

EPC PROPOSAL FOR A PILOT PROJECT TO STUDY DIGITAL INFORMATION LITERACY

As a follow-up to its presentation to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the Educational Policy Committee has reviewed faculty comments and suggestions made during and after the February meeting. It has also learned that the State Council on Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV) has mandated that the College to file an assessment plan on computing competency by 15 May 2001 and a final report by 1 July 2002. By a unanimous vote, the EPC proposes the Faculty of Arts and Sciences approve the following:

Design a pilot program to evaluate the level of digital information literacy of 10% (130) of the freshman class who arrive in Fall 2001. This will include on-line tests and tutorials that range from information access (web searching, e-mail, and Courseinfo) to information evaluation and ethics. This pilot program will be the basis of the 2002 report to SCHEV.

Rationale: The EPC unanimously believes that the 1993 objectives of the computing proficiency requirement are out-dated. As outlined in our report, the Concentration Computing Proficiency (CCR) does not have clearly stated standard goals across disciplines. And in some disciplines—the Humanities primarily—the CCR comes too late in a student's academic career to have significant impact on scholarship. The consensus opinion at the February faculty meeting was that certain skills, such as finding and evaluating information, are required by all students, regardless of their concentration discipline.

The EPC appreciates the Faculty of Arts and Sciences objection to 'having the tail wag the dog' as regards SCHEV's required assessment of student competencies. The EPC has resisted and will continue to resist the increasing pressures to analyze ourselves into oblivion. The assessment of computing competencies, like the recent plan W&M sent on writing, are recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission that established 12 Toolbox competencies that should be covered by general education requirements. Because the EPC had already come to the conclusion that it would be preferable to establish a base-line determination of student skills and knowledge of digital information during the freshman year, it views SCHEV's mandate as an opportunity to test a limited version of the program. The Faculty of Arts and Sciences will receive a report on the pilot program in Spring 2002.