

# Public Higher Education Shared Governance Bills S.248/H.642



**Vermont is experiencing a crisis in public higher education. To protect and preserve Vermont Higher Education Vermont faculty and staff *need and deserve a voice* in university governance, they need to be on the Board of Trustees.**

**Over 26 percent of public universities in 13 states have faculty representation on their board.** Shared governance guarantees that key stakeholders, and those most knowledgeable about the university operations, can help guide it. For personnel issues, boards have specific protocols for executive session to avoid conflicts of interest.

**This bill adds faculty, staff, & student representation to the UVM and VSC Boards of Trustees** to include the universities' most experienced and knowledgeable stakeholders in governance.

	Board of Trustees			
	VSCS Current		UVM	
	Current	Proposed	Current	Proposed
Gov Appts	5	3	3	3
Student	1	3	2	3
Legislative	4	4	9	9
Board Appts	4	4	9	9
Ex-Officio	1	1	2	2
Faculty	0	4	0	4
Staff	0	4	0	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>34</b>

Term Limits: 8 years

**Vermont is experiencing a crisis in public higher education.** After years of underfunding public higher education, the people of Vermont are at a crossroads. In April 2020, the VSC administration threatened to close three of its residential campuses, and UVM faculty and staff faced significant layoffs and threats of salary cuts. UVM is cutting important academic programs and restructuring the University without meaningful participation by faculty, staff, or students. First and foremost, the state needs to adequately fund public higher education in Vermont so that our Vermont students have an affordable option. Public higher education is an economic engine for our state. This is especially important at a time when Vermont is starving for skilled workers. Students who attend one of our public colleges are more likely to stay, live, work, buy homes, and raise their children in Vermont. We need public higher education in Vermont to best serve the interests of all the state's population. One way to do this is by ensuring that everyone has a seat at the table. This change costs the state nothing and has far-reaching impact.

# Public Higher Education Shared Governance Bills S.248/H.642

The top-down, corporate model of higher education that now dominates public higher education does not serve the students or the public good of the state. It is critical that UVM and the VSCS prioritize the interests of all our students and our state through full representation. This goal is best achieved by having all constituents have a voice in decision-making.

## **Why Shared Governance?**

- Most trustees are not on campus, not part of the campus community, and lack the on-the-ground perspective. Very few Trustees have higher education experience.
- Campus reports come from the administration whose jobs depend on being successful. They tend to present a rosy representation of campus issues rather than a truthful one.
- UVM Board meetings have become inaccessible, and the President, Provost, and Trustees do not respond to faculty, staff and student messages. Lack of accountability of our leaders, and shutting out opportunities for public participation and input, is not acceptable for our Vermont public higher education institutions.
- Student-facing members of the board will inform decisions and reduce changes that have unforeseen consequences.

## **Too often the VSC and UVM administrations rely on outside consultants, while overlooking the expertise of those who work in the institutions.**

- Outside experts are costly: NCHEMS (National Corporation for Higher Education Management Systems) charged approximately \$250,000 to compile their report on the future of the VSCS. The RPK group which was hired to make recommendations about academic consolidation cost \$195,000.
- UVM hires outside consultants who frequently have no understanding of the needs of Vermont. UVM contracted the Huron Group for \$3.9 million over the past 5 years. The Administration has refused to provide information on the consulting services provided despite a FOIA request. The contract may involve a restructuring of UVM.
- Inside experts in the staff and faculty who daily carry out the University's educational mission understand the challenges and opportunities that these outside experts do not. Without incorporating this expertise, the result is costly and detrimental to the system. This expertise should be utilized before hiring costly outsiders.
- The Board of Trustees are causing long-term damage by cutting programs and completely restructuring UVM and VSC without full understanding of what is happening on the campuses.
- The VSCS's previous chancellor's proposal to close NVU (Lyndon and Johnson campuses) and VTC (Randolph) is an excellent example of this.
- Similarly, UVM's closure of its childcare center and other programs further exacerbated the problem in a region that already experiences a shortage of childcare.

**We need to hold our institutions of public higher education  
accountable to the Vermont families who rely on them.**