




## PRESIDENTIAL POLICY MEMORANDUM NO. 291

**To:** All Virginia Tech Faculty and Graduate Students  
**From:** Timothy D. Sands   
**Date:** April 6, 2015  
**Subject:** Graduate Continuous Enrollment

**Approved by the Commission on Graduate Studies & Policies:**  
**Approved by the University Council:**  
**Approved by the President:**  
**Effective Date:**

**February 18, 2015**  
**April 6, 2015**  
**April 6, 2015**  
**Upon Approval**

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University Council approved a resolution on graduate continuous enrollment.

Following is the text of the resolution.

**WHEREAS**, graduate students normally remain continuously engaged in their academic work from initial enrollment until graduation; and

**WHEREAS**, several important purposes are served by requiring graduate students to remain continuously enrolled at the University until graduation. These include, (1) ensuring that students remain current in their discipline; (2) encouraging timely graduation; (3) improving graduation rates by preventing students from drifting away from their studies before receiving a degree; (4) ensuring that the University receives official recognition and credit for mentoring as well as for other use of University resources by graduate students; (5) encouraging graduate students to remain focused on their academic studies and research; and

**WHEREAS**, the current Virginia Tech continuous enrollment policy lacks an enforcement mechanism; and

**WHEREAS**, because of the lack of an enforcement mechanism, graduate students can fail to enroll for two consecutive semesters with no consequences, even without applying for a leave of absence or otherwise notifying the Graduate School; and

**WHEREAS**, some graduate students in fact do fail to maintain continuous enrollment, sometimes making significant use of University resources while not enrolled; and

**WHEREAS**, faculty, academic departments, and the University as a whole deserve to receive official credit for work done mentoring graduate students throughout their tenure; therefore be it

**RESOLVED**, that the following shall be the official policy of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University:

1. Except as provided below, graduate students at Virginia Tech are required to be continuously enrolled at the University from the time of initial matriculation in a degree program until graduation.
2. Students satisfy the continuous enrollment requirement by enrolling in a minimum of three credit hours in all Spring and Fall semesters until they graduate.
3. Students approved for in absentia status or who are participating in a Cooperative Education Program are deemed to satisfy the continuous enrollment requirement even when enrolling in fewer credits than specified above.
4. Individual graduate programs may seek the approval of the Graduate School to temporarily or permanently exempt some or all of their students from this policy. Such exemptions may be granted to programs that are dominated by distance learning, to programs that are specifically directed at part-time students, to salaried employees qualifying under University Policy No. 4800, or for other appropriate reasons.
5. Graduate students who will need to break their continuous enrollment can do so either by applying for a leave of absence or by participating in programs and activities approved by the Graduate School that require absence from the University.

Students who fail to follow this process will be resigned from the University by the Graduate School, and will then need to apply for readmission in order to continue their studies. Readmission requires a positive recommendation from each student's home academic unit, and is not guaranteed.

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