

Public Comments to Higher Ed Committee, Afternoon of Dec. 8, 2020

From: Anne Blake <anneblake1@yahoo.com>

Sent: Tuesday, December 8, 2020 2:33 PM

To: higheredcommittee <higheredcommittee@leg.state.vt.us>

Subject: Governance of VSCS

Dear Committee Members,

I would like to applaud you for all that you have accomplished in such a short amount of time! There are many great recommendations - especially concerning the future expectations of the Chancellor's Office and the Board of Trustees (BOT).

However, I am concerned about the following:

GOVERNANCE

1. If there are no changes in the direct oversight and accountability of the VSCS and the BOT by the state and they continue to operate autonomously:

- How can there be any guarantees that the recommendations will be enacted upon?
- What, if any, sanctions can or will there be if the recommendations are not followed?

2. How can preserving the status quo prevent the following from happening again?

- The fact that the governor and legislature found themselves in a position of being caught completely off guard by a proposal by the former VSC Chancellor to the Board of Trustees that would significantly impact the entire state.
- The fact that there was not a centralized office to respond effectively and timely to the emergencies in the VSC: Covid and the proposal to close three state college campuses
- The fact that the Board of Trustees (apparently) did not exercise its leadership requiring each state college to work as a system rather than independently in response to the emergencies.

I did my best diagraming the disorganized and chaotic response to Covid and the closing of 3 campuses that transpired without centralized state governance of higher ed. and what a response with centralized state governance.



3. Governance of state college systems (breakdown of 50 state higher education governance structures)

The fact that a state government could find itself in a position of being totally out of the loop when it came to closing three state college campuses, prompted me to research how other states govern their state colleges.

As you will note, Vermont is the only state without some of state oversight of higher education

I believe that any changes to governance will require a bill to be introduced which I hope the Select Committee will recommend

I plan to call in at the December 8th meeting. Thank you for taking the time to read this and the attachment.

Sincerely,
 Anne Blake
anneblake1@yahoo.com

OVERVIEW OF 50 STATES - HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNA

From Anne Blake, 8 Dec 2020; public comment

GOVERNANCE	STATES & TOTAL	EXAMPLES OF NAMES GIVEN TO GOVERNING BODIES
THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH AND GOVERNOR	25 Alaska Arizona Arkansas Colorado Connecticut Georgia Idaho Illinois Kansas Maine Mass Michigan Minnesota Missouri Montana, N.H. New Jerrey, North Dakota, PA, R.I. S.C.TN VA W.V. WI	Commission on Post Secondary Education Department of Education Postsecondary Commission Office of Higher Education State Board of Education State Board of Regents Board of Higher Education Council on Post Secondary Education Department of Higher Education Higher Education Coordinating Commission State Council of Higher Education State System of Higher Education
GOVERNOR ONLY (not a cabinet position)	1 Louisiana	Dept of Education - Board of Regents
GOVERNOR - A CABINET POSITION	8 Delaware Indiana KY Maryland N.M. Ohio Oklahoma Oregon	Reports to Secretary of Education Reports to: Commission for Higher Education Reports to the Governor Reports to: Chancellor Department of Higher Education
EXECUTIVE BRANCH ONLY (not the governor)	9 Alabama Florida Hawaii Iowa Mississippi Nebraska Utah Washington Wyoming	Board of Trustees for State Institutions of Higher Learning University of Wyoming Board of Trustees
LEGISLATURE ONLY	2 New York North Carolina	UNC Board of Governors University of NC System
LEGISLATURE AND GOVERNOR	1 Tennessee	Higher Ed Commission
THE ELECTORATE/ ELECTED BOARD	1 Nevada - under the electorate elected board	Nevada System of higher Ed and State Board of Education
AUTONOMOUS	1 Vermont	
CANNOT FIND THE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT	2 California Texas	The California Post Secondary Commission Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

From: McGough, David J. <david.mcgough@northernvermont.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, December 8, 2020 3:34 PM
To: higheredcommittee <higheredcommittee@leg.state.vt.us>
Cc: Olson, Linda J. <linda.olson@castleton.edu>; Walsh, Beth R. <brw07250@nvu.vsc.edu>
Subject: Proposal to create a single, unified public-access university: Title and Identity Concerns

This note concerns comments about the proposal to create a single unified public-access university across VT.

It appears that many commenters are concerned about the campuses losing their identities.

The *Unifying Vermont* proposal is to unify the four separate institutions and change the title of the System from the *VT State College System* to *VT State University*. This title change will present a branding opportunity for the System as a whole.

As well, per the *Unifying Vermont* proposal, each campus would maintain its identity and name--Castleton, Northern Vermont, VT Tech, & Community Campuses--to form regional hubs that are connected through a statewide network.

Indeed, per the *Unifying Vermont* proposal and the NCHEMS proposal, each campus would be supported in developing a truly unique instructional model, such as NVU's *Learning and Working Community* model, while enabling access and enhancing quality by connecting the curriculum through university-wide Schools.

