



**Virginia Western Community College
SITUATIONAL/NEEDS ANALYSIS**

October 5, 2007

Introduction

The Situational/Needs Analysis is the result of five months' work by the Situational/Needs Analysis and Data Analysis task forces of Virginia Western's Strategic Planning Council.

Situational/Needs Analysis

Task Force Members

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Overview

Virginia Western Community College is embarking upon a multiphased and new strategic planning process, ***Vision 2013***, that will focus on strategic initiatives from 2008 to 2013. The College has engaged Ms. Susan Kelly, Vice President of Institutional Advancement at Valencia Community College, Orlando, FL, to provide consultation to the College regarding its strategic planning process.

In December 2006, the Situational/Needs Analysis and Data Analysis task forces were charged by the President and Steering Team to:

- Identify a taxonomy to determine relevant qualitative and quantitative data to assist the College in analyzing the data
- Contract with Mr. John Hull, Regional Economic Resources Planner for the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, to collect hard data for the Situational/Needs Analysis
- Conduct external and internal focus groups and surveys to gather additional qualitative data
- Assess and interpret data and draft a narrative Situational/Needs Analysis that is focused on needs (gaps in results) and analysis of both Virginia Western's and the community's situations, and present the analysis and relevant data to the Steering Team, Planning Council, and College community for review

Taxonomy

During January -February 2007, the Situational/ Needs Analysis Task Force,

Planning Council, and Steering Team selected the standard taxonomy for external use from the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP):

Societal/Cultural
Political/Legal
Competition
Technology
Economic

The College's organizational chart was used to sort data for internal use. Four questions were also developed to collect and sort internal data.

Internal Question #1

How does Virginia Western invite or restrict access to higher education?

Internal Question #2

How is Virginia Western perceived by students regarding access to the College and their experiences while attending Virginia Western?

Internal Question #3

How do the experiences and characteristics of successful and unsuccessful students differ, beginning with their initial contact with Virginia Western?

Internal Question #4

How do our fiscal, facility, technological, and human resource capabilities and financial aid resources support and/or hinder students in meeting their learning goals?

The Situational/Needs Analysis is organized and presented in terms utilizing the SCUP taxonomy and the four questions that comprise Virginia Western's taxonomy.

Approach and Strategy

The Steering Team, Planning Council, and Situational/Needs Analysis Task Force identified and compiled a list of quantitative and qualitative data related to the taxonomy. On April 27, 2007, Mr. John Hull compiled the hard data and created a report entitled “Initial Investigation of Data and Trend Analysis in Support of Virginia Western Community College’s Strategic Planning Process.”

During March through April 2007, the Situational/Needs Analysis Task Force conducted focus groups with business, education, and community groups in Roanoke City, Roanoke County, Salem, Franklin County (Smith Mountain Lake and Rocky Mount), and Botetourt County. The Task Force was unable to secure enough individuals to participate in a focus group for Craig County. Focus groups were also conducted for faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). Faculty, staff, community, and student surveys were also conducted.

The Data Analysis Task Force studied and reviewed all data compiled by the Situational/ Needs Analysis Task Force with at least two, and in some cases three, members studying each set of data, with a final review by the Task Force as a collective team. The key points identified by the Task Force that are critical to future planning are located in this report under the heading **Key Current and Emerging Issues Impacting Virginia Western’s Future.**

A SWOT analysis was conducted by the Planning Council and Steering Team on August 1, 2007, after reviewing the drafted Situational/Needs Analysis.

Respecting Team Work

The first version of the Situational/Needs Analysis was drafted by a four-person volunteer writing team for consideration by the Planning Council and Steering Team on July 31, 2007. In August–September 2007, faculty, staff, and representatives of the student body and the community had the opportunity to review the document. Questions were included at the end of each section to stimulate thinking and discussion, and thoughts relating to the questions and the document were shared. The writing team finalized the document, taking into consideration all feedback received.

Members of the writing team included Marilyn Herbert-Ashton, Rachelle Koudelik-Jones, Avis Quinn, and Walter Sabin. The writing team extends a sincere thank you to Nancy Francisco for proofreading the Situational/Needs Analysis.

Key Current and Emerging Issues Impacting Virginia Western's Future

1. College costs and access

Community college tuition costs are up an average 41 percent over the past five years (College Board, *Trends in Pricing 2006*). Virginia Western's costs will continue to rise, while state funds will be inadequate to meet identified needs. Virginia Western must continue to seek alternative funding through gifts, fundraising, grants, and revenue-generating activities.

Four-year college admissions are undergoing change as statewide affirmative actions are having increased success and early admission is being eliminated by many colleges and universities (Harvard being the first university to do so). These changes may create more articulation opportunities with community colleges (*SCUP Trends in Higher Education*, December 2006).

2. Green industry boom

Futurist Michael Milken identifies energy as well as education as the two most pressing issues of the decade (*NCMPR Counsel*, April 2007). Over the next 15 years, it is projected that the alternative fuel industry will employ several times more people than the petroleum industry. Green is being demanded by consumers: green products, alternative fuels for vehicles, and geothermal heating for homes. Community colleges are in an excellent position to provide training and retraining of new and older green enterprises and workers. With increasing pressure to "operate green," the College must take this into consideration while renovating and undergoing future building projects (*SCUP Trends in Higher Education*, December 2006).

3. Services and skills for the baby boomers

Over the next 12 years, 78 million baby boomers (29% of the population) will leave the workforce, causing a major shift in its worker base and earnings distribution. The Roanoke MSA continues to age, creating boomerang opportunities such as "encore careers," expanding lifelong learning centers, and creating revenue-generating service programs. The aging population will need more health care, thus the need for health care workers and continued growth of health care programs.

