


TO: Long Range Planning Committee
Michael Pieciak, Chair
Janette Bombardier, Vice-Chair
Megan Cluver
Lynn Dickinson
Dylan Giambatista
Adam Grinold
Bill Lippert
Karen Luneau

FROM: Sophie Zdatny, Chancellor 

RE: Long Range Planning Committee Meeting on July 23, 2020

DATE: July 21, 2020

The Long Range Planning Committee of the Board of Trustees is scheduled to meet from 1:00 – 4:30 p.m.

The agenda is attached. To give the committee an update on the various efforts and discussions underway within the system and its communities, I have invited the following groups to share their thinking and work for the first portion of the committee’s meeting:

Organizers of VSCS Thrive! As described on its new website (<https://vscsthive.org/about/>), this grassroots group was formed in April 2020. The group also has an active public Facebook group with over 9,800 members. A copy of a document, “The Case for the Vermont State Colleges” authored by several group members was shared with the VSCS Forward Task Force and is included for you in the materials.

Labor Task Force. On June 17, 2020, VSCS union leaders jointly organized an open “Labor Task Force Town Hall” meeting. Notes from the discussions at this meeting were also shared with the VSCS Forward Task Force and are included in the materials packet.

The committee will also have the opportunity to hear updates from our presidents and an initial report on the work thus far of the VSCS Forward Task Force. The committee is scheduled to meet until 4:30 p.m. to allow for ample time for discussion of these efforts. I look forward to Thursday’s conversation.

Cc: VSC Board of Trustees
Council of Presidents

**Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees
Long Range Planning Committee Meeting**

July 23, 2020

AGENDA

1. Call to order
2. Approval of Minutes from June 1, 2020
3. VSCS Thrive! Organizers
4. Labor Task Force
5. Progress Report from VSCS Forward Task Force
6. Presidents and Chancellor Updates
7. Other business
8. Comments from the public

MATERIALS:

1. June 1, 2020 Minutes
2. VSCS Thrive! Document, "The Case for the Vermont State Colleges"
3. Labor Task Force Town Hall Meeting Notes

Minutes of the VSCS Board of Trustees Long Range Planning Committee meeting held Monday, June 1, 2019, at 3:00 p.m. via Zoom – UNAPPROVED

Note: These are unapproved minutes, subject to amendment and/or approval at the subsequent meeting.

The Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees Long Range Planning Committee conducted a meeting Monday, June 1, 2019, via Zoom

Committee members: Michael Pieciak (Chair), Janette Bombardier (Vice Chair), Megan Cluver, Lynn Dickinson, Dylan Giambatista, Adam Grinold, Bill Lippert, Karen Luneau

Other Trustees Present: Ryan Cooney, Churchill Hindes, Jim Masland, Peg Flory, Linda Milne, David Silverman

Presidents: Elaine Collins, Joyce Judy, Pat Moulton, Jonathan Spiro (Interim)

Chancellor's Office Staff: Donny Bazluke, Network/Security Analyst
Todd Daloz, Interim General Counsel
Jen Porrier, Administrative Director
Meg Walz, Project Manager
Steve Wisloski, Chief Financial Office
Sophie Zdatny, Interim Chancellor
Yasmine Ziesler, Chief Academic Officer

From the Colleges: Nolan Atkins, Provost, Northern Vermont University
Sarah Chambers, Coordinator of Instructional Technology, Castleton University
Michael Fox, Dean of Enrollment & Marketing, Northern Vermont University
Laura Jakubowski, Chief Budget & Finance Ofc., Castleton University
Linda Olson, VP Education AFT-VT, Castleton University
Maurice Ouimet, Dean of Enrollment, Castleton University
Andy Pallito, Dean of Administration, Community College of Vermont
Sharron Scott, Dean of Administration, Northern Vermont University

Bethany Sprague, Office Manager, Castleton University
Michael Stevens, Director of Facilities, Northern Vermont
University
Littleton Tyler, Dean of Administration, Vermont Technical
College
Beth Walsh, President, VSCUP, Northern Vermont University

From the public:

Lola Duffort, Reporter, VT Digger
Amy Nixon, Reporter, Caledonian Record

1. Chair Pieciak called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.
2. Approval of the minutes
 - a. October 21, 2019

Trustee Dickinson moved and Trustee Flory seconded the motion to approve the meeting minutes from October 21, 2019. The motion was approved unanimously.

3. Secure the Future

- a. Overview by Chair on the background to the Secure the Future project

Chair Pieciak reviewed the Committee's work, starting in May 2019 with the *Secure the Future* project, followed by the release of the White Paper in August 2019. The White Paper identified six challenges facing the VSCS and the Committee solicited key stakeholder groups for ideas and recommendations over the summer and fall of 2019. At its October 2019 meeting, the Committee tasked the Presidents with reporting on their efforts on *Secure the Future* at the institution level to the LRPC Committee and the Board of Trustees.

- b. Presentation by Presidents with updates on actions that have been undertaken in response to *Secure the Future* and how each institution is continuing to plan and prepare for the future.

Northern Vermont University President Elaine Collins discussed an innovative model being developed to ensure the sustainability of NVU in the future. President Collins discussed NVU's new Advisory Committee: NVU Strong (<https://www.northernvermont.edu/about/support-northern-vermont-university/northern-vermont-university-strong>) comprised of students, faculty, staff and community members. The Advisory Committee will develop sustainable models, vet ideas and propose future models meeting the goals of the committee.

Vermont Technical College President Pat Moulton stated that Vermont Tech expects to end the year with a surplus which President Moulton credits to controlled expenses and solid enrollment. Vermont Tech is deactivating their BioDigester, resulting in a small number of layoffs. President Moulton discussed the possibility of establishing some permanent work from home positions reducing the overall footprint and need for office space on campus. Vermont Tech has created the Transformation Advisory Task Force, comprised of faculty, staff and students. It will

be developing a transformation and implementation plan for a sustainable campus with return on investment and more student access through decentralized delivery and improving graduate satisfaction.

Castleton University Interim President Jonathan Spiro shared that CU froze spending in March. They will be archiving eight under-enrolled academic programs. CU is planning to partner with the town of Castleton and the city of Rutland to forge entrepreneurial partnerships. CU has created a taskforce to coordinate plans for a safe reopening of their campus. President Spiro views the current marketing challenge as one that can be met by marketing the actual state of Vermont and all it has to offer the students of the VSC, and that CU will continue to focus on what it does best, which is operate as a small New England University with small classes and individualized teaching.

Community College of Vermont President Joyce Judy shared that CCV's key asset is their strong relationships within the labor market and communities. Maintaining their crucial relationships with businesses keeps CCV responsive and agile. CCV has begun offering accelerated courses and flex courses and are expanding their apprenticeship programs, as well as expanding their offerings for adult learners and making courses more accessible.

4. Committee Discussion: System-wide Task Force

Chair Pieciak stated that this Task Force was approved by the Board of Trustees at their Special Board meeting earlier in the day. Interim Chancellor Sophie Zdatny then discussed the creation of the system-wide task force, which is charged with developing plans and advising the Chancellor's Office and Board of Trustees on how to move the organization forward to ensure quality, financial viability, and access to programs for students across Vermont. The 15-member task force, called *VSCS Forward*, is comprised of diverse and highly skilled individuals from across the VSC. Each college and full-time bargaining unit was asked to select participants. An outside professional facilitator will be hired to lead the group discussion and support the team's work.

5. Other Business

Chair Pieciak noted that the next Committee meeting is not scheduled until October 26th but that the Committee might like to have an additional meeting prior to that. Dates will be solicited for an additional meeting.

6. Comments from the public

There were no comments.

Chair Pieciak adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

The Case For Vermont State Colleges

Roger Allbee . Mary L. Collins . Rebecca Flieder . Eric Gilbertson . Ben Luce . Richard Moye
Adam Norton . Bill Petrics . David Plazek . Cathy Printon . Susan Rand . Shayne Spence

June 18, 2020

The Case for Vermont State Colleges

We stand at a crossroad. Over the past several weeks, the Vermont State Colleges have been under siege by its own managing body. The Chancellor and his Board of Trustees opened up a Pandora's box of shock, dismay, and outrage when then-Chancellor Jeb Spaulding suggested Vermont close three of our five state college campuses. Citing insurmountable economic challenges, the former Chancellor believed the VSCS's salvation would come through shuttering the three northern-most campuses: NVU Lyndon, NVU Johnson, and Vermont Technical College in Randolph. In the span of six weeks, students, faculty, alumni, community members and legislators rallied to express deep concern at this poorly conceived and badly delivered idea. Since then, numerous task forces have developed, many commentaries have been shared with the press, and hundreds of ideas have surfaced on social media and elsewhere in defense and for the preservation of our VSCS.

Why such a vigorous effort? Because the VSCS is a critical life force in Vermont's more rural communities and provides a means to an education for those who may otherwise not pursue one. It matters.

If we were to look squarely at the economic fallout of closing our VSCS, we would see a staggering erosion of the economies of our northern cities and towns. By NVU alone, fully \$113 million dollars is generated annually within these communities because of the presence of the VSC. A college education is more than the acquisition of skills and credentials. It improves quality of life - just like public parks and historic buildings improve community life. These things exist and are preserved at considerable public expense. We should similarly value an educated populace.

Small colleges may be looked upon as part of the state's beneficial physical and human landscape. As you know, Vermont is not simply a geographic and political entity, it's a brand that evokes quality, beauty and enlightened common sense. The existence of small traditional and progressive colleges are part of that brand.

If we consider the socio-economic impact losing any of the colleges would have upon the regions they serve, we would see an irrevocable loss of jobs and sense of community that has been fostered by these institutions for generations. Isn't it, then, more sensible to consider more innovative solutions that engage the communities in the re-imagining of our State Colleges? We think so. And we invite you to join us in the conversation, planning, and future of our VSCS.

On the following pages, you will hear from students, alumni, faculty, and others who are committed to our Vermont State Colleges and why it matters that we sustain them. We are sharing our stories, our concerns, and numerous ideas of HOW we might be able to accomplish a re-imagined VSCS from current students and faculty, from former presidents of these colleges, and from alumni whose relationships with their alma maters span more than 40 years.

At the end of the document, you will find contacts and resources should you wish to join us. We hope you do. If not, please share this with anyone you think might wish to be involved or to know what's at stake.

Thank you.

We Were Cottier Class



The author, age 3, with cousin, brother, and neighbor

As I watch the story of Vermont's State Colleges unfold here in this quiet corner of the state where I live, I am struck by the fact that my home is just a few short miles from where I spent four years of my young adult life exploring

what it meant to be *me* without the restrictions of my upbringing or from within the Catholic school choke-hold – the only educational experience I'd had until that point.

I think about all that's at stake as Vermont navigates the terrain from what once was—and what has been part of our heritage since the state wrote its constitution in 1777—to what may soon remain of our public educational institutions.

We are changing – as we must. But we must not lose sight of or devalue what we already have.

The world is fast-moving; students are challenged by an ever-increasing competitive world and the benefits they must weigh when deciding to what they will commit their hearts and minds. In that equation is the equally serious consideration of the cost/benefit of earning a degree, most often before the age of 22. Young Vermonters must decide if the investment is worth the risk.

In homes where higher education is part of the family history, or where money is not a restriction, the question is not so much *if* but *what*? What will John, Jr. study? Will he attend his mother's alma mater or strike out on his own? What will Mara choose? Arts or Sciences? She's equally talented in both and has her pick of a number of colleges and universities.

Yet in homes where college seems an exotic and mysterious undertaking, where the cost to attain a four-year degree could hobble a family, or where the college-bound young adult has to establish a precarious balance among their abilities, their desires, and what they can and their families can afford; between staying on the farm or leaving the nest altogether—in that, the quest for higher education is a different gamble from those who have the means and legacy to pursue a college education. Yet we evaluate them as one and the same.

They are not.

In Irish history, a distinct class of people were caught up in a similar struggle. The *cottiers* were landless. They were the progeny of poor families, and, while some of those families may have had modest landholdings, all of the property would have been bequeathed to the eldest son. Younger siblings would have had to take their chances elsewhere. For many, that meant emigrating to England, Canada, or the United States, working as laborers, factory workers, or domestic help.

My family were among the exodus of Irish in 1832. Our earliest papers indicate that at least some could read, and, while they toiled for years as “ditch

diggers” by the notes found in family records, they eventually acquired enough money to buy land in West Berkshire, Vermont. Still, none of my relations attended college until my generation.

Of five children, four of us earned bachelor’s degrees; three of these four have master’s degrees. The fifth sibling opted for four years in the Navy.

My siblings include an attorney and college professor; a police officer and high school resource officer; a former Dean of Students and Student Services Director at two of Vermont’s State Colleges; and a successful writer, educator, business owner, and nationally recognized community activist.

Each of us made our own way through college despite having parents who did not understand or embrace the idea of college for us. They weren’t bad parents; they were just not aware of the value of a college education and so didn’t encourage it. All four of us paid our own way through college and graduate school. Three of us received our undergraduate degrees from Johnson State College, one from the University of Vermont. Our youngest brother earned his master’s degree from UVM as well. We are no different from any other first-generation Vermont college student. We just came in at a time when funding was more generous and the cost of education much less. Still, it was a sacrifice and a financial stretch.

And that is why each of us feels it is our duty to speak up for this generation of students—whether they be fresh out of high school or a returning adult who wants to better their opportunities and expand their world through the gift of education.

But the current dilemma of funding our State

Colleges indicates that the state of Vermont doesn’t see the value of higher education the way it once did. For many years now, Vermont State Colleges have been woefully under-funded, so much so that we have earned the dubious distinction of being the second least funded state in the nation for higher education. In a state that is also losing its young adults to other states in significant numbers, it would seem the last thing we would want to do is cut learning opportunities. Worse is for the Chancellor’s office and Board of Trustees to evaluate higher education strictly from a balance sheet, or reduce our colleges to be little more than job training centers.

Our colleges are rich resources for the arts, sciences, environmental studies, health care, and teacher training. They produce engineers and nurses, journalists and farmers, and so much more. They create communities rich in diversity and experiences our rural towns would not otherwise have available. They are places that attract high-quality faculty and staff and provide a focal point for many to live and work and, in significant numbers, to put down permanent roots.

Our Vermont State Colleges are job developers, liaison-builders, and a focal point for learning and community enrichment.

Most significantly to this story is this: our Vermont State Colleges are THE first choice for a higher education for first-generation Vermont college students. So to cut them down, like the branches of a tree, will only stultify the potential of thousands of Vermonters and make wastelands of the communities and people they serve.

