

I write to urge passage of the AFT FY25 Funding Request including the full promise of \$10 million to Vermont State University (VTSU) for deficit reduction and bridge funding, including VTSU Chancellor Mauch's request to restore the \$5 million removed by the governor plus a significant increase to offset recent inflation.

This issue is most important to me as a taxpaying Vermonter and a recent full-time faculty retiree who worked enough decades in the VSC to witness firsthand the creeping dysfunction caused by the longstanding and appalling lack of legislative support for the state colleges that has brought us where we are today--under threat of completely losing the local, in-person higher education that has bettered the lives of so many Vermont students.

One young Vermonter I know well would not have been able to go to college at all were it not for his local Lyndon campus that made it possible for him to commute from his family farm that he would and could not leave, graduating as our top environmental science student in May, '22. He couldn't repeat that college path now; of the four full-time science dept faculty who mentored him, three are gone, thanks to "optimization". On-line learning wouldn't have served him either--first, environmental science requires hands-on mentorship as we all learned during the pandemic; and second, connectivity is still not reliable in many places as I watched my pandemic-era students struggle.

Vermont students deserve far better than the consequences of insisting that the state colleges can cut their way out of a fiscal crisis engineered by the legislature's default on its promises, particularly when those cuts are student-facing positions with a direct, verifiable impact on student success.

Alison S Lathrop, PhD
Professor of Geology, retired, VTSU-Lyndon