



VSCS Transformation Newsletter (4/17/2023)

Transformation Update #49-

April 17, 2023

Bringing you the latest updates in the Vermont State Colleges System's transformation project¹.

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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. Concurrent with phase one, we are also now engaged in phase two of the transformation work. The second phase is focused on system-wide administrative consolidation and includes work on the shift to shared services for Information Technology, Human Resources, Finance, and Libraries. You can read past Transformation Updates², visit the Transformation website³, or the Vermont State University website⁴ to learn more.

¹<https://transformation.vsc.edu/>

²<https://transformation.vsc.edu/about-transformation/from-the-chancellor/>

³<https://transformation.vsc.edu/creating-vermont-state-university/>

⁴<https://vermontstate.edu/>

Message From the Chancellor:



Message from the Chancellor (April 14, 2023)

Dear Faculty, Staff, and Students,

The launch of the Vermont State University (VTSU) on July 1 is the most important move forward for the future of the Vermont State Colleges System – possibly since its founding. We are on the doorstep of achieving unification of our state colleges to meet the needs of today’s learners and chart a path to financial sustainability that has long eluded the system.

In order to achieve this grand vision, we have worked tirelessly for three years to trim expenses, make critical investments in modern systems, and streamline our academic programs. We knew this work would be difficult – in fact, none of this work is simple or easy. I know that many of you have given hours and hours of your time and expertise to develop plans for this transformation and are committed to seeing Vermont State University succeed.

Dr. Parwinder Grewal has tendered his resignation and is stepping down effective immediately for personal reasons. We are grateful to Dr. Grewal for taking on the role of President last year. Dr. Grewal brought his skills and expertise from a similar higher education unification at this important time, and we appreciate his service.

We are pleased to announce that the Board of Trustees has named former Vermont Agency of Human Services Secretary Mike Smith to serve as Interim President. He will begin next week for a term of approximately six-months and will be focusing all efforts on the successful launch of Vermont State

University. For the short period of time until Interim President Smith officially starts, the Board has named Vice President of Business Operations Sarah Truckle as the acting President.

Interim President Smith comes to Vermont State University after a long career in public service, most recently from state government where he was a critical player in the state's COVID-19 pandemic response. He served in the U.S. Navy, in the Vermont House of Representatives, and as Secretary of the Agency of Administration, as well as time in the private sector.

The Board of Trustees and I have asked Interim President Smith to pause implementation of the proposed initiatives around athletics and the libraries, pending development of a comprehensive set of recommendations for continued transformation work in the coming weeks. More information will be shared when that work is complete. The goal is for Interim President Smith to have time to evaluate and engage stakeholders as we work to trim expenses to meet our legislative mandate.

There is much more to do to prepare for the successful launch of Vermont State University on July 1, 2023. Once launched, ongoing investments, modernization, and additional expense reductions will get the new university to a place of financial viability. Strong communications, engagement, and collaboration will be our ongoing focus.

Please join me in thanking Dr. Grewal for his service and in welcoming Interim President Smith.

Working together, we can show the generations of Vermonters who depend on the Vermont State Colleges to realize their education and professional goals that Vermont State University is a great choice in higher education.

With best wishes,

Sophie

[A Message from Newly Appointed Interim President of VTSU, Mike Smith \(4/14/23\)](#)

Dear Vermont State University Faculty, Staff, and Students,

I am looking forward to starting as Interim President of Vermont State University next week. I come from a long history of leadership in institutions that serve Vermonters, and I cannot wait to get started working with you to launch Vermont State University this July 1.

Your personal dedication to the future of Vermont State University is what drew me to this role. The care, compassion, and commitment you have shown in this transformation work will help us create a university that serves the people of Vermont and beyond and from all walks of life.

I am here to focus on communication, transparency, engagement, and collaboration as we move forward together. Please read Chancellor Zdatny's message above. I will see you next week and I look forward to joining you in the critical work you are engaged in every day. Enjoy this very warm spring!

