



November 13, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: VCCS Presidents

FROM: Glenn DuBois, Chancellor

SUBJECT: **Next Steps for High Risk Instructional Programs**

The purposes of this memorandum are to provide a summary of the results of a VCCS audit of high risk instructional programs and to outline an action plan to strengthen and sustain a culture of safety that is grounded in best practices in safety instruction and policy at all of our colleges.

In March 2014, the VCCS Internal Audit Department produced a report on the results of an audit that was performed on high risk instructional programs at seven of our community colleges. This audit was prompted by an incident that occurred in a welding lab at Thomas Nelson Community College, which resulted in severely injuring a student.

The audit was performed to evaluate whether instructors are practicing and teaching safety standards and best practices in high risk instructional programs, including both academic and workforce development programming. Any program that puts students in a learning environment that can cause immediate, grievous, and unique bodily harm is considered a "high risk instructional program." **Each college will need to identify which programs put students at risk of "immediate, grievous, and unique bodily harm."** The audit concluded that instructors in the sample of high risk programs are demonstrably practicing and teaching industry safety standards. However, the auditors determined that there are opportunities for improvement in the following categories, which are defined below:

- (1) Communication: Improve communication between instructors of similar programs at colleges and between the colleges and the System Office related to any incidents. Additionally, develop formal communication process for colleges and the System Office to address incidents when they occur.
- (2) Safety Instruction: Improve safety instruction in labs of high risk instructional programs by implementing consistent practices and ensuring instructors and students are familiar with emergency equipment and proper procedures in case of an emergency. Create a classroom-specific code of conduct, require safety-specific

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tests, document equipment inspections, consult with advisory councils for safety-related information, and utilize syllabi to emphasize the importance of safety. Additionally, maintain a list of all necessary personal protective equipment and ensure lab practices are consistent with the syllabi.

- (3) Policy: Create and emphasize safety policies to address student supervision in labs, instructor currency, written safety manuals, guidelines for personal projects, safety components in instructor evaluations, security of labs, use of labs for non-instructional purposes, and lab organization and cleanliness.

Next Steps

Colleges need to complete the attached Best Practices Safety Inventory for High Risk Instructional Programs. The inventory highlights fifteen (15) focus areas that pertain to safety instruction and/or safety policy. Each college needs to specify what programs have been identified as high risk in the space provided in the inventory. Please note that each college will complete one (1) inventory that features college-wide policies for high risk instructional programs. A guidance document that provides a comprehensive description of each of the focus areas is attached to this memorandum. Colleges will be required to complete the inventory on an annual basis.

Please submit the inventory to Dr. Dan Lewis, Director of Educational Programs, dlewis@vccs.edu on or before **March 2, 2015**. Colleges will need to complete the institutional process to implement any new policies and/or practices prompted by the focus areas in the inventory by May 1, 2015.

To support the college's work on high risk instructional programs, a webinar for academic and workforce development faculty and administrators will be provided on **December 5, 1:00-2:30**. The program will provide an overview of the VCCS audit and the Best Practices Safety Inventory. The program will also showcase the work of several colleges that have implemented best practices in high risk instructional programs. Faculty who teach in an industrial technology program in addition to program heads, directors, deans, and vice presidents who oversee these programs are invited to participate in the webinar. There will be a Question and Answer session as well. Details to follow.

Attachments: 1: Best Practices Safety Inventory for High Risk Instructional Programs
 2: VCCS Guidance on Best Practices Safety Inventory