

UNITING VERMONT:
A DESIGN FOR A UNIFIED PUBLIC-ACCESS
HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

LABOR TASK FORCE for
PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN VERMONT

UNITING VERMONT

Background

- Soon after the recommendation to close three campuses was rejected, members of collective bargaining units organized the Labor Task Force (LTF).
- The LTF held a series of Town Hall events for discussion and to collect comments.
- The LTF presented a preliminary proposal to the VSCS Board of Trustees Long Range Planning Committee on July 23rd.
- The preliminary proposal was presented to staff and faculty on August 6th.
- A 2-page brief was shared with state legislators, Vermont's Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education in Vermont, and the Office of the Chancellor
- A full report was completed and shared with staff, faculty and the Chancellor on November 20th.

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GOALS

Through conversation with members of the community the LTF identified design principles that we used to establish goals for the proposal: Cost, Access, and Quality.

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GOALS

1) **Cost Goals**

- Enable students to graduate low-debt or no-debt
- Reduce expense of administrative operations to levels of peer institutions
- Maintain multiple campuses to support regional economic vibrancy

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GOALS

2) Access Goals

- Preserve current campuses as hubs for local educational and student life opportunities
- Design flexible delivery formats for in-person, online, applied, and self-directed learning
- Expand workforce development options through certificate and non-degree opportunities

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GOALS

3) Quality Goals

- Foster collaboration through cross-campus structures that bolster communication
- Design interdisciplinary academic programs that are both practical and meaningful
- Form partnerships with local organizations to integrate applied learning

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. In order to reduce tuition, increase state appropriation for public-access higher education to achieve parity with national averages and keep the promise that “the VSC ... shall [be] supported in whole or in substantial part with State funds” (Vermont 16 V.S.A. 2171).**
 - Since the 1980s, the state appropriation has been reduced from 51% to 17.5% of the VSCS budget.
 - Vermont currently ranks 49th out of 50 states for state support for public higher education.
 - 51% of our college-bound students go out of state for college.
 - 40% of high school graduates do not immediately go on to college.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Reconsider the distribution of public funds for enrollment in out-of-state colleges.

