

Theresa Utton-Jerman

Subject: Public comment to Vermont House and Senate Committees on Appropriations

To: Vermont House and Senate Committees on Appropriations
From: Mary Droege, Castleton, VT
Re: Governor's Recommended FY 2022 State Budget

As a 25 year resident of the Town of Castleton, I would like to make the following statements into the public record:

1. There is incredible value that each VSCS campus brings to its local community and the state. This is difficult to measure, however that doesn't mean it isn't real and significant. CU students are the life blood of Rutland County, they are prized employees and many start their own businesses. Many decide to stay and raise a family becoming valued citizens in an area where the population is aging and employers are begging for an educated workforce.
2. Our Vermont students need an affordable option for college. They are currently paying one of the highest tuitions in the country and carry more debt after graduation. College, and especially state colleges simply must be affordable. I have witnessed students in tears over describing their debt. It is simply wrong that our state schools are some of the most expensive in the country!
3. The VSCS Chancellor's Office has respectfully requested 67.4 million for FY 2022. The Governor's budget proposes \$25 million less than what the Chancellor's office has requested. Please restore the budget to the full \$67.4 million urgently needed by the VSCS.
4. The VT Legislature has been negligent in its funding for the VSCS for decades now. Since the 1980s state funding has decreased. This is the real cause of today's VSCS financial crisis. Chronic underfunding which leads to increases in tuition that leads to lower enrollment and higher student debt.

5. **Please! Fulfill your promise!**

The promise outlined in [Title 16: Education Chapter 72: Vermont State Colleges:](#)

§ 2171. Corporation established; purposes; powers

- (a) There is created as a part of the educational system of the State of Vermont a public corporation to be known as "Vermont State Colleges" or any other name that the Board of Trustees, established under section 2172 of this chapter, selects at a meeting duly warned for that purpose, provided that the word "Vermont" shall appear in the selected name. The Corporation shall plan, supervise, administer, and operate facilities for education at the postsecondary level **supported in whole or in substantial part with State funds;**

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Droege

Castleton, Vermont