

TO: Education, Personnel, and Student Life Committee
Megan Cluver, Chair
Karen Luneau, Vice Chair
Janette Bombardier
Ryan Cooney
Mary Moran

FROM: Yasmine Ziesler, Chief Academic Officer

RE: EPSL Meeting on January 8, 2021

DATE: January 5, 2021



The EPSL Committee of the Board of Trustees is scheduled to meet on Friday, January 8th from 10:00am to 12:00pm by Zoom.

The focus for this meeting will be for the committee to establish its goals and plan of work for the year and to have preliminary discussions on several important topics to support a potential system transformation. As the [initial report](#) of the *Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education in Vermont* noted, there is a need for the Board to “more deliberately and effectively exercise its leadership and oversight roles.” Specific to the EPSL committee’s scope, the report recommends that

Effective system-wide governance begins with establishing and maintaining clear missions that deliberately specify the array of programs by level and field to be offered at each institution...the audiences to be served...features of the educational model(s)...and other special or unique characteristics. (19-20)

In preparation for the committee’s discussion, in the accompanying materials is a summary of system policies governing academic programs and transferability, with notes on current work underway and current procedures for Board oversight.

Also on the agenda is an update on an Academic Programs Analysis [request for proposals](#) to support the work of a potential system transformation with an in-depth review of its academic program offerings. An analysis of this type was recommended last fall by the Castleton-Northern Vermont University Academic Programs Group, and should the Board decide to move forward with system transformation project planning, an investment in an in-depth review of academic programs would be an important component of the planning work.

I can be reached directly at (802) 224-3025 if you have any questions.

Thank you.

Cc: VSC Board of Trustees
Council of Presidents
Chief Academic Officers
Student Affairs Council
HR Council

**Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees
Education, Personnel, and Student Life Committee**

January 8, 2021

AGENDA

1. Call to order
2. Approval of October 29, 2020 Meeting Minutes
3. EPSL goals and plans for the year
4. Academic program and credit transfer policies
5. Discussion of dashboard indicators for EPSL
 - a. Student Success
 - b. Workforce Alignment
 - c. Academic Programs
6. Academic Programs Analysis request for proposals
7. Update on plans to address low-enrolled programs at Northern Vermont University and Castleton
8. Other business
9. Comments from the public

MATERIALS

1. October 29, 2020 minutes
2. EPSL Responsibilities (excerpt from Board handbook)
3. EPSL Draft Plan for 2021
4. Board Guide to Academic Program Oversight and Transferability 2021

ITEM 1:
October 29, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the VSCS Board of Trustees Education, Personnel, and Student Life Committee informational meeting held Thursday October 29, 2020 at 9:30 a.m. via Zoom - UNAPPROVED

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

The VSCS Board of Trustees Education, Personnel, and Student Life Committee met on Thursday, October 29, 2020 via Zoom.

Committee Members present: Jim Masland (Chair) 9:42 a.m., Janette Bombardier, Karen Luneau (Vice Chair), Megan Cluver, Ryan Cooney, Dylan Giambatista, Mary Moran

Other Trustees Present: Lynn Dickinson (9:59 a.m.)

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

Chancellor's Office Staff: Donny Bazluke, Network/Security Analyst
Kevin Conroy, Chief Information Office
Katherine Levasseur, Director of Governmental & External Relations
Katrina Meigs, System Director of HR and Benefits
Jen Porrier, Administrative Director
Sharron Scott, Chief Financial/Operating Officer
Patty Turley, General Counsel
Sophie Zdatny, Chancellor
Yasmine Ziesler, Chief Academic Officer

From the Colleges: Nolan Atkins, Provost, Northern Vermont University
Sarah Chambers, Coordinator of Instructional Technology, Castleton University
John Diebold, Faculty, Vermont Technical College
Laura Jakubowski, Chief Budget & Finance Officer, Castleton University
Karen Madden, Director of Academic Support Services, Northern Vermont University
Helen Mango, Faculty, Castleton University
Tom Mauhs-Pugh, Provost, Castleton University
David McGough, Faculty, Northern Vermont University
Sandra Noyes, President, VSC Staff Federation, Northern Vermont University
Linda Olson, VP Education AFT-VT, Castleton University

Maurice Ouimet, Dean of Enrollment, Castleton University
Philip Parisi, Faculty, Northern Vermont University
Tyrone Shaw, Faculty, Northern Vermont University
Toby Stewart, Dean of Administration, Northern Vermont University
Beth Walsh, President, VSCUP, Northern Vermont University

From the Public: Cyndi Miller, American Federation of Teachers, Vermont

1. Call to Order

Vice Chair Luneau called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m.

