GREATER WASHINGTON, D.C. METRO AREA SUPPORT SERVICES ASSESSMENT

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND NEXT STEPS

APRIL 2020
As Virginia Tech continues to evolve, grow, and align its academic programs and activities across the Greater Washington, D.C., metro area, it is important that the institution is organized and positioned to deliver the highest quality services possible in the most efficient, effective, and consistent manner. Towards these ends, over the last two years, leaders from across the university have explored different options for creating university level integrated support models to best serve all faculty, staff, and students in the D.C. area. Their efforts involved initial data collection, assessment of various service delivery models, and other activities focused on developing an effective strategy to enhance support services in the region. To advance this initial work and gather more information about the current state of decentralized support service delivery in the D.C. area, Executive Vice President and Provost Cyril Clarke and Senior Vice President and Chief Business Officer Dwayne Pinkney commissioned an assessment of service delivery. It focused on a wide-range of functional and service areas across the enterprise and if/how they are delivered at six sites in the D.C. area.

**ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW**

- **Functional/service areas:** Enrollment Services (Admissions, Bursar, Financial Aid, Immigration, Registrar, Veterans); Equity and Accessibility; Facilities (Building management); Finance; Faculty Support and Development; Human Resources; IT Services; Library; Mail Services; Parking and Transportation; Procurement; Research (Sponsored Programs, Secure Research); Safety and Security; Student Services (Career, Dean of Students, Housing, International, Physical and Mental Health, Recreation and Wellness, Services for Students with Disabilities, Student Conduct).

- **Sites:** D.C. Humane Rescue Alliance (D.C.), Marion Equine Medical Center (Leesburg), Northern Virginia Center (Falls Church), Occoquan Water Monitoring Laboratory (Manassas), Virginia Tech Research Center (Arlington), Washington Alexandria Architecture Center (Alexandria).

Segal Consulting was hired to conduct the assessment over a two-month period through a series of interviews with a range of stakeholders in the D.C. and Blacksburg areas. A total of 98 faculty, staff, and students in the D.C. area were interviewed, including a few adjunct faculty. A total of 36 academic program leaders and staff in Blacksburg were interviewed, including a few deans and vice provosts.
Segal Consulting’s primary findings, recommendations, and suggested next steps are organized under the following themes.

- Administrative and Operational Support Services
- Academic and Student Support Services
- Awareness, Alignment, and Connectedness
Primary Findings

Basic services are provided by scarce local resources, largely transactional in nature, and inconsistent across sites and with main campus which leads to variable service quality and higher levels of institutional risk, and in some cases, barriers to collaboration and integration.

Segal Recommendation

To address these challenges, the university should engage in an organized and facilitated effort to reimagine, add critical administrative and operational support services, and bolster delivery across the region, including the future Innovation Campus. Specifically, Segal recommends that a new service delivery model be developed that includes the following:

- Access to human resource and equity and accessibility services to all faculty and staff throughout the region that fill basic gaps and meet the following identified needs: employee relations, title IX, professional development and training; more robust on-boarding and orientation; meaningful recruitment and retention activities.
- A standard and common approach to creating, offering, and delivering services across the region for the following function/service areas: IT services, parking, mail, building maintenance.
- A procurement strategy to improve standards/control and to reduce costs through leveraged purchasing power.
- A strategy for delivering professional safety and security across all sites in the region.

Suggested Next Step

Commission a team to engage in an organized and facilitated effort to reimagine and bolster the delivery of administrative and operational services across the region.
### Functional/Services Areas:

- Enrollment Services (Admissions, Bursar, Financial Aid, Immigration, Registrar, Veterans)
- Faculty Support and Development
- Library
- Research (Sponsored Programs, Secure Research)
- Student Services (Career, Dean of Students, Housing, International, Physical and Mental Health, Recreation and Wellness, Services for Students with Disabilities, Student Conduct)

### Primary Findings

Basic services are provided but a wide range of co-curricular and other support services are not available locally; faculty and students are feeling underserved with a widely different experience than their counterparts in Blacksburg.

### Segal Recommendation

To address these gaps and critical needs, the University should engage in a concerted effort to design and develop a comprehensive approach that provides a rich set of services and programs to students and faculty. Specifically, Segal recommends:

- Student counseling, including clear and immediate access to mental and behavioral health services.
- A full range of services to help students navigate university resources and the respective local communities at each site.
- Enhanced support for initial and continued onboarding of international students into the University, community, and country.
- Services that address the unique needs military veterans, including educational benefits
- Programs that create opportunities for graduate students to collaborate professionally and connect socially.
- Programs that help to create inclusive learning environments and those that that celebrate or recognize diverse cultures and people.
- Provision for graduate students in the region to regularly provide input into their unique needs and circumstances.
- Devising an approach for improving pre- and post-award sponsored programs services
- Increasing faculty support and development opportunities.