4. Improving retention and graduation rates will continue to challenge Virginia Western and our students

Virginia Western will continue to see interest from the community and area school systems related to improving high school graduation rates and college readiness. The College will also need to continue to explore and develop measures to improve its graduation and retention rates.

Community college students are three to four times more likely than four-year college students to be at risk for not completing their education (*Keeping America's Promise*, Education Commission of the United States, and the League for Innovation in the Community College, 2004). As a large number of first-time Virginia Western students will struggle, the College must assess and make informed decisions about why this is happening.

5. Increased needs by the community and demands for accountability

Employers expect employees to readily learn and adapt to new technologies, work

well with diverse populations, and readily analyze and solve problems.

There will be an increased emphasis for public accountability, adding to the need to collect, analyze, and report data/trends to constituents.

Target industries for the Roanoke MSA include communication and entertainment, health care, and machinery and equipment manufacturing. Potentially emerging clusters in the region include finance and insurance, information technology and professional services, and chemicals and plastics (2005 Study by VCCS and VEC).

6. Managing crisis

In the advent of Hurricane Katrina, the shootings at Virginia Tech, and pandemic flu planning, it is expected that there must be better integration of disaster planning, with institution-wide crisis planning and management structures.

7. Generational learning changes

Learning by young students will continue to evolve and change, as effected by culture, technology, and student acceptance of constantly on-networking. Virginia Western must be able to adapt to these rapidly changing technologies as our students become more diverse in background and needs.

8. Communicating effectively

Communication methods, tools, and styles vary by culture and generation. Today's youth use text messaging, social networks, and instant messaging (IM) rather than email to communicate. The baby boomers tend to use email, the telephone, or written correspondence to communicate.

Virginia Western will need to consider which method(s) of communication will most quickly and inexpensively reach our constituents.

Societal/Cultural

Education is a driving force that causes shifts in society's values, perceptions, preferences, and behaviors. Consumers are time-starved, convenience-oriented, and better-living-conscious and often think in terms of reducing stress and simplifying their lives.

Demographics

Relative to the state as a whole, the population within Virginia Western's service area tends to:

- Be slightly older
- Contain a smaller population of minorities
- Exhibit lower educational attainment rates, especially at the baccalaureate level
- Face lower levels of unemployment
- Have a smaller population of individuals who speak English "less than well" and a larger proportion of individuals who speak only English within their homes
- Experience poverty levels that are comparable to the statewide average
- The City of Roanoke is the largest magnet for in-commuters

Projected Population

Data indicate that between 2003-2010, the Virginia Western service area may experience a demographically-driven increase of approximately 169 students or a 2.1 percent enrollment growth. There is an expected decline in the area's 15 to 19 and 30 to 49 populations. These age cohorts account for 63 percent of Virginia Western's enrollment. The 15 to 19 year old population varies significantly across the service area. Depending upon the magnitude, a positive increase in the enrollment rate for 15 to 19 year olds in growing counties including Botetourt and

Franklin, may be sufficient enough to overwhelm the effect of otherwise adverse population trends to yield a sufficient increase in enrollment. However, between 2010-2020, Virginia Western's service area is projected to experience a decline of 9,754 in its 15-19 population, which could significantly impact enrollment (*Virginia Western Community College Environmental Scan and Analysis*, published November 2004 by Mangum Economic Consulting, LLC).

Enrollment Trends

Virginia Western has experienced less FTES growth over the last five years (9.5%) than the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) 12.3%. Virginia Western's headcount has also decreased over the past five years, while actual fall enrollment headcounts have increased three percent over the same period of time. We are not retaining our fall students.

Developmental course enrollment has increased over the last ten years. Has the success rate of the developmental students increased?

Virginia Western's distance learning enrollment FTES' annualized growth has outpaced the VCCS over the last four years: 15.4% to 13.6%. Virginia Western should continue to grow its distance learning courses.

While there has been growth in dual enrollment over the past five years, the growth is lower at Virginia Western (9.4%) than for the VCCS as a whole (15.4%).

Workforce Development Services and Lifelong Learning growth has fluctuated

over the past five years. More data is needed to examine this growth pattern.

Retention and graduation rates for Virginia Western are comparable to those of the VCCS. Fall to fall retention and graduation rates are slightly lower than those of the VCCS on the whole. The College may want to consider placing more of a focus on fall-fall retention (Roanoke Valley-Allegheny Regional Commission, *Initial Investigation of Data and Trend Analysis in Support of Virginia Western Community College's Strategic Planning Process*. March 2007).

Employment Projections

The Virginia Employment Commission's (VEC) occupational employment projections indicate that the greatest demand for new workers will be in retail trade, food service, clerical and administrative support, health services, business administration, and transportation.

Much demographic data point to a trend of new markets for the business of Virginia Western. This includes a significant and growing market of nontraditional students seeking affordable and quality "higher education" opportunities.

Identified nontraditional college students and more traditional four-year-degree-bound college students are seeking "individualized attention" for success with their particular educational goals and objectives.

"Community College" has marketing and capacity building advantages over traditional colleges/universities, including being a bridge (via collaboration) between unmet community needs, traditional

institutions, and Workforce Investment Act initiatives. There is a significant niche for two-year, community colleges. Public perceptions still vary on the role of community colleges, and as more public education (marketing) occurs, trends indicate that they are responsive and proactive within their region.

For traditional and nontraditional students, Virginia Western has a societal/cultural identity of "stepping stone" toward educational goals, career/occupational goals, technical goals, and special interest goals (consumer/market-driven such as learning a craft or a new language, etc.). For parents and the financers of students/enrollees, Virginia Western is an affordable and cost-effective opportunity for nontraditional and transfer students to show that they have the "right stuff" to be successful in a higher education setting. There are also identified needs for developmental courses, which are a niche for Virginia Western, and better government funding (expanding capacities of education).

