Policy and Procedures for Establishment of New Schools at Virginia Tech

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

No. 6150

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Policy Owner:
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Affected Parties:
Undergraduate
Graduate
Faculty
Staff
Other

1.0 Purpose

Consideration of proposals to establish the School of the Arts and the School for Public and International Affairs followed a process informed by practices at other institutions but not formally codified. All parties will benefit from making more explicit the criteria and process to evaluate such proposals. The Board of Visitors requested that criteria be developed for both establishment of new "schools" at Virginia Tech and their subsequent evaluation, and to define a process for approval.

2.0 Policy

2.1 Definition

A *school* is defined as an academic unit that has a special curricular/programmatic function and identity with research and outreach components as appropriate. Schools may have varying levels of budgetary, programmatic, and administrative independence. Although a separate administrative structure is not required, administrative and reporting relationships must be clearly defined. If a school administrator is appointed, this position will typically be designated a *director.*

2.2 Criteria for Establishing Schools Within or Among Colleges

Several basic criteria are required for consideration in creating a new school, whether the new entity will be wholly a part of one college or will involve departments or subunits in several colleges. These criteria are:

1. Creation of the school is consistent with the goals and objectives of the university.
2. The new school will usually consist of more than one department or subunit and must have a critical mass of faculty and students.
3. There must be a strong curricular/programmatic justification for creation of the new organizational entity.
4. A significant university benefit can be anticipated, such as:
    - The school will significantly improve the quality and integration of the curriculum.
    - The curricular advances will result in the generation of additional opportunities for research, service, outreach, and/or development.

5. The discipline focus of the new entity should have unique features that are not adequately addressed by the existing structure(s) because of one or more of the following:

   - The interdisciplinary nature of the program(s) or curricula

   - The professional nature of discipline(s)

   - The traditional treatment at comparable institutions

   - The exceptional strength or national reputation of programs

All criteria must be met, although not all elements of the fourth and fifth criteria are required.

3.0 Procedures

3.1 Review and Approval Process

The Pre-proposal. Preparation and review of a pre-proposal is the first step in considering the creation of a new school. The pre-proposal is a brief description and rationale for the new school (approximately five pages). Areas addressed should include:

1. How the proposed school meets each of the basic criteria above.
2. The anticipated effects on teaching, research, outreach/service, and development efforts.
3. The resources that will be required to establish and operate the school, both short-term and long-term, and the extent to which the school will be self-supporting or will require additional university or college resources to maintain and grow. Indicate sources of funding.
4. The expected impact on the parent college(s) or other related units.
5. Why the anticipated benefits are unlikely to be achieved within the current organizational structure and how the proposed structure accomplishes the objectives outlined.

The pre-proposal should first be reviewed with the relevant departmental faculty, heads, and college dean(s). If favorably reviewed, the dean(s) and the school supporters will discuss the pre-proposal with the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs and the Dean of the Graduate School. They will make a recommendation to the Provost. If the pre-proposal appears to have merit, the Provost will share it with the Deans' Council and request their response before making a decision to proceed. The Provost will determine whether or not a full proposal should be developed for serious consideration by the university community.

The "Full" Proposal. The full proposal (hereinafter referred to as the "proposal") for establishment of a new school should follow the outline provided by the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost.

Steps in the Review of the Proposal:

1. *Departmental review*. The proposal should be reviewed and approved by the faculty in the participating departments and supported by the heads.

2. *College-level review*. The college curriculum committee and the dean should review and approve the proposal. If more than one college is involved, each must review and approve the proposal.

3. *Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies and the Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies*. Supporters for the school should submit the proposal to both CUSP and CGSP for

review and approval . (This presumes that the new school entity has the potential to incorporate programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.) Supporters will be invited to present the proposal to commission members and to respond to questions. It is expected that these discussions may lead to revisions of the proposal. The Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs and the Dean of the Graduate School are expected to play a lead role in working with the commissions and supporters in this process. If approved, the resolution calling for creation of the new school is forwarded to University Council.

4. *University Council.* University Council receives the resolution and votes to accept or reject on the second reading.

5. *Provost, President, and Board of Visitors.* Approval by University Council is a recommendation for favorable action to the President. If the school proposal has the support of the Provost and President, it will be presented to the Board of Visitors for approval.

6. *State Council for Higher Education.* Creation of new organizational entities must be approved by the State Council.

