

Progress Report on UNIFICATION

**Northern Vermont University
February 2019**

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Introduction

On July 28, 2017, President Elaine C. Collins as CEO submitted a substantive change proposal seeking Commission approval to unite Johnson State College and Lyndon State College, both members of the Vermont State Colleges System (VSCS), as Northern Vermont University (NVU) with campuses at both locations, NVU-Lyndon and NVU-Johnson. In his December 7, 2017, letter, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education Chair David P. Angel conveyed the Commission's decision, taken at its meeting on September 29, 2017, to accept the colleges' report and approve the plans to merge as Northern Vermont University as of July 1, 2018. President of the Commission Barbara E. Brittingham wrote to President Collins on December 21, 2017, confirming that the new Northern Vermont University had been granted initial accreditation as of July 1, 2018.

In accordance with the policy on substantive change, the Commission in its December letter also scheduled a Spring 2019 site visit to assess initial implementation of the merger. For the progress report in advance of the site visit the Commission directed particular attention to three areas: **(1)** developing an effective governance structure for Northern Vermont University that provides for the participation of constituency groups on both campuses; **(2)** consolidating the planning and evaluation activities of the two institutions and implementing an institution-wide approach to assessing student learning; **(3)** meeting enrollment goals and achieving a balanced budget that ensures sufficient staffing for Northern Vermont University's two campuses.

The process leading to unification, detailed in our substantive change proposal, revealed ample goodwill on both campuses as well as a plethora of promising, if mostly preliminary (as well as some more advanced), discussions about a wide range of matters central to the new Northern Vermont University. It also revealed, the more staff and faculty dug into the "weeds" of unification, subtle differences between the former Lyndon and Johnson State Colleges. Despite both being long-time members of the Vermont State Colleges System, varied policies and practices had developed over the years. This was understandable, as the two largely autonomous institutions possessed differing campus cultures and histories. In addition, when it comes to alignment, the challenge posed by 43 difficult miles separating the two campuses, along Vermont state roads, cannot be gainsaid.

Whether—as we hope—the great promise will win out over the not insignificant challenges is the subject of this report. Its primary purpose is to gauge what progress has been made since the submission of the substantive change proposal. To what extent have the initial discussions borne fruit? The evidence to be presented will be the work "products" that are in process or have already emerged from collaborative efforts. At the same time, we recognize that unification is a long-term, multi-year project that will and must continue long after the formal launch of Northern Vermont University. The approval letter from the Commission recognizes this

extended timeline: “...these matters do not lend themselves to rapid resolution and will require the University’s sustained attention over time.”

First the report addresses the three areas for emphasis identified in the Commission letter. Then it goes on to describe briefly the University’s progress on and continued compliance with each of the *Standards for Accreditation*. With some exceptions, the effective end date for reportage is December 2018. Vigorous collaborative efforts continue to and beyond the time of this writing.

Governance

Well before the new institution’s formal launch date, the executive leadership set a tone of equal participation of both campuses in all processes, including governance. A sample schedule for President Collins, for example from Fall 2017, shows that she spent a nearly equal proportion of her time on each of the campuses: 55% of her on-campus work days at Johnson and 45% on the Lyndon campus. That pattern of equal participation, including direct access to the University leadership and to other key constituencies and activities, has continued. The creative and frequent use of technology, including telepresence, has served to enhance and equalize opportunities for bringing individuals and groups together.

Thus an expectation of equal participation was set early on. For instance the President’s Leadership Team (PLT), which met for the first time in July 2017, had from the outset nearly equal representation from both campuses: 10 members who claimed Johnson as their home campus, 8 from Lyndon, and 7 members who divided their time between campuses. From its inception, the PLT alternated and continues to alternate its meeting location between Lyndon and Johnson.

Faculty governance mirrors the collaborative pattern set by NVU’s executive leadership team. Its structure includes the equal representation of constituency groups from both campuses. NVU faculty members maintain two separate assemblies, governed by a shared set of University by-laws. The chairs of the Faculty Assembly on both campuses meet regularly and a number of faculty standing committees from both campuses have met together. Lyndon’s faculty ambassador has twice visited (and presented at) the Johnson Faculty Assembly.