There is a call for more developmental courses including math, sciences, reading, and writing. Equally as important, Virginia Western is called upon to expand curriculum involving lifelong learning:

- Career and life planning
- Curriculum for being a better person, a more effective self-advocate, student, speaker, volunteer, nonprofit board member, etc.
- Opportunities for expanding capacities of workers via good basic and soft-skill training as well as customer relations skills

There seems to be a significant call for expanding marketing (public education) efforts. In addition to ensuring public

knowledge of Virginia Western's offerings and successes, it is also appropriate to call upon the community for help with identified social/cultural needs, as well as needs for success with strategic plans.

Strategies for impacting societal/cultural implications as well as enrollment, retention, and graduation rates include developing and replicating model programs for:

- Increasing capacities of new and existing workers who will be in greater demand for retail trade, food service, clerical and administrative support, business administration, and transportation
- Increasing capacities of workers at small businesses
- Increasing capacities of new and existing workers in the health care field
- Increasing capacities of new and existing workers in the fields of mathematics, science, and health technology (i.e., Anderson Hall modernizations)
- Investing resources so that waiting lists for admission to certain programs of study are eliminated (meeting market demands with consumer-driven services)
- Ensuring that Virginia Western students (enrollees) have smooth transitions into their next phase of life, be it better employment, a four-year degree, or regrouping that comes with paradigm shifts such as learning that college may not be the right choice at this time
- Differentiating and increasing capacities of those students who have the "right stuff" for success in college by expanding collaborations with other educational and training institutions including maximizing developmental courses
- Increasing the capacities of Virginia Western to better maximize its strong resourcefulness with adjunct faculty and better recognize when full-time faculty might better serve quality and student needs
- Increasing capacities of public school systems in the region to provide quality, consumer-focused (needs-based versus funder-focused) education and training services. Examples may include a continuum of community-based educational services beyond public school ages, model programs for transition-aged students beginning in the middle school years, etc.
- Increasing capacities of the region's community- and faith-based organizations whose missions include quality of life
- Increasing the capacities of minorities, underserved and underemployed, and cross-disability populations within the region
- Increasing capacities of and opportunities for nontraditional students, i.e., childcare, gerontology, accessible programs and facilities, and affordability for those who may be underemployed

Societal/Cultural Questions to Consider:

How can Virginia Western respond to a projected loss of the 15-19 population?

Which community needs should Virginia Western focus on over the next five years, and how will we know that we have made an impact?

Political/Legal

Federal Focus

The United States Secretary of Education's Commission on Higher Education, also known as the Spelling's Commission, released its final report in 2006. The report challenges traditional thinking about higher education and is calling for more accountability, requiring an increased focus on analysis, data-collection, and outcomes.

Areas of Interest

- **Accountability:** accreditation reform, new data collection systems, and outcomes tied to funding
- **Affordability:** financial aid reform and operational efficiency
- **Educational quality:** increased international emphasis, technology development, lifelong learning, and pedagogical curriculum
- **Increased access:** closing low income and minority participation gaps, reducing barriers to student mobility, and improving secondary-postsecondary transitions

Note: Virginia law mandates that higher education in Virginia must be accessible, affordable, of high quality, and offer sufficient programming to serve state needs.

State Funding

Although the recession of 2001 lasted a short period of time, it has taken a long time to bring funding back to late 1990's levels for higher education. There was a significant increase in support in the 2006-08 budget cycle. Increased global competition could be a factor in increased funding and may open the door for community colleges to receive unanticipated foundation funding.

Virginia's Transfer Grant Legislation

Recently landmark legislation, the first of its kind in the United States, was passed to award additional financial incentives to community college students who transfer to a four-year college or university.

The transfer grants will be available to students who begin their studies in Virginia's community colleges or Richard Bland College in the fall of 2007 and transfer to one of Virginia's public or private four-year colleges or universities after receiving their associate degree. The grants will amount to \$1,000 per year for students who graduate with a 3.0 grade point average and who demonstrate financial need by having expected family contributions of \$8,000 or less per year as calculated by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. An additional \$1,000 will be awarded to students who pursue undergraduate work in science, math, nursing, engineering, or teaching. This is a great opportunity for Virginia Western to promote, while helping students pay for college.

Dateline 2009 Virginia Community College System (VCCS) Strategic Goals

These goals will have funding implications for Virginia Western:

1. Serve at least 16,000 new students
2. Provide training each year for 225,000 individuals who choose noncredit training—an increase of nearly 80 percent
3. Rank in the top 10 percent of the nation's community college systems in rates of student graduation, retention, and job placement
4. Triple the number of graduates who successfully transfer to four-year institutions

5. Limit tuition to half of the average cost to attend a public four-year institution in the Commonwealth
6. Triple the number of high school students who take college courses and receive college credits -- raising the number from 14,000 to 45,000
7. Proactively secure private support to ensure the capacity to respond to the needs of the Commonwealth -- doubling the Virginia Community College foundations' holdings from \$75 million to \$150 million

State Council of Higher Education (SCHEV) for Virginia: Advancing Virginia: Access, Alignment, and Investment. The 2007-13 Strategic Planning for Higher Education (<http://www.schev.edu/reports/reportsindex.asp>. Accessed July 25, 2007).

SCHEV's Strategic Plan emphasizes access, alignment, and investment. Investment is focused on the four-year institutions as it focuses on enhancing research.

