

Recommendation 1, 4/9/00: Submit notification of all new programs to the Commission on Colleges and include notification responses.

Response 9/20/00: Per Dr. Rogers request in his letter dated March 10, 2000 (Appendix 1A), the University provided the Commission by the required date (5/11/00), “complete descriptions of those substantive changes addressing all elements in the COC’s prospectus outline (to be provided by staff)”. As further indicated in the March 10 letter, “those descriptions of changes of a substantive nature will be referred to the standing committee of the Commission on Colleges for review during their meetings June 20-22, 2000. **The decisions of the standing committees of the Commission will be included in a letter and that letter, as well as your letters of notification accompanying the substantive change descriptions, should be submitted with your Second Follow-up Report due September 20, 2000, as evidence that you have reported the substantive changes to the Commission.**” Those letters are included as Appendix 1B, 1C and 1D and are highlighted below:

- May 11, 2000 letter from Dr. Charles Steger, President - Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University to Dr. James Rodgers, Executive Director - Commission on Colleges (Appendix 1B). Dr. Steger **submitted notification** of all new programs to the Commission as stated in the opening paragraph of his letter.

“This letter accompanies an addendum to Virginia Tech’s First Follow-Up Report submitted in October 1999. Following your letter of March 10, we submitted a list of all program changes since 1994 when annual reporting to the Commission on Colleges ceased. Per recommendations received in response to that submission dated April 17 (Appendix 1C), we have prepared the enclosed report. We hope that it will satisfy the requirements for Section 1.2, Application of the Criteria. Virginia Tech wishes to be fully cooperative in this process and has respect for the guidelines. It is our intention to provide any and all reporting as required in the Criteria”.

The reference of Appendix 1C in Dr. Steger’s letter of May 11, 2000 is included in this report as Appendix 1E. Included in Dr. Steger’s notification to Dr. Rogers were:

1. a Roster of Degree Changes since 1994 (Appendix 1F)
 2. a Roster of Distance Delivered Programs Added since 1994 (Appendix 1G)
 3. the Roster of Distance delivered programs from the university’s first follow-up report (Appendix 1H)
- July 7, 2000 letter from James T. Rogers to Dr. Charles W. Steger (Appendix 1C). Dr. Rogers provided **notification response** by informing Dr. Steger of the Commission’s denial of the previously unreported substantive changes offered since 1996 and placed the institution on Notice for six months for “failure to comply with the following section of the Criteria: Section 1.2 (Principles and Philosophy of Accreditation – Application of the Criteria).” Further the university “is requested to submit a Progress Report due September 20, 2000, addressing the following section of the *Criteria*:

Section 1.2 (Principles and Philosophy of Accreditation –Application of the Criteria)

The institution implemented substantive changes in violation of the *Criteria* for Accreditation and applicable policies and procedures of the Commission. Therefore, the institution must provide evidence that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to ensure that in the future it complies with applicable

Criteria and Commission policies and procedures related to substantive change. Further explanation of the Commission's concerns will be sent in a subsequent letter from the Executive Director."

- August 10, 2000 letter from James T. Rogers to Dr. Charles W. Steger (Appendix 1D). Dr. Rogers forwarded a statement from the Committee on Criteria and Reports regarding its June 2000 action on the university's addendum to the First Follow-up Report. In its statement the Committee indicated that, "It is the Committee's judgment that the material provided does not adequately respond to Dr. Rogers' request and does not provide adequate information regarding ongoing compliance with *the Criteria for Accreditation*. The reference to Dr. Rogers' letter of request was for "complete descriptions of those substantive changes addressing all elements in the COC prospectus outline (to be provided by staff)." The Committee further stated that, "Fortunately, there is time to rectify the situation regarding Recommendation 1 prior to the September 20, 2000 reporting date. For the "new programs" identified above, which do not require "prior approval", **only notification is required**, not complete descriptions."

On July 26 Dr. David Ford, Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs and COC delegate for the university wrote Dr. Rogers seeking concurrence with the list of programs for which the university is responsible to present a prospectus on unreported substantive changes to the Committee on Criteria and Reports for their consideration with the Second Follow-up Report due on September 20, 2000. In this letter Dr. Ford clarified three areas listed on the earlier Roster of Distance Delivered Programs added since 1994.

