

Thank you for your support of the Vermont State Colleges System and of NVU. We appreciate the initial bridge funding and Coronavirus Relief Funds you approved earlier this year, enabling a safe return for students to continue their studies this fall. We just finished our first week of classes. We have about 300 students in our residential halls on each campus in addition to commuter and students studying remotely due to the pandemic. Our official enrollment numbers will be out on October 15. Our numbers are soft as expected due to the pandemic. We are hearing that enrollment is soft nationwide.

NVU will – and is – taking swift and strong action to ensure the health and safety of our community. Action has included at least one dismissal from an NVU campus due to repeated non-compliance with the NVU Health Pledge. Every student, staff, and faculty member was required to sign the pledge. NVU is taking every precaution to keep our campuses safe with measures we have put in place, including distancing in classrooms, health and safety education, extra cleaning and disinfecting, the implementation of single rooms, repeated testing, self-attestations, and more. Each of us holds responsibility for others by how we choose to go about our daily lives during this pandemic.

VSC Chancellor Sophie Zdatny recently presented on needed bridge funding to the House Appropriations Committee. I've included a [link to her presentation](#) for your review. The needed bridge funding, along with the monumental work that has happened and continues with community members, students, faculty, staff, and administration, will help ensure that NVU can continue to offer the best possible education and opportunities for Vermont students. We're confident that the VSC, the legislature, and the Scott administration can find a solution for the needed bridge funding in the coming weeks. Thank you for the hard work you are doing during this very difficult time. We know it is not easy.

As NVU and our sister institutions work to navigate the pandemic and the system's fiscal crisis, our focus is on ensuring access to affordable higher education. **NVU has received \$2.75 million to continue our TRIO program, which provides outreach and student services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds.** This funding is critical as the vast majority of NVU's students are Vermonters and nearly half of them are first in family to attend college.

NVU is in the process of **applying for an Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant to support a nursing degree program in collaboration with Vermont Technical College (VTC) and local health care providers** in addition to supporting the Do North Coworking space.

The university remains committed to providing an innovative professional and liberal arts education that prepares students to be critical thinkers and engaged global citizens. It is this liberal arts foundation that provides the soft-skills employers seek. In addition, NVU's economic impact of \$113 million makes it vital to the economic, educational, environmental, and cultural vitality of Northern Vermont.

It is also a busy time for the system as a whole. I would like to update you on some of the actions taken at the August 12, 2020 Board of Trustees meeting. Chair Churchill Hides, who has served on the board for twenty years, stepped down. We thank him for his service and congratulate him on, as he put it, finally becoming a VSC graduate. New officers were elected: Representative Lynn Dickinson, the current Vice Chair and a legislative trustee from St. Albans, has been elected to serve as Chair. Megan Culver, the current Secretary, was elected to serve as the Vice Chair and Karen Luneau was elected to serve as Secretary. These three trustees, along with David Silverman, the Treasurer, comprise the Executive Committee of the Board.

The Board of Trustees now has two gubernatorial-appointed seats open. We have asked that the Governor appoint one trustee from the Northeast Kingdom to ensure equitable representation on the Board. We respectfully ask that you lend your support to this request.

The Trustees received a report and recommendations from the VSCS Forward Task Force, made up of constituents from across the system's institutions. (Note: The VSCS Forward Task Force received recommendations from the NVU Strong Advisory Committee and VTC's task force to consider.)

Per Chancellor Zdatny, no final decisions have been made on the VSCS Forward Task Force recommendations and much more work is needed, particularly in identifying the priorities for the VSC in the future, developing strategies, and analyzing data. The Board directed the Chancellor, to:

- Create a combined Castleton-Northern Vermont University academic affairs group to develop clear evaluation criteria for review of duplicate and low-enrolled programs.
- Charge the Community College of Vermont and Vermont Technical College jointly to develop a plan for shared operations and opportunities to expand program offerings in co-located spaces. (This would be in addition to the ongoing consolidation of business operations currently underway across the system.)
- Charge the Chief Academic Officer, in coordination with the faculty chairs of each institution's general education curriculum committee, to develop a single general education program core that is available online.
- Charge the Chief Academic Officer, in coordination with the VSCS's business officers and registrars, to provide a single framework for students to access online/remote or telepresence course offerings across the system.

We want to keep you up to speed on the operations at NVU throughout the fall and beyond and will be providing updates whenever new information is available. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at 802.635.1251 or Leah.Hollenberger@NorthernVermont.edu for more information.

Thank you and be safe!