



# VERMONT STATE UNIVERSITY

*President*

*The University is envisioned as the first statewide hybrid institution in the nation, delivering on the promise to our students that Vermont is their campus, with programs that span our state, for the benefit of our students and families, our communities, our workforce, our economy, and our future.*





## POSITION PROFILE

The Vermont State Colleges System (VSCS) and the newly established Vermont State University invite nominations and applications for the University's inaugural role of President at a truly unique institution that is committed to providing high quality, yet affordable and accessible education. The University is envisioned as the first statewide hybrid institution in the nation, delivering on the promise to our students that Vermont is their campus, with programs that span our state, for the benefit of our students and families, our communities, our workforce, our economy, and our future.

Vermont State University will be formed from the combination of Castleton University, Northern Vermont University, and Vermont Technical College, and will operate five campuses across the state plus additional remote sites. From July 2022 until July 2023, the President will oversee the last year of this transition, serving simultaneously as the President of Vermont State University and President of Castleton University, Northern Vermont University, and Vermont Technical College. It is envisioned that by July 2023, all work will be completed to finalize the transition to a singly accredited institution. Building upon the proud history of these institutions, Vermont State University is dedicated to improving the lives of students of all types from all over the world—and in particular, students from Vermont—while strengthening the economic and cultural vitality of the state.



## Vermont State University seeks an energetic, dynamic individual to:

- **Lead and engage** in the community and region
- **Build relationships** with other civic, business, and educational leaders
- **Raise the profile** of the institution and plan for its future

During this promising and audacious period, the president will work closely with their Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, and alumni – as well as civic and economic leaders – to ensure student success, and to lead the University and state into an exciting new chapter.

# VERMONT STATE COLLEGES SYSTEM (VSCS)

## PERIOD OF TRANSFORMATION

In 2020, the Vermont State Colleges System embarked on a period of transformation that includes the consolidation of three institutions into a singly accredited entity by July 1, 2023, with administrative transformation and physical transformation over the next five years. When fully transitioned, the VSCS will be comprised of Vermont State University and the Community College of Vermont (CCV). The new University will increase the reach of learning opportunities for all learners, fueling Vermont's economic pipeline, and creating

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opportunities for all learners who may otherwise lack access to affordable higher education opportunities. Additionally, these transformation efforts will help the entire Vermont State College System evolve into a financially sustainable organization.

Primary inputs into this decision to transform the Vermont State Colleges System include the following:

- Reports from Vermont's Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education in Vermont, including the most recent Revised Report from the Select Committee.
- A High-Level Plan for evaluation of Select Committee recommendations as approved by the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees
- VSCS Structural Transformation Preliminary Analysis as submitted to the Board of Trustees
- Written and oral public comment, a copy of which can be viewed [www.vsc.edu/live](http://www.vsc.edu/live) and read here.
- A preliminary project plan for system transformation presented by the Chancellor and approved by the VSCS's Board of Trustees on February 22, 2021.

### Transformation Principles

As the VSCS continues this transformation, they are converting many of the challenges they have confronted—pandemic-related, demographic, and financial—into opportunities. They are transforming the system with more efficient operations and processes to deliver better results for Vermont, and the students the VSCS serves, for decades to come. Efforts have focused on three key questions:

1. Does the action meet the needs of students?
2. Does the action meet the needs of Vermont?
3. Does it contribute to the VSCS's financial sustainability?

Foundational to these principles are the following strategic priorities of the Board of Trustees:

1. The education must be high quality, affordable, accessible, relevant, and innovative; and
2. It must meet the needs of diverse learners equitably and inclusively; and
3. The needs of current and prospective students must be at the center of every decision.

**Student success is the key focus of the Vermont State Colleges:** The VSCS is committed to delivering on the higher education and continuing education needs of Vermont, Vermonters, and all learners, while preserving the high-touch, personalized approach and close-knit campus communities that are a VSCS hallmark. While doing that, the VSCS seeks to better serve students with a learning modality that works for them, on a schedule and in a location that works for them, with the courses, programs, credentials – both credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing—that provide them with the skills they need to attain their life goals at a price they can afford.



