

To: Vermont State College System Communities  
From: Chancellor Sophie Zdatny  
Re: **Transformation Update #28**  
Date: April 25, 2022

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Dear Vermont State Colleges Community,

A lot of exciting milestones were reached between this transformation update and the last: the inaugural president was selected, work towards accreditation continued, and important votes by faculty assemblies took place. The work towards transforming into Vermont State University continues to make significant progress and the transformation website at <https://transformation.vsc.edu/> continues to be a good source of information on transformation.

### INAUGURAL PRESIDENT

At their April 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Board of Trustees selected [Dr. Parwinder Grewal to serve as the inaugural President of Vermont State University](#). Dr. Grewal will start July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 and play a key role in Transformation. He brings an understanding of the opportunities and challenges when unifying colleges, as he held a leadership role during the launch and inaugural years of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, a university created by bringing together three long-standing legacy institutions. We are thrilled to welcome him and look forward to the energy, thoughtful leadership, and commitment to long-term success that he will bring.

Thank you to the hundreds of students, faculty, and staff who participated in the candidate townhalls and campus events when the presidential candidate finalists visited, as well as a thank you to the faculty (Sherill Blodgett, Tyrone Shaw, and Roger Weeden) and staff (Tiffany Walker and Sharron Scott) who served on the Search and Screen Committee. Your engagement and feedback were invaluable.

I want to recognize and honor the tremendous contributions of Interim President Thomas Mauhs-Pugh of CU, President Patricia Moulton of VTC, and Interim President John Mills of NVU, who have stewarded our institutions through much of the transformation process to date. Each of them has brought their shared wisdom and experience, enabling us to build a strong foundation for Vermont State University. President Mills and President Mauhs-Pugh will be stepping down

this summer and it is anticipated that President Moulton will be moving into a different position within the system.

**Local news coverage:**

- [VTDigger press release.](#)
- [WCAX interview with Dr. Grewal](#) in which he discusses why he is excited about the role and how his own experience as a first-generation college student motivates his lifelong goal of enhancing access to higher education.

**VISIT TO NECHE**

On April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022, Chief Academic Officer Yasmine Ziesler, Chief Financial and Operating Officer Sharron Scott, Interim-President of Castleton Thomas Mauhs-Pugh, Board Chair Lynn Dickinson, and I attended a meeting of the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE). We presented and responded to questions related to our substantive change request seeking approval for the launch of Vermont State University as an accredited institution on July 1, 2023, and for Dr. Grewal to serve as the President of the three current, separately accredited institutions for the 2022-2023 academic year. NECHE is the regional accreditation body recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education to review and accredit institutions to ensure they provide quality higher education. Accreditation is critically important because it allows institutions to award and distribute federal financial aid.

On Friday, NECHE's President called to confirm that the substantive change proposal for Vermont State University was approved, as well as Castleton's ten-year accreditation review. We will be required to submit a couple of reports during AY 2022-2023 to ensure that we are meeting the transformation milestones set forth in the proposal and NECHE will send a visiting team in Fall 2023 to see how things are going. [A copy of the substantive change proposal is available on the Transformation website](#) and we will post the Commission's follow-up letter when we receive it. Thank you to everyone for helping us reach this stage – we are excited to continue our Transformation efforts!

**ACADEMIC STRUCTURE ENDORSED**

On April 20<sup>th</sup> another exciting milestone occurred when the Faculty Assembly at Vermont Tech became the fourth and final Faculty Assembly to endorse the proposed academic organizational model for Vermont State University. The development of this model started with a proposal from faculty on the Labor Task Force, which the Chief Academic Officers led by Provost Nolan Atkins then used to create a draft structure. The draft was made with guiding principles in mind, such as creating cross-campus departments and schools that fostered collaboration and shared responsibility for program delivery, innovation, and providing expanded opportunities for

students. After receiving extensive feedback and a faculty survey conducted by the Faculty Federation, a proposed structure was submitted for a vote by the Faculty Assemblies.

The organizational model that was developed and endorsed envisions five schools with a graduate division. The five schools are:

- 1) Nursing, Movement, and Healthcare,
- 2) Education, Psychology, and Social Sciences,
- 3) Business and Professional Studies,
- 4) Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, and
- 5) Arts and Communication.

Thank you so much to the faculty across each of the campuses and the Faculty Federation for their work helping to come up with a model that aligns with [the new University's mission](#) to prepare “all students for meaningful work and responsible citizenship by fostering their intellectual, personal, and creative growth in an accessible, caring, and inclusive community.”

### **BRAND LAUNCH IS COMING**

Starting next week, the new brand will be “teased” with social media messaging and imagery ahead of a formal launch scheduled for Tuesday, May 17<sup>th</sup>. Brand launch parties will be scheduled for the campuses for the start of the fall 2022 semester.

### **ON THE MOVE**

After much searching and deliberating, the decision has been made for the Chancellor's Office to remain at 575 Stone Cutters Way but to occupy a significantly smaller footprint. We will be relinquishing the conference rooms and other VSC space on the ground floor, as well as the “Chancellor's end” of the second floor. Moving forward, the Chancellor's Office will occupy one half of the second floor, which is approximately one-third of the existing space. This turned out to be the most economically feasible and least costly option. Thank you to Jen Porrier, Kathy Armstrong, Dick Ethier, Mike Stevens, Michael Martel, Jed Hock, Tom Maguire, and Sharron Scott for their participation on this project.

The deadline for clearing out offices is May 20<sup>th</sup>. Those employees who regularly work in the office will have a dedicated space. Those who work occasionally in the office will share space with someone else and will coordinate schedules so as not to overlap. There will be space available for those who need to use the office on a rare occasion, including visitors from the campuses, as well as conference space for small groups to meet. We will be setting up an automated process for reserving office space and conference space.

## STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Student Advisory Council will hold its last meeting of the semester on **Thursday, April 28, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.** The focus this week will be on Student and Residence Life.

### UPCOMING BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

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

<b>May 2, 2022, 2:00 p.m.</b>	Executive Committee (Zoom)
<b>May 9, 2022, 1:00 p.m.</b>	DEI Committee (Zoom)
<b>May 9, 2022, 2:00 p.m.</b>	Audit Committee (Zoom)
<b>May 16, 2022, 1:00 p.m.</b>	Board of Trustees (Zoom)
<b>May 23, 2022, TBD</b>	Finance & Facilities Committee (Zoom)
<b>May 23, 2022, TBD</b>	Education, Personnel & Student Life Committee (Zoom)
<b>June 16, 2022, TBD</b>	Board of Trustees (in person at Castleton)

Additional information about Board and Committee meetings, including information on how to access the meetings may be found [here](#).

### Feedback

If you would like to submit your thoughts regarding the ongoing system transformation or offer suggestions to a specific team, please send your questions or comments to [Engage – VSCS Transformation](#).

Are there items related to Transformation that you would like to see more of? Is there work by colleagues or students you would like to elevate? Please send suggestions for future spotlight features by emailing our Communications Assistant & Staff Writer at: [aurora.hurd@vsc.edu](mailto:aurora.hurd@vsc.edu)

With kind regards,

Sophie