

VSCS Secure the Future
Guiding Principles for Action

NOVEMBER 2019

Consistent with the Chancellor's White Paper, [Serving Vermont's Students by Securing the Future of the Vermont State Colleges System](#) and the [charge from the Long Range Planning Committee](#), the following guiding principles are intended to provide the VSCS Board of Trustees a framework to evaluate the action steps planned by member institutions and guide any related decisions of the Board.

1. Action steps should be good for students and good for Vermont.

The White Paper describes a vision of a thriving future Vermont State Colleges System that includes these elements specifically relevant to students:

- a high quality, relevant, and contemporary educational experience for students, both traditional and non-traditional;
- an interconnected, coordinated, and friction free system of unique and innovative colleges and universities;
- great places to...learn, in good condition and with up-to-date physical and IT infrastructure;
- programs that...[launch] the hopes and dreams of our students and meet the workforce needs of the state and region; and
- delivery of programs and services where and when students...need them.

Action steps that will inevitably require prioritization of scarce resources should ultimately reflect a balanced approach to achieving this vision.

2. Action steps should be practical.

The White Paper draws conclusions about unavoidable challenges as well as those within the control of the VSCS and its stakeholders. Practical solutions will be those that:

- adapt to realistic projections of future traditional campus-based students;
- recognize the limitations on increased support from the state's general fund; and
- develop new delivery models that provide increased efficiency for institutions and students alike, whether by increasing success rates (e.g. lowering student tuition costs due to unsuccessful credits or excess semesters) or optimizing enrollment levels (e.g. via cohort-based courses and shorter-term credentials delivered at external locations or delivery modalities that support access by blend of traditional and non-traditional learners).

3. Internal and external stakeholders should recognize action steps as feasible.

The White Paper identifies that achieving significant institutional adaptation in a short timeframe will be challenging. The system's physical and personnel infrastructures are all currently organized to support local communities, work processes, and work cycles that may be misaligned with the

practical demands and best interests of future VSCS students. Action steps should recognize these realities and present a clear rationale for affected stakeholders.

4. Action steps should provide meaningful and durable financial benefits.

Given the constrained resources across the system, it becomes even more critical that resources for innovation and improvement are focused on those directions most likely to yield substantial operating benefits. At its [October 21, 2019 meeting](#), the Long Range Planning Committee charged the presidents with reporting to the board on action steps that address the challenges outlined in the White Paper to ensure:

- Consistent positive operating results;
- Sustainable campus configurations;
- Increased opportunities for non-traditional students;
- Improved affordability for students;
- Improved retention and graduation rates; and
- Increased system collaborations.