The two Assemblies are linked by a Faculty Council, which is composed of the executive committees from both the Lyndon and Johnson assemblies. The by-laws have this to say about the NVU Faculty Council:

Recognizing the need to coordinate the activities of the NVU Faculty Assemblies, the members of each Executive Committee, acting together, shall:

- a. deliberate on NVU-wide issues of faculty governance, including, but not limited to:
 - i. proposed amendments to the By-Laws;
 - ii. issues of Academic Policy and Procedure;
 - iii. concerns raised by either Assembly;
- b. hold at least one in-person or telepresence meeting per semester;
- c. meet additionally as necessary; and
- d. bring issues of common concern back to each Faculty Assembly.

As stipulated by the shared governance by-laws, the new Faculty Council met once, by telepresence, this past fall. At that meeting Council members decided to postpone action on aligning graduation standards until 2019-2020. In light of the fraught history of graduation standards throughout the Vermont State Colleges System, this seems a reasonable decision and one which should bring the alignment project to completion by the end of next academic year.

The shared and important work of aligning academic policies started last spring and continued over the summer. This yielded new agreements on a minimum passing grade, a minimum number of required upper-level credits, and on the number of internship hours per earned academic credit. A first pass at the further alignment of academic policies will be the work of two three-person committees, one from Lyndon and one from Johnson. Their work commenced at the start of the current semester.

In some respects the most important outcomes, to date, have been increased communication and a spirit of cooperation that prevails at this point regarding governance issues.

Planning, Evaluation, Assessment

Strategic planning:

Impressive progress has been made on planning. Under the stewardship of Provost Atkins and President Collins and based upon the published Vision and Mission, the first Northern Vermont University Strategic Plan now exists, covering five years, 2018-2023. Four pillars frame the plan. All are important, but they appear in priority order: 1. Vibrant Thriving Campuses; 2. Transformative Student Experience; 3. Innovative Professional and Liberal Arts Education; 4. Exceptional Community Leadership. Two or three goals attach to each pillar, with specific initiatives (and sub-initiatives) subsumed under each goal. A total of 100 unique initiatives give substance to this ambitious yet realistic five-year plan.

The plan is readily available on the public-facing website:

<https://www.northernvermont.edu/about/depth/strategic-plan>. Staff and faculty also have electronic access to a detailed work plan that accompanies the strategic plan. An easy-to-follow instructional video, available on the NVU Portal (accessed by password only for staff and faculty) (<https://portal.vsc.edu/nvuhome/Pages/default.aspx>) and narrated by the Provost, demonstrates access to the strategic plan and work plan and guides users through the work plan. The latter allows easy tracking of the multi-pronged strategic plan. Using the Microsoft application Planner, the detailed work plan includes timelines (start dates and due dates) for completing each initiative, an identification of those assigned, as well as progress reports (completed, in-progress, not started, late). To document the work as it moves forward, the work plan has a “comments” function to keep track of dialogue. Importantly, it also provides, through “attachments,” space for work products to be displayed. A variety of filters allow multiple ways to organize and display the various initiatives, for instance by progress and/or by those assigned. Charts also are available to provide pictorial representations of progress on plan initiatives. Overall, this tool helps fulfill our commitment, made at the time of submitting the substantive change proposal for unification, to prepare timelines and metrics for steps to be undertaken.

The Vermont State Colleges System Board of Trustees reviewed the themes, goals and initiatives of NVU’s Strategic Plan, and approved it at its September, 2018 meeting. The plan was developed with much input and feedback from across the University community. In particular, a Strategic Planning Steering Committee guided the process. That committee was comprised of six active working groups, focused on: the economic viability of NVU; student engagement, retention, persistence, and completion; innovative pedagogy, scholarly and creative activity, innovative technology; relationships, collaborations, and partnerships, with local, state, national, and global communities; enhanced image and reputation; and diversity and inclusion. Each working group had approximately equal members from NVU-J and NVU-L, and a mixed membership of faculty and staff; some included student or community members as well. The President, Provost, Dean of Administration, and Dean of Students formed an over-arching executive team.

