Chartered University

Virginia Tech, the University of Virginia, and the College of William and Mary are proposing to become “Chartered Universities.” A Chartered University is a public body accountable through its board, the Governor, and the General Assembly. Benefits to the state include a mean to address the funding priorities that compete with higher education. Benefits to the universities are flexibility and a better fit of administrative policies and procedures with the university’s goals and priorities. Academic program accountability would continue to be to the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia. Accountability for administration would be to the governor, the legislature, and several secretariats. The university, if granted charter status, will adopt policies that parallel current state policies but that may be refined to fit institutional needs.

Chartered universities would remain public institutions and would be constituted as political subdivisions instead of state agencies.

New Media Center

The mission of the Virginia Tech New Media Center is to showcase high-quality, multimedia resources. The New Media Center (NMC) provides the university community with access to high-level computers, software, consultants, and training for the development of digital content. The Center is open to the public and provides reasonable access to all segments of the community.

In addition to providing up-to-date hardware and software, the center offers personal assistance to patrons using the equipment and supported services. It also plays a critical role in directly supporting all aspects of the Faculty Development Institute, including significant support of the FDI website. The three reasons most often cited for using the NMC are access to high-end hardware and software, on-site assistance, and the central location.

The largest share of the center’s users are students (typically about 85%), followed by faculty and staff, and a small number of individuals in the larger public. Large-format flatbed scanners comprise 24% of patron transactions, followed by video digitizing/editing (22%), a significant increase over last year. The increase was facilitated by computer upgrades, the addition of a 2-terabyte server, and a high-speed intranet between the video computers and the server, creating a friendly environment for video work. The third highest area was equipment loan, primarily digital still cameras (19%). Digital still and video cameras were borrowed 1,527 times last year. Other areas of use were graphics creation (11%), web development (5%), desktop publishing (5%), CD-ROM burning (4%), and slide scanning (4%).

NMC supports the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) project with workshops for graduate students and individual assistance.

The New Media Center is led managed by Shannon Phillips, and reports to Ed Schwartz. James Dustin is the Operations Assistant. Eight undergraduate lab assistants assist users of the Center.
Hokie SPA Statistics

The DBMS team monitors performance of the Banner self-service web-based applications—Hokie SPA. Student drop/add can be seen in the April peaks below.

New publications

In the current edition of *Educause Review* [May/June 2004, Vol. 39, No. 3, pp. 60-61], Erv Blythe writes about recent breakthroughs in high performance communications and computing that promise to restructure both the economics and the performance of networks in order to facilitate advance research. These include both the National LambdaRail project to build a national optical research network, and the “commodity supercomputing” like Virginia Tech’s System X. The demonstrated capacity of such systems promise not only greater benefit to research, but also a transformation of the global producer network.

In the same issue, Brenda van Gelder authored “The Case for Municipal Provision of Competitive Broadband Infrastructure.” [pp. 62-63]. Brenda is the Director of the eCorridors Program (see www.ecorridors.vt.edu). The article describes recent events related to whether or not municipalities may provide telecommunications services, including broadband infrastructure. A recent Supreme Court decision upheld a decision that would permit a state to prevent municipalities from offering such service, while underscoring that municipal sponsorship of broadband infrastructure may be very worthwhile.

The Educause Net@EDU Broadband Policy Group advocates availability of high-bandwidth, advance Internet and communications services. Municipal players in this arena may be one way to foster such availability.

Anne Moore addresses “Technology, Learning, and Change: Community Development Revisited,” in the *Educause Quarterly*, No 2., 2004, pages 53-60. Economic development efforts in the Dan River, Southside Virginia area include a focus on using technology, and includes a web of partnerships among local governments, private businesses, K-12 and higher education institutions, and a local foundation. Virginia Tech’s role is to assist in the development of an advanced telecommunications and computing infrastructure and to help develop the related knowledge and skills among the local populace that provides the human infrastructure required to drive renewal. Technology is not the end of the efforts; rather, it is the catalyst for continued development.

“Every member of the community is a potential producer and contributor of research and scholarship in this new world, and every member can help build the infrastructure and the literacy on which it depends.”