

## **Virginia Department of Corrections – Division of Education American Council on Education Accreditation Project**

### ***How long has the program operated?***

The American Council on Education began as a project for the Virginia Department of Corrections/Division of Education in January of 2014. The work continued on for 1 year and 9 months and was deemed a success such that the American Council on Education granted retroactive credit to January 1, 2014 for any student completing the accredited career and technical education courses after this date.

### ***What was the month and year of initiation?***

The program was initiated in January of 2014.

### ***Has the program been in operation for nine months to three years? (Note: to qualify, the program must be between nine months and three years old as of May 27, 2016.)***

Our courses were granted credit for all students completing them from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2014. The program has granted 1045 returning citizen students American Council on Education credit.

### ***Why was it created? What problems or issues was the program designed to address?***

Research shows that ex-offenders who have acquired college credit while incarcerated have lower recidivism rates upon re-entry into society. However, with the rising cost of college tuition many offenders cannot afford college tuition and books. To help alleviate this problem, our agency has investigated different options to provide college programming to our students. We looked to building relationships as a key to providing this service and the possibility of such a relationship with the American Council on Education held the potential of providing college credit in a cost effective method to incarcerated individuals who are students in our Career and Technical Education courses. Accreditation of our Career and Technical Education courses through ACE is an innovative approach for providing postsecondary coursework while being fiscally responsible for all of our stakeholders.

### ***What are the specific activities and operations of the program? (Please list in chronological order, if applicable.)***

In January 2014 we inquired of ACE the process for this program. We were required to complete and submit data sheets about each course. Representatives of ACE then visited DOC Headquarters for a pre-audit to develop and understanding of our courses and our requirements for completion of each. At this time we were provided information required for the audit of our classes. Once we had the presentations developed representatives of ACE returned to do a complete audit. As a result of this audit, five of our CTE courses were given recommendation for credit through ACE. Please see the chart below for the specifics of the number of credits for each course approved for accreditation. As the first state or federal correctional agency to hold the distinction of being accredited by the American Council on Education the VADOC is now able to provide all students completing these 5 CTE courses recommended transferrable equivalent credits at any state or private college in the country. The accreditation of Business Software Applications, Introduction to Computers, Print Production, Commercial Arts and Design and Computer Aided Drafting will provide our graduates a head start toward reaching a college degree and becoming returning citizens that are successful. It will also provide further validation of the coursework and content learned in each of them. The list of credits and named credits are listed below in the table.

CTE Course	Number of Credits	ACE Course names
Business Software Applications	6 Credits	Business Applications, and Computer Operating Systems
Computer Aided Drafting	14 Credits	Intro to Board Drafting, Basic CAD, Advanced CAD, Portfolio/Final Project
Commercial Arts and Design	6 Credits	Principles of Graphics design
Introduction to Computers	3 Credits	Keyboarding
Digital Print Production	12 Credits	Typography, Print Reproduction Techniques, Field Work Practicum

***What equipment, technology and/or software (if any) are used to operate and administer the program?***

The equipment used to operate each program varies by the Career and Technology course that is accredited. Many of our courses utilize desktop computers, laptop computers, smartboards, printing equipment and specialized equipment designed for the program. The only hardware equipment that is used to administer the program is that of a computer with internet access. We additionally utilize computer access to a statewide database of completions for Virginia Department of Corrections (we use a program called CORIS), as well as, an American Council on Education portal to register official transcripts when they are requested. No additional equipment was required by ACE for our courses to be accredited. While the accreditations were unconditional, there were recommendations made by the ACE representatives for improvements to each of the courses accredited. These improvements will be as part of our tri-annual review for our CTE courses.

***What are the annual operational costs of the program? How is it funded?***

The initial cost for 5 programs for a time period of three years was \$29,600. The annual fee to be listed on ACE's national database is \$1800. The cost for the program was taken entirely from annual state budget funding allocated for postsecondary education. The simplicity and cost effectiveness of the program are two important features that drew our agency to seek accreditation.

