



# VSCS Transformation Newsletter #55 (10/16/2023)

***Transformation Update #55 - October 16, 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



September 17 was [National Voter Registration Day](#). There is still time to register! Vermont has same day voter registration meaning you can register any time, including the day of an election. [Online registration is also available.](#)

October 19 is Spirit Day, which takes place on the third Thursday in October. It [“is the world’s most visible anti-bullying movement inspiring LGBTQ youth, especially transgender and nonbinary youth to live their lives in their truth and authenticity.”](#) One way to participate is to wear purple on October 19 to show your support.

November is Native American Heritage Month, a month to celebrate indigenous peoples and their culture, traditions, and customs past and present in the United States. Here are some resources to do so [from PBS](#), [National Park Service](#), and [the National Archives](#).

November 1 is Día de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) which continues into November 2. It is primarily observed in Mexico and by those of Mexican heritage. It is celebrated on these days because [“the spirits of the dead are believed to return home and spend time with their relatives on these two days.”](#)

November 1 is also [All Saints' Day](#), a Christian holiday celebrating all saints of the church through a feast. Today it is celebrated in different countries across the world.

November 11 is Veteran's Day, [which was first observed in 1919, commemorating November 11, 1918 when an armistice that brought an end to World War I](#). It now honors generations of veterans who have served the United States in the Armed Forces, but it is especially a time to thank ["living veterans for their \[service and\] sacrifices."](#)

November 12 is [Diwali, which is a 5-day festival of lights which is celebrated by Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and some Buddhists. It is one of the most prominent holiday in India and is celebrated worldwide](#). It is a celebration of the triumph of light over darkness, as well as knowledge over ignorance and good over evil.

November 13 through 19 is [Transgender Awareness Week, a time to for individuals and organizations across the country to raise the visibility of transgender people and the issues that the community faces](#). It is also [a time to honor, uplift, and celebrate the transgender community](#), which is more important than ever as the community is facing a backlash of violence and laws restricting human rights.

## Message From the Chancellor



All:

In this month's update, given all that is going on at the institutions, we are focusing instead on providing an update on the Chancellor's Office and three of the key areas covered by Shared Services: Human Resources, Information Technology, and Finance.

The Office of the Chancellor has reduced in size (both by physical space and number of people) considerably over the course of the transformation. The Chancellor's Office staff is now composed of three people -- the Chancellor, the Administrative Director (who also serves as a liaison to the Board of Trustees), and the Director of External and Government Relations. There is one vacant position which is presently being held open for consideration by the next Chancellor. The Chancellor's senior leadership team includes these three individuals, plus the Chief Information Officer, Chief Financial and Operating Officer, and Chief Human Resources Officer, each of whom lead their respective shared services teams. The General Counsel and Associate General Counsel are part of shared services (Legal) and participate on the senior leadership team, along with the Director of Transformation Projects, whose position is covered by legislatively provided transformation funding.

The physical space occupied by the Chancellor's Office in Montpelier has been significantly downsized to approximately one-third of its pre-Covid size. Several of the staff in Shared Services continue to work on the campuses of Vermont State University and in the academic centers of the Community College of Vermont, including many of the Information Technology staff. In turn, a couple of employees with Vermont State University have offices in the Chancellor's Office in Montpelier. The office is open to CCV and VTSU employees who need a temporary space to meet others or from which to work in Montpelier. There are a couple of individual offices that can be used, as well as two conference rooms, one of which is well-equipped for small hybrid meetings. To reserve a room, please contact Jen Porrier at [jen.porrier@vsc.edu](mailto:jen.porrier@vsc.edu).

Shared Services provide support and services to employees and students across the system and not simply to the Office of the Chancellor. The benefits of the Shared Services model includes the ability to streamline business processes, thereby improving efficiency, increasing consistency, and enhancing the system's ability to meet its compliance and reporting requirements. By bringing these areas together, we have already realized significant benefits in reducing costly customizations.