Goals

A. Access

1. Enhance access through P-16 curricular alignment
2. Enhance access through improved coordination of information

Affordability:

3. Enhance affordability through financial aid advocacy
4. Enhance affordability through education and investment incentives

B. Alignment

Enhance alignment with P-12 education:

5. Improve college readiness through strengthened P-16 cooperation and communication
6. Strengthen P-16 coordination through expanded data collection and analysis

Enhancing Alignment with Workforce Needs:

7. Support state workforce needs through strengthened participation in post-secondary education
8. Conduct a comprehensive economic impact study of higher education
9. Improve alignment between higher education and workforce needs

Enhancing Academic Quality:

10. Strengthen academic program quality and accountability through assessment

C. Investment

Enhancing research (more focused on four-year institutions):

11. Enhance research through investment in targeted consortia
12. Enhance research through investment and infrastructure

The College must continue to cultivate, develop, and grow relationships with the VCCS and local, state, and federal governments to remind them of Virginia Western's value to the community. Virginia Western's Economic Impact Study conducted in November 2004 demonstrated that, compared to four-year colleges and universities, Virginia Western saved the Commonwealth \$21 million in tax dollars in FY 2002. Furthermore, the dollar value of the increased workforce productivity generated by Virginia Western's education services was

approximately \$20 million per year (*Virginia Western Community College Contributes to the Roanoke Valley's Economic Future*, November 2004, Magnum Economic Consulting, LLC).

With continued legislative and public scrutiny, Virginia Western must focus on data analysis and collection and reporting it to the public. Changes in Commission on Colleges Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation criteria emphasize accountability and performance measures.

Question to Consider:

What issues should Virginia Western address to advance access, alignment, and investment of public and private dollars?

Competition

Almost half of all undergraduate students in the United States are enrolled in community colleges. For-profit institutions award at least 10 percent of all associate degrees, and their share of the two-year market is 28 percent. Despite paying higher tuition rates, this growth continues to occur (Hamm, 2004, "Going to College, Not What it Used to Be."

Keeping America's Promise. A joint publication of Education Commission of the States and League for Innovation in the Community College. Denver: Education Commission of the States).

Virginia Western should consider "lessons learned" from for-profit entities and may want to consider collaboration. Virginia Western has relationships with other educational entities, including K-12, and it is expected that these relationships will continue to grow.

Kent Farnsworth, a former community college president, wrote a commentary to ***The Chronicle for Higher Education*** highlighting four principles that community colleges could learn from for-profit institutions providing technical education. These include focusing on the client, who is the employer, while the student is the beneficiary of being able to get a job; greater professionalism, "coming dressed for the job"; adhering to and establishing competency standards; and emphasizing skills training (Farnsworth, K., Commentary – "The 4 Lessons That Community Colleges Can Learn From Non-Profit Institutions." ***The Chronicle of Higher Education***, October 27, 2006).

There has been a rapid increase in the number of students taking online courses and programs. More employers are accepting online degrees than ever before. In 2006-2007, the total distance learning enrollments (unduplicated headcount) was 27.6% (VCCS

<http://system.vccs.edu/vccsasr/Research/annualdl07.htm>. Accessed July 25, 2007).

In the ***Community Perception Report for Virginia Western Community College***, prepared by Sandra Golden & Associates in May 2007, it was cited that over 50 percent of respondents surveyed indicated an interest in online courses. Virginia Western should examine its own programming to see where additional online courses may be appropriate.

Financial aid availability and an increase in Pell Grant funding and student financial assistance programs will make it possible for students to be more selective, allowing them to choose colleges/universities with higher tuition and costs. Results from focus groups, student surveys, and the ***Community Perception Report for Virginia Western Community College*** indicate that students chose Virginia Western for its quality of instruction, value, and convenience. Virginia Western needs to continue to promote these factors in its marketing and recruitment efforts.

Questions to Consider:

To what degree are other educational institutions our competitors?

To what extent should we consider partnering with these institutions?

Technology

All forms of technology have the potential for being the most dramatic change force in the United States. The use of new machines has reduced the need for human workers, while increasing the need for a more educated and skilled workforce. This will impact Virginia Western as target industries for the service area include machinery and equipment manufacturing. It will be an ongoing challenge for the College to keep up with the developments of new machines and technologies. The College must continue to develop and enhance its partnerships with business and industry to provide leading-edge instruction. As financially feasible, the College must be committed to providing ongoing professional development to faculty and staff.

The **2006-07 Technology Plan** includes the completion of the campus wireless network, VWifi, website enhancements, and the implementation of an eCommerce system to allow the purchasing of books online and continued review and update of the Virginia Western's Business Impact/Risk Analysis and Disaster Recovery.

Enrollment (FTES) in distance learning classes increased 83.33% between 1999 and 2005. Distance learning students' FTES are 15.4% of the annual FTES for VWCC (VWCC, Department of Institutional Research and VCCS, 2007). It is expected that the distance learning program will continue to grow. However, the College must continue to invest in and provide, as financially feasible, professional development and opportunities to use and apply the ever-changing technology in the classroom and in distance learning settings. Whenever financially feasible, the technology in the classroom, computer laboratory, and office setting must be equipped with the latest technology.

The volume of information continues to grow exponentially, and the speed by which it is delivered continues to increase, causing increased numbers of people to be connected 24/7/365. It is imperative that communication planning and protocols be developed. The College's strategic planning process must serve as a guidance system for communication for the both the internal and external communities.

Many local universities are utilizing blogs, wikis, podcasts, streaming video, geomapping, and portal creation to reach students. Although Virginia Western is offering the first geomapping class this fall 2007, the College needs to continue to take advantage of other methods of technology to communicate with students. Recently, Virginia Tech had thousands of students sign up to receive instant messages on their cell phones or PDAs regarding safety bulletins and inclement weather announcements. The use of technology will continue to be a critical component in crisis planning and management.

