To: U.Va. Strategy Committee  
From: U.Va. Synergy Working Group  
Date: January 28, 2013  
Re: Draft summary of key thoughts

**CHARGE**

*Identify and examine ways to align common interests among the University's schools and community for more effective teaching and research. Identify barriers to interdisciplinary work and ways to address them. Examine ways to ensure that good ideas are nurtured and shared across schools. Document examples of successful collaborations and identify examples of high potential future collaborations that will distinguish U.Va. in the future.*

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

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ASSUMPTIONS

- Opportunities for innovation, scholarship, education and service are maximized when all the talents of the University community can contribute, regardless of organizational unit.
- The current organizational structure of the University will remain largely in place.
- The University community shares a culture of trust and collaboration that provides a major asset and impetus for collaborations across grounds and across disciplines.
- Identification of barriers to and incentives for cross-grounds interactions, collaborations and sustainable program-building is a near-term goal.
- Experiences within U.Va. and at peer institutions can provide case studies that will enable the optimal selection of specific initiatives going forward.

SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

- Enhance cross grounds communication using technology and social media.
- Structure departmental hiring strategies to accommodate inter-disciplinary goals.
- Ensure that rewards and incentives take account of inter-disciplinary accomplishments.
- Structure funding streams so that inter-disciplinary and cross-grounds initiatives can be supported.
- Identify commonalities in processes, services, facilities and resources that can be shared cross-grounds.
- Broaden the community of collaboration to include alumni and partners in government and the private sector.

ONGOING INITIATIVES

- Integrate relevant results from the Arts & Sciences benchmarking study.
- Participate in on-line surveys with alumni, staff, faculty and students.
- Begin cross checking with other working groups on findings that are similar and work with them (for example, on the use of technology to enhance communication).
- Develop specific operational recommendations based on current findings.
Tools, Techniques to Enhance Collaboration

Communication. Cross-ground communication should be enhanced. We have identified at all levels -- from students, to faculty to area heads to Deans to Administration to the Board of Visitors to Alumni and Parents -- that there is a need to have more open sharing of information in a user-friendly manner. There are several projects, such as one being developed by SHANTI, to make faculty web pages searchable.

Develop an internet feed where people can post their ideas, projects, research, initiatives and see others’ work. Create a talent database to inventory interests, backgrounds and areas of research of faculty, staff, students, and possibly alumni, creating an easily accessible, consistent way for faculty and administrators to find overlap and intersections. Identify key people who can act as curators of common areas of interest who will ensure that those at U.Va. who are part of those communities are kept up to speed.

Hold even more open forums, flash seminars, Jeffersonian Dinners, community wide debates to enhance the opportunity for people to work with others of common interests and passions from around the University. Consider a “new inquiry” lecture series that would be focused on cross discipline big questions, such as genetic testing, behavioral economics, big data, security, etc.

Open many of these curated interests and activities to alumni and parents so they can see faculty who are working on areas of common interest.

Hiring. Hiring of faculty and staff needs to take place within an interdisciplinary context. Cluster hires, shared hires, Center hires are all valid ways to achieve this goal. The Provost should be further empowered to act as the key party reviewing and promoting all interdisciplinary hiring. Additionally, the Vice President for Research has an in-depth, granular understanding of research and people across all schools and can nucleate differentiating things that are not visible in some cases to individual units. The Vice President for Research also brings a national and international landscape in research to decisions and judgments, adding value to strategic initiatives and philanthropy
efforts. The Vice President for Research and the Provost review faculty directions as they move through their careers.

**Faculty Incentives.** The reward system of promotion, salary and tenure should formally take into account inter-disciplinary contributions. In many cases this will require the creation of an interdisciplinary peer evaluation group or the inclusion of extra-departmental members in a departmental evaluation.