2. Approval of June 1, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Trustee Bombardier moved and Trustee Cluver seconded the approval of the June 1, 2020 meeting minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously.

3. Report on Policy 101 “PreCIP” program reviews; status updates for 2020 and status update for 2020 and approval of 2021 Review Cycle Plans

Chief Academic Officer Dr. Yasmine Ziesler gave a brief overview of the 2020 cycle of the “PreCIP” process. Given the pandemic, only a limited number of programs have completed reports for this year. These will be reviewed and the results shared with EPSL at its next meeting. Dr. Ziesler shared the selected programs recommended for review in the 2021 Review Cycle. These recommendations came from the Chief Academic Officers Group as designees of COP.

Trustee Masland moved and Trustee Bombardier seconded the motion to approve the 2021 Review Cycle Plans. The motion was approved unanimously.

4. Approval of revisions to Policy 208 Criminal Background Checks

General Counsel Patty Turley gave a review of the revisions to Policy 208. The current policy of the VSC requires all new employees to undergo fingerprint supported background checks, which is a lengthy process with significant delays. The proposed changes allow the system to use other background check options, including online services. These changes provide greater flexibility and the receipt of more timely results. The policy revisions create flexibility while still maintaining protections.

Trustee Luneau moved and Trustee Cluver seconded the motion to recommend to the Board the approval of the revisions to Policy 208 Criminal Background Checks. The motion was approved unanimously.

5. Report of plans to address low-enrolled programs at Northern Vermont University and Castleton

Dr. Ziesler reminded the Committee that, at its October 16, 2020 meeting, the Board charged the Presidents of Castleton University and Northern Vermont University to present their first step recommendations on Policy 109 low-enrolled programs; these are defined as programs with fewer than 5 graduates in a year or fewer than 25 enrolled students. The recommendations are preliminary pending consultation with Faculty Assemblies per the collective bargaining agreement. Dr. Ziesler further shared that while there would be some cost savings, these would primarily be due to reductions in course sections offered. Castleton University Provost Tom Mauhs-Pugh discussed the programs from CU with the proposed actions of “teach out and close.” Northern Vermont University Provost Nolan Atkins discussed programs at NVU proposed for three different actions: teach-out and close, transition to the new Digital Communication program, and programs proposed for collaborations and exploration with CU.

6. Other Business

There was no other business.

7. Comments from the public

Linda Olson shared her concern regarding the reduction of low enrolled programs and the effects on faculty. Ms. Olson specifically mentioned her concern regarding the minor in Women’s and Gender Studies as it provides a home to students that don’t always find a home elsewhere in the curriculum.

Chair Masland adjourned the meeting at 10:46 a.m.

ITEM 2:
EPSL Responsibilities (excerpt from Board Handbook)

Education, Personnel and Student Life (EPSL) Committee

Areas of Responsibility

The members and chair of the Committee shall be appointed by the Chair of the Board, where feasible, by the next Board meeting following the Annual meeting. The EPSL committee has primary responsibility for the development and implementation of policies related to Academic Affairs, Personnel, and Student Affairs.

On an annual basis, the EPSL committee shall:

1. Review activities of the colleges and system that promote the continuous improvement in quality of academic programs. These activities are summarized in reports generated according to VSC Policy 101 (Program Review and Continuous Improvement Process).
2. Recommend to the board the status of all programs under review through Policy 109 Annual Enrollment Review of Existing Academic Programs).
3. Review annual personnel/ legal affairs reports, including but not limited to: crime statistics, staffing plans, and legal affairs activity.
4. Review annual system performance indicators and, on a rotating schedule developed in consultation with the Chancellor or designee, reports on system wide initiatives related to academic, personnel or student affairs, including but not limited to: educator quality, distance learning, student success and retention, workforce education and training, assessment, employee relations and PK-16 partnerships.
5. Review reports on the size and characteristics of the VSCS student populations broadly and by campus settings, as well as provide accurate and consistent aggregate information about student achievement and institutional performance.
6. Support and assess VSCS goals to achieve diversity, equity, and inclusion among its personnel.

