



NACUBO INNOVATION AWARD 2011 Nomination Form

To guarantee consideration completed nomination form must be received or postmarked by **April 1, 2011**

Please mail to: Kristin Witters, Manager, Member Services
NACUBO/Innovation Award
1110 Vermont Ave., NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20005
202.861.2515 (voice)/202.449.1221 (fax)
kwitters@nacubo.org

Please submit a program summary no more than 3 double-spaced pages using a minimum font size of 10 points.

Do not include additional information (reports, forms, etc.) with the nomination form. The Awards Council may request such items during the evaluation process.

Program Title: Virginia Education Wizard: Adding Efficiency to Career & College Planning
Institution Name: Virginia Community College System
Contact Name: Dr. Craig Herndon
Contact Title: Interim Vice Chancellor for Workforce Development
Office Address: 15th Floor, 101 N. 14th Street, Richmond VA, 23219
Phone and Fax: 804.819.4782 (V) 804.819.4769 (F)
E-mail Address: cherndon@vccs.edu

Institution Type

- Research Comprehensive/Doctoral Small Institution Community College

Award Category Type

- Process Improvement**
Recognizes higher education institutions that have successfully re-engineered or designed a program, or improved a service delivery of administrative activity in response to a campus need.
- Resource Enhancement**
Recognizes higher education institutions that have successfully reduced costs, increased revenues or improved productivity in response to a campus need.

Topical Area(s) (Check all that apply)

- Accounting, Finance and Tax Campus Operations Human Resources
 Information Technology Leadership/Institutional Effectiveness Planning and Budgeting
 Risk Management Student Financial Services Other: _____

NACUBO Primary Representative (Endorsement required)

Name (print clearly) Donna VanCleave
Title (print clearly) Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services

I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the statements and calculations contained herein accurately reflect the circumstances reported.

Date 3/31/11 Signature Donna VanCleave

**NACUBO INNOVATION AWARD 2011 NOMINATION
THE VIRGINIA EDUCATION WIZARD
VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM**

Innovation Description: The Virginia Education Wizard is a game-changing and first of its kind innovation in career and college planning that brings together existing resources and savvy new technologies in a seamless and comprehensive format that provides greater efficiency to not only Virginians seeking higher education, but also to the postsecondary and secondary institutions that aim to assist them. In direct response to Virginians' needs, the Wizard, like no other tool, allows users to:

- Find careers that match their interests, skills, and work values
- Explore user-friendly information describing individual occupations—including local median salary, local projected demand, top ten largest local employers, and the specific education offered locally to obtain the occupation
- Create, modify, and track personal academic and career plans that guide middle and high school students through the coursework and educational experiences they need to achieve their postsecondary goals
- Compare tuition and fees at nearly 100 public and private colleges and universities in Virginia
- Receive a personalized financial aid award estimate specific to the community college of interest
- Engage in a step-by-step, avatar-hosted tutorial on completing federal financial aid forms
- Prepare for admission and attendance at a community college or university by receiving a user-specific checklist of steps to get them on their way and get automated email reminders to enhance their progress
- Gain admission to Virginia's colleges and universities

Business Problem: Now, more than ever, Virginians need high quality data at their disposal for making informed decisions about what careers the market will demand in the years to come, what education will be necessary to obtain those careers, how to pay for that education, and how to get started. At the same time, schools, colleges, and universities are operating at their leanest financial levels and therefore have fewer human resources to deliver this critical information.

New Solution: The Virginia Education Wizard systematically addresses the needs of students through an intuitive, interactive, one-stop, web-based portal and reduces the need for human resources by delivering high-quality, tailored information to potential students of postsecondary education.

