

Why We Need Free Tuition at Public Colleges in Vermont

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My name is Taylor Sanders and I am a full time student at Castleton University. This is my senior year and I am a sociology major with a women's and gender studies minor. I am here to share my struggles as a college student in Vermont. I currently pay my own way by working 20 to 25 hours a week as a hostess at a restaurant. What I make does not cover all of my expenses so I supplement my income with student loans. Some weeks I need to decide whether to pay for gas or food. I am currently \$25,000 in debt and this is true despite the fact that the first two years of college tuition and housing were paid for through scholarships and my dad's GI bill. My breaking point was the night I decided I had to take more loans out in order to reduce my burden. This debt will probably mean I will have postpone adulthood and move in with my parents, which many of my friends are also doing. My plan after paying off some of my student loan debt is to move to a more affordable state. There is little chance that I could support myself in Vermont with the debt I have accumulated. Much as I love this state, settling is not going to be an option.

I am here today not only for myself, but also my roommate who could not be here today because she had to work. She is currently working to get her BSN at Castleton, but she is also an LN working the night shift at Porter Hospital 20 hours a week. She gets out of her shift at 11pm and then has to drive 45 minutes back home to Castleton. She has always been an excellent student both at CCV and Castleton, but last semester her schedule was too much for her and she ended up on academic probation. The stress meant that for her own well-being she reduced her school schedule to part time. Jasmina, a first generation American, is just trying to make her life

easier. She is also working in a field that is suffering from a statewide shortage. It seems to me we want to attract and keep students like Jasmina and me and not make our lives more difficult to stay in school, to graduate and to contribute to Vermont after graduation.

Thank you for your time.