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**Education for life:** The VSCS creates opportunities for learners at every point in their adult life, from early college/dual enrollment programs for high school students, to credentials of value for working adults and those seeking to upskill and reskill. The VSCS recognizes that moving forward, they need to develop even more high-quality educational opportunities that meet the needs of students, employers, and the state by expanding the availability of credentials of value, such as associate's degrees, industry-recognized credentials, and certificates that will enable students to secure higher-paying employment or advance at work. Additionally, they need to continue their work to create stackable credentials within degree programs to provide the maximum value and flexibility to our students.

**Vermont is our community:** In addition to serving students and meeting the workforce needs of Vermont, the VSCS is looking to maintain its physical presence in each of its current host communities, combining a reduced physical footprint with expanded access to academic programs statewide. Rural public institutions, such as the ones that make up the VSCS, provide crucial educational and employment opportunities to residents, serve as economic, social, and cultural anchors in their host communities, and help to educate workers in high-demand local industries, such as healthcare, education, business, mental health counseling, manufacturing, and hospitality and tourism.

**Consolidation of administrative functions:** To achieve fiscal sustainability, the VSCS recognizes that it needs to reduce administrative costs. Consolidated administrative functions will enable the VSCS to avoid duplication, increase efficiency, improve compliance, and reduce costs.





## MISSION

Vermont State University prepares all students for meaningful work and responsible citizenship by fostering their intellectual, personal, and creative growth in an accessible, caring, and inclusive community. As Vermont's regional public university, our technological, professional, and liberal arts programs engage with partners throughout Vermont and beyond to provide students with rich real-world learning while meeting the needs of our communities and the state.



## VISION

Vermont State University's commitment is to the success of every student. We will stand as Vermont's regional public university with interconnected campuses and sites dispersed throughout the state, a community dedicated to providing accessible and affordable higher learning. Our innovative, relevant programs will focus on student success and career readiness and will meet students where they are on their educational journey. We will support students' academic, social, and personal growth, as well as their futures as skilled leaders and lifelong learners through an integrated academic and extracurricular experience. A culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion will be fostered and endure. Our students' transformational experience will be nurtured through intentional interactions and relationships.

The University will provide globally relevant programs spanning the technological, professional, and liberal arts. The programs will be designed to address the needs and challenges facing Vermont and our world. Students will be drawn to an academic experience that reaches beyond the classroom into our communities with our Green Mountain State as a living laboratory. We will embrace public engagement and partnerships as our civic responsibility, actively contributing to the vibrancy of our communities and their relevance in the global economy. In doing so, our students will gain an understanding of community and self and their impact on the world. Our purpose will live on for generations in the positive contributions of our alumni.



## ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY

Vermont State University will be a geographically distributed, public, comprehensive university that is deeply ingrained in the rural Vermont communities that define the state. The Vermont State University will contribute to and play a leading role in the economic, educational, artistic, entrepreneurial, and civic vibrancy of these communities. The Vermont State University and community leaders will work together to identify important issues and solutions that the Vermont State University will help to implement and deliver. Degree programs will be designed so that students are working and learning both in the classroom and in local communities through service-learning, civic engagement, internships, cooperative experiences, and contract work. Faculty and students will engage in applied research and problem solving, working on problems confronting Vermont communities and businesses, providing solutions that improve the quality of life, competitiveness, and success of our communities and businesses. Entering students will transform as they complete their educational journey to become engaged citizens and many will choose to stay, contributing to the vibrancy of our rural communities and economy, helping to reverse outward migration trends of younger Vermonters.

Vermont State University targets students who want to make a difference while earning an affordable credential of value – to be part of the solution for many problems that face society. Many of these problems are important on local, regional, national, and global scales. Students will be able to learn and contribute to finding solutions to these problems by working and learning in our small rural communities that will become a natural extension of the classroom. Specifically, students will engage in academic programs that address:

- Environmental issues, climate, and climate change;
- Social justice; addressing problems related to diversity and inclusion;
- Technical infrastructure needs;
- Engineering and computing solutions and innovation in new technologies;
- Renewable energy, buildings systems, and construction innovation for sustainability;

- Agricultural entrepreneurship and innovation for sustainability;
- Professional skills in high demand;
- Education in our PreK-12 system;
- Healthcare and wellness – especially for the increasingly larger elderly population;
- Restoring and/or enhancing artistic and cultural vibrancy in rural Vermont through fine and performing arts
- Hospitality and tourism;
- Building the entrepreneurial small business community and more.

