Paths to Graduation:
Supporting Student Planning, Purpose, and Persistence

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Dhanfu Elston, *Vice President of Strategy, Complete College America*

"Guided Paths to Graduation"

Dr. Dhanfu E. Elston (pronounced: dah-nee-foo) serves as Complete College America's Vice President of Strategy for Guided Pathways and Purpose First where he utilizes his campus expertise for practical application, implementation, and scaling of CCA strategies at institutions throughout the nation. In over two decades of his higher education career in academic and student affairs, Elston has created and implemented comprehensive success and retention programs that have garnered national attention. He has been recognized as an expert in college completion policy initiatives at institutions that educate highly diverse and underrepresented student populations. Prior to his current role with CCA, Dr. Elston held the position of Executive Director of Student Success and Transition at Purdue University Calumet. Under Elston's leadership, Purdue Calumet (now Purdue Northwest) experienced exponential gains in first-year retention, graduation rates, and enrolled credit hours.

Following his keynote address, Dr. Dhanfu Elston will lead a workshop using VSCS-based student scenarios to explore potential applications of nationally recognized strategies to achieve significant improvements in student outcomes.

THIS YEAR'S ACADEMIC RETREAT WAS DEVELOPED WITH SUPPORT FROM COMPLETE COLLEGE AMERICA AND IN ALIGNMENT WITH THE VSCS BOARD OF TRUSTEES' **START TO FINISH** INITIATIVE, THE GOALS OF WHICH ARE TO INCREASE ACADEMIC SUCCESS AND RETENTION IN THE FIRST YEAR, SUPPORT ON-TIME COMPLETION OF A VSCS DEGREE OR OTHER CREDENTIAL OF VALUE, AND SUPPORT STUDENTS' PROGRESSION WITHIN THE SYSTEM TO FURTHER LEARNING.

RETREAT PLANNING MEMBERS

JENNIFER ALBERICO, CCV	GILLIAN GALLE, CU	BRENT SARGENT, VTC
KELLEY BECKWITH, CU	HARRIET JOHNSON, OC	TRISH VAN DER SPUY, CU
KIM CAREY, CU	SARA KINERSON, NVU	MARGO WARDEN, NVU
ROSEMARY DISTEL, VTC	CATHY KOZLIK, CU	
	ERIC SAKAI, CCV	

Retreat Schedule Overview

8:30 Arrival, coffee, informal networking	
9:00 Welcome *Castleton President Karen Scolforo* Our Data: VSCS Students from Start to Finish *VSCS Chief Academic Officer Yasmine Ziesler* **Keynote: Guided Paths to Graduation** *Dr. Dhanfu Elston, Complete College America*	**VSCS Teaching & Learning Technologies Sponsored Sessions:** ***Moodle Medic*** **Drop-in Clinic** **11am-3pm** An annual retreat feature, stop by for one-on-one assistance with the gradebook and demonstrations of popular Moodle resources.
11:00 Concurrent sessions I **Start to Finish Advising & Teaching with Dr. Dhanfu Elston** Using Moodle for Retention & Connection Using Alumni to increase Student Enrollment	***Moodle Course Showcase***
12:00 Luncheon remarks and conversation with: Chancellor Jeb Spaulding, VSCS Board Chair Churchill Hindes, and Education, Personnel, and Student Life Committee Chair Alyson Richards.	VSCS-TLT has created a [Moodle Course Showcase](#), featuring exemplary Moodle courses from all VSCS institutions. Showcase courses are available to the entire VSCS community to illustrate various approaches to designing Moodle courses that are user-friendly and accessible to all users.
1:30 Concurrent sessions II Distance Learning: What, How, and Why Working Session: Cross-College Advising Moodle Course Showcase	Faculty authors of Showcase courses will present their courses and explain how and why they designed them as they did. **Showcase presented during concurrent sessions II and III.**
2:45 Concurrent sessions III Competency Based Solutions: Recognizing Prior Learning for Increased Persistence Low and No Cost Textbook Solutions: Developing a System OER Infrastructure Moodle Course Showcase	
3:45 Evaluations and Closing	

Concurrent Sessions I: 11:00AM-Noon

Start to Finish Advising and Teaching – *Dhanfu Elston, Complete College America*
Join our keynote speaker Dr. Dhanfu Elston for a workshop using VSCS-based student scenarios to explore potential applications of nationally recognized strategies to achieve significant improvements in student outcomes.

