VSCS Transformation Newsletter (7/5/22)

Transformation Update #33

July 5, 2022

Bringing you the latest updates in the Vermont State College System's transformation project.

In This Issue

- Message from President Parwinder Grewal

- Approval Letter from NECHE

- IT Shared Services Update

- Updates from Transformation Project Teams

- Spotlight: Hybrid University

- Vermont State Leadership Hiring Progress

New to the VSC? The Vermont State College system is engaged in a five-year plan, the first phase of which is to launch the new Vermont State University. This will be comprised of Castleton University, Northern Vermont University, and Vermont Technical College and will be launched July 1, 2023. You can read past Transformation Updates, visit the Transformation website, or the Vermont State University website to learn more.

Message from President Parwinder Grewal

I am honored to start my role as the inaugural president for Vermont State University and serve as president for Castleton University, Northern Vermont University, and Vermont Technical College for the 2022-23 academic year. I am particularly excited about the transformation work that you all have done over the past two years. The continuation of this transformation is essential for us to build a new university that can be a model for the rest of the country. Let us continue envisioning and innovating to build our nation's first, state-wide hybrid and community engaged university that is financially sustainable, produces career-ready graduates, and becomes an accessibility, affordability, and inclusivity leader in higher education. I look forward to meeting you all and working with you in this important work.

Approval Letter from NECHE

We had previously reported in April that the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) had preliminarily approved the substantive change proposal for the creation of Vermont State University and for Parwinder Grewal to serve as president of VTC, CU, and NVU for the coming year. On June 17, 2022, NECHE provided a letter accepting the proposal contingent upon Vermont State University meeting the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation* and setting forth a timeline for the submission of two progress reports and a focused evaluation. NECHE commended VSCS for its multi-year transformation plan and acknowledged that "significant progress … has been achieved to date." The Commission also expressed that it is looking forward to learning more about the hybrid model Vermont State is building (more details about this model can be found below). NECHE's letter can be read in full on the Transformation website.

IT Shared Service Update

At the June 16, 2022, meeting of the Board of Trustees, Chief Information Officer Dr. Kellie Campbell presented a design strategy for an Information Technology (IT) Shared Services model and submitted an implementation timeline, which the Board approved. Building an IT shared services model is part of the broader system strategy to build a shared services organization for key service areas. The Board approved a definition for shared services at the May 16th meeting and IT returned for the June 16th Board meeting with an initial proposal, as requested.

Shared Services Definition for VSC

A way of providing administrative and technical services across multiple units in a way that optimizes quality, consistency, and efficiency and allows the units to focus on their primary mission

- Accountable to the organizations it serves (Council of Presidents, Advisory Board, other shared service units)
- Distinct from the "central office" -- services and support provided by employees distributed across the state
- Able to gain economies of scale and more specialized knowledge and capacity in specific technical functions
- Focuses on the processes, systems, and data needed to ensure the intended outcomes — consistent where possible, but unique as required
- Shared accountability and measures between the functional leaders and the shared service organization (Service Level Agreements – SLAs)
- Customers include students, faculty, and staff and are addressed with a service mentality

VERMONT Transformation Projects
STATE COLLEGES SYSTEM

Part of the IT strategy is to design a service division that best uses the resources we have across our entire VSCS system, working towards building a sustainable and responsive IT organization in alignment with the vision for system transformation. You can find the full slide deck outlining the design strategy and timeline for the IT shared services proposal here.

IT has been working closely together for years, especially over the past year and a half on transformation efforts. Dr. Campbell shared her sincere appreciation for IT leaders and colleagues across the system, emphasizing that this work needs to be done as a team and appreciating their proven ability to challenge one another, yet continue moving forward. Please feel free to reach out to Kellie at kcampbell@vsc.edu with any questions.