There are many multi-campus, single institutions of higher education across the country and the world (See, Oxford University, Harvard University, Fairleigh Dickinson University, and Loyola University as examples). Both proposals move the System from a collection of individual schools, to a unified network of public-access higher education.

djm

David J. McGough, Ph.D.
Education Department
Interdisciplinary Graduate Program
Northern Vermont University
121 McClelland Hall
Johnson, VT 05656
432 Vail Hall
Lyndon, VT 05851
(802) 635-1416
david.mcgough@northernvermont.edu
<https://vsc.zoom.us/my/djmcgough>

Hello,

The comments I submitted on behalf of the VSC Labor Task Force at the last meeting do not seem to be posted on your website, so I am attaching our comments again.

Thank you,

Linda Olson

Dr. Linda Olson
She/Her
VP Education AFT-VT
Sociology and Women's and Gender Studies Programs
Castleton University
Castleton, VT 05735
(802)353-1965
linda.olson@castleton.edu

Vermont State College's Labor Task Force Response to National Center for Higher Education Management Systems Draft Report 11.30.20

The Vermont State College System Labor Task Force (VSC LTF) has six central areas of concern in the Draft Recommendations for the Legislative Select Committee on the future of Higher Education in Vermont prepared by National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). The VSC LTF is prepared to address and expand on these issues with the Legislative Select Committee on the future of Higher Education, but we have also prepared a brief document outlining some of our concerns.

○ **Work-force preparation:** Conversation within the Select Committee and the NCHEMS draft report indicates a desire to shift the mission of the public college system toward job-training and work-force development. The NCHEMS draft report recommends that the Community College of Vermont (CCV) should become the principal provider of sub-baccalaureate workforce-oriented education and training (p. 10). The report includes Charts 5 and 6 as supporting evidence and references the McClure Foundation Report "Pathways to Promising Careers."

There are three obvious problems with movement:

1. The VSCS already enacts strong career-preparation and has plans to expand these endeavors through careful planning and expense monitoring (see NVU Strong). For example, of the 62 listings in the McClure Report, 3 are at the doctoral and 13 are at the high school + training level, 3 are industry apprenticeships, and 5 are industry certificates. Training programs for these positions are available for lower expense than a college-credit system would permit. Of the remaining 38 jobs, Vermonters can already gain suitable training through existing VSC programs.
2. In order to operate most efficiently under the guise of life-long learning, the entire VSCS must coalesce into a unified whole-system, the Vermont State University. Separating and isolating "sub-baccalaureate workforce-oriented education and training" to one branch of the VSCS

perpetuates the balkanization of post-secondary, lifelong learning that is one of the fundamental obstacles of the existing structure.

3. As noted by many scholars of higher education, the jobs of the future do not exist in the present. As such, numerous reports have concluded that the best preparation for the future is a program that provides citizens with breadth and depth of disciplinary content along with specific skills. Instead of reducing the public-access higher education system to a job training program, we should strive to transform it into an agile network for career preparation, civic engagement, community service, and personal well-being.

○ **Shared Governance:** The VSC LTF agrees with NCHEMS that there needs to be “robust Board development program” to educate the Board about their roles and obligations to the VSCS. The Board has essentially become a rubber stamp for the Chancellor’s Office and this has had disastrous implications for the VSCS. The proposed campus closures announced by Chancellor Spaulding is one example. We do believe though that a significant part of the problem is that the Board lacks representation from those of us who do the day to day work of the college. We propose:

1. Having four representatives from the staff and faculty on the board. There is already a student representative on the Board. We believe that having faculty and staff representatives will give the Board added insight about how their decisions will impact the campuses, the students, and our ability to serve our public mission to the state of Vermont.
2. We also think term limits on Board members would enable new ideas and perspectives on the future of the VSCS.
3. Governance should be enhanced with a Faculty and Staff Senate to balance deliberations between the Board of Trustees and the Executive Team.

○ **Unification with the Community College of Vermont (CCV):** The task force rejects the idea that combining CCV with other VSC institutions would limit its flexibility and affordability as a member institution. To the contrary, it will offer greater access to resources both intellectual and physical currently unavailable to CCV students and faculty alike.

1. The VSC LTF would also like to note that the primary reason that CCV is a more affordable model than the other colleges is because it has an entirely part time faculty. In fact, it is the only community college in the country with no full-time faculty. It is the contention of the VSC LTF that this model discriminates against CCV students because they have no access to full-time faculty. It also discriminates against the part-time faculty who teach there because they are not paid a livable wage.

2. Incorporating CCV with the other VSC institutions under the umbrella of VSU would greatly ease transfer of credentials from CCV to the other institutions because there will be attention given to educational requirements of all courses at all schools.

3. Having CCV as part of the VSU will not alter CCV's original mission or its ability to partner with business to provide stackable, non-degree certificates. It will, however, enhance the ability of CCV to deliver all their programs to students, while maintaining the ability to withstand the constantly changing needs of employers because they will have more resources available to meet changing those needs creatively, nimbly and without substantial reinvestment.

