

Steering Group of the Vermont Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education
Tuesday, December 8, 2020 - 3:00pm
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Present:

Members: Briar Alpert, Heather Bouchey, Sarah Buxton, Megan Cluver, Joyce Judy

Others: Sally Johnstone, Dennis Jones, Joyce Manchester, Brian Prescott, Michael Thomas, Candace Williams

Minutes:

I. Discussion of reactions to the 12/4 report from stakeholders and/or the public

Briar shared feedback about UVM's cuts to liberal arts programs.

Sarah notes:

- Bill Schubert wrote a reaction piece published in the VTDigger
- There have been a few op-eds on liberal arts education
- Little feedback from students so far

Employers will need to come together to invest in higher education and training. If there's a sense of economic loss due to number of graduates, who will pay to fill the need?

Joyce Judy notes:

- People are looking for more detail on the finances of operating as a system.
- What are the low hanging fruit that we should begin to work on?
- Are there other states that have gone through a similar exercise, particularly with pursuing greater system-ness and combining residential campuses with a technical school? To come up with some lessons learned to consider.
- The legislators will have a conversation about the report soon. Sen. Baruth sent the report to his colleagues with a cover letter endorsing its content.

Megan's sense is that folks have not fully digested the report but that its direction could be supported by the VSC Board. There is a keen interest in the details. It would also be helpful to know how the labor costs compare to other systems and institutions.

II. Focus areas for NCHEMS and the Select Committee to cover ahead of the February report

a. Timeline for related activities

Brian: A few things that need to be revisited include:

- Adult CTE and Adult Basic Education

- Affordability and the affordability standard
- Earn and learn programs, including a state work study program

Megan: Many of the details that the Board is looking for must come from engaging stakeholders in the design and implementation of the recommendations. It would be helpful to see case studies, however.

Briar: I can endorse a report that puts out such recommendations but in the long-term, the state will be better off in 10-20 years if they do so. Will it be necessary to put out a set of recommendations for the case in which the legislature is not likely to provide the needed resources?

Dennis: I'd want to listen to Sen. Baruth and Rep. James and learn what doors they want to open.

Joyce: It makes sense for the Select Committee to introduce the optimal plan and the VSC Board would consider alternatives, if need be.

III. Updates on stakeholder engagement activities

Sarah suggests that we could include unemployment claimants and partner with DOL to survey them on their experiences with and perceptions of postsecondary education.

Joyce suggests that we schedule the focus groups first and then invite Select Committee members to participate.

IV. Select Committee 12/14 meeting agenda

Brian: The agenda is light but would mirror today's discussion.

Joyce: It will be a good opportunity to hear the feedback Select Committee members have received.

V. Next steps

VI. Public comments and questions

- a. Members of the public, please share comments and questions at highercommittee@leg.state.vt.us
- b. *Please be advised that with few exceptions, any submitted documents are open to the public*

Three comments were received during the meeting and will be posted to the JFO site.

Respectfully submitted,

Candace Williams
New England Board of Higher Education