

My name is Dr. Julie Theoret. I am a Professor of Mathematics at Johnson State College. I have been a full-time faculty member at JSC since 2008. I was a full-time faculty member at Lyndon State College from 2000 until 2008.

I wholeheartedly support Chancellor Spaulding's request for a \$4 million increase to the Vermont State College System with an annual inflator. I urge you to support Representative Hill's bill H122.

When I began teaching at LSC, I came to realize how poorly funded the Vermont State Colleges were. It has progressively gotten worse. Today, less than 16% of the VSC revenue comes from the state. This means more than 84% comes from student tuition. Nationally, we rank at the bottom in terms of state support for public higher education. This results in one of the highest tuitions in the country. On average, our students graduate with more student debt than students from other states. On average, VSC employees have lower salaries than employees in comparable institutions.

In 1961 the enabling legislation that created the VSC said the state would support the VSC in "whole or substantial part". You don't have to be a mathematics professor to know that 16% is neither "whole" nor "substantial". The last time state appropriations represented more than 50% of the VSC's revenue was in 1980.

Over half of all VSC students are first-generation college students; 83% are Vermonters, and 84% stay in the state to live and work after graduation. We need more young Vermonters to stay and work in this state, not less. Vermont is aging. Who will do the jobs we already have when people retire? How will we attract companies that will bring new jobs, if we don't have an educated workforce in the state?

Investing in public higher education is not just about helping students. It is about helping Vermont. We cannot afford to ignore this problem any longer. Vermont's vitality and economic future are at stake.

In recent years, the VSC has undertaken many cost-cutting measures, while trying to maintain a high-quality education for our students. This is getting more and more difficult. Recently, the VSC Board of Trustees voted to unify JSC and LSC into one institution, Northern Vermont University. This is a huge undertaking that has come about because of the lack of state funding. Both LSC and JSC provide an invaluable service to Vermonters. NVU will surely do the same. With this unification, the VSC is once again trying to cut costs without sacrificing academic quality. It is time for the state of Vermont to start investing in the Vermont State College System once again. Waiting is not an option. Representative Hill's bill H122 is a great place to start.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share something I feel so passionately about.