

VERMONT STATE COLLEGES SYSTEM

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

RESOLUTION 2019-007

Recommendations to Address the Challenges
Facing the Vermont State Colleges System

WHEREAS, The Vermont State Colleges System, which includes Castleton University, Northern Vermont University, Vermont Technical College, and the Community College of Vermont, was created by Vermont Statute in 1961 as a public corporation to plan, supervise, administer and operate facilities for education at the postsecondary level supported in whole or in substantial part with State funds; and

WHEREAS, The System's Mission is, for the benefit of Vermont, to provide affordable, high quality, student-centered, and accessible education, fully integrating professional, liberal, and career studies, consistent with student aspirations and regional and State needs; and

WHEREAS, The System's Institutions currently serve over 11,000 students, provide continuing education for over 9,000 adults, and employ approximately 2,000 individuals statewide; and

WHEREAS, In his June 20, 2019 report entitled "Serving Vermont's Students by Securing the Future of the Vermont State Colleges System," also called the "White Paper," the Chancellor described six challenges confronting the System and its Institutions, including historically weak demographics, low levels of State operating and capital support, accelerating competition and pricing pressures, barriers to adaptability, changing student preferences and attitudes, and disruptive technology and delivery; and

WHEREAS, Since the release of the White Paper, the Chancellor, members of the Board's Long Range Planning Committee and other Trustees have met with each Institution's President and leadership team; conducted two System-wide online meetings open to all faculty, staff and others; convened listening sessions on each of the System's five major campuses; and compiled over 200 suggestions, thus far from stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, These stakeholders have overwhelmingly concurred with the Chancellor's assessment of the six challenges and their potential to have serious impacts on the System, its Institutions, and the System's Mission; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Trustees continues to fully and unequivocally support and endorse Northern Vermont University's on-going unification efforts at thriving campuses in Lyndon and Johnson, and the rapidly growing NVU-Online programs, which provide access for additional students; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Trustees is the legally constituted body ultimately responsible for the quality and integrity of the System and its Institutions, and it is the Trustees' duty as fiduciaries to act in the best interests of and to secure the System's Mission in the face of these challenges; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Trustees hereby directs the Chancellor to provide a plan with specific recommendations for each Institution, the Chancellor's Office and the System as a whole to address these challenges. Such plan may include proposals and estimates including elements such as:

- a) changes to academic and other program offerings;
- b) goals for educational and workforce outcomes;
- c) changes to tuition pricing and other student charges;
- d) further consideration of administrative overhead and shared services;
- e) related levels of needed ongoing operating and capital funding, one-time funding for specific initiatives, and potential sources of those funds, including State funds, and whether capital financing (e.g., bonds or other indebtedness) may be required;
- f) costs of related facilities and infrastructure projects such as construction, renovation, major maintenance and or demolition; and
- g) an assessment of the primary risks inherent to implementation of the plan and the anticipated efforts to mitigate these risks; and be it further

RESOLVED, That such recommendations should include projected or anticipated changes to:

- a) total enrollments;
- b) numbers and type of employees;
- c) financial operating results and fund balance; and
- d) annual debt service and total outstanding debt

for the System and each of its individual Institutions over a 10-year period from fiscal years 2021 through 2030; and be it further

RESOLVED,

That recommendations shall address issues such as:

- a) how the recommendations enhance the System's Mission;
- b) what expected one-time and ongoing costs and benefits are associated with the changes;
- c) how the changes will affect students, staff, and faculty;
- e) how the recommendations will improve retention and graduation rates;
- d) the timeframe over which the changes will occur including a schedule of major benchmarks from initiation to completion and metrics used to evaluate success;
- e) what major bargaining or other contractual obligations need to be satisfied; and
- f) what external approvals are required from various bodies, including but not limited to the Vermont General Assembly, the Governor's Office, the United States Department of Education, the New England Commission for Higher Education, and other legal, regulatory, or accrediting bodies or other authorities as required; and be it further

RESOLVED,

That the Chancellor shall provide a status report on the development of recommendations to the Long Range Planning Committee at its meeting scheduled for October 21, 2019 and to deliver the recommendations for consideration at the Board's meeting scheduled for December 2 or, if the Chancellor recommends that additional time is needed to produce such plan, then such later date as proposed by the Chancellor and approved by the Board.

Approved: September 18, 2019

J. Churchill Hinds, Chair of the Board of Trustees