


MEMORANDUM

TO: VSCS Board of Trustees Executive Committee
Lynn Dickinson, Chair
Megan Cluver, Vice-Chair
David Silverman, Treasurer
Karen Luneau, Secretary

FROM: Sophie Zdatny, Chancellor 

DATE: March 21, 2023

SUBJECT: Board of Trustees Executive Committee Meeting – March 23, 2023

Trustees:

Attached, please find the meeting agenda and materials.

Following public comment and approval of the December 19, 2022 minutes, Jonathan Davis (NVU Dean of Students) and Angie Albeck (CCV Associate Deans of Students) will be providing an update on the proposed plans for Vermont State University and Community of College of Vermont regarding COVID-19 vaccinations. Back in 2021, the Executive Committee passed Resolution 2021-018, adding the COVID-19 vaccine to the list of vaccinations required for all students attending A VSC residential institution. Jonathan and Angie have been working with other deans of students, as well as other institutions of higher education in Vermont, on updating existing COVID-19 policies given the course of the virus. We are asking the Committee to approve allowing Resolution 2021-018 to expire, effective May 11, 2023, the date the federal Public Health Emergency for COVID-19 is scheduled to expire. See [Fact sheet: COVID 19 Public Health Emergency Transition Roadmap](#).

The next agenda item is a discussion of succession planning and Board committee assignments. If the Committee so votes, it is anticipated that this discussion will occur in executive session as it involves the appointment, employment, or evaluation of public officers or employees. See 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3). It is not anticipated that any final decisions will be made but, if they are, any such decisions will be made in open meeting.

Following Other Business, the meeting will adjourn.

cc: Presidents, Jonathan Davis, Angie Albeck

Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees – Executive Committee
Zoom Meeting/YouTube Stream
Thursday, March 23, 2023 at 10:30 a.m.

AGENDA

Executive Committee Meeting

1. Call to order
 1. Public Comment – sign up here: www.vsc.edu/signup
 2. Approval of Minutes – December 19, 2022
 3. COVID-19 vaccination policy and Executive Committee Resolution 2021-018
 4. Succession planning and Board Committees – the Committee may, if circumstances warrant and it so votes, enter into Executive Session
 5. Other Business
 6. Adjourn
-
- Contact Jen Porrier at jen.porrier@vsc.edu for information on how to attend the Zoom meeting
 - This will also be livestreamed on YouTube at www.vsc.edu/live

Meeting Materials

1. Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, December 19, 2022
2. Executive Committee Resolution 2021-018
3. VTSU Proposed COVID Policy

ITEM ONE:

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes – December 19, 2022

**Minutes of the VSCS Board of Trustees Executive Special Committee meeting held
Monday, December 19, 2022, at 10:30 a.m. via Zoom - UNAPPROVED**

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

The Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees Executive Special Committee met on Monday, December 19, 2022.

Committee members present: Lynn Dickinson (Chair), Megan Cluver (Vice Chair), Karen Luneau, David Silverman

Presidents: Parwinder Grewal, Joyce Judy

Chancellor's Office staff: Katherine Levasseur, Director of Governmental & External Affairs
Jen Porrier, Administrative Director
Patty Turley, General Counsel
Meg Walz, Director, Project Management
Sophie Zdatny, Chancellor

From the Colleges: Sarah Chambers, Coordinator of Instructional Technology,
Castleton University

1. Chair Dickinson called the meeting to order at 10:31 a.m.
2. Approval of July 18, 2022 Minutes

Trustee Cluver moved and Trustee Luneau seconded the motion to approve the minutes of July 18, 2022. The motion was approved unanimously.

3. Executive Session

At 10:33 a.m. Trustee Dickinson moved that the VSCS Board of Trustees enter executive session pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3) to discuss the appointment and employment of a public officer. Along with the members of the Board present at the meeting, the Board invited the Chancellor and the Presidents to attend. Trustee Silverman seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

The committee exited executive session at 12:06 p.m. and took no action.

Chair Dickinson adjourned the meeting at 12:07 p.m.