On the following pages, you will hear from alumni,

faculty, community partners, and current students whose stories, we hope, will illustrate why we feel so strongly that our Vermont State Colleges need a fresh perspective and review. We are deeply concerned that the State Colleges' Board of Trustees and its current leadership continue to rehash the same top-down style of management that excludes community voice, student voice, and others. We hope you will add your voice. Thank you.

- Mary L. Collins

Johnson State College, BFA in Creative Writing,
Class of 1981



Johnson State College. Class of 1985. Then & Now



The Vermont State College Mission: One Graduate's Story

Our mission starts with “For the benefit of Vermont.” The Vermont State Colleges System is deeply rooted in the communities and regions of the state. We educate more Vermonters annually than all the other institutions of higher education in the state combined. We employ thousands of Vermonters, and our campuses and academic centers are centers of academic excellence, culture, and community.

This. This is our mission. First and foremost the purpose of the VSCs is to benefit Vermont – in academic excellence, culture, and community. The question posed is this:

If I were to design a higher education system for the State of Vermont what would it look like? It would certainly look like a caring, student-centered system of shared learning and teaching through curiosity; success with support and engagement; and progress through seeking out and listening to the voices of students, staff, faculty, and community. Vermont is uniquely poised.

More opportunities are better than fewer when looking at an institution of higher learning. Cutting smaller programs that haven't had the attention and marketing strategy to grow is short sighted. Small programs grow and enhance the campus culture. Too narrow a focus limits who is attracted to an institution and region and narrows the scope of versatility and growth.

In a post-COVID world, traditional and non-traditional degree and non-degree enrollment students are looking for enhancing job skills, completing degrees, looking to transition to new careers – and are more likely to take advantage of opportunities for learning.

Learners are experiencing online fatigue and are taking time to decide on their personal next steps.

Many are stepping back from college, choosing to stay closer to home if learning is going to be remote or if they will be sent home early as the result of a new outbreak. What a great opportunity for our VSCs to attract students in transition – students who are uncertain of their future but want to move forward. This is the time to be bold and forge new paths with attention to what is important. People. Engagement. Cooperation. Lifting everyone up from a situation that has depleted us and rendered us temporarily fractured. COVID-19 is temporary. It did not cause this – but we can and must learn from it.

Investment in people, education, and humanity must be the result.

Instead of consolidating program into one region of Vermont, why not build?

- Forge partnerships with businesses that create direct lines to learning, internships, certificate programs (healthcare, EMT, bricklayer, firefighter, medical coder, funeral director, personal trainer, IT, HVAC, Massage Therapists, Environmental and Health Scientists, etc.) and jobs.

- Reduce the costs in small, strip mall CCV sites, and move those within a reasonable range onto the campuses of NVU Lyndon and Johnson, Vermont Tech, and Castleton.
- Utilize the space and resources of the residential campus to create a hybrid program that allows CCV programs to dovetail with campus-based programs and staff.
- We need well-trained health care providers, engineers, environmental scientists, teachers, poets, and artists for the future.

Build and be ready. Don't shutter and give up. Creativity not cuts.

Each college appeals to the people in their region, while attracting students from across Vermont and from out of state to a campus that provides a world-class education and the attention and developed relationships of an involved and caring faculty and staff. The world is changing around us – there are successes in online learning (ASU and SNHU), and we can learn a lot from them, but let's not forget the importance of in-person learning, ideas exchanges, and the need for human interaction for growth.

In Vermont, PreK–12 public education is remarkable. We have some of the best teachers in the country and our schools are well funded. In Vermont we have an independent approach to what we feel is best for our students, and we support creative, inclusive, and innovative learning environments.

We have high aspiration rates for post-secondary education. And then we drop the ball.

You know the numbers. And if you don't, they are attached. Higher education in Vermont is underfunded to the exclusion of the students we have so strongly supported. We are failing our students. We encourage them to be college ready, to reach for the stars. We tell them they can be anything they want to be – and that there is a college, technical program, or training for them to create options after high school. And then **we price them out**, we created tuition-dependent post-secondary education that creates an unbearable struggle to repay. We build them up and then push them toward insurmountable debt. Over 63% of Vermont college graduates have to borrow money for college. Their average debt is \$28,860.00. Here are the average family incomes in some Vermont counties in 2019:

- Caledonia County: \$42,999
- Orleans County: \$38,036
- Essex County: \$43,207
- Lamoille County: \$35,972
- Rutland County: \$44,506
- Orange County: \$44,202
- Washington County: \$44,953

The amount of debt students and their families take on to attend their local college is far above a price point they can afford.

It is not easy to commit to college for first-generation, rural, modest-income Vermonters. The most direct line from high school to college is to take a baby step (huge for some) to attend college in

your own back yard. This is a leap of faith—a venture into the unknown, and a risk of money, family resources (if they spend it all on me, they won't have enough for themselves, siblings, etc.), and possibly a prideful step: “who do I think I am to go to college.” These are huge, real risks for students with no guarantee of success or lucrative careers that will pay them back. It is a leap of faith. And there is no net.

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If you ask the majority of these students to consider attending college outside of their neighborhoods— or away from people who get them and “see” them for who they are and all of their colors—they are not likely to attend college at all. The culture outside of their sphere is different and they are not necessarily looking to expand their world—not yet anyway. They do get a taste for the extension of what is possible—remember, baby steps.

We are our stories – here is mine:

It was 40 years ago. A lifetime. But it is with me today as fresh and as clear as if it were happening right now. I stepped into Martinetti Hall on the campus of Johnson State College ready. I wasn't sure for what, but I was ready for something spectacular.

A first-generation college student arriving on campus a full year after her classmates started at UVM, St. Michael's, Champlain, Boston University, Colgate, Lyndon State, Castleton, and others. I never really gave them much of a thought. I didn't know the path to college. I didn't have a grand plan. I just knew that I wanted to go to college, and I had to make the plan on my own. Even my school

counselor told me I should apply to cosmetology school—because “I wasn’t college material.” I remember being a bit non-reactive to that. I wasn’t surprised, but I also didn’t believe her.

So I showed up when I got the letter from Johnson that I was “conditionally accepted” and had to attend a summer PROVE program before I could fully enroll. I was elated! It was a YES to me and my dream. So I arrived—right at the business office at Johnson State with my acceptance—well conditional acceptance—letter in hand. I hadn’t accepted the offer of admission. I was a surprise to them! I wasn’t on any lists; however, nobody batted an eye. I was given a room and classes. I was hand-held through the process but never felt stupid or “less than” anyone else who showed up that day. You can guess why. These were already my people.

Flash forward: I thrived. I continued to thrive for 4 (4 ½ truth be told) more years, attaining the Dean’s List and President’s List repeatedly and holding leadership positions across campus. The President of Johnson was our senior honors suite advisor—because we created it and we asked. Because of the people of JSC and the philosophy of educating Vermonters, I thrived. I could have gone somewhere else, but I never would have found my family, my successes, my confidence and fortitude without that support, those people, at that time.

There are colleges that are “reach” colleges. There are “safety” colleges, and there are “exactly where you should be because it’s family” colleges.

Our state colleges are just that for so many students. They are just the right place.

Look at the demographics of students at the VSCs. Over half of the students in the system are first-generation Vermont students. Nobody does this better for Vermonters in every corner of the state than each regional college in a student’s own neighborhood.

As a Junior, about a month in, I had a knock on my door. I was a Resident Assistant; it was the best way for me to keep my costs down—my parents didn’t understand the importance of completing the FAFSA information. College was my responsibility and my choice. It was on my own or it wasn’t going to happen.

I was being asked to leave campus. I couldn’t pay my bill. I was devastated. A friend of mine said he would ask his father, a physician, to cover my balance and that I could pay him back later. This balance was only around \$800, but I couldn’t pay it. I didn’t have it, and I knew my parents wouldn’t provide it. Over the course of the weekend I packed my room. I didn’t see a way out. I went to the business office the following Monday to see what I could do. I was distraught. I was nervous. But I wasn’t ready to leave. This was now home—my best friends and mentors were there. I was learning; I was successful; I was on my way to being a teacher. I wasn’t ready to give that up. This was my family now.

The Business Manager at the time had me sit down and explain what was going on. He told me to take a deep breath. He then laid out a payment plan for me

over the next semester. I would work my non-work study job, at \$88 every other week, and pay JSC \$50 and keep \$38 for my student teaching gas money. That was it: \$19 per week for me, but I took the deal. He was amazing—and he saved me.

I had the great fortune to see him last Fall, and I thanked him. I got emotional at the sight of him. “You saved me. If not for you I would have been a failed statistic. Thank you.” Unflinching, he said that I wasn’t the only one. I understood then that he saved many. He, without ego or need for glory, saved many of us who were unprepared but determined. These are the people that make up the VSCs. They know who they are working with and for. They understand the students in their care. They themselves are a family. This is why we need all of the Vermont State Colleges. We need their people, their understanding of who we all are, their acceptance to take us as we come and help us become. There are other buildings where learning can happen, but there is no substitute for acceptance, belonging, and understanding. I wouldn’t trade my Johnson experience for anything in the world. It’s here for others now—and they will come and find home here—and we will be there for them. They’re depending on us.

My story is only one of thousands. Just ask a student, alum, faculty or staff member—or the business owner who came and stayed. We are peppered all over the state and we found our home here in these small towns of Vermont.

This is still the case.

These Vermont State Colleges save people. They save students and communities.

Please, PLEASE don’t let them go away. I can’t imagine our state without them. They are lifelines for communities. Generations of families survive because of them. Seek out innovators and visionaries to revive them. Vermont is made up of innovators—creative solutions—get your hands dirty contributors. We can make it happen. I am willing to help.

My years of working in higher education, family systems, and college and career access and planning have trained me well. I received my Master of Arts degree in Higher Education at Virginia Tech after a few years of working in Admissions and the Alumni Office at Johnson State. I took my love of higher education and access and made it my career. I worked steadily in student life at JSC, VTC, Virginia Tech, Goddard, Pine Ridge School, assisting and supporting families at the Milton Family Community Center, and now at VSAC. My passion is in preparing students for life after high school—after college—and for their right to an education.

- Cathy Printon,
MA, Higher Education/Student Personnel Services
Virginia Tech, Class of 1992.
BA in Special Education, Johnson State College,
Class of 1985



At the request of VSCS Thrive, we reached out to former president Eric Gilbertson for his thoughts about what is happening with the VSCS. Here are his thoughts:

June 3, 2020

Vermont State Colleges

A letter from former Johnson State College president, Eric Gilbertson

Daniel Webster stood before the United States Supreme Court in the case of Dartmouth College vs. Woodward in 1818, and spoke emotionally of his alma mater: “It is Sir, as I have said, a small College. And yet, there are those who love it.” There are good reasons to love our small colleges and there surely are those who love them.

These Vermont State Colleges are uniquely Vermont institutions. They were founded by Vermonters in the mid and late 1800s who promised opportunities for their children and generations of their grandchildren. These colleges have been protected and sustained by Vermonters through good times and bad, through wars and depressions and plagues and, yes, even budget shortfalls. These earlier generations of Vermonters believed that any bright future for their families and their State would need more and better educational opportunities, certainly not less.

Does anyone really believe that any imaginable future for Vermont in the years and decades ahead will need less higher education?

It is worse than merely ironic that at a moment in history when many, including some Vermonters, are arguing for tuition-free higher education at the national level some would now propose limiting higher education access for other Vermonters in their own State.

The Vermont Colleges are, like the State itself, frugal – many believe too frugal. Their costs are, by and measure, anything but extravagant, but even the Vermont virtue of frugality, taken too far, can become short-sighted and self-defeating.

Is all Vermonters want for their youth the cheapest educational opportunities they can scrape together?

Earlier generations of Vermonters had a clearer vision and a willingness to support these Colleges, knowing that they would yield future generations of leaders and citizens capable of serving others. And over these past decades – for more than a Century and a half – these Colleges have, in fact, enabled

Vermonters to become business executives, political leaders and public servants, teachers and technicians, artists and entrepreneurs. Where would Vermont be without them?

And, like Webster, these alumni remember with affection and gratitude what their college experiences have done to mold and shape their careers and their lives.

The current generation of Vermonters – even and especially now in another difficult episode in time – face an opportunity to honor their State's history and help create its better future. The Vermont State Colleges have been born and nurtured throughout that proud history and are essential to that better future. May Vermonters not blow that opportunity and miss this moment.

- Eric Gilbertson
President of Johnson State College (1981-89)

Vermont State 2020 Average Tuition Costs

The average tuition & fees of Vermont colleges is \$13,128 for Vermont residents and \$28,190 for students from other States. Landmark College has the highest (most expensive) tuition & fees as of \$59,100 and Goddard College has the lowest tuition & fees (cheapest) as of \$17,084. For graduate programs, SIT Graduate Institute has the highest (most expensive) graduate tuition & fees as of -\$1 and Saint Michael's College has the lowest graduate tuition & fees (cheapest) as of \$47,045 in Vermont.

Castleton University: Total 2,196 students have enrolled into Castleton University where 1,892 students have enroll into undergraduate programs and 304 students for graduate programs. By gender, 975 male and 1,221 female students are attending Castleton University. Castleton University has much fewer students compared to similar colleges (3,233 students in average - Public Baccalaureate College - Diverse Fields). 53 students are enrolled exclusively and 40 students are enrolled in some online courses at Castleton University

Northern Vermont University: Northern Vermont University is a Public, 4 or more years school located in Johnson, and Lyndon, VT. It is classified as Master's College and University (smaller programs) by Carnegie Classification and its highest level of offering is Master's degree. The 2020 tuition & fees at Northern Vermont University is \$12,422 for Vermont residents and \$26,126 for out-of-state students. 82% of the enrolled undergraduate students have received grant or scholarships and the average aid amount is \$8,350 at Northern Vermont University. The school has a total enrollment of 2,590 and student to faculty ratio is 15 to 1 (6.67%). The average earning after 10 years of graduation is \$35,600. The salary range after graduation from Northern Vermont University varies by field of study and the average salary range \$17,100 to \$38,100.

Vermont Technical College: Vermont Technical College (VTC) is a Public, 4 or more years school located in Randolph, VT. It is classified as Baccalaureate/Associate's College by Carnegie Classification and its highest level of offering is Master's degree. The 2020 tuition & fees at Vermont Technical College is \$15,292 for Vermont residents and \$28,588 for out-of-state students. 61% of the enrolled undergraduate students have received grant or scholarships and the average aid amount is \$6,614 at VTC. The school has a total enrollment of 1,638 and student to faculty ratio is 11 to 1 (9.09%). The average earning after 10 years of graduation is \$45,900. The salary range after graduation from VTC varies by field of study and the average salary range \$31,100 to \$55,800.