Updates from Transformation Project Teams
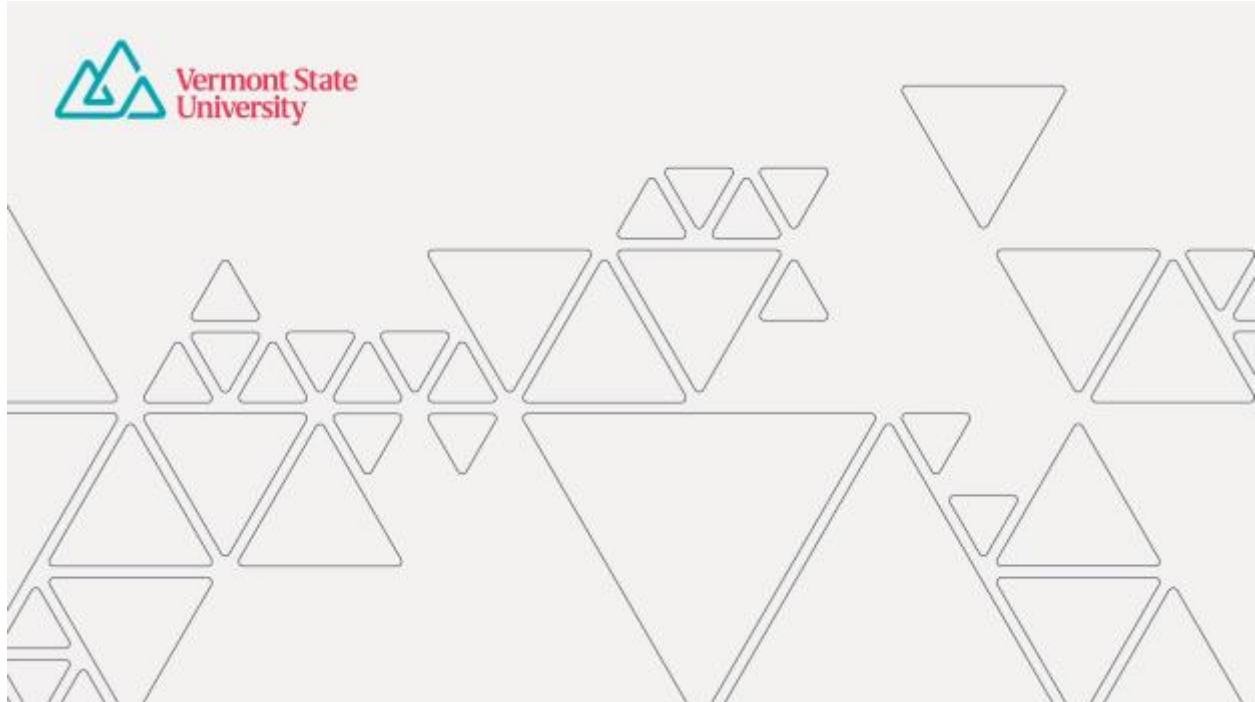
Message from the Student Experience Team

Student & Residence Life are preparing for their Design Gate. The Campus Events group presented their plan for the fall, balancing having consistency across campuses while also having some unique events on specific campuses. Slate implementation is moving forward. There is preparation of a recommendation about when and how to integrate data with Colleague. We have also been moving to the new VermontState.edu domain.

Message from the Administrative Operations Team

The Administrative Operations teams work has accelerated over the course of Summer 2022.

Information Technology has many items on their plate. They have been updating cyber security policies and implementing multi-factor identification software. They are preparing for a business intelligence proof of concept to assess the possibilities of using a streamlined approach to access data. The team continues collaborate on projects related to the work of Student Experience and Academic Operations teams. They are currently working closely with Ferrilli regarding our Colleague implementation and RHB regarding our customer relationship management software, SLATE. They are also focusing on work related to Acalog and Curriculog software for course and curriculum catalogs. As mentioned above, IT is also working on the implementation plan for an IT Shared Services model.

Alumni & Development have worked closely with President Grewal to develop a letter to the alumni of Castleton University, Northern Vermont University, and Vermont Technical College. The team is also developing the Alumni & Development page for the new VTSU microsite and is developing a unified calendar of events. **Facilities** continues its work related to compliance and safety training, campus right sizing, and reviewing fleet leasing opportunities. **Employee Services** will begin its design work regarding

student employment next week with an expectation to implement solutions in time for students to begin work this fall.

Operations and Processing has completed work on the chart of accounts modifications needed to support the creation of Vermont State University, Shared Services, and Workforce Development. They have also identified changes necessary to support the recommendations outlined in the 2022 internal audit regarding the Chart of Accounts.

