

To: Vermont State College System Communities
From: Chancellor Sophie Zdatny
Re: **Transformation Update #10**
Date: August 16, 2021

Dear Vermont State Colleges Community,

Our regular updates to you throughout the Transformation process can be found on the VSCS website at www.vsc.edu/transformation.

STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

We will be launching a Student Advisory Council in September to help guide the work of the Transformation Teams as we work to design the future of the new university that will be formed by unifying Northern Vermont University, Castleton University, and Vermont Technical College. Student input will be essential to ensuring a student-centered approach to how we provide our academic programs, student services, advising, athletics, residence life, and other events and programs. We will also be looking at ways of strengthening connections between the new university and the Community College of Vermont (CCV).

The Transformation Teams are beginning to engage in Discovery work to explore different ways that we can do what we do, and later this fall the teams will begin designing our new programs, support services, processes, and systems that will be put in place for the new university.

There will be time at the Student Advisory Council meetings for students to hear from the Transformation Teams, engage in group work to provide input and feedback, and collaborate with other students to help set priorities for the work. We are looking to assemble an Advisory Council comprised of 25-30 students representing a broad cross-section of students across the three universities, as well as some representatives from CCV.

The proposed schedule for the Student Advisory Council is to meet on the following evenings, via Zoom, from 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Additional dates will be added if needed.

Thursday, September 23rd
Thursday, September 30th
Thursday, October 14th
Thursday, October 28th
Thursday, November 18th

Thursday, December 9th

Thursday, January 27th (with additional dates to be scheduled for the spring semester)

If you are a student and these days and times are not a good fit with your schedule, please know that there are other opportunities, outside of the Student Advisory Council, to provide input and feedback on transformation.

For Students - We need your help to make sure that all aspects of the new university are designed to help you succeed. If you are interested in joining the Student Advisory Council, follow this [link](#) to nominate yourself.

Faculty and Staff - If you know students who you think would be good representatives and help us to shape important aspects of the new university, follow this [link](#) to nominate them.

The deadline for submitting nominations is Friday, September 10th. Decisions on membership will be made by Friday, September 17th. The first meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 23rd.

UPDATES FROM THE TRANSFORMATION TEAMS

The **Academic Operations Core Team** has reviewed the project timeline and dependencies for deliverables in their subject area. They have identified some critical priorities (such as defining delivery modalities, launching new library by summer 2022) and have determined more time for all sub-teams to complete discovery is needed right now. The team is engaging directly in discovery for the creation of a student success, retention, and persistence plan and providing perspectives on student success for the Student Experience and Administrative Operations teams. The sub-teams are each now kicking off their work. We have identified the faculty governance and program array work as critical dependencies that must receive additional attention in the next month.

The work of the **Student Experience Team** continues to go well. In the last two meetings the team worked on finalizing the initial list of goals and objectives for the charter. All of the sub-teams are beginning their work now. Athletics, Registrar Operations, and Student/Residence Life have all kicked off their initial meetings and are developing their team charters along with their own goals and objectives. The student experience overlaps so many functional areas of the university that most of the sub-teams will be working collaboratively with one another during this process and share similar goals and objectives. The core team started the discovery phase by describing the experience of what it is like to be a prospective student on our current campuses. Team members will be going back to their colleagues to learn more about this experience, as well as considering what others outside our system are doing based on best practice. The core team welcomes input from all stakeholders regarding this stage of the process.

The Transformation teams for the **Administrative Operations** core process area will be kicking off this Wednesday, August 18th. As with the other core process areas of Student Experience and Academic Operations, there will be a Core Team that will lead the cross-functional work and coordination, and it will be supported by other sub-teams and workgroups to provide functional and institutional expertise. We will be engaging a broad range of stakeholders in this work, particularly in areas like business planning and administration and employee services. Here is some high-level information about the teams for Administrative Operations:

Core Process Area: Administrative Operations

The purpose of this team is to define the administrative services, processes, and systems to support the institutions of the VSCS (the NCE and CCV) in their mission to serve future students, their communities, and the state in a way that builds the foundation for an inclusive and sustainable future for higher education in Vermont.

