

**Vermont State Colleges System
Request for Proposals
Academic Program Analysis
December 15, 2020**

**Questions due: December 28, 5:00 PM EST
Proposals due: January 4, 2021 5:00 PM EST
Anticipated Project Period: January 25-March 30, 2021**

INTRODUCTION

The Vermont State Colleges System (VSCS) seeks proposals for an in-depth review of its academic program offerings to support the transformation of the system. The outcome of this work will support the VSCS as it develops a transformation vision and high level project plan, in alignment with the [initial recommendations](#) of the *Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education in Vermont (Select Committee)* for common accreditation of the three residential colleges and consolidation of administrative services.

As articulated by the Select Committee, the goal of the transformation is to create a system that will be:

- Nimble in response to the needs of students, employers, regions and communities, and the state.
- Accessible—programs will be readily available to all types of students in all parts of the state.
- Ubiquitous—the VSC System will be a resource to residents in all parts of the state.
- Essential—the VSC System will continue to provide essential support to stimulating economic and workforce development for the state and its regions and communities.
- High-quality—transformation will help to smooth educational pathways and improve program relevance and delivery.
- Financially self-sustaining—systemwide scale will yield greater efficiencies in academic delivery and administrative services, while keeping tuition revenue focused on paying for instruction and support costs.

The key questions the VSCS seeks to address through this project are:

1. What are the student market trends related to VSCS institutions, locations, and academic programs as currently configured?
2. What are the current areas of excellence in curricular and/or co-curricular programming distinctive to particular institutions, locations, or transfer pathways, and how can these be strengthened in a transformed, financially self-sustaining system?
3. What are the programs most necessary to fulfill Vermont's stated goal of 70% of Vermonters having a credential of value by 2025, and what are the most likely student populations to be served by those programs?
4. What is the optimal constellation of programs that could be sustainably delivered in each of the VSCS's locations?
5. What modality or modalities are most feasible for delivery of each program (fully in-person; partially asynchronous online; synchronous delivery to remotely located students; low-residency; etc.)?

6. What is the optimal, most sustainable delivery strategy for programs where duplication exists within the system?
7. What programs could be sustainably delivered through a fully online/remote learning division?
8. What are key transition needs for programs identified for changes (e.g. duplicate programs with separate external accreditations; programs to be expanded for delivery to additional locations in different modalities; programs to be consolidated to delivery at a single location; programs to be closed)?
9. What programs should be removed from or added to the array of VSCS program offerings, and what metrics should the VSCS use to guide future review of existing and potential programs?

This project also builds on recent work of the [VSCS Forward Task Force](#) and subsequent report from the Castleton--Northern Vermont University Academic Programs Group (see page 18 in [October 16, 2020 board materials](#)). The VSCS currently operates a single system-wide instance of its student information system (Ellucian Colleague), learning management system (Canvas), and advising software with predictive analytics (Aviso). The VSCS's single governing board sets [system-wide academic policies and processes](#) including approval of new programs, review of existing programs, general education, and management of the single academic transcript for VSCS students.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Background and experience: Describe your experience and qualifications, including a brief description of other similar projects completed.

Project plan: Describe your proposed approach to the project, including a project timeline, major project milestones and deliverables, and strategies you will use to accomplish the work within the stated timeframe.

Project staffing: Describe the qualifications of the project lead and other key personnel and the role each of them will have in the project. Describe anticipated needs for VSCS personnel to support the project, with timeframe and workload estimates.

Data sets, benchmarks, and models: Describe the VSCS data as well as any external data elements or benchmarks you expect to use, and analyses you expect to perform. Describe what recommended metrics you would develop to support the VSCS board and institutional leadership in maintaining an appropriate array of program offerings going forward.

References: Include names, addresses, and telephone numbers of at least three clients for whom you have performed similar services.

Pricing: Any and all costs that you wish the VSCS to consider must be included in a proposal. The cost structure for the project should be described including billing rates and estimated hours for key staff, payments to any subcontractors, overhead rates, and estimated non- salary expenses, including travel.

PROPOSAL PROCESS

Submission of questions: The deadline for submitting questions is 5:00 PM Eastern Time, Monday, December 28, 2021. All questions will be posted on the VSC website, www.vsc.edu and made available

to all bidders. Send questions to Dr. Yasmine Ziesler, Chief Academic Officer, at yasmine.ziesler@vsc.edu.

Submission of proposals: The deadline for submitting responses is 5:00 PM Eastern Time, Monday, January 4, 2021. Provide an electronic copy only, via email, to: Dr. Yasmine Ziesler, Chief Academic Officer, at yasmine.ziesler@vsc.edu.

Criteria for evaluation: Proposals will be evaluated for depth of expertise; capacity to address the key questions; approach to working with board, system, and institutional leadership; and approach to engaging with faculty and other internal stakeholders.

Confidentiality: The Vermont State Colleges System complies with the Vermont Public Records Act, 1 VSA § 315 *et seq.* which requires public agencies to allow any person to inspect or copy any public record upon request. Accordingly, bidders are hereby advised that any communications, data or other information received by the Vermont State Colleges System during the RFP process could be subject to a public records request. However, certain public records are exempt from public inspection and copying, as set forth in 1 VSA § 317(c), including, for example, those portions of a record which meet the statutory definition of a trade secret. Accordingly, bidders should submit a second copy of their proposal, from which any portion of the proposal that the bidder reasonably believes to be exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Act has been redacted. By submitting a proposal, you indicate that you understand the requirements of this subsection and the potential applicability of Vermont's Public Records Act to your proposal.

Indemnification: The bidder shall indemnify and hold VSCS, its officers, agents and employees free and harmless from any and all claims, liabilities, losses, actions, proceedings, suits, damages and expenses, including out-of-pocket litigation costs and reasonable legal fees, arising from or relating to the bidder's performance in response to this RFP and under any contract entered into with the successful bidder. By submitting a proposal, and in exchange for VSCS' consideration of same, you agree on behalf of yourself, your shareholders and your officers to be bound by the indemnification provisions of this paragraph.

Rights of the VSCS: VSCS reserves the right, at its discretion, to pursue actions that include but are not limited to the following:

- Request additional information
- Request clarification of any sections or questions in the bidder's response to this RFP
- Reject, for any reason, any or all of the proposals submitted to VSC
- Issue subsequent RFP or RFP invitations to bid as a result of changes and/or refinements to the proposed project

This RFP does not obligate the VSCS to accept any proposal, negotiate with any bidder, award a contract or proceed with the project as it is outlined in this RFP.

Assignment: The bidder may not assign or transfer its rights or obligations under this RFP without the prior written consent of VSCS, which consent shall not be unreasonably withheld. Any assignment of the RFP agreement by the bidder without the prior written consent of VSCS shall void the RFP response from the bidder.