

Initial Comparator Research – University of Virginia

(LMS = Sakai, <http://collab.its.virginia.edu>, managed by Information Technology Services, <http://its.virginia.edu/>.)

General impression: UVa's online education is market-specific, largely targeted to working professionals, and remains rather distinct, in comparison to the campus-based, residential ("On Grounds") experience. This has limited innovation campus-wide; while a few academic and service units are providing digital education, the UVa "brand" is so tied to a historically residential experience that what online courses are offered are career-oriented (and therefore no "political" threat to the core academic units).

UVa is an instructive parallel, to be considered carefully in comparison to UO. There are similar approaches and outlooks, however UO was not designed by Thomas Jefferson, and therefore cannot claim the same sort of institutional branding and history that UVa can claim. UVa may not be a good comparison as an organizational model for a future UO. There are similar organizational structures, and UVa is not far ahead of UO digital education efforts, but applying UVa's organization to UO will make it harder for campus units to collaborate in the long run.

1) What services does this institution's Extension unit provide to campus partners?

Very little. The University of Virginia's School of Continuing and Professional Studies (SCPS; <http://www.scps.virginia.edu>) plays a role very similar to UO's Academic Extension unit. It offers credit classes for degree completion in targeted subjects, it offers some online certificates and degrees, and it is the home of non-credit education (which is generally provided via face-to-face delivery in the evenings at offsite locations, or asynchronously online). While SCPS students are enrolled at the University of Virginia, this seems to largely be a means of facilitating a connection to digital services, including UVa e-mail, the student registration system, and the LMS. It's also a means of navigating the payment system. SCPS students who enroll in a credit-bearing course, whether that is part of a certificate or a degree, are billed through UVa's Student Financial Services alongside the rest of the student body. Other students are billed through SCPS according to a detailed tuition matrix.

Students normally enrolled on Grounds (i.e., traditional/residential degree-seeking students) who wish to enroll in SCPS courses will be charged regular tuition by the University (see <http://www.scps.virginia.edu/uploads/Spring2015Catalog.pdf>). This statement, SCPS's marketing/branding efforts, and the regulations for SCPS faculty (limited to adjunct pools and a few NTT hires for online degree programs, see <http://www.scps.virginia.edu/audience/faculty/teach-for-scps>) suggest that SCPS is almost entirely focused on external audiences. Its degree programs are designed for adult learners and do not overlap with the rest of the institution, organizationally or academically.

2) Where is digital education housed? Are there separate units for online learning and blended or hybrid courses? Are technology and pedagogy combined or separate? How much of this effort is centralized?

UVa has an advantage over UO in that its LMS appears to be a single, centrally-administered unit, and nearly all of the programs that offer digital education work with the LMS group to provide a single digital framework for online learning. That LMS is Sakai, which is open source, and it lives in UVA's central IT unit (Information Technology Services; <http://its.virginia.edu/home.php>), so it is managed like any other system resource or enterprise application—these factors undoubtedly contribute to the seamlessness of the experience. There is also a single Student Information System (<https://sisuva.admin.virginia.edu/>), which is used by SCPS as well as the rest of the University. So much of the overhead of SCPS has been centralized, from both technological and administrative perspectives.

Still, only some of the digital education offered by UVA is administered through the School of Continuing and Professional Studies. SCPS offers one noncredit certificate in public relations, 3 undergraduate certificates (HR management, information technology, and procurement and contracts management), 8 graduate certificates (cybersecurity management, e-marketing, leadership, leadership in HR management, procurement and contracts management, project management, public administration, and technology leadership), and one brand-new undergraduate degree, a Bachelor of Professional Studies in Health Sciences Management, launched in January 2015 and conducted more than 90% online. The Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies program, which offers both evening and online for-credit courses, could be considered a hybridized degree, but as online learning is not a *required* element, it is not marketed as an online program per se.

In addition to the online offerings through SCPS, however, UVA has a number of digital education initiatives in its schools and colleges. Some of these are quite extensive.

Several UVA academic divisions have partnered with Coursera to offer MOOCs, drawing upon faculty from the humanities, sciences, education and business (<https://www.coursera.org/uva>; 14 MOOCs currently on offer).

The Physics Department has established a blended master's degree in Physics Education (<http://k12.phys.virginia.edu>). While not advertised by SCPS, it appears to receive a measure of administrative support from that unit. Most courses are online, with several in-residence summer courses also required. Online courses for this degree are offered through UVA's Sakai installation. The Physics department is also offering a number of its undergraduate courses online; these appear to be organized by the academic unit, rather than by any administrative body, and while they are online, they follow the University's academic calendar. Some of these undergraduate courses may be considered professional development for teachers more than courses for on-grounds degree seekers, but there does appear to be audience overlap.