Before Students Fade Away: Using Moodle for Retention and Connection – *Phil Crossman, Coordinator of Academic Services and Jennifer Alberico, Lead Coordinator of Academic Services, CCV*
The Center for Online Learning at CCV has developed—or taken advantage of—various ways to use Moodle tools to help keep students engaged in their work, both online and off. Studies show that students do better when they know they matter and that their presence counts. They are also more motivated when they know how they're doing. But how can a student do well without knowing what's expected? We will demonstrate strategies CCV has developed to orient, support, and monitor students from the beginning of the semester to the end: all with tools we already have!

Using Alumni to increase Student Enrollment – *Zoe McDonald, AmeriCorps VISTA Vermont Tech*
Academic research shows promising findings recruit alumni to increase enrollment. In Vermont, these alumni-student connections can become the deciding factor motivating students to enroll in a particular institution. This presentation reviews academic research related to alumni ambassadors, student satisfaction, and student enrollment decisions. The majority of this presentation will be devoted to participants applying those findings to their institutions in small groups.

Concurrent Sessions II: 1:30-2:30PM

The What, How, & Why of Distance Learning – *Sarah Billings-Berg, Associate Dean of Nursing, Vermont Tech & Bobbi Jo Carter, Associate Dean of Distance Education, Johnson*
In this session, we will explore *what* distance learning at Northern Vermont University and Vermont Tech looks like today and where we're taking it tomorrow. We'll talk about how online and hybrid courses are used to deliver NVU programs such as Wellness and Alternative Medicine, and how telepresence has enabled Vermont Tech to address the nursing shortage by serving students throughout the state. In addition to sharing *what* we are doing, we will also share *how* we do it by discussing our models for providing student and faculty support. After looking at the big picture of distance learning, we will share insight into *why* our institutions have decided to pursue distance learning options for delivering our programs.

Invited Working Session: Cross-College Advising – *Facilitated by Jennifer Alberico, Lead Coordinator of Academic Services, CCV and Lori Arner, Registrar, Castleton*
Join an invited team of academic advising staff, faculty, and registrars in a working session to identify the needs, issues, current tools and best practices, and potential new strategies to support students who are transferring within or otherwise desire (or could benefit from) taking advantage of the full resources of the system to stay on track and complete a degree. Have you worked with students who accessed courses at another college to catch-up or speed up? Who struggled to adapt to a new learning environment, whether online or a new campus-based culture? Who began their studies via Dual Enrollment or Early College with a goal of transferring within the VSC to finish a degree? Please join us to contribute your perspectives.

Moodle Course Showcase – *VSCS-TLT Sponsored Session, Presented by Showcase Faculty*

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Concurrent Sessions III: 2:45-3:45PM

Competency Based Solutions: Recognizing Prior Learning for Increased Persistence *Melissa DeBlois, Director of Prior Learning Assessment, and Stephanie Giese, Assistant Professor of Business, NVU-Lyndon*

> In this session, you will learn about the VSCS's new Competency Based solutions developed by Business departments around the system. The solutions include efficient and consistent online assignments that provide students with a way to demonstrate their learning in five identified courses. We will explore data around retention of adult learners, share how the VSCS Business departments made this happen??, see the developed course shells, consider advising scenarios, and brainstorm ways to support non-traditional students. We will finish up with an exploration of the courses in your own programs that might fit into an expansion of streamlined Competency Based solutions.

Low Cost and No Cost Textbook Solutions: Developing a VSCS Open Education Resources Infrastructure *Eileen Gatti, Assistant Director, Hartness Library; Jami Yazdani, Director, Calvin Coolidge Library; Mike Keogh, Business & Community Outreach Manager, CCV; Sam Boss, Director, Samuel Read Hall Library*

> Textbook prices have skyrocketed in the past few decades, with ramifications for student access and success. In one recent survey, 66.6% of Florida students polled said they had gone without buying a required textbook due to the high price tag; another 47.6% said they had simply taken fewer courses. A global movement toward Open Educational Resources (OER) has arisen in response to this economic burden and in support of an open, creative and collaborative approach to educational materials. How can the Vermont State Colleges help faculty make the switch to low- or no-cost course materials to help boost student success and retention? The VSC Library Council proposes an OER Program that would bring together stakeholders across the colleges to contribute to the planning, oversight, and collaboration needed to make OER at the VSC a robust and sustainable part of higher education affordability in Vermont. Come hear librarians and faculty discuss their approach, see how programs have been implemented around the country, and share your own experiences and potential OER support needs as faculty.

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