

**Vermont Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education**  
**Monday, February 8, 2021 - 3:30pm**  
**Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

**Present:**

Members: 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, Briar Alpert, Wendy Koenig

Others: Sally Johnstone, Dennis Jones, Joyce Manchester, Brian Prescott, Michael Thomas, Charlotte Peysner, Megan Cluver

**Minutes:**

- I. Review and discussion of changes to 12/4 report

Executive Summary

Brian:

- New Recommendations included in executive summary (not new recommendations)
  - Urgency
  - Statewide objectives
  - Affordability standard
- New presentation of state investments (4 tables now)—bringing more clarity to these tables and bring clarity around select committee’s focus on structural deficit—continuing discussion about what this amount will be, federal stimulus has already helped in this regard
- Not in the executive summary, but plan to include implementation steps, some with suggested timelines (within domain of VSC board)
- Changes to language: adult CTE, adult education and literacy, streamline discussion around affordability standard to clarify as a metric rather than mechanism for distribution of state aid
- New minimum data policy
- New recommendation: requirement for high school graduates to complete FAFSA
- Tried to adjust language around role of Chancellor’s office and consolidation of administrative operations to clarify Select Committee’s recommendations

Joyce:

- Figure 5 is really helpful—helps to explain how this all works: state appropriation, transformation costs are going down

Sandy:

- Appreciate leadership Steering Committee has provided in document—very clear

Rep. James:

- Investments in transformation: want a little bit more on this—more specific laundry list of the kind of things we’re talking about regarding what “transformation” means (5<sup>th</sup> recommendation in the recommendation section)

Brian:

- Transformation is subject to Board's discretion, but broadly speaking includes: activities that lead to greater academic sharing, engagement with accreditors, branding associated with shifting from multiple institutions to one, state board has been meeting frequently within the last year--there are expenses associated with that, external assistance to facilitate changes

Dennis:

- New administrative data systems will be a transformation cost

Brian:

- Operational transformation versus capital transformation are now included in one line item—repurposing physical space or demolishing buildings that are no longer useful
- Deferred maintenance falls under capacity

Sen. Baruth:

- VT legislature articulating goals in statute—amenable to this discussion
- Chancellor Spaulding released a plan that did not include who was responsible for closing/consolidating campuses—legislature decided that trustees held the power to cease operations, but not to sell campuses
- We have to articulate what exactly the trustees have the authority to do and what the legislature has the authority to do in terms of campus closures/mergers
- Right now it seems that the legislature is in charge of selling a campus, but unclear who has the power to shut campus operations down
- This discussion should be raised to the committees of jurisdiction

Sophie:

- Have to determine who is responsible for selling/leasing out individual buildings on campuses for alternative uses
- Statute has not changed since 1963 where VSC was given jurisdiction over the properties

Sarah:

- Make specific recommendations around adult CTE and adult education and literacy programs?
- Recommending that we not make specific recommendations but say that there is an opportunity to connect adult system better with VSC—the purpose for doing this is not organizational, it's a way to expand the customer of the VSCS and provide a more seamless experience in accessing more points of adult education—worthy of additional clarification?
- Interest in putting a finer point of the opportunity to provide a dedicated organizational component that is tasked with providing outreach and services to employers to connect them with trainings, programs, certificates as a new revenue source for VSCS—if this is of interest, this should be made more clear (support from Sandy, Megan Cluver, Sophie, Rep. James)

Sandy:

- Should be stronger language around involving small and mid-size employers (because there are not a lot of large employers in VT)

Steve:

- Should also involve associations (i.e. hospital system) and business roundtables rather than focus solely on individual employers

Sarah:

- Use example of VTC as organizer/intermediary for companies who do electrical work—help to place apprentices and employees

Brian:

- Some of these items are in the document when speaking of the role of the Chancellor's office (including a particular need for employer/workforce development services)—should this be raised earlier in the document rather than housed in section on how to serve students better?

Joyce:

- Perhaps this should be included in the recommendations to avoid making the executive summary too long
- Executive summary should be the highlights, recognizing that it's not inclusive of everything we have to say
- Include at a high level in executive summary and get into more detail in recommendations

Sophie:

- Note page numbers where individuals can find more information on a given subject within the executive summary

### Recommendations

Sarah:

- FAFSA completion recommendation: why would VT adopt this? What are naysayers going to say? Will high school graduation rates go down if students do not complete the FAFSA?