The University of Virginia Darden School of Business is home to a number of digital education initiatives. In addition to providing online courses as part of its Executive

MBA program (see <http://www.darden.virginia.edu/emba/format/distance-learning/>), the school recently announced a new online certificate, the Specialization in Innovation (<http://www.darden.virginia.edu/executive-education/certificates/innovation-specialization/>). This certificate will begin accepting students in September 2015, and appears to belong solely to Darden; SCPS or other centralized administrative units are not mentioned in the materials. In addition to this certificate, Darden offers “short online courses” and “custom online solutions” that can lead to two other graduate certificates in business. These online-only offerings appear to be run through Darden’s Executive Education division, which manages its own student registrations, and which may run its own LMS as well. No obvious references to the Sakai installation the rest of campus uses. At least some of the course information lives on a Squarespace web site (<http://batten.squarespace.com>).

The Curry School of Education offers a number of online degrees and certificates (<http://curry.virginia.edu/online>). In addition to master’s degrees in reading education and curriculum and instruction, they offer graduate certificates in reading education, adolescent literacy, gifted and talented education, and English language learning. In Spring 2015 there were 30 sections of 24 titles offered online. These courses and degree programs appear to make use of UVa’s centralized LMS and registration systems.

UVa Engineering’s Office of Online Innovations (<http://online.seas.virginia.edu/index.php>) is the home of distance learning in the School of Engineering and Applied Science. There are several digital education initiatives in engineering: the Commonwealth Graduate Engineering Program (<http://cgep.virginia.edu>) offers online master’s degrees in chemical, civil and environmental, electrical and computer, materials, mechanical and aerospace, and systems engineering (a total of 6 online degrees). These use the centralized LMS and registration systems. There is also a well-established online degree program in engineering for undergraduates, Engineers PRODUCED in Virginia (<http://www.seas.virginia.edu/acad/programs/producedinva/index.php>), which partners with local community colleges to provide a path through both A.S. and B.S. degrees. These classes appear to be conducted *synchronously* via webcast (no specific technical information is available). Two bachelor’s degrees, in engineering science and mechanical engineering, are currently offered through this program. The mechanical engineering degree is hybridized, however, with the final year spent on Grounds at UVa.

In addition to all of these degree and certificate offerings, the University of Virginia School of Medicine’s Continuing Medical Education unit provides a number of robust digital learning experiences for working medical professionals: <http://www.medicine.virginia.edu/education/more/cme/online-page>. This is in addition to a number of face-to-face offerings. While this is generally noncredit education, the programs do meet standardized continuing education requirements within this particular profession. Transcripts are available to participants.

Finally, the Lifetime Learning unit, which is focused on alumni and parent engagement, offers a number of digital resources, including occasional online courses and events (<http://www.virginia.edu/lifetimelearning/>).

Aside from the Office of Online Innovation in the School of Engineering and Applied Science, most of these offerings are not clearly linked to pedagogical support. Both the Office of Online Innovation (see the associate dean, hired January 2014, here: <http://www.seas.virginia.edu/admin/outreach.php>) and SCPS do try to consciously engineer smaller learning communities for students in online degree programs. There is one FTE in Engineering dedicated to this, and it is articulated by a staff member in SCPS's video advertising (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pp_F5yP5Xes).

3) What structures, formal or informal, are in place to encourage pedagogical innovation on campus? Is there any effort to centralize such activity?

Pedagogical support at UVa is generally the provenance of the Teaching Resource Center (<http://trc.virginia.edu>). A “pan-University center” for professional development that serves both faculty and teaching assistants across the institution, the TRC collaborates with other University units, particularly in order to enhance the use of technology in teaching. Their list of active collaborations (<http://trc.virginia.edu/resources/center-collaborations/>) highlights some of the ways in which the center is trying to have an impact across campus. In addition to maintaining cross-unit partnerships, the TRC hosts an annual Innovation in Pedagogy Summit, which integrates talks on educational technology (<http://trc.virginia.edu/programs/annual-innovation-in-pedagogy-summit/>), runs workshops for new faculty and for graduate student professional development, offers one-on-one consultations, including on teaching with technology topics, conducts in-class observations or mid-semester student evaluations upon request, and maintains a variety of learning communities for both faculty and graduate students. There is an annual intensive Course Design Institute (<http://trc.virginia.edu/programs/course-design-institute/>), faculty peer mentoring, a teaching with technology “Summer Camp” (<http://trc.virginia.edu/programs/teaching-with-technology-summer-camp/>), and regular awards, fellowships, and grants for both faculty and teaching assistants. Notable among this is the Hybrid Challenge for Engaged Learning (<http://trc.virginia.edu/programs/hybrid-challenge/>), which is an initiative funded by the University President and managed in collaboration with the UVa Faculty Senate. The initiative is designed to provide funding and support to faculty who wish to develop some of their traditional courses into flipped or hybrid learning experiences. Finally, the TRC has collected an extensive resource library (<http://trc.virginia.edu/resources/>).