**Innovation.** The Provost’s office and/or the Vice President for Research's office should have a central pool of funds that can be used to invest in the early stages of innovative, cross school/unit, ideas and initiatives. Once these ideas are successfully off the ground then they can be integrated into the appropriate line budgets and fundraising plans. These offices should also assist in providing administrative support and mentoring for these early stage ideas. However, it is important that there be a culture that quickly supports new ideas and, just as quickly, shuts them down if they prove unworthy. If permanent centers are created consideration should be given to setting up a shared services (finance, operations, support) structure that can be shared by multiple centers. There also can be an expediter in the office who can help young start up efforts cut through red tape and assist in connecting the projects to internal and external contacts.

**Active Learning.** The Medical School, Darden and McIntire have used active learning tools and techniques for quite a while. There is an opportunity to look at applying this very effective learning system to more schools around U.Va. The attendance rates in classes that are active in design (flipping the classroom where the professors and students team to work on projects and problems together in the classroom rather than having a lecture environment) have increased dramatically. The Teaching Research Center at U.Va. is respected and could possibly be brought in to set up common standards. More analysis of this with regard to cost and facilities that would be required.

**External Collaboration.** There is significant potential to enhance the productivity, resources, creativity and outcomes of research and teaching around the University of stronger linkages are built with alumni, non-profits, corporations, and other Universities. Joint
projects, with common goals, where all of these groups through in their resources. McIntire uses alums/experienced business people to jointly teach classes; the Center for Contemplative Sciences uses an advisory board who work very closely with the academic team to set strategy, research goals and solicit resources; and key student experiences with non-profits like Peer Health allow for a more broad learning experience. Cases should be written that describe these "broader than normal" collaborations and document why they create value so that others at the University can model themselves after them.

- **Centralize On-Line Facilities.** Set up a centralized on-line course production location that has a team of people who have great equipment and an understanding of how to best teach in the MOOC and on-line linked environment.

- **Common academic calendar across schools.**

- **Common research allocations policies and awarding of credit.** Develop common policies between schools for funding of joint research projects, covering overhead allocations and naming of Principal Investigator status. The current system hinders cooperation.

- **Interdisciplinary Majors** for students. Facilitate the process for students to set up Interdisciplinary Majors. The current approval process in each major area inhibits Majors that require multiple department approvals.

- **Fund Key Courses that are key to multiple majors.** Examine courses that are taken by various majors around the University and ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to them. For example, there doesn’t appear to be enough computer science professors available to teach all the students from Engineering, the College (Math, Social Sciences), McIntire, etc. who want to take CS courses.

- **Facilities.** As the University engages in renovation and renewal of its facilities, coordinated planning across relevant stakeholders should focus on creating spaces that can be utilized for multiple diverse purposes at different moments in time. Incorporating concepts of active learning, work/study/life integration, and technology innovation
into space design can also help address issues of facility access/shortages and operational cost. Questions of space usage policy are central to this discussion and overlap with other working groups.

**High Potential Areas to Explore for Cross University Collaboration**

- **Fundraising.** Identify projects that involve collaborations across schools, and staff with development offices from the central team. These development officers will work closely with each school’s respective development teams. We believe that more funds will be raised from private donors if multiple schools and teams are involved in the investment idea and one development officer per Center can operate as collaborative glue.

- **Focus on the State of Virginia.** Work with other state of Virginia colleges and universities to identify common courses, collaborative research and service initiatives and back office needs. U.Va. has been distancing itself in many ways from the Commonwealth over the past decade; we should emphasize as part of our strategic review what U.Va. is doing and what we want to do to strengthen our relationship with citizens of the Commonwealth. We are the flagship university for the Commonwealth and can do much more for the average Virginia citizen. Online learning is a perfect opportunity to reach out to a much greater number of Virginians to enable them to benefit from all that U.Va. has to offer.

- **Enhanced Global linkages.** Consider going to other countries, particularly South America. Identify area and global studies initiatives that are ripe for investment. Share staff, office, joint ventures. Better organize and share information about students studying abroad, faculty with international relationships, i.e., with research colleagues, and international students studying at U.Va. as a way to connect experiences and interests.

