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Building on Good Foundations: Constructing a Research Data Management Program for a Research University

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Building on Good Foundations: Constructing a Research Data Management Program for a Research University

**Background**
Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) is a research university with very high research activity and over 30,000 students on two campuses. Part of the VCU Libraries (VCUL), the Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences (TML) is located on the Medical College of Virginia (MCV) Campus. The Tompkins-McCaw Library serves professional schools in allied health, dentistry, medicine, nursing, and pharmacy, as well as researchers and graduate and post-doctoral students. On the Monroe Park Campus, the James Branch Cabell Library serves a large undergraduate population, graduate students, faculty and researchers in sciences, engineering, social sciences, humanities, and arts. In 2013, the leadership of the VCU Libraries decided to launch an e-science initiative by creating research data management services under the director of the health sciences library. A director of research data management (DRDM) was hired in August 2013 to launch the initiative.

**Objective**
Develop an 18-month plan to create a research data management program for the entire university. The program needed to support mandated data management plans and sharing, as well as encourage good data management practices throughout the institution.

**The Roadmap**

- Develop an 18-month plan, based on research about exemplary and developing research data management programs.
- Assume that VCU researcher needs are similar to those identified through extensive interviews at other institutions on data management needs.
- Conduct a SWOT analysis of the data landscape of the University.
- Define potential services.
- Periodically assessing progress to establish an assessment plan for services, resources, and educational efforts.
- Develop collaborative relationships with liaison librarians, librarians, departments, or other VCU groups.
- Create a flexible infrastructure that can adapt to the future needs of the research enterprise at VCU.

**Results**
- Started with targeted meetings and presentations to faculty.
- Developed collaborative relationships with liaison librarians in both libraries to enhance awareness of research data management and to provide a conduit for appropriate referrals.
- Developed a plan to share a core curriculum with liaison librarians for instruction in their areas.
- Developed a communication plan to aid the Libraries’ communication officer and web developer.
- Identified and continue to pursue strategic partnerships.
- Periodically assessing progress to ensure that the needs of the research community are being met.

**Route Adjustments**
- Use VCU Libraries staff survey to plan training for data and scholarly communication topics.
- Combine review of institutional resources with stakeholder interview results to create a database of research resources, including data related resources, using eScience Institute strategic agenda planning.
- Always be prepared to revise the plan.
- Be ready for unexpected opportunities that may lead to better or different outcomes.

**Conclusion:**
- Don’t be wedded to your plan.
- Always be prepared to revise the plan.
- Be ready for unexpected opportunities that may lead to better or different outcomes.