



Catastrophic Event Planning for Supporting Instruction

Center for Teaching and Learning

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Introduction

Vance-Granville Community College (VGCC) is committed to offering quality educational programs in all delivery methodologies. Distance learning (i.e., online and hybrid learning environments) provides unique challenges and opportunities to serve students. To this end, VGCC complies with the Higher Education Opportunity Act and the [Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education](#) standards for quality online courses, as well as Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) guidelines for reporting of distance education. VGCC will secure authorization from states that require educational institutions to be legally authorized in their state prior to offering online/ distance education programs/courses to students residing in that state. Authorization must be secured for both curriculum and continuing education students. Authorization must be secured for faculty who teach online. All distance, hybrid, and online courses must be coordinated through the VGCC Center for Teaching and Learning prior to delivery. All academic departments are responsible for being knowledgeable and following VGCC's Program Development and Review Policy as well.

The **Center for Teaching and Learning: Catastrophic Events Planning for Supporting Instruction (CTL:CEPSI)** document is designed specifically to provide written context for how the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) contributes to business continuity and disaster recovery at [Vance-Granville Community College](#). Figure 1 illustrates how CTL:CEPSI connects to the Business Continuity Plan and Disaster Recovery Plan which serves as the structure for this plan.

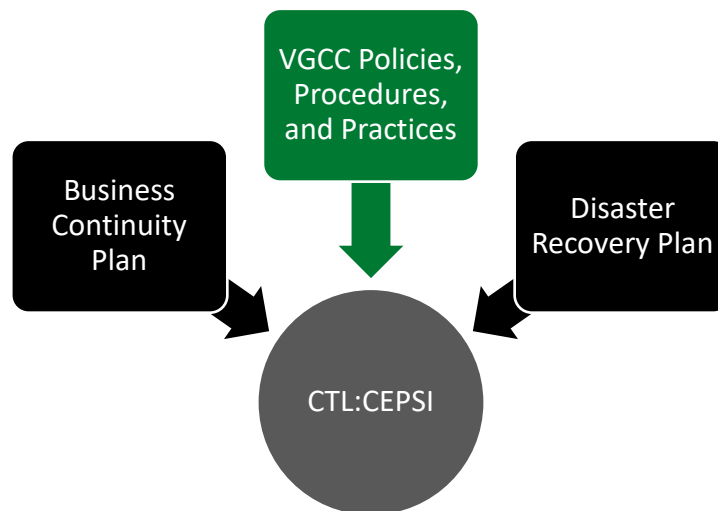


Figure 1. Illustration of the policies, procedures, and practices feed into the ideas and concepts for CTL:CEPSI.

CTL:CEPSI is also utilized for meeting yearly requirements for renewing membership with the [National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements](#) (NC-SARA). Continuous membership with NC-SARA demonstrates our commitment to removing barriers that impede access for students to enroll in distance education programs at VGCC. Please visit the [VGCC state authorization page](#) for more information.

Catastrophic Events Plan

Purpose and Scope

CTL:CEPSI outlines the current capacity and infrastructure for supporting instruction within the scope and guidelines disclosed by the [State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement North Carolina](#) (SARA NC). An annual requirement for colleges to start and maintain membership with SARA NC and NC-SARA is to share the catastrophic events plan. SARA NC defines the CEP as follows, stating that it:

...explains processes in the event of a natural disaster or unforeseen phenomenon, where classes are disrupted. The processes should outline what happens if students are unable to receive instruction. Will refunds be provided? If so, how? Will teach-out plans be provided? If so, how? Will you help students with transferring to another school? If so, how? We are looking for a process that explains how you will continue to provide student services in the event of a catastrophe, and if not, how will students be remunerated.

The CEP requires SARA NC and NC-SARA member institutions to address how students are supported based on any factors that disrupt their distance education program experience at the course or program level due to circumstances impacting college operations. This is also an accreditation requirement by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges

Vance-Granville Community College is accredited by the [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges](#) (SASCOC) and follows the policies, guidance, and recommendations the organization provides for ensuring the continuity of instruction in cases surrounding emergency situations and unanticipated circumstances (ex. pandemic, natural disaster, fire, institution/program closures, etc.). In cases where instruction cannot be fully delivered in courses or programs for which a student has contracted, the following plans will be implemented for students as a comparable solution.

Emergency Temporary Relocation of Instruction

SASCOC released a policy statement, the [Emergency Temporary Relocation of Instruction](#), for colleges to follow if classes are temporarily or permanently disrupted. The document provides the following opening statement to introduce the policy:

An institution may request emergency temporary relocation of instruction from its main campus or off-campus instructional sites. Emergency relocation is for an unforeseeable situation such as fire, natural disaster, or pandemic; emergency relocation is not applicable to a foreseeable situation such as the end of a lease, a one-time program offering, or renovation. Unlike non-emergency relocation in which instruction permanently relocates to another single site, emergency relocation temporarily relocates instruction to another single site or to multiple other sites.