The College must continue to invest in its website. According to Carnegie Communications, the web is considered to be the single most important tool in the college search process and will enhance the enrollment process (<http://www.universitybusiness.com/viewarticle.aspx?articleid=623&pf=1>. Accessed July 18, 2007). A content management system or other software to help organize the process may need to be considered.

According to the **Community Perception Report for Virginia Western Community College** April/May 2007, prepared by Sandra Golden & Associates, 89.50% of individuals between the ages of 17-65 responded that they do own a computer, and 79.39% of those with a computer said they have high speed Internet access. We are a society that is daily increasing in the use of technology. Any

observer mingling within the Roanoke MSA has to notice that not only are most people using cell phones, but many do not remove their blue-tooth connection to their cell phones.

Virginia Western has the forward thinking to utilize the technologies available today in creative ways. The opportunity is there to integrate the latest technologies into curricula and everyday work environments. With the advent of more impersonal technologies, Virginia Western will need to attend to building “human connections” with students. Consequently, team-oriented projects, project-based and cooperative learning, and collaborative work will become more important.

Questions to Consider:

How can Virginia Western best respond to the ever-changing technology needs and updates for both the internal and external communities?

What communication planning protocols need to be developed?

Economic

The Roanoke Valley's major economic strengths include:

- Diversified economy
- Not overly dependent on cyclical industries
- Service provider for Southwest Virginia
- Low unemployment rates
- Attractive tourist destination

With an increase in the Gross State Product in Roanoke of 4.3% and a lower cost of living, 91.7% of national average, (Global Insight) as well as an unemployment rate at or below the state level (VEC, VELMA, 2006), one might anticipate that funds would be available to support educational endeavors.

The greatest expected growth (VEC, Industry & Occupational Projections, 2002-2012) of job availability occupations are in protective services, health care support, health care practitioners, and technical occupations, as well as personal care and support occupations. Virginia Western has curricula that will address most of these fields, but consideration should be given to expansion. These numbers are most likely driven by the fact that between 2000 and 2010 there is an anticipated:

- Decrease of 519 persons in the 15 to 19 year old population in Roanoke County and the City of Salem
- Increase of 11,429 persons in the 20 to 29 age population with the largest increase (3,046) projected to occur in the City of Roanoke and Roanoke County (3,080)
- Decrease of 17,780 persons in the 30-49 year old population, most of which is expected to occur in Roanoke City and County

- Increase of 26,758 persons in the 50 and above population. This expected retirement age increase will occur in Roanoke County, Franklin County, Roanoke City and Botetourt County (***Virginia Western Community College Environmental Scan and Analysis***, November 2004, Mangum Economic Consulting, LLC).

The poverty rate for all people of the Roanoke MSA is slightly higher than in the Commonwealth but lower than the nation. Poverty rates for people in families and for married couples with children are lower in the Roanoke MSA than in the Commonwealth and nation. Of note, the City of Roanoke and Franklin County have poverty rates higher than the regional average (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2005).

With small businesses (under 20 employees) representing 83.5% of the employers hiring the majority of workers in the Roanoke Metropolitan Statistical Area (VEC, QCEW, 2nd Quarter, 2006), it is advantageous to continue to develop entrepreneurial programs in partnership with secondary schools, the arts community, and business and industry.

Taxable sales in Roanoke Valley have been fairly stagnant, especially when compared to those in the Commonwealth. Growth in the Roanoke Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is significantly lower than growth at the state level. Of note, Franklin County, home of Smith Mountain Lake, experienced a large increase in the number of yearly building permits annually, from 2000 to 2005, the largest increase in the Roanoke MSA (***Initial Investigation of Data and Trend Analysis in Support of Virginia Western Community College's Strategic Planning Process***, March 2007).

There is a significant problem in the Roanoke Valley in terms of underemployment. Underemployed individuals are not officially

counted as unemployed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. There are five types of underemployment including:

- Discouraged Workers – Individuals not counted in the labor force statistics as unemployed, but who are not employed, yet want and are available for work and have looked for employment in the past 12 months
- Marginally Attached Workers – Individuals who would be counted as discouraged workers except they are not currently looking for work for non-economic reasons such as lack of childcare or transportation issues
- Part-time Workers for Economic Reasons – Individuals who are working part-time but desire full-time work
- Multiple Job Holders – Individuals employed with more than one job
- Underutilized Workers – Workers who are in jobs that do not sufficiently use their skills or, alternatively, workers in jobs that underpay given the workers' contribution to input

With 10,455 underemployed persons in the Roanoke MSA (*VA Economic Development Partnership*, 4th Quarter, 2006), further education may not be a consideration. Education may even be counter-indicated. Some stated reasons included lack of childcare and transportation. Lack of childcare may be turned into an opportunity for Virginia Western with an onsite child/daycare program.

The population in the Roanoke MSA is increasing slightly. As stated earlier, there is a growing population age 50 and over. The

younger, more traditional college-age population appears to be leaving.

There is an opportunity to expand lifelong learning programs for populations that have more disposable income. There are also opportunities to work with underemployed or dislocated workers to strengthen the region's workforce. To do so will require the College to consider providing more resources for these learners and continued development of the partnership with the Western Virginia Workforce Development Board.

Questions to Consider:

Who does Virginia Western define as its target population?

Would changing the target population increase FTES?

Internal Question #1

How does Virginia Western invite or restrict access to higher education?

Sixty-eight percent of new jobs created between 1998-2008 require postsecondary training/education beyond high school, but will require less than a four-year degree (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor). According to the Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education, Hans Meeder reported that 83% of the workforce in 2003 who had only an associate in arts degree from a community college earned the same average income as workers with a bachelor's degree. The emerging mandate from the state and federal level is that community colleges must become the "career graduate" schools of the nation. The question is, are we prepared for this? Increasing access has never been more important for those we serve.

