



VSCS Transformation Newsletter #53 (8/21/2023)

Transformation Update #53 - August 21, 2023

Bringing you the latest updates in the [Vermont State Colleges System's transformation project](#).

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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 was to launch the new Vermont State University. This new institution is comprised of what was Castleton University, Northern Vermont University, and Vermont Technical College and launched July 1, 2023. The second phase of transformation is focused on functional process optimization and system-wide administrative consolidation, including a shift to shared services for Information Technology, Human Resources, Finance, and Libraries. You can read past [Transformation Updates](#), visit [the Transformation website](#), or [the Vermont State University website](#) to learn more.

Significant Dates & Celebrations



The following dates are shared as opportunities to learn more about these significant cultural and historical dates as part of our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice:

August 26 is Women’s Equality Day recognizes the [vote and certification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920](#), becoming a rallying day for women’s equality. However, [it didn’t enfranchise all women such](#) as African American women in the South and Native American women – these rights were won decades later.

Did you know you can register to vote in Vermont online? [Learn more at the Vermont Secretary of State website](#). Same day registration has also been implemented so you can register to vote the day of an election!

September 4 is Labor Day, [a federal holiday](#) celebrating the achievements of American workers, unions, and other labor organizations. The labor movement has fought and won laws to protect workers, including: [40-hour work weeks, paid time off, and weekends](#). [Learn more about heroes of the labor movement with this collection of videos from PBS!](#)

Between September 2 to September 10, [Vermonters across the state will be celebrating Pride week!](#) Smaller events will culminate on the [10th with Pride Vermont, taking place in Burlington](#). Extra exciting? It is the 40th anniversary of Vermont’s first Pride march!

September 6 and 7 Krishna Janmashtami, a Hindu festival celebrating the birth of Krishna. It is also known as Krishnashtami, Janmashtami, or Gokulashtami. It is a significant holiday to Hindus worldwide and ways to celebrate are different across regions and cultures.

Starting **September 15 at sundown and ending on September 17 is Rosh Hashanah**, the Jewish New Year. It is a time of introspection and renewal. It is also the start of the High Holy Days that ends with Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, beginning at sundown on September 24. Looking for ways to celebrate? [Jewish Communities of Vermont has a list of events across the state.](#)

Message From the Chancellor



Greetings and welcome to all incoming students and welcome back to all returning students. This is an exciting and inspiring time of the year with the start of classes at Vermont State University today (August 21st) and at the Community College of Vermont on September 5th. I wish all of you—and our faculty and staff—a very happy and successful year ahead.

For those of you receiving this update for the first time, this is the 53rd Chancellor's Transformation Update. All updates are available on the transformation website at <https://transformation.vsc.edu/about-transformation/from-the-chancellor/>, along with a lot of other

information about the ongoing transformation of the Vermont State Colleges system. See <https://transformation.vsc.edu/>.

The first update was shared in April 2021 as the Vermont State Colleges began its transformation journey and the updates have become a vehicle for sharing all the ongoing transformation activity. The updates were sent out every two weeks up until January of this year, at which time we switched to monthly updates as Vermont State University began issuing its own internal newsletters. We will continue to provide monthly updates but the focus will increasingly shift to updates on system-level projects and events.

With best wishes,

Sophie

VTSU Presidential Search Update



Please see the July Transformation Update (#52) for additional information about the ongoing search to find an Interim President to replace current President Mike Smith when his term ends in October. Briefly, given the short period of time in which to find the next President of Vermont State University and the nonalignment of the search process with the academic year, the Board of Trustees is moving forward with an abbreviated search process to identify and hire an experienced change management leader to serve as interim President of VTSU through to the summer of 2025. During this interim period, the

Board will conduct a full traditional academic search and hiring process to identify the next President of Vermont State University.

At its most recent meeting on August 17, 2023, the Board's Ad Hoc Search Committee approved the "Qualifications and Competencies" being sought and identified five candidates to be interviewed in the first round. Three of the candidates were identified with the assistance of a search firm (AGB Interim Search), while two of the candidates were identified through recommendations made to the Committee. The Search Committee is currently on schedule to invite finalists to the Board's retreat in September to interview with the Board, senior leaders, and University representatives.