### Suggested Next Step

Commission a team to engage in a concerted effort to design and develop a comprehensive range of services for all students in the region.
Primary Findings

Additionally, there are opportunities to elevate awareness of D.C. area academic programs, improve and create an environment that facilitates integration and encourages collaboration, and increase connectedness of existing D.C. area faculty, staff, and students to the Virginia Tech community and future plans for the region.

Segal Recommendation

To take advantage of these opportunities, the university should invest in and develop strategies and activities to enhance intra- and inter-regional awareness, alignment and connectedness. Specifically, Segal recommends the following:

- Create a sustained strategic marketing plan for academic programs in the region.
- Create new approaches and structures that enable, promote, and stimulate multi-disciplinary collaboration, integration, and partnership within the university.
- Increase communication across the various sites through new strategies and approaches.
- Create, encourage and promote opportunities for D.C. area faculty, staff, and students to engage in cultural, social and other informal gatherings and events.
- Increase the frequency of communication about institutional priorities, strategies, and activities for the D.C. area.
- Increase the visible presence of university leaders (administrative and academic, university-level and department-level) in the region.
- Develop strategies and activities to promote, elevate, and stimulate higher levels of employee engagement in the region.

Suggested Next Step

Use the emerging organizational structures in the region to prioritize and recommend solutions that focus on creating strategies, approaches, opportunities and plans to enhance awareness, alignment, and connectedness within the D.C. area and the broader Virginia Tech community.
Administrative and Operational Support Services

The assessment findings provided an overview and critical insights on the current state of administrative and operational services in the region. Presently, the delivery of services varies significantly by site and/or by unit, and there are multiple service providers, technologies, practices, and standards in place. By addressing the disjointed nature of administrative and operational services in the D.C. area, the university can improve the quality, accessibility, consistency, and efficiency of services for faculty, staff, and students, regardless of location or discipline. In order to address the various specific findings raised by Segal, five subcommittees have been created. The subcommittees are focused on 1. Administrative Services; 2. Facilities Management; 3. Parking and Transportation; 4. Safety and Security; and 5. IT Services. Each is led by a central, functional leader, except for the cross-functional administrative services subcommittee which is led by a member of the Organizational Excellence team. See below for a short description of the subcommittee's focus and chair.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcommittee</th>
<th>Services Addressed</th>
<th>Chair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Services</td>
<td>Range of services in the following functional areas: Equity and Accessibility, Finance (Controller, Procurement, Hokie Passport), Human Resources, Mail Services</td>
<td>Lauren Bulka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities Management</td>
<td>Building maintenance and management</td>
<td>Chris Kiwus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT Services</td>
<td>Broad range from help-desk to instructional &amp; research support</td>
<td>Ken McCrery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation &amp; Parking</td>
<td>Intra- and Inter-regional transportation, parking, transit options, etc.</td>
<td>Jeri Baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and Security</td>
<td>Police, Safety and Security, Emergency Management, Threat Assessment, Environmental Health and Safety, etc.</td>
<td>Kevin Foust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The subcommittees expect to make recommendations on a rolling basis, however the majority of this work phase will likely wrap up in fall 2020.
Academic and Student Support Services
These assessment findings were critical in informing and enhancing Academic and Student Support Services planning efforts already underway. Addressing these needs requires the engagement of a number of senior management areas across the institution. And future growth will mean that students will have opportunities to connect locally and more directly with specific departments. These efforts are being led by representatives from the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, including senior leaders and team members from the Graduate School, Undergraduate Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, University Registrar, Student Affairs, University Libraries, Learning Systems Innovation and Effectiveness, and Academic Resource Management, as well as representatives from various colleges, who are all working together to develop a comprehensive suite of services that include those highlighted in the findings for students and faculty in the region. This working group, known as the Academic Programs and College Operations Delivery Team, was originally established to support the Innovation Campus efforts but has since evolved to focus on the region as a whole. The addition of services is expected as soon as fall 2020 and will continue to grow and expand as the number of programs and students in the region expands. These services will be delivered locally but in close coordination with the primary Blacksburg unit in order to facilitate integration and maintain consistency.

Awareness, Alignment, and Connectedness
Virginia Tech will use the emerging organizational structures in the region to prioritize and recommend solutions that focus on creating strategies, approaches, opportunities and plans to enhance awareness, alignment, and connectedness within the D.C. area and the broader Virginia Tech community. The creation of the D.C. area resource website and routine updates in the VT Daily News Campus Notices are examples of efforts already undertaken. In addition, we may leverage existing working groups and teams already focused on related activities in the Greater Washington, D.C. metro area, or establish new initiatives and/or groups to advance awareness, alignment, and connectedness across the region.