Thank you.

Mike Smith

Interim President of Vermont State University

Transformation Project Updates



New Student Experience Updates

All applications and most critical communication flows are up and running within our new Slate instance, and communications from the old instances of Slate have ceased. Admitted students are being directed to the Admitted Students⁵ page on the website has launched and portal instructions are being provided.

Regarding our expected Fall enrollment, applications and deposits are behind prior years due to a number of factors. We are launching some new digital marketing campaigns to support undergraduate programs, as well as graduate and online programs.

We are in the heart of open house and accepted student session season. We have hosted hundreds of visitors in the last two weeks and we expect to see this continue with more than ten significant events in the coming two weeks. May 1st is an important milestone for our fall enrollment, but we will continue to work with students right through the summer. Last year, 40% of our new student enrollment came after May 1st.

Progress on the graduate admissions process is also moving ahead quickly at this point. Systems for graduate program faculty to access and review candidates are up and running. Admissions has begun processing graduate application decisions as of last week.

⁵<https://vermontstate.edu/admission/next-steps/>

Student Success Updates

Communicating effectively and with transparency is both important and often a challenge in times of change. Toward that end, Student Success All-Staff Meetings are held monthly by Zoom and followed by small group conversations on all campuses for a deeper dive into how to improve the student experience.

Twice a year, Student Success will come together for in-person half-day meetings, with the first one on **May 17 at the Randolph campus**. The day promises to be a balance of substance and celebration. We'll take on questions like: Why are we organized under Student Success? How will Student Success help students? Who are my colleagues in Student Success, and what are their roles? What can I contribute to this new model in my position?

And here is this month's news from the Student Success Teams:

Student Success Advisors

After a successful search, we have concluded the hiring process for our student success advisors (SSAs). We have 15 SSAs across the state who will serve all VTSU undergraduate, certificate-seeking, and dual-enrolled high school students. Extensive training will be provided to the SSAs to ensure we offer consistent and excellent services and support to all students. We will kick off our training next week when the Inquiry Institute⁶ joins us to facilitate a series of sessions that are designed to lead us through a discovery of mindset and question thinking.

The advising team will be reaching out to VTSU faculty and staff in the coming weeks to make introductions, invite conversation, and request assistance in training.

The Vermont State Career Development Team

Strong career outcomes for all students are a key driver of why we have reorganized as Student Success at VTSU. The five career development professionals located across VTSU will lead this important work. The team wants to highlight some of the new ways students will access career development services starting this fall.

- Crafted pathways designed to engage students with **applied learning opportunities** related to their academic interests and careers will be available to all students.
- **Handshake** will be launched as the Vermont State University job and internship online platform for students and community partner organizations.
- Integration with **Connections Seminar 1** utilizing Canvas and other resources will provide career education and experiences.
- **Student Success Advisors** will offer the first tier of individualized career development to all students.

Career Team Members:

Renee Beaupre White, Assistant Director of Applied Learning Opportunities

⁶<https://inquiryinstitute.com/about/>

Karry Booska, Assistant Director of Community Partnerships for Career Development

Beth Walsh, Assistant Director of Curriculum Integration for Career Development

Amy Wright, Assistant Director of Career Readiness

Jessica Duncan, Director of Career Development and Innovation

Vermont State University Senior Exit Survey

In collaboration with the Director of Institutional Research, Irene Irudayam, the Career Team is planning the launch of the first Vermont State University Senior Exit Survey for Spring 2023. Collecting student graduate outcomes and student information in the areas of career, advising, experience, and engagement supports building a shared foundation of understanding of our students at their time of graduation. This effort is a significant step towards increasing data-informed decision-making practices. It will allow Student Success teams to create interventions that support increased student success. Beginning the third week in April, students will be able to access the Vermont State University Senior Exit Survey online via email and through campus websites.