Information about the Search Committee (agendas, minutes, meeting materials) is available at <https://www.vsc.edu/board-of-trustees/meeting-materials/> (scroll to the bottom for the link to the Ad Hoc Search Committee). The meetings are open to the public although discussions about candidates occur in executive session. The committee's next meeting is on August 31st.

Transformation Project Updates



New Student Experience Updates

Admissions and Financial Aid are continuing to work with new students right into the first week of the semester. Special thanks to all our colleagues who are working tirelessly to help onboard and orient our students to the Vermont State University community in a condensed time frame. Your efforts are truly appreciated!

The enrollment planning team has been focused on how to build on the foundation of success that we achieved in the past cycle and make improvements going forward. A strategic admissions and enrollment marketing plan has been drafted and will be finalized in the coming weeks. Increased focus on academic program level marketing and differentiated strategies to engage with adult and online learners are two of the major themes permeating the plan. The admissions team is excited to participate in training that focuses on a more consultative approach to working with these populations.

In addition to all the exciting planned changes in the year ahead, there is also a lot of work happening to prepare for the next recruitment cycle. This includes building out the new applications, designing and printing collateral for upcoming recruitment events, updating presentations and information sheets, and continuing to work with online college search platforms to maximize exposure for VTSU.

On Thursday of this past week, we received word from the U.S. Department of Education that the official unification of Castleton, NVU, and Vermont Tech into Vermont State University was completed and approved. Now VTSU is able to award Title IV federal funding to our students without missing a beat. This is a huge accomplishment and another major milestone in the launch of our new university. The financial team has spent considerable time and energy on this project, and we thank them for all their efforts in making this happen!

Student Success Updates

The following is an update that was provided to the Vermont State University community last week that has been adapted here.

New Student Numbers:

It's an exciting time as we approach the first day of classes. Of the more than 1,400 new students committed to attend Vermont State this fall, over 1,300 are registered, with more students coming through the admissions process every day. Student Success Advisors will meet with students in small groups during Kick-off weekend and early next week to fine tune schedules as needed. One-on-one meetings to confirm and adjust schedules with Student Success Advisors continue to occur daily.

Please join me in appreciating the advising team for their work this summer. They exhibited consistent enthusiasm and dedication to help our new students, all the while troubleshooting our new systems, helping one another, and maintaining a positive mindset. Thank you, team!

Student Success Resources:

Designed to provide streamlined access to students, faculty, and staff for all Student Success processes, forms, and information, the Student Success Resources site is live! Students, faculty, and staff with log in credentials can find it under VTSU Resources on the portal, in every Canvas course, or at this direct link: [Student Success Resources](#). You will find tiles on academic support, advising, residence life, disability services, health & wellness, career development, and more!

Accessing Disability Services:

We hope students will drop by our offices, and we encourage faculty to refer students to the Disability Services employee based on their campus. However, we strive to serve all students equitably regardless of their location. For that reason, students can now access all our services through the Disability Services tile on the VTSU Portal. If students have questions about our services, they can email

disabilityservices@vermontstate.edu or contact individual staff members and request appointments through the Portal or on the [Disability Services web page](#).

Kick-Off Weekend News from Jamia Danzy, Dean of Students:

On behalf of the Student Activities staff throughout Vermont State University, I am happy to share Kick-Off Weekend information. This week we welcome new students to our community. We know that the programming, support, and resources we offer throughout their introduction to Vermont State will help them to develop a strong sense of belonging in their community, ease their transition, and allow them to connect with fellow students, staff, and faculty more easily.

For campus-specific Kick-Off Weekend schedules and information about Welcome Week, use this direct link: [Kickoff Weekend & Welcome Week](#).

Academic Program Updates

In late July, President Smith convened an Optimization 2.0 Working Group, the second phase of our program array evaluation which is a continuation of the work that was done last fall. The working group includes faculty and staff from across the university with representatives from each campus, including university leadership, faculty, staff, deans, and key departments such as admissions and marketing. The team's objectives are to align programs with campus identity, effectively meet the needs of current and prospective students, ensure fiscal efficiency, and support long-term sustainability of the five primary campuses and the university. Over the first four meetings, the group has reviewed and updated proposed elements of campus identity for each campus that will be highlighted in messaging, the website, and other channels once they are finalized. In conjunction with this work, the group has also reviewed program revenue/cost models and is beginning to align programs to disciplinary clusters that will be used as part of optimization. Watch for town hall meetings on each campus in September where additional details about this work will be shared.