Realizing this vision will provide Vermont State University students with a rich educational experience while building the vibrancy of our rural communities. Enhancing existing and developing new partnerships between Vermont State University and rural community and business leaders will be critical. Interdisciplinary teams of faculty, students, business and community members will work to solve pressing issues including but not limited to social justice, the environment, healthcare, hospitality and tourism, education, entrepreneurship, innovation, sustainability required to support and grow the large number of Vermont small businesses (presently 93% of all Vermont businesses), culture, and the arts. The teams will focus on capitalizing and building on the strengths of the respective rural communities.

Vermont State University will be built on the foundation of two small comprehensive public liberal arts colleges, Castleton University and Northern Vermont University, and Vermont's only technical institution, Vermont Technical College. Each institution brings a rich history and unique culture to Vermont State University.

Currently separately accredited institutions, Castleton University, Northern Vermont University, and Vermont Technical College have strong institutional histories with tight connections to their rural communities. Information about each existing institution is shared on the next page.



## ACADEMICS

Vermont State University will offer an appropriate balance of technical, liberal arts, and professional degree programs that meet critical needs within Vermont's rural communities, helping to solve the pressing issues they face. Every student will graduate "career ready" and therefore, will be well prepared to pursue educational or work opportunities elsewhere if they choose to do so.

Vermont State University will look to expand programming to build Vermont's workforce in areas with acute/critical need in our communities, especially our rural communities. Given the aging Vermont population, Vermont State University will also look to add credentials focusing on the care of our elderly population by capitalizing on its strong nursing and allied health programs.

To meet the diverse needs of Vermont State University learners and to provide life-long learning opportunities, credentials will be "laddered" from individual courses to certificates, AA/AS, BA/BS, and MA/MS degrees. Most associate and baccalaureate programs will have a seamless pathway articulated with the Community College of Vermont's (CCV) degree programs. Vermont State University and CCV will align systems and business practices ensuring that the transfer process for CCV students is easy and seamless. Vermont State University will become the institution of choice for CCV grads.

Given the geographic distribution of physical learning sites and the desire by 21st-century learners for delivery flexibility, many of the undergraduate programs will be offered in a multi-modal manner to ensure quality programs are offered in a cost-effective, flexible, and accessible manner to learners throughout the state. These modalities include face-to-face, synchronous remote from classrooms, asynchronous remote, remote sites, hybrid, and online delivery. A subset of the associates and baccalaureate programs will be offered entirely online or in a low-residency model. Graduate programs designed for learners looking to upskill or reskill will be offered in low residency and online modalities administered within a robust graduate division.



# VERMONT STATE UNIVERSITY



## Castleton

### Castleton University

Vermont's first institution of higher education, Castleton University has been dedicated to educating future leaders of Vermont and beyond since 1787. Castleton sits on a foundation of more than 230 years of providing cutting-edge education through a highly personalized approach. Castleton is small enough to be a community where every student matters, yet large enough to enroll a total of 2,400 students (1,900 full-time, 500 part-time), offer more than 75 programs of study, including 8 graduate programs, 28 varsity sports, and over 50 clubs and organizations. The university stresses experiential learning through internships, community service, and research opportunities provided by more than 400 community partnerships.

Nestled at the base of the Green Mountains in Castleton, VT, the campus offers a panoramic view of every season. From watching autumn claim the mountainside to conquering snowfalls in the snowboard park, Vermont's natural beauty can be enjoyed from every corner of campus. Adding to its natural beauty, Castleton has invested nearly \$85 million in the grounds over the past 15 years.

**For more information,** please visit <https://www.castleton.edu/about-castleton/our-campus/>.



## Northern Vermont UNIVERSITY

### Northern Vermont University

Northern Vermont University is a two-campus institution of higher education that combines the best of Johnson State College and Lyndon State College's nationally recognized liberal arts and professional programs. At Northern Vermont University, the goal is to guide curious, motivated, and engaged students on their paths to success and their places in the world.

By combining more than 200 years of history in liberal arts and professional learning, NVU offers expanded access to a faculty with a broader and deeper depth of expertise and experience. Students collaborate with and learn from peers and staff on both campuses, and alumni networks include Lyndon and Johnson graduates from all over the world.

**NVU-Johnson**, designated by the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges as Vermont's premier public liberal arts institution, offers a hands-on liberal arts experience. NVU-Johnson enrolls 1,145 students (757 full-time undergraduates, 99 part-time undergraduates, and 289 graduate students), offering 10 degrees.

