

Thursday, April 6 Statement – Van Dora Williams
House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development
Vermont Film and Creative Media Commission H.434

THANK YOU FOR THE INVITATION TO SPEAK TO THE COMMITTEE ON THE IMPACT A FILM AND CREATIVE MEDIA COMMISSION WILL HAVE ON COLLEGE STUDENTS AND GRADUATES WHO HAVE A PASSION FOR AND WANT TO HAVE A CAREER IN THESE FIELDS.

I HAVE BEEN IN THE FILM AND BROADCAST INDUSTRY FOR OVER 30 YEARS BEFORE I MOVED INTO HIGHER EDUCATION. MUCH OF MY WORK FOCUSED ON DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING AND JOURNALISM. AS AN EDUCATOR, I BELIEVE THAT, BRINGING PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE INTO THE CLASSROOM IS KEY TO PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE INDUSTRY. AT CHAMPLAIN COLLEGE, THAT'S ONE OF OUR CORE GOALS TO GET STUDENTS "READY", CHAMPLAIN READY WHEN THEY GRADUATE.

CHAMPLAIN IS KNOWN FOR ITS CREATIVE MEDIA PROGRAMS WHICH INCLUDE FILMMAKING, BROADCAST, PROFESSIONAL WRITING, GRAPHIC DESIGN, AND GAME STUDIO MAJORS. MANY OF OUR STUDENT WORK HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED REGIONALLY AT THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF TELEVISION ARTS AND SCIENCES NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER BY EARNING SEVERAL STUDENT PRODUCTION AWARDS...THE STUDENTS CALL THEM THE STUDENT EMMYS; OUR STUDENTS SUBMIT THEIR FILMS, VIDEOS AND SCREENPLAYS TO LOCAL AND NATIONAL FILM FESTIVALS AND THEY HAVE HAD THEIR WORK SHOWN ON LOCAL AND STATEWIDE BROADCAST NETWORKS. WE ARE VERY PROUD OF THE WORK OUR STUDENTS CREATE AND WE WANT TO SEE THEM DO MORE OF THAT WORK IN THE STATE OF VERMONT.

AT THE COLLEGE, WE endeavor to be AWARE OF THE CURRENT TRENDS IN THE INDUSTRY AND ONE TREND OF CONVERGING TECHNOLOGIES IS ONE THAT WE SEE AND ARE ADDRESSING IN OUR PROGRAMS. INDUSTRY IS INTEGRATING THE FILM, BROADCAST AND GAMING TECHNOLOGIES FOR NARRATIVE, NONFICTION, DOCUMENTARY AND EXPERIMENTAL MEDIA. AS AN EXAMPLE, THE FOLLOWING

FILMS USED THE UNREAL GAME ENGINE: MANDALORIAN, READY PLAYER ONE AND HBO'S WESTWORLD. I SAY THIS TO APPLAUD THE COMMITTEE ON MAKING ROOM FOR OTHER CREATIVE MEDIA LIKE GAMING.

ALONG WITH THE TRADITIONAL METHODS OF PRODUCTION, WE ARE TRAINING OUR STUDENTS TO COMBINE THE GAMING TECHNOLOGY, VIRTUAL SETS AND VIRTUAL PRODUCTION IN THEIR WORK. AS AN EXAMPLE, IN THE FALL WE WILL LAUNCH TWO NEW PROGRAMS IN INTERACTIVE NARRATIVE AND ANIMATION. WE SEE A GROWING TREND OF YOUNG PEOPLE PURSUING CAREERS IN THESE FIELDS AND AS AN EDUCATOR WE STRIVE TO GET THEM READY FOR THAT CAREER. WE ALSO SEE A TREND OF EMPLOYERS LOOKING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO CAN CREATE CONTENT IN THESE NEW FIELDS.

PART OF OUR GOAL IS TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR STUDENTS TO WORK WITH INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS USING THIS TECHNOLOGY. AND MOST OF OUR STUDENTS TRY TO GET THIS EXPERIENCE OUTSIDE OF VERMONT.

