

To: Vermont State College System Communities
From: Chancellor Sophie Zdatny
Re: **Transformation Update #4**
Date: May 24, 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.

STATE FUNDING

We are thrilled to share with you that the legislature finalized their work on the Fiscal Year 2022 budget and is appropriating a record \$88.9 million to the Vermont State Colleges System, our transformation efforts, and to student scholarships, workforce development initiatives, and free tuition program pilots. This includes:

- \$30.5 million in the annual state appropriation;
- \$5 million increase to the annual state appropriation;
- \$20 million to support system transformation over the next four years, \$8 million of which may be used in FY22;
- \$21 million in bridge funding to address the VSCS's operating deficit due to the pandemic; and
- \$12.4 million in student scholarships, free tuition program pilots, and workforce development initiatives.

You can read more about this exciting development in the [press release](#) we issued on Friday and we expect to release additional information on the student scholarships, workforce development initiatives, and free tuition program pilots in the coming weeks.

NAME AND BRANDING UPDATE

The Transformation Marketing Team has identified four finalists to present this week to a cross-institution group on their proposals for [Audience Research, Name, and Brand Strategy and Development](#) for the newly combined institution, unifying Castleton University, Northern Vermont University, and Vermont Technical College. The firm or partnership will be selected in

the coming weeks and is expected to begin work in early June. Their first task will be to collect stakeholder input and conduct audience research to inform a name recommendation to the Board of Trustees. We anticipate that, barring any setbacks, the Board will receive that information and will make a decision on the name for the new university at the August 4th Board of Trustees meeting. We anticipate the firm and transformation team creating public and stakeholder input opportunities prior to the August 4th board meeting.

Additional audience research work to inform the brand development work for the new university will continue throughout the fall and winter. We expect there to be robust opportunities for stakeholder engagement throughout this process.

ACADEMIC UNIFICATION UPDATE

Today, rpk GROUP presented its final report and recommendations to the Education, Personnel, and Student Life (EPSL) Committee of the Board. A copy of their final report, together with all the materials previously shared is available [here](#). At its meeting, the EPSL Committee voted to recommend to the full Board that the Program Evaluation Framework recommended by rpk GROUP to guide ongoing review of the academic portfolio be adopted. The EPSL Committee also voted to recommend to the Board that the Chancellor and Chief Academic Officers be charged to move forward with rpk GROUP's recommendations for program optimization work by faculty this summer. Preliminary plans for that summer work were discussed by department chairs and academic program leaders at a meeting held on May 12th, and department chairs are currently providing feedback to their respective Chief Academic Officers on the organization of that work.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Since our last update, conversations have continued with Ellucian (Colleague), our current ERP provider. Kellie Campbell (CIO) and Doug Eastman (Director of Information Systems), in partnership with Ellucian, facilitated a discussion with the Council of Presidents and Business Affairs Council. The agenda prioritized reviewing historical use of Colleague, discussing current customization complexity, and discussing next steps for aligning our future system design in alignment with the administrative consolidation vision.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Workforce development and career services staff from across the system have been working on drafting a survey for Vermont employers. The draft survey was shared with the Board's EPSL Committee at its meeting earlier today. The Committee's meeting materials are available [here](#).

HIRING/SEARCHES

A request for proposals for a firm to conduct an executive search for the recruitment of the first President of the new university has been posted. A copy of the RFP is available [here](#). Submissions were due on May 20, 2021.

As noted in [Transformation Update #2](#), the Director of VSCS Libraries position has been posted. See [here](#). The applications are currently being reviewed by the system-wide hiring committee, with the first round of interviews planned for mid-June. In the meantime, library staff are moving forward with standing up the technical backbone for the single integrated virtual library system.

UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS

June 2nd - Executive Committee of the Board Meeting

June 3rd - Nominating Committee of the Board Meeting

June 7th – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee of the Board meeting

June 16th - Board of Trustees Meeting

August 4th - Board of Trustees Meeting

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](#).

I welcome your questions and concerns as this process unfolds and I will continue to keep you updated as decisions are made by the state and the Board of Trustees. Thank you for your ongoing engagement in this critical work.

With kind regards,

Sophie