- <https://www.collegetuitioncompare.com/state/vermont/>

The View From Here - Faculty Voice



I am not from Vermont; I'm from away, as they say around here—a flatlander. But I have made Vermont my home and raised my daughter here in the Northeast Kingdom. I made Vermont my home because I knew it

was where I wanted to be when I came to college here as an undergraduate. So after spending about a decade in graduate school in Manhattan, I returned to Vermont when the opportunity arose to teach at Lyndon State College. It was, to most of my colleagues and friends in graduate school and after, an odd choice: to leave a teaching job at a major research university working half the teaching load for almost twice the salary. But for me it was an obvious choice, and not just because Vermont is a beautiful place to live.

My education had been a privilege, one I wasn't really even aware of at the time. I went to a private, liberal arts college of my choosing not because of any special merit or abilities, but because it was available to me. Then, largely because of where I'd gone to college (and learned that I loved education), I went to graduate school at a major research university to become a teacher of English literature. As a graduate student and then after I finished my Ph.D., I taught for eight or nine years at Columbia. One of the most important things I learned from that experience was that those (mostly highly privileged) kids really didn't need me; they could pretty much learn what they needed to and make the connections they needed to without my doing

much more than giving them a bit of guidance and a few pushes along the way.

What I learned, in other words, was that there was far greater value and meaning in my working here, at a small, underfunded public college, where I could help deliver the kind of first-rate education I'd had as a privilege to an area and an audience that didn't otherwise have access for whatever reason.

And that is exactly how Peggy Williams, the president at the time, and Jim Doyle and the rest of the English Department articulated the purpose of LSC. So I shaped my entire working life around the idea that every kid deserves the best education we can give them, not some half-baked nonsense that we pass off as what we can "afford." And here's the thing: there is absolutely nothing special about me; this is how the vast majority of faculty and staff at the colleges see their purpose and mission.

But the greatest value of that sense of mission, purpose, and commitment is, I know from experience, that it is contagious, and it grows exponentially by way of the students we serve. Let me give you just three examples—three (of many) students who came to Lyndon for their education and have in their turn touched more students of their own than I can count.

The first, a traditional college-aged young woman, could have gone anywhere to college and had been accepted by and intended to go to an excellent college out west. But she decided instead to stay close to home, for a variety of reasons, at least to start her college path. But she found what she was

looking for at Lyndon and stayed; she did very well and graduated at the top of her class in English, also completing the requirements for licensure in English secondary education. She taught very successfully at a small independent school in St. Johnsbury, where she made not only a significant mark at her school but also married and started a family here where she grew up herself. Having served her first school and students with dedication and skill, she looked for new challenges and decided to pursue a master's degree. She looked around at various options, any of which she could have chosen, and again found what she was looking for in Lyndon's Master of Arts in Liberal Studies program, where again she was an outstanding contributor to the program. Having finished her master's, she again sought work in her local community, landing a job where she had gone to high school, St. Johnsbury Academy, first as a college counselor and now as an English Department faculty member and a class dean. She is highly valued and superb at her job, and the most important piece, at least as I see it, is that she is giving back exponentially to her Vermont community, and she stayed here because she had the opportunity to get the education at Lyndon, in a strong program with quality faculty, that would allow her to do great work here in Vermont. She demonstrates a joy, a true excitement, in teaching and learning that obviously inspires her students and moves them to do more with their own education. Our community is all the stronger and better because she remained here and dedicates the fruits of her education to all the students she mentors and guides.

The second example first came to Lyndon having graduated from U32 High School; she completed her degree in communications, but she discovered

her true passion in English literature and returned to add a B.A. in English with licensure in secondary education. She, too, graduated at the top of her class and soon demonstrated her abilities as a teacher in several Vermont schools, while also completing an M.A. in English at Middlebury's Bread Loaf School. Then, having moved to the west side of the state, she decided to broaden her perspective further by moving to the wide-open spaces of Montana. Fortunately for us, after several years she returned and now teaches middle and high school in Hardwick. The fortune for us is that she is a master teacher; she completed a rigorous program to become a National Board Certified Teacher, and just this school year she was awarded the Angelo J. Dorta Award for Teaching Excellence by the Vermont NEA. While her awards and credentials are truly impressive, what is most remarkable is how profoundly and comprehensively she touches her students' lives. She works incredibly hard on their behalf, and she strives endlessly to widen their perspective and to engage them in the broader world. Perhaps because she knows well the potential insularity of a rural community, she works tirelessly to remove for her students obstacles to their awareness of and connections to a global community. She inspires her students not only intellectually and academically, but also to be engaged and committed citizens and community members. While her own education has widened her perspective, she has enriched her students' lives in extending that perspective exponentially. And Vermont is clearly the richer for the many hundreds of students she has inspired.

My final example is a young woman who started at Lyndon right out of high school but discovered that she needed to reach out to a wider world and left

before she completed her degree. She left Vermont and pursued a successful career outside our state for a couple of decades. But she returned home to Vermont and, partly by chance, discovered, by taking on a culinary arts course as an interim teacher, that her true passion is teaching. So she made the decision to return to Lyndon, as a semi-affordable and manageable option while she continued working full-time, to complete her B.A. in English, again with licensure in secondary education. Like her peers above, she was a wonderful and inspiring student who took great joy in learning—a joy that she now conveys to her own students. She is exceptionally bright, articulate, engaged, and engaging, and, as with her peers above, I feel very lucky to have had her as a student. It was certainly our good fortune that she made so enormous a change in career and life and that she chose Lyndon because Lyndon was available and flexible enough for her to make that change. But clearly Vermont is more the beneficiary of what she now brings to her own teaching career. One problem exists: she has enrolled in the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies at NVU to further her education and her career, but that program is struggling to provide what she needs given the continuing cuts to the colleges and programs; worse, she risks enrolling in and completing courses in a program and a college that may vanish out from underneath her. It would be sheer folly for the Vermont State Colleges to fail to provide the continuing education for so valuable a teacher, a resource, when that teacher has made considerable sacrifices to return to Vermont and to dedicate her energy, her abilities, and her joy in learning and teaching to the community in which she grew up.

I write of these three not simply because they were fabulous students that I was lucky enough to have during my career and because they enriched my life in immense ways. Rather, I write of them because they are examples of hundreds of students who, in their turn, became teachers in our Vermont schools and have touched in their turn thousands of students and enriched their lives in immense ways. That is an extraordinary return on the very small investment Vermont has made in supporting the college they attended. But without that investment, Lyndon would not have been there for these women to choose, and they might never have had the chance to commit their remarkable talents to communities, schools, and students in Vermont.

They chose to stay or to return to Vermont to teach and live, and we are far the richer for it, not only because they can inspire and guide a new generation of Vermonters, but also because they know and believe in their communities and choose to invest their talents, energies, and time in the communities they know and love.

If we fail to support our colleges and our future teachers (not to mention all the other professions Vermont students pursue) we will have lost the opportunity to retain and benefit from exactly these treasures and all they bring to Vermont.

- Richard Moyer
Professor Emeritus of Humanities,
Part-time Faculty Writing & Literature

Community Commentary -News & Citizen May 21, 2020



In an Ernest Hemingway novel, a character is asked how he went bankrupt. The answer, “Gradually, then suddenly,” could very well apply to our Vermont State College System.

The recent proposed closure of Northern Vermont University, though long in the making, has blindsided many and created an existential threat to rural Vermont. Students who have paid their bills and put their lives into their education are now left to wonder whether their school will exist for them to complete their degrees. Faculty and staff, who have given so much to their students and the communities around them, learned along with the rest of us that their employer was set to be suddenly eliminated.

The proposal has since been withdrawn, and the Vermont State Colleges chancellor who proposed it replaced, but many challenges still face the Vermont State College System. And so far, we have seen little progress from our Legislature in addressing this threat.

While much of what we are struggling through now is a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and somewhat unavoidable, there is still much that could have been done to prevent this exercise in brinkmanship. Former Chancellor Jeb Spaulding’s proposal was dangerous — it signaled weakness in the Vermont State Colleges System to prospective students and potential faculty hires, and further imperiled the system — but it was not a surprise to those who have followed the fortunes of the state colleges over the years.

When I was a political science student at what was then Johnson State College, now NVU, I remember attending annual rallies at the Statehouse organized around the demand for increased funding for the state colleges. Back then, we were the state with the second-lowest level of state funding for their public higher education institutions. Now, we have the very undignified position of last place.

I know for many Vermonters, who perceive Vermont as a progressive state, hearing that simple fact is shocking, but it is true.

We have to reverse this trend and make supporting a vibrant, accessible and high-quality higher education system a priority for state government. The Vermont State Colleges System chronic under-funding has downstream impacts that are becoming difficult for us to ignore.

Much attention is paid these days to Vermont’s disturbing demographic trends, telling us that for decades, our working-age populations have been shrinking, while our older population continues to

rise. We are rapidly approaching the day when the cost of services we must provide to those in retirement will overtake the amount our state's economy is capable of generating.

It is in the midst of this reality that we see this counterintuitive proposal to gut our state college system, one of our most effective tools to attract and retain young people in Vermont. If young adults spend their college years in rural Vermont, making personal and professional connections along the way, it is much more likely they will stay after college is done. This helps to grow our rural communities and pay for our services for the most vulnerable.

We need to be finding ways to empower our state colleges to accomplish this goal more effectively, not tearing them down.

It is because of this burning need that I was the first person to sign on to the VSCS Thrive! Legislative Pledge of Support. This pledge, to fight for a doubling of state funding for the state college system, was a no-brainer for me to sign.

As I've been shouting from the rooftops in recent days, Vermont's statute creating the state colleges specifically requires those colleges be funded "in whole or in substantial part" with state appropriations. At our current pitiful state funding level of 17 percent, we are coming nowhere near this statutory obligation.

Beyond that, for the reasons mentioned above, I believe this is an investment in our future that is worth making. We all know that we've had real issues keeping young people in Vermont over the last couple of decades — does anybody else think it's not a coincidence that we've also been severely under-funding our state colleges that entire time? This is unacceptable, and we must use our current budgetary chaos as an opportunity to vocally express that we believe the Vermont State Colleges are worthy of being a priority going forward.

It is exciting to see that a Facebook Group (VSCS Thrive!) of over 10,000 people, including students, faculty, alumni and community members of the colleges, has come together around this issue and loudly shown its support for these rural campuses and the immense value they provide to Vermonters.

I expect that this group will find continued avenues to amplify this very important message. And I can only hope that our legislators and their leadership will hear them.

– Shayne Spence of Johnson
Republican candidate for a Vermont House seat representing
Belvidere, Hyde Park, Johnson and Wolcott.

VSCS Funding Facts

Increasing tuition is directly correlated with declining enrollment.



In 1970, Vermont ranked 3rd in higher education spending. In 2020, Vermont ranks 48th.

3rd ↓ **48th**

In just 50 years, Vermont's higher education spending has plummeted to nearly last in the nation.



83% of VSCS students are Vermonters, and 50% are first in their family to attend college.

84% of VSCS graduates stay and work in Vermont.



NVU contributes \$113 million to northern Vermont's economy alone.



VTC Randolph is a significant economic hub for Central Vermont.



Vermont's State Colleges are one of Vermont's primary economic drivers.



The fastest growing group of college students nationally are 1st generation/low income.



VSCS graduates entering Vermont's workforce expand state tax revenues.



The VSCS attracts many out-of-state students.



100% of Vermont's high growth/high wage jobs by 2028 are expected to require education beyond high school.

Secure the future of Vermont's youth. Help the VSCS thrive.

Visit <https://vscsthive.org/> to get involved.

Our Vision

Below are ideas for reshaping NVU (and the VSC) for the future. We have considered the enormous cost of underwriting our institutions of higher education as well as the cost of NOT underwriting them. These are our recommendations. Please add your own by joining us. Contact information is provided at the end of this document.:



NVU Johnson student, Rebecca Flieder,
with Professor Tyrone Shaw

Immediate Efforts

. Make an immediate effort to ensure returning and incoming students actually do enroll in the fall: Immediate outreach by a team led by admissions to every student, either by email or phone, to assure them that NVU will be open and is committed to their success.

. Immediate outreach to students who are unsure of their plans for next fall, given current circumstances. Make a very strong public commitment that NVU will be open in the fall. Reach out to area high schools and high school graduates to offer safe haven in difficult circumstances. If they are unsure of their plans or wavering about going to the college they had planned to in the fall, either for fear of a resurgence of the virus or for economic reasons, offer them what we might call a “stop-gap” year. Rather than deferring their education with a gap year (in which very little might be available to them), they could enroll at Lyndon or Johnson, live at home where it’s relatively safe and economically more viable, and still earn college credits. That way they can proceed with their education without losing time. And we may find that some of them decide to stay at Lyndon or Johnson once they realize the educational experience they can get here.

Longer Term Efforts:

. Eliminate the central office and subsume the Vermont State Colleges under the umbrella of UVM, making each of the campuses a satellite of the main campus (as is done in most state college systems in the country). That would eliminate the overhead of a central office that has simply failed to function effectively, with or without a pandemic. Certainly, such a merger would no doubt capitalize on the larger applicant pool of students who wish to come to or stay in Vermont for higher education but do not have the good fortune of attending UVM, for whatever reason including expense. Vermont needs not only to keep Vermonters here for education and beyond, but also to

draw students to the state to learn and, likely, to stay. Before we lose a lot more strong Vermont kids to other states by crippling their educational opportunities here, we need to turn things around and bring more young people to physically attend college here, to stay here, and to contribute to a stronger, healthier community. It is certainly no secret that students often stay to live and work where they went to college. We can't educate our own young people and draw kids "from away" without offering a solid education and good reasons for them to physically come to Vermont for a valuable college experience. Online education serves a purpose, but it won't do anything like what the real thing will do. And the notion that we will successfully compete with established online institutions such as SNHU is sheer folly and as misguided a strategy as the consolidation of LSC and JSC. If merging under a UVM umbrella is not viable, at least eliminate the Chancellor in favor of the existing council of presidents, who at least understand their various institutions, and trim the central office to only those minimal functions which really do demand central operation. The \$8 million dollars or so that the central office consumes really deliver nothing of real value directly to the education of Vermont students.

