

To: Vermont State College System Communities
From: Chancellor Sophie Zdatny
Re: **Transformation Update #12**
Date: September 13, 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

Thank you to all those who have nominated themselves or nominated others to serve on the Student Advisory Council. We have a broad cross-section of nominees by institution, part-time/full-time, traditional/early college/adult learner, commuters/residential, in-state/out of state, veterans, first generation, students of color, students who manage disabilities, *et cetera*.

The Student Advisory Council will help guide the work of the Transformation Teams as we work to design the future of the new unified university. We will be finalizing the composition of the committee this week. As a reminder the first few meetings are scheduled for September 23rd, September 30th, October 14th, and October 28th.

PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH – Feedback requested

As discussed in [Transformation Update #11](#), the search for the first president of the new university is underway. We are working with executive search firm Storbeck Search. Please see the attached memo from Trustee Megan Cluver to the VSC Community about the search as this provides some additional information.

Last week Storbeck Search began conducting meetings with different groups of students, faculty, staff, and administrators at the three institutions that will form the new university. These sessions, all conducted electronically, will continue through the first week of October. Your candid and engaged participation in these sessions is vital to our future. If you are not able to participate in one of these meetings, or you would like to provide additional insight, you are encouraged to complete a short survey and share your thoughts about the priorities, traits, experiences, and practices that the future President of our new combined entity should

possess. Your responses are confidential and will go directly to Storbeck Search, where they will be aggregated and analyzed. Storbeck will present themes, patterns and trends gleaned from the survey with the Search and Screen Committee. The composition of the Search and Screen Committee will be determined in the coming weeks.

Link to the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VSCNCEPresidentSearchSurvey>

UPDATES FROM THE TRANSFORMATION TEAMS

Academic Operations Team

The Academic Operations Core Team is scheduled to meet weekly through the semester and is working closely with the various sub-teams, all of which have now launched except for the General Education and Institutional Research sub-teams. In addition to the General Education sub-team, there will be a DEI learning outcomes working group. The Academic Programs sub-team is working closely with the Academic Governance Planning Group on how to handle the review and approval process for the program array work.

The Advising sub-team is planning campus visits from NACADA (formerly the National Academic Advising Association, now known as the Global Community for Academic Advising) next week to explore potential new advising models.

Student Experience Team

The Student Experience sub-teams are putting the finishing touches on their team charters and finalizing their objectives and deliverables. Discussions are underway to discover what is currently working well on each campus and what services and procedures could be improved for our students. In addition, the teams are incorporating best practices into their conversations so that multiple perspectives can be considered. The Core Team has been looking at enrollment services across the three institutions, especially as to how the admissions, financial aid, billing, and registration components intersect during the pre-enrollment process for students and their families.

Administrative Operations

The Administrative Operations Core team kicked off on August 18th and introduced the administrative operations concepts to the sub-team members. A second Core Team meeting was held on August 26th at which the charter for the team was organized. A short-term working group on Tuition Pricing for the new university, comprised of enrollment and finance staff, was established. The sub-teams and the Tuition Pricing working group will hold their initial meetings during the weeks of September 13th and 20th.

NAME AND BRAND UPDATE

Thank you to all those who participated in the listening tours conducted by VisionPoint Marketing and those who completed the survey regarding the name and brand for the new university. VisionPoint Marketing is currently analyzing the data and feedback received and will be presenting their recommendation on the name for the new university at the upcoming Board of Trustees meeting on **Tuesday, September 22nd**. The meeting will be livestreamed so the presentation and recommendation can be watched live or viewed at a later time.

We anticipate that there will be considerable interest in the recommendation and so, in order to obtain feedback and public comment before the Board votes on the recommendation, we will be providing a link for submitting **written feedback**, following the Board’s September 22nd meeting. In addition, the Board will be holding a virtual public **listening session** for input on the recommendation on **Wednesday, September 29th at 6:30 p.m.** The links for submitting written feedback and for the listening session will be sent out next week, via email.

Recommendations regarding the brand for the new university will follow in October.

