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

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Background

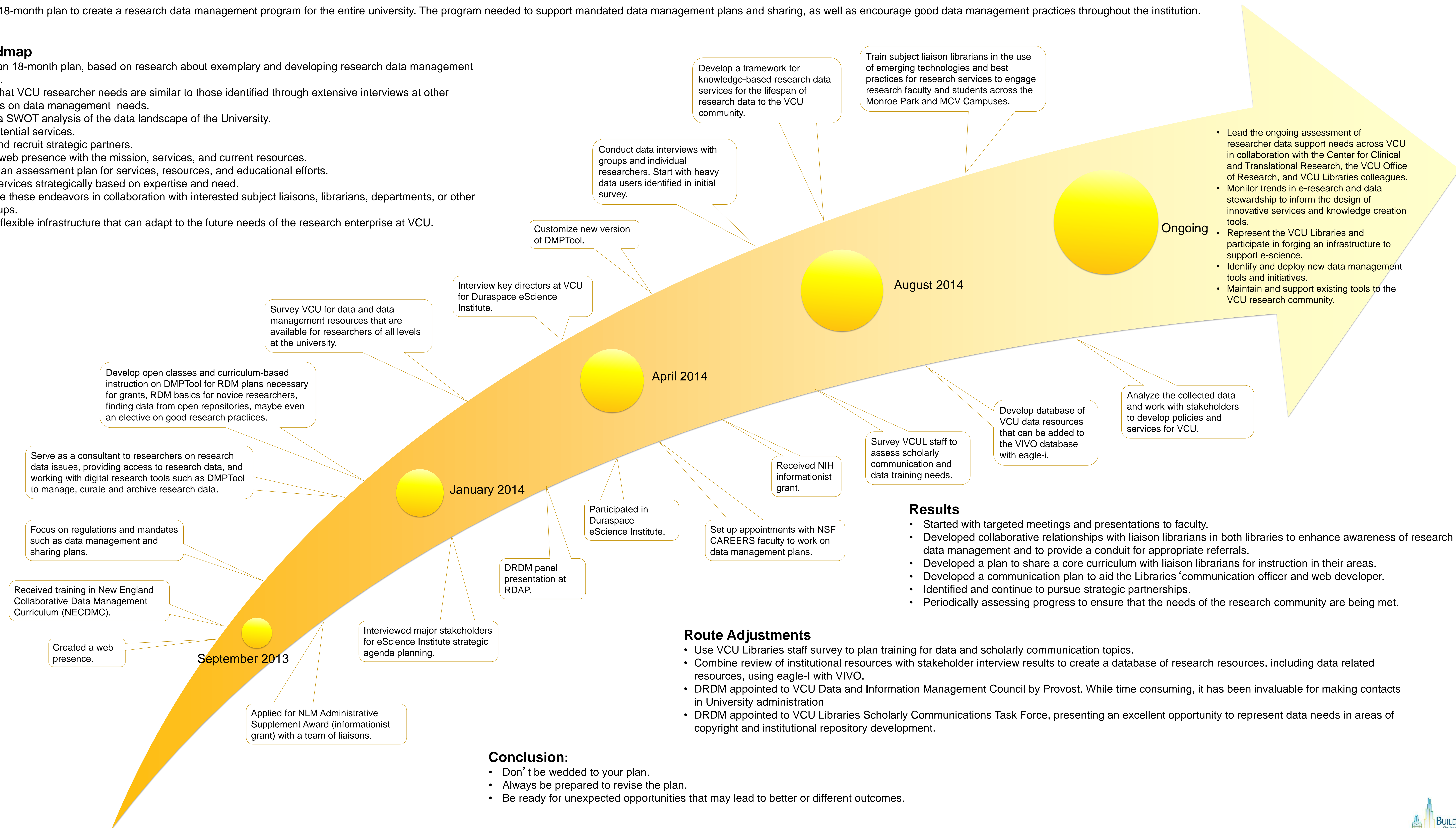
Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) is a research university with very high research activity and over 30,000 students on two campuses. Part of the VCU Libraries (VCUL), the Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences (TML) is located on the Medical College of Virginia (MCV) Campus. The Tompkins-McCaw 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.
- Identify and recruit strategic partners.
- Create a web presence with the mission, services, and current resources.
- Establish an assessment plan for services, resources, and educational efforts.
- Launch services strategically based on expertise and need.
- Undertake these endeavors in collaboration with interested subject liaisons, 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 eagle-i with VIVO.
- DRDM appointed to VCU Data and Information Management Council by Provost. While time consuming, it has been invaluable for making contacts in University administration
- DRDM appointed to VCU Libraries Scholarly Communications Task Force, presenting an excellent opportunity to represent data needs in areas of copyright and institutional repository development.

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.