As needed on an ongoing basis, the EPSL committee shall also:

1. Approve preliminary proposals for new academic program development and make recommendations to the Board of Trustees on final proposals for new academic programs according to Policy 102 (Approval of New Academic Programs). ^{[[]]}_[SEP]
2. Review and recommend action to the Board of Trustees on proposals to award emeritus status (Policy 204). ^{[[]]}_[SEP]
3. Recommend action to the Board of Trustees on the revision and/ or development of VSCS academic, personnel, and student affairs policies and procedures.
4. Review and recommend action to the Board of Trustees on resolutions to offer special recognition to individuals, groups or organizations. ^{[[]]}_[SEP]
5. Conduct other business as needed and related to academic, personnel and/or student affairs.

Revised 4/2015; Revisions Dec 2020

ITEM 3:
EPSL Draft Plan for 2021

Committee Members

- Megan Cluver
- Janette Bombardier
- Ryan Cooney
- Karen Luneau
- Mary Moran

VSCS Leadership – Yasmine Ziesler (Chief Academic Officer), with VSCS Chief Academic Officers Group

Committee Scope for the next 12 months

1. Academic Program Array
Review Board policies related to the review of new and existing programs, with a focus on accountability to institutional missions and sustaining results. As part of this review process, EPSL will monitor the work outlined in Academic Programs Review RFP as part of a potential system transformation project, determining whether or how metrics established in that work should become incorporated into Board policies on academic programs.

[Context, from Select Committee's Initial Report] "Effective system-wide governance begins with establishing and maintaining clear missions that deliberately specify including the array of programs by level and field to be offered at each institution, with attention to distinctive clusters of expertise—including the liberal arts and applied programs like business and education, and unique capacity like NVU's meteorology program—as well as differences in local needs."

2. Transferability
Review policies related to transfer credits and understand current landscape of articulation agreements, progress towards a single general education core, and barriers to student transfer.
3. Workforce Education
Review continuing education and workforce development programming offered across the system and understand its alignment with VSCS certificates and degree programs.
4. Student Success and Retention
Review system efforts to support and improve student success, including data on student retention and graduation.

Desired Inputs / Data Needs

1. Guest speakers / case studies | Peer and near peers who we can learn from.
2. System data
3. Understand the work of program review (VSCS engaging an outside partner); EPSL to be appropriately apprised of milestone with periodic report outs.

Potential Meeting Schedule and Topics

January 8: EPSL Role and Plan for the Year; Academic and Transfer Policies First Look; Academic Program Array

Feb 1: cancelled, pending reschedule for mid-March: Update on Academic Program Array; Workforce Education

May 24: Student Success and Retention

Mid-summer: additional meeting TBD, focus on potential policy revisions, draft metrics to support ongoing EPSL oversight of program and student success goals.

October 24: Finalize policy revisions and metrics.

ITEM 4:

Board Guide to Academic Program Oversight and Transferability 2021

A VSC Board Member's Guide to Academic Program Oversight and Transferability (2021)

A fundamental role of the Board as it relates to academic programs is to ensure educational quality. A [2014 report](#) by the Association of Governing Boards offers these recommendations for boards to follow in meeting this responsibility:

1. Develop board capacity...through regular, intentional discussions.
2. Ensure policies and practices promote educational quality.
3. Ensure that learning is assessed, data are used, and improvements tracked.
4. Approve and monitor necessary financial resources.
5. Develop an understanding of academic programs.
6. Focus on the total educational experience.
7. Understand accreditation.

There are three primary policies guiding academic program oversight at the VSC, and three guiding the transferability of credit.

Policy 101 (Program Review and Continuous Improvement Process)

Policy 101 defines board standards for high-quality programs and directs a process at the college and system level to ensure continuous quality improvement. This process results in recommendations for each program on a five-year cycle that are provided to EPSL for discussion.