Academic restructuring:

Work is continuing to proceed on a plan to restructure academic departments. A group met over the summer to establish broad goals. About 25 models were created, which resulted in two presented to the President’s Leadership Team at its September meeting. Both models show a revamped structure, down from 9 and 14 departments to five. The five units have yet to be named, but “schools” are the likely choice. Not all faculty were in agreement with the models developed and presented, so discussions have been ongoing; still, the aim is to move forward in a timely manner. Meanwhile, a smaller group has convened to drill down on the administrative particulars of academic reorganization (e.g., chairs, division heads, etc.).

Those working closely on this restructuring project have high hopes that reorganization will help bring faculty together to discuss program improvements; and that students can be the beneficiaries of these discussions. Reorganization should also help break down academic and intellectual silos and, in doing so, provide our students with a broader perspective and enhanced opportunities. There may also be marketing benefits, as materials will be able to describe schools that are more robust than individual departments.

Other resource planning: Finances, information technology, library, enrollment/marketing

The new University's emphasis on planning has fostered a wider environment of thoughtful deliberation, which extends to several key areas of the organization. A financial plan receives attention in the discussion of *Standard 7* (below), as will plans for information technology and the library. Here we briefly discuss a detailed enrollment plan, which flows from the strategic plan goal of "creat[ing] a dynamic fiscal environment that fosters student engagement, development, and success."

The enrollment plan outlines the many enrollment and marketing initiatives already underway and those planned for the remainder of the current enrollment cycle. All of them are designed to halt downward enrollment trends and make strides toward increasing enrollments both within and outside of Vermont.

Key initiatives that have been implemented for the 2018-19 enrollment cycle include:

- Segmenting recruitment territories across both campuses geographically to recruit more efficiently.
- Examining and reviewing visit incentive initiatives.
- Making a case with the Executive Team for athletic full rosters as of fall 2019.
- Utilizing financial aid monies to increase enrollment responsibly so as to ensure NVU is an affordable option.
- Continuing name buy purchases to grow the prospect and inquiry pools for responsible growth.
- Creating a robust multi-channel communication plan and outreach to students.
- Creating the capacity among all Admissions staff to send text messages to prospective students.
- Employing Saturday visits and open houses, where none existed.
- Engaging with vendors to explore and review digital advertising to help optimize the website, generating more organic leads in all programs.
- Creating a program to market directly to college counselors, sharing with them the values and virtues of NVU.

- Formalizing and training staff members to increase engagement and create relationships with prospective students and their families to ensure they are educated about every step of the college search process.

The document also includes major recommendations for future action.

Institutional research:

NVU is developing its institutional research capacity to support these planning and evaluation efforts. A goal of “Transformative Student Experience” within the NVU strategic plan is to “develop operational infrastructure to promote student success.” One initiative to further this goal calls for the creation of an Office of Institutional Research “to support data-driven decision making, faculty research, and institutional grants.” The budget attached to the plan funds a full-time IR position starting fall 2020. We have delayed hiring this position by one year to provide the time necessary to develop the data infrastructure that will be utilized by a full-time IR person.

In the meantime, working within budgetary and data infrastructure constraints, NVU has created a fledgling Office of Institutional Research, staffed by Kate Gold, director of advising resources on the Lyndon campus, and Stephanie Giese, also NVU-L, assistant professor, Business Administration. Kate’s position was reclassified and restructured during the summer of 2018 to provide IR support in the form of responding to data requests that had previously gone to the Registrar’s Office. Since then, she has been developing expertise with our data system and now responds to data requests from both campuses, particularly in the areas of enrollment and retention. She has begun to work with Kathleen Brinegar, associate academic for NVU-J, so that both campuses can compile and maintain the same data on their first-year (federal cohort) students. Stephanie Giese developed considerable IR expertise and data analysis experience in the corporate world, before coming to academe. As of Spring 2019, she has a one-course release to establish IR process at NVU. In particular she is participating in a working group comprised of registrar, financial aid, and IT expertise around the system, led by Doug Eastman, now director of information technology at the Chancellor’s Office and formerly NVU-J registrar. This working group is tasked with developing the VSCS data infrastructure and supporting data-driven decision making on our campuses by addressing three areas:

1. What questions on our campuses do we need to answer in the context of data-driven decision making?
2. What data do we need to answer those questions?
3. How do we make the data available and present it in a way that is accessible and sensible to users?