UPCOMING CAMPUS TOWN HALLS

Barring any additional challenges presented by the COVID virus, we will be visiting the campuses for a series of in-person Town Hall meetings between September 22-28, 2021. The format will be a short presentation on transformation, the mission and vision for the new university, and the name/brand for the new university, followed by a dialogue about the upcoming changes, including the opportunity to ask questions.

All are welcome to attend. Here is the schedule – any additional details will be shared by your institution.

Campus	Date	Time	Location
NVU-Johnson	Weds., Sept. 22 nd	11:30-12:30 p.m.	Dibden
NVU-Lyndon	Thurs., Sept. 23 rd	11:30-12:30 p.m.	Alexander Twilight Theater
Castleton	Fri., Sept. 24 th	11:30-12:30 p.m.	1787 Room
VTC-Randolph	Mon., Sept. 27 th	1:00-2:00 p.m.	Conant 102
CCV/Chancellor’s Office	Tues., Sept. 28 th	9:00-10:00 a.m.	Via Zoom
VTC-Williston	Tues., Sept. 28 th	1:00-2:00 p.m.	Williston 401B

In addition, following each meeting, Wilson Garland will hold a “**meet and greet**” meeting for all those serving on a project management team from that institution. These meetings will be held in the same room as the Town Hall at Castleton and Vermont Tech. Rooms for these meetings at NVU-Johnson and NVU-Lyndon are to be determined.

TRANSFORMATION FAQs

To respond to some of the most pressing questions that may be circulating on campuses, here are some transformation FAQs that you may find helpful. Transformation is a work in progress and so there are not answers to every question at this point but, if you have questions, please consider coming to one of the upcoming Town Hall meetings.

1. Why is transformation occurring? How will unification of Castleton, NVU and Vermont Tech meet the goal?

There are demographic and economic challenges that are impacting institutions of higher education across the country. Similar actions are being taken in other states. In many ways, the model of higher education is shifting and we need to adapt to those demands and modernize if we are to meet these challenges and build a solid foundation for the future. Our current model is fiscally unsustainable given our small size, primarily rural locations, and these new realities. Creating a singly accredited entity reduces redundancy, increases efficiency, and will make us more fiscally sustainable. Transformation will ensure we can provide high-quality education to our students now and in the future and is critical to preserving and expanding access to education statewide.

Through unification, we can strengthen our services and our offerings to better serve the students of Vermont and beyond. The State of Vermont is mandating that we make these changes and is providing significant financial support to us while we do so. We must meet their expectations of system transformation and focus on the VSC’s strategic priorities of affordability, accessibility, quality, and relevance.

2. Will my campus remain open?

Yes. The VSCS Board of Trustees and the Vermont Legislature have expressed their commitment to maintaining our existing campuses at Johnson, Lyndon, Randolph, Williston, and Castleton. The legislature has demonstrated its support for maintaining our existing campuses by investing millions of dollars into the VSCS over the past year. The need for continued higher levels of state support into the future has been clearly established, for example through the work of the legislatively-created Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education in Vermont. Several of the project management teams are exploring what the future configuration of the campuses will look like. For example, this may be shaped by academic program offerings, co-curricular opportunities, and workforce development needs.

3. Will my major be offered at the new university?

Faculty are working hard to align programs across institutions and campuses and develop ways, using technology, of extending access to a broader selection of programs at each campus location and online. This program array work involves exploring ways to bring similar programs currently offered across the three institutions together to create stronger, more academically robust programs. Information about the exact program offerings and the plans for in person courses and alternative options by location are yet to be determined.

4. Will my major be offered at the location I am considering?

Students will be able to pursue their desired degree from most locations around the state through a combination of face to face, online, and synchronous remote learning modalities. There will be some academic programs that will be location-based due to their unique classroom/laboratory or other special facility needs. Unification is an incredible opportunity for students to have access to more programs and courses to round out their collegiate experience. Program names may change as we unify programs across the system and build the new, higher-quality, and more sustainable array for the new university, but our commitment to high-quality education options for all students remains.

5. Will the support I need for success continue to be available, such as specified academic support, and wellness services?