Following a large scale evaluation of student need and a comprehensive market analysis, the Virginia Community College System built, tested, and refined the Virginia Education Wizard before launching the site to an eager public. Following the initial and successful launch of the community college specific tool, the Wizard garnered the attention of public and private supporters (e.g. the Virginia Department of Education, State Council of Higher Education, and Virginia's 529) that sought to broaden the audience and content of the Wizard to provide college planning information to students seeking postsecondary education from Virginia's wide array of institutions. The most recent version of the Wizard, inclusive of public, private, two-year and four-year institutions was released in September of 2010 to much acclaim.

The Wizard as an Innovation: The Virginia Education Wizard is a unique innovation in career and college planning that marries existing resources and savvy new technologies in a comprehensive format that is both heralded for its sophistication of information and prized for its simplicity of use. Experts in the content areas identified by the evaluation of student needs guided the development of tools that provide high-quality, easy-to-access, and understandable information. By utilizing existing economic and higher education datasets, creating entirely new data like how majors at individual colleges align to specific careers, and implementing the site's popular avatar host, "Ginny", the result has been a set of tools that seamlessly assists and guides users by providing concrete and up-to-date information allowing them to: 1) Take simple assessments that result in a set of occupations that match their interests, values and skills and then delve deeply into user-friendly information describing individual occupations—including their local median salary, local projected demand, top ten largest local employers, and the specific education offered locally to obtain the occupation, 2) Compare tuition and fees public and private colleges and universities in Virginia, 3) Create a student- and community college-specific financial aid award estimate, 4) Engage in a step-by-step tutorial, hosted by avatars, on completing federal financial aid forms, 5) Plan their journey to college using a tool that provides a user-specific checklist of steps and automated email reminders to enhance student progress, and 6) Gain admission to Virginia's colleges and universities.

As a testament to the Wizard's innovation, the site has gained high praise from students across the Commonwealth and those that aim to help them, including the Virginia Governor's highest award for technology, and a national award for innovation from Campus Technology magazine. The Wizard's value as an innovation is also evident in its media presence and the interest of potential buyers of the technology. Through media coverage in newspapers and television stations from around the state, the site gained more than two million media impressions in its first few weeks of operation. In addition, the site has gathered attention through social media outlets with a presence on Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube. Moreover, and perhaps the greatest signal that the site is both cutting-edge and first-of-its-kind in

the market for career and college planning technologies, other states and institutions have expressed strong interest in purchasing the Wizard technologies developed by the Virginia Community College System.

Impact: The Wizard's value and success can be seen in its site usage, user satisfaction, and the financial value that the schools, colleges, and universities reap through the efficient delivery of services as well as the financial value that the Commonwealth of Virginia reaps in increased access to higher education and a better workforce. Since the first version of the Wizard was launched just two years ago, it has experienced almost 9,000,000 pageviews and nearly 700,000 unique users (or just less than one in ten Virginians), while users spend an average of almost ten minutes each exploring the site. In almost 2,000 surveys administered to target audiences in grades 7 through 12 and college students of various ages, the Wizard enjoyed satisfaction rates consistently greater than 90%. Professionals who seek to assist students in college and career planning also reported satisfaction levels consistently greater than 90%. While difficult to quantify monetarily, reports from professionals indicate that the Wizard has and will continue to improve college and schools services, increase efficiency in delivering services, enhance Virginia's workforce through informed decision-making and assist college and school professionals in providing access to more students at a time when the number of student services professionals is not keeping pace.

Resources Required: To build the innovation, the Virginia Community College System sought and received \$2.5 million in federal support. With this initial investment, the Virginia Community College System built the first version of the Wizard which then attracted the financial support of public and private backers who contributed funds to support the development of subsequent versions and ongoing maintenance of the Wizard for a cost of just over \$3 million extending out over a six year period. Due to the popularity and effectiveness of the site, additional financial supporters have expressed interest in additional development to meet the needs of veterans returning to the civilian workforce, facilitating participation in apprenticeships, and much more. Simply put, the Wizard's effectiveness as an innovation has led to its enviable position as almost entirely financially self-sustaining and self-expanding.