

## VACRAO / VDOE Meeting FAQs

On April 16, 2008, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) hosted a status meeting regarding the Virginia Transcript Center (VTC) project. VDOE invited colleges throughout the state and the participating pilot school divisions to attend. Attendees were given the opportunity to submit questions as a part of the brief survey they completed at the end of this meeting. This document provides answers to the submitted questions.

### Security

#### **How secure is the flow of transcripts from end-to-end?**

All file transfers occur over a secure encrypted connection between servers. The servers use certificates that attest to their authenticity. All users of the system are required to log in to VTC using a strong password. In addition, the web interface connection is encrypted. This guarantees that everyone is communicating on a secure channel. Also, the VTC server has a certificate that the user can review for authenticity. When a transcript is sent and received electronically using VTC, the transcript is actually just moving within VTC itself, so it remains within the security of the system.

#### **Is there a backup process to this system, if there is a system, network or hardware failure?**

The National Transcript Center (NTC) performs regular backups and runs a RAID 6 Storage Area Network that allows for the ability to hot swap a failed hard-drive without a loss of data. NTC has system and application redundancy in case of a hardware or software failure. NTC also has a backup firewall and a redundant power supply to the hardware.

#### **How are the transcripts authenticated after they are printed or downloaded?**

NTC guarantees that the transcript data received is exactly what the sender intended to send. Before a transcript is sent, there is an "UNOFFICIAL" watermark across the PDF rendering of the transcript. When a transcript is sent through VTC, this watermark changes from "UNOFFICIAL" to "PENDING". This watermark is not removed until the recipient of the transcript logs in to NTC and accepts it.

If the transcript is sent to an institution that is not electronically enabled, the transcript will be delivered on paper. The National Transcript Center uses secure transcript paper that, among other things, becomes void if it is photocopied.

Also, a unique tracking number is generated for every VTC transaction. Using this tracking number, the details of the transactions can be reviewed by the electronic recipient. If the transcript is delivered on paper, this tracking number is printed on the paper transcripts, and the recipient can enter this number on the National Transcript Center's corporate website in order to authenticate the source of the transcript.

### Confidentiality and FERPA

#### **How is FERPA compliance maintained?**

In order to facilitate the electronic exchange of student records and transcripts, The National Transcript Center is an authorized agent of its users. NTC has several layers of security in place that ensures the right people have the right access to the right data. NTC only displays student information to authenticated users who are relevant to a particular transaction. Even authenticated users are locked out of data not related to their institution. The data that is contained within NTC is purged from the system in accordance with a customer-defined purge policy. Furthermore, NTC has a nationally recognized FERPA Compliance Officer who conducts periodic training for NTC employees in order to review FERPA guidelines and policies.

**How do you obtain permission from students for the release of their record?**

We allow the control of this function to remain with the schools in which a student attended. The processes for requests in each school division will remain in effect.

## Implementation

**Do all (feeder) high schools need this software?**

Because VTC is web-based, there is no software to install or download. High schools will need access to VTC, and they must be using software that is Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF)-enabled. Currently, 110 of 132 divisions in Virginia are SIF-enabled.

**Will this system replace all of our incoming transcripts?**

This system will replace incoming transcripts for the Virginia school divisions that are participating in the program offered by the VDOE.

**What other options are there besides receiving transcripts electronically?**

VTC can deliver student records and transcripts as raw data and PDFs to other VTC or NTC members. For those institutions who do not currently receive transcripts in an electronic format, NTC can print the record or transcript on secure paper and send it through the U.S. Postal Service.

**Will the colleges receive a standard transcript format?**

Yes, there will be a statewide uniformly formatted transcript for Virginia. Any Virginia college who has the NTC interface in order to receive the Virginia transcripts will also be able to receive transcripts from other NTC members. These other members are currently utilizing the NTC uniformly formatted transcript.

**What type of strategies/plans are in place in order to gain buy-in from guidance counselors?**

The VDOE will be marketing the service to all school divisions in a variety of ways. Strong incentives are the time savings and improved data quality. In addition, the service and training are free during the grant period, and we are working on strategies to sustain the service at no charge after the grant.

**What future strategies are going to be put in place for the inclusion of private high schools and colleges?**

At the present time, the scope of the VTC project is limited to public high schools and colleges in Virginia.

**Will there be full representation on a committee for sustaining the system?**

Yes, all stakeholders will be encouraged to participate.

**Will VA set up a SPEEDE-like server for VA state transcripts?**

We will not be using the SPEEDE server for Virginia Transcripts. However, NTC is providing EDI, PESC XML, PDF, and paper transcripts as a means of transcript transmission to other institutions.

**How will you get SCHEV involved?**

The VDOE will continue to communicate the results of the pilot to SCHEV and will encourage JMU and GMU and other interested institutions to work with their SCHEV representative.

## Data

**Do all test scores need to be in the Student Information System?**

Yes, all test scores will be required to be in the student information system in order to be transferred to other institutions.

**Will the eTranscript include SAT scores?**

SATs will be on the electronic transcript as long as the test scores are in the student information system.

**Will this system promote grading standards?**

No, this system will not promote grading standards. It will deliver the same grading standards that a school currently employs.

**How will course numbers work with this system?**

A school division will pass up to three different course codes (Local, State, and National Course Code). This system will pass these course codes to the higher education facility as provided to them from the school division.

**Will this system promote course codes standards?**

No, this system will not promote course code standards; however it will allow for schools to use the National Center for Educational Statistics Course Codes. If divisions want to participate in using this number we will pass it to the higher education institutions. We encourage higher education to request this number from the schools.

**Can eTranscript be automatically uploaded into our Student System - eg. Banner, Datatel, PeopleSoft?**  
VTC delivers transcript data to colleges and universities in either PESC XML or SPEEDE EDI, and because it is delivered as raw data, it is possible to import this data into other systems. You will need to work with your SIS vendor to determine whether or not your SIS has this capability.

**How would a college handle eTranscripts from multiple vendors efficiently?**

As more divisions join the official state transcript system, VTC, a high percentage of your inbound volume will come through one system. If you are receiving some transcripts from other Virginia public school divisions, you can recommend they begin using the state system.

## Usability

**Is there the ability to attach other relevant documents (school profile, SAT scores, recommendations) to the eTranscript when it is sent from our high school?**

Yes, attachments can be added to individual student records, and there is no restriction on the type of file that can be attached. There also is no limitation on the number of attachments per student record, but each individual attachment cannot exceed a file size of 16Mb. Not only can you add attachments to individual student records, but you can also upload a transcript legend at the institution level. Once this is uploaded, it will be appended to every student record / transcript within the system.

**Is there a possibility of transmitting one record at a time? As needed?**

Once the data is in VTC, one student record / transcript can be sent to one institution, one student record / transcript can be sent to multiple institutions, or multiple student records / transcripts can be sent to one institution.

**Will individual institution transcript paper be used? Will you use individual legends? Will the legends be printed on the paper transcripts?**

No, individual transcript paper will not be used. If a transcript is to be delivered on paper, it will be printed on NTC secure transcript paper. Individual legends can be uploaded into VTC, and if an institution utilizes this functionality, the legend will be appended to the PDF rendering of the transcript as well as to a transcript that is printed on secure transcript paper.

## Pricing

What are the costs for students, public and private high schools, and public and private colleges?

At the present time, the project is limited to sending records and transcripts to other public Virginia PK-12 schools and to public Virginia higher education institutions at no cost for the duration of the federal grant that is funding the project.

For more information, visit [www.transcriptcenter.com/virginia](http://www.transcriptcenter.com/virginia)