We are committed to delivering comprehensive higher education and continuing education for Vermonters and our out-of-state students, while preserving the high-touch, personalized approach, and close-knit campus communities for which the VSCS is known. Student support services are vital to the success of our new university. Each location will have a variety of support services available to students in person and through remote access. All students, regardless of location, will have access to a wide array of services.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION – Feedback requested

The Board of Trustees created a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee earlier this year. The DEI Committee has met twice. You can see the meeting materials and minutes [here](#). The DEI Committee's meeting scheduled for September 13th was canceled, in part to provide time for public feedback on the proposed definitions of the terms Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The Committee's charter provides that the Committee will define these terms as they will apply to the VSC. At its June 7th meeting, the Committee received the following proposed definitions as drafted by the VSCS Social Justice Group:

Diversity: A community where individuals with various intersecting identities thrive. We acknowledge that no person may be defined by one identity, and our various identities intersect in unique ways. These identities include race, color, ancestry, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, medical status, religion, language, culture, marital status, height, weight, national origin, age, and disability. *Note: we recommend excluding “political ideology” from this list. We do not tolerate, for example, white supremacist ideologies in the VSCS.*

Equity: The active and sustained deconstruction of unjust power hierarchies that privilege certain voices, identities, and bodies over others, at both the interpersonal and structural scales.

Inclusion: Being a part of a meaningful decision-making process. *Note: we recommend avoiding the term “feel” in this definition. We want people to be included, not feel included.*

Statement of Gender Inclusivity: The VSCS draws on the Agency of Education’s 4 core principles to guide gender inclusivity¹:

1. All students, faculty, and staff have a gender identity which is self-determined and valid.
2. All students, faculty, and staff have privacy rights.
3. All students, faculty, and staff have a right to a safe learning environment and social community.
4. All students, faculty, and staff have a right to a learning environment free from discrimination.

As the definitions of these terms will be applicable across the Vermont State Colleges System, the DEI Committee is requesting public feedback on these proposed definitions. Please send any feedback you have to chancellor@vsc.edu, using the subject line “DEI Definitions,” on or before **October 5th**. The next meeting of the Board’s DEI Committee is scheduled for October 15th.

BOARD RETREAT

Speaking of the Board of Trustees, the uptick in the Delta variant has necessitated some adjustments to the upcoming Board Retreat. The Board will meet in person at Lake Morey (<https://www.lakemoreyresort.com/>) on **Monday, September 20th** for three educational and informational sessions. The Board’s regular business meeting will be held on **Tuesday, September 21st**, virtually via Zoom. The formal notice of the meeting and the agenda will be posted later this week.

¹ See [Continuing Best Practices for Schools Regarding \(vermont.gov\)](#).

CALENDAR: UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS

September 20th	Board of Trustees retreat (in person, Lake Morey)
September 21st	Board of Trustees Meeting (Zoom)
September 29th	Board of Trustees Listening Session & Special Meeting on the name for the new university(Zoom)
October 15th	DEI Board Committee Meeting (Zoom)
October 15th	EPSL Board Committee Meeting (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

Enc. Memo from Trustee Megan Cluver on the Presidential Search

September 13, 2021

To: Members of the Vermont State Colleges Community
From: Trustee Megan Cluver
Re: New Combined Entity Presidential Search Survey

Dear Members of the Vermont State Colleges Community:

As we begin the very early stages of our search for the inaugural President of our new combined entity, I am writing to ask for your input and insight to inform this work. It is incredibly important to the Board that our search begins – and continues – with input from our community.

Immediately, I am asking that you please take a few minutes to complete a short survey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VSCNCEPresidentSearchSurvey>) and share your thoughts about the priorities, traits, experiences and practices that the future President of our new combined entity should possess. Your responses are confidential and will go directly to our search firm, where they will be aggregated and analyzed. Our search firm will present themes, patterns and trends to the Search and Screen Committee.

In addition, over the next few weeks, Storbeck Search will be conducting a number of meetings with different groups of students, faculty, staff, and administrators throughout the different locations of the newly combined entity. I recognize the busyness of the fall semester, and the extra workload of our transformation; however, if you are asked to participate, your candid and engaged participation in this session would be valuable to our future.

Thank you in advance for your input into this search.



Megan E. Cluver

Chair, New Combined Entity Presidential Search and Screen Committee
Vice Chair, VSC Board of Trustees