**NVU-Lyndon** offers distinct professional programs with a liberal arts core, with nationally recognized majors in atmospheric sciences, electronic journalism arts, and exercise science. NVU-Lyndon has 1,057 students (867 full-time undergraduate, 144 part-time undergraduate, and 46 graduate students) and seven degrees.

## VERMONT TECH

### Vermont Technical College

Vermont Technical College is a leading public college with a mission of applied education and student-centeredness. Vermont Tech serves students from throughout Vermont, New England, and beyond at its residential campuses in Williston and Randolph Center, campuses in Brattleboro and Bennington, and at seven nursing sites located throughout the state. Vermont Tech features state-of-the-art laboratory experience and a highly personalized classroom and student-life experience. All of Vermont Tech's programs utilize a technological educational component, from the simulators used by our nursing program around the state to manufacturing laboratories in Randolph Center and Williston. The College's academic programs encompass a wide range of engineering technology, agricultural, health, and business fields that are vital to producing the knowledgeable workers needed most by employers in the state and the region.

Vermont Tech enrolls approximately 1,640 students in 45-plus hands-on programs. Eighty-five percent of its students are from Vermont, and 24 countries are represented in its student body.

**For more information please visit:** <https://www.vtc.edu/#>





# ABOUT THE VERMONT STATE COLLEGES SYSTEM

The Vermont State Colleges System (VSCS) mission starts with “For the benefit of Vermont.” VSCS is deeply rooted in the communities and regions of the state. The system educates more Vermonters annually than all other institutions of higher education in the state combined. VSCS employs thousands of Vermonters, and its campuses and academic centers are centers of academic excellence, culture, and community.

Across the four institutions of the VSCS – Castleton University, Community College of Vermont, Northern Vermont University, and Vermont Technical College – the system educates more than 10,000 Vermonters and non-Vermonters each year, employs more than 3,000 Vermonters, and in Spring 2020, graduated more than 1,800 Vermonters and out-of-state students into the workforce with certificates and degrees.

The Vermont State Colleges System makes it possible for all Vermonters and all learners to succeed. More than half of its students are the first in their families to go to college. More than a thousand high school students each year earn free college credit through VSCS and consequently can see themselves succeeding in college. There is a VSCS classroom within 25 miles of every Vermonter. Online education opportunities allow Vermonters the flexibility to achieve their educational goals no matter where they are. And two-thirds of alumni live and work in our state, benefiting Vermont every day. The future Vermont State Colleges System will be comprised of two institutions, Vermont State University and Community College of Vermont, that will be supported by shared back-office processes and report directly to the Chancellor of the System.

## Leadership

On July 6, 2020, Sophie Zdatny was appointed to serve as Chancellor of the VSCS by the Board of Trustees.

After five and a half years with the law firm Dinse, Knapp & McAndrew in Burlington, Vermont, where she represented higher education clients, Sophie joined the Vermont State Colleges first as Associate General Counsel in August 2014 and then as General Counsel, effective January 1, 2017. She previously practiced employment law with Allan Karlin & Associates in

Morgantown, West Virginia, following a two-year federal clerkship with Judge Irene Keeley of the Northern District of West Virginia, and two years with Kay, Casto & Chaney, PLLC. She also taught appellate advocacy and served as an adjunct professor in the Immigration Law Clinic at West Virginia University's College of Law.

Sophie lives in Essex Junction, Vermont with her husband. She has two children: a daughter in Newton, Massachusetts, and a son in London, England.

## Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees provides leadership and governance at the system level. Together the Board navigates the challenging waters of higher education today, addressing issues of funding, sustainability, accessibility, affordability, and student retention and completion.

The Board of Trustees is a body of 15 people. Five are appointed by the Governor of Vermont, four trustees are elected by the Board, and four trustees are state legislators who are elected by the General Assembly. There is also one student trustee elected by the VSCS Student Government Association. All trustees serve a four-year term, except for the student trustee, who serves a one-year term but can be reelected to a second term. Finally, the Governor is an ex officio Board member.

For more information on the Board of Trustees for the VSCS and its bylaws, please visit: <https://www.vsc.edu/board-of-trustees/>.

## VSCS Mission

“For the benefit of Vermont, the Vermont State Colleges system provides affordable, high quality, student-centered, and accessible education, fully integrating professional, liberal, and career study, consistent with student aspirations and regional and state needs.”