ITEM TWO:
Executive Committee Resolution 2021-018

**VERMONT STATE COLLEGES
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
RESOLUTION NO. 2021-018**

**Endorsing vaccination requirement for students at Castleton University,
Northern Vermont University and Vermont Technical College**

- WHEREAS, Vermont State Colleges (“VSC”) institutions currently provide programs for over three-thousand students on residential campus across the state; and
- WHEREAS, The U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services has declared that the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and the resulting disease COVID-19 constitutes a public health emergency; and
- WHEREAS, COVID-19 can cause severe respiratory illness, hospitalization, and death in a subset of individuals infected with the virus; and
- WHEREAS, The COVID-19 Delta variant is substantially more communicable than the original COVID-19 disease, is present in the state of Vermont, and is currently responsible for 83% of the positive COVID-19 cases across the country; and
- WHEREAS, Safe and effective vaccinations are readily available; and
- WHEREAS, While over 83 percent of Vermont residents are vaccinated, less than 50 percent of the U.S. population is vaccinated, and traditional residential college-aged students are less likely to be vaccinated;
- WHEREAS, A significant percentage of VSC students are from an age group that is less likely to be vaccinated, and some come from locations outside Vermont with a lower vaccination rate and a higher positivity rate than the state of Vermont;
- WHEREAS, The Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Health has advised there is a strong public health rationale in support of college policies that seek to maximize vaccination rates of students against COVID-19; therefore be it
- RESOLVED, That the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees, for the health and safety of all members of our VSC and wider communities, endorses the recommendation that the COVID-19 vaccine be added to the list of vaccinations required of all students planning to attend a VSC residential institution in the Fall 2021 or thereafter.

Approved: July 22, 2021

Eileen M Dickinson

Eileen “Lynn” Dickinson, Chair of the Board of Trustees

ITEM THREE:
VTSU Proposed COVID Policy

VTSU COVID-19 vaccine Policy, Recommendations, and Rationale Fall 2023

Policy:

1. VTSU does not have an institutional mandate requiring students, faculty, or staff be vaccinated against COVID-19.
2. VTSU recognizes we all hold personal responsibility for one's health and the broader health of our community and recommends students, faculty, and staff to follow Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance including staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccines including boosters and staying home when sick.
3. Pursuant to COVID-19 protocols in healthcare settings certain academic programs will require up-to-date COVID vaccination and masking for clinical placement. VTSU will follow current guidance from the CDC and the Vermont Department of Health related to health care settings to ensure students can participate in clinical placements.

Recommendations:

1. Starting in Fall of 2023, we recommend downgrading the COVID-19 Vaccine requirement for VTSU Students to a *recommendation to follow CDC prevention guidance including staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccines including boosters.*
3. Emphasize a shift from institutional mandates to personal responsibility for one's health and the health of our community.
4. Certain Academic Programs will continue to require COVID vaccination as the norm (e.g. Nursing and Dental will need to require this for clinical placement pursuant to guidance in healthcare settings)

Rationale:

1. Lack of federal or state requirements
 - a. Unlike other specified vaccines (MMR, Varicella, etc), there are no state or federal COVID-19 vaccine requirements for college students.
 - b. A strong recommendation would align with state and federal guidelines.
2. In order to be medically effective, any requirement would need to include updated versions of the COVID-19 vaccine.
 - a. The most effective vaccine for a particular emerging strain may not exist yet¹⁰.
 - b. Vaccine effectiveness has been shown to wane over time⁸.
 - c. It might be a more medically effective strategy to advise individuals that proof of vaccination could become required if and when it is medically warranted.
 - i. Why require someone get a vaccine that might not work well in the future¹⁰?
3. The situational framework has improved significantly.
 - a. Unlike Spring 2021, current conditions should not jeopardize the academic mission or place the local / regional hospital system at high risk of failure.

i. We no longer face ten-day isolation in designated housing, few treatment options, hospital crises, and low levels of herd immunity from past infection and/or immunization.

4. Hospital mortality rates due to COVID-19 are declining.⁴
5. Current antiviral medications remain effective in preventing hospitalizations and severe outcomes.^{6,7}
6. Currently available bivalent vaccines remain safe⁵ and effective against current circulating strains in reducing rates of infection, hospitalization, and severe health outcomes.^{1,2,3,8}
7. Natural immunity (i.e. from prior infection) may be equivalent to current vaccination strategies in preventing severe disease⁹.
8. The current vaccine policy requires monitoring and enforcement, increasing workload and stress and diverting energy away from progress in other important areas.