

Thank you for allowing me to address you today.

My name is Beth Walsh and I am the Coordinator of Career Development at Johnson State College and the President of the Vermont State Colleges United Professionals, AFT (American Federation of Teachers) Vermont, local 6217, AFL-CIO.

I speak for all of us at AFT Vermont when I say that we want to express our appreciation for the support that Governor Scott has shown to the Vermont State Colleges by including \$770,000 in the budget adjustment to help fund the unification of Johnson State College and Lyndon State College, soon to be known as Northern Vermont University.

Unifying our two campuses is the right thing to do for many reasons. We will be able to increase educational opportunities for our students by offering additional classes, courses of study, faculty and other human resources, affording students a more rapid path to graduation. The northern tier of Vermont will be better served with one larger institution providing a specialized career applied liberal arts education on our two campuses.

Now is the right time to do this for a number of reasons. This proactive response to upcoming challenges addresses the need to find financial economies in a trying time for New England institutions of higher ed. The unique window in time was created by several administrative vacancies, as well as the need for an early decision to meet accreditation and federal financial aid deadlines.

For many reasons, it is imperative that the State of Vermont, our Governor and our legislators provide the support that our young Vermonters require. In 1961 the enabling legislation that created the Vermont State College System said the state would support it in "whole or substantial part." (<http://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/16/072/02171>) Appropriations from the state have fallen from 50% in 1980 to the current 16% (<https://29dj2p23zy5gsrxeee4mso9d-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/VSC-Financial-Statements-2016.pdf>) . This puts Vermont near the very bottom of several lists measuring state spending on higher education in our country (http://sheeo.org/sites/default/files/project-files/SHEEO_FY15_Report_051816.pdf). As you can imagine, the Vermont State Colleges have done much over the last 3 and a half decades to tighten our belts, while maintaining high quality educational experiences for our students.

Please stand by the Vermont State College System and support the \$770,000 that will allow us to prepare and promote our wonderful institutions and help us generate confidence in Northern Vermont University...confidence that Vermont will stand behind us and confidence that this unification will continue to serve our state and our young people long into the future.

Thank you

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