

Futures Group Report to the Provost

On August 27, 2014, Provost Minner presented the concept of a Futures Group to the Board of Visitors during the Academic Affairs and Business Affairs Joint Committee Meeting. After consultation with President Kyle, the Futures Group membership was created via nomination by leaders from each college and academic support unit across campus.

The Futures Group members were asked to: ...*examine the near term and more distant challenges and opportunities before RU and to recommend one or more courses of action to more powerfully achieve RU's mission to teach students*

Futures Group Recommendation

SCHEV Strategic Plan Alignment

Opportunities and Challenges Addressed

Recommendation #1: Embed the Learning Sciences into Radford University's Mission, Practice and Ethos

Summary

Research over the last two decades has provided profound insights into how people learn, which have practical applications for classroom teaching and potentially increasing the effectiveness of instruction at every level. Despite the emergence of the Learning Sciences, few universities have adopted this approach as a fundamental aspect of their instructional, programmatic, or environmental design. Integrating learning sciences across RU will better align our teaching methods with the research on how people learn to better meet the needs of today's RU student.

Learning sciences is an interdisciplinary field drawing upon research in cognitive science, educational psychology, computer science, education, sociology, neuroscience, anthropology, information sciences, design studies and other fields.⁴ “The goal of the learning sciences is to better understand the cognitive and social processes that result in the most effective learning, and to use this knowledge to redesign classrooms and other learning environments so that people learn more deeply and effectively.”⁵

We recommend the design of every class, program and learning environment at Radford University be based on the basic sciences of learning. Doing so will profoundly impact instructional design of class both online and face-to-face; choice of instructional technology tools including mobile, learning analytics, and adaptive learning systems or Intelligent Tutoring Systems (ITS); the development of programs in th(4(ve)4(Tw 3.29 0 Tde)4(Tw 3..3 Twc -0.002 Tw 0.24 0n)-4(g

Recommendation #3: Create a Cross-Disciplinary Radford Innovation Lab to Promote

Recommendation #4: Expand Online Programs with a Strategic and Entrepreneurial Approach

Summary

Recommendation #5: Leverage Radford University's Geographical and Cultural Distinctiveness for Learning and Scholarship⁹

Summary

RU is located in the [Appalachian region](#), one of the most geographically rich, naturally beautiful, and culturally diverse parts of the Commonwealth.¹⁰ This provides many opportunities for enhanced teaching, research and scholarship, as well as service to the greater community.

Our recommendation is to construct an academic ecosystem focused on Appalachia that brings together students, scholars and citizens, while leveraging distinct local resources such as RU's [Selu Conservancy](#), the [New River Valley](#), and [Mountain Lake](#).

Our recommendation #5 is to construct an academic ecosystem focused on Appalachia that brings together students, scholars and citizens, while leveraging distinct local resources such as RU's [Selu Conservancy](#), the [New River Valley](#), and [Mountain Lake](#). [REDACTED]

Recommendation #6: Increase and Accelerate Degree Completion

Strategy #1: Deliver a Bachelor's Degree Completion Program for Nontraditional Students

Summary

According to recent research, the majority of all college students are *not* the “traditional” 17-22 year old, full-time residential student. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) projections suggest significant growth in the population of students aged 25 years and older. Rather than relying solely on high school juniors and seniors, RU could target nontraditional students, a ior.

Recommendation #6: Increase and Accelerate Degree Completion (cont.)

Strategy #2: Provide Alternative, Accelerated and Flexible Scheduling

Summary

Most higher education institutions, including Radford University, use an antiquated rationale and structure for designing semesters and scheduling classes.¹¹ This model is not optimal for serving traditional and nontraditional students. However, the emergence of online education has brought a significant increase in the number of nontraditional learners (e.g., working adults, veterans, etc.) who in turn have required more flexible scheduling options than the traditional 16-week semester could afford.¹² The result has been an explosion of alternative, accelerated and flexible scheduling options, which can now be leveraged for both traditional and nontraditional students. These options fall within two main categories: course design and program design. Examples of flexible course design and program design include:

1. Online, asynchronous courses that enable students to enroll and complete the course at their own pace throughout the academic year.
 2. Compressed classes that enable students to complete a course over a 6-8 week time frame rather than a 14-week time frame.
 3. Competency-based course and programs that enable the students to earn
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Recommendation #6: Increase and Accelerate Degree Completion (cont.)

Strategy #3: Develop Structure and Policy to Recruit and Retain Transfer Students

Summary

From 2000 to 2013, community college enrollment in Virginia increased by approximately 38%. During that same period of time, RU's transfer student enrollment only increased by 14%, while the increase in transfer enrollments by other 4-year public universities in Virginia averaged 36%. There is the potential for RU to grow transfer student enrollment. We therefore recommend making RU the most Virginia Community College System (VCCS) transfer-friendly institution in the Commonwealth.

We recommend continuing with our ongoing efforts to strengthen and streamline the transfer admission process. Initiatives are already underway to provide an online tool that will provide comprehensive transfer course review. Students

Recommendation #7: Welcome visitors to Radford University with attractive and inspiring facilities and services

Summary

Enrollment Management, Admissions,

Recommendation #8: Be the “Place to Go” for Educators

Summary

Radford University is a leader in preparing K-12 educators. High quality teacher preparation programs have been a central part of our mission since the University’s founding. While the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) produces a large number of Early Childhood, Elementary Education and Special Education teachers, many other departments (Sci, Art, Biology, Physical/Earth Science, English, Math, Music, Social Sciences and others) produce a significant number of teachers, as well. Our programs have a long history of producing outstanding teachers

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