

# WCET *Frontiers* “What’s Next” Interviews

## Spring 2020

*Interviewer: Russ Adkins*

*Sheri Prupis, Director, Teaching & Learning Technologies, Virginia Community College System.*

We heard Sheri talking about how she’s helping her colleges move forward in a recent call. She serves as the Director, Teaching & Learning Technologies, for the System’s 23 colleges. Virginians enjoy having a community college within 30 miles of every citizen. It’s a state that ranges from the very urban areas around the Washington, DC area to extremely rural and mountainous regions.

They have been converting tens of thousands of face-to-face courses. The vast majority of their faculty have no experience with online or hybrid courses. About 60% of faculty are adjuncts. The “what’s next” lessons from Sherri and her colleges:

- **Focused on Converting Summer Courses.** To prepare for the likelihood that face-to-face instruction will not soon resume, the System’s Chancellor provided guidance for institutional personnel to begin converting summer term courses to remote instruction. Most campuses are already planning and implanting the conversion of the first half of all their summer courses. (add: At this time, one of our institutions announced that they will be using remote instruction for the Summer term and the others are considering it.
- **Gearing Up Media Outreach for Summer Courses.** Given the Covid closures across the state, many learners may assume that the community colleges are closed or that there is no space for them to enroll. An aggressive social media (other media being considered) campaign is being created to keep and attract students for the summer term.
- **Converting “Passport” Transfer Courses by Summer.** [Virginia’s Passport](#) “is a 16-credit hour community college program in which all courses are transferable and shall satisfy a lower-division general education requirement at any public institution of higher education.” There is focus on converting these courses by Summer.
- **Flipping the Focus of Faculty Development in the Short Term.** To achieve the rapid conversion of face-to-face courses, the initial focus in working with faculty was on the tools with good practices secondary. Faculty needed to know what software to download and what buttons to push. That was unfortunate by highly necessary step. Moving forward that focus will flip as the future development will begin with the goal of achieving best practices and then focusing on the tools that can be used to accomplish that goal.
- **Grading Has Gone Pass/Fail in the Short Term.** The default grading system for all converted courses is now pass, fail, or incomplete. A student can request by the last day of instruction to switch to receiving a letter grade. Once that request is made, the student cannot switch back to the pass/fail option.
- **Sharing Expertise.** The colleges have been sharing what they know and their processes. For example, Northern Virginia Community College enrolls over one-third of the headcount in the state. They have extensive online learning experience to share. Germanna Community College has experience with building templates with online courses that they can share.

- **Creativity in Addressing Rurality.** Virginia has some extremely rural areas with insufficient broadband access. Some courses are offered via phone with coursework exchanged via U.S. Mail. As Sherri said, “it’s the only way to do it.”
- **Celebrate and Be Thankful.** To recognize the hard work of instructional designers in her state, Sheri Prupis created and mailed them hats reading: “Instructional Designer: Because ‘Freakin’ Awesome’ is not an Official Title.”

Thank you to Sheri for these lessons and energy to move forward to improve learning for students.