Virginia Western provides college access to our community.

In fall 2006, Virginia Western had the fifth highest enrollment in the VCCS and is the fourth largest college in the VCCS. It is the only public institution of higher education in the service area. One in four high school graduates enrolls at Virginia Western.

The College's international student population has been increasing about five percent per year. Currently, 240 to 250 international students attend Virginia Western.

From fall 2005 to spring 2007, there were 4,424 (unduplicated headcount) students enrolled in dual enrollment courses.

The average age of Virginia Western students in spring 2007 was 28.80.

Below is a chart highlighting student demographics:

Fall 2006 Student Profile			
Total	8,362 students	3,831 FTES	
Credit Load	77% part-time	23% full-time	
Gender	57% female	43% male	
Race	86% white	9% black	5% other
Curriculum Type	25% transfer	31% oc/tech	44% non-curricular
Age	39% under 20	30% age 20-29	31% age 30

(<http://www.vw.vccs.edu/factbook/FastFacts.html>. Accessed July 29, 2007).

Although Virginia Western's minority and ethnic population is small, each year it has been steadily growing.

Over the past five years, there have been major improvements and renovations on campus including Chapman, Duncan, and Webber Hall. However, facilities and classroom space are still a concern. Anderson Hall, which is home to health technology, mathematics and science programs, is in desperate need of renovation. The building has a thirty-year life span and is nearly forty years old. The laboratory space is limited and outdated. There is also a lack of classroom space throughout campus, much of which is attributed to the current renovations. Students have expressed concern that there are limited areas for large numbers of people to gather. Due to the size of the nursing program, classes are taught in Whitman Auditorium, which is the only facility on campus that can encompass the class size.

Virginia Western offers a variety of courses, but, based on the internal focus groups and student surveys, the College should consider the following:

- Increasing the frequency of course offerings
- Increasing the number of terms courses are offered

- Reducing the number of cancelled classes
- Increasing the number of our “flexible” courses including night, short-session, distance, hybrid, and weekend courses
- Better promotion of how these nontraditional courses are run in order to increase student success and retention

Night class enrollment has been declining, but distance enrollment has been increasing. Are students opting for distance classes, or are the night classes that are needed no longer available?

Our Doors are Opening Wider

There are over 22 articulation agreements, and with the passage of Virginia’s Transfer Grant legislation, this will increase opportunities to access higher levels of education and training. The College offers 23 associate degree programs and 54 certificate programs. Enrollment in distance learning classes increased 83% from 1999 to 2005 and continues to grow.

The College is attracting an increasing number of students from other service regions because of our extensive and nontraditional course offerings. See chart below.

Fall 2006 Students by Jurisdiction of Residence				
Locality	Population	Students	% of Pop.	% College
Bedford County*	63,000	354	0.6	4.2
Botetourt County	31,800	581	1.8	7.0
Craig County	5,140	107	2.1	1.3
Franklin County	49,900	703	1.4	8.4
Montgomery County*	87,900	152	0.2	1.8
Roanoke County	87,700	3,287	3.7	39.3
Roanoke City	92,900	1,825	2.0	21.8
Salem	24,700	916	3.7	11.0
Other*	-	429	-	5.1
Total	-	8,354	-	100.0

(<http://www.vw.vccs.edu/factbook/FastFacts.html>. Accessed July 29, 2007)

Students taking ESL classes are increasing. From fall 2005 to spring 2007, there were 81 students enrolled in ESL classes.

Virginia Western has increased the class options for nontraditional students including weekend, night, distance learning, and hybrid courses. For example, there is an online general studies curriculum. While the College must continue to expand course offerings for nontraditional students, it also needs to focus on providing access to College facilities that better fit the schedule of the nontraditional student. Support services are currently limited to weekday availability. Limited access to these facilities and services may make nontraditional students feel that they are not a part of the campus and the Virginia Western community.

Virginia Western offers comprehensive Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. By increasing promotion of these programs, developing career pathways and articulation agreements, and emphasizing the CTE programs for students not looking for a traditional four-year degree, we may gain a

broader student population and increase enrollments. Virginia Western must continue to develop CTE programs and let the community know that the College can develop courses and programs to fit the specific needs of the workforce.

The COMPASS placement testing process is important to appropriately place students for courses with prerequisites; however, there is limited or no testing space available outside of the Learning Technology Center (LTC) on the main campus.

The Honors Institute and articulation agreements with four-year institutions will continue to encourage academically strong students to consider Virginia Western as an alternative to entering a major university immediately after graduating from high school. The College must continue to pursue more articulation/transfer agreements. These agreements invite access to the College and will become increasingly more important as GPA and SAT standards for entrance into four-year institutions continue to rise.

Of increased concern is student retention. Retention rates are on the decline, and Virginia Western is sitting near the bottom of the VCCS colleges, based on fall to fall percentages. In order to improve retention, the internal focus groups state that it is important to track students while at Virginia Western and after they leave. By identifying students' goals as early as possible and placing the students into correct courses with the proper prerequisites, the students will be better prepared, more successful, and possibly easier to retain.

Currently, there is discussion underway in the Governor's office about a proposal to make community colleges responsible for adult education. The Governor's office is exploring measures to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the state's workforce training and adult education programs, which are

currently spread across several agencies including local school districts.

Although the College continues to work hard to invite college participation, significant barriers continue to restrict access for many potential students.

Barrier: College Affordability

Virginia Western is one of the most affordable college options in the area. However, tuition continues to rise and is expected to increase six percent over the next five years. This is a significant increase.

