Report and Recommendations

VSCS *Forward* Task Force

August 12, 2020

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VERMONT
— STATE COLLEGES SYSTEM —

Guiding Vision

The Vermont State College System will provide a high-quality education that is **accessible and affordable** and prepares students for the workforce and the needs of the 21st century.

This education includes **different experiences for different students** such as post-high school traditional students, students looking to work and go to school simultaneously, students interested in specific credentials and trades, and continuing education for all ages.

VSCS *Forward* is optimistic about a reimagined future for the system that is robust, creative, and sustainable.

August 12, 2020 Report

I. Stakeholder Survey Results

II. Charges and Recommendations

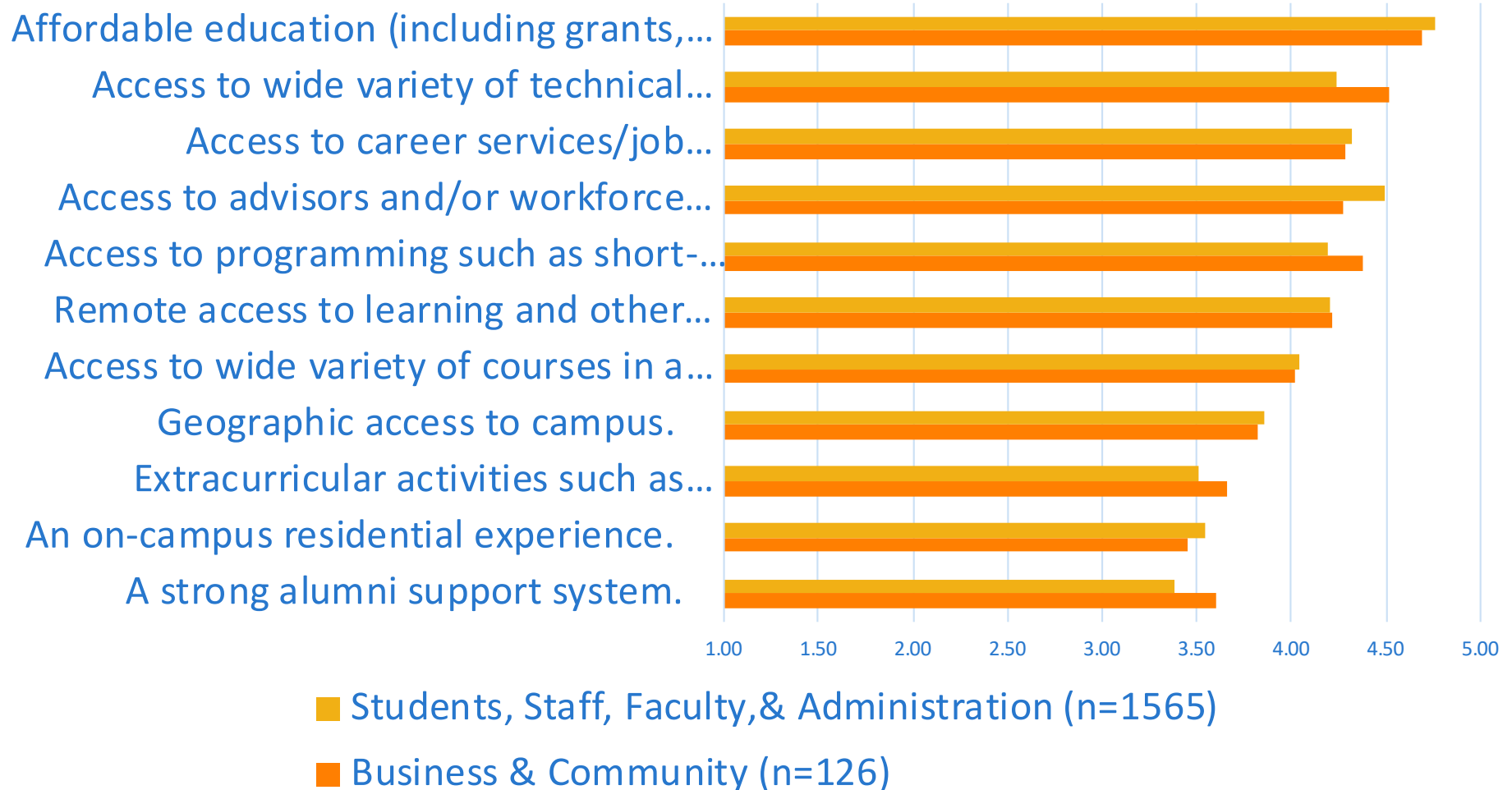III. Affordability Theme and Ideas

VSCS *Forward* Stakeholder Survey

Distribution:

All VSCS internal stakeholders (students, faculty, staff, administration)

400+ high school partners (Dual Enr/Early College, VSAC Outreach)

400+ employer/workforce development partners

2400+ responses in 5 days = 400+ hours of input

Focus on: Priorities, Strengths, and Opportunities

Ranking Priorities

Chart categories (top to bottom):
- Affordable education (including grants,…
- Access to wide variety of technical…
- Access to career services/job…
- Access to advisors and/or workforce…
- Access to programming such as short-…
- Remote access to learning and other…
- Access to wide variety of courses in a…
- Geographic access to campus.
- Extracurricular activities such as…
- An on-campus residential experience.
- A strong alumni support system.

Axis: 1.00 1.50 2.00 2.50 3.00 3.50 4.00 4.50 5.00

Legend:
- Students, Staff, Faculty,& Administration (n=1565)
- Business & Community (n=126)

Workforce Preparation Perceptions

- Stakeholders outside of the system are generally satisfied that students graduate from the VSCS with skills for the workforce.

- Ninety-one percent of those who responded (n=132) are either "very satisfied" (45.5%) or "somewhat satisfied" (45.5%); six percent are somewhat dissatisfied, and 3 percent are very dissatisfied.

- When asked what knowledge or skills are missing from VSCS graduates, many stakeholders referenced a need for more hands-on experience and more focus on communication skills.

School Counselor Perceptions

Thinking only of students who choose a VSCS institution - Why do students choose VSCS? What are those students looking for?
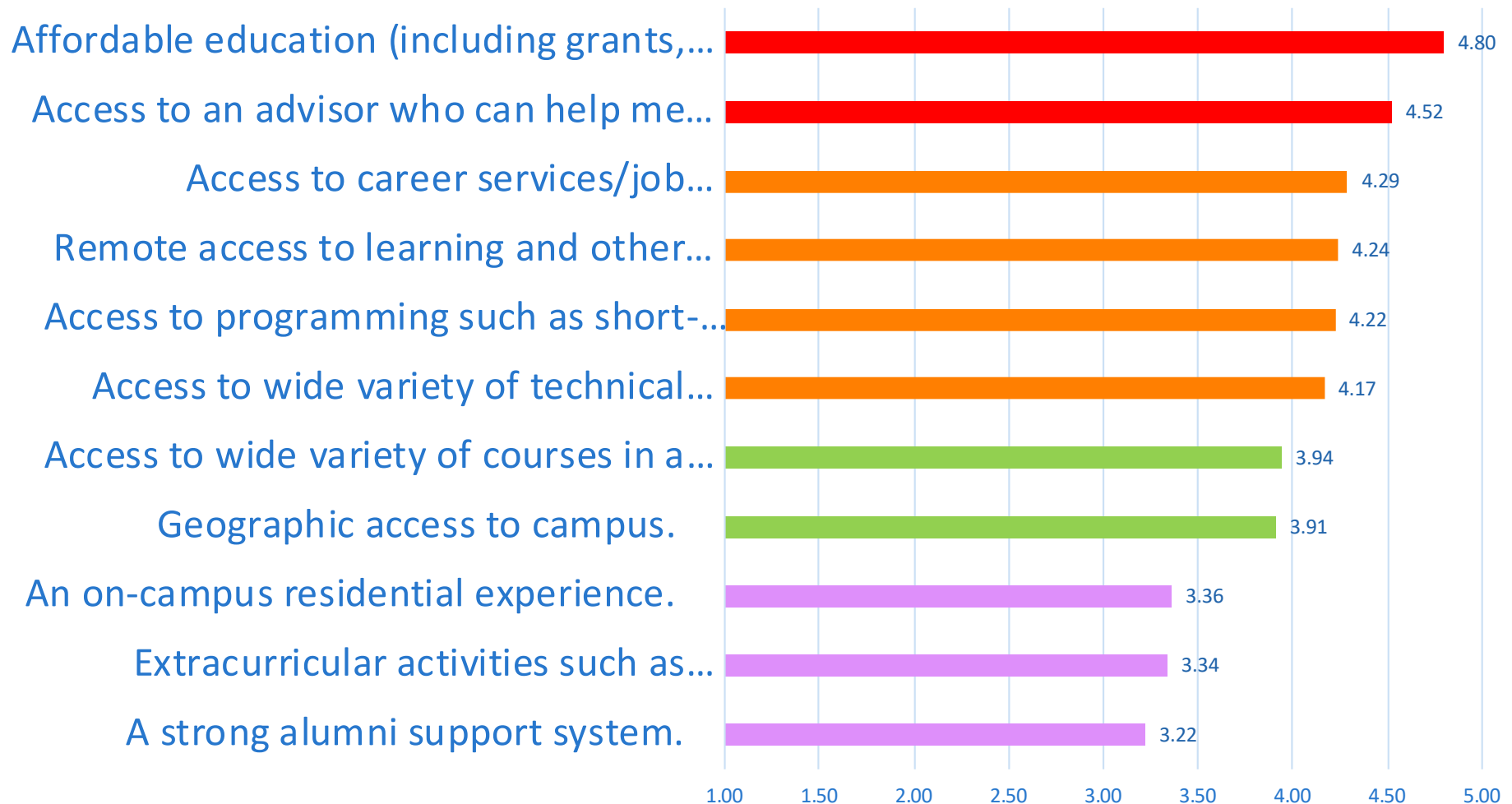
affordability

