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Statement from the Chair of the Board of the Vermont State Colleges on the Initial Report of the Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education in Vermont

MONTPELIER, VT – On Friday, the state’s [Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education in Vermont](#) released their [initial report](#). After the Board of Trustees of the Vermont State Colleges discussed the report today at their December Board Meeting, Board Chair Lynn Dickinson released the following statement:

“This is a pivotal moment for the Vermont State College System. The Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education has provided a clear roadmap to address the urgent needs of the Vermont State Colleges for now and into the future. We are grateful for both the support of state leaders and the diligent work of its Select Committee. This road map builds on the work of groups like the VSCS *Forward Task Force*, to collect stakeholder input and to thoroughly analyze the situation confronting the Vermont State Colleges System.

“The VSCS Board has received the Committee’s report and will be reviewing its recommendations in the coming weeks. Some of the recommendations are consistent with actions that the Board has already taken. The Chancellor will be working, in consultation with the Presidents, on developing an implementation plan as well as the decision structure that would be required if the Board were to adopt recommendations such as further consolidation of administrative services and submission of a proposal for a common accreditation for the residential colleges: Castleton University, Northern Vermont University, and Vermont Technical College. I want to be clear that the Select Committee report does NOT recommend closing any of the VSCS institution campuses.”

Vermont State Colleges Chancellor Sophie Zdatny added, “the report released on Friday included a lot of stakeholder feedback and provides a thorough analysis of the financial and enrollment challenges confronting the VSCS. It emphasizes that transformative change for the system is vital so we can continue to serve our students and the people of Vermont far into the future.

“The report is a detailed blueprint for reform — and another voice stating in no uncertain terms that the colleges do indeed need more financial help from the state. This additional investment from the state will ensure the accessibility of education to all Vermonters that is affordable, high quality, and student-centered. Keeping our students and their ability to access higher education at the center of our work is key to change. This is one of the reasons why the VSCS requested additional bridge funding this year that will enable us to maintain our current offerings and services to students without tuition increases while we undergo these transformative changes.

“I’m encouraged by the response the VSCS has received from elected officials on all levels regarding our ongoing transformation. It’s clear that there is widespread support for public higher education and that all are anticipating the recommendations of the Select Committee. I’m reassured that there is acknowledgement from all stakeholder groups that the status quo will not continue to work for Vermont or Vermonters.

“The transformation that is underway under the guidance of the state and the Board of Trustees will be challenging – change always is – but I’m confident we are all working towards the same outcome of a state college system that meets the needs of Vermont and Vermonters.”

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