## VSCS Strategic Priorities

The Board's Strategic Priorities for the system articulate the VSCS mission and role in providing public postsecondary education in Vermont. The Board is committed to achieving success as a fully integrated system that achieves financial stability





# For the benefit of *Vermont*.

## VSCS Strategic Priorities:

- Affordability
- Accessibility
- Quality
- Relevance



responsibly and sustainably, and ensures equitable access to, and completion of, quality post-secondary education for all Vermonters, including historically marginalized and underrepresented learners.

**Affordability:** In the VSCS, affordability means that cost and debt are not access barriers for students. Affordability is thus relative to both tuition cost and Vermont student/family income, and the post-graduation earnings needed for debt repayment.

Success on affordability will be measured by:

1. A reduction in the total cost of attendance for students and families; and
2. An increase in the number of students from low and middle-income backgrounds accessing and succeeding in VSCS programs; and
3. A manageable debt load for students relative to their current family income and future earning potential.

**Accessibility:** In the VSCS, accessibility means that all Vermont students (including adult learners) will have a supported pathway to meet their educational goals, regardless of their financial means, rural geography, college readiness, or technology/broadband internet access.

## Success on accessibility will be measured by:

1. Increased access to VSCS programs regardless of race/ethnicity, age, educational attainment of parents, prior educational experience, family status, or place of residence; and
2. Students receiving the academic, advising, and other supports necessary to succeed in their VSCS programs as measured by their retention, persistence, and graduation; and
3. The VSCS has a meaningful presence across Vermont, especially in rural areas regardless of historical access points, which includes providing economic and cultural support to its host communities.

**Quality and Relevance:** In the VSCS, the relevance and quality of academic programs are understood in terms of student and state expectations of value both qualitatively and quantitatively. For students, expectations of value include the ability to pursue their chosen educational path, a positive “return on investment” in the cost of pursuing a particular program relative to expected earnings, successful preparation for external evaluations such as licensure exams, and preparation for a lifelong career and personal success in our global 21st century. For Vermont, expectations of value include quality VSCS programs that are aligned with state workforce needs and that are offered in a fiscally responsible manner, delivered in ways relevant to today’s students’ and employers’ needs.

## **Success on quality will be measured by:**

1. The ability of VSCS graduates to meet externally-recognized measures of achievement (i.e. licensure exam success rates) and their preparation to compete in the global workforce; and
2. Consistency of high-quality education and instruction provided by the VSCS across the system; and
3. External recognition (including accreditation) of the quality of VSCS programs.

## **Success on relevance will be measured by:**

1. Development of degree paths that are highly relevant to student goals and expectations of value in a career;
2. Offering programs and credentials that meet Vermont's workforce needs; and
3. Delivering programs and credentials flexibly in a modality that meets student needs and expectations.

## **FINANCES, FACILITIES, FUNDRAISING**

The annual operating budget for Vermont State University is \$154 million, of which approximately 60 percent is derived from tuition, fees, room and board, and 19 percent from state appropriations. In recent years, the level of state support has increased with the State of Vermont providing bridge funding above \$49.8 million for the Vermont State Colleges, plus \$20 million in transformation funding, \$10.5 million in Coronavirus Relief Funding (CRF), \$15 million in scholarship support, and a \$5 million increase to the base appropriation. In coordination with the Office of the Chancellor, the President will engage with local officials and the state legislature to advocate for resources. Additionally, the President will engage with community and alumni stakeholders to build a stronger donor base over time for Vermont State University.

Among the primary responsibilities of the new President will be to assemble the resources necessary to attract and maintain a first-rate faculty, to continue providing programs of high quality, and to allocate the University's resources according to the mission of Vermont State University, in consultation with individual units and the faculty. Strategic allocation of resources to foster growth is an important challenge for the new President.

### **Additional Fundraising Information**

Historically, philanthropy at the Vermont State Colleges is limited to alumni and community-based donors. The communities at Castleton, Johnson, and Lyndon have strong histories of giving and the communities in Randolph and Williston have a strong record of accomplishment of receipt of gifts in kind. In spring 2021, the Lyndon campus of Northern Vermont University received the single largest gift in Vermont State Colleges history (\$3.5 million) to fund learning and working communities in the "Northeast Kingdom" of Vermont (those communities near the Lyndon Center campus.). The Castleton and Johnson communities have each received modestly large one-time gifts, a few large (\$1M or more) gifts from donors and friends, and have annual funds for alumni outreach. As of June 30, 2021, the total endowment for Vermont State University was \$25.2M. By location, the endowment was attributable as follows: Johnson and Lyndon, \$13M; Castleton, \$7.7M; Randolph and Williston, \$4.5M.