3.2 Evaluation Of Schools For Continuation

Schools will be evaluated on a five-year cycle in a manner consistent with all academic units on campus. The evaluation will require a self-assessment of accomplishments by school representatives and an external panel review. Written reports from each group will be forwarded to the dean(s) of the participating college(s), who will discuss the evaluations with the school leadership prior to preparing a recommendation to continue or disestablish the school. The recommendation of the dean(s) and supporting materials will be forwarded to the Provost for final approval.

The external panel shall be appointed by the dean(s) of the participating college(s) and will consist of five members. Panel members will be drawn from departments not included within the colleges, members of the respective dean's office(s), and at least one faculty member external to Virginia Tech but from a comparable school located at a peer university.

3.2.1 Evaluation Criteria

Reviews will be guided by the school's objectives and implementation plan, as well as by the relationship of the school's goals to the University Plan. Demonstrable evidence of accomplishments must be included in both the internal and external reviews. The evaluation will emphasize the degree to which the school has met the criteria and benefited the institution, with evidence such as active involvement of a critical mass of interdisciplinary faculty and students; contributions to enriching the education of students; effective interdepartmental collaboration with respect to teaching, research, and public service activities; and increased access to external resources. In addition, the review will address issues of administrative effectiveness and efficiency and fiscal management.

4.0 Definitions

5.0 References

6.0 Approval and Revisions

Approved April 21, 1997 by the Board of Visitors.

- Revision 1
  Updated April 23, 2002 – minor editorial changes and changes to position titles.

- Revision 2
  Technical update to reflect changes to position titles. Reviewed by the university registrar.

  Approved March 25, 2022 by the Vice President for Policy and Governance, Kim O'Rourke.

APPENDIX

Outline for School Proposal

1. Proposed name
2. Proposed participating departments or units
3. Proposed effective date of the organizational change
4. Proposed mission
   - Describe the mission and purpose of the proposed school and its relationship to Virginia Tech's mission.
   - Describe the goals and objectives for the school and relate these to the University's goals and objectives.
   - Describe the benefits that are sought by creating the new organizational structure.
5. Proposed organizational structure:
   - Describe how the proposed school would be structured as an organizational unit within the University. Include organizational charts that illustrate reporting relationships for the proposed school.
   - Describe the internal organizational or administrative structure proposed for the school. Describe the relationships between the school leadership and the dean(s), and among the heads of the participating departments and the school leadership. Include descriptions of the duties and responsibilities of senior administrators within the school. Make clear the proposed locus of control for personnel and budgetary decisions.
   - Describe changes to the standard college review and decision making processes for promotion and tenure and annual evaluation if any changes are proposed or anticipated.
   - Identify any additional resources needed to create the administrative organization of the proposed school and provide a justification for these resources.
     - Will the school require an additional financial/budget officer?
     - Will the school require a development officer?
     - Will the school require an information officer?
     - Will the school require associate or assistant directors?
     - What additional staff resources and operating budgets will be required to support any new positions?
   - Develop a proposed operating budget for the school that reflects both current operations and any new financial resources required to create the school.
6. Describe the academic programs (including instruction, research, and outreach) that would be offered or conducted by the proposed school. If recent academic program review documents are available, they may be submitted to respond to the relevant questions below.
   - Describe the program priorities for the school in terms of its instruction, research, and outreach missions.
   - Using historical enrollment data and enrollment projections, describe the past and projected enrollments in the departments that will be part of the proposed school. Relate these data to overall University trends.
   - Describe how the creation of the school will affect faculty workload and productivity in the component departments.
   - Describe the programs offered and trends in degrees awarded for these programs.

- List and describe any anticipated major changes to the academic programs -- such as new degree programs, options or concentrations to be proposed; merger of programs/degrees; or discontinuance of degrees/programs. (Proposed changes to academic programs would need to be reviewed separately through usual governance procedures.) Estimate the effects on enrollment and resources if such changes were implemented.
- Describe changes in the nature, quantity, or interdisciplinarity of the research, scholarship, creative expression or artistic performances of faculty in the component departments which might be anticipated by establishment of the school.
- Describe changes in the nature, quantity, or interdisciplinarity of the outreach and continuing education of faculty in the component departments which might be anticipated by establishment of the school.

7. Proposed Evaluation Criteria
    - Using the general guidelines provided in the policy document, state the evaluation criteria that will be used to assess the effectiveness of the new school in achieving the benefits that are sought by its creation.

8. Provide any additional materials or information pertinent to the proposal.