Student Activities & SGA Collaboration

The Student Activities Staff and Student Government Associations have come together to agree on policies for recognizing clubs throughout VTSU. The team, and all Student Success staff, recognize the importance of clubs and student activities to student development and strong communities.

VTSU Dean of Student Search

Check your email for details about how to engage with the Dean of Students search. All faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to participate! Three finalists will be on multiple campuses between now and the end of April. Email rita.geno@vermontstate.edu⁷ for details.

Academic Program Updates

The Academic Programs core team has been focusing efforts to publish and refine the Fall 2023 schedule in advance of student registration that opens on April 17. While the process has been challenging for several reasons, progress is being made to ensure the schedule provides the requisite courses our current and incoming students need.

Significant progress is also being made to finalize and publish the first VTSU undergraduate catalog. All the newly approved academic programs and courses, along with the new Connections General Education program, are being coded for catalog availability. This project will be completed for new student registration this coming summer.

Finally, our Center for Teaching and Learning Innovation team is preparing to expand the Face-To-Face Plus (F2F+) pilot this summer to provide more faculty with the necessary training to effectively teach courses in this modality. This work will kick off with a retreat scheduled for May 24.

⁷<mailto:rita.geno@vermontstate.edu>

Administrative Ops: VTSU Facilities Master Plan

An important aspect of our Transformation is related to the physical attributes of our campuses and settings. Significant work is ongoing to align our operational practices, evolve our curriculum, and refine its delivery. An essential next step is optimizing our campuses to support these changes and find efficiencies to strengthen the overall health of our institution. We are excited to be entering this phase and are happy to announce that we have selected the firm Dumont Janks⁸ as our partner in this endeavor.

What can you expect next?

Together, with Dumont Janks, we are kicking off the Investigation Phase of this work. Over the next few weeks, we will be working to coordinate campus visits. Once they have had a chance to walk around and learn a bit about our various locations, we will be coordinating Master Planning Discussion sessions for students, faculty, and staff.

Over the summer the Investigation Phase will focus on our operations side of our business. You can expect to see focused meetings diving into details related to Admission, Athletics, Campus Life and all the other core functions that we provide. Shortly after we return in the Fall semester, we will kick off a CoMap activity for all students, faculty, and staff. This is a virtual tool and a great way to crowdsource input into the planning process. That activity will be the starting point for a robust stakeholder engagement process that will span the fall and spring semesters.

IT Shared Services: Update on Systems Projects

There has been significant progress since our last update on systems projects, with much of the effort these last few months on preparing for fall registration. For this update, we will focus on projects related to the Ad Astra, Colleague, and Perceptive Content systems. Updates on each of the current systems projects are available on the Transformation Systems Projects Dashboard⁹.

Ad Astra

After much hard work from everyone on the team, the fall schedule has been published, and the pre-registration period began last week. The project faced many challenges, especially related to tight timelines and hiccups with the new software. We appreciate all the patience and understanding as everyone learned the new process – it certainly felt like a steep learning curve. We will be engaging in lessons-learned sessions and reviewing and refining the business process ahead of building the Spring 2024 term.

Phase 2 of the project with Conferences and Events is underway and will continue for the next several months. The early stages of this project will be looking at the current and future business processes to inform system configuration.

Colleague

With our vendor partner, Ferrilli, the functional area teams continue to approve and implement directional recommendations. The teams are all engaged in the development stage of the project. The