- **Create a Center for Creativity at U.Va.** It would foster networks of collaboration across disciplines, including the arts, technology, science, economics, finance, business, and other fields that engage creative thinking and practice: medicine, business, computer engineering, sustainability studies, and more. The center would provide seed money and administrative support for interdisciplinary
courses, research projects, and Grounds- or community-based events and programs. It would further serve as an organizational locus for raising private and corporate support, for example, to fund residencies by collaborative teams of creative workers (on the model of the Princeton Atelier). The center should be housed in the Provost's office or the Vice President for Research's office and should seek to leverage existing departmental strengths as well as interdisciplinary programs such as the Arts Scholars (CLAS), the BA & BS in Computer Science (CLAS & SEAS), the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities, and OpenGrounds. The launch of OpenGrounds at U.Va. was quite intentionally and strategically envisioned to link ideation and creativity with major social challenges and partners; it is changing the culture of U.Va.

**Successful and Potential Collaborative Models (as the strategy is laid out our view is a few specific examples can be helpful in adding color and a feeling of momentum).**

- The Center for Contemplative Studies – use as a role model for how to bring together eight schools under a common set of objectives and excite donors and students. In the first year of the center we would point to four elements that have allowed it to integrate well across the schools of the University. (i) cross-school governance, (ii) collaborative governance, (iii) donor collaborative partnerships, and (iv) integrated top-down/bottom-up methods of approaching individual schools. More time studying this model is warranted.

- Leadership – McIntire, Darden, College, Batten. Tom Bateman at the McIntire School helps lead the undergraduate leadership minor. Batten and Darden have deep programs in Leadership. Further deepening the focus on leadership by linking all the various efforts could be productive.

- Entrepreneurship – McIntire, Darden, Engineering, Medical Center; two components of entrepreneurship at U.Va.: 1) Academic programs and 2) Applied entrepreneurship. There is a new i-lab being set up at Darden and a number of incubators around the University. How might the celebration of entrepreneurship be allowed to flourish? Could UVA be a center for thought about how to create jobs and companies in the Commonwealth. Can there be linkages to the
outside world where efforts like Start Up America have been started by the Case Foundation and supported by the White House?

Social Entrepreneurship – Christine Mahoney in the Batten School has pulled together 25 or so individuals from schools across the University to work to build a collaborative social enterprise effort at UVA. She has linked up with alums, students, faculty and other centers to build a cross school specialty. Social Entrepreneurship is one of the hottest areas of interest for students and donors. How can the University and schools like Darden and McIntire support such an effort in a budget constrained environment. Should there be seed funding to create a plan.

Environmental Sustainability – significant time has been spent pulling together a plan for a cross-school focus on environmental sustainability. Should a Center be set up to start bringing the linkages identified in the plans together?

Big Data/Quantitative collaboration – McIntire/Engineering/College. The VP of Research has quite a bit of information regarding how this focus, across schools, might be leveragable.

Washington Semester (semester residency similar to that in Europe) – Batten, Miller, College. Governor Baliles at the Miller Center has created a plan to bring together various schools and start a Washington D.C. student residency that might provide a diverse and hands on experience in D.C. This could leverage off the strengths of each of the schools and their natural strength in the study of the Presidency, political science, leadership and key societal change.

Institute for Humanities and Global Cultures – a very strong Center in the college that has significant opportunity to grow.

There are enormous opportunities for integrating medical research and teaching with the larger University. This includes genomics, regenerative medicine, aging and outcomes research with statistics, sociology, education, religious studies, business and law. The Cancer Center provides a fairly successful model, with an international reputation for basic cancer research, major funding streams from multiple sources, members drawn not only from Medicine and
Nursing, but also the College and SEAS, and interactions with Religious Studies and Law that are ready for expansion. This topic is work for an entire second-generation committee.

Peace and Dialogue Collaborative – interest out of the College by donors to fund the study of religious freedom and peace. Miller/Batten/Law/Education/Global.