The **Business Planning team** is meeting two times a week. Their work is focused on a deep dive regarding the allocation of shared expenses with discussion regarding shared revenues and base appropriation allocation to follow. The team has received substantial input from the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) and the National Center Educational Metrics (NCHEMS), using this insight to consider best options.

For more on Ferrilli, an update on this work was provided 6/29/22 stating that teams are preparing for official assessment and opportunity reports to be delivered. Full information on the update and the project can be found on the Transformation website.

Message from the Workforce Development Team

Dr. Richard Rhodes' from Austin Community College (ACC) spoke with our team to give input on how we can best serve all learners with the Workforce Development division. Dr. Rhodes was able to speak from experience of how ACC was able to significantly raise enrollment by lowering barriers of cost and improving access to support. The discussion validated many activities the VSCS is already doing, and with transformation we can expand and improve these options. Some highlights from the talk included:

- Intentional focus to elevate all members of the workforce.

- Involving local business as stake holders to be able to provide relevant workforce skills to help employment – both in elevating those already working and by providing needed skills/support to those who are under or unemployed.

- Equity needs to be a driving principle. Learners from all backgrounds need to be able to access workforce development programing provided by VSCS.

- Provide training to "non-typical" students. Question how the very systems of higher education are creating barriers to access.

- Provide student support services of all types – not just academic support, but access to food assistance, housing assistance, etc.

Spotlight: Hybrid University

A key goal of the unification is to increase accessibility for students across everything [Vermont State University](#) has to offer. We believe that Vermont State University is the first example of an institution planning to deliver its entire academic program array—to a varying extent for each individual program depending on the learning requirements—with faculty and students in multiple locations all engaging together using different technology modalities. Our approach is one particularly suited to our small rural scale in Vermont.

This means that wherever possible, we will be establishing systems, processes, and learning opportunities that meet students where they are, breaking down barriers to access and creating a truly student-centered university. This hybrid approach blends the digital and physical spaces and will extend to student services, resources, and academic opportunities. Students will no longer have to come to campus to meet with a financial aid advisor, access academic advising, or meet with career counselors, but the on-campus access will be available to those who prefer that option.

On the academic side, this means we are working to expand access to courses and programs in the "Face-to-Face Plus" modality. Students will no longer be limited to the faculty or course offerings in-person on their campus; rather, they will be able to access courses using a variety of technologies from home or another campus, synchronously, or asynchronously if that works best for them. Students will be able to mix-and-match online, hybrid, and face-to-face experiences to complete their programs, while many programs will continue to be offered primarily in-person to students who wish for a mostly in-person experience.

We had several courses in the Business and Math programs at NVU taught in flexible modalities over the last few years. This enabled students with childcare challenges or school closures for their dependent children to access the class and classwork when it worked best for them, it allowed many of our students who work or commute long distances to campus to pick up additional work shifts or opt to attend virtually if that was the best option for them that day, and it made it possible for students

residing at geographically distant campuses to access the specialties and research of professors not at their home campus. The FTF Plus pilot this fall with 28 faculty and courses will continue to expand the teaching strategies and learning technologies faculty are using to bring a wider variety of courses to students in more accessible formats in advance of launching Vermont State University next year.

Vermont State Leadership Hiring Progress

Interviews for interim positions are underway and selections will be communicated soon. Similar review and selection processes have begun for the permanent positions. We are excited to continue this process now that Dr. Grewal has started, to build the leadership team that will report to him and will continue to elevate transformation to the next level.

Search committees are following VSCS' revised Recruitment and Selection procedure which includes completing unconscious bias training before beginning to review and interview candidates, and other practices to ensure the selection process is equitable and inclusive.

Upcoming Board and Committee Meetings

- *August 3, 2022 | Time TBD | Zoom | Board of Trustees*

- *August 3, 2022 | Time TBD | Zoom | DEI Committee*

- *August 22, 2022 | Time TBD | Zoom | Finance & Facilities Committee*

- *August 22, 2022 | Time TBD | Zoom | Education, Personnel & Student Life Committee*

- *September 2022 | Time and Date TBD | Lake Morey | Board of Trustees (Fall Retreat)*

Agenda and meeting materials for upcoming meetings are posted on the VSC website.

Feedback

If you would like to submit your thoughts regarding the ongoing system transformation or offer suggestions to a specific team, please send them 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