

## Theresa Utton-Jerman

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**Subject:** FW: Budget Priorities 2020

**From:** Olson, Linda J.

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Thank you for giving us the opportunity to express what we want to see as budget priorities this year. I would like to see the state adequately support public higher education. Here is my testimony:

1. Vermont currently ranks 49 out of 50 states for state support for higher education
  - a. This results in one of the highest tuitions in the country for public higher education (Second highest tuition in the country)
  - b. This means our students on average graduate with more student debt than students from other states
  - c. The employees of the VSC on average have lower salaries than in employees in comparable institutions elsewhere
2. There has been a dwindling of state support:
  - a. Vermont has not always neglected higher education, but state support has consistently been reduced since 1980. In 1980, state appropriations covered 51% of the costs of the VSC. Currently they pay for less than 14% of the costs.
  - b. Since 1980, the burden of higher education costs has been transferred to tuition which has consistently gone up.
  - c. Sharing a personal testimonial of a student who had to leave college because of the financial burden would be powerful too.
3. Facts about our students:
  - a. 83% of our students are Vermonters
  - b. 84% of our students stay and work in Vermont after graduation
  - c. 57% of our students are first generation college students
4. An Investment in PUBLIC Higher Education is an Investment in Vermont:
  - a. Since the majority of our students stay and work in Vermont after graduation, an investment in their education truly is an investment in the future well-being of the state. They are our teachers, nurses, small business owners.
  - b. We have an aging population, it is critical that we keep our young people in Vermont after graduation.
5. What can we do?

- a. Support the Chancellor Spaulding's proposal for 5 million increase each year for the next 5 years (25 million total) to bring us up to the national average in terms of state appropriation
- c. Support free tuition for all Vermonters at all VSCS colleges and universities

Thank you so much!

Linda Olson

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She/Her

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