Due to the small scale of each institution, fundraising has not historically been a large portion of each president's portfolio. However, it is expected that with the creation of Vermont State University, the President's role in fundraising will be increased, especially after the first one to two years of transition.



## FACILITIES



With owned facilities in Randolph Center, Castleton, Johnson, Lyndon, and Williston, Vermont State University is comprised of more than 2.2M square feet on 1,700 acres of land. In addition, Vermont State University owns an ice arena in Rutland and a farm in Norwich (currently for sale) and is the owner and steward of a 1,000-acre nature preserve in Eden, Vermont. Vermont State University also operates leased facilities in many communities including Bennington, and Killington. Additionally, Vermont State University is co-located at many Community College of Vermont sites.

Vermont State University has residential facilities, with a full suite of residence life options including student clubs, activities, dining facilities, and gymnasiums at Randolph Center, Lyndon, Johnson, and Castleton. Additionally, Vermont State University operates smaller facilities at Killington and Williston to serve specific populations.

The majority of Vermont State University facilities were built between 1955 and 2010. A small number of historical buildings are sited on three of the primary locations. The State of Vermont provides approximately \$2M annually in funding to support capital improvements at the Vermont State Colleges, of which approximately 75% is distributed to Vermont State University. Like many higher education institutions, Vermont State University has deferred maintenance. The Board of Trustees of the Vermont State Colleges is developing a strategic financial plan to address this issue in the coming years.

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION



The Vermont State Colleges System has embedded Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion principles in its transformation design. In October, the Board of Trustees endorsed an Anti-Racism Pledge that was created by students from across the system. The pledge commits to “providing equitable opportunities to achieve a higher education free from harm and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or culture; to listening to, and responding to, voices of

*The Vermont State Colleges System has embedded Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion principles in its transformation design.*

those who are oppressed; and actively speaking out against racism and a call in to student peers when they display racist behaviors even when it is inconvenient or uncomfortable.” Additionally, the Board of Trustees of the Vermont State Colleges has adopted system-wide definitions for diversity, equity, and inclusion founded on definitions originally developed by the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE). The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee of the Board of Trustees in concert with faculty, staff, and student leaders are continuing these efforts.



## THE ROLE OF PRESIDENT

Vermont State University seeks a bold, visionary, and effective leader to create, enhance, and advance the academic programs and initiatives of a newly created and growth-minded institution. The successful candidate will:

- Support faculty development and aspirations;
- Work with an engaged student body that has a strong work ethic;
- Maintain positive working relationships with staff, faculty, and collective bargaining units;
- Collaborate with other institutions of higher education within Vermont as well as citizens, community leaders, and local officials for the advancement of the University and the state; and,
- Work with legislators and others to help advocate for the University.

Reporting to the Chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges System, and working closely with the Board of Trustees, the President exercises broad responsibilities for all aspects of the academic, student, financial, and development dimensions of Vermont State University. Broadly, the role of the President will be more strategic than tactical as there will be campus directors reporting to the President. These directors will be in charge of the day-to-day operations. The President is also expected to work collaboratively with the President of Community College of Vermont and the head of Workforce Development for the Vermont State Colleges System.



## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

While a newly created entity, the three institutions that are the foundation of Vermont State University have long, storied histories and traditions with highly regarded academic programs, strong student-focused cultures, active teachers and scholars, and records of commitment to their communities and the state of Vermont. Vermont State University faces both challenges and opportunities over the near term as it seeks to sustain and further strengthen programs and services for its students and Vermont.

**Raising the Profile of Vermont State University.** The Vermont State Colleges System has a long and successful track record of being a leader in higher education, which positions Vermont State University for great opportunities. Additionally, Vermont State University will require intense and sustained branding and marketing campaigns, both in person and via all media platforms. The President will be expected to determine an appropriate strategy to raise the profile and reputation of Vermont State University within Vermont and nationally. Working with the Office of the Chancellor and the Office of Workforce Development, this strategy must also be coordinated with continued efforts to strengthen partnerships and relationships at the state level – particularly with the legislature and the Commission for Higher Education.

