

To: Vermont State College System Communities  
From: Chancellor Sophie Zdatny  
Re: **Transformation Update #15**  
Date: October 25, 2021

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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](http://www.vsc.edu/transformation).

This transformation update is primarily focused on actions taken today by the VSC Board of Trustees.

### **1. Anti-Racism Pledge**

The Board voted to approve the Anti-Racism Pledge created by members of the Coalition of Minority Students Organization at NVU-Johnson and the VSCS Student Diversity and Inclusion Task Force. The Task Force is comprised of the following representatives:

- a. Tajae Edwards, Castleton University
- b. Kevin McGreal, Community College of Vermont
- c. Devyn Thompson, Northern Vermont University-Johnson
- d. Sabra Anne Snyder, Northern Vermont University-Lyndon '21
- e. Rawniesha Davis, Northern Vermont University-Lyndon
- f. Cynci Watkins, Vermont Technical College

The pledge is intended to serve as an educational tool and conversation-starter as the VSC seeks to become more respectful and welcoming to all people from all cultural backgrounds.

A copy of the pledge is available for review [here](#) (at pp.16-19). Moving forward, the students plan to engage in outreach about the pledge and other educational activities about anti-racism. The pledge is planned to be launched for the start of the Spring 2022 semester. Signing the pledge will be voluntary. While the students will be able to see the name and email address of those who sign the pledge, VSC administrators will not be maintaining a record of or otherwise tracking who chooses to sign the pledge.

As a reminder, the Vermont State Colleges prohibit discrimination and harassment on the basis of a person's race, color, ancestry, ethnicity, national origin, place of birth, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, creed, religion, disability, age, veteran status, marital status, genetic information, positive HIV-related blood test results, or any other status protected by state or

federal law. See [Policy 311: Non-discrimination and Prevention of Harassment and Related Unprofessional Conduct](#) and [Policy 311's Implementing Procedures](#).

## 2. VSC DEI Definitions

The Board voted to approve the definitions of “diversity,” “equity,” and “inclusion” used by the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE) in its *Self-Assessment Rubric for the Institutionalization of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Higher Education*, with one amendment—the inclusion of “gender identity” in the definition of “diversity”—as follows:

**“Diversity:** Individual differences (e.g., personality, learning styles, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, country of origin, physical or cognitive abilities, as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations) that can be engaged in the service of learning.

**Inclusion:** The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in people, in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical). This engagement with diversity has the potential to increase one’s awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions.

**Equity:** Creating opportunities for equal access and success for historically underrepresented populations, such as racial and ethnic minority and low-income students, in three main areas:

- Representational equity, the proportional participation at all levels of an institution;
- Resource equity, the distribution of educational resources in order to close equity gaps; and
- Equity-mindedness, the demonstration of an awareness of and willingness to address equity issues among institutional leaders and staff.”

NERCHE’s *Self-Assessment Rubric* will be used as part of the ongoing transformation work. A copy of the rubric is available [here](#) (pp. 23-43).

## 3. Mission and Vision Statements for Vermont State University

The Board voted to approve the proposed Mission and Vision Statements for the new university. These statements are a key requirement of the accreditation standards that will govern the new university. The proposed statements were drafted by a group of representatives from Castleton University, Northern Vermont University, and Vermont Tech, led by Provost Nolan Atkins, and took into consideration feedback received from faculty assemblies, the Council of Presidents, the recent Town Hall meetings, and other stakeholders, as well as data from VisionPoint’s research.

The statements were intentionally crafted to not use higher education jargon and to be understood by a variety of audiences.

## Vermont State University Mission and Vision Statements

### Mission Statement<sup>1</sup>

Vermont State University prepares all students for meaningful work and responsible citizenship by fostering their intellectual, personal, and creative growth in an accessible, caring, and inclusive community. As Vermont's regional public university, our technological, professional, and liberal arts programs engage with partners throughout Vermont and beyond to provide students with rich real-world learning while meeting the needs of our communities and the state.

### Vision Statement

Vermont State University's commitment is to the success of every student. We will stand as Vermont's regional public university with interconnected campuses and sites dispersed throughout the state, a community dedicated to providing accessible and affordable higher learning. Our innovative, relevant programs will focus on student success and career readiness, and will meet students where they are on their educational journey. We will support students' academic, social, and personal growth, as well as their futures as skilled leaders and lifelong learners through an integrated academic and extracurricular experience. A culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion will be fostered and endure. Our students' transformational experience will be nurtured through intentional interactions and relationships. The University will provide globally relevant programs spanning the technological, professional, and liberal arts and designed to address the needs and challenges facing Vermont and our world. Students will be drawn to an academic experience that reaches beyond the classroom into our communities with our Green Mountain State as a living laboratory. We will embrace public engagement and partnerships as our civic responsibility, actively contributing to the vibrancy of our communities and their relevance in the global economy. In doing so, our students will gain understanding of community and self and their impact in the world. Our purpose will live on for generations in the positive contributions of our alumni.

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<sup>1</sup> For comparison purposes, **VSC's Mission** states: "For the benefit of Vermont, the Vermont State Colleges system provides affordable, high quality, student-centered, and accessible education, fully integrating professional, liberal, and career study, consistent with student aspirations and regional and state needs." See [VSC Strategic Planning](#).

**CCV's Mission** states: "The Community College of Vermont supports and challenges all students in meeting their educational goals through an abiding commitment to access, affordability, and student success." See [Mission, Values, and History - Community College of Vermont \(ccv.edu\)](#).

#### **4. Search and Screen Committee for recruitment of the first President of Vermont State University**

The Search and Screen Committee members are:

##### Trustees

Megan Cluver, Chair  
Ryan Cooney  
Adam Grinold  
Bill Lippert  
Mary Moran  
Shawn Tester

##### Faculty & Staff

Sherill Blodget (Castleton, faculty)  
Gina Mireault (NVU, faculty)  
Sharron Scott (OC, staff)  
Tiffany Walker (CCV, staff)  
Roger Weeden (VTC, faculty)

##### Community Partners

Kathleen James, House of Representatives (Bennington-4)  
Michael Pieciak, Commissioner of the Department of Financial Regulation  
Michael Solimano, President and General Manager at Killington Resort & Pico Mountain  
Armando Villaseca, former Commissioner of Vermont Department of Education

Campus-based interviews of finalists are being planned for the last two weeks in March 2022.

#### **5. Transformation Update**

The Board also received a Transformation Update, which is available [here](#).

#### **UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS**

Agenda and meeting materials for upcoming meetings are posted [here](#).

**November 2<sup>nd</sup> - 11:00 a.m.** Executive Committee Meeting

**December 6<sup>th</sup>** EPSL Board Committee Meeting (Vermont Tech-Randolph)

**December 6<sup>th</sup>** Board of Trustees Meeting (Vermont Tech-Randolph)

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](#).** This feedback is reviewed and posted monthly on the transformation website.

With kind regards,

Sophie