



VSCS Transformation Newsletter #56 (11/17/2023)

Transformation Update #56 - November 17, 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



As mentioned in last month's newsletter, November is Native American Heritage Month. We shared the following resources [from PBS](#), [National Park Service](#), and [the National Archives](#). Vermont Professionals of Color Network's [newsletter also has an article and additional resources in their latest issue](#).

November 16 is [International Day for Tolerance which is a holiday adopted by the United Nations in 1996](#). It is focused [on using information and education to build respect and teach the importance of tolerance](#) of diverse people regardless of culture, language, religion, or ethnicity across the world.

November 20 is [Transgender Day of Remembrance](#), an annual observance to honor the memory of transgender people who have lost their lives to acts of hate and transphobic violence. It now comes at the end Transgender Awareness Week. [Intersectionality is an important part of this conversation as the endemic of violence especially affects trans women of color](#).

November 23 - Wishing everyone a happy and safe Thanksgiving to all those celebrating the holiday and traveling to be with family, friends, and loved ones.

November 27 is Guru Nanak Gurpurab, which honors the birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of the Sikh religion. [The day is celebrated with a festival and is one of the most sacred for the Sikh community throughout the world](#).

December 1 commemorates [World AIDS Day](#) as [“people around the world unite to show support for people living with and affected by HIV and to remember those who lost their lives to AIDS.”](#) Support looks like [increasing awareness and funding to respond to AIDS, as well as ending stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV](#).

December 3 is [International for Persons with Disabilities](#), an annual observance that aims to promote understanding and [“mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.”](#) In addition to this, it is to celebrate the importance that persons with disability have on all aspects of political, social, economic, and cultural life.

December 7 through 15 this year is [Hanukkah \(Chanukah\), the Jewish Festival of Lights](#). It lasts eight days, from the 24th day of the month of Kislev to the 1st day of the month of Tevet on the Jewish religious calendar. [Hanukkah is one of the most well known Jewish holidays because of its proximity to Christmas and not necessarily because of religious significance](#).

December 10 is [International Human Rights Day](#) which is the commemorating the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and this year, in 2023, is the 75th anniversary of the Declaration. The Declaration [“enshrines the rights of all human beings and is a global blueprint for international, national, and local laws and policies.”](#)

December 13 is Mawlid (Eid-e-Milad an-Nabi; Mawlid al-Nabi), the Prophet Muhammad’s Birthday. [Many Muslims around the world commemorate this day through festivals, prayer, lectures, and sharing food and poetry](#). It is a time to learn about and remember the Prophet Muhammad’s life and teachings.

Message From the Chancellor



All:

In last month's Transformation Update I provided an overview of some of the changes to the Chancellor's Office, along with an overview of Shared Services, which launched earlier this year and is still a work in progress. At the recent Board meeting, held on November 13, 2023, I shared some thoughts on the progress made over the past few years, my appreciation for the many people whose hard work has made it possible, and a response to some of the questions as to why the system needs a Chancellor and who works in Shared Services. Here is a summary of some of the points I shared.

Thankful for State support. I want to thank the legislature and Governor Scott for their continued financial support and for their encouragement as we have worked through transformation. Over \$300 million has flowed to the VSC institutions, including to our students through scholarships and workforce development opportunities, in the form of bridge funding to cover the shortfall between revenue and expenses at VTSU and its legacy institutions as we transition, increased capital transformation funding, and more. This unprecedented funding has been made with the clear expectation that we fundamentally transform the system and the way it operates – no more nibbling around the edges! We have seen a prioritization of rural public higher education in Vermont with a 55% increase to our annual

state funding, which now stands at \$48 million, up from \$30 million. We are no longer the state with the lowest per capita funding of higher education nationally, and that is something we can all be thankful for.

Thankful to the students we serve. The future of the Vermont State Colleges system is bright. In any given semester, we educate about 10,500 students in our academic programs. But on an annual basis, we serve more than 15,500 students through our for credit courses and programs, plus an additional close to 3,000 non-credit/workforce development students, totaling around 18,500 learners annually. I believe passionately in the vital importance of the education and training provided by the Community College of Vermont and Vermont State University to all our students – traditional, non-traditional, residential, commuter, online, full-time, part-time, first generation, low income, managing disabilities, athletes, parents, and working adults. As noted by Steve Howard of the Vermont State Employees Association at Monday’s Board meeting, the Vermont State Colleges educate the workforce of Vermont and we are essential to the economic vitality of the state, as well as supporting an informed and engaged citizenry.