- Students and prospective students will be at the center of how we think about the work
- We will seek efficiencies and improvements that will lower administrative costs per student
- The users of our services, processes, and systems are our internal customers
- We will engage in discovery and design with an eye towards best practices and innovative solutions

Core Team:

Sharron Scott – Team Lead
Toby Stewart - Business Planning & Admin
Kellie Campbell – IT Services
Mike Stevens – Facilities Planning
Katrina Meigs - HR/Employee Services
Patty Turley - Legal/Regulatory
Wilson Garland – Project Manager
Financial Analyst – TBD

Sub-Teams:

Business Planning and Administration
Operations and Processing
IT Services
Facilities Planning
Employee Services
Procurement and Purchasing

NAME AND BRAND UPDATE

The **Branding Identity Team** has been working with VisionPoint Marketing to begin conducting the audience research that will inform the name and brand recommendations for the New Combined Entity. After several weeks of planning, the Brand Identity work got under way last week, with Listening Tours at Vermont Tech (Williston and Randolph) and Castleton. A Branding Workshop was held today (August 16th) and Northern Vermont's Listening Tours are scheduled for August 26th and 27th.

Due to an upsurge in the number of COVID cases locally and nationally, the Listening Tours are being held virtually. These consist of daylong virtual visits to the colleges/campuses to meet with stakeholders (in groups of 7-10), including senior leadership, academic leadership and faculty, marketing and communications staff + enrollment/admissions staff, student life/student services staff, current and prospective students, alumni, and members of the local community.

We have begun to brainstorm ways for VisionPoint to capture the sense of being on our campuses. They have brought sensory questions into their interviews and we are also looking at creative solutions, such as student led tours with a GoPro or selfie stick, and visits later in the process to ensure they have a full feel for our vibrant campus communities as they work with us on the name and brand of the new combined institution.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM ARRAY UPDATE

On Thursday, August 19th, the Program Array optimization results and recommendations will be presented to the Board of Trustees' Education, Personnel, and Student Life (EPSL) Committee. Over 85 faculty made up 13 working groups, assisted by academic affairs liaisons, to engage in this process over the summer with the goal of creating a comprehensive first draft of an aligned and streamlined academic portfolio for the new institution. The result is a first draft outlining over 100 quality programs, as compared to the original of over 250 programs and concentrations. EPSL will review this draft on Thursday.

PROCESS FOR PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH

Storbeck Search presented an overview of the search process that will be used to select a President for the new university at the August 4th Board meeting. The presentation materials are available [here](#). A livestream of the Board's meeting, which includes the presentation, is available [here](#) at around the 26-minute mark.

UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS

August 19th – Education, Personnel, and Student Life (“EPSL”) Board Committee Meeting (Zoom)

August 23rd – Finance and Facilities (“F&F”) Board Committee Meeting (Zoom)

September 13th – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (“DEI”) Board Committee Meeting (Zoom)

September 20-21st – Board of Trustees Annual Retreat (in person)

October 15th – EPSL and DEI Board Committee Meetings (Zoom)

October 18th – F&F and Audit Board Committee Meetings (Zoom)

October 25th – Board of Trustees Meeting (Zoom)

Additional information about Board and Committee meetings, including information on how to access the meetings may be found [here](#).

PUBLIC INPUT

We will continue to solicit broad input as our transformation continues. **We encourage you to share your feedback at [this link](#)**. Additionally, we will continue accepting public comments at Board and Committee meetings and will post regular updates on our [Transformation page](#). The feedback received through the transformation page survey link is posted publicly each month on the transformation page.

A question has been raised as to what do we do with the public feedback we receive. In addition to posting it publicly, the comments are shared with the Trustees and are reviewed by senior leadership. Responsive action is taken as appropriate. This may take different forms, such as addressing an issue in greater detail in a transformation update, adding an action item to the charge of a project team, or creating a new project team/working group. So, please continue to share your input and feedback. It is given serious and thoughtful consideration.

I will continue to keep you updated and welcome your ongoing feedback and input. Thank you for your engagement in this critical work.

With kind regards,

Sophie