- The proposed Masters in Natural Resources is not developed sufficiently to submit it as a substantive change but it will be submitted at the appropriate time.
- The coursework offered at the center for European Studies and Architecture is only one semester in a 10-semester degree program. The center has been a Virginia Tech site for many years and was described in the University's Self-Study report.
- The Reynolds Homestead in Critz, Virginia is not a new Virginia Tech site. It has been a continuing education site of the university for many years and described in the 1996-1998 Self-Study. Its connection to *Net.Work.Virginia*, the statewide ATM network, provides the site with the capability to participate in course offerings through two-way interactive video conferencing. The university has been involved in technology-based distance delivery of degree programs since 1983 and of courses prior to that date.

That list and the letter are included as Appendix II.

On August 10, 2000 Dr. Rogers responded to Dr. Ford's July 26 letter with a letter to Dr. Steger indicating his willingness to "reply with my best professional judgment" but clarifying that "final decisions in our peer-review process are made by members of the Commission." (Appendix 1J). In his response Dr. Rogers indicated that the university need only to provide summary notifications for the three "New programs" and for the 1999 Master's in Information Technology. For the M.S. and Ph.D. in Computer Engineering, Dr. Rogers indicated that the University had already provided notification to the Commission.

Based on Dr. Rogers' guidance, the University's desire to be fully compliant with the *Criteria* and the University's desire to demonstrate its continuing good faith in seeking to comply with the Committee on Criteria and Reports decisions regarding the University's compliance with the *Criteria*, the University has submitted: notification and complete prospectuses for all new degree programs since 1994 in accordance with Substantive Change Procedure B, notification and complete prospectuses for all expanded programs through distance learning since 1994 in accordance with Substantive Change Procedure C - Procedure Two, and documentation of the

previous notification and response to the Commission on the M.S. and Ph.D. in Computer Engineering programs. Second notification letters from Dr. Steger of new degree programs can be found in Appendix 1K. Notification letters from Dr. Steger of expanded programs through distance learning can be found in Appendix 1L. The complete set of prospectuses for both new and expanded programs accompany this report. Documentation of the prior approval and response of the new M.S. and Ph.D. degree in Computer Engineering is included in Appendix 1M.

As indicated earlier, the Committee on Criteria and Reports cited the University at its June meeting for “failure to comply with the following section of the Criteria: Section 1.2 (Principles and Philosophy of Accreditation – Application of the Criteria).” Further the university “is requested to submit a Progress Report due September 20, 2000, addressing the following section of the *Criteria*:

Section 1.2 (Principles and Philosophy of Accreditation –Application of the Criteria)

The institution implemented substantive changes in violation of the *Criteria* for Accreditation and applicable policies and procedures of the Commission. Therefore, the institution must provide evidence that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to ensure that in the future it complies with applicable *Criteria* and Commission policies and procedures related to substantive change. Further explanation of the Commission’s concerns will be sent in a subsequent letter from the Executive Director.”

While the University sought to comply in good faith with the *Criteria* it became apparent that improved administrative procedures were needed to insure that compliance with the *Criteria* with respect to substantive change was needed. On August 30, 2000 Dr. Peggy Meszaros, Senior Vice President and Provost implemented an Administrative Directive for Reporting Substantive Changes to SACS. This Directive was distributed to all College Deans, Academic Department Heads and Extended-Campus Directors and became effective immediately. The Directive provides the *Criteria* statement regarding substantive change, presents the Commission on Colleges’ definition of substantive change, provides examples of substantive change from the Commission On Colleges *Policies, Procedures and Guidelines*, and outlines procedures for notifying the Commission and for preparing appropriate prospectuses. A copy of the Administrative Directive is included in Appendix 1N.

The success of the Administrative Directive is apparent in that the Associate Provost for Administration, the Director of the Institute for Distance and Distributed Learning and the Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs - who serves as the University’s liaison/delegate to the Commission - have each received inquiries regarding potential substantive changes by program areas. An example of notification to the Commission on Colleges of a new site in the Richmond area is further evidence that the Administrative Directive is working. (Appendix 1O).