⁸<http://dumontjanks.com/>

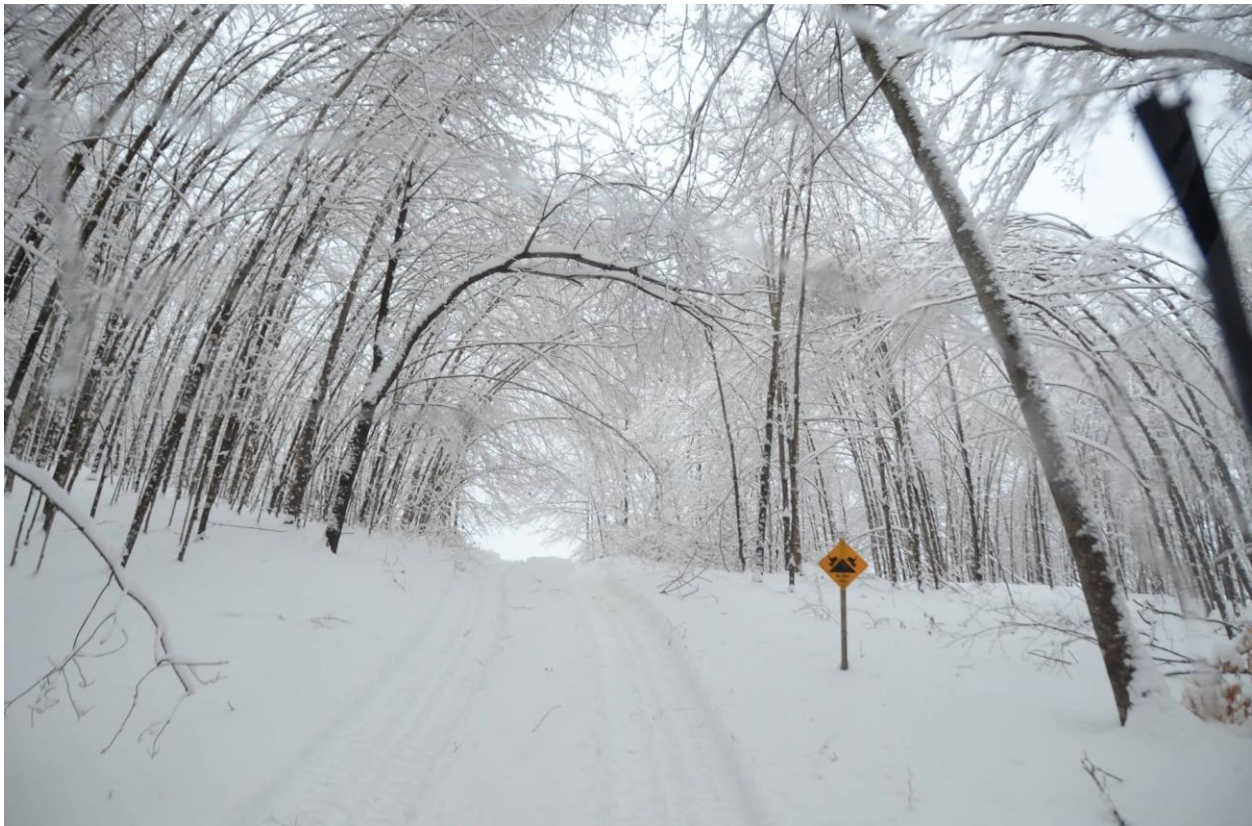
⁹<https://transformation.vsc.edu/administrative-operations/transformation-systems-projects-dashboard/>

Financial Aid department is successfully awarding aid to new students and is working with Ferrilli on operational functions. Recently, the priority of the Colleague project has been focused on getting the university set up for fall registration. This activity has included building sections, registration rules, and setup of the Self-Service environment.

Perceptive Content

Our vendor partner has completed discovery sessions with Finance, Financial Aid, Registrar, Student Accounts, and Admissions departments. They are working to develop recommendations that will go to the Operations and Processing Team and Core Team leads for approval before moving on to the development stage of the project. The vendor is also assisting with records retention policies within the software and working to align the setup and schedule of the retention policies.

Spotlight: Update on the 1:1 Device Pilot



During this academic year, faculty, staff, and students have been involved in piloting the use of iPad Kits as Vermont State University leadership considers instituting a 1:1 device program. Many students at VTSU currently use personal devices with varying levels of connectivity, reliability, and quality. Institutions that have adopted 1:1 device programs do so to promote digital equity, which is a particularly important need for a hybrid university. To date, 54 faculty and 65 staff have received an iPad Kit (consisting of the iPad tablet, keyboard/trackpad, Airpod earbuds, and an Apple pencil). Additionally, 128 students have borrowed an iPad Kit for a semester to use specifically in their Face-to-Face Plus (F2F+) class, as well as to support their learning and schoolwork more broadly.