Thankful for our employees. Every employee that I have met and worked with within the VSC is motivated by the mission to serve our students. That is why so many employees give selflessly of their time, their energy, and their passion to make sure that these institutions, their campuses, and academic centers survive for the benefit of future students seeking a degree, a certificate, a credential, a fresh start in life, or a step up in their career. The Vermont State Colleges system is far bigger than its component parts. It endures because it serves the public good, filling a niche and meeting a need that cannot be served by any other institution of higher education in Vermont. We offer education, inspiration, community and even love to students of all ages and backgrounds, who, in many cases, would not continue with their education or receive training and skills after high school, but for the Vermont State College System.

Thankful for teamwork. Through the legislatively created *Select Committee*, internal work groups, and by leveraging the talent of our leaders, faculty, staff, students, and outside experts, we have brought a lot of ideas and plans to the table for how to transform to operate more efficiently and sustainably. Those ideas have informed and influenced the plans executed thus far and those being advanced now. Where we are today is a remarkable demonstration of teamwork. Looking back, we have accomplished an enormous amount over the past four years and the system is now on the path to a financially sustainable future for the first time in over a decade, if not longer. I also know that there is still much more work to be done to operationalize and implement these plans.

So, why does the Vermont State Colleges System need to transform? Many of those arguing that the system no longer needs a Chancellor come from a place of anger about the transformation work that has happened and the new direction and shape of the system. Understandably this has been directed at the Chancellor as moving the system forward by restructuring and rightsizing the colleges has been my primary responsibility over the past four years. To be clear, my one goal throughout has been to ensure the ultimate survival of the system, its member institutions, and rural campuses and to do so in a way that is financially sustainable in the long-term and can be resilient enough to weather whatever further storms for higher education may be on the horizon. Higher education is going through a seismic upheaval and colleges and universities across the country are scrambling to adjust. For many, as with the legacy institutions in our system, the economic model no longer works and, without fundamental change, institutions will not survive. We are not alone in facing these challenges – the national higher

education press is filled with reports of college closures and mergers, faculty and program cuts, and downsizing of administrative staff on a weekly, if not daily, basis.

Why does the VSC need a Chancellor and what does the Chancellor do? First, the Vermont State Colleges is a system with two distinct but complementary organizations – a two year community college and a four year university. Their organizational structures are markedly different, but both require operational support to coordinate and function well. Amongst other things, the Chancellor is responsible for:

- Policy leadership and strategy on behalf of the system;
- Ensuring the fiscal health of the system;
- Supporting the Board and ensuring Board policies and procedures are implemented;
- Supervising the Presidents and making sure the two institutions work together seamlessly and not in competition with each other;
- Ensuring the institutions meet NECHE’s accreditation standards;
- Advocating on behalf of the system with the state and securing necessary state funding;
- Representing the system on state, regional and national boards, councils, and organizations;
- Identifying, assessing, and managing risks and overseeing regulatory compliance;
- Building and maintaining relationships with external entities, such as state agencies, businesses, and other educational institutions; and
- Executing system-wide strategies

The reality is that the position of Chancellor is not only necessary, but critical for the next phase of implementation and transformation of the system. The new Chancellor will lead the Vermont State Colleges forward by enhancing partnerships, maintaining our state support, and ensuring we continue to make progress towards achieving financial viability.

Why hasn’t the Chancellor’s Office had to transform, along with everyone else? It has! The Office of the Chancellor has undergone significant transformation over the past three and a half years. The number and nature of positions within the Chancellor’s Office is constantly under review and decisions made accordingly. Several positions have been eliminated entirely and, where appropriate, responsibilities have been shifted to the colleges, such as for institutional research, facilities, and grant compliance. As noted in last month’s transformation update, the Chancellor’s Office currently employs three people: the Chancellor, the Administrative Director/Board Liaison, and the Director of Governmental and External Affairs. There is a current vacancy (previously held by the Chief Academic Officer) that is being held open pending a decision by the incoming Chancellor as to whether and how to

use the position. The physical office of the Chancellor has been significantly reduced in size to approximately one third of its previous size, with a corresponding reduction in its cost.

Who are the employees in Shared Services and what do they do? One of the key recommendations of the *Select Committee* was that the VSC engage in “aggressive administrative consolidation” and that the VSC function as a system, with all of its advantages, not as a federation. If you look across higher education, you will see that colleges and universities are increasingly coming together to form consortia with peer institutions in order to realize the savings and efficiencies that can come from a shared services model. We see this here in Vermont where Middlebury, St. Michael’s and Champlain College have come together to create the Green Mountain Consortium. We see it next door in New Hampshire where the University of New Hampshire system is engaged in similar efforts. Through Shared Services, we are optimizing how we manage back-office systems for both VTSU and CCV, with the goal of saving money, increasing efficiency, and reducing legal risk. This approach has reduced duplication across the colleges and has resulted in personnel savings. Additional information about how Shared Services operate and what functions they perform were included in last month’s [Transformation Update \(#55\)](#). As the name suggests, the employees working in Shared Services provide support and services to employees and students at CCV and VTSU.