This working group has just begun its work. NVU's aim is to ensure that process and data are in place for next fall, specifically data to support the new academic department structure as the University moves to a "schools" model. School heads will certainly need these data to track their realization of the goals that have been established for this new model.

Developing sufficient IR capacity is surely a work in progress, but one that is receiving much attention and is widely regarded as of great importance. That development should receive a boost from new Title III grant funding at NVU-J with its focus on student persistence. Lessons learned will be shared with colleagues on the Lyndon campus. Grant funds are available to hire a part-time institutional researcher and the services of an educational research firm to help with student success (and risk) modeling, so as to improve the ameliorative steps we take. Currently, the Title III project director and advisor are conducting interviews with firms such as Eduventures, Starfish, and Hanover Research, among those being considered.

Assessment of student learning:

A redesign of general education resulted in a new program, the NVU General Core Curriculum (GCC), shared university-wide by both campuses. From its construction the GCC is an outcomes-based program consisting of four over-arching goals and 12 specific learning outcomes. These flow from a core mission—"...to enable students to make a positive impact in the world by developing the intellectual, social, and career skills necessary for lifelong learning and success"—and a guiding question for students: "How can I make a positive impact in the world?" Through the GCC students are introduced to, and practice, the various program outcomes by taking courses in eight interdisciplinary categories.

The process of redesigning general education included constructing rubrics and assessment protocols. All previously approved general education courses are to be put through the application process in order to align course and program outcomes. The program and detailed application materials are available at <https://www.northernvermont.edu/nvu-general-core-curriculum-resources>. At this site toolkits for faculty are grouped by each core category, with comprehensive resources including an application with instructions and guidelines, as well as the relevant rubrics that will be used to assess learning outcomes. Faculty members are in the process of selecting assessment software. Once a decision is made, a faculty group will train on the software this summer, and conduct assessments on artifacts collected during the current semester. Although the process has gone more slowly than planned, it is still on track.

A similar appraisal could be made about the progress of major program assessment. All programs submitted curriculum maps and assessment plans, and submit an updated report each October on the previous year's assessments. The associate academic dean at NVU-J, Dr. Kathleen Brinegar, has begun working with NVU-L's Dr. Alison Lathrop to share and review

assessment practices on both campuses. The software we purchase will also allow major programs to move their assessments to an all-digital environment.

Budget, Enrollment, Staffing

On September 29, 2016, the *Chancellor’s Report and Recommendations on the Unification of Johnson State College and Lyndon State College* (Unification Report) was issued to the Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees. The report, which preceded (and was referred to in) our subsequent substantive change proposal, outlined the costs and benefits of merging the two institutions into a single entity and made a recommendation to unify the two so as to improve offerings to students and reduce the costs of running the organization.

The Unification Report estimated the following budget for the proposed unified institution:

