Domain Name System (DNS) Policy

All devices on the Internet require an entry in a Domain Name Server (DNS) system in order to facilitate connection requests. Connections between machines on the Internet are made using the machine's numeric IP address. DNS systems provide a translation from the text name of a host to the host's numeric address. DNS entries may refer to a specific web page, a host or workstation, or other Internet entity. Different naming conventions have been developed based on the business needs of the University. The following policy statements apply to all DNS naming conventions:

In order to reduce security risks associated with running DNS servers as well as providing a consistent naming structure for VCU, all DNS services must be provided by VCUnet. VCUnet staff shall maintain the DNS at the most current revision levels consistent with operational stability and recommendations of industry security experts.

To increase the visibility of the University on the Internet, all VCU related DNS entries must end in VCU.EDU. For-profit or non-VCU related entries must be served by a commercial ISP. The cost for this service is to be borne by the requesting department or individual.

All VCU related DNS entries (host names, web sites, workstations, etc) should conform to the VCU DNS Naming Conventions. Existing entries that do not conform to the Naming Conventions will continue to be supported, but all new requests will follow these formats.

In all cases, DNS entries should present VCU in a professional light. Requests for names that might be offensive or inappropriate should be avoided. VCUnet staff will attempt to negotiate a resolution agreeable to all parties. Unresolved requests for names deemed questionable by VCUnet staff will be referred to the Information Technology Coordinating Committee (ITCC) for final resolution.

In the event that two units request the same domain name or URL, VCUnet staff will attempt to negotiate a resolution agreeable to all parties. Requests will normally be honored on a first come-first served basis, but University business needs may prevail. Unresolved request conflicts will be referred to the ITCC.

General Machine Name Conventions

In order to reduce the possibility of duplicate names and facilitate identifying non-centrally controlled devices, it is important to logically subdivide the available name space through the use of third and fourth level domain names.

University-Level Hosts: Only University-level hosts use a three level domain name, taking the format:

DeviceName.VCU.EDU

Generally, University-level hosts are directly supported by Technology Services. Examples are:

SATURN.VCU.EDU

AMBER.VCU.EDU

Departmental Hosts: The majority of devices on the network are departmental level devices. Internet names for departmental level devices on VCUNet use a four level domain name in the format

DeviceName.DepartmentCode.VCU.EDU

where DepartmentCode is a three-letter abbreviation for the department. In the case where the department does not have an assigned abbreviation, VCUnet will create an appropriate three-letter

abbreviation.

Departments have a fair amount of leeway in creating the DeviceName portion of the DNS entry. Names should be descriptive or functionally relevant, and most importantly, unique.

NT Server Name Conventions: NT Server names should be a three-letter department identifier followed by a dash and the letters NT; a sequential number starting with 1 for the first so that the type of server is easily identified. For example, the first Windows NT server installed in Animal Resources would be:

ANR-NT1.ANR.VCU.EDU

Workstation Name Conventions: It is recommended that workstations be identified by a three-letter department code followed by a dash, the letters PC and a sequential number. For example:

ANR-PC1.ANR.VCU.EDU

Using this format, rather than the PC owner's name or other information, eases the administrative burden of making changes when staffing changes.

Web Site Names

To accommodate business needs and ease of use, web site names use a different naming convention than individual Internet devices. Additionally, web sites hosted on departmental servers have different naming requirements than those hosted on official University web hosts. In all cases, web site names should be as simple and short as possible, start with WWW and end with VCU.EDU.

Web sites hosted on the University web server:

Sites hosted on the University web server may elect to have a shortened URL in the format:

WWW.SITENAME.VCU.EDU

Schools, departments, and institutes may elect to request a SITENAME that spells out the department name. For example, Technology Services could elect to name their web page:

WWW.TECHNOLOGYSERVICES.VCU.EDU

Rather than WWW.TS.VCU.EDU. However, decision makers should carefully consider which version of the web name really is more user friendly. The long version of the Technology Services name would be quite a lot to type; does having an English-language version of the name out-weigh the convenience of having an easy to type short name?

Sites on the University web server may also elect to have a URL in the format described below in the section on departmental web hosts.

Web sites hosted on departmental web servers:

Departmental or project based web sites hosted on departmental supported hosts will include the departmental three-letter identifier described in the naming conventions for devices. Generally, the DeviceName for web sites are WWW or descriptive of the specific project

Example:

WWW.DIVISION.DEP.VCU.EDU

WWW.PROJECT.DEP.VCU.EDU

VCU Health System DNS Conventions

VCUnet supports DNS entries for VCU Health System devices located on VCUnet. Generally, VCU Health System entries shall conform to VCU DNS conventions with the following exceptions:

The primary first and second level domains will be VCUHEALTH.ORG vice VCU.EDU

To support marketing efforts, other first and second level domains will be supported as defined in the OSA.