

**Testimony Prepared for the Senate Commerce Committee**  
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Good morning. My name is Elaine Collins, President of Northern Vermont University. I appreciate the opportunity to share with you today how the Vermont State College System and Northern Vermont University (NVU) continue to make a positive impact on workforce development.

Since my time is limited this morning, I would like to underscore the fact that the VT State College System is a major engine in the generation of the VT workforce. Our alumni have served and continue to serve as mayors, police chiefs, actors, artists, teachers, scientists, outdoor explorers, guides, and business and community leaders to name a few.

What you may not know, however, are some of the most recent developments at Northern VT University. So I would like to present two examples – one specific to NVU’s Johnson campus and one specific to NVU’s Lyndon campus – to illustrate our current efforts to develop a strong workforce.

In 2016, I commissioned a study that mined the distribution of professional licenses awarded by the Vermont Office of Professional Regulation across a decade (2006-2016). My purpose was to illustrate clearly the impact of NVU (Johnson) on the professional landscape of the entire state, even outside the typical urban areas of Chittenden County. Given JSC’s long standing history in Counseling Education, I was not surprised to find that the fields of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counseling and Allied Mental Health are areas where the impact of NVU Johnson is substantial. Out of a total of 708 Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors licensed by the State of Vermont in that timeframe, 7.6% of them attended JSC. Similarly, there are 2,117 Allied Mental Health practitioners licensed by the State of Vermont, and 9.5% or 202, attended Johnson. Given the concerns all Vermonters have regarding the need to address the effects of drug (opiate), and alcohol addiction, alcohol and drug counseling, as well as graduate and undergraduate mental health programs, are vital in producing strong numbers of professionals to engage today’s challenging and rewarding work in counseling.

At the Lyndon campus, we are currently working to produce a co-working space that will be housed in Lyndonville at the former Bag Balm building in support of startup businesses and entrepreneurs. Funding partners for this venture include Northern VT Development Association, Northern Counties Health Care, Northern VT Regional Hospital and the North Country Federal Credit Union. Our hope is that the curated environment of creativity and self-starter energy will give rise to organic networking for professionals to share ideas and collaborate. More tangibly, the space will provide access to high speed internet not readily available in the rural area needed to develop business. Events and classes will be an integral part of the space offerings. Tapping into teaching expertise from NVU (Lyndon) and other education partners, classes in social media

marketing, project management, and design thinking will build expertise for today's fast-paced competitive marketplace.

I'll stop here to allow my colleagues to share the wonderful work that is happening on their campuses, but I am available to you at any time to answer any questions you have about these projects or to learn about other examples of workforce development that are currently in progress at NVU. Thank you.