Multi-Year Budget FY2017 - FY2020
September 29, 2016 Unification Report

	Year 0		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	3-Year
	FY2017 Budget	FY2017 Projection	FY2018 Projection	FY2019 Projection	FY2020 Projection	Projected Change
Revenues						
Tuition and Fees	34,782	34,782	36,521	38,712	41,035	6,253
State Appropriation	9,830	9,830	10,125	10,429	10,742	912
Room and Board	10,095	10,095	10,448	10,866	11,301	1,206
All Other Revenue	<u>2,502</u>	<u>2,502</u>	<u>2,502</u>	<u>2,502</u>	<u>2,502</u>	-
Total Revenues	57,209	57,209	59,596	62,509	65,580	8,371
Expenses						
Personnel	36,347	35,875	36,534	37,532	38,574	2,699
Service, Supplies, and Travel	11,318	11,318	11,544	11,775	12,011	693
Scholarship and Fellowships	4,660	4,660	4,893	5,187	5,498	838
All Other Expenses	<u>8,273</u>	<u>7,531</u>	<u>8,127</u>	<u>8,342</u>	<u>8,013</u>	<u>482</u>
Total Expenses	60,598	59,384	61,098	62,836	64,096	4,712
Net Revenues/(DEFICIT)	<u>(3,389)</u>	<u>(2,175)</u>	<u>(1,502)</u>	<u>(327)</u>	<u>1,484</u>	<u>3,659</u>
Percent of total Expenses	-5.6%	-3.7%	-2.5%	-0.5%	2.3%	
Reserve Balance	3,887	5101	3,599	3,272	4,756	

Financially, the Unification Report asserted that merging the two institutions would “lower base spending by approximately \$2 million by FY2020.” The Unification Report indicated that savings would largely come from elimination of executive leadership positions, consolidation of back-office functions with the system office of the Vermont State Colleges, retirements, natural

attrition, and redesign of work processes. Additionally, the Unification Report estimated that enrollment, and therefore revenue, would increase modestly between FY2018 and FY2020, reflecting a 1% per year growth per year during this time. The result was a cumulative reduction in net assets, or available reserves, of approximately \$2.5 million between FY2017 and FY2020 with a return to balanced budgets in FY2020.

Actual performance has differed since the creation of the Unification Report in 2016. The following represents actual performance for FY2017 and FY2018 as well as projected performance for FY2019 and FY2020.

**Multi-Year Actual and Projected Performance
FY2017 - FY2021**

	Year 0 FY2017 Actuals	Year 1 FY2018 Actuals	Year 2 FY2019 Projection	Year 3 FY2020 Projection	Year 4 FY2021 Projection	3-Year Projected Change
Revenues						
Tuition and Fees	34,324	32,958	32,724	34,674	36,332	350
State Appropriation	9,830	10,930	10,930	10,515	10,105	685
Room and Board	10,350	9,773	9,546	10,386	10,594	36
<u>All Other Revenue</u>	<u>2,497</u>	<u>2,482</u>	<u>2,790</u>	<u>2,790</u>	<u>2,790</u>	<u>293</u>
Total Revenues	57,001	56,143	55,990	58,365	59,821	1,364
Expenses						
Personnel	33,843	33,116	33,864	34,159	34,755	316
Service, Supplies, and Travel	10,599	9,856	9,474	9,682	9,822	(917)
Scholarship and Fellowships	5,069	5,305	6,798	7,478	8,226	2,409
<u>All Other Expenses</u>	<u>8,422</u>	<u>6,881</u>	<u>8,131</u>	<u>8,812</u>	<u>8,382</u>	<u>390</u>
Total Expenses	57,933	55,158	58,267	60,131	61,185	2,198
Net Revenues/(DEFICIT)	<u>(932)</u>	<u>985</u>	<u>(2,277)</u>	<u>(1,766)</u>	<u>(1,364)</u>	<u>(834)</u>
Percent of total Expenses	-1.6%	1.8%	-3.9%	-2.9%	-2.2%	-37.9%
Reserve Balance	6,032	6,984	4,707	2,941	1,577	

Several critical factors must be noted regarding actual performance since the Unification Report:

1. Actual performance in FY2017 was better than projected in the Unification Report by \$1.24 million. Due to natural attrition and tight budget management, Northern Vermont University was able to reduce budgeted expenditures, specifically on the Lyndon campus, during FY2017, resulting in improved performance from the projections shown in the Unification Report. This improvement in performance reduced the consumption of unrestricted reserves resulting in an improved reserve position comparable to the actual total year performance.

