

My name is Louis Palmer. I am a professor at Castleton University, where I have taught since 2000.

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

We recently changed our name from Castleton State College to Castleton University. I hope that this name change doesn't mean that we will be adopting the funding model of the University of Vermont, which has come to rely on bringing in out-of-state students as the majority in order to support its programs.

In the sixteen years that I have taught at Castleton, Vermont has consistently been at the bottom in national comparisons in terms of support for higher education, and the percentage of support has steadily declined. We have a chart that we call the crocodile because it shows constantly rising student costs against constantly declining state support since the early 1980's when the two were about even. The ascending line of expenses and the descending line of support look like the jaws of a crocodile with its mouth wide open.

This crocodile is devouring the future of Vermont. Many of my students would like to stay here, but feel that they must leave because of the high debt burden they carry and the fact that they can make more money out of the state.

These students are the lucky ones have been able to stay in college for four years and graduate, despite Vermont's lack of support. Staying behind are the ones who didn't get a college degree.

57% of our students are first-generation college students. Currently, 83% of VSC students are Vermonters, and 86% of them stay in Vermont for their careers. Vermont needs to encourage its educated young people to stay. I would hate to see the day when Vermont State Colleges serve only affluent Vermonters and out-of-staters.

Chancellor Spaulding's request is only a first step in reversing these trends and investing in Vermont's future. I urge you to support it.

Louis H Palmer, III
English Department
Castleton University
6 Alumni Drive
Castleton, VT 05735

802-468-1341
louis.palmer@castleton.edu