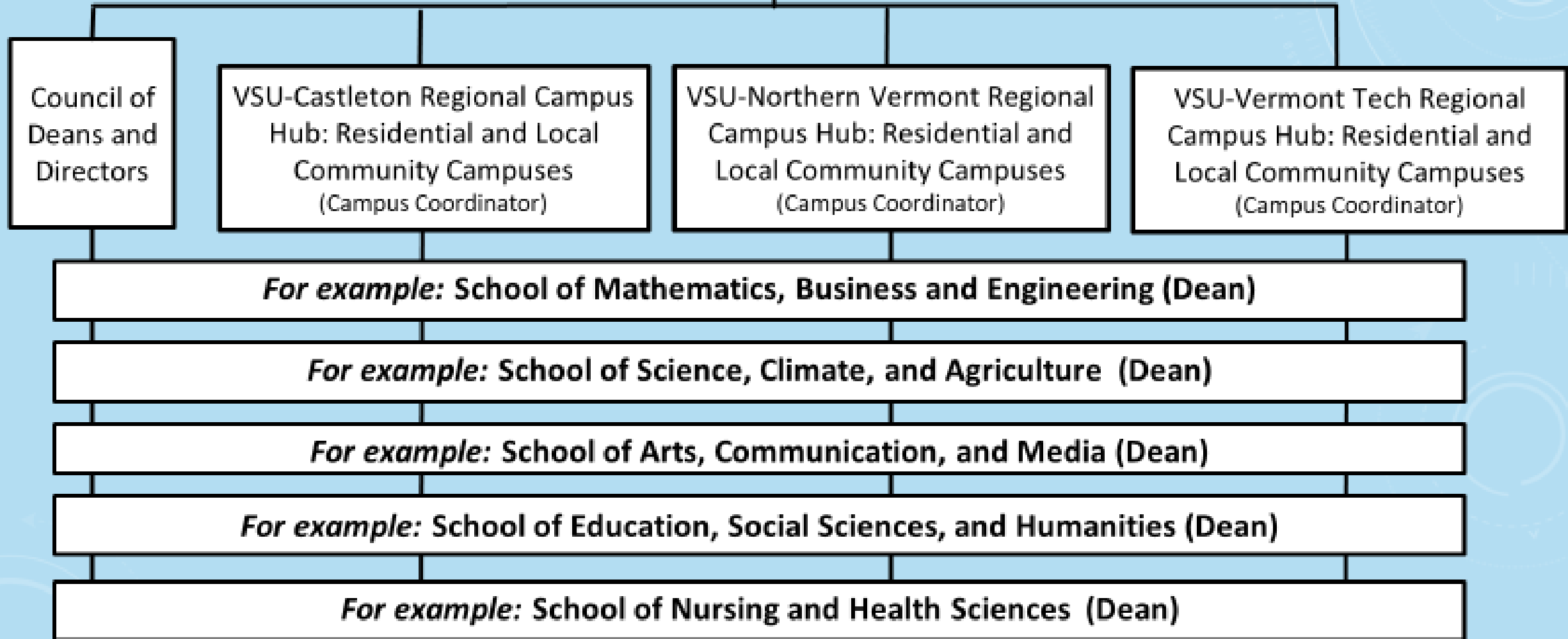
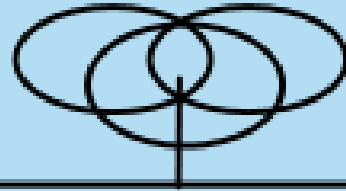
- Unrestricted VSAC portability has diverted millions of tax dollars annually to out-of-state institutions.
- In 2017-18, Vermont granted about \$5 million of need-based grant aid to students who took it out of state.
- In 2017-18, U.S. students used a total of \$11.8 million in aid to attend institutions that were not in their home states. Of that \$11.8 million, 41.7 percent was paid by the state of Vermont.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

3. **Unify the four institutions of the VSCS into a single-accreditation institution of public-access higher education to be titled Vermont State University (VSU).**
 - Unifying the VSCS into a single system with a common mission, *distinct educational, cultural, and athletic approaches across campuses*, with system-wide schools to increase access, collaboration, and innovation.
 - Appoint a president for VSU who will lead the University with a single executive team. The VSU Executive Office will replace the Chancellor's Office and consolidate the executive teams of the existing institutions.
 - Consolidate common executive and upper-level administrative operations.

VERMONT STATE UNIVERSITY



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RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4. Establish a structure for shared system-wide decision-making by trustees, faculty, staff, and the executive team.**
 - The fundamental premise for a shared governance model to succeed in higher education requires students, staff, faculty, administrative team, and trustees to participate in the decision-making process of an institution.
 - Shared governance strengthens leadership and decision-making, but to be effective and sustained there needs to be an atmosphere of mutual “trust, collaboration, communication, transparency, inclusiveness, honesty, and integrity”.*

*Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. “Shared Governance: Changing with the Times”. AGB Press, 2017.