One of the key criticisms by Presidents in the past has been the lack of insight into or control over the cost of the Chancellor's Office, yet the institutions were required to cover a share of the cost. The Shared Services model provides both financial transparency and the ability for Presidents and their senior leaders to weigh in on the scope of services to be provided by Shared Services. By understanding where the costs come from, the Presidents can make better informed decisions about how their own practices and policies can be adjusted to reduce costs. This also enables the institutions to benefit from economies of scale when negotiating contracts.

Under this new model, the leaders of the Shared Services teams meet periodically with the Presidents and the Chancellor to discuss their Service Level Agreements and receive direction on their planning for the future. Through this collaborative process, we can make informed and thoughtful decisions. For example, the budget for the system's libraries is currently within the FY2024 shared services budget but the Director of Libraries reports to the chief academic officers of Vermont State University and the Community College of Vermont. As the libraries serve the institutions and not Shared Services or the

Chancellor's Office, Libraries will be moving out of the Shared Services budget for FY2025 and be co-managed directly by the academic leadership of the two institutions. Similarly, the Executive Director of Workforce position is being eliminated and the directors of workforce and continuing education at each institution will meet regularly with the Council of Presidents to make sure that the system as a whole is meeting the workforce needs of the state and the expectations of the Board of Trustees.

We are currently in the process of working through the FY2025 budget for Shared Services. The leaders of each of the Shared Services areas have been asked to provide proposals on how to cut costs while minimizing the impact on services. Both Presidents are asking tough questions and pushing very hard for cost containment and cost reductions, as they simultaneously work on their own budgets for FY2025.

I have asked each of the leaders of the three key Shared Services areas to provide a brief overview of the services they provide and the functions they perform for the benefit of the two institutions and the system overall. These are shared below.

With best wishes,

Sophie

## Shared Service Updates



### Information Technology

Information Technology Shared Services partners with and supports the VSC communities to achieve their missions by planning and implementing creative and innovative technology solutions. Our team focuses on personal engagement, equitable access to tools and services, and strategic partnerships to improve opportunities for all users.

Newly organized since January of 2023, over the past year IT Shared Services has been working to reorganize into an organizational structure that is built around prioritized service areas. We spent

months reviewing our services, identifying opportunities for alignment, and working toward Service Level Agreements to better align our services with our community needs.

We are organized into [six major service areas](#), supporting [a broad service catalog](#) across the VSC, and we encourage you to learn more about [who we are](#) and visit our [new support site](#) with growing content and information to better support your 24/7 needs.

## Human Resources

Human Resources Shared Services is comprised of 6.5 FTE employees. It manages group insurance, retirement savings, tuition, and leave benefits for all employees across VSC system, as well as retiree benefits. We are responsible for State and Federal benefits reporting requirements. We also manage the system's Human Resources Information System (HRIS), which houses employee data. We process, on average, 600 HR data-related tickets per month, including job changes, new hires, and employment terminations. In addition, we respond to requests for employment verifications, including verification for loan forgiveness programs.

One of several ongoing projects is the development and implementation of employee services process improvements. We are partnering with CCV and VTSU HR to develop more efficient and effective processes for requesting and implementing job changes, compensation adjustments, and other types of employment changes. We are developing an HR Shared Services intranet site so that information, procedures, and links to online forms will be easily accessible to employees and supervisors. We are also working with our IT colleagues to facilitate data feeds between employee data housed in Colleague and UKG, our HRIS, to further improve the transfer of data and find greater efficiencies.

## Finance

Finance Shared Services provides system-wide services for financial accounting, grants accounting, accounts payable, accounts receivable, taxation, treasury, and payroll. The team's primary focus is on compliance with federal and state regulations. These services, with the exception of accounts payable, grants accounting, and some elements of financial accounting, have been a shared service for the Vermont State Colleges for several decades. Accounts payable, grants accounting and certain elements of financial accounting were added to the Finance Shared Services between 2015 and 2018. Finance Shared Services places great emphasis on accuracy, timeliness, and legal compliance.

## VTSU Optimization 2.0 Feedback



As Interim President Smith has communicated, Optimization 2.0 is a comprehensive effort to evaluate Vermont State University's academic programs, considering financial, academic, and enrollment data, as well as qualitative input.