With 6 FTE, 4 part-time graduate student associates, and an undergraduate student assistant, the TRC is considerably better-staffed than UO's Teaching Effectiveness Program. And TRC's tagline—“building community, enhancing learning, fostering innovation”—suggests it has a more expansive perspective than does TEP. and is a very good example of what TEP could be if it were properly resourced.

In addition to the TRC, there are a number of other units dedicated to pedagogical or technological support. These include several school-specific units, but also cross-campus initiatives emerging from different offices at the vice-presidential level. One is the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (CASTL-HE; <http://curry.virginia.edu/research/centers/castlhe>), a research center in the Curry School of Education which applies “the principles of evidence-based assessment to the relationship between college teaching and pedagogy and student learning outcomes.” CASTL-HE researchers partner with the TRC to conduct research and provide services to UVa faculty.

Another partnership, articulated between the Provost and the Vice President of Information Technology but facilitated by TRC and ITS, is the Teaching + Technology Support Partners (<http://www.tti.virginia.edu/ttsp/>), the current iteration of what was previously the Teaching + Technology Initiative (<http://tti.virginia.edu>). TTSP is a fellowship program in which graduate students are trained and made available to support faculty technological and pedagogical innovation within their academic departments. Departments participate for a three-year period.

Finally, a number of pedagogically-oriented technology programs are in place within UVa’s College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (<http://as.virginia.edu>). The school’s administrative framework includes a New Learning Technologies Committee (<http://as.virginia.edu/committees/new-learning-technologies>), a Technology Strategies team that is dedicated to researching and experimenting with new pedagogies (sadly, no web site available), and their own Center for Instructional Technology (ASCIT; <http://ascitweb.clas.virginia.edu>), which manages media services, language labs, and some software for the school, but also conducts teaching and technology consultations and training for faculty, with two technology specialists on staff. Faculty initiatives include SHANTI, the Sciences, Humanities & Arts Network of Technological Initiatives, which supports the use of digital technologies in research, teaching, publishing and collaborative engagement (<http://shanti.virginia.edu>), and is clearly an attempt to help faculty who are interested in new technologies communicate and collaborate. This one of the most elaborate faculty community seen in the initial comparator research, and very notable because it is peer-driven.

4) Where are instructional design and instructional technology housed? What pathways exist to guide faculty to instructional technology services? Is access to instructional technology support uniform across different faculty groups at the institution?

Instructional design and instructional technology live in too many places to count. But like UO, UVa’s decentralized approach makes it difficult to find clear pathways to support; everyone claims they do everything, much as we do here at Oregon. For example, the TRC clearly provides instructional technology support, as does ASCIT for Arts & Sciences faculty, as does the Online Innovation office within the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. But UVa’s central IT service claims to provide robust instructional support as well (see their service catalog; http://its.virginia.edu/services/#cat_3), and the UVa Library houses a Digital Media Lab

that provides “assistance and solutions for UVa faculty and students” (<https://pages.shanti.virginia.edu/medianet/>). Finally, the Office of the Vice President for Research manages OpenGrounds, an effort that appears to be both a digital and an in-person effort to enhance collaboration and networking around a number of issues, including the use of technology (<http://opengrounds.virginia.edu/>).

5) At what administrative level are digital education initiatives, endorsed, supported, or made a fundraising priority? For example, does the institution count, encourage, or otherwise track student enrollment or participation in digitally-inflected (hybrid, blended, tech-enhanced F2F) courses? What institutional investments have been made in hybrid and/or blended learning?

Top-down model with internal investment from offices at the presidential and provost levels. Sustained investment in hybrid learning and in the growth of online degrees, but the decentralization here means these efforts remain fragmented.