



May 28, 2019

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VIA EMAIL AND USPS DELIVERY

*acicsinfo@viu.edu*

Dr. Isa Sarac  
President and CEO  
Virginia International University  
4401 Village Drive  
Fairfax, VA 22030

**Subject: Continued Show-Cause Directive – External Information**

Dear Dr. Sarac:

At its May 2019 meeting, the Council reviewed your institution's response to the show-cause directive issued in the letter dated March 22, 2019, regarding the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia's (SCHEV) staff recommendation and Council acceptance of the intent to revoke Virginia International University's (VIU) certificate to operate. The Council also considered the testimony provided by the institution's leadership at the hearing before the Council on May 8, 2019. As a result of its review, the Council notes the following:

1. Following its August 2018 audit of VIU and prior to its February 2019 provision of the report of the audit, SCHEV issued a certificate to operate, with an "unconditional status," to VIU in September 2019. At this time, the institution continues to be licensed to operate and to confer credentials in the state of Virginia until a final action is taken by SCHEV, following the institution's appeal, if applicable. VIU has an informal fact-finding conference with SCHEV scheduled for May 29, 2019, in Richmond, Virginia.
2. VIU has temporarily ceased operation of its distance education program for the Summer 2019 term and notified its students of the online hold and the reasons for it. Therefore, while the institution has also indicated its willingness to discontinue all distance education course offerings, if necessary for the health of its operations, it has not yet done so.
3. To improve the quality of its residential course offerings and its future distance education offerings, the institution has implemented the following, among others:
  - a. A 5-student course minimum for its online courses, with exceptions for courses necessary to fulfill students' program requirements, in order to ensure an appropriate amount of peer interaction is possible;
  - b. A change to requiring all course assignments to be submitted to Turnitin to check for academic integrity. Previously, the use of Turnitin for assignments was optional. The institution has identified and acted on more instances of plagiarism,

- using Turnitin, and review by faculty and its Quality Assurance department, in the past few months since this implementation;
- c. Revision of the institution's online education manual for faculty teaching in the online setting;
  - d. Transformation of the institution's demo process, in which faculty show how they can perform tasks for online instruction, into required and supplemental training processes for online faculty, "regardless of their prior experience in teaching online education." This includes "a course on online course facilitation, as well as a course on the Canvas Learning Management System";
  - e. A new observation system for distance education courses, in which faculty preparedness and quality of course instruction and facilitation are evaluated by the faculty's program/department chair (and by another faculty member in the department if the course is taught by the chair), using "Course Readiness" and "Online Course Facilitation Observation" forms; and
  - f. Establishment of a "Scholarship & Academic Work" policy which identifies the institution's expectation for these areas, as well as the formal connection between its attendance policy, and the rigor of participation in online courses. Students' attendance is dependent on their contribution of meaningful and substantive participation, as well as timely completion of assigned activities.
4. The institution provided a teach-out plan and student audit which identify that, at the time of submission, there were 272 students enrolled in 20 programs at the institution. Most students enrolled are anticipated to graduate by December 2023. VIU provided a list of institutions, for each program, which offer similar programs which VIU students may be able to attend to complete their degrees in the event of institutional closure. One such institution is University of the Potomac, for which VIU provided a "teach-out agreement" effective December 31, 2017, and which appears more transfer agreement-like in nature.

### **Council Action**

Therefore, given the continued uncertainty of the institution's authorization to operate by SCHEV, as well as the hiatus of its distance education program, the Council acted to continue the show-cause directive for subsequent review at its August 2019 meeting.

In written response to the show-cause directive, the institution must submit the following information by **July 19, 2019**:

1. A summary of the institution's fact-finding conference with SCHEV, to include the outcome of the conference. Documentation must include all communication between the institution and SCHEV as to the status of the institution's approval to operate. The institution is reminded that in the event of a revocation of its license to operate by the state, it is required to notify ACICS immediately of such action.
2. A status update and clarity on the institution's plans for its distance education offerings.

VIU must also provide immediate notification to ACICS upon the reinstatement of its online education program (at any time prior to, on, or after July 19, 2019). The Council reserves the right to conduct a visit to the institution to review the quality of the online program at any time following its reinstatement.

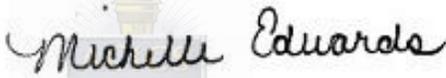
3. An updated audit of students, for the Teach-Out Plan, which shows their progression towards completion of their respective programs.

The information listed above must be received, via the existing online Show-Cause Application in the institution's Member Center, by the date indicated above. Failure to provide all information requested by the Council may result in the withdrawal of the institution's accreditation.

The Council is obligated to take adverse action against any institution that fails to come into compliance within established time frames without good cause, pursuant to Title II, Chapter 3, Introduction of the *Accreditation Criteria*.

If you have any questions about this action, please contact Ms. Perliter Walters-Gilliam at [pwgilliam@acics.org](mailto:pwgilliam@acics.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle Edwards". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Michelle Edwards  
President and CEO

- c: Ms. Cathy Sheffield, Accreditation and State Liaison, U.S. Department of Education  
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