**Vermont Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education**

**Monday, November 9, 2020 - 3:30pm**

**Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

**Present:**

Members: Briar Alpert, Sen. Baruth, Heather Bouchey, Sarah Buxton, Megan Cluver, Daniel Daley, Suresh Garimella, Scott Giles, Steve Gordon, Rep. James, Joyce Judy, Sandy Mayotte, Devin Tingle, Jeff Weld, Sophie Zdatny

Others: Sally Johnstone, Dennis Jones, Joyce Manchester, Stephanie Murphy, Charlotte Peyser, Michael Thomas, Candace Williams

**Minutes:**

1. NCHEMS’s progress report

NCHEMS and NEBHE have started conducting focus groups. The draft outline shared today will be adapted into draft report format by the November 30th Select Committee meeting.

1. Review and discussion of draft interim report outline

See draft outline. Brian Prescott describes the various sections of the outline.

Sen. Baruth notes that his previous feedback on the working description of state’s needs related to the creative economy has not have been incorporated.

Rep. James adds that promoting the liberal arts and graduate participation in a democratic society as a role of the VSC is uneven and not thoroughly addressed.

Sarah Buxton contributes that these concerns may be outside the scope of the Select Committee’s charge. Closer relationships with employers could have financial implications for the system, for example.

Sen. Baruth responds that the Senate Committee did not intend to take off everything from the table except the financial aspects. Because these need statements are meant to be foundational to recommendations, it’s important to address these aspects.

Scott Giles suggests that preparing students for the work understates higher education’s impact on creating economic opportunities and mitigating inequities.

Sen. Baruth asks for clarity about the status of the recommendations and when the underlying data and rationale will be available. Brian walks through the reasoning behind maintaining CCV’s independence:

* Geographically accessible
* Differentiated mission
* Operating well financially

Sen. Baruth notes that this recommendation would be in opposition to former-Chancellor Spaulding’s recommendation. Additional work product would give the Select Committee confidence in going along with such recommendations.

Dennis speaks to financial viability, culture and mission differentiation as considerations for consolidating or closing institutions. CCV is different on these fronts, as well as being the most efficient. VTC operates higher cost programs but does have a distinctive mission and is more workforce oriented than Castleton and Johnson. It looks most like Lyndon. But since Lyndon and Johnson have been merged, it’d be difficult to conceive undoing it. How can the system be better organized to better deliver its services?

Heather feels there are other options related to these institutions. They are both Perkins funded. So she is uncomfortable endorsing these recommendations before having discussions on the various options. Sarah echoes these sentiments and provides the example of considering the system as a single entity with different access points that could be customized in various ways. Jeff Weld cites the example of Southern Maine Community College and Southern Maine Technical Center, in which they positioned themselves as launchpads into higher degree pathways or careers.

Scott asks, If we think from an access and affordability perspective, could CCV offer baccalaureate degrees as similar institutions in other states do? Brian responds that one of the challenges NCHEMS sees is an overproduction of bachelor’s degrees and a limited focus on other credentials.

Sandy Mayotte adds to the chat: Agreed. CCV would not be the vehicle to obtain a bachelor’s degree.

Brian says that NCHEMS has considered thinking of campuses of outposts, although VTC’s are primarily focused on nursing programs.

Dan Daley thinks it’s critical to work on recognition of credits and transferability across the system.

Steve Gordon asks whether there’s a cost savings target that should be considered as these recommendations are discussed? This is a federation of individual campuses, so low-hanging fruit would be consolidating administrative services.

Brian says that the VSC’s FY22 will be $42-47 million.

Devin Tingle asks whether there’s an idea for how VTC’s focus on nursing impacts its operation costs? Could these programs be better worked in other campuses? Brian responds that moving programs can be difficult because nursing is often one of the most demanded options.

Megan Cluver returns to the idea of low hanging fruit. Combining accreditation and consolidating administrative services takes a few years, for example. The VSC executive committee has discussed how to be ready to implement the Select Committee’s recommendations quickly without getting ahead of the Select Committee’s work. It would make since to share ideas of low hanging fruit early on to promote collaboration and action.

Brian adds that VSC’s financial sustainability will be a multi-year journey but it must get started quickly to enact changes before bridge funding or other resources dry up.

