**VSCS Forward Task Force Meetings 6/16 and 6/23 2020**

The VSCS Forward Task Force spent first meeting on process to reach agreement on the charge of the task force, how decisions are made and communicated, and the shared values that will guide the recommendations to the VSCS board.

**Established Ground Rules**

Meeting ground rules include:stay open to influence (be willing to move your stake), don’t advocate but inquire about what others think, put thinking on table, test assumptions, use data to inform recommendations, have open and frank discussions and disagreements in the meeting not outside, share thinking externally from Task Force not from individuals.

**Task Force communications and public engagement**

Group feels it is important to get input from stakeholders (public engagement) and share the Task Force progress. Stakeholders should feel confident that the Task Force will not reach decisions or make recommendations until they create opportunities to hear from them.

**Decision-making process**

Task Force decision-making method will be consensus defined as: individuals are heard, process is open and fair, and group agrees to "live with" decision as it is made.

The task force will accept input this summer through (website). The task force will try to address as many questions as we can as they come in.

**Shared Values Discussed by Task Force**

We started with understanding our shared values. The values named include:

* 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 mean students have the time, money, 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.

**Process of Task Force Deliberation to Reach Recommendations**

1. We will identify sustainable strategies to deliver programs and provide student support in rural areas of Vermont.
2. We will clarify distinguishing characteristics of member institutions.
3. We will look at governance and reconfiguration of the system in organization, finance, governance, and accreditation.

As part of these three areas of focus we will ask:
* Where is there program duplication that doesn’t support the students?
* How do we ensure quality, financial viability, and access/affordability to programs?
* How can we strengthen VSCS’s focus on core, high-demand programs that meet the needs of today’s students and the Vermont workforce?