

Minutes of the First Meeting on  
The Commonwealth Electronic Campus  
January 28, 1998

The meeting was convened at 1:30 p.m. simultaneously in Richmond and Blacksburg via Net. Work. Virginia.

Present in Richmond: Dr. Dennis Aebersold, W&M; Dr. David Aversman, MWC; Mr. Peter Blake, SCHEV; Mr. Richard Bratcher, LC; Dr. Joy Hughes, GMU; Mr. Richard Hurley, LC; Ms. Patricia Jackson, VT; Dr. Robert Godwin Jones, VCU; Mr. Michael McDowell, VT; Dr. Michael Mullen, SCHEV; Dr. Arnold Oliver, VCCS; Dr. Dennis "Skip" Parks, U.Va.; Dr. John Payne, U.Va.; Dr. Linwood Rose, JMU; and Dr. Anne Savage, ODU. Present in Blacksburg: Dr. Anne Moore, VT; Dr. Will Stanton, RU; and Mr. William Yerrick, RU.

Following introductions, representatives described their institutions' initiatives and/or interests in distance learning and instructional technology.

Dr. Moore described two ways Virginia's public institutions of higher education could develop a more coordinated approach to distance learning. The first option was simply to develop an electronic catalog of all distance-learning courses in Virginia. A more integrated approach would be to develop a comprehensive virtual institution. She pointed to the California example in which institutions conducted feasibility studies to determine the market, developed a catalog of courses from participating institutions, and organized a committee to decide policy issues in administration and programming. Dr. Moore also described other existing consortia in Virginia for physics and microelectronics that might figure into electronic programming possibilities.

Dr. Mullen asked if such a distance-learning consortium would be limited to public institutions and whether it would be open to out-of-state institutions operating in Virginia. He also asked how this proposed consortium would complement the SREB electronic campus.

Dr. Moore described the uniqueness of Net. Work. Virginia, the opportunities it presents, and the desirability of making electronic campus offerings and the infrastructure that supports them compatible with SREB and other robust electronic initiatives.

Dr. Savage stated that, while technology is allowing us to operate anywhere at anytime, institutions must still seek approval to operate in certain areas to prevent the U.S. Department of Education from withholding student financial aid.

Dr. Mullen stated that SCHEV will expedite approvals for Virginia institutions to go out of state. This, in turn, will help accelerate approval by those states.

Dr. Moore asked if SCHEV would be willing to coordinate electronic offerings. Dr. Mullen said that SCHEV won't stand in the way of institutions, citing its desire to increase access while bearing in mind quality and consumer protection.

Dr. Oliver stated that there were two overriding issues: 1) the technicalities of administering collaborative distance learning, and 2) the programmatic, qualitative, and policy issues. He said the critical thing to do was to create a volunteer council consisting of institutional representatives to work on these issues and to draft a strategic planning document. Dr. Savage seconded this recommendation, citing the need to analyze the electronic curriculum to ensure that it meets students' needs and to examine the role of technology and the faculty.

Dr. Moore said Virginia Tech would be happy to offer training from its Faculty Development Institute to other institutions and to share what lessons have been learned.

Mr. Blake asked what the Business Higher Education Council's thinking was in articulating a need for distance-learning offerings. Dr. Oliver said the goal was to provide access to workforce services from master's level degree programs to lower division post-secondary courses. He described how, by investing less than \$15,000 in six foreign language distance learning programs, the VCCS could deliver these six courses to all 38 community-college campuses across the Commonwealth for less than \$100,000. He said that kind of efficiency is also part of the Council's vision.

Mr. Yerrick asked where the leadership for this initiative would come from. Dr. Hughes described collaborative efforts at SUNY and in the Oregon system. She said that in collaborative efforts such as these, institutions can respond to changing needs much faster because the burden of change is not shouldered by only one institution. These systems also were able to secure collective funding from their respective legislatures for key collaborations.

Dr. Moore said the volunteer council could solve the administrative questions, and that the council should seek out faculty participation for content and program collaboration issues.

Dr. Parks said the group should focus efforts on those areas of the greatest demand and not to try to be all things to all people. The specific skills needed in northern Virginia, he said, are the same skills needed in Southside and southwest Virginia. Tackling these needs would be more useful to the Commonwealth than simply a listing of electronic courses.

Dr. Mullen said he would convene a meeting to answer the administrative questions. Dr. Moore said she would convene a meeting on behalf of Virginia Tech president Paul Torgersen to address academic concerns. She suggested that members of the group present should serve on both committees to ensure continuity between the administrative and academic groups. Dr. Moore suggested that the group review SREB virtual campus documents at: [www.srec.sreb.org](http://www.srec.sreb.org).

After a brief discussion, the group decided to invite participation by private institutions. It also decided to hold the administrative and academic committee meetings prior to March 1, in advance of the next Business Higher Education Council meeting March 13. Dr. Moore stated that the groups needed to keep the digital libraries in mind in these discussions.

Dr. Mullen advised that the academic group needs to figure out how a student would put these courses from different institutions together into a credential and by whom it would be awarded.