Sarah asks whether there will be a time to discuss the various structural and organizational options for VSC? Brian notes that are a few concerns around single accreditation:

* Missions of sub-baccalaureate should not be further underserved by traditional institutions’ missions
* The collective bargaining power of faculty and its impact on delivering sub-baccalaureate training and education

Dennis says historical examples of combining traditional and vocationally-oriented missions have resulted in diminution of the postsecondary education spectrum. How do you organize institutions to deliver along this spectrum without losing emphasis where it’s needed? How much structural change would be required to ensure everything was delivered everywhere vs. employing policy and practice changes?

Sandy Mayotte comments in the chat: What of differing outcomes, as well? It could diffuse specific objectives if unified programmatically. However, organizing the oversight and administrative services is worth additional consideration.

Heather Bouchey comments in the chat: We have been working on the seamless pathways among institutions for years, if not decades, however, with little effect.

Brian states that one area of common ground is the need to consolidate administrative services.

Sen. Baruth wonders about the corporation option, which would sell services to institutions and other organizes. Why would they be exempt from state personnel regulations? Brian responds that it would be due to the need to hire competent employees and be nimble.

Sandy notes that this section was exciting and provides the schools an opportunity to do what they do well and create opportunities of scale on the administrative size. Marketing the system as an international player is another need.

Sarah thinks that principle of collective efforts could be expanded for this corporation – for example, grant writing, apprenticeship, business services, etc.

Dennis notes another concern is that operations functions can push aside policy and long-term strategy considerations from a system office.

Steve asks if the HEIs are on the same IT platform. Joyce answers yes and that that is managed by the Chancellor’s office.

Steve says you can’t save your way to prosperity, you also have to grow. It’s often cuts that get the attention but more students need to be recruited into the system.

Brian moves on to the program array section. Dennis notes that there are several programs with one faculty member, which compromises the student experience. Brian adds that faculty are aware that tuition dependence has contributed to an erosion of quality due to cuts in faculty and staff.

Sarah implores the Select Committee to dig in. This is probably not an area where there are savings but there’s tremendous opportunity to find new customers in adult learners and incumbent workers. We should also be mindful of any duplication in employer partnerships between VSC and UVM.

NCHEMS recommends a funding model that rewards collaboration, which is difficult when tuition-driven institutions are competing for students.

Devin comments on campus collaboration: One thing that could be used is highlighting the strengths of campuses.

Dan notes that performance metrics can be challenging knowing the missions of some of the institutions. It’s important to keep in mind the college preparation of incoming students.

Sarah Buxton suggests that the committee consider the use of CTE centers, if VSC needs additional capacity.

Rep. James asks whether the affordability standard would be used as a metric that the institutions would report on? Brian says this metric would help determine affordability and understand how awards impact institutions enrolling their classes. Rep. James asks the difference between the work study programs and a state-funded work study. NCHEMS is recommending a state-funded one, unlike the usual use of the federal system.

Scott likes the standard but adds that there needs to be a funding commitment. The allocation formula is similar to this. They also look at over all award levels.

Dennis notes that the most effective student financial aid program is actually an increase in minimum wage.

Suresh Garimella suggests that the point for using the metric should be clarified.

Sandy comments in the chat: May we have more conversation on Suresh's point at another time. It was a good point. I, too, would like to understand. Jeff Weld chats: Agreed.

Sarah mentions that financial aid should support low-income Vermonters and it should continue to flow through VSAC for economies of scale. Another point is that DOL operates the state’s internship program, which is being reconfigured but seeks to leverage support from UVM and VSC. A work study program shouldn’t interfere with this effort. There was a Vermont Scholar program which was created in legislation that was never funded.

Brian says that the state also requires a cohesive economic development strategy.

Sarah asks for other state examples of longitudinal data systems.

1. Next Steps

NCHEMS will improve the case for many of these recommendations to share back with the committee. Another conversation will be organized before the 3oth. The discussion around mission and structure needs more attention and can be prioritized. They will also help answer Sophie and Megan’s immediate concerns.

1. Public comments and questions
   1. Members of the public, please share comments and questions at [higheredcommittee@leg.state.vt.us](mailto:higheredcommittee@leg.state.vt.us)
   2. *Please be advised that with few exceptions, any submitted documents are open to the public*

Seven public comments were received and summarized by Joyce Manchester.

Respectfully submitted,

Candace Williams

New England Board of Higher Education