. Site CCV (as CCV) at each of the campuses in order to increase the number of commuter and local students using the existing space. There is clearly a pedagogical advantage to on-campus education, preserving the college experience that goes well beyond simply attending information-distribution sessions that occur online. Moreover, siting CCV at each of the campuses provides a tangible and immediate pathway from a two-year degree to a four-year degree, allowing students so inclined to continue their education even to the graduate level. Whatever your perspective on the current political situation and climate, several things are clear: every economic downturn increases the numbers of young and older people heading to colleges, and there is almost certainly going to be a substantial effort to reduce or eliminate costs at least for community college tuition. If the VSC fails to capitalize on those circumstances—and fails to use the opportunity to increase enrollments at the campuses—it will be not merely shortsighted but tragic. Even without eliminating the central office and merging with UVM, this second strategy would provide a perfectly reasonable alternative to campus closures and would allow for, at the very least, an intermediate stage before the radical "solution" of closing the college campuses. The capital investment in the current campuses would be preserved (as opposed to abandoned), and capitalizing on a projected increase in community college students would supply a stop-gap measure if not ultimately an opportunity to continue providing, "for the benefit of Vermont . . . affordable, high quality, student-centered, and accessible education, fully integrating professional, liberal, and career study, consistent with student aspirations and regional and state needs," as the VSC mission states.

. Economic downturns have historically always driven up college enrollments, as young people look to college for a leg up in getting a job and older workers require retraining. That uptick always favors lower-cost colleges, especially when traditional students already headed to college find that

economic circumstances require less expense for them. The VSC would stand to gain substantially from that uptick, but that will happen only if tuition can be reduced, which will happen only if the legislature increases funding to a truly viable level, at least doubling it from the paltry current 17% to something like 35%, closer to the 49% it was in 1980. That investment will pay off in increased enrollments and hence greater economic impact in the communities.

. Lyndon, in particular, has made a strong effort to increase athletic recruiting over the past 20 years, but not always efficiently or effectively. We have failed to take advantage of our geographic location or our local advantages. Reestablish ski teams (we had NCAA ski teams at both Lyndon and Johnson as recently as the early 1980s before budget cuts ensued) to take advantage of Lyndon's proximity to Burke Mountain and Johnson's to Stowe and Smuggler's Notch. We could easily recruit from Vermont (and beyond) for those who are looking to continue skiing competitively in college but at smaller schools. There are other opportunities for creating synergy between Lyndon and Burke Mountain Academy, one of the premier ski-racing academies in the US, and with Johnson and the Mount Mansfield Ski Club, one of the oldest alpine racing clubs in the US. Certainly, there are advantages in creating greater links with Burke Mountain, both for our interested skiers and for our Recreation and Athletic Training Programs, not to mention potential hospitality programs. In addition, establishing ice hockey teams for both men and women would also take advantage of our geographical location and expand recruiting opportunities, not to mention increase our attractiveness to Canadian students (as would ski teams). We talk about Do North, but there is really nothing "North" about baseball, softball (which can't really be played up here without paying a lot of money yearly to send kids to Florida to play while their own fields are under snow) or track and field, and there is nothing more "North" than hockey and skiing. We should capitalize on it as Castleton has – even though they are farther south than north.

. Increasing funding in order to reduce tuition immediately makes the VSC colleges more attractive. The VSC is one of the most expensive state colleges in the country, and that is widely known in college application circles. So we definitely need to use effective marketing to change that reputation and perception, and to increase awareness of the significant value offered by the VSC institutions beyond distinctive programs (which we don't want to ignore at the same time). We have done some valueless marketing in the past, particularly with the campaign to market NVU out of state, which did not yield fruit. So a more focused, strategic, "in-house" effort is needed. For example, both Lyndon and Johnson have had strong teacher education programs for years, and high school teachers in particular are extraordinarily influential when kids choose colleges. So we ask every single high school teacher who has ever graduated from any VSC institution to send us their top student for an unquestioned acceptance into the program of their choice with a scholarship award attached. That brings us successful students from all over the country and ramps up the reputation of the VSC colleges at every school where this program is active.

- . Take a year to develop solutions task forces in each community much like the think tanks for Act 46 consolidations.
- . Create a citizen-based group to push for more funding support from the State of Vermont - funding from Vermont is critical.
- . Pull together innovators with vision to look at the brick and mortar campuses and create cooperative living and learning environments that are bold and support student learning with community needs; cooperative living with the community, community classes in the arts, education, the environment, etc.
- . Offer residential options for CCV students in Randolph, Castleton, Lyndon, and Johnson
- . Remove some of the CCV sites that offer nothing more than strip-mall classrooms
- . Recognize that with a variety of learners comes the need for a variety of educational settings and "brick and mortar" institutions are just as necessary as online learning.
- . Eliminate the Chancellor's office and form a Council of Presidents who run the institutions; you can house other director type positions at the campuses around the state but they all coordinate their services.
- . Expand Nursing and medical programs - dispersing the Williston classroom materials to other sites for satellite services
- . Partner with the Vermont Studio Center to further develop and sustain an arts focus for NVU Johnson.
- . Operate as one system but with separate identities - with respect to marketing/sharing resources and other cost-savings measures.
- . Utilize the opportunities to be proactive with the economic needs of the state, if we need more nurses and we only have space for so many, utilize the campuses around the state as satellite campuses for nursing students.
- . Create a low-residency program at one of the campuses and utilize it during the rest of the year for conferences, workshops, maker space, construction opportunities for students in building programs - the possibilities are endless.
- . Engage with "senior" learners who may also see the campuses as desirable communal housing opportunities.
- . Create more "step up" certification courses in support of workforce needs.

- . High aspirations – low continuation – drops off – affordability – Expected family contribution of 10K . They don't go far.
- . Recruit and retain staff who create a learning culture for students on campus. Keep students there over weekends, engage students, faculty, and staff in a robust and active campus that is inviting and creates the culture that represents the community.
- . Faculty should be full time in each program as a majority. Admissions, faculty, and staff should be part of a large marketing group, sit on statewide committees, advise and learn from commerce, K-12 and PreK-16 state planning groups.
- . Utilize past faculty, staff, and administrators to form a legacy advisory and recruiting team.
- . Work together with other VSCs to retain marginally accepted students into a remedial college readiness program.
- . Reduce the percentage of administrative expense to be aligned with student expenses.
- . Recognize the cultural/social values of a liberal arts college as integral to the community at large vs. just a “job training center” mentality.
- . Eliminate the Chancellor's Office and replace with a Board of Presidents and Leaders from with expertise to guide/advise and within the regions served.
- . Bring (new) leadership for the entire system under one umbrella in Montpelier or Waterbury.
- . Eliminate current administration from NVU and CU and reduce admin. support staff. Leave VTC and CCV management as is and conduct efficiency and cost assessment on admin. staffing.
- . Install new administration structure at NVU and CU - one head of each campus with limited support staff (TBD by student and faculty committee plus one former (retired) administrator and one outside business rep.
- . Establish a central office (in conjunction with the Board of Presidents/Leaders) to manage technology, payroll, legal, insurance, outside contracting, marketing and finance – essentially support roles for shared services.
- . Hire new director/manager to oversee centralized system functions and budget.
- . Eliminate the board of trustees and replace with new reps. selected by committee of equal representation between legislators, VSCS students, and faculty/staff. Two-year/four-year terms.

- . Ensure that plans for "creating an affordable degree program that meets the critical Vermont workforce needs" are adaptable to future trends and needs.
- . Build into the new plans, avenues to ensure NVU remains attractive to out of state students and at a minimum maintains the long-standing 30% total enrollment balance.
- . Out of state tuition per student is greater than 55% higher than in-state tuition. Important revenue stream.
- . Out of state students bring important geographical and social diversity, thus expanding the campus culture.
- . Out of state students often remain in Vermont following graduation. Add to the tax base as employees and start businesses (that employ Vermonters and increase state GDP).
- . Each institution should be known for its speciality, but not to exclude other programs:
 - NVU Lyndon: Meteorology, Forestry and collected sciences
 - NVU Johnson: Media and communications, Education
 - VTC: Institute for AG and Food Systems and Technology, Nursing
 - Castleton: Nursing, Education
- . Compact/MOU: between State Colleges and UVM relative to collaborative programming, resource utilization, and policy development.
- . Land Grant and State Colleges (especially VTC) should be connected relative to joint program and financial and program support and administration. (Note the suggestion in the 2009 Governor's report on this.) There are many programs at VTC and other state colleges that relate to the Land Grant mission and purpose.
- . With COVID-19 and relative need for re-education that will come out of this period, that the state colleges be designated as essential locations for re-educating individuals and others on skills training. Like in the 1930's it will be essential that programs and locations be in place to do this, and federal funding will likely be needed. Can the facilities also be utilized to other purposes connected to economic and cultural development in the regions.
- . Better utilization of these facilities year-round for multiple uses in education and training of ALL ages.
- . Commit to an independent economic analysis of the contribution that these institutions have contributed to the regions and areas, and what it would mean if lost.

- . Market the services and programs in a more integrated fashion with the Vermont Commerce and Tourism Divisions.
- . Cultivate relationships and future potential of all students who were “wait listed” or who were not accepted into programs.

Vermont State Colleges System Impact 2018-2019

(From the VSCS website - www.vsc.edu)

VERMONT STATE COLLEGES SYSTEM IMPACT 2018-19

VISIT WWW.VSC.EDU FOR MORE INFORMATION

Bottom-Ranked State Funding

New England & New York Public Colleges: State Appropriation as Share of Revenue, FY2017

State	Share of Revenue (%)
MASS	42.6%
CONN	41.2%
MAINE	33.1%
RI	32.9%
NY ¹	32.0%
NH	17.7%
VERMONT ²	17.5%

1. SUNY system used for New York
2. Vermont numbers are as of FY2022 and include all increases to appropriation since FY2017

County	Employees	Students
GRAND ISLE	8	86
FRANKLIN	54	744
ORLEANS	69	554
ESSEX	24	74
CHITTENDEN	341	2045
LAMOILLE	171	493
CALEDONIA	183	498
WASHINGTON	209	840
ORANGE	150	432
ADDISON	63	427
WINDSOR	71	655
RUTLAND	402	1240
WINDHAM	49	541
BENNINGTON	49	469

49TH Vermont's rank in the nation for in state funding per student (FTE)
Source: State Higher Education Executive Officers, 2018

82% Family share of college costs in Vermont
No. 1 The highest percentage in the nation
Source: Young Institute State Report Card, 2018

42% ...of all Vermont high school graduates do not continue to college.
64% ...of economically-disadvantaged Vermonters do not enroll in degree programs after high school.
Source: New England Common Data Project, 2018

For the Benefit of Vermont

- + Campuses and Academic Centers
- + VSCS Nursing Programs
- + NVU Online
- + VT Small Business Development Center Sites
- + VT Manufacturing Extension Center Sites
- + VSCS EMPLOYEES
- + VSCS STUDENTS

Source: VSCS Institutional Research

VSCS Degree Program Enrollments by Field Fall 2019

Arts & Humanities 1,818	Health Professions 1,785
STEM 1,399	Business & Management 1,473
Other 615	Education 674
Social Services & Public Admin. 956	TOTAL: 8,720

A Letter to Governor Scott, Lt. Governor Zuckerman, Vermont Legislators, the Chancellor of the VSCS and its Board of Trustees

May 7, 2020

The Honorable Phil Scott, Governor of Vermont

Lieutenant Governor, Mr. David Zuckerman

Chancellor (Interim), Vermont State Colleges, Sophie Zdatny

President, Board of Trustees, Vermont State Colleges, Churchill Hindes

Senate President Pro Tempore, Senator, Tim Ashe

Speaker of the House, Representative, Mitzi Johnson

Representative Kathryn Webb, Chair, House Committee on Education, Vermont

Senator Philip Baruth, Chair, Senate Committee on Education

Senator Brian Champion, Higher Education Subcommittee (Subcommittee of the PreK-16 Council)

Representative Carolyn W. Partridge, Chair, House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry

Senator Robert Starr, Chair, Senate Committee on Agriculture

Representative Michael Marcotte, Chair, House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development

Senator Michael Sirotkin, Chair, Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and

Representative Catherine Toll, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations

Senator Joe Benning, Senate Committee on Institutions, Chair

Senator Jane Kitchel, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations

Dear Governor Scott, Lt. Governor Zuckerman, Chancellor Zdatny, Mr. Hindes, Senator Ashe,

Representative Johnson, Representative Webb, Senator Baruth, Senator Champion, Representative

Partridge, Senator Starr, Representative Marcotte, Senator Sirotkin, Representative Toll, Senator

Benning and Senator Kitchel,

We are writing to you as a group of citizens with many backgrounds, including community leaders,

educators, students, alumni, business and development professionals, legislators, past college

presidents, and others in order to both encourage your work in funding the Vermont State College

*System (VSCS) as well as offer our assistance in its reformation. We support a long-term funding and
revitalization approach to creating a stable future for the VSCS.*

*Over the last three weeks, we as a group have had the opportunity to review and discuss the actions
taken by Chancellor Spaulding in proposing the closure of several campuses of the State College system.*

We have also reviewed the joint response by Senate President Pro Tempore Ashe and Speaker of the

House Johnson, Governor Scott, and others. While we know that the proposal has been rescinded and

*Mr. Spaulding has submitted his resignation, these two actions do not simply make the issues go away,
nor*

does the action alone pave a path forward. The issues he and others have identified cannot be ignored if the objective is to have a viable and sustainable higher educational system in our state that will serve ALL Vermonters, others in the region, and attract new Vermonters, regardless of their location, age, or economic backgrounds.

Here in Vermont, we are blessed with these five distinctive colleges that encourage, educate, and serve, predominantly, first-generation Vermont students. These colleges produce teachers and nurses, engineers and farmers, writers and artists, entrepreneurs. They nurture successive generations of active, vibrant, creative and committed citizens who have woven a tapestry of talent and common good to sustain our Vermont way of life in meaningful numbers. These campuses have vibrant futures and storied pasts. They have paved the way for thousands of graduates to take a chance, stay close to home, and better their lives with affordable education; not only for themselves, but for their families and their community.

In the many conversations we have participated in these past weeks, we have come to know current students, faculty, staff, alumni, concerned legislators and citizens as caring partners not only in the preservation of the VSCS, but as people who have always understood its challenges and what losing 60% of it will do to the future of higher education in Vermont. We recognize and reiterate the economic, social, and geopolitical importance of these important institutions and their legacies for future generations. This conversation is essential. And we know there is much more to this story than meets the eye.

70% of students attending Vermont State Colleges are Vermonters. Most live close to the schools they attend. Some of these students have deep roots in these communities, spanning generations. We should not disservice these students by saying that they are somehow less than their peers whose families have the means to send them 'wherever their GPA may take them,' because the VSCS serves all, has served all. Students who stay in-state for these opportunities come from a wide spectrum of backgrounds, and deserve the kind of high-quality education that the VSCS could provide, given appropriate funding.