The Academic Programs team is also happy to report that the faculty handbook is close to being published, and the work revising Academic Policy processes is nearly complete. Details of these efforts will be posted on the Portal soon.

Finally, it is the time of the year when faculty and staff begin to create academic schedules for the Spring term. We have revised the term schedule building process based on what we learned from the work that was done to create Fall. More details will be shared with those involved in the process in the coming weeks.

Administrative Operations

As part of the Transformation work related to our planning and budgeting system, the team has completed and is now rolling out a new self-service process. All budget managers at both VTSU and CCV will use this new interface to track and manage their budgets throughout the new fiscal year.

Coming soon, both institutions will also have a new payment request and accounts payable process, including new forms and approval routing. The team working on this change is currently testing the new solution and making some final tweaks. Watch for information and training which will be available in the coming weeks to those who request and process payments.

Over the last several months the Finance Operations group has worked with Financial Aid and the Registrar at VTSU to assist with the completion of all account closeout requirements and other steps needed to merge the legacy institutions into Vermont State University with the US Department of Education. We are pleased to report that this work has been completed, and last week they finalized a new Program Participation Agreement which authorizes the disbursement of aid to students at VTSU. Congratulations to VTSU for achieving this critical milestone!

As we move ahead into the next phase of transformation, the administrative operations team is continuing to prioritize, scope, and plan for projects that will be kicking off this fall. In particular, the HR Shared Services group is working with the HR Council and institution leadership to prioritize a set of processes that will be addressed as part of optimization.

Finally, the Alumni and Institutional Advancement team at VTSU is happy to report that work has now commenced on mapping and merging the alumni databases from the three legacy institutions. This work will take some time, but ultimately it will be critical for ensuring that VTSU is able to maintain strong connections with the alumni of each of the legacy institutions.

IT Shared Services Update



Information Technology Shared Services staff worked hard over the summer preparing for the new year. Here are some of the highlights, plus a few important reminders as we head into the fall semester:

- See the latest [Letter from the CIO](#).
- We upgraded more than 50 learning spaces this summer, including many nursing sites.
- We updated the Wi-Fi in campus buildings and residence halls this summer. We think you will be excited about the improvements!
- The [IT Knowledge Base](#) is a repository of help articles for students, faculty, and staff on everything from how to connect to the Wi-Fi, account login questions, how to use our various learning and business tools, and more. IT staff are still available by putting in a [HelpDesk ticket](#) or by phone, but the knowledge base offers 24x7 help for our most common questions.

Join the Learning Technologies team throughout the Fall 2023 Semester for drop-in, “come anytime” assistance with Canvas, YuJa, and Zoom.

Canvas: Tuesdays, 9-10 a.m.

YuJa: Tuesdays, 1-2 p.m.

Zoom: Fridays, 10-11 a.m.

Your Choice: Fridays, 12-1 p.m. For information on how to join these drop-in sessions, please reach out to Sean Dailey or Sarah Chambers by email.

VTSU Facilities Master Planning Update



As reported in last month's newsletter, the Facilities Master Plan Working Group has continued to meet and work over the summer. The group has explored and discussed some initial discovery work related to topics such as state demographics and population distribution, transportation infrastructure, and access to broadband infrastructure.

The team is also doing a detailed physical analysis of each campus, including topography, hydrology, utilities, and transportation. As part of the next steps, the working group will compile a summary of master planning opportunities, challenges, and issues for each campus which will guide the conversation and work this fall. Watch for town halls in the coming weeks to gather feedback from students, faculty, staff, and the broader community.

Upcoming Board and Committee Meetings



[Please find all information, including the full meeting schedule and the links for virtual attendance, here.](#)

[The Board Chair's Rules for Public Comment are available on the VSC website](#), as is a form to [submit public comment before the meetings](#).

Monday, September 18 & Tuesday, September 19 – Board Retreat at Lake Morey (in person)

Monday, October 16 – Audit Committee (via Zoom) – Time TBD

Monday, October 16 – Finance & Facilities Committee (via Zoom) – Time TBD

Monday, October 30 – Education, Personnel, and Student Life Committee (via Zoom) – Time TBD

Monday, October 30 – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (via Zoom) – Time TBD

Monday, October 30 – Board of Trustees Meeting (via Zoom) – Time TBD

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](#).