

C. Although course syllabi instruct students to submit work in APA format, many students that did not follow the policy were not penalized.

IV. **Rampant plagiarism** - VIU has a policy for academic misconduct which includes a process by which plagiarism is to be handled by instructors. SCHEV found many instances of plagiarism that were not penalized although it was obvious to the auditors that the material submitted as students' work was not original. In many cases, students' own words, determined through student postings on the online platform, indicated a poor command of English including errors in grammar, spelling, word usage and punctuation. Yet the same students submitted assignments that were highly complex in word choice, vocabulary and organization. While these assignments raised red flags with the auditors, faculty either ignored the signs of obvious plagiarism or chose not to penalize the student.

A. SCHEV staff found:

1. Rampant examples of plagiarism in work submitted by students in 11 out of the 27 (41%) courses reviewed at the time of audit.
2. In all, 50 separate cases of plagiarism were detected during the audit. In only two of these cases did students receive a zero for the plagiarized work. None of the other plagiarized work reviewed by the audit team was penalized.
3. One student submitted plagiarized work for all assignments in one graduate level class. Even though he submitted no original work, he still received an A for the course.

V. **Graduate level courses lacking academic rigor**

- A. In one 600-level graduate course in computer science, the assigned textbook was described as "intended for use in a one- or two-semester undergraduate course in operating systems for computer science, computer engineering and electrical engineering majors."
- B. The answers to the multiple choice midterm exam for a graduate level course were readily available via an internet search.
- C. An instructor's solution sheet for a graduate level course included referenced articles obtained from Wikipedia.
- D. Student responses in several cases did not answer the question posed by instructor, but the students still received a full grade.
- E. In one course, a student submitted an assignment that was clearly for another class and still received a full grade for it.

VI. **Online courses are not comparable in content to those offered in residence**

- A. As noted in IIA above, only three out of 27 courses reviewed indicated an acceptable level of faculty to student engagement.
- B. Student engagement with classmates in online classes is also poor. Items I A&B above support SCHEV's finding that VIU's online courses lack peer-to-peer engagement.
- C. SCHEV staff randomly selected 11 courses and evaluated the amount of time each enrolled student spent signed into the online platform to complete

assignments and peer-to-peer engagement. In comparison to class attendance of 42.5 hours if the student had enrolled in a comparable face-to-face class, online students' "attendance" hours were far less.

1. There were 28 students enrolled in the 11 courses. Hours spent online ranged from a low of 7.5 hours to a high of 158 hours.
2. Four students (14%) clocked in more than 40 hours during the 8-week course.
3. Fifteen students (54%) clocked in between 21 and 40 hours during the 8-week online session.
4. Nine students (32%) clocked in for less than twenty hours during the entire 8-week session. SCHEV questions how a comparable level of work, peer-to-peer engagement and student-faculty interaction can take place in less than half the time it takes to attend a face-to-face class.

VII. Grade Inflation

A. Overall observations regarding grade inflation

1. Late submissions even when penalized did not affect the overall grade
2. Some students did not turn in assignments and class projects but the final grade did not reflect missed work
3. Instructors did not detect plagiarized submissions or chose to ignore the obvious signs. Surprisingly, in some cases where the work submitted was clearly not the student's own, the instructor feedback was positive, e.g. "well explained" or "good work."
4. Students responded incorrectly to questions on assignments and still receive full grades for the assignment.

B. Specific examples of grade inflation (Note: The examples below do not constitute all the instances of grade inflation found by SCHEV staff.)

1. CMP 570 - A graduate level computer class:
 - a. SCHEV staff reviewed a portion of the assignments submitted by students and detected 11 plagiarized assignments. Every student in the class submitted at least one plagiarized item. Five of the six students enrolled received final grades of A. The sixth student received an A-.
2. CMP 641- A graduate level computer class:
 - a. SCHEV staff reviewed three assignments for this course with the following results
 - i. Week 1 - None of the students followed the instructions for the assignment; all submissions included some plagiarism; three out of four students received 100% on the assignment and the fourth student received 70%.
 - ii. Week 2 - All four students plagiarized; all received 100% on the assignment.

- iii. Week 6 (Research Paper) - All four students plagiarized; one student plagiarized an entire research paper found on the internet, including its sources.
 - b. Three out of four students received final grades of A, the fourth student received an A-.
3. CMP 650- A graduate level computer course:
 - a. One student plagiarized every assignment, the midterm exam and the final exam and received a final grade of A.
 - b. The second student in the class plagiarized one assignment and received a final grade of A.
4. MBA500- A graduate level business course in "Managerial Communication":
 - a. All three students submitted writing assignments that contained errors in grammar, sentence structure, word usage, spelling and intelligibility.
 - b. Two students received final grades of A; one student received a B+.
5. MBA611- a graduate level business course:
 - a. The assignment directions instructed students to respond to questions in their own words but none did. Responses were directly plagiarized from other sources. SCHUV auditors concluded that students did not understand the material well enough to paraphrase what they read.
 - b. Nearly all students submitted work that contained plagiarism, poor grammar, incorrect word usage, misspellings and incorrect sentence structure.
 - c. Four final papers reflected students with extremely low levels of English proficiency. In their attempts to hide plagiarism, students substituted synonyms for words in their reports and created strings of nonsensical sentences in the process. Three of these students received final grades of A, one received a C. The following represent examples of wording from 2 different final papers:
 - i. "However, if the situation is happened even the company protected, the occupational disease is seeking so they need to get treatment earlier." (sic)
 - ii. "Faircheck will use Justice theory as battleship with the conflict of interests." (sic)
6. PMP620- a graduate level course in project management:
 - a. The assignment directions instructed students to respond to questions in their own words, but none did. Responses were simply plagiarized and the students were penalized for not following directions.
 - b. One student cited a source that he did not use. Instead, the submitted work was entirely plagiarized from a different source. The instructor called it a "perfect paper" and graded it "A."