2. Northern Vermont University ended FY2018 with a surplus of \$985 thousand reflecting performance approximately \$2.5 million better than projected in the Unification Report.
3. As of the end of Q1 FY2019, Northern Vermont University is expected to end the year with a deficit of \$2.27 million. This deficit, of which \$985 thousand will be addressed via carry forward of the surplus from FY2018, is due largely to enrollment and institutional aid pressures associated with unification. Brand confusion, related to simultaneous use of the Lyndon State College, Johnson State College, and Northern Vermont University names, depressed applications and acceptances. The result was a reduced incoming first-year campus undergraduate class on the Johnson campus. Additionally, market pressures related to regional competition in online learning have placed pressure on the marketability of the NVU Online distance learning programs.
4. As of December 2018, Northern Vermont University has surpassed the expectations of the Unification Report, having achieved administrator- and staff-related unification savings of more than \$2.3 million. By taking advantage of natural attrition and retirements, the University has been able to redesign work so as to accelerate cost reductions. This has allowed the University to continue to reduce costs while also investing in critical infrastructure.
5. In addition to administrator and staff savings, NVU has achieved curricular efficiencies via the adoption of a new general education program, and the joint delivery of low-enrolled courses via telepresence offerings, thereby reducing the University's reliance on part-time faculty and overload instruction.

The Unification Report anticipated use of \$3.68 million in reserves during FY2017 and FY2018. Actual performance required no cumulative use of reserves during this period, and, in fact, resulted in a \$951 thousand increase in reserves. As noted previously, increased pressure on recruitment and associated costs during FY2019 lead to an anticipated loss of \$2.27 million this year, of which \$985 thousand will come from carry forward reserves from the previous year. The current forecast for FY2020 and FY2021 reflects additional losses of \$1.77 million and \$1.36 million respectively. These losses can be attributed to several factors beyond the control of Northern Vermont University. The first is a reduction in the medical reserve distribution, estimated at approximately \$700 thousand a year beginning in FY2020. The second factor is a revision to the state appropriation allocation methodology that will result in a \$416 thousand reduction in FY2020 and an \$832 thousand reduction in FY2021.

Fiscal Year	Pro Forma Performance	Pro Forma Reserves	Actual/Estimated Performance	Actual/Estimated Reserves
FY 2017	-2,175,000	5,101,000	-932,000	6,032,062
FY 2018	-1,502,000	3,599,000	985,000	6,983,666
FY 2019*	-326,000	3,272,000	-2,277,000	4,706,666
FY 2020*	1,484,000	4,756,000	-1,766,000	2,940,666
FY 2021*			-1,364,000	1,594,666

Fiscal years denoted with an asterisk are estimated based on data as of 9/30/2018.

Northern Vermont University is fortunate to have many recent bright spots that we expect will mitigate the anticipated deficits in FY2020 and FY2021.

In July 2018, NVU hired Michael Fox as its new dean of enrollment and marketing. Under Michael's leadership, applications for first-year campus-based undergraduate students for Fall 2019 have increased significantly. As of December 15, 2018, the University achieved a 72% increase in applications, or 472 applications, with the greatest increases occurring in the out-of-state categories. Through strong marketing approaches and changes in yield protocols, acceptances as of December 15 were up 74% year-over-year in this category. Deposits, while still very early in the cycle, also reflect a very positive trend. Additionally, it is expected that spring starts may be up as much as 30% year-over-year, with the greatest gains in the first-year student category. These trends point favorably toward the University's strategy of improving its financial position through increasing enrollments.

Over the past eighteen months the University has also attracted several major grants that are designed to lead to improved enrollment, persistence, and retention of current students. These grants include a Title III Strengthening Institutions grant (>\$1.8 million over five years) received on October 1, 2018. The primary focus of this grant is on improving the persistence and retention of students in the second year and beyond, including a focus on near completers, while continuing to serve the needs of first-year students. Although still in its early stages, work is underway to offer improved advising strategies, professional development, and research on critical infrastructure. The aims of the grant are bold, with improved persistence of 1-2% per year over each of the next five years.

In addition, in early 2018