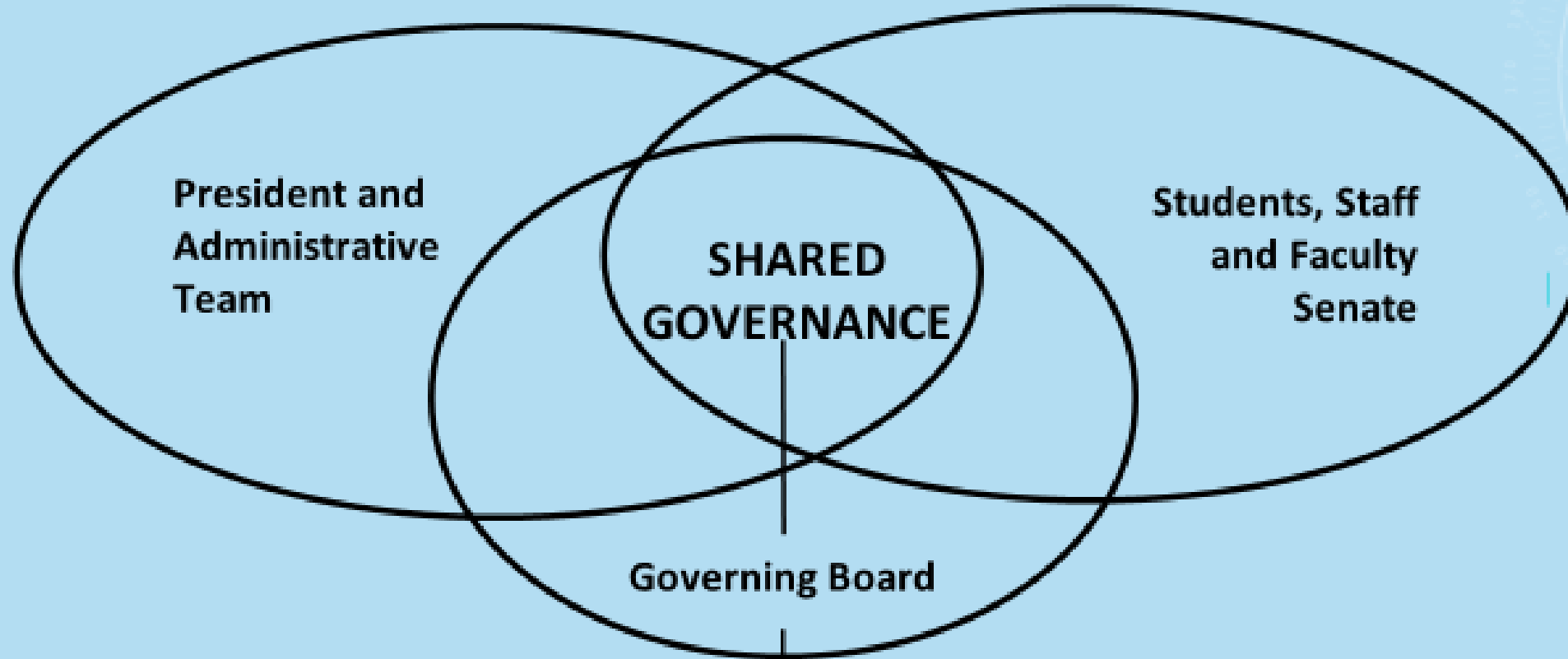
https://agb.org/sites/default/files/report_2017_shared_governance.pdf

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RECOMMENDATIONS

4. **Establish a structure for shared system-wide decision-making by trustees, faculty, staff, and the executive team.**
 - LTF proposes reconstituting the Board of Trustees (BoT) as follows:
 - 2 – Students
 - 2 – Vermont State Employees Association members
 - 2 – AFT United Professionals members
 - 4 – FT/PT Faculty
 - 1 – FT/PT Librarian
 - 4 – Legislative appointees
 - 4 – Elected by the BoT

VERMONT STATE UNIVERSITY



Council of Deans and Directors

VSU-Castleton Regional Campus Hub: Residential and Local Community Campuses (Campus Coordinator)

VSU-Northern Vermont Regional Campus Hub: Residential and Local Community Campuses (Campus Coordinator)

VSU-Vermont Tech Regional Campus Hub: Residential and Local Community Campuses (Campus Coordinator)

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This student-centered proposal to unite Vermont comes from staff and faculty with a vision to build an educated and civil society. The LTF proposal has four recommendations:

1. Increase state appropriation for public-access higher education to reduce the currently prohibitive cost of tuition, which will lead to an increase in enrollment.
2. Redirect VSAC portability funds to create a tuition assistance program for Vermont students attending a public college in Vermont; this will improve retention and reduce student debt.
3. Unify CU, NVU, VTC and CCV into a single multi-campus institution managed by one executive team housed on an existing campus. Redirect savings to reduce tuition costs.
4. Establish a Faculty and Staff Senate, and add faculty and staff to the governing board to assure authentic and effective shared decision-making.

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Questions?

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