


## MEMORANDUM

TO: VSCS Board of Trustees Ad Hoc Search Committee  
Trustee Bombardier  
Trustee Dickinson  
Trustee Durfee  
Trustee Luneau  
Trustee Tester

FROM: Sophie Zdatny, Chancellor 

DATE: August 2, 2023

SUBJECT: Supplemental Material for August 3, 2023 Meeting

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Trustees:

Attached, please find a compilation of the feedback received on proposed revisions to the Qualifications and Characteristics section of the Presidential Portfolio developed in 2021 for the prior Presidential Search.

To facilitate review of the feedback, numbers have been added to the bullets so that the proposed edits and comments can be readily cross-referenced with the original document. A discussion of the feedback is the third item on the agenda for tomorrow's meeting.

If you should have any questions, please let me know.

## **QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS (numbered)**

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:

1. Outstanding leadership and management experience;
2. 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;
3. 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;
4. The ability to work effectively with legislative leaders in coordination with the Office of the Chancellor;
5. The ability to work well within a matrixed organization where responsibility for some functions is shared across the system;
6. The ability to forge strong partnerships with community leaders and businesses, in coordination with the Office of Workforce Development;
7. Familiarity with leading rural campus(es) and the ability to serve the needs of both the campuses and the region;
8. 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;
9. A strong record of intellectual accomplishments;
10. Strong communication and interpersonal skills;
11. Demonstrated social and emotional intelligence;
12. A strong record of financial management and strategic planning;
13. A broad understanding of liberal arts education and professional programs;
14. Skills to lead initiatives to maintain and enhance the academic stature of the University;
15. Demonstrated experience and leadership in fundraising across a diverse donor base;
16. A commitment to innovation and creativity;

17. A strong record of team building and collaborative leadership at all levels;
18. Evidence of successful interactions with governing boards;
19. A demonstrated record of building and maintaining an atmosphere of transparency and collegiality;
20. A record of achievement in strengthening and infusing diversity and inclusion in their current operation;
21. Respect for faculty, staff, and student ideas, input, and decisions.

**Additionally, this candidate will:**

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

A terminal degree is preferred, but not required.

# COMPILATION OF FEEDBACK ON PRESIDENTIAL PORTFOLIO

## UNION FEEDBACK (from all three Union Presidents)

- Need an individual with experience with, and respect for, faculty and staff unions.
- Familiarity with a state college system, preferably a rural state.
- A connection to Vermont and/or the Vermont State Colleges campuses would be ideal.
- A proven track record of successfully leading an institution experiencing transformation while maintaining individual campus cultures.
- The ideal candidate would be creative, tenacious, inclusive, transparent, and committed to hearing and considering all voices, especially those who are “in the trenches” and on the campuses.

## SENIOR LEADERSHIP FEEDBACK #1

- Presidential Higher Education experience
- Strategies to involve faculty
- Alliance builder – still a long way to go
- Understanding need for consultative and collaborative approach in higher education
- Vermont connections or support to build a network in Vermont
- Rural higher education experience (if not from Vermont) – a personal story that can connect with Vermonters

## SENIOR LEADERSHIP FEEDBACK #2

- Revise 1<sup>st</sup> bullet: “Outstanding and proven leadership management experience of a large corporation” and add “Proven change management expert, with demonstrated track record of facilitating and moving organization through significant organizational change.”
- Revise 4<sup>th</sup> bullet: “Demonstrated ability to work effectively with legislative leaders in coordination with the Office of the Chancellor.” Along with the added comment that the President should be a known entity in Vermont, with legislative experience and relationships with those in government and industry (*i.e.* someone with a strong contact list who really understands Vermont.)
- Replace 5<sup>th</sup> bullet with “Experience with a shared services model” as this more accurately represents where we are now.
- Replace 6<sup>th</sup> bullet with “History forming strong partnerships with community leaders and businesses in Vermont.”
- Replace 7<sup>th</sup> bullet with “Familiarity and experience working in rural communities.”

- Delete 9<sup>th</sup> bullet – the President does not need to be an academic but does need to be a strong and proven leader.
- Revise 10<sup>th</sup> bullet: “Strong communication and interpersonal skills, including experience of storming, forming and norming new teams.”

### SENIOR LEADERSHIP FEEDBACK #3

- Comment on 1<sup>st</sup> bullet: “The search committee is going to need to develop some probing questions to ensure the successful candidate is, in fact, an outstanding leader and manager. Especially management skills.”
- Comment on 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet: “This bullet is confusing. The campuses don’t have missions. And we share common values. VTSU has a mission and vision that the incoming President will need to fully support and ensure our practices fully realize.”
- Comment on 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet: “And what does this mean? A new broad and bold vision?”
- Add a new bullet: “Ability to work effectively with the VTSU executive leadership team.”
- Add a new bullet: “Familiarity with relevant trends in higher education, especially those impacting rural public colleges and universities.”

### SENIOR LEADERSHIP FEEDBACK #4

- Use the term “Competencies,” rather than “Characteristics” as this term may lend itself to unconscious bias.
- Include reference to the DEI pillars in the 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet.
- Replace “varied stakeholders” in the 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet with “diverse stakeholders.”
- Add data-informed decision-making as a competency.

### SENIOR LEADERSHIP FEEDBACK #5

- 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.
- Retain the bullet relating to “the ability to work well within a matrixed organization where responsibility for some functions is shared across the system.” (5<sup>th</sup> bullet)
- Understanding technology (8<sup>th</sup> bullet) includes: (i) understanding how technology impacts the student academic experience (modalities, etc.); and (ii) the infusion of technology into business processes across the organization.

### TRUSTEE FEEDBACK #1

- Add “managing a complex organization through transition and reorganization.”

- Add “establishing a system-wide structure for performance management and reporting.”
- Add a commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

#### TRUSTEE FEEDBACK #2

- Revise 1<sup>st</sup> bullet – “Outstanding leadership and large organization change management experience.”
- Revise 5<sup>th</sup> bullet: “The ability to work well within a matrixed organization where responsibility for some functions is shared across the system, with a demonstration of results.”
- Revise 10<sup>th</sup> bullet: “Strong internal and external communication and interpersonal skills.”
- Add a new bullet: “Demonstrated ability to grow educational programs and be responsive to changing education demands and requirements.”