

Initial Comparator Research – Virginia Commonwealth University (LMS = Blackboard 9.1)

General Impression: VCU presents as a smaller school, with more focus than UO. There is much more activity in the online environment (especially graduate degrees), although the level of online course development appears limited to one 5-week program and a few dedicated staff. There is no process referenced for creating online courses or programs. EdTech and IT are combined in one central unit (administering the LMS), while teaching and learning comes out of a community building/experimentally focused unit in which technology is seamlessly integrated into pedagogy support. This Academic Learning Transformation Lab might be interesting to examine further, but not sure if VCU in general is a useful example for further study.

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

The Office of Continuing and Professional Education (<http://ocpe.vcu.edu/>) coordinates programs, 'harnessing' the "power of VCU", to provide noncredit, credit, and CEU programming, lifelong learning for alumni, as well as customized training and analysis services for a variety of topics.

- Programs are course grouping in 18 areas, but classes are a mainly F2F. Current offerings include 38 online courses, many of which are "Live" (synchronous delivery).
- There do not seem to be any fully online programs (certificate, undergraduate or graduate degree). I could only find one certificate program at all (Paralegal) in their listings. Not sure if that means all other professional development courses just provide CEU.
- OCPE is running a Quick Poll on their web pages asking "How do you prefer a continuing education course to be delivered?"(Online, In person, Hybrid).
- OCPE also houses the Virginia Center for Consensus Building which provides mediation services and negotiation skills training to state, local, and regional entities.

Online@VCU (<http://online.vcu.edu/>) lists 260 courses for Summer 2015 (these are a combination of fully online, correspondence courses, and some online/F2F mixes).

- Undergraduate degrees: 2 B.S.
- Certificates: 5 without label, 2 graduate, 1 post. Bacc.
 - School of Nursing: Hybrid/Online PhD program (much coursework can be taken online, but it is implied that some portion of activity requires physical presence, not sure what) (<http://nursing.vcu.edu/education/phd/>)
- Graduate degrees: 12 M.S., 2 M. Ed., 2 Ph.D., 1 O.T.D., 1 D.N.A.P.
- 1 MOOC (Global Health and Social Media) through medical school

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?

VCU Technology Services (<http://www.ts.vcu.edu/>) is the central IT unit. They administer Blackboard, handle A/V equipment checkout, clickers, desktop software. Academic Technologies (<http://www.ts.vcu.edu/about-us/academic-technologies/>) is a division of Technology Services. AT defines its services by Learning Systems (defined by technology: SafeAssign, Wimba, SoftChalk, Respondus, StudyMate, iTunes University, etc.); Media Support Services; Lab and Classroom Support. Little to no pedagogical connection to any of this as their 'teaching and learning' link just lists technology options.

- TechServices has a Planning and Project Management Office.

Technology and Pedagogy are not closely linked, at least no visible links between TechServices and the Academic Learning Transformation Lab.

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

The Academic Learning Transformation Lab (<http://altlab.vcu.edu/>) seems to be the teaching and learning center for VCU, presenting a community/experimental approach as "Connected Learning for a Networked World". The staff includes Learning Innovation Design Specialists, Online Learning Innovation Liaisons, Learning Media Innovation Specialists, 1 Graduate Fellow, 1 Communications & Design Specialist, 1 Instructional Technologist, and 1 IT Analyst (also a director, assoc. director, and the Vice Provost).

- ALT Lab Agora and social media connection for informal consultations

- New Faculty Academy, Faculty Learning Communities, Online Learning Experience (5 week program to help faculty through online course design process), Brown Bag Lunch Series, 3D Printing, an Incubator Classroom, Innovative Learning Media, and Digital Storytelling Program, are among their "structured professional learning opportunities."

- ALTfest is a program of formal and informal special events, performances, and festive activities celebrating stories of learning transformation and exploring new possibilities. (An unconference on learning?). This includes ALTCamp, Hackjam, Active Makerspace, Editing Wikipedia, Gaming + Learning activities.

ATL Lab is connected to the Online program, but there are no visible connection with Technology Services.

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?

The ALT Lab (see #3) seems to be it, serving as the combined pedagogical/technological service unit.

Technology Services provides resources for Blackboard use (links, how-to's), but nothing further along the lines of instructional designer/technologist.

Schools/Colleges may provide some training in technology/teaching topics, but it seems very limited. The School of Medicine especially has a few programs and resources.

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?

The digital education initiatives seem integrated into the administrative structure, with the Vice Provost for Learning Innovation and Student Success overseeing both Online@VCU and the ALTLab (as well as Student Services, Student Learning units, and the University College), and the Strategic Planning, Mission, and Goals provide cover for (innovation, learning focused student success), but not direct mention of digital education (or online or instructional technology).

Teaching grants or awards – funding resources at all – could not be found. A lot of service activity through ALT Lab for innovation, but done through community building and networking concepts, rather than monetary support.