

To: Vermont State College System Communities
From: Chancellor Sophie Zdatny
Re: **Transformation Update #11**
Date: August 30, 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

As you know from [Transformation Update #10](#), 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 unified university.

The Student Advisory Council meetings will be an opportunity 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 6:00-7:30 p.m. with additional dates 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)

Students are encouraged to apply or nominate peers to provide perspective to ensure all aspects of the new university are designed to help you succeed. **Faculty and Staff** are encouraged to nominate students as well. Click this [link](#) to access the nomination form.

The deadline for submitting nominations is Friday, September 10th. Decisions on membership will be made by Friday, September 17th.

UPDATES FROM THE TRANSFORMATION TEAMS

Academic Operations Core Team

The Advising, Career Services, Libraries, Teaching & Learning Innovation, and Academic Programs sub-teams have all launched and are working on completing their charters amidst a very busy beginning to the academic year. The core team has been focused on identifying the many tasks and interdependencies with the work on the program array for the new combined institution. The faculty governance group is engaged with the Academic Programs sub-team and working to develop a governance process aligned with the deliverables of the Programs sub-team to move the summer faculty work on program optimization forward. All groups will continue discovery work in the coming weeks related to their specific project deliverables as well as to overall student success and retention. This discovery work includes identifying the needs of our diverse student populations in context of these deliverables and retention, practices that are working and not working well, key design principles for consideration, systems and technologies needed, and constraints or risks to address.

Student Experience Team

All sub-teams of the Student Experience group are now meeting. Each team is progressing in their discovery work while at the same time getting to know each other. Conversations are generating a lot of good questions and opportunities to learn from one another. The outside pressures of the beginning of a new semester and the normal late summer rush have certainly been felt in the last two weeks. We appreciate the time and effort that everyone is devoting to this process. The core team is continuing to discuss the prospective student experience and is learning about different models of service that can be considered for managing incoming and outgoing phone calls and responding to inquiries of all types while considering the behaviors/expectations/needs of various student types.

Administrative Operations

The Transformation core team for Administrative Operations launched last week. Like the other teams that have launched, the team is engaging in Discovery. During this stage they will explore how we handle administrative operations today across all are institutions and campuses and what options, new approaches, and best practices into our work. The core team will also be working with sub-teams of functional experts from each institution to help ensure that we design processes and systems to support the work that we do and uncover opportunities to increase effectiveness and efficiency. The sub-teams for Administrative Operations will be launching over the next few weeks. If you would like to learn more about the Administrative Operations

teams and their charge from leadership, the kickoff presentation that was used last week is linked [here](#).

NAME AND BRAND UPDATE

Over the last few weeks, the **Branding Identity Team** has been working with VisionPoint Marketing to conduct the audience research that will inform the name and brand recommendations for the New Combined Entity via daylong Listening Tours with diverse stakeholder groups at each of the current institutions.

These meetings have yielded thoughtful information and VisionPoint is synthesizing the data they collected to inform their name and brand recommendations to the Board. A survey, designed to provide quantitative data to inform the choice of a name for the new university and its brand, will be issued early this week. The survey will be sent to all VSCS current students and employees, as well as to alumni, community members, employer partners, and other stakeholder groups. Please check your email (college email for students and employees) for a link to the survey and complete it as soon as you can so that your feedback is captured for this important step in the transformation process.

The survey results will be analyzed by VisionPoint Marketing and will help inform their recommendations regarding the name for the new institution, as well as the brand. VisionPoint will bring their recommendations on the name to the Board of Trustees' meeting on September 21st. The recommendations will be made publicly available and the Board has scheduled a Listening Session to receive input on the recommendations for **Wednesday, September 29th at 6:30 p.m. (via Zoom)**, before the Board votes on the new name. There will also be an opportunity to provide written feedback on the recommendations prior to the Board's decision. Recommendations regarding the brand for the new university will follow in October.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM ARRAY UPDATE

On Thursday, August 19th, the Program Array optimization results and recommendations were presented to the Board of Trustees' Education, Personnel, and Student Life (EPSL) Committee. A recording of that meeting is available [here](#). Thanks to the tremendous work of over 85 faculty members and academic affairs liaisons in 13 working groups, a comprehensive first draft of an aligned and streamlined academic portfolio for the new institution outlining approximately 100 quality programs was shared with EPSL at their meeting. Approximately half of the proposed programs immediately met the optimization goals for this work, and will be moving forward immediately for review through the faculty governance process, with the majority of the rest of the proposed programs expected to meet optimization goals in the next few months pending additional review and revision.

PROCESS FOR PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH

As we begin preparation for the search for the first president of the new combined entity, our search consultants ([Steve Leo](#) and [Matt Bunting](#)) at Storbeck Search will be holding a series of cohort based meetings and discussions for those people who are interested in sharing with them their views on the process, the search, and the needs for the future president for the newly combined entity. Meetings and forums will be scheduled for Castleton University, Northern Vermont University, and Vermont Technical College with students, faculty, staff, and key institutional partners identified by each President. Stay tuned for meeting dates and times for your institution. For those who cannot attend a forum or cohort meeting, or who would like to offer their feedback privately, Storbeck Search will be conducting a survey. A link to the presidential search survey will be made available by the next transformation update.

UPCOMING CAMPUS TOURS

We are still working out the details but we are planning a road trip in late September (COVID restrictions permitting) to visit each of the campuses and share information about transformation and receive input from faculty, staff, and students. More information will be shared when the details have been finalized but the tentative schedule is:

NVU-Johnson – Wednesday, September 22nd
NVU-Lyndon - Thursday, September 23rd
Castleton University – Friday, September 24th
Vermont Tech-Williston - Monday, September 27th
CCV and the Chancellor’s Office – Tuesday September 28th
Vermont-Tech-Williston – Tuesday, September 28th

The visits will include a Town Hall meeting open to everyone and a separate meeting for all those serving on a project management team to discuss how things are going.

UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS

September 13th – DEI Board Committee Meeting (Zoom)
September 20-21st – Board of Trustees Annual Retreat (in person)
September 29th—Board of Trustees Listening Session & Special Meeting (Zoom)
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. Please continue to share your input and feedback as 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