Key questions for board members in reviewing Policy 101 reports:

- How does the program assess student learning, and what does the program's data on student learning outcomes indicate?
- What strategies are being used for continuous improvement?
- How does the program meet board standards for quality?

January 2021 status: this policy was last updated in 2013; since then, process revisions have focused on student success and comprehensive assessment of program learning outcomes.

Policy 102 (Approval of New Degrees and Majors)

Policy 102 directs a process for new program development that ensures alignment with the mission of the VSC, encourages system collaboration in planning, and supports flexible, nimble program development. EPSL reviews each new program proposal after it has undergone consultation and endorsement by the Chancellor and Council of Presidents and determines whether to recommend a proposal for board approval.

Key questions for board members in reviewing Policy 102 new program proposals:

- Is the new program aligned with and in support of VSC and college mission and strategic planning directions?
- Will the program provide a clear and viable career path for graduates?
- Will it assist in meeting State needs and/or serve a new student market?
- Will the new program strengthen the college and complement, extend and/or diversify the offerings of the VSC?

January 2021 status: this policy was last updated in 2019 and now includes a [rubric](#) to evaluate all proposed programs on criteria including enrollment needs and projections; alignment with state and regional needs; considerations for transfer and competition within the system; fit of program to institutional mission; and benefits risks, and costs.

Policy 109 (Annual Enrollment and Cost Effectiveness Review)

Policy 109 directs Presidents to review program enrollment and cost data on an annual basis and with the Chancellor provide summary reports to EPSL, including information on any programs identified for closure. EPSL reviews these reports and determines whether to recommend any actions to the board.

Key questions in reviewing Policy 109 reports:

- What are the current program enrollment trends and how are the colleges responding to these?
- How are the colleges managing resource needs and costs related to program staffing (e.g. faculty:student ratios) and delivery (e.g. average class size)?
- Do we have the right mix of programs within each college and across the system?
- What are the particular student population(s) being served by each program (e.g. full-time, part-time, commuter, residential, distance learning, underrepresented minorities, traditional-age, working adult, etc.)?

January 2021 status: this policy was last updated in 2019 to include a definition of minimum annual program size of 5 or more program graduates or 25 or more active first majors. In the fall of 2020, the Castleton – NVU Academic Programs group recommended the development of a comprehensive set of recognized metrics to support Board review of programs. Development of such metrics is one of the intended outcomes of the academic programs review request for proposals.

Policy 108 (Transfer of Credit)

Policy 108 describes the use of the single official transcript within the VSC such that credits earned within the VSC are not considered transfer credits across VSC institutions. It also guides the acceptance of credits earned outside the VSC by each institution and the granting of credit through the VSC's Assessment of Prior Learning program administered by CCV.

January 2021 status: this policy was last updated in 2009 and in conjunction with Policy 111 ensures that VSC institutions meet NECHE accreditation standards for quality and

integrity in the acceptance of transfer credit. There is no mechanism currently in the policy to provide more specific board oversight of transfer practices.

Policy 106 (General Education)

Policy 106 provides overall guidance on general education requirements for all VSC graduates, including graduation standards in writing, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and oral communication. The policy also establishes that general education requirements and/or graduation standards fulfilled at one VSC institution are accepted as fulfilling the same standards at any other VSC institution.

January 2021 status: this policy was last updated in 2003 and is in alignment with NECHE accreditation standards for general education. The policy includes an expectation of regular reporting by the VSC and colleges on the graduation standards, which currently takes place via the Policy 101 (PreCIP) report process.

Following the August 2020 recommendation of the VSCS Forward Task Force to develop a single general education program core for the system, a group of faculty representatives from all four VSC institutions has worked through the fall to develop a draft proposal for consideration by their respective academic governance entities. The draft proposal maintains the current requirements of Policy 106 while providing additional transparency and flexibility for students with a single set of minimum requirements shared by all institutions.

Policy 111 (Academic Data Management)

Policy 111 provides standard procedures to be followed by each VSC institution in order to maintain the single course database and transcribing of credits as established by Policy 108.

January 2021 status: this policy was last updated in 2018 to clarify procedures necessary for the multiple institutions and registrars' offices in the system to maintain single course numbers, titles, and descriptions for shared courses. The policy's requirements are consistent with current NECHE academic program standards.