***Has the program been effective at addressing the problem or issue? Please provide tangible results and examples.***

The impact of our programs has and will continue to be felt by our more than 2000 career and technical education students currently enrolled statewide. The final impact involves a cost benefit analysis of providing college education to offenders. Our cost of accreditation was \$29,600 with a fee of \$1800 per year. Below is a table of the cost of our accreditation versus providing college level credits through a traditional community college partnership as of today's date. When the total cost has been broken down by the number of credits our current cost would equal \$5.12 per credit. However since the cost of ACE accreditation is fixed the more completions we have in each our courses the lower the cost per credit.

	Number of Students Completing Program	Credits	Cost for Credits (if college funded) \$145.00 Per Credit	Cost for Credits (with ACE funding) \$5.12 Per Credit
Business Software Applications (6 credits)	<b>280</b>	1680	\$243,600.00	\$6,280
Computer Aided Drafting (14 credits)	<b>116</b>	1624	\$235,480.00	\$6,280
Computer Graphics and Design (6 credits)	<b>19</b>	114	\$16,530.00	\$6,280
Introduction to Computers (3 credits)	<b>539</b>	1617	\$234,465.00	\$6,280
Print Production ( 12 credits)	<b>91</b>	1092	\$158,340.00	\$6,280
<b>Total</b>	<b>1045</b>	<b>6127</b>	<b>\$888,415.00</b>	<b>\$31,400</b>

**What measurable impact has the program had? Has it created significant change in your state?**

These five programs will provide a benefit to the state and larger society in two key areas. The first benefit is that those completing these courses will leave custody with several credits that can be used to enter an institution of higher learning to ultimately lead to earning a degree. This impact is one of a feeling of accomplishment and self-worth that many of our returning citizens have not felt prior to these opportunities being made available to them. The second benefit that we have noted throughout our accreditation process is that of improving our own programs by taking a critical look at ways to make technical, procedural and content level changes. The two experts per program that were reviewing our competencies and every aspect of our classes provided key feedback and made positive suggestions that will aid not just for the courses that were reviewed, but others that we will seek accreditation in the future.

***Did the program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and email address.***

The American Council on Education has been accrediting colleges, universities, businesses and state organizations for many years. The Virginia Department of Corrections/Division of Education however is a pioneer in accreditation for statewide and federal correctional institutions for offenders. In addition, the process involved in the evaluation was a unique blend of adapting virtual evaluation and on-site evaluation which was a key to providing an environment for the review, but still maintaining good security for our correctional environment.

***Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does your program differ?***

According to the American Council on Education, the Virginia Department of Corrections, Division of Education is the first correctional system to be awarded recommendation for credit of CTE courses through the ACE. There are several states with collaborative agreements through local community colleges, public or private institutions and the financial limitations that we experienced in the past are commonplace with other states. This key step of being granted our own accreditation opens up doors to all offenders earning college credit as opposed to alternate programs that are limited to offenders with financial means.

***Is the program transferable to other policy areas or states? What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter when attempting to adopt this program?***

The process of learning how to provide appropriate information to the American Council on Education of how competency based learning operates versus a traditional semester system aided us in creating a unique model of how to review our courses. The two normal modes of review are virtual review where all materials are sent to the two reviewers at various locations throughout the country or a comprehensive site visit in the actual classroom. We created a third model with a virtual classroom environment at our headquarters to prevent auditors from needing to enter our facilities which are spread-out statewide and using laptop demonstrations of our courses with created manuals of the operation of our classes. The process is easily replicable in any environment and the Virginia Department of Corrections, Division of Education has provided a clearer understanding of how many correctional education entities operate in adult institutions across the country. The process is simple with very little modification for each career and technical education class that exists. The cost involved two laptops per program and an onsite expert (teacher) of each program in case there were questions. With little discussion of the process by those that went through the process it can be passed on to other state agencies. Furthermore, now that our relationship with ACE has proven successful we will explore further courses that would benefit from ACE accreditation in the future to provide even more students with this opportunity.