

Steering Group of the Vermont Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education
Tuesday, January 19, 2021 - 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, Candace Williams

Minutes:

Joyce Judy: NCHEMS has testified in Senate Education and Senate Appropriations. Sen. Baruth and Rep. James have been very helpful in this process and sharing information with their colleagues.

- I. Discussion of 1/11/21 Select Committee meeting and feedback
 - a. Affordability standard

Brian: Folks have conflated the affordability standard and work study program.

Dennis: This metric's main purpose is to help legislators understand how affordable or not higher education is in Vermont.

Joyce: How do we make this section work for UVM? The legislators really like it.

Briar: I see the value of including this section. All the language in the report up to this point is very specific to VSC, so it was surprising to see UVM here. One way to address this is to include UVM in the funding request to make it parallel. Consistency throughout the report is important. Happy to work with President Garimella on some language changes.

Steering Group members summarized the points of President Garimella & Sen. Baruth during the 1/11/21 Select Committee meeting.

Brian: This conversation started with affordability for students but policymakers are thinking of investments to attract students without considering tuition discounting. This gives a false impression of institutional health.

Sarah: Including the affordability standard in a footnote or appendix would agree with the scope of the report. But if you can find agreement that allows it to be fully included, a note could be added to suggest this as an area for future, further study.

Brian: Inclusion of UVM relates to the scope in terms of shared services, access and program availability. The question to include them at all persists, as does avoiding unfunded mandates.

b. State work study program

Dennis: We're talking with Heather and Sarah about how this section connects with other earn and learn strategies in Vermont, such as apprenticeships.

Joyce Judy: We should move away from this term as people assume it's Title IV financial aid.

Heather: What about the term "Workforce Immersion"?

Sarah: The aims are to broker workforce connections and create paid work experiences. In addition, the goal would be to retain graduates in Vermont.

Briar: The legislature's interest in exploring synergies across the higher education ecosystem makes sense, as long as they are beneficial to all partners. We are interested in driving innovative change and doing so across two leadership structures creates obstacles.

Joyce: Right now, the legislature's funding allows us only to consider our ongoing existence and not much more. The legislature previously challenged us to combine operations but not much came out of that investigation.

c. Analysis of cost of inaction

Brian: As this will be new information, it will be elevated in the executive summary.

Joyce: Including a stronger emphasis on the current financial challenges in the executive summary would be useful. People may have lost sight of the very real financial status of the colleges.

Sarah: I don't think it's up to us to quantify the economic impact in the case of closure.

Megan: It's worth reminding the reader that the fates of the four institution hang together.

II. Expectations for 2/12/21 report submission

Brian: Another redline draft will come next week, ahead of the steering group meeting on the 2/2. At this point, we will go over the expectations for the 2/12 report. There will be adjustments to the executive summary.

III. Discussion of NCHEMS role vs. role of Select Committee in representing the report and its recommendations

Joyce: Allowing Sen. Baruth and Rep. James take the lead in summarizing the activities of the Select Committee makes sense. We will continue to testify as a team.

IV. Update on stakeholder engagement activities

V. Public comments and questions

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

No public comments.

Joyce Manchester: Revenue projections are looking better now than they did in the August forecast – up \$160 million. Legislators are talking about what one time investments can be made from that pot.

Respectfully submitted,

Candace Williams
New England Board of Higher Education