Vance-Granville Community College details administrative functions which involve all departments and divisions. According to the Business Continuity Plan, "Each of these functional areas requires access to computerized college data systems and equipment, as well as space for administrative personnel to operate."¹ Should a significant disaster necessitate the evacuation of an entire campus facility or a substantial portion, the business continuity strategy for

¹ Taken from the Vance-Granville Community College Business Continuity Plan

the impacted campus will adhere to this recovery plan. Two strategies focus on classroom/instructional space and administrative services space.

It is also important to note that all course sections and modalities (i.e., traditional, hybrid, online) have a virtual presence located within the learning management system (LMS) utilized by VGCC. This includes learning and development opportunities focused on upskilling VGCC employees, especially faculty. In addition, instructors have access to Web conferencing technologies (ex. WebEx, Microsoft Teams, Zoom) to accommodate online synchronous instruction. These tools are critical for one of the choices outlined in the Make Up Plan for Missed Classes procedure for courses impacted by inclement weather, emergencies, staff development, or other reasons. Faculty have the option to leverage each tool for missed instructional days; and, as previously mentioned, for college-level impacts, VGCC developed a Business Continuity Plan and Disaster Recovery Plan to address catastrophic events.

Protocols based on disruptions to technology are outlined in the Disaster Recovery Plan. As its name implies, the purpose of the Disaster Recovery Plan is to “establish and define the procedures that will insure the continued operation and/or orderly recovery of information technology resources in the event of loss due to disaster or unforeseen emergencies, within reasonable time and costs.” For example, retention planning for the LMS includes recurring server backup services and cloud storages on an hourly basis which can be restored within 24 hours. LMS content is hosted on a cloud server, therefore disaster recovery includes use of the backed-up data to restore online services.

Institution or Program Closures / Teach Out Transfers

The [Closing a Program, Site, Branch, or Institution](#) document is recommended practice from SACSCOC for those accredited by the organization. Vance-Granville follows this practice if classes or the entire college is temporarily or permanently closed. For students impacted by program closures, faculty and professional advisors/counselors will provide consultation on comparable programs that they can enroll in as an option for pursuing a credential.

The following statement is an overview of the Closing a Program, Site, Branch, or Institution offered at the beginning of the document²:

A decision to close an educational program, site, branch campus, or the entire institution requires thoughtful planning and careful consultation with all affected constituencies. Every effort should be devoted to informing each constituency as fully as possible about the conditions compelling consideration of a decision of such importance, and all available information should be shared. As much as possible, the determination to close a program, site, branch campus, or the institution should be made through a consultative process and only after alternatives have been considered, but responsibility for the final decision to close rests with the institution’s governing board. Because the immediate interests of current students and faculty are most directly affected, their present and future prospects require especially sensitive and timely attention and involvement.

If an institution decides to close an educational program, site, branch campus, or the entire institution, it must consider the following options:

1. The institution teaches out currently enrolled students; no longer admits students to programs; and terminates the program, the operations of a site or a branch campus, or the operations of an institution after students have graduated. The institution must submit to the Commission a teach-out plan for approval.

² Taken from the Closing a Program, Site, Branch, or Institution Good Practices document written by SACSCOC

2. If the institution enters into a contractual teach-out agreement for another institution to teach out the educational programs or program, the teach-out agreement requires Commission approval in advance.

Tuition Refund Policy

Vance-Granville's [Tuition Refund Policy](#) is located on their website. Eligibility for tuition refunds is determined by the state policy in effect during the specified term, which will be published prior to the beginning of each term. The Tuition Refund policy is subject to change as directed by the N.C. Legislature and the N.C. Board of Community Colleges. Federal policy on Refund of Tuition for Title IV funds will supersede the State policy on Refund of Tuition.

Summary

The CTL:CEPSI leverages information from the VGCC Business Continuity Plan, Disaster Recovery Plan, and policies, procedures, and practices throughout the college. Policies and procedures for addressing course, program, or college campus disruptions are in place to support the continued mission and vision of VGCC. All courses traditional, hybrid, and online classes have access to a virtual space within the VGCC LMS. The Tuition Refund Policy is regulated. The policy is subject to change as directed by the N.C. Legislature and the N.C. Board of Community Colleges. Federal policy on Refund of Tuition for Title IV funds will supersede the State policy on Refund of Tuition.