○ **Branding:** Each campus must retain its individuality and identity and be able to promote its unique attributes. The recommendation to form a "Vermont State University" is aimed at unification at the systems level: To make the systemic structural changes that will increase efficiency of services and enhance transferability across all campuses.

○ **Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) recommendations:** The VSC LTF is deeply concerned that there is nothing in NCHEMS report that will limit VSAC portability.

1. As we indicated in our report unrestricted VSAC portability has diverted millions of tax dollars annually to out-of-state institutions while Vermonters who seek in-state, public-access college have no affordable option.

2. NCHEMS report talks about increasing funding to VSAC, but there is no mention about changing this policy of completely unrestricted portability. This means that even more of our tax dollars could go out of state. The lack of state support historically, combined with unrestricted portability of VSAC funds has been a recipe for disaster for our public colleges and universities. There is a reason every other state either does not allow portability of funds or places significant restrictions on them.

○ Appropriations: As with the data in the Labor Task Force Proposal, *Uniting Vermont*, the NCHEMS draft report indicates that an increase in routine state appropriations will be necessary:

1. NCHEMS recommends \$10-15M in “additional ongoing state institutional appropriations” to manage continuous improvements and another \$5M to improve affordability. This amounts to an increase of \$15-20M annually. NCHEMS also recommends a \$15-20M investment to facilitate a change in the System.

2. The Labor Task Force identified \$14M in annual expenses for executive and upper-level administration services that are duplicated across the System with, for example, four Executive Teams and a separate Chancellor’s Office and other copied upper-level office operations across the five entities. Reducing the duplicative operations at this level should garner a significant savings.

3. Taken together, a significant increase in annual appropriations partnered with a significant reduction in executive and upper-level administrative expenses, as per the *Uniting Vermont* proposal, should be primarily and directly targeted for tuition reduction as a means of increasing access to public higher education for Vermonters. Indeed, as an immediate step, a portion of the \$15-20M that NCHEMS recommends for facilitating change in the System should be immediately directed to tuition reduction.

4. Essentially, the three problems with the current System are (1) the tuition is too high, (2) the Board of Trustees and executive Teams do not enact state-of-the-art shared governance, and (3) the four institutions of the VSCS need to be united into a functional network in order to enhance access and quality. See the Labor Task Force Action Steps.

Conclusions: In the world of higher education, students are not the Point of Sale, they are the reason for our existence. We cannot be truly student driven as long as we are so heavily dependent on each student’s tuition. We, the members of the Vermont State Colleges Labor Task Force, have used the belief that the Vermont Public Higher Education system exists for the public good, and not for the benefit of the corporation, to guide our work for a United Vermont. Following this time of COVID-19, we are leaving a world where the burden is on the individual, and entering a world where the burden is shared by all of us in our communities, from local to global. This is also true of the future we envision for Public Higher Education in Vermont. The burden must be better shared by the state of Vermont, keeping our students and our communities in the forefront, being guided by a commitment to access, quality, and affordability, and fulfilling our promise for the benefit of Vermont.

John.Diebold@VTC.edu, VSCFF Jonathan.Kaplan@NorthernVermont.edu, VSCFF Alison.Lathrop@NorthernVermont.edu, VSCFF Helen.Mango@Castleton.edu, VSCFF David.McGough@NorthernVermont.edu, VSCFF Sandra.Noyes@NorthernVermont.edu, VSCSF Linda.Olson@Castleton.edu, VSCFF Beth.Walsh@NorthernVermont.edu, VSCUP Shaun.Williams@Castleton.edu, VSCUP Elizabeth.McHale@CCV.edu, CCV United

From: McGough, David J. <david.mcgough@northernvermont.edu>

Sent: Tuesday, December 8, 2020 4:02 PM

To: higheredcommittee <higheredcommittee@leg.state.vt.us>

Subject: Regarding Existing Models of System Unification

The Labor Task Force studied a number of statewide higher education unification projects (e.g. Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Georgia, and others). We also examined international innovations in higher education (the EU's Bologna Process, the emergence of Professional Vocational Universities across the East, and Labor Colleges and Degrees). It is clear that the time has come for true transformation of higher education. The *Unifying Vermont* plan includes recommendations that will help to transform public-access higher education in VT.

Our background study helps to reveal that the NCHEMS proposal is innovative in some ways, and conventional and short-sighted in others.

It is unfortunately clear that the Select Committee has adopted the NCHMES proposal in advance of a comparative background study. Conducting such a study will be helpful. The Labor Task force is willing to assist you in this process.

djm

David J. McGough, Ph.D.
Education Department
Interdisciplinary Graduate Program
Northern Vermont University
121 McClelland Hall
Johnson, VT 05656
432 Vail Hall
Lyndon, VT 05851
(802) 635-1416
david.mcgough@northernvermont.edu
<https://vsc.zoom.us/my/djmcgough>