**Developing, articulating, and implementing a distinctive and responsible vision for the University's future.** The new President must prepare Vermont State University to meet the changes and challenges facing higher education with a bold yet responsible vision. With the University facing a crowded marketplace for prospective students, the new President will determine and articulate the University's most distinctive and noteworthy features, highlighting them through investment and support. The President will lead a transparent and inclusive process to identify an emerging set of priorities for the University that both stays true to its unique campuses and traditions, to Vermont, and educational values, and also embraces an equitable future for the University's broad and diverse community.

**Maintaining and Improving Program Excellence.** Vermont State University has gained a reputation for excellence in student learning, teaching, and scholarship. Every effort must be made to ensure that excellence remains the focal point in all aspects of the University. Increased enrollment, retention, and more visible recognition can only be accomplished if the academic culture and student focus remain at the center of Vermont State University's commitment. The President must articulate a vision that can: unite the campuses and their cultures, communicate the University's values, effectively advocate for the resources and staffing necessary to sustain the energetic beginnings of the Vermont State University, and maintain the excellence of these historically significant institutions.

**Building upon Existing Strengths and Developing New Programs.** The new President will help guide the discussion regarding supporting systematic growth in existing programs and new program development as well as new modes of delivery. In addition, the President will have the opportunity to strengthen an academic model of education that integrates the liberal arts, social and natural sciences, and professional programs, including an expansion of its graduate curriculum to include, for instance, additional health and wellness, and/or technical programs that meet critical workforce needs.

**Demographics and Enrollment Management.** The Vermont State University is within a region that is undergoing continued population decline within the traditional-age cohort and this trend will likely continue for the next five to ten years. Additionally, competition for students has grown. Yet, Vermont has 60,000 learners with some college but no degree, as well as 47% of high school students who do not matriculate into higher education: these populations represent opportunities for Vermont State University. Further opportunities can be found with international students, climate migrants seeking relief, as well as those seeking a safe environment to raise families. The University is committed to growing enrollment and must further improve its admission and retention profiles to further strengthen and support a student-focused model in the years ahead and represent the University more aggressively within Vermont and beyond.

**Diversifying Resources.** Over the years, the institutions that make up the Vermont State Colleges System have experienced a decline in the tax-supported share of its operating budgets, with limited control over tuition rates and limited ability to set student fees, placing the System as a whole in a financially difficult position. The transformation efforts currently underway are intended to address the structural problems of too little funding and too much expense and there has been significant progress. However, the work is not yet over. Therefore, the President will need to be a financial advocate for Vermont State University, finding ways to maintain and improve the quality of programs, reducing the cost of education by partnering with the Chancellor's office on strong legislative advocacy, engaging in energetic fundraising with alumni and other donors, the development of other resources through community and economic development, greater internal efficiencies, and creative marshaling of the finances. In partnership with the Board of Trustees and VSCS Foundation the new President has the opportunity to, over time, build momentum for fundraising and advancement. The new President will benefit from a positive spirit of entrepreneurship within the VSCS and its campuses to help address these challenges and take advantage of new opportunities.

**Maintaining Strong Campus Cultures.** Our campus cultures are highly valued. Vermont State University believes in open and honest dialogue and inclusive debate. The University commits to shared governance, communication, collaboration, and access and its actions serve as the foundation for a unified vision for the University. The President and entire administration will have an opportunity, and responsibility, to shape, model, and strengthen these values and the culture of Vermont State University.

**Communication.** The relative size of Vermont State University's campuses and diversity of programs have always been strengths, both internally and externally. In addressing new issues as well as old, the President needs to play an active, engaged, and transparent role with the faculty, staff, and students on each campus and to engage the campus communities – empowering all levels of Vermont State University to understand and address institutional goals. Successfully representing the entire University within Vermont, the President will work cooperatively with University faculty, staff, students, administrators, collective bargaining units, community and business leaders, and state government.

**Embracing Shared Governance.** The administration, faculty, staff, and students of Vermont State University are committed to working together collaboratively to continually improve all aspects of



the University. Vermont State University must not only commit to shared governance but its structures and processes give evidence to a strong culture of collaboration. The President and the administration must work with faculty, staff, and student governance structures as well as the various unions in the development of policies and decision-making at a variety of levels. Working effectively with constituent groups to ensure mutual respect, participation, and cooperation is critical to the future growth and development of Vermont State University.

