

Commentary: We Have Confidence in Vermont State University Faculty, Staff, and Leaders

10 years from now, we believe Vermont will have a state-wide hybrid university that supports access and aspirations of students from across the state's rural communities, strengthens Vermont's workforce, and demonstrates sustainable quality. We are confident of this because of what we have seen faculty, staff, and leaders of the future Vermont State University already accomplish in just a few short years.

We pivoted in the emergency of the pandemic. Classes and meetings on Zoom. New and new uses of digital resources and technologies for student advising and collaboration.

In the challenges of that time, people came together, sharing resources and expertise across campuses. In a time when interaction was of necessity primarily virtual, human relationships across distance were maintained, and new connections formed.

Coming out of the pandemic, faculty across what have historically been four state colleges—at times in direct competition with one another—came together to redesign over 250 academic programs into a more sustainable array of just over 100 programs designed for increased access across multiple campuses. With significant faculty leadership, painstaking coordination and effort, faculty reviewed and approved these 100 programs just this past fall.

With support of innovative and dedicated staff, they are piloting new teaching strategies and technologies in order to deliver these programs to students needing remote access to courses. It is not possible to overstate either the challenges or the accomplishments of this work.

There is much more hard work ahead. Collectively, Vermont State University is in the midst of redesigning our libraries, a process that is challenging everyone to define priorities for access to quality academic resources and sustain relationships and community across physical and virtual university spaces.

Right now, the first course schedule for Vermont State University is being built, a schedule that is designed to serve a broader range of Vermont students and will offer increased access to faculty, programs, and courses, whether a student attends from a classroom on a campus or connects from a laptop at home or during a break from work.

We are taking the best of what staff offer now for academic support, advising, and career development and creating new approaches to ensure all students have the access they need.

What Vermont State University will precisely look like ten years from now is impossible to predict. With uncertainty also comes fear, and with pressure to change comes frustration.

But make no mistake – there are good people working tirelessly every day, responding to the inevitable fears and frustrations with patience, humor, respect, and most important, commitment to ensuring students have access to quality education that they deserve, and that the state of Vermont needs.

We have confidence in the future of Vermont State University on every campus – Castleton, Johnson, Lyndon, Randolph, and Williston—in the students who are our lifeblood, and in the faculty, staff, and leaders who are working tirelessly to launch this new university on July 1.

By: The Vermont State Colleges System Board of Trustees Executive Committee

The Executive Committee of the Vermont State Colleges System Board of Trustees is composed of:

- *Board Chair and State Representative Lynn Dickinson;*
- *Vice Chair of the Board and Chair of the Education, Personnel, and Student Life Committee Megan Cluver;*
- *Board Treasurer and Chair of the Finance and Facilities Committee David Silverman; and*
- *Secretary of the Board and Vice Chair of the Education, Personnel, and Student Life Committee Karen Luneau*

About Vermont State Colleges System

The Vermont State Colleges System provides affordable, high quality, student-centered, and accessible education and career development opportunities for all Vermonters. In 2020, the Vermont State Colleges System embarked on a period of transformation to unify Castleton University, Northern Vermont University, and Vermont Technical College. By July 1, 2023, these schools will unite as a single accredited institution entitled Vermont State University, bringing together all five campuses. The new University will increase access to high-quality educational programs for all learners, fueling Vermont’s economic pipeline, and creating greater access to affordable higher education opportunities. When fully transitioned, the Vermont State Colleges system will be comprised of Vermont State University and Community College of Vermont (CCV). Learn more about the Vermont State Colleges System at www.vsc.edu.

###