

February 13, 2021

Dear Senators,

Thank you for your consideration of the Vermont State College System's requests for support this year. We are working hard to transform the system, using the reports of the *Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education in Vermont* as a guide. Our shared goal is to unify Castleton University, Northern Vermont University, and Vermont Technical College under a common accreditation. This will create one vibrant, student-centered university that provides accessibility to students across the state, regardless of home campus or location. We are looking at developing one set of policies, practices, and business procedures across the system wherever possible to streamline what we do, eliminate duplication, and focus on adding value for our students, for the state, and for our host communities. These administrative changes will affect both the new combined entity and our fourth institution, the Community College of Vermont.

We want to create the most innovative and flexible VSCS organization we can, understanding that higher education and the wider world will continue to change. We want to ensure that we are positioning the VSCS for the future – whatever that might look like. As such, we have a significant request for state support this year.

In H.439, *An act relating to making appropriations for the support of government*, you will find a \$97 million appropriation for the Vermont State Colleges System. This includes:

- \$30.5 million in our regular base appropriation,
- \$5 million permanent increase to the base,
- \$21 million in bridge funding to address our current structural deficit,
- \$20 million in Transformation money to support system transformation over the next four years, and
- \$20.5 million in Critical Occupations Scholarships and Workforce Development funding.

Additionally, in H.315, *An act relating to COVID-19 relief*, you will find:

- \$3 million in a second Workforce Development Initiative,
- \$1.4 million to stand up a Practical Nursing Program at Long-Term Care Facilities statewide, and
- \$2.8 million to VSAC for Vermont High School graduates in the Class of 2020 or 2021 to take up to two courses at VSCS institutions.

The first two of these requests, the Workforce Development Initiative and the Practical Nursing Program Funding, are duplicative in that they are found in both H.315 *as passed by the House and Senate* and in H.439, *as passed by the House*.

In addition to these two requests, we shared an updated list of our unfunded COVID-19 expenses with the Committee. Like colleges and universities across the country, we are experiencing continuous expenses related to the pandemic, particularly in information technology (IT) and building heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC). The items on this list are not otherwise covered by H.439 or H.315 and are limited to costs incurred as a result of the pandemic.

With the funding in H.429, the House also included success metrics and accountability standards for the VSCS to meet in the coming years. We recognize the significant investment the state has made in our schools, our students, and our system, especially in the last twelve months. We welcome being held accountable and the opportunity to work in partnership with the state to accomplish our shared goals of system transformation for a better future for our students, our schools, and the state in the years to come.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at Sophie.Zdatny@vsc.edu or to VSCS Director of External and Governmental Affairs, Katherine Levasseur at Katherine.Levasseur@vsc.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "SZdatny". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sophie Zdatny
Chancellor
Vermont State Colleges System