Brian:

- Recommendation is inspired by other states that have this in place—tends to lead to more students thinking about college possibilities, addressing cost gaps and affordability concerns, and getting a financial plan in place

Heather:

- Have been doing this work with VSAC for a long time in terms of universal FAFSA completion—will not be a surprise to the field
- To actually complete the FAFSA form, parents need to share information—this could be a point of contention

Scott:

- Only 55% of students are completing, which translates to 90% of students on VSCS campuses—it's a strong point
- Are all students going to be required to complete the FAFSA knowing that not all students are not going to attend postsecondary education?
- Some states had Promise programs in place as well—closely linked
- If students are not going to attend college, there could be a requirement to complete the next step in students' path (i.e. apprenticeship application)

Dennis:

- Chicago Public Schools have this requirement and have seen an uptick in FAFSA completion and college attendance

Heather:

- Personalized learning plan already in place—could include FAFSA completion in this requirement
- Completing the FAFSA and understanding how much funding students are eligible for could mean an increase in college consideration and subsequent enrollment

Daniel:

- Is forcing students to do something yield the desired result? Would like to see more correlation studies here on FAFSA completion versus college attendance

Steve:

- How is system going to positively impact issues ongoing in VT workforce? We have a problem finding professionals to fill roles—the VSCS should be addressing this—could be very appealing to the legislature because it ties back to jobs and the economy
- Value proposition: how can VSCS help provide a workforce in the next 8 years?

Sarah:

- Expand availability of paid internships—there is evidence of ROI even with 8 week internships—students are more likely to apply to work at their internship host, employers are better connected to education providers
- Highlight paid work experiences in college

Sandy:

- Have to consider that, in light of COVID, employers do not have to limit searches to Vermonters

Jeff:

- Seeing more and more job postings leaning away from degree requirements and more toward skill sets (which are clearly achieved through higher education)—but the missing piece is even if individuals do not have a postsecondary degree, they will reach a point where they will need a soft skill to advance in their careers—VSCS has a role to play here
- VSCS could be entrepreneurial and fill this role—provide flexible, next-level training for employees—can do it remotely

Joyce:

- Recommendation 3—is economic development aspect not strong enough?

Steve:

- Economic and workforce are different
- VSC has to internalize efforts to play a role in workforce development—has to be internal and VSCS has to make the commitment
- Who has to do the “elevating?” It’s the role of the VSCS

Brian:

- Legislature has to specify that the VSCS has to commit to this—expect VSCS institutions to serve as a workforce development entity

Daniel:

- Difference between student wants and workforce needs—have to find a balance, but it’s hard to articulate

- Have to provide workforce development for those who are already in the workforce, but also have to realize that some students are not considering what's available in the workforce and, instead, focusing on the degree path they want to pursue

Megan:

- Suggestions that the legislature should set metrics to hold system accountable—should the Committee be prescriptive on what those metrics are? Traditional metrics should be measured, but adding upskilling, job placement for those able to work remotely, other more innovative metrics could be recommended by the Committee

Brian:

- If legislature specifies workforce development as a need, metrics will focus on this

Sandy:

- Is there a way of acknowledging the role of innovation beyond Vermont? Making sure students are prepared to be employed in a larger arena/prepared for remote work

Sarah:

- Seeing a more entrepreneurial turn in labor force—scaling study in entrepreneurial supports could be an early win (already offered at CCV and VTC)

Dennis:

- Link students to other entrepreneurs rather than big companies

Steve:

- Most important recommendation is for legislature to provide strategic objectives to VSCS—everything else will flow from that

Sophie:

- Part of the job of the Board to figure this out, but there will be input from the legislature

Brian:

- This theme has emerged in focus groups re: how investments should be allocated
- We are close to hitting the mark on all of these items—just need some refinement

### *Final thoughts*

Scott:

- Affordability standard changes—works well from a VSAC perspective, beginning conversation grounded in data

Rep. James:

- Increasing funding for VSAC for aid to low-income students in context of grant portability—thought that this conversation is beyond the scope of Select Committee and had talked about excluding this element

Brian:

- This item is intended to spark discussion around whether grant portability is appropriate in Vermont—intent is to have grant dollars go to VT students who attend VT institutions—not intended to address existing allocations of grant dollars

Scott:

- Challenge with funding model in front of us is that it doesn't directly deal with affordability challenges—insofar as there's additional money to deal with this, VSAC would be supportive—how this plays with the grant program would require nuance

Joyce:

- Portability is beyond the scope of this group—it is up to the legislature
- We can flag it, but this report should be silent on the portability issue

Jeff:

- Misstep to recommend a naming convention—everything else in report is based on research and understanding, naming element is not—a specific name should not be recommended in this report

### Implementation Steps

II. Plan for 2/12/21 report submission

Brian:

- Will refine this draft based on this discussion and circulate the updated draft by Wednesday, February 10
- Committee should submit comments by 7:00PM EST on Thursday, February 11

III. Update from January focus groups

IV. Next steps

V. Public comments and questions

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

See website for posted public comments.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlotte Peyser

New England Board of Higher Education