

Dear Vermont House and Senate Committees on Appropriations,

I have been teaching at Castleton University School of Nursing since 2014. During my tenure, I have helped to educate over 700 nurses. I have the pleasure of teaching first-year students a course entitled "First Year Seminar", which will be called "Connections", beginning in the fall of 2021. It has been a joy to teach these young students in their very first class, on their very first day of college. I know first-hand how vulnerable these students, many of them first-generation college students from working-class families (like me), can be. The small campus and relationship-based philosophy of Castleton University instrumental to their success.

There are four particular areas in which I see Castleton University as incredible value to the future of Vermont. The first, of course, is the School of Nursing. It is common knowledge that our current nursing force has reached retirement age and we need thousands of new nurses to take their place. This is also an issue for our aging population in general as Vermont remains one of the oldest populations in The United States. We need well-trained, Bachelor's prepared Registered Nurses to care for the most vulnerable among us, the elderly and the sick.

The second area of importance, as I see it, is the Education Department which is teaching the teachers of the future. Vermont has many school-aged children, we want to attract more young families and keep the young families we have. To do this we will need top-notch educators to serve our Vermont schools. We need to continue the mission of educating our young people who feel called to teaching. This is the same with our Athletic Department. The Athletic Department is training the workforce who will keep us all healthy and engaged in meaningful movement at all stages in our life span. Lastly, but certainly not least, is our Business Department who is educating the entrepreneurs and business owners and managers of the future. Vermont is all about business both small and large and we need to keep educating competent business people to carry that torch.

I live in Castleton and I know that Castleton University is greatly valued in our community. Community members enjoy the cultural offerings of the Art, Theater, and Music Departments, and the sports competitions. The local community also appreciate the hospitality and generosity of Castleton University which enthusiastically shares its space with summer sports camps, The Boston Crusaders, the Quakers, and The Governor's Art Institute just to name a few. The town of Castleton also enjoys the Calvin Coolidge Library, the Shape program, the pool, and tennis courts. I could go on. As you can see, Castleton University is serving the needs of the State and the local community in many wonderful ways.

Our Vermont college students deserve an affordable option for college. Vermonters are paying one of the highest tuition rates in the United States and are left with a large student loan debt after graduation. One of the reasons our young people are leaving Vermont is because they are burdened with significant student debt and cannot earn enough money in Vermont to pay their student loan payments and start an independent life. As you well know, Vermont has a very high cost of living and the working wages are very low compared to other nearby states. Please consider the Chancellor's Office funding request for FY 2022. We owe it to our young Vermonters now. Vermont will benefit from their accomplishments in the very near future.

Respectfully submitted,
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