Optimization 2.0 emphasizes vibrant campuses and the development of a student-friendly delivery model. It prioritizes programs to secure the university's financial stability and foster growth. Some programs may be consolidated or retired, which will impact new students who begin in the fall of 2024 and beyond. Current students will not be impacted.

Vermont State University faculty, staff, and students may submit feedback to the [Draft Report on Optimization 2.0](#) in the following ways:

- Faculty: send your feedback to your academic dean
- Students: email [opt2studentfeedback@vermontstate.edu](mailto:opt2studentfeedback@vermontstate.edu)
- Staff: email [Opt2stafffeedback@vermontstate.edu](mailto:Opt2stafffeedback@vermontstate.edu)

## Chancellor Search



The Board of Trustees has created a search and screen committee for the position of Chancellor. The committee is composed of six trustees, three external participants, and one member of the Chancellor's Senior Leadership team (Wilson Garland). The committee is being chaired by David Durfee, a legislative trustee. The other trustees are Megan Cluver (Vice Chair), Sue Zeller, Bob Flint, Perry Ragouzis (student trustee), and Janette Bombardier. The three external participants are Senator Brian Campion (Chair of Senate Education and Director of Public Policy Programs in the Center for the Advancement of Public Action at Bennington College), Scott Giles (President and CEO of Vermont Student Assistance Corporation), and Dylan Giambatista (former VSC trustee, alum of CCV and Johnson State College, and Director of Public Affairs at Vermont Gas Systems).

A job description has been prepared and posted - [Chancellor of Vermont State Colleges | Office of the Chancellor \(ultipro.com\)](#). Please take a look at the posting and share it with those you think would be interested in the position and meet the qualifications. At this point, we are not using a search firm but are relying on word of mouth and advertising in some of the higher education publications.

The committee is scheduled to start reviewing applications beginning October 20th. The committee will conduct preliminary screening interviews of qualified candidates and then pass their recommendations to the Board's Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will interview semi-finalists and identify the candidates for final interviews. Finalists will be interviewed by several groups, including the full Board, senior leaders, and representatives of faculty and staff from VTSU and CCV. The Board is the final decision-maker and is seeking to select the next Chancellor before Thanksgiving. This is a tight timeframe as the next Chancellor is anticipated to start on January 1, 2024.



# 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](#).

1. Monday, October 16 – Audit & Risk Management Committee (via Zoom) – 1:00 p.m.
2. Monday, October 16 – Finance & Facilities Committee (via Zoom) – 2:00 p.m. or at the conclusion of the prior meeting, if it runs over
3. Tuesday, October 17 – Executive Committee (via Zoom) – 8:30 a.m.
4. Tuesday, October 24 – Board of Trustees (via Zoom) – 8:30 a.m.
5. Monday, October 30 – Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee (via Zoom) – 11:00 a.m.
6. Monday, October 30 – Board of Trustees (via Zoom) – 12:30 p.m.
7. Monday, October 30 – Education, Personnel & Student Life Committee (via Zoom) – 1:00 p.m. of at the conclusion of the prior meeting, if it runs over
8. Monday, November 13 – Board of Trustees (in person at CCV-Winooski) – 1:00 p.m.

## 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](#).

We do read your feedback! A friendly reader shared that we missed **Constitution Day** in last month's celebration of holidays. As someone who did not grow up here in the United States, I will confess to not knowing much about Constitution Day so, by way of amends, here is what I have learned. Constitution Day became a federally recognized holiday in 2004. It celebrates the signing of the United States Constitution on September 17, 1787 by the thirty delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. Constitution Day is also known as Citizenship Day. You can find out more about the U.S. Constitution and the history of Constitution Day [here](#). The website includes [Constitution Facts Quiz](#), on which I scored 9 out of 10 so while I may not have known about Constitution Day, I know at least something about the U.S. Constitution!

Looking ahead to upcoming celebrations, one of my favorites that you may not be familiar with is [Guy Fawkes Day](#), also known as Bonfire Night, which is celebrated in Britain on November 5th. This celebrates the failure of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605, in which Guy Fawkes and his co-conspirators sought to blow up the Houses of Parliament and assassinate King James. You can find more information [here](#) and [here](#).

Sophie