It is also important to note that within the walls of the VSCS institutions are dedicated faculty with advanced degrees of their own from prestigious universities who have chosen to devote themselves to their students and to a way of life not easily duplicated elsewhere. These professors would be prized at other institutions, but chose the VSCS for its student-centric focus. They bring all of that here, to our VSCS, and pass along their knowledge to our mostly rural student body. This happens because these people, who live and work among us, serve on community boards and send their children to our schools, become part of us--with all the richness of their experience and expertise fully in bloom. It is through these experiences, relationships, growth, and acceptance that we are allowed and encouraged to be our best selves. Every interaction over these past few weeks has included this sentiment and underscored its

importance. We need the brick and mortar. We crave human interactions and opportunities for growth.

If we have learned anything from this recent social isolation, it is that our ability to thrive and grow and learn in our communities is what is important. It is in the “living together” that makes us whole.

We are the complexity of our history. We are children of farmers, laborers, factory workers, homemakers, and truck drivers. We are the future promise of Vermont that cannot be contained on a balance sheet. An acknowledgement of this rich heritage is essential in seeing the importance of the VSCS beyond a figure in a bank account. And while that is a critical component in the evaluation, it is not the only important factor in determining their worth.

These colleges are not degree mills-- they are foundational places of learning and leadership, where real emotional and social change can happen quickly. Look in the offices on each campus and you're bound to find graduates of that institution, who did not want to leave that special place behind. In almost every department, you will find a graduate or generational Vermonter who remembers going to a summer camp at VTC, JSC, LSC, or CSU. It is in the gathering of students and local residents who become dependent on each other for a meaningful life, shared experiences, and an exchange of ideas.

If an objective of the State of Vermont is to keep young people and others in our state, it is of critical importance to understand that over 80% of those who attend any of the state colleges remain after graduation. A renewed and sustainable vision and approach to higher education in Vermont that is not solely relegated and reduced to online learning must be developed very soon.

Further, in his recent letter to Governor Scott, Ward Heneveld, Ed.D., (letter attached) a retired professor of education in Vermont who has served at the World Bank and as Director of the School for International Training, and who began his career at Johnson State, observed this, “The Covid-19 impact on education delivery presents a unique opportunity for Vermonters to think holistically about the state’s overall education system. Let’s stop patching up a system that is not excellent and plan the renewal of the system so that it will be effective and affordable...Vermont is small and nimble enough to take on this challenge successfully. I agree with you, if the will is there.”

In his letter, Dr. Heneveld stressed the need to review the entire Vermont education policy and priorities with a course of action that addresses the needs in different parts of the state, emphasizing the “need to be balanced with the social welfare functions that education institutions have accumulated as family and community life have weakened.”

We also believe it is imperative to reevaluate the design of the governance of the VSCS. Bill Schubart, a

respected Vermont business person adroitly summed up the problem in a column he wrote for VT Digger (4/16/20). Schubart said, “We have a dysfunctional habit of loading up state governing boards with otherwise-occupied politicians and legislators. Both the VSCS and the University of Vermont suffer from this.”

Each board has gubernatorial appointees, board elects, legislators and students, but they do not accurately represent the demographics of each institution.

“This is not the model for effective governing boards,” wrote Schubart, “which are usually fully self-perpetuating and administered by a nominating and governance committee focused on a broad spectrum of possible candidates with skills that best support and fulfill the institution’s mission. An effective VSC system would be overseen by such a governing board including the surviving college presidents and the UVM and Vermont Law School presidents as well as leading lights in education, community, business and philanthropy. The chancellor’s office is a redundant operation. Retiring it will return some \$8 million a year to the system.”

We agree. And, we believe that any plan must revitalize the system in a way that has the minimum disruption to the areas served by the Colleges and involves the voices of the people it serves-- rather than a board of elites in a closed loop. That point was made no clearer than the recent comment by VSC Board of Trustees President, Church Hinde who said, “Decisiveness during particularly urgent times is a critical element of sound leadership and is especially difficult when that sense of urgency is not widely shared or understood.” Chair Hinde’s statement speaks to exactly the problem: Many share and understand the Board’s sense of urgency, but we were excluded from the table when the decision was made. That cannot continue. There are too many ideas to share and solutions to be found in our collective, skilled, and thoughtful population.

Lastly, we leave you with this thought from Mary L. Collins, a sixth generation Vermonter, graduate of Johnson State College, and a member of our citizen’s initiative. She said, “We Vermonters are immigrants, all, with a certain amount of pluck and grit that made us able to survive long winters and short growing seasons. We are the grandchildren of farmers and mill workers who found ways to express ourselves as artists and poets despite our lack of high culture, or, in spite of it. We’re newly arrived and generations deep. We are city dwellers and hill farmers. We welcome any and everyone who has a work ethic and doesn’t whine when things don’t go their way. We like it when you think old people are cool and when you show up as a volunteer firefighter to get a cat out of a tree for a child. We speak many languages and hold dear the funny phrases of our grandparents. It’s what keeps them alive. We are the memories we hold of walking past the deli that once was our grandfather’s barbershop still able to smell

cigar smoke and hear a Red Sox game playing on a transistor radio, yet, glad that the space has new life and a new vision. We know how to pronounce “Charlotte”, “Barre” and “Reading” but won’t correct you, if you don’t. A Vermonter is an amateur historian, a beekeeper, a school teacher, a rabbi, a world class athlete and a rock star. We are doctors and nurses, engineers, brewers and farmers – and sometimes multiples of these at once. There is no one type, one face, or one preferred heritage that defines us. That we even get to call ourselves “Vermonters” is reward enough; and that someone wishes to further

their education here among us – as both students from within the state and those who choose Vermont by allegiance to a way of life; to join our ranks should make us all shout, “Hallelujah! We’ve been waiting for you and we have vibrant communities of learning where we learn from each other. Welcome!”

And that, is the soul of Vermont: it’s the way we’ve done things. A petition to save our state colleges, started by NVU-Lyndon student Patrick Wickstrom, is a testament to the kind of political groundswell that happens when we feel that something we love may be threatened: nearly 30,000 signatures in less than a week and thousands upon thousands of emails in your inboxes.

This movement has gone beyond the senate floor and out from behind closed doors. It’s time for citizens, real Vermonters, to get involved in the work to save our Vermont State Colleges. We’re ready and able to take up the mantle of this struggle. Through invention and imagination, we can find solutions to the real problems the VSCS faces.

We ask that citizen involvement be considered and included in any future discussions or decisions that will impact the Vermont State Colleges and the regions they serve. We urge you to consider any future plans for higher education in Vermont be reviewed and discussed with stakeholders from the institutions and regions affected by the proposed changes. We are willing to help, and we are asking for broad representation during planning and decision making. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Roger Allbee, Former Vermont Secretary of Agriculture, Former CEO of Grace Cottage Healthcare

Mary L. Collins, Johnson State College, Class of 1981, Educator, Writer, Community Activist

Cathy Collins Printon, Johnson State College, Class of 1985, Class Agent, 1985, JSC Staff Member 1986-1990 and 1997-2000, VTC Staff Member 1993-1997

Sabin Densmore, M.A., Faculty, Leadership Studies, Northern Vermont University, Johnson

Adriana Eldred, Senior, Northern Vermont University, Johnson

Rebecca Fleider, Senior, Northern Vermont University, Johnson

Alan Giese, Professor of Biology, Northern Vermont University, Lyndon

David Johnston, Professor, Visual Arts | English, Philosophy, and Film Studies, Northern Vermont University, Lyndon

Linda Olson, Interim President VSC FF, Vice President Education AFT-VT, Sociology and Women's And Gender Studies Programs, Castleton State University

Susan Sweetser, Esq., Johnson State College, Class of 1981, Student Representative Board of Trustees, Professor, St. Michael's College

Vermont State Colleges System Impact 2018-2019

(From the VSCS website - www.vsc.edu)



New programs aligned with high-demand Vermont workforce needs.

Certificates

- CCV
- Clinical Medical Assisting
- Funeral Director
- Graphic Design
- Media Communications
- Medical Assisting
- Studio Art

Registered Apprenticeships

- CCV
- Manufacturing Production Technician
- Medical Assisting
- Pharmacy Technician
- Vermont Tech
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Industrial Maintenance
- Licensed Practical Nursing

Associate Degrees

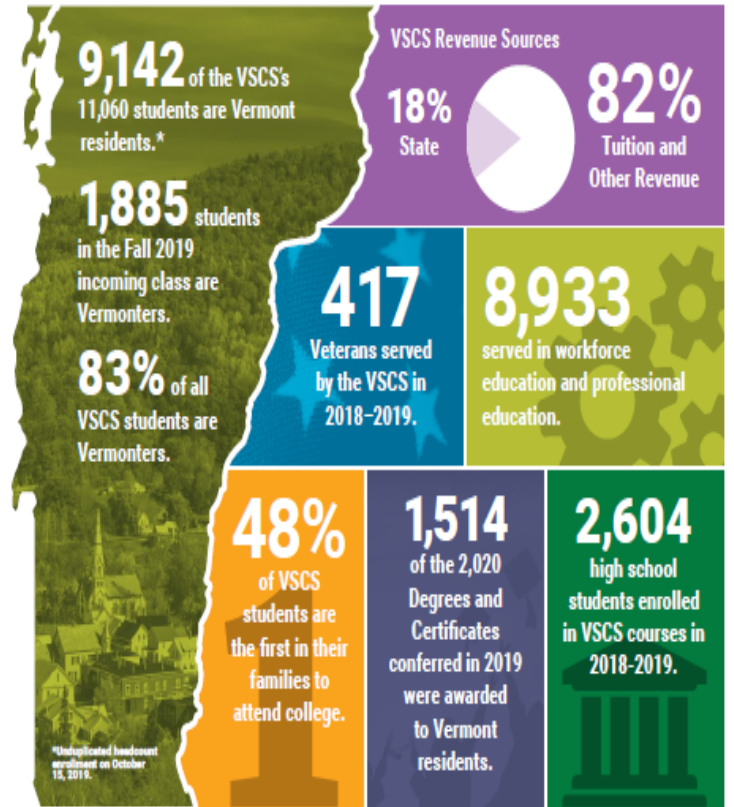
- Northern Vermont University
- Digital Communications
- Mountain Resort Management
- Psychology
- Vermont Tech
- Radiologic Science

Bachelor's Degrees

- Northern Vermont University
- Data Science
- Digital Communications
- Castleton University
- Archaeology, Geography and Applied Anthropology
- Early Childhood and Special Education
- Resort and Hospitality Management
- Wildlife and Forest Conservation

Master's Degrees

- Castleton University
- Business Administration
- Nursing
- Northern Vermont University
- Leadership Studies



IMPACT 2018 2019

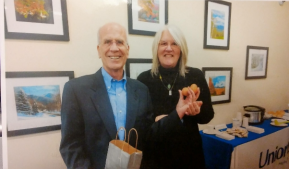


“What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children.” - John Dewey

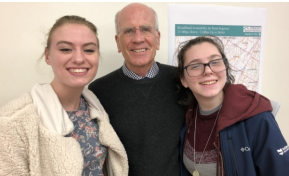
Who We Are:



ROGER ALLBEE - University of Vermont, Class of 1967. Former CEO, Grace Cottage Health Care, Vermont Secretary of Agriculture. Roger.allbee@yahoo.com



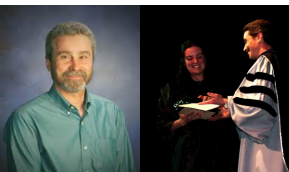
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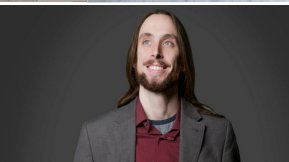
DAVID PLAZEK - NVU/Johnson, Director of the Institute for Canadian Studies; Department Chair Humanities. david.plazek@northernvermont.edu



CATHY PRINTON - Johnson State College, Class of 1985. MAEd in Higher Education Administration, Virginia Tech. Class of 1992. Former Dean of Students, Goddard College, Former Student Services Director at VTC, JSC. cathyprinton@yahoo.com



SUSAN RAND - Johnson State College, Class of 1980. Former Director of Athletics, Champlain College, Former VP Worldwide Business Operations VBT Bicycling Vacations, Former Owner Sojourn Bicycling & Active Vacations. srandvt@gmail.com



SHAYNE SPENCE - Johnson State College, Political Science, Candidate for Vermont House in Lamoille County. shaynewspence@gmail.com

VSCFF Task Force Town Meeting
June 17, 2020

Group 2: How can we modify or restructure the college system to insure efficiency?

Moderator: Cindy Hill

Note Taker: Helen Mango

Most of the discussion focused on how to balance specialization of courses/programs/individual campus “personality” with system-wide accessibility and efficiency.

Using distance learning to enhance accessibility and efficiency

Our current experience with system-wide distance learning may provide opportunities. Each campus could be a portal to every other campus. Anyone at one location should be able to access resources at any other location by taking advantage of distance-learning technology.

- Electives are limited on each individual campus; broadening access to specific courses across the system would benefit all students.
- Students from outside the system or out of state could be drawn in to take a specific course
- Downside: Some courses can only be done in-person (e.g. fine arts performance)
- Statewide broadband needs to be enhanced so that all students have access (although having groups within a general region meet in specific places that have good internet access could help)

Specialization at individual campuses

This is a sort of “magnet school” concept – Decide which programs should only be at one campus, and invest resources there.

- This would mean those programs would be better resourced and viable (more students, no competition within the system).
- Downside: Students who must attend other campuses (e.g. for financial reasons) would not have access to those majors or courses within the major. How would this affect the VSCS mission?
- Concern that this would be an excuse to lay off faculty
- Structural change will create winners and losers

Create a “Vermont State University” system

What if the system was a true “Vermont State University” system (or some equivalent), with different campuses, as opposed to the more disjointed five-college system we currently have?

- Can this be leveraged to position the system to attract more students from outside Vermont/Northeast? Vermont already has a valuable “brand” that is known nationally and internationally.
- We need to reduce our internal competition for the same potential students.

- Can we do better by using system-wide marketing and outreach? More \$\$ is needed to enhance recruitment outside Vermont/Northeast.
- Would this destroy the individuality of each campus?
- Athletics are very important to students. This is a big part of how students identify with a particular college.

Other points raised:

- We need to align our teacher education system better with the K-12 system. For example, education programs are still using exams to assess students, while the K-12 system is going to proficiency-based assessment.
- The SUNY system might provide guidance – they have some centralized administrative functions, and others that are done by specific campuses. Individual campuses have specific programs that they are known for.