Mr. Hurley asked if the groups couldn't do more than line up a couple of committee meetings before the Council meeting to show that institutions can respond quickly to business needs. Dr. Hughes suggested creating a World Wide Web site citing distance-education courses already available, complete with a course schedule. She also recommended sections describing where we are and where we intend to go with distance learning.

Dr. Ayersman asked that the group not limit itself to what Virginia institutions offer, but rather that it look at options of bringing courses offered by out-of-state institutions to Virginia campuses and businesses.

Participants agreed to put together listings of their offerings. Dr. Hughes offered to suggest a template, which Dr. Moore offered to share with the group and to assist in developing the Web site format preferred by the participants.

The group briefly discussed seeking language in the Appropriations Act that would allow all institutions to have an enterprise institute similar to Old Dominion University's.

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

## The Commonwealth Electronic Campus

The Commonwealth Electronic Campus is being created by Virginia's public colleges and universities in response to the Virginia Business Higher Education Council's Report, Virginia First 2000, Business and Higher Education: Partners for the Learning Economy. A key purpose of the electronic campus is to provide employees with "one-stop" electronic access to training and advanced instruction, from lower-division postsecondary education to the master's degree level. Institutions will share resources and talent and therefore be able to respond to changing business and economic needs much faster than a single institution operating alone.

The Commonwealth Electronic Campus will exploit the potential of Net.Work.Virginia, Virginia's high-speed, broadband communication network providing asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) service statewide. This high-capacity network delivers fully interactive voice, data, and video services and can support different types of multimedia connections simultaneously. Only three institutions were connected to the network in 1996. Today, 34 of 39 public colleges and universities are connected, with two more scheduled to connect this year. Private colleges and universities also are taking full advantage of Net.Work.Virginia. Businesses and industry can connect to it to gain access to a wealth of educational resources, including on-site, distance learning programs.

A task force has been formed to develop and establish the Commonwealth Electronic Campus. Represented at the initial meeting were the College of William & Mary, George Mason University, James Madison University, Longwood College, Mary Washington College, Old Dominion University, Radford University, the State Council of Higher Education, the University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, the Virginia Community College System, and Virginia Tech.

The task force met Jan. 28, 1998, and the following preliminary action plan was adopted.

The task force agreed to:

- Create a World Wide Web site that will list electronic courses already available, complete with course schedules. The site will be updated as new courses are added. Students will be able to access detailed course information from their desktop and register at any participating institution. The Web site will also contain the Commonwealth Electronic Classroom strategic plan for development and implementation.
- Create a volunteer council of chief administrators knowledgeable about information technology to resolve technicalities in administering collaborative distance learning among institutions, such as how degrees or certificates will be awarded for courses taken electronically at a variety of institutions.
- Create a volunteer council of academic officers and faculty knowledgeable about information technology to resolve programmatic, qualitative and policy issues to ensure that the electronic curriculum meets employers' and students' needs.
- Invite Virginia's private colleges and universities to participate in the program.
- Ensure that the Commonwealth Electronic Campus is compatible and complementary to the Southern Regional Education Board's Southern Regional Electronic Campus.

Dr. Anne H. Moore, Director of Information Technology Initiatives, Virginia Tech will convene the academic council, and Dr. J. Michael Mullen, Interim Director, State Council of Higher Education, will convene the administrative council. Both councils will meet prior to March 1 to develop strategic plans for implementing policies and action. Task force members will serve on both committees for continuity and to ensure that policy development and strategic planning by the two committees are compatible.

Task force members already have begun collecting information from their institutions to contribute to the Web site. The Web site will be available to employers, employees, and other interested parties by summer.

Mon Feb 23 10:13:53 1998

Commonwealth Electronic Campus

Date: Mon, 16 Feb 1998 11:37:18 -0400  
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The 2nd meeting of the Electronic Campus group will be on Monday, February 23 from 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. in Richmond. I know this date will not be convenient for everyone, however it received the majority of votes from those who responded. Please let me know if you will or will not be able to attend, along with the name and title of the faculty member you will be bringing along. Thank you.

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## Electronic Campus to be Online by Fall

Virginia's Commonwealth Electronic Campus, a cooperative instructional technology initiative among the state's public and private colleges and universities, is scheduled to be online for fall 1998.

A key goal of the electronic campus is to provide students of all ages with "one-stop" access to distance-learning training and instruction, from the college freshman to the master's degree level. The project was launched in January in response to the Virginia Business Higher Education Council's Report, Virginia First 2000.

The electronic campus will use the potential of *Net. Work. Virginia*, Virginia's high-speed, broadband communication network. This high-capacity, statewide network delivers fully interactive voice, data, and video services and can support different types of multimedia connections simultaneously.

A World Wide Web site will list distributed or dis-

tance learning courses currently available statewide, complete with course schedules. The site will be updated as new courses or learning modules are added. Employers, employees and the general public will be able to access detailed course information from their desktop and register at any participating institution. The Virginia Commonwealth Electronic Campus will be compatible with, but will not duplicate, the Southern Regional Education Board's Southern Regional Electronic Campus.

The Blacksburg Electronic Village will establish the initial website this summer. Each institution will be responsible for maintaining its own information and course offerings.

The electronic campus is one of several collaborative projects now underway by Virginia's colleges and universities to meet workforce preparation needs and to help meet the needs for advanced education and technological literacy.