As of October 2023, there were sixty people working in Shared Services. Twenty-two of the sixty (more than one-third) are covered by the collective bargaining agreement with United Professionals and thirty-three (more than half) are physically based on a VTSU campus or in a CCV academic center. Thirty-nine work in Information Technology (almost two-thirds), six in Human Resources, ten in Finance, three in Legal, and two in Libraries.

I hope that this additional information is helpful.

With best wishes for a happy Thanksgiving and safe travels over the holiday,

Sophie

Welcome to Interim President David Bergh



President Bergh officially started in his role as Interim President of Vermont State University on November 15, 2023. We are delighted to welcome him back to the Vermont State Colleges system and very much look forward to working with him over the next year and a half.

President Bergh previously spent nineteen years on the Johnson campus in Student Affairs so brings a student-centered focus to his Presidency. In his prior roles, he worked closely with his fellow Deans of students and had the opportunity to spend time on each of the VTSU campuses, as well as developing strong ties with the Johnson community and Lamoille County leaders.

Information Technology Shared Service Updates



IT Strategic Plan

Shared Services IT staff members came together last summer for strategic planning sessions in support of building our first strategic plan under our [new organizational structure](#). The purpose of our IT Strategic Plan is to serve as a roadmap for the strategic use of technology in alignment with CCV and VTSU's missions and strategic plans. Our strategic plan provides a framework for decision-making and prioritization. Over the past several weeks, we have been sharing our draft strategic plan with groups at both CCV and VTSU for review. We are pleased to open review to the full VSC community, and welcome feedback from all. If you have any comments or feedback about the [VSC IT Shared Services Draft Strategic Plan](#), please email [Kellie Campbell, Chief Information Officer](#).

Big thanks to IT Shared Services staff for their ideas and input, and to VTSU professor Allan Rodgers for helping provide structure to our conversations and workshops. We greatly appreciate everyone's participation and the collaborative effort that went into our draft strategic plan.

ERP Assessment Update

As previously announced, Vermont State Colleges (VSC) is partnering with the enterprise systems consultant, Ferrilli, to assess the VSC Enterprise Resources Planning (ERP) system, Ellucian Colleague, and create a roadmap to future sustainability. The assessment will look at our whole ERP environment and include a review of software systems connected to our ERP. *This assessment is not a commitment to change or move away from our ERP system* but an investigation of our current state and today's technology marketplace to understand the opportunities to position ourselves for the future. Answers to some frequently asked questions can be found on our [ERP Assessment FAQ page](#).

The ERP Assessment continues in November with interviews of institutional leadership and key stakeholders as part of our current state assessment. Looking ahead in the timeline, Ferrilli will deliver its Assessment Report, including market analysis and recommended roadmap, to sponsors and stakeholders early in the new year. This week, Kellie Campbell [presented an ERP Assessment Update](#) to the Board of

Trustees and the [Board approved a governance structure \(p. 25-26\)](#) for review of the assessment report. This governance structure will be used as we make decisions on how to implement Ferrilli's recommendations concerning the future ERP roadmap.

In response to interest in providing feedback, we have developed a survey to capture input from those who were not interviewed. The survey is open to all, but most relevant to faculty or staff who use Colleague or Self-Service in their daily work. We look forward to reading your responses to the [ERP Assessment Survey](#).

Additional Updates



- Vermont State University submitted [its most recent progress report to the New England Commission for Higher Education](#) for consideration at its November meeting.
- VSC Human Resources has launched its intranet site at [VSC | Human Resources - Home \(sharepoint.com\)](#). Employees can find a wealth of resources on Employee Benefits, Leave of Absence Benefits, an array of HR documents, many self-service options, and a host of “how to” resources. Please check it out.
- **REMINDER:** Open Enrollment for benefits-eligible employees ends on Monday, November 20th 2023 so, if you haven't yet done so, please go ahead and complete open enrollment even if you

are not planning to make changes to your existing health, dental, vision, life and, disability and supplemental insurance plans. Changes will be effective 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](#).

- Tuesday, November 28, 2023 – Full Board or Executive Committee (via Zoom) – 8:30 a.m.
- Monday, December 11, 2023 – Nominating Committee (via Zoom) – 1:00 p.m.
- Monday, December 11, 2023 – Finance & Facilities Committee (via Zoom) – 1:30 p.m. or at the conclusion of the prior meeting, if it runs over
- Monday, January 8, 2024 - Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee (via Zoom) – TBD
- Monday, January 8, 2024 – Education, Personnel & Student Life Committee (via Zoom) – TBD or at the conclusion of the prior meeting, if it runs over
- Monday, January 22, 2024 – Board of Trustees (via Zoom) – 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](#).