1 - <https://youtu.be/BFVJqDY1xG8>

The 26 faculty involved in the F2F+ Pilot project each have their own iPad Kit. F2F+ classes rely on technology to help mediate connections between students joining in-person and remotely, as well as access to course content and materials. For instance, some faculty have used their iPad as an instructional tool to broadcast class notes. Instead of writing on a classroom whiteboard, the instructor uses a digital whiteboard which is displayed in the classroom via the projector and via Zoom to remote students. All students are seeing the same notes, with the added bonus of retaining a record of those digital notes, unlike the whiteboard, which often gets erased multiple times in a single class session. Other faculty are using their iPad as a second screen and camera in the F2F+ class. If they like to wander around the classroom, they can carry their iPad so they don't lose visual contact with their remote students. Additionally, when a class has only a small number of remote students, the instructor's iPad can be used to bring those students into small group work with in-person students. Finally, some instructors have designed full lessons using applications that incorporate student interactivity, such as polling, self-paced slide decks, individual and collaborative whiteboards, and quizzing games.

In Fall 2022 and Spring 2023, five faculty have also piloted student iPads in one of their F2F+ classes each semester. Increased possibilities for interactivity emerge when faculty can count on students to have reliable, common devices. Faculty have found that students are more willing to participate when they have options other than unmuting themselves in a Zoom call, giving opportunities for better in-the-moment feedback loops (formative assessments). Additionally, feedback from students has been mostly (although not universally) positive. The tablet functionality has been highlighted as especially useful for note-taking, writing mathematical equations, drawing diagrams, and annotating readings. While students strongly believe a personal computing device is essential for college, they are not in consensus about whether a tablet or laptop is the better device, acknowledging the pros and cons of each.

This spring, the Learning Technologies service area of IT Shared Services and the VTSU Center for Teaching & Learning Innovation have hosted four full days of training for 28 additional faculty and 65 staff to provide an orientation to the iPad Kit and more specialized learning opportunities related to specific apps and tools. Participants are identifying ways to apply what they learn for administrative tasks (collaborating on notes, developing video resources, and allowing students to self-schedule appointments) as well as instructional needs (sharing notes with students, increasing accessibility for instructional resources, and tutoring).

Additional staff training will occur in June, and faculty training in August/September.

Upcoming Board and Committee Meetings



Please find all information, including the full meeting schedule and the links for virtual attendance, here.

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The Board Chair's Rules for Public Comment are available on the VSC website¹¹, as is a form to submit public comment before the meetings¹².

Monday, April 17th at 1:00 p.m. – Audit & Risk Management Committee (via Zoom)

Monday, April 17th at 2:00 p.m. (or at the conclusion of the Audit & Risk Management meeting) - Finance & Facilities Committee (via Zoom)

Monday, April 24th at 1:00 p.m. – Board of Trustees (via Zoom)

Monday, May 8th (Time TBD) – Nominating Committee (via Zoom)

Monday, May 8th (Time TBD) - Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee (via Zoom)

Monday, May 22nd (Time TBD) – Finance & Facilities Committee (via Zoom)

Monday, May 22nd (Time TBD) - Education, Personnel, and Student Life (via Zoom)

Monday, June 12th (Time TBD) – Board of Trustees (in person at NVU-Johnson)

¹⁰<https://www.vsc.edu/board-of-trustees/meeting-schedule-materials/>

¹¹<https://www.vsc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/VSC-BOT-Rules-for-Public-Comment.pdf>

¹²<http://www.vsc.edu/signup>

Giving Feedback to the Transformation Teams

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.¹³

¹³<https://transformation.vsc.edu/engage/>