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**Vermont State Colleges System Chancellor Announces Adaptation Plans
to Meet the Challenges of the Future**
*Recommendation to Board of Trustees Includes Substantial Transformation and
Campus Consolidation*

Montpelier, VT – Chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges System (VSCS), Jeb Spaulding today announced plans to recommend a substantial transformation of the nearly 60 year old system. The plan will be proposed to the VSCS Board of Trustees to address significant financial challenges greatly exacerbated by the global COVID-19 pandemic. The VSCS has long struggled financially for reasons outlined in their [Serving Vermont Students by Securing the Future of the Vermont State Colleges System](#) whitepaper including aging demographics and stagnant enrollment, years of low State support and pricing competition from other colleges, over capacity and aging residential facilities, and increased technological disruption of the higher education model.

The System projects a near-term operating deficit to as much as \$7-10 million this fiscal year, including \$5.6 million in costs for student refunds for room and board due to moving students off-campus and shifting to remote instruction. This anticipated deficit includes the expected \$3 million in federal assistance to offset losses. Looking ahead to fiscal year 2021, the VSCS must prepare for a possible declining enrollment of 15-20 percent at its residential campuses due to COVID-19 concerns and a corresponding budget deficit approaching \$12 million, even after substantial budgetary actions.

“These are very painful decisions, but they are necessary because we must preserve the VSCS for generations of Vermonters who rely on public higher education to achieve their personal and professional dreams,” said Jeb Spaulding, Chancellor, VSCS. “We are in truly unprecedented times like nothing we have ever experienced before in our lifetimes and we know the impacts of COVID-19 will linger for months, maybe years. We cannot wait and hope for recovery, we must act decisively to chart a course toward long-term viability. That is our ultimate goal. We owe it to our students, faculty, staff and state.”

The plan – which will be presented to the full VSCS board of trustees at a Monday meeting – is a whole system transformation focused on eliminating program duplication, reducing overhead



and investing in programs that are high demand, economically viable, and provide high demand career opportunities for Vermont students. It includes the consolidation of the two residential career-focused liberal arts campuses of Northern Vermont University (NVU) to Castleton University.

“We will be upholding the best of Castleton and adding strong programs from Northern Vermont University to enhance student opportunities, including those offered through NVU Online,” Spaulding explained.

Additionally, Vermont Technical College (VTC) will continue offering programs critical to Vermonters and Vermont employers by closing its Randolph Center campus, consolidating to expanded locations in the Williston area and throughout Vermont. Programs will be more accessible to Vermonters via new low-residency, regional delivery and distance learning modalities. The applied learning and hands-on labs will be maintained with low residency options in Williston and eventually elsewhere.

Community College of Vermont, which has avoided many of the challenges brought on by COVID-19, will maintain its key role providing a statewide network of access to academic programs, workforce development, and student advising and further develop plans and partnerships to enhance existing online and in-person instruction in the Northeast Kingdom and the northern parts of Vermont. Over time, Castleton and other higher education institutions will offer more robust 2+2 and bachelor’s degree programs at CCV or other shared sites.

The Chancellor’s office will also be restructured and downsized beginning in the next fiscal year.

The VSCS anticipates residential campus closures at NVU and VTC-Randolph and VTC’s move to the Williston area will be completed before the beginning of the 2020-21 academic year and estimates a reduction of approximately 500 employees as a result of the consolidations.

“Our hearts are with the students, faculty and staff whose lives will be painfully impacted by this news and we will make every effort to ensure they are supported in the transition,” Spaulding continued. “Every member of the VSCS family, including tens of thousands of alumni have made a lasting impact on the institutions and the state. Please know we will work tirelessly to maintain a VSCS we can all be proud of now and for the future.”

The VSCS currently serves over 11,000 degree-seeking students and provides additional continuing education for over 9,000 adults. A post-COVID-19 world will require those seeking employment in high wage jobs to attain a post-secondary degree, certificate or training and the VSCS will focus on how best to serve those Vermonters – we will be there.

Students planning to attend Northern Vermont University in the fall will be supported with a smooth transition to the consolidated Castleton University. Vermont Tech will be working with its students through this reconfiguration, as well. In some cases, transfer agreements with programs in and outside Vermont may be established for programs no longer supported through the VSCS. Those plans are being finalized and students will be notified in the coming weeks.



“We know this represents more unwelcome change for students, employees and community members in an already stressful environment, but now more than ever, we urge people to recognize this transformation is critical to a sustainable future for public higher education in Vermont. Our economy will rebound and post-secondary education opens so many opportunities. And the VSCS has been, and will continue to be, the main point of access to higher education for thousands of Vermonters each year,” Spaulding concluded.

The VSCS Board of Trustees will conduct a virtual meeting on Monday where they will consider adoption of the Chancellor’s recommendation. People interested in submitting written comments to the Board before the meeting may do so at www.vsc.edu. More information will be forthcoming in the weeks ahead.