

To: Vermont State College System Communities
From: Chancellor Sophie Zdatny
Re: **Transformation Update #6**
Date: June 21, 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.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT FOR TRANSFORMATION

A Transformation update was provided to the Board of Trustees at their meeting on Wednesday, June 16th. Wilson Garland, the Director of Transformation Projects, and Kellie Campbell, the VSCS Chief Information Officer, provided an overview of how the Transformation work will be organized, the cross-functional team approach, some tools and processes that will be used, and the implications it will have on the processes, data, and systems that will support the institutions and system. If you would like to better understand how this project management approach will assist with the transformation of the VSCS, a link to the video can be found [HERE](#).

Over the next several weeks, we will be assembling the first of the cross-functional core teams that will be doing the work of transformation and making recommendations to help shape the student experience, academic operations, and administrative support of the new combined entity (NCE) and the broader system. The Chancellor, the Presidents, and other leaders have been working together to identify who will be asked to serve on these teams. It is expected that these teams will evolve over time, and there will be additional teams and work groups formed as needed. As the work progresses, there will be opportunities for others to have input as well. We will be kicking off this work in mid-July.

Does leading or serving on a transformation project team mean that those employees have been chosen to fill positions in the new university? No. Leading or serving on a transformation project team does not mean that a person has been selected to fill a particular role in the new university. There are many reasons why someone may be asked to lead or serve upon a project team, including ensuring that different institutions and different functional areas are represented and such selection should not be interpreted as meaning anything more than that a particular individual has been tapped to assist with a particular project.

NAME AND BRANDING UPDATE

The VSCS has hired a firm to provide [Audience Research, Name, and Brand Strategy and Development](#) for the newly combined institution, unifying Castleton University, Northern Vermont University, and Vermont Technical College. After a search process involving stakeholders from the three institutions and Transformation Team members, [VisionPoint Marketing](#) was hired to begin work this month. Their initial work will involve collecting stakeholder input and conducting audience research to inform a name and brand recommendation for the new university to the Board of Trustees.

Sylvia Plumb, Director of Marketing and Communications at Northern Vermont University, has agreed to lead this project, in collaboration with the Transformation Marketing Team, which includes the Marketing Directors for both Vermont Technical College and Castleton University.

ACADEMIC UNIFICATION UPDATE

rpk GROUP's [final report](#) was issued a few weeks ago and the Board of Trustees adopted the program evaluation framework at its June 16, 2021 Board meeting. See related Board meeting materials and minutes [here](#). Eighty-five faculty members will be working across 14 teams on this summer work, which will kick off on June 24, 2021. The Vermont State Colleges System, through Yasmine Ziesler, VSCS Chief Academic Officer, was able to secure funding through the Davis Educational Foundation to help support this work. The Board's Education, Personnel and Student Life Committee (EPSL) will receive a report on the status of this work at its upcoming meeting in August.

HIRING/SEARCHES

With the significant work ahead of all of us for system transformation, there is a need for additional support in specific areas, as discussed in Wilson Garland's presentation to the Board. See above. As positions are identified to support the system Transformation work, they will be posted publicly [here](#). Two positions are currently posted:

Business and Process Analyst – The Business and Process Analyst will work closely with functional and cross-functional teams as a member of the project management office. They will be responsible for understanding internal and external customer needs, documenting processes, identifying opportunities for process improvement, and assisting with the project management of transformation and other system initiatives. As part of this role, they will work as a liaison between technical and functional staff, assist with the creation of business and technical requirements, work with experts and power users to draft documentation and job aids, and support the development and delivery of training.

Business Intelligence (BI) Manager – The Business Intelligence Manager will identify, standardize, and organize data needed to support transformation and strategic decision-making across the systems and institutions. They will inventory current standard reporting requirements and identify institutionally stored data to be recommended for centralized storage and reporting. Working closely with stakeholders across the system, the BI Manager will develop governance principles and procedures for long-term data health.

A third position, **Financial Analyst**, is expected to be posted soon. This role will support the annual financial planning and budgeting processes across the system and institutions. They will also conduct financial analysis and create financial models to assist transformation teams trying to optimize quality, efficiency, and growth.

NEW UNIVERSITY

The Council of Presidents (comprised of the four Presidents and the Chancellor) recently met to discuss the need to start building a senior leadership team for the new university because some decisions cannot wait until the search for a new President has been completed and the new President has been brought on board.

Two positions were identified as essential and for which the need to fill them was immediate. The first was for a Provost for the new university and the second was for a Dean of Enrollment. It was agreed that we had well-qualified candidates for both positions within the Vermont State Colleges and we explored their interest in taking on these roles.

Nolan Atkins, Provost of Northern Vermont University, and **Maurice Ouimet**, Dean of Enrollment at Castleton University, have agreed to step into these roles. Both are experienced, well-qualified, highly respected, and an excellent fit for these two positions. Given the critical work that each of them performs for their current institutions, we are exploring what resources are needed to give them the capacity to take on these roles, including backfilling positions.

How will decisions be made as to who will fill other positions in the new university? Many of these decisions will ultimately be made by the President of the new university but, in the interim, if—as here—a determination is made that it is critical to fill a particular position prior to the new President coming on board, then the Chancellor, in consultation with the Presidents, will determine how best to fill the position. Depending on the particular circumstances and the available talent pool within the VSC, the decision-making process may vary. For example, some positions may be filled by selection, some through internal postings and applications, and some through an external search process.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Governor recently made three appointments to the VSCS Board of Trustees. He re-appointed Shawn Tester for a full term and appointed two new trustees, Shirley Jefferson and Sue Zeller. More information is available [HERE](#) in the press release issued last week. Shirley and Sue replace Linda Milne and Mike Pieciak on the Board.

UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS

August 4th – Board of Trustees

August 19th – Education, Personnel, and Student Life Board Committee Meeting

August 23rd – Finance and Facilities Board Committee Meeting

September 13th – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Board Committee Meeting

September 20-21st – Board of Trustees Annual Retreat

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.

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

With kind regards,

Sophie