Labor Task Force Town Hall

June 17, 2020

3. How can we work together as unions and campuses without being in competition?
- A lot of the talk about no duplication of programs
 - Students need regional access; we have to consider geography
 - Shouldn't we have science programs in northern Vermont and southern Vermont.
 - We need to think of ourselves as a system.
 - An NVU student should be able to take a course or even minor in something at Castleton, for example.
 - It is hard when students take a course at another college in the system, but there is no "equate" set up. What about a single general education across the system?
 - What are the barriers?
 - Faculty passionate about our own gen eds; different goals and outcomes
 - We have never been a system, so we are very different.
 - Have they looked at low-enrolled programs?
 - Administrative side (marketing; admissions; security)
 - We are competing against each other, this is extra cost.
 - For students it could be confusing to apply to one university, but then be told that they have to go to campus A to do thing B.
 - When NVU unified, Lyndon got lost in the process!! They ceased to exist. For example, students got sent to broken link when they searched for Atmospheric Science.
 - If we are going to be one institution, we need to be very careful.
 - Psychology on each NVU campus is very different; students are confused that they can't get either degree at either place; they are not duplicate program
 - What about this model?
 - First two years are gen ed only = online
 - Last two years = upper level major courses
 - Problem: first-year students are more vulnerable so they might not want online options
 - Gen eds are usually very full.

Labor Task Force Town Hall Kick-off, June 17, 2020

How can we best achieve our mission of serving a public good for our students and the state of Vermont?

Moderator: Alison Lathrop

Note taker: Beth Walsh

Philip Parisi, Patricia Shine, Alison Lathrop, Jenny Harris, Jenny Bryan, Joan Richard-Hall, Karen Madden, Jal (VTC control systems), Jason Pelletier, Heather Blair, Hilary Linehan, Jason Kaiser, John Rhodes, Jason Eter, Kim Hannon-Brobst, nxh04280 (left) Bonnie Hanley, Sally Caldwell

Define public good

- State thinks we should be producing a tangible product, which we don't actually do
- Founded in service to all Vermonters, something to do with us providing higher education for those in our region and beyond (bandwidth)
- Now more than ever affordable, accessible education around the state
- Not state supported enough to be affordable
- "Product that an individual can consume while not depriving it to others" google result
- Esoteric thing, not economic. Living productive, economic lives, good family life.
- If we are funded by the taxpayers of Vermont, we need to explain it to them and prove that we are providing it. Every Vermonter provides the taxes that goes toward state funding.
- Educating people. Community members didn't understand the public good other than getting a job. Voting, community involvement, good parent, good neighbor
- People want education to be affordable, important, want it for their kids and grandkids. Everyone struggles to pay their taxes. Want it affordable, but don't want their taxes to go up.
- Nursing and teachers, come from us. We need educators and nurses to bolster our society. Have to have replacements. And nursing faculty.
- Psychology and human services. In NEK, staffed by graduates from our department. Staying here, buying houses, paying taxes, and working for the public good. People won't relocate to the NEK.
- Students that graduate from VTC Randolph, get jobs and they are wanted. Local businesses have a hard time finding educated people. Contributing to the state, as a whole. To build the state is public good.
- Go out and get a job. How about go out and make a job? How do we equip people with a boost to their creativity, and not be saddled with the debt, very fancy car or small house, will not be in a position to start a business. We need to be conscious of what they will do when they leave us. HE is not a personal good, it is a community good, when students are free to let their imaginations go
- Support more loan forgiveness programs, stay in Vermont for 5 years, clear benefit to a state
- VSAC portability, advocate for VSAC money to be used for VSC schools

- NVU Strong, bridge the education with local businesses, don't go at loggerheads with NVU Strong, making their way to become employers, and not only employees.
- 2003 article in Seven Days. Vermont Model tries to tag students with funding, not institutions with funding. If we had numbers with VSCS stay in Vermont, vs how many who take VSAC funds out of state are in Vermont. It might be time for an op ed.
- Plan to benefit Vermont in general, improve the economy in Vermont. We offer a public good and that comes with a cost. State hasn't really participated in this enough. College and HE, improves the economy of the state. We are committed, willing to work harder, we need this to move the colleges from this level to this level. If they don't come up we don't have a chance to do the common good. We are working harder, getting courses online, but they need to come up with the funding.
- There is often times that we need to educate ourselves of the value of our own system. Dental hygiene, offering good to the public, but we are sometimes educating our students to go into one direction, there are so many ways that we could be collaborating with. If we are cut back to a 2 year program, the collaboration will go away, and we will only be providing one direction.
- Every kid grows up in a bubble, kids have ideas on what they want to do, but college exposes us to so much more. Expands peoples vision.

**PRESENTATION OF VSCS THRIVE! TO THE VERMONT STATE COLLEGES BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND
CHANCELLOR SOPHIE ZDATNY**

JULY 23, 2020

MEMBERS OF VSCS THRIVE!

MARY L. COLLINS: A sixth generation Vermonter, Mary holds the first awarded Bachelor of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Johnson State College. She is a nationally recognized community activist, a published poet, award-winning writer and producer, a former faculty member of Champlain College and the North American Hockey Academy, business owner and broadcast and marketing professional with over 35 years of experience in private industry, the nonprofit sector and state government.

BEN LUCE: Ben Luce is a Professor of Physics at NVU and an organizer of VSCS Thrive!

RICHARD MOYE: Richard Moyer is Professor Emeritus of Humanities, having taught at Lyndon for more than 27 years, beginning in 1991, in the English, Philosophy, and Film Studies Department. He has been deeply involved at the faculty, administrative, and committee levels for both college and system in the enormous changes that have taken place over those years, having served on various New England regional accreditation committees, on many VSC academic program review committees, as department chair for some 20 years, and as chair of the LSC Curriculum Committee for about the same.

ADAM NORTON: Adam is a member of the Vermont Progressive Party Coordinating Committee, VSCS Thrive! and a Lyndon State alumnus.

BILL PETRICS: Bill Petrics has taught at Otter Valley Union High School, Brandon, Vermont (23 Years); Law Practice Vermont & New Jersey (20 Years); and a Resident of Killington (28 years). An educator committed to quality public higher education, made available for every Vermont high school graduate, but without the burden of the unreasonable debt currently imposed on those Vermonterers with post secondary career ambitions.

DAVID PLAZEK: David Plazek is a Professor of Political Science at Northern Vermont University.

CATHY PRINTON: Cathy is a sixth generation Vermonter and a first-gen alumnus of Johnson State College - Class of 1985. Cathy also holds a Master's degree in Education/Student Affairs from Virginia Tech. With over 30 years of progressive responsibility in student life, culminating as Dean of Students, with the VSCs, Goddard, Pine Ridge School, and now VSAC, Cathy has developed multiple successful residence life programs and collaborations with faculty to create a culture of belonging and success for students.

SUSAN RAND: Originally from Lexington, MA, Susan Rand has resided in Vermont for 40 years. She worked for 18 years in higher education administration at Champlain College and then spent four years as Vice President for Worldwide Business Operations at VBT prior to starting her own Vermont-based company which employed over 25 people. She lives with her husband in Ferrisburgh and is recently retired following the sale of her company.

SHAYNE SPENCE: A former NVU Johnson student, Shayne is a candidate for the Vermont House of Representatives.

BRANDON STROUP: Brandon Stroup is an Associate Professor of Criminal and Restorative Justice, NVU Lyndon.

JULIE THEORET: Julie Theoret chairs the Mathematics Department at NVU Johnson.

OUR COMMENTS:

Mary Collins - I could quote statistical evidence to support my belief that higher education for Vermonters is a good investment. I could list an endless number of justifications, financial, social, economic, and other for maintaining and, in fact, growing the state's commitment and investment in its young. I could talk about the missteps and detours the state has taken over the past twenty odd years that have led to this critical time and decision about whether or not it is prudent to continue to support Vermont's State Colleges into the future. But you have heard this from us and others for the past four months and in previous documents we have submitted to you.

Instead, I want to share my story as a first generation VSCS graduate. It may not be the most eloquent or compelling, but for me, it's all I've got to share and perhaps, may echo the stories of thousands more like me who benefited from a VSCS education.

Everybody has a story. And while mine may not be reason enough for the VSCS to change current course, nor may we ultimately be able to do so; I believe it's deeply important for the Board of Trustees to do everything it can to stop the rush to "right size" our state colleges. At risk are our current and future generations. They recognize the VSCS as an important determiner of their future. Educated Vermonters help to make Vermont a vibrant state. But not all Vermonters can afford to leave Vermont to gain that education. So, in some very critical ways, the VSCS is irreplaceable. And the legislature has left us in a sorry state. To be the least well-funded state college system in the nation is not a badge of honor.

Here's my point: At the heart of his book, ***The Vanishing Middle Class: Prejudice and Power in a Dual Economy***, (2017), Peter Temin, an economist from MIT argued that, following decades of growing inequality, America has been left with what is more or less a two-class system: one small, predominantly white upper class that wields a disproportionate share of money, power, and political influence; and a much larger, minority-heavy (but still mostly white) lower class that is all too frequently subject to the first group's whims.

I am here to tell you that it mattered deeply to me that as one of those lower class kids, I had an opportunity to choose a different path than many of my closest friends. One year out of high school, working a low paying, no future, hospital clerk job and watching all three of my best girlfriends get married one right after the other at 19, 20 and 21 years of age; I recognized I was on a dead end road.

I thought, “This is not right for me. This is not my path. I have more to learn. More to offer. More to say. More to do. And I won’t find it at the end of a row of medical records or with an engagement ring on my left hand just one year beyond my senior prom.”

Yet, back in 1976, I didn’t have a lot of confidence, nor was I provided much support or guidance to continue my education. My parents were not college educated. My eldest sibling enlisted in the Navy. The remaining four of us floundered around on our own – each of us taking a few courses at UVM before we each found our fit. Three of the four of us graduated from Johnson State College, one from UVM and three of the four completed advanced degrees, one at Virginia Tech, another at UVM and another at New York Law School. Yet, following high school, it was perfectly acceptable from my family’s point of view for my siblings and I to get a job, get a life, and frankly, just get on with it.

I knew, that for me, there was something more. I knew it from the time I was 10 years old sitting in our basement, reading from a fluorescent desk lamp surrounded by darkness and memorizing poems by Robert Frost – just because I liked the sound of his words and so wanting to understand the message that was beyond my comprehension at the time. I knew it when friends offered to pay me to write poems for them so they wouldn’t flunk English class. I knew it at 17 when I received a standing ovation after speaking from an unprepared script in front of 750 of my high school peers.

What I didn’t know was that a first generation kid like me from a lower middle class family in Burlington, VT, could even consider getting an education beyond high school. No one had even invited me to ask the question. Not my parents. Not my teachers. No one. There was, as Peter Temin alluded to in his book, a certain pecking order. And I already knew my place within it.

So, without any plan, and with just the money I’d saved from working that first year out of high school, I decided I should continue my education and enrolled at Johnson State College in the Fall of 1977. Why Johnson? Because it was attainable, affordable, and it felt familiar. I’d attended small private Catholic schools my entire life. Going to a big university was not affordable nor was it a comfortable fit. I felt at home on the Johnson campus. And it was there that I found my calling; rather, my calling was uncovered by a trio of English professors who saw something in me I had not yet consciously recognized myself. And that was my talent for writing. I had always taken it for granted. I didn’t see it as a career path or even something to pursue in more depth. It was just something I always did because I enjoyed it and because within which I heard my real voice.

How earning that degree has played out in my life is nothing short of remarkable. I’ve made a career from my writing through broadcasting, advertising, social advocacy, and as a teacher. I’ve been published in anthologies and national magazines, won numerous awards, received national recognition for my advocacy work, and I have had the opportunity to meet and work with people whose names and reputations are known by thousands.

Having a liberal arts education has allowed me to pursue my interests and diversify my career while staying here in Vermont to do it, to raise my son here among his extended family, and to continue

contributing to my home state in numerous ways. While I paid every dollar of my college education myself, I've always understood it to be the best bargain and the best investment I've ever made.

So now, I simply ask that you recognize the importance, in fact, the necessity of continuing Vermont's investment in our state colleges, and in a liberal arts education as a way for Vermonters to evolve as human beings – not just as job seekers hoping to carve out a career path, but as the true opportunities it presents for a kid like me whose passions and talents are worthy in and of themselves and from which a career will appear because that student's talent, ingenuity, creativity and longing will forge a path through whatever wilderness any of us find ourselves in.

I know college is expensive. I know we have all been horrified at the specter and effect of Covid-19. I know there are no guarantees that college will cure all ills or that there aren't other opportunities beyond our Vermont State Colleges. But I ask you to consider what life is like in communities where the vitality has been sucked out of them? If we diminish our state colleges, we diminish our very heritage and the sustainability of our uniquely distinctive and important Vermont future and way of life. It's all intertwined. Education. Jobs. Community culture. I believe it's imperative that we sustain the VSCS for future generations and not just as work mills churning out certificates but as institutions of a deeper, higher learning. I know we'll reap the rewards of that investment. The evidence bears this out.

The VSCS Thrive! Coalition is here to support you, to align with you in a good and purposeful way, to do the research and hard work to make the best recommendations for the VSCS's future. We have worked diligently these past four months and have many ideas to share from a learned and dedicated group of interested faculty, staff, alumni, students and community members. We only ask that you include us as a trusted and helpful partner to assist in the future vibrancy of the VSCS and what it means for Vermont to sustain our colleges for generations to come.

In closing, I want to share with you our vision for the future of the VSCS. It is this: To Reinvest, Reinvigorate, and Reimagine the Vermont State Colleges! We believe, contrary to the NVU Strong! proposals, both NVU and Castleton should be robust liberal arts universities serving their respective regions, while VTC should remain a robust technical college for all of Vermont and CCV becomes an integrated pathway to four-year degrees. To meet these ends, the Legislature must fund the VSC as required by Vermont Statutes "in whole or in substantial part" (16 V.S.A. § 2171).

Thank you kindly for your generosity of time, attention and sincere consideration. We are here in support, solidarity and hope that you believe as strongly in the VSCS as we do, and that you, too, wish to see all the schools remain vibrant in order to continue to serve Vermont for generations to come.

Cathy Printon - In a culture of life-long learning and uncertainty for our students, Vermont cannot afford to reduce the opportunities for our students now or in the future. Over 80% of first generation Vermont students attend a Vermont State College, overwhelmingly in the communities in which they live. For our first generation, moderate income, and low income families, colleges close to home where familiarity is strong, is their best bet and their trusted choice. The faculty and staff (res life, facilities, offices, dining

hall) are their neighbors and family members. These baby steps, if you will, into higher education are necessary for a large portion of our population in the most rural communities in our state. This does not mean they are not capable of another choice, it merely means they are cautiously entering an environment that is a huge step out of their family culture. They also, more-so than their private in-state or UVM classmates, stay in Vermont. First generation students feel an overwhelming sense of responsibility to their families. Being close to home allows them the ability to be supported and to support their families while not creating too hard a burden. Without this local, residential option, many of our young people will not continue their educations.