THIS IS WHERE THE FILM AND CREATIVE MEDIA COMMISSION CAN BE A GREAT RESOURCE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION. WE WOULD LOVE TO HAVE A CENTRAL PLACE TO GO TO LEARN OF AND POSSIBLY GAIN ACCESS TO INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS LIKE PRODUCERS, WRITERS, CINEMATOGRAPHERS, EDITORS, DOCUMENTARIANS WHO ARE HERE IN VERMONT. BUT IT WOULD BE FANTASTIC TO KNOW OF OUT OF STATE PRODUCTION COMPANIES WHO PLAN TO FILM IN VERMONT. WE OFTEN GET REQUESTS FROM PRODUCTION COMPANIES TO HAVE OUR STUDENTS WORK AS PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS AND WE WOULD LIKE MORE OF THAT TO HAPPEN. USUALLY, THESE REQUESTS COME AFTER THE SEMESTER HAS STARTED AND IT CAN BE CHALLENGING FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS TO COORDINATE WORKING WORK ON A PROFESSIONAL FILM SET AND MANAGING THEIR ACADEMIC COURSE LOAD. I BELIEVE HAVING A STATE FILM COMMISSION CAN HELP WITH MAKING THOSE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE IN A MORE ORGANIZED FASHION SO THE FACULTY AND STUDENTS ARE AWARE OF THESE PRODUCTIONS EARLIER. THIS WOULD BE A GREAT RESOURCE FOR OUR STUDENTS TO USE FOR EMPLOYMENT.

LET ME SAY A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT THIS. HAVING A PAID INTERNSHIP IN FILMMAKING, BROADCAST, GAMING AND INTERACTIVE WRITING CAN ONLY ENHANCE STUDENT LEARNING. CURRENTLY, WE HAVE THREE PROGRAMS THAT REQUIRE AN INTERNSHIP AND THAT IS DOABLE BECAUSE THERE IS AN INDUSTRY PRESENCE THAT SUPPORTS OUR PROGRAMS. STUDENTS IN FILMMAKING AND GAMING SEEK INTERNSHIPS OUTSIDE OF VERMONT DUE TO THE LACK OF THOSE INDUSTRIES HERE. THEY CURRENTLY TRAVEL TO MONTREAL, NEW YORK, MASSACHUSETTS AND CALIFORNIA TO PURUSE INTERNSHIPS IF THEY CAN AFFORD IT. HAVING A CENTRALIZED PLACE WHERE STUDENTS CAN APPLY FOR VERMONT INTERNSHIPS AND JOBS IN THE CREATIVE MEDIA INDUSTRIES WILL STRENGTHEN RETENTION.

I WILL SHARE SOME EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION ABOUT OUR GRADUATES. IN 2019, OUR GRADUATES FROM THE GAME STUDIO, FILMMAKING, BROADCAST MAJORS WERE ABLE TO GET EMPLOYMENT IN CA, NY, NJ, MASS, CT, COLORADO, NORTH CAROLINA, QUEBEC AND SOME IN VERMONT. IN 2020 AND 2021, THERE WAS AN INCREASE OF OUR GRADUATES GOING TO CA, MASS, NY, NJ, AND QUEBEC FOR WORK. EVEN LESS STAYED IN VERMONT. SOME REASONS OUR GRADUATES LEFT THE STATE WERE LACK OF OPPORTUNITY AND LACK OF HOUSING. THEY ARE GOING TO THE HUBS WHERE THEY CAN THRIVE. I HAVE NOTICED A TREND OF MORE SOUTHERN STATES LIKE NC, TX, SC AND FL BECOMING A DRAW FOR OUR GRADUATES.

HAVING A VERMONT FILM AND CREATIVE MEDIA COMMISSION DEDICATED TO GROWING THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN THE STATE WILL HELP COLLEGES LIKE CHAMPLAIN RECRUIT AND RETAIN YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WILL SHARE THEIR WONDERFUL TALENT IN THE MAKING OF CREATIVE CONTENT THAT HIGHLIGHT THE BEAUTY, PEOPLE AND PLACES OF VERMONT.