- c. One student submitted a totally unintelligible paper by substituting synonyms throughout a plagiarized paper. The paper received a grade of 90. The student repeated this same technique for the midterm exam.
- d. Another student in the class submitted a paper filled with grammatical errors, incorrect word usage and non-standard formatting.
- e. There were five students enrolled in the course. Four received final grades of A, the fifth student received an A-.

VIII. Factor contributing to substandard quality of online education

The single most important factor contributing to the substandard quality of online education at VIU is the institution's acceptance of international students with an abysmally poor command of the English language. This is especially true for graduate level programs. It is unclear whether this an intentional recruiting decision or if it is the result of an admission policy that does not properly assess whether a candidate has sufficient mastery of the English language to engage in genuine graduate level work.

SCHEV's review of VIU's online course content indicates that the admission of unqualified students is the first of many impediments to a quality online education system. Unqualified students regularly submit plagiarized or inferior work; faculty turn a blind eye and lower grading standards (perhaps to avoid failing an entire class); and administrators do not effectively monitor the quality of online education being provided. That such substandard coursework could continue with no complaints from students, faculty or administrators raises concerns about the purpose of education at VIU.

Final SCHEV staff recommendation:

In accordance with "*Guidelines for Procedures Related to Audits of Certified Institutions*" adopted by Council at the January 14, 2019 meeting, SCHEV staff will prepare a report for review by Council at its March 18-19, 2019 meeting recommending revocation of Virginia International University's certificate to operate. The basis for this recommendation is that VIU was found to have (i) a violation that adversely affects the quality of education; and (ii) repeat violations from an audit conducted in the past five years.

This report concludes that the courses and instruction by VIU Online fail to meet quality and content to adequately achieve the stated objectives of the programs offered. Additionally, SCHEV staff believe that the deficiency of the education provided by VIU is not limited to online courses. This conclusion is based on the following:

- Students who regularly plagiarize in online classes are equally likely to submit plagiarized work in face-to-face classes.
- The lack of English proficiency in the student population of VIU would not only affect their online courses, but their face-to-face courses as well.
- Faculty teaching online courses also teach face-to-face classes. SCHEV staff conclude that faculty members who ignore or cannot identify flagrant plagiarism in an online class

will not be better equipped to recognize and penalize such academic violations in a classroom setting.

- SCHEV reviewed over 60 student transcripts and noted no discernible difference in the grades received for online courses versus face-to-face coursework. If all factors are equal, including submission of inferior work by students, the limited English proficiency of enrolled students, and faculty inability or unwillingness to penalize plagiarism, then the quality of face-to-face instruction would also likely be of unacceptable quality. As such, SCHEV concludes that the only reasonable recommendation staff can make to Council is revocation of the certificate to operate.

VIU Audit
August 14-16, 2018

Online courses reviewed

- APLX 530 Language Teaching Methods, Summer II 2018 (Shufang Ni)
- APLX 572 Technologies for Language Learning (Marietta Bradinova)
- APLX 630 Sociolinguistics in the Classroom Spring 2018 (Marietta Bradinova)
- BUSS 154 Intro to Import/Export Management Spring 2018 (Osman Masahudu)
- BUSS 210 Intro to Business Spring 2018 (Lena Starr)
- BUSS 312 Organizational Theory Spring 2018 (Lena Starr)
- CMP 375 Human-Computer Interactions Spring 2018 (Salman Qureshi)
- CMP 467 Database Systems for web applications Fall 2017 (Alla Webb)
- CMP 498 Capstone Project Spring 2018 (Manuel Medrano)
- CMP 551 Research Methods Fall 2017 (Alfred Basta)
- CMP 570 Enterprise Information Systems Fall 2017 (Darcell Tolliver)
- CMP 641 Operating Systems, Sumr II 2018 (Alla Webb)
- CMP 650 Software Design Fall 2017 (Alla Webb)
- ECON 207 Intermediate Microeconomics (Srinidhi Anantharamiah)
- ENG 113 English Composition Spring 2018 (Sean Ulbert)
- GEOG 101 World Geography Spring 2018 (Christine Rosenfeld)
- GOVT 632 Comparative Politics Spring 2018 (Emrullah Uslu)
- GOVT 790 Advanced Research Project Spring 2018 (Klara Bilgin)
- MBA 500 Managerial Communication Spring 2018 (Seth Gillespie)
- MBA 514 Marketing Management Spring 2018 (Yun Lee)
- MBA 514 Marketing Management Summer I 2018 (Yun Lee)
- MBA 523 HR Law, Sumr II 2018 (Ashley Newell)
- MBA 611 Business Law and Ethics Spring 2018 (Ashley Newell)
- MBA 641 Economics of Healthcare and Policy Spring 2018 (Jeffrey White)
- PMP 615 Risk Project Management Spring 2018 (Seth Gillespie)
- PMP 620 Contracts and Project Procurement Management Spring 2018 (Seth Gillespie)
- STAT 200 Intro to Statistics Spring 2018 (Zelalem Chala)