Frequently, for many potential students, an often confusing financial aid process provides an additional barrier. In addition, there may be scholarships or grants that these potential students may not be aware of. In spring 2007, of the 7,860 students enrolled, only 1,832 students or 23.3% were receiving financial aid. The College must continue to promote and provide information to students and faculty about financial aid, scholarship and grant opportunities, and the new transfer grant opportunities.

Barrier: Communication

Based on the results of the internal, external, alumni, and student focus groups and surveys, internal and external communication needs continued improvement. With ever-changing technology, this will continue to be a challenge for the College.

The perception of Virginia Western is very positive. A community college perception study was completed in May 2007 by Sandra Golden & Associates, experts in community college marketing. The report includes Virginia Western's market research findings. To gain a better understanding of the marketing process, the Golden's will be conducting an onsite workshop in fall 2007, and a college-wide marketing plan will be developed.

Barrier: The Front Door

Virginia Western may be losing students before they even enroll in classes.

Unfortunately, the College does not know the nature and extent of these barriers. Some sources indicate that the advising and customer service provided at proprietary career and technical colleges could be steering CTE students away from Virginia Western in favor of alternative educational opportunities.

Based on student surveys, customer service on our campus must be improved. Specific concerns included:

- Difficulty getting in contact with the correct person on campus
- Difficulty with the online registration process
- Misinformation provided at time of enrollment
- Extensive wait time when trying to be advised on campus

First contact with our students is extremely important. During peak registration, it has been reported that it takes about an hour and a half to complete the registration process.

The College utilizes "ability to benefit" cutoff scores to accurately place those students who are not yet ready for developmental English or mathematics; non-credit, pre-developmental courses are offered to assist these students in strengthening their background and to prepare for COMPASS placement testing.

As the developmental population is different from the population scoring below the ability to benefit, a large segment of the developmental population moves on to credit coursework successfully. It is, however, a growing population, and the College is

engaged in a variety of efforts to meet the needs of that group.

Question to Consider:

What steps do we need to take to enable students to make the jump from initial inquiry to enrollment and to success academically and/or in the workforce?

Internal Question #2

How is Virginia Western perceived by students regarding access to the College and their experiences while attending Virginia Western?

97% of our students would recommend Virginia Western as an institute of higher education to their friends and family. They were impressed with the quality of education, the preparation for a four-year degree, the affordability, faculty/staff, small classes, convenience, flexibility, campus, programs, and pass rates.

From the students' perspective, Virginia Western is very affordable compared to four-year colleges. There are excellent programs and curricula offered and excellent, caring faculty. The transfer opportunities are good, specifically the articulation agreements. Students state that we need to expand the programs and schools included in the articulation agreements. For first-time college students, it is nice to have a small, beautiful campus that is not intimidating. Virginia Western students state that this is a friendly campus that is convenient for both traditional and nontraditional students. There are various types of courses offered at flexible times that work for women with children at home, students with disabilities, and students with full-time jobs. This feedback was also confirmed in the May 2007 Virginia Western Community College Perception Study.

While the college provides excellent programs and faculty, there is limited space available in some of the high-demand fields, especially in the health technology programs. Laboratory space in the science laboratories is also limited.

It is apparent from recent surveys that students seem to know what is expected of them and know that they may need assistance or to put in large amounts of time outside of class in order to succeed. The challenge is

that a large percentage of students are not doing what they know is needed to be successful. For example, consider the following results from the 2005 CCSSE Report:

- 50% of Virginia Western students claim to spend 5 hours or less studying per week
- 36% of current students are not enrolled in, but plan to take developmental courses
- 4% of students are not enrolled in, but plan to take ESL courses

According to the student surveys and focus groups, students indicated they would like to:

- Have an updated library with more technology
- See an increase in the number of computer laboratories on campus, especially on the south side
- Have updated materials for research
- Have additional study/tutoring rooms
- Have a student activities center on campus
- See faculty and staff encourage younger students who may be intimidated by professors to seek out help

Recent graduates, as well as faculty and staff, have indicated that mandatory and proactive advising and counseling will help students to reach their goals and increase retention. Internal and external focus groups and surveys indicate that the College must continue to review/revise its advising and admission process.

Faculty who work most closely with the students in the classroom recognize that students:

- Do not get involved on campus outside of classes
- Do not understand what attending college entails
- Have a preconceived agenda and do not want to take prerequisite or developmental classes

Question to Consider:

How does the College go about expanding access to its most in-demand programs, given the limited availability of resources?

Internal Question #3

How do the experiences and characteristics of successful and unsuccessful students differ, beginning with their initial contact with Virginia Western?

Of concern is that while 70.2% of our students intend to complete a degree or a certificate, only 13.7% actually do so. Note: the VCCS graduation rate is 14%.

College readiness continues to be an issue. The College is starting to feel the impact of the SOLs on the general knowledge base of our students. High school students and recent graduates tend to not read assigned materials and expect the faculty to guide them.

Some noted problems leading to unsatisfactory performance as noted by the faculty include:

- Students not taking their classes seriously because Virginia Western is not a “real” college
- Students in large classes and classes with large percentages of high school students in dual-enrollment
- Students do not realize how difficult it is to attend classes and work
- Many students are still immature and don’t have the personal skills to be successful in the college setting
- Students who apply late for financial aid or have to wait for financial aid in order to purchase textbooks are often behind due to missed classes and/or assignments
- Self-advising results in students’ taking classes without the appropriate pre-

requisites and often enrolling in courses that they do not need to take

Students are affected by the daily demands in their lives. In fall 2006, 77% of our students were part-time, and only 23% were full-time. According to a student survey, many of our students are employed more than 30 hours per week and are providing care for dependents.

External factors such as childcare and transportation were also noted as difficulties for many students. By providing childcare for students and employees, Virginia Western may be able to help more students attend classes and add flexibility to students’ scheduling. The College may also want to consider working with Valley Metro to improve mass transit access to campus.