**Championing the recruitment, inclusion, support, and retention of individuals from underrepresented backgrounds.** Vermont State University is dedicated to recruiting and retaining highly qualified faculty, staff, and students, with an emphasis on attracting and supporting faculty, staff, and students from underrepresented backgrounds. The new President must strengthen the University's commitment to diverse, underserved adult students, support social justice initiatives across all campuses, and provide more social and community-oriented opportunities for a broader student population. The new President must ensure that all students feel heard, valued, and accommodated, fostering a safe environment for intellectual discourse. The new President will reaffirm the VSCS' commitments to, and ongoing training around, diversity, equity, and inclusion by continuing the work of creating and sustaining an intercultural community that welcomes and empowers all faculty, staff, and community partners.

**Strengthening Relations with Alumni.** Vermont State University's commitment to the future is in part dependent upon the support of past students. The President should strengthen existing relationships with alumni, particularly through the University's creation of newly consolidated alumni associations, as well as seek and establish new partnerships that will be mutually beneficial. The University's alumni are supportive of their "home" institution; however, there is a feeling of a loss of identity by some alumni due to the merger. It will be imperative that the President work closely with their team to improve alumni interaction and involvement.

**Community Service.** Beyond its institutional value as an economic and cultural resource, Vermont State University must take proactive steps to lead and partner with economic and educational initiatives within Vermont including with regional development corporations, workforce investment boards, civic, and governmental groups. Vermont State University promotes personal growth, business development, and economic revitalization in the communities it serves. The new President will have the opportunity to lead efforts to build upon and further deepen ties, with attention to such issues as the changing economy and in finding new ways to meet the educational needs of Vermont.



*The new President must strengthen the University's commitment to diverse, underserved adult students, support social justice initiatives across all campuses, and provide more social and community-oriented opportunities for a broader student population.*



# QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Vermont State University seeks a leader whose professional experiences and personal values align with the University's student-centered and community-oriented ethos. The ideal new President will possess many of the following qualifications and experiences:

- Outstanding leadership and management experience;
- A demonstrated commitment to, and appreciation for, the values, traditions, and missions of the VSCS and the individual campuses that provide the foundation for Vermont State University;
- The capacity to work with varied stakeholders to create and implement a broad, bold vision for the newly created University, which will allow the institution to leverage and build upon its strengths and unique position within Vermont and beyond;
- The ability to work effectively with legislative leaders in coordination with the Office of the Chancellor;
- The ability to work well within a matrixed organization where responsibility for some functions is shared across the system;
- The ability to forge strong partnerships with community leaders and businesses, in coordination with the Office of Workforce Development;
- Familiarity with leading rural campus(es) and the ability to serve the needs of both the campuses and the region;
- A deep understanding of and respect for academic values and the traditions of higher education, as well as the ability to grasp and manage the demands of higher education today, including technology, and adapting to a quickly changing world;
- A strong record of intellectual accomplishments;
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills;
- Demonstrated social and emotional intelligence;
- A strong record of financial management and strategic planning;
- A broad understanding of liberal arts education and professional programs;
- Skills to lead initiatives to maintain and enhance the academic stature of the University;
- Demonstrated experience and leadership in fundraising across a diverse donor base;
- A commitment to innovation and creativity;
- A strong record of team building and collaborative leadership at all levels;
- Evidence of successful interactions with governing boards;
- A demonstrated record of building and maintaining an atmosphere of transparency and collegiality;
- A record of achievement in strengthening and infusing diversity and inclusion in their current operation;
- Respect for faculty, staff, and student ideas, input, and decisions.

## **Additionally, this candidate will:**

- Have the highest integrity;
- Be a strategic and visionary thinker;
- Be an articulate and inspiring communicator; and
- Have energy, passion, and an abiding sense of humor.

A terminal degree is preferred, but not required.

## **For best consideration, please send all nominations and applications to:**

Steve Leo, Managing Director  
Matthew Bunting, Managing Associate  
Storbeck Search  
VermontStateUniversityPresident@storbecksearch.com

For more information about Vermont State University, please visit [www.vsc.edu/PresidentialSearch](http://www.vsc.edu/PresidentialSearch)

Vermont State University and the Vermont State Colleges System are committed to diversity and providing safe and nondiscriminatory employment and educational environments.