proximity to home

small, welcoming communities

What are some reasons students do NOT choose a VSCS institution?

Seeking more affordable alternative, further from home, beyond Vermont, not rural, larger in size and with more breadth of programming, more competitive academically.

Priorities Rated by Students

Priority	Rating
Affordable education (including grants,...	4.80
Access to an advisor who can help me...	4.52
Access to career services/job...	4.29
Remote access to learning and other...	4.24
Access to programming such as short-...	4.22
Access to wide variety of technical...	4.17
Access to wide variety of courses in a...	3.94
Geographic access to campus.	3.91
An on-campus residential experience.	3.36
Extracurricular activities such as...	3.34
A strong alumni support system.	3.22

Charges and Recommendations

Charges: address duplication; ensure quality, financial viability, and access

Recommendation 1:

As the majority of academic program overlap exists between Castleton and Northern Vermont University, charge a combined CU/NVU academic affairs group to develop clear evaluation criteria for review of duplicate and low-enrolled programs and a draft proposal for consolidation, increased investment, and/or closure.

This proposal should preserve student access to programs through consortium agreements, consolidation of programs to single majors, and telepresence/hybrid delivery models.

Work to be completed by October 1.

Charges: address duplication; ensure quality, financial viability, and access

Recommendation 2:

As CCV and Vermont Tech operations both serve large proportions of high school students and working adults across the state, charge CCV and VTC to review data and develop a plan for shared operations and opportunities to expand program offerings in co-located spaces.

Work to be completed by October 1.

Charges: address duplication; ensure quality, financial viability, and access

Recommendation 3:

Develop a single general education program core and make this available in person and online.

Recommendation 4:

Develop a plan to provide options for students to have flexible access to course offerings from all system institutions across the state. We recommend a structure that allows all students, including students in rural parts of the state, to take courses online or at telepresence locations.

Charges: Identify sustainable strategies for programs and provide student support in rural areas; strengthen focus on high-demand programs

Recommendation 5:

Engage an external consultant to review data (detailed costs and enrollments) and develop a proposal of most effective way to deliver residential experiences.

Some ideas received as input, discussed by Task Force:
- Prioritize greater collaboration and shared utilization of existing VSCS sites.
- Prioritize expansion in programming offered at high schools, CTEs, businesses, non-profits, health care agencies, etc. where it makes sense.
- Identify non-higher ed uses for some VSCS facilities (or parts) such as business incubators, mental health facilities, arts facilities, and other community uses.
- Explore opportunities for housing and hybrid continuation of academic programs in some VSCS locations without additional services (athletics, student life programming).

Charge: Reconfigure the system in organization, finance, governance, and accreditation.

Recommendation 6:

Conduct an in-depth analysis of the potential sustainability of moving to a new system configuration.

The Task Force recognizes that our recommendations and the results support an effort to transform the VSCS from its existing "federation of institutions" model to a true, interconnected system. We foresee a new system with a simplified accreditation and governance structure. More time and data is needed to make a recommendation for a new configuration model.

Affordability Theme & Ideas

- Expand Early College access and opportunities

- Year-round programming

- Associates degree concurrent with HS graduation or one additional year through pathways with HS and CTE

- Expand 2+2 pathways

- Community investment in the VSCS via greater collaboration with business, non-profits, public entities