Question to Consider:

What are the measures that will tell us that our learning results are improving?

Internal Question #4

How do our fiscal, facility, technological, and human resource capabilities and financial aid resources support and/or hinder students in meeting their learning goals?

Fiscal Resources

In FY 2002-03, Virginia's Higher Education budget was cut by 9.3%, and in FY 2003-04 it was cut by 12.4%. Even with additional funding to Higher Education this year and next, these funds do not make up for the budget shortfalls that the College has experienced over the past several years. Virginia Western must also deal with increased costs for equipment, faculty, starting or maintaining program/initiatives, construction, and renovations. Over each of the next five years, tuition is expected to rise six percent each year. The increased tuition has probably added to the pressure on enrollment, especially for part-time students.

Of the College's \$30 million dollar budget, approximately 52% of the revenue comes from state appropriations, 24% comes from tuition and fees, 14% comes from federal funding, and 10% from local and private sources.

Virginia Western has experienced much success in pursuing private donations as well as private and public grants. The Virginia Western Educational Foundation has grown significantly over the past five years, which included completing its first successful major gifts campaign in 2005 in which \$4 million dollars was raised. The Foundation established a Virginia Western Alumni Program in 2004 and an Annual Giving Program for the College in 2005. Since 2001, scholarship support has nearly quadrupled.

The Grants Development Office was established five years ago, and grant funding

rates have been running between 70%-80%. The Grants Development Office is in the process of aligning its efforts with the College planning cycle.

Faculty believe that allocating more money for professional development will help them be more effective in the classroom, thus increasing student success and retention.

The College needs to better focus on allocating its resources effectively as state funding for the college will continue to decline.

Facilities

Virginia Western is an urban campus situated on 70 acres of land within Roanoke City. Approximately 40 acres are developed with green space, parking lots, or buildings. There are approximately 314,170 square feet of facility space. The campus is bisected by Colonial Avenue, and a pedestrian bridge forms a link between North Campus and South Campus.

A new campus master plan has been completed which incorporates Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) principles and sustainable design concepts. The new master plan promotes development of synergism within buildings, between buildings, site features, and the surrounding community by design. Considerations include growth by infill, view shed protection, and green space preservation.

A new Health Technology Center is being planned, based on growth and demand, to replace a 40-year-old outdated facility. The new facility will house nursing, practical nursing, radiographic technology, dental hygiene, biology, chemistry, math, and science programs critical to the College. A 150 seat lecture hall will be incorporated to support these programs. The new facility would provide much needed state-of-the-art

classrooms and equipment in these fields of study. The project is pending state capital funding. A new building for these programs is part of the approved master plan.

Other demands on facilities continue to be meeting state energy management goals and demands on space utilization.

While we continue to grow, the College must continue to consider the most efficient means of utilizing our current space both on the main campus and sites off-campus.

Technology

Distance learning is the fastest growing educational opportunity at Virginia Western. During FY 2005-06, the College had an annual unduplicated enrollment of 3,461 students in distance learning classes--including both synchronous (live interactive video) and asynchronous (online) courses--comprising 27% of the College's total enrollment.

While our classroom technology surpasses that of many four-year institutions, the technology available to faculty and staff outside the classroom is not as advanced.

Computer security remains an increasing concern as identified in the 2006-2007 Technology Plan. As technology continues to advance and systems need repair or become obsolete, Virginia Western will see expenditures grow.

Human Resources

Human Resources is the largest investment of the College. The College employs approximately 241 full-time employees, including 81 full-time instructional faculty, plus 251 part-time instructors and a variable number of part-time staff.

Fall 2007 Full-time Employee Profile					
Position	Male	Female	White	Minority	Total
Officials & Administrators	14	10	23	1	24
Professional/Faculty	34	59	91	2	93
Professional	11	29	35	5	40
Paraprofessional	3	32	31	4	35
Technicians	8	4	12	0	12
Administrative Support	0	28	24	4	28
Skilled Craft Worker	10	1	9	2	11
Protective Service	5	0	5	0	5
Service/Maintenance	3	0	2	1	3
Total Full-time	88	163	232	19	251

(Virginia Western Community College Human Resources, August 20, 2007)

The College continues to increase the number of full-time faculty teaching courses. In fall 2005, the College employed 251 adjunct faculty, 124 men and 127 women. In 2006-07, the ratio of credits taught by full-time faculty to part-time faculty was 51.3% to 48.7%.

Virginia Western's employment diversity is not reflective of our community. In July 2007, Virginia Western Community College reaffirmed our commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity with the policy statement "VIRGINIA WESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE is dedicated to the belief that every individual should be provided the continuing opportunity to increase his/her awareness of his/her role and responsibility in society." This statement reflects a broad commitment to diversity and equal opportunity.

Additionally, human resource policies and community outreach efforts have been expanded to support the advancement of diversity initiatives, equal opportunity, and

affirmative action in our programs, procedures, and practices. Within the past year, Human Resources updated the ***VWCC Procedures for Employment of Full-time and Part-time Employees***, strengthening diversity initiatives at the advertisement, screening, interview, and hiring stages of the employment process. Several diversity initiatives are in place and have been implemented.

The College strives to leverage the benefits of diversity and inclusiveness through organizational and program development practices, ensuring the values of diversity and inclusiveness in employment, appointment of committees, College-wide outreach activities, and the delivery of employee educational programs.

The College has experienced hiring challenges in institutional effectiveness, math and science faculty, and all health technology-related faculty areas. Faculty and staff turnover will continue due to aging of the population, causing hiring challenges to continue. Recruitment and employment of future faculty and staff must be complementary to the College's future direction.

Questions to Consider:

How does our work enhance learning?

How do we know?