In a conversation with a colleague earlier today, he noticed in the signature at the bottom of my email, the term "first gen" and commented on it – an unsolicited comment. He said, "I have never seen the "first-gen" indicator in an email signature before seeing yours - in the context of VSAC I'm taking that to mean first-generation college. 23 years ago now (how time flies) I was starting out as first-gen to complete a college degree. After arriving on campus (at UVM) I was surprised to find how common it was that others around me were not first-gen and presumably walked around with a different and more complete context for what it meant to pursue a degree. I appreciate the help of those who I suspect took an interest in seeing that this first-gen student was successful in their new environment. I expect the first-gen college experience has become more challenging since my own time." Travis is a first gen UVM graduate who grew up in Central VT.

For out-of-state students, the VSCs have always been an affordable, small New England liberal arts choice. I believe, that in the wake of COVID-19, more and more students will be seeking small, relationship-based, familial colleges. We have and can continue to create that place here -- and we certainly have the talent to go out and get those students. Being brave, bold, and innovative is necessary.

This is what our VSCs do best! We provide relationship-oriented education where the focus is on whole student development, content education, and young adult development toward independence. Students can not truly learn independence when learning from their childhood bedroom in the household of their family with all of the family obligations, expectations, and limitations that are imposed. Especially for first-generation students who have a full load of family responsibilities and worry.

We might think that remote learning is the wave of the future, and it would be an easy adult "fix" to take the easy road to remote education but it is not what is best for our students now or in the future. I say we take the tougher road, the personal road, the student centered road, and be who we were always meant to be -- and have been successful at it for decades. I couldn't tell you what I learned in my environmental science lecture, but I can tell you every lesson I learned from my mentors, friends, and the mistakes and successes along the way with people who knew me and were invested in my success.

For the Vermont State Colleges to clearly and proudly state who they are and who they serve - without wavering and without apology.

Richard Moyer - Our objective is to ensure that, as a community both for NVU and for the VSCS, we frame our future in terms that prepare us to get ahead of what's coming, both federally and at the state level. We need to be in a position to take advantage of those major changes, economically and socially, and we cannot do that if we continue to pare away at who we are and what we offer. If we put ourselves in the position of taking advantage of what's coming, we can reinvest, reinvigorate, and reimagine the VSC. And we, as VSCS Thrive! have numerous specific ideas to share on how to do that. Most importantly, we need to expect the legislature to fund the VSC as originally intended by their founding statute, and, we have an army of supporters to enlist in that work! VSCS Thrive! will have the Board's back if you push that as hard as you can and as hard as you need to. Then we can lower tuition and reinvest in programs to draw students back to the VSC.

David Plazek - We believe the haste behind the decision-making processes in the post-April VSC is not appropriate in light of the upcoming election. We cannot allow the Covid crisis to cloud our long term thinking. If history is any indicator, the November elections will lead to sweeping Federal changes that will fundamentally alter the financial landscape for higher education in the US. Biden has already promised that he would pursue free public higher education for at least the first two years of college. There are good odds that this will be our future and hence we should plan for this likely contingency. Hence, we would argue any significant changes should be delayed until after the election, at a minimum. In addition to the election, the Legislature's VSC report does not come out until December 1, giving further reason to be patient.

Susan Rand - The VSCS Thrive! Group is in the final stages of drafting a formal vision document for the VSCS. Our intent is to share this document with you, the general public and the legislature as encouragement for returning to an appropriate level of funding, per the Vermont State Statute, and also to endorse a reimagining of the VSCS to meet the needs and interests of the twenty-first century, both from a student and a business perspective.

We understand that the VSC Board of Trustees has always pushed reasonably to limit tuition increases, while at the same time the legislature, over 40 years, continuously reduced the level of funding from near 50% to 17%. As you are well aware, these reductions in funding have necessitated a corresponding increase in tuition to the point where Vermont ranks at or near the very top of the list of most expensive public higher education tuition rates in the country. Cuts to course and program offerings coupled with rising tuition have led to the current declines in enrollments, not demographic changes as many assume.

The only way to reverse this situation is to reinvest and rebuild the colleges so they are attractive to and affordable for students, and offer much more comprehensive and transformative educational opportunities than is currently the case. There is no alternative to reinvesting and reinvigorating these institutions other than convincing the Legislature to fund the VSCS as stipulated in the Vermont State Statutes, "in whole or in large part," thus allowing for tuition to be reduced to a more reasonable level.

We have a moment in time, probably the only moment we'll ever have, to push the legislature to reverse their long-standing defunding of the VSCS. The light appears to have recently come on for many legislators that we simply cannot continue to provide more for less, and they can see that the VSCS have reached the tipping point. Our organization has the means to gather significant numbers of voices to support the board's push for appropriate funding as the state statute requires, and we have the vision and the plan to capitalize on the legislature's commitment.

It's a mistake to have the colleges prepare plans assuming a 15-25% cut for the fiscal year 2022, as NVU Strong and the others are doing. Some legislators will assume they have "saved" the colleges with bridge funding, and if plans are presented to return to inadequate funding following this "bridge," the assumption will be that this is reasonable and workable. The fact is that it is neither reasonable nor workable. Academic and student support programs have repeatedly been cut while the scope of the administration has grown exponentially, resulting in diminished value for students. The legislature must understand that there is only one choice to ensure high-quality, accessible, affordable higher education through the VSCS: funding the VSCS as the founding state statute requires. It is time to reinvest, reinvigorate, and reimagine the system for the twenty-first century.

The likelihood of federal changes that would relieve student debt and/or make public colleges either free or heavily subsidized it is important to effectively prepare for. Additionally, planning for capitalizing on the current economic downturn, which will certainly redirect many students (both in and out of state) away from existing private liberal arts colleges to less expensive alternatives in the public realm. Serving the broader community audience and effectively planning for this likelihood will enable the VSCS to be positioned to take advantage of these situations.

Across the country as well as across Vermont, student reaction to online learning in the wake of COVID-19 demanded shifts in education delivery have made it abundantly clear that the future of education for traditional college age students is not online. Demand for vibrant and expansive, campus-based education is not going to disappear and the VSCS should be prepared to take advantage of this.

What is needed for "re-visioning" of the VSCS is a true re-imagining of what we can and should do to serve the educational needs of Vermont—a re-imagining that is expansive, comprehensive, that includes the needs of any and all Vermonters—from those who need re-training for employment, to those who want to create new, vital, undreamed of careers and businesses in Vermont, to those who now leave the state in search of the kind of education that will open a world of opportunities and abilities that they don't even know exist. Truly, we cannot do less and successfully meet our mission.

To reach this goal, of course, will require enormous changes, the most important of which is a fundamental re-visioning of how we understand and present to our constituents the nature, purpose, and design of education across the VSCS. The articulation of that new vision and future will then have to be taken by both leadership and stakeholders to the legislature and to the broader community in order to reverse the last forty plus years of underfunding the VSCS, so that the legislature fulfills its statutory responsibility to fund the VSCS "in whole or in substantial part." We must conceive of and represent the broad range of what the VSCS can and should do as a vital investment—one that has an extraordinary economic, social and cultural return—in our communities and our state. Truly we cannot do less and successfully meet our mission.

It is time for real change—and that real change is to pivot in the direction of anticipating and furthering the effects of significant public pressure for saving the Vermont State Colleges and legislative awareness of the value of the colleges “for the benefit of Vermont”—all of Vermont, not just prospective employers. Restricting access to true educational opportunities ensures a less educated population and limits economic development. There is a burning need for re-visioning education for a real twenty-first century education however that model cannot ascribe to old ways of thinking that undermine education by emphasizing job training and workforce development instead. We need to educate students to think critically and develop the wide range of knowledge and skills necessary to become future leaders in our ever-changing world; this is what students want and what businesses seek.

It is an irresponsible and flawed business model that requires educational institutions to adopt responsibility for workforce training. Education should not be coopted by businesses who do not plan responsibly for the training and development of their employees. Pivoting from educating students to cater to business desires for cheap labor is shameful and wrong. The VSCS should serve the needs of its students and the citizens of Vermont first, and not those of business owners unwilling to take responsibility for training their employees. What’s more, further narrowing educational opportunities is counterproductive to the mission of the Vermont State Colleges and doing so, gradually over the past twenty years, has resulted in program elimination and accelerated enrollment decline.

We believe the VSCS can do better than they have done for the past twenty years of narrowing and limiting, especially now in this national and global climate—manifested in massive protests and demonstrations driven largely by young people—that so clearly needs a larger and fuller vision of who we are as a local community, as well as a national and international one. Clearly, such opportunity and education are not only what our students want, but what they need and deserve.

The primary emphasis of our vision is that the purpose and responsibility of the Vermont State Colleges is not solely to produce or train workers for the economic development of our communities, but is rather to provide access to and support for the opportunity for our citizens to undertake a fully developed, expansive, and transformative education to advance themselves and to serve the economic, social, and cultural development of our communities, our region, and the world.

NVU cannot just be focused solely on work-force development because education doesn’t equate with creating “degree products” for business; its purpose is to educate citizens to be fully developed human beings who make up the vitality of Vermont’s communities. All the uniqueness and distinctiveness of individuals and of those communities are among the most important things to cherish, to preserve, and to foster, as the Vermont State Colleges mission says, “for the benefit of Vermont.” It is especially important right now—with all turmoil and change going on in the world—that our citizens be creative and thinking people, in the broadest ways possible.

Vermont and Vermonters need robust liberal arts colleges to serve the western and southern region of the state as well as the northern and eastern regions. The state must reinvest, reinvigorate, and reimagine these colleges to meet student interests, future state and national needs, and to stimulate the Vermont economy. We must find ways to expand and empower the younger generation not only to remain in the state but to move to the state; reinvesting in the VSCS and expanding and transforming its educational offerings is the most effective means of achieving this. The entire state of Vermont can afford nothing less or the responsibility for the future of the state will fall squarely on the backs of the

small number of larger communities who will inevitably be required to fund social services, corrections, and more.

There exists (at NVU-Johnson) the designation of the premier public liberal arts college in Vermont, which we have yet to capitalize on and, at the same time, have undermined by cutting liberal arts programs and courses beyond the bone. The work involved by NVU to achieve admittance into COPLAC (Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges) should not have been accomplished in vain as it recognizes the university as one of the 30 institutions nationally who are committed to providing superior liberal arts and sciences education to their students.

The four-year Vermont State Colleges have previously offered both professional programs and liberal arts programs simultaneously and there is no reason to consider massive structural changes that would reduce educational opportunities when the current situation has clearly been created by inappropriate levels of state funding. In fact, according to a 2020 in-depth study by LinkedIn, there is strong sentiment from nearly 60% of business leaders that soft skills such as creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability – described as “an essential tool for navigating today’s ever-changing world” – are more important than hard skills.

Ryan Jenkins, a Millennial and Gen Z Speaker and Generational Expert, writes in Inc. that “In today’s fast world, hard skills have a short shelf life...soft skills are more transferrable across careers and industries.” “The future will require workers to be emotionally intelligent.” “When AI can diagnose a patient’s condition with greater accuracy than a doctor, what will become of doctors?”

According to The Society of Human Resource Management’s 2019 State of the Workplace study, the top three missing skills of job applicants are problem-solving, the ability to deal with complexity and ambiguity, and communication skills. Next on the list: trade skills such as carpentry, plumbing, etc.

Our conversations with business leaders in Vermont indicate an overwhelming preference for the range of skills developed through a liberal arts curriculum, such as critical thinking, flexibility and emotional intelligence. The most common thread in these conversations is that businesses would prefer to hire well-rounded people and then undertake specific training within their companies.

Kiplinger, in their 2019 search for “the best bet shots at success and satisfaction in the workplace, complete with generous incomes,” identifies the best 25 majors for a lucrative career. As you might expect, the list is STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) dominant but included in the top 15 are two liberal arts majors: Classics and American Studies. Their rationale: “The level of critical thinking and research skills...is highly marketable in a wide range of industries.” What’s more, 51% of those with a BA in Classics report high levels of meaning in their careers thus are less likely to look to change jobs or careers. Kiplinger cites as an important factor in their ranking, the importance of workers who “feel their jobs have a positive impact in the world because having a sense of purpose can be just as important as having a good payday.”

For these reasons and many more, the VSCS Thrive! Group feels strongly that, contrary to the NVU Strong! proposals, both NVU and Castleton should be robust liberal arts universities serving their respective regions, while VTC should remain a robust technical college for all of Vermont and CCV becomes an integrated pathway to four-year degrees. To meet these ends, the Legislature must fund

the Vermont State Colleges as required by Vermont Statutes “in whole or in substantial part” (16 V.S.A. § 2171).

As such, we recommend incorporating cutting edge models such as SHAPE and MESH into reinvigorating and reshaping the liberal arts curriculum to address student interests as well as those of businesses. SHAPE is a recently designed UK model that stands for Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts and Film for the People. MESH is an acronym for media literacy, ethics, sociology, and history. MESH evolved from the need to provide a wider range of soft skills to the existing and widely adopted STEM model.

Shifting the VSC focus, for NVU in particular, to that of workforce training at the expense of strong liberal arts programs is unfair to Vermonters and to the future of Vermont. The VSCS can and should lead the way to growing Vermont’s economy by expanding educational opportunities for Vermonters and at the same time, attracting students from out-of-state. Suggesting, or going so far as to implement, structural changes that deny expansive educational opportunities is shortsighted and will ultimately weaken Vermont’s economy and social fabric. The loss of these opportunities will also significantly impact the ability to attract students from out of state, negatively impacting the VSCS revenues and also the growth of young people in the state who come to Vermont to go to college and ultimately stay to work here or to start companies.

Entrepreneurship is the root of most businesses in Vermont, whether created by “real” Vermonters or those who have come to the state to attend college and remained following graduation. Let’s provide our citizens the opportunity to acquire the range of skills and intellectual curiosity needed to continue to fuel this legacy.

The assumption that rural Vermonters only deserve workforce training and not the opportunity to pursue higher levels of thinking and emotional intelligence is discriminatory and serves only to perpetuate low levels of achievement in rural areas of the state.

It is time to reinvest in Vermont and Vermonters by appropriately funding the VSCS and creating a sustainable model that will yield an important and wide-reaching return on this investment for the entire state.

Shayne Spence (could not be with us today but provided these thoughts) - Downturns in enrollment are much better correlated statistically with increases in tuition than demographic trends

Since former-Vermont State College System (VSCS) Chancellor Spaulding released the so-called “white paper” in 2019, it has been widely circulated that the VSCS’ primary obstacle to success is declining demographics in the State of Vermont. If this were true, then one would expect to see a relationship between the number of college-aged Vermonters (18 to 24 years old) and the headcount at the VSCS. In particular, one would expect to see that a lower number of college-aged Vermonters would correspond to lower numbers of people attending the VSCS.

The exact opposite has been observed between 2011 and 2020.

Notably, the number of Vermonters aged 18 to 24 years old has remained relatively stable between 65,000 and 68,000. Furthermore, there has been no observed relationship between the number of Vermonters aged 18-24 and VSCS headcount. In fact, there is a weak negative relationship between the two variables, indicating that there is no relationship of note whatsoever. See figure 1 which shows the number of Vermonters aged 18-24 from 2011 to 2020 on the horizontal axis, and the VSCS headcount from 2011 to 2020 on the vertical axis.

Economic impacts of VSCS are immense and dwarf the impacts of other state economic development initiatives

Using a conservative 2.5x economic multiplier, NVU-Johnson contributes \$113 million annually to the economy of Northern VT.

VEDA (Vermont Economic Development Authority) contributes roughly \$15m to the same area of Vermont.

There are no numbers online relating to the Regional Development Corporations economic impact, but it is safe to say they also do not compare to the VSCS.

Viewing the VSCS as a black hole of funding, and forcing them to operate in an austerity mindset, has been the strategy for the last 20 years. Despite those challenges, the VSCS has a massive positive impact on the state's economy. Imagine what they could do if they were fully funded.

Thank you for this opportunity to share the work of VSCS Thrive! Should you need to reach us, you may contact:

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Memo: Task Force Update to Board of Trustees Long Term Planning Committee

Date: July 23, 2020

The VSCS Forward Task Force (Task Force) was charged by the VSCS Board of Trustees (Board) with providing concrete recommendations for moving the system toward a sustainable future that provides a high-quality education for students. As the Task Force began our work, we painfully acknowledged that the challenging fiscal situation of the VSCS is compounded by the impact of COVID-19 and the public health and economic crisis that followed. The Task Force responded to the charge, and took on the responsibility, with a student-centered focus and approach.

This memo describes an acknowledgement of the current situation of VSCS, the Task Force work to date (June 11-July 22), and outlines the guiding principles, process, and ideas discussed to date. The Task Force will provide ideas and recommendations to the Chancellor and Board mid-August.

Current Situation of VSCS

--Years of underfunding and practices of “doing more with less” have substantially weakened the system and its institutions. This is universally recognized by members of the VSCS internally and well-documented publicly. ([Secure the Future White Paper](#), [Jim Page report](#), [NVU faculty survey results](#))

--Public spending on education in Vermont is unevenly distributed across the preK-16 continuum, with approximately \$18k spent per Vermont K-12 student and less than \$5k spent per student on education beyond high school. This significant difference is something the state and Vermonters will want to consider for a successful future of its citizens.

-- Legislative leaders assured the VSCS that they will provide funding for one year. At the same time, the timeframe to achieve many of the system-strengthening and system-transformation options identified by faculty, staff, and students at our institutions is necessarily much longer.

--While the average state appropriations share of New England public higher education systems' operating budgets is [currently 31.5%](#), the VSCS receives only about half this amount (17%). To reach a comparable proportion of funding to other New England public systems, Vermont would need to invest \$25 million more annually in the system. (Put another way, if VSCS's current level of state funding (\$32 million in FY2020) represented 31.5% of its operating budget, the system would have to shrink by 45%, from approximately \$180 million operation to a \$101 million operation.)

Values

As a guide to its deliberations and recommendations, the Task Force agreed upon a set of values:

- ❖ We will be bold and apply visionary thinking in the recommendations.
 - This means we have a willingness to think beyond the boundaries of what we know now.
 - We see this time as a rare opportunity given health and economic crisis.
 - Some of our ideas could be completely new and different.

- ❖ We will provide a quality, student-driven education to learners. Decisions are learner-centered and student-driven.
 - Quality is defined as: given the cost of the VSCS education, it is worth it by providing students with opportunities to pursue their dreams. Our students are prepared for the workforce, effective participants in civil life, have broader viewpoints, and better health.

- ❖ The Task Force will seek input from stakeholders including students, faculty and staff, workforce, and communities.

- ❖ We will be innovative, responsive, and flexible.

- ❖ We will act with a sense of urgency to make recommendations and adapt to current circumstances.

- ❖ We will focus on access and affordability.
 - Access to education (not necessarily geography). Rural students need access through technology and a flexible approach to learning.
 - Affordability means students have the time, money, and less debt/loans.

- ❖ We are looking ahead, beyond this year and next. Who do we want to serve and how do we serve students 5, 10, 15 years from now?

- ❖ We care about workforce development. With a VSCS education, students will be able to meet their dreams and are employable.

- ❖ We exist for the benefit of Vermont. We must consider the pockets of in-state students we can serve better.
- ❖ Out-of-state students are also crucial to our VSCS success and Vermont's future. Many students from out of state plan to join the VT community.
- ❖ We value diversity in our VSCS student population, faculty, the approach, and programs.
- ❖ We will think as a system, rather than as individual institutions.
 - We are stronger if we capitalize on strengths, recognize weaknesses, and don't compete against each other. (Competition examples: financial aid, academic programs, etc.).
 - The task force will set collaboration between institutions as a goal.
- ❖ We value fairness. Sometimes this means consistency and sometimes it means equity.

Task Force Process

After agreeing on shared values, and reviewing the input from stakeholders to date, the Task Force decided on the following process:

In a discussion format, the Task Force explored challenges, questions, and opportunities related to accreditation, the VSCS footprint, accessibility, affordability, and governance. We looked at data, stakeholder input to date, had conversations with the Maine system staff and the VSCS Board Chair, and then surfaced ideas (see below) from our discussions.

The next steps for the Task Force for the next couple weeks are to generate some alternative models of the future of the VSCS and continue stakeholder engagement. By creating a variety of solutions for the future of the VSCS, our Task Force will weigh the costs and benefits of different approaches.

Task Force Stakeholder Engagement

The Task Force reviewed input from Labor Task Force Town Halls, "VTC Request for Transformative Ideas", NVU Strong, House Speaker Mitzi Johnson's Idea Bank, VSCS Thrive!, a VSC Student Association presentation and feedback with Ryan Cooney and Alexandra Huff, and ideas provided to the Task Force through the VSC.edu website. Information about the Task Force's work can be found at <https://www.vsc.edu/board-of-trustees/vscsforward/>.

The Task Force is planning to connect with faculty assemblies, unions, and staff on our ideas to date. We will also send out surveys to school counselors, students, and businesses/employers. We hope to collect input in the surveys that provide perspectives on the question of “as they look to the future, what do these groups want from the VSCS?” What are the strengths, opportunities, characteristics of the system they wish to maintain or see in the future?

Task Force Ideas To Date

Below you will find our Task Force list of ideas under consideration to date. The Task Force recognizes, and we are comfortable, that each of our ideas requires process, some potential investments in technologies, and broadband access. There isn't a one-size-fits-all solution, and the VSCS should differentiate strategies by program.

Accessibility

1. Prioritize state money for in-state programs (VSAC funding but also other sources of funding that goes to training and credential programs).
2. Offer flexible programs that meet students needs such as: low-residency programs with shorter times on campus, intensive programming, accelerated courses/programs, shorter-term credentials and programs, and regular weekend and evening classes to allow for more diverse cohorts of students using facilities.
3. Significantly expand and invest in telepresence and telepresence-like options, and online delivery. Telepresence allows flexibility of offering a program or a class at multiple sites. This investment could include:
 - ❖ Making all classrooms telepresence capable. There are scheduling conflicts with too few classrooms offering this option.
 - ❖ Providing faculty professional development support for online classes and telepresence.
4. Provide year-round programming. This makes it faster to degree and the buildings and facilities are used year-round.
5. Create a Center for Continuing Education for the entire system with revenue sharing back to individual institutions.
6. With the consolidations to date, staff and faculty are stretched. When looking at areas of accessibility, and the future of programs, it is important to recognize this fact.

Governance

The Task Force spent time exploring accreditation and governance options. We did not reach any conclusions, but we recognized several important points:

- ❖ Different colleges in the system have different levels of symbiosis. Therefore, it is important to recognize the different needs of the institutions in all areas including governance.
- ❖ There are benefits and costs associated with centralized governance (Chancellor's Office). It is important to look at services and systems that can be improved and meet the needs of the colleges.
- ❖ The IT department (system-wide software, network costs, and staffing) is 5/8 of the budget for the OC. This is an area to explore and consider the overlap in staffing at this central office and at the colleges.
- ❖ Decisions by the OC and individual colleges can and should have better coordination and communication.

Duplication

1. Explore, single degree majors (programs) for like-programs across the system. Preserve options across the system, but not at all locations. Look at these programs individually, there is not one approach that fits all.
2. Create a single general education program.
3. Create a direct pathways (admissions) process for all associate degree programs. Create more 2+2 articulation agreements within the system. Also consider ease of transfer of CCV meta-majors.
4. Increase and enhance the number of online degree completion programs for all degrees (associate, bachelor, and masters level classes). Determine where this makes sense, not a one-size fits all solution.
5. Conduct an analysis of academic programs and consider areas for consolidation, specifically with NVU and CU.

6. Conduct an analysis of functional area duplication in non-academic areas such as: admissions/ recruitment, alumni relations, grants and contracts, large gifts, communication/PR, advising, student life, student housing/residential living, IT infrastructure, IT desktop / user support, instructional technology, libraries, financial aid, registrar/records and career services.
7. Other ideas for systems improvements and potential inefficiencies in duplication: create one military-connected certifying official, streamline electronic forms, align terminology of services and programs across the system.

Affordability

We have not discussed the topic of affordability fully, although it is a critical and core area. We will discuss this area and share ideas on 7/28.

The Future of the VSCS
A Reasonable Path Forward
By Ryan Cooney
6/23/2020

Introduction

The VSCS was first formed by the Legislature in 1961. The enacting legislation brought VTC (Vermont Technical College), Castleton University, Johnson, and Lyndon College, who would later become NVU (Northern Vermont University), and later CCV together under one roof. These higher education facilities had originally been founded on their own, and thus ran independently. Following the actions taken in 1961, these institutes have continued to act somewhat independent of each other. Considering recent events, it is the belief of the report's author that it is time to stop working as a system in name only.

Currently, the VSCS does not run as a system, but a collection of institutes that share the common goal of educating individuals. For example, when transferring within the system, credits may transfer but not necessarily meet prerequisite requirements. Faculty are not cross trained, nor teach at other schools within the systems. System schools with identical programs compete for students. Students can also not apply to the system but must choose an individual school. To be effective in the future, something must change.

Proposal

A solution would be to rebrand the VSCS altogether. Instead of operating different institutes under a common banner, we would operate one school under one banner. The Vermont State College would take the place of Castleton, VTC, and NVU. The respective current campuses of each of these facilities would then be known as “VSC Johnson Campus” and so on. At this time, the plan would be to operate all campuses, with no plans for any closings.

One thought would be to place CCV on its own, outside the new system. Multiple other states currently run their community colleges as a separate institute, so there is precedent for such a move. An understanding would continue where CCV is still the feeder program to the VSC. Students would also continue to have a direct admissions pathway to the VSC.

If the wish is to maintain CCV within the system, it is suggested that this be done so with CCV as a subsidiary. CCV would retain its individual accreditation, name, and various campuses. This plan would also likely be supported and would keep costs low for our students. As with the above plan, students would continue to have a direct admissions pathway to the VSC. Keeping CCV in house would also open the door to potential expansion in the future.

Leadership would be streamlined under this proposal. At each of the five campuses, the respective senior Dean would be promoted to Provost and would handle the day to day operations. They would also report to the President of the system. The office of President would summarily take the place of the Chancellor. The President in turn would then report to the BOT

(Board of Trustees). At this time, it would make the most sense to continue to run the future system from a centralized point. The author would recommend continuing operations from the offices currently held in Montpelier.

Possible Backlash

It is likely that many individuals would have an adverse reaction to this plan. Most notably would be those of NVU. Having recently gone through a change in identity, it is unlikely they would want to again. Others at VTC and Castleton would also most likely voice opposition, as this plan does strip these institutes of their individuality and long history. However, if it is made clear at once that the intent is to continue to operate every campus, then it is likely that these populations can be brought on board.

Administration is also likely to express misgivings about this plan. Some would lose their jobs as the system is rebranded and streamlined. However, if other positions can be made available, or deals can be made, it is likely they can be brought on board as well.

CCV is likely to be against this plan. Sending them on their own could be viewed as an improper action on our part. CCV though does not have any four-year degree programs, and thus does not fit in the future system. As stated above, other states run the community colleges separately. There will be growing pains and some feelings of anger but it is believed that these would come to pass quickly.

Benefits

An immediate benefit would be that we become the system we are supposed to be. Bringing our colleges and universities together has the potential to strengthen us for the future. It shows the state that we are serious about being here for the future and can change. Overall, it would complete the work the Legislature started in 1961.

Another benefit would come from the streamlining that would occur. Some positions would be cut, meaning a direct savings to the system. The Legislature has also asked that the system make a change soon. It is likely the Legislature would smile upon such an act and be more willing to work and help the system in the future. There is also the benefit to future students, as they could

apply to the system, and not individual colleges. There would also be subsequent savings in Admissions and Marketing.

Path Forward

It is recommended that conversations begin between the BOT, the Legislature, and the Presidents. Early discussion will allow us to gauge interest, any misgivings, and supply other viewpoints to potential issues. Should there be reasonable interest, and the BOT and Legislature decide to move forward, it is suggested that public be informed at the earliest possible time. To not do this could lead to far greater issues later.

It is also recommended that conversations begin with NECHE. Both the VSC and CCV would have receive accreditation again. Since both institutes have a history of earlier accreditation, it is likely that they would be easily accredited again. However, the process would still take some years, and this must be understood by all stakeholders. This proposal would change the face of higher education in Vermont, and thus would take time to do correctly.

Conversations should also occur between the BOT and those in Finance and HR. Such a move as that proposed will inevitably have a price tag. Determining this cost early is key, as well as staying within it once the change has begun. Budgets are tight, and while it is important that such a change be done right, it is equally important that we do not overspend.

Final Thoughts

The author understands this would be a drastic change to how we operate today. However, it is understood that many key stakeholders wish for a drastic change to occur. This is only a draft of a potential plan and should be treated as such. The author is more than happy to discuss further with any who wish to, as well as re-draft until an agreeable plan is created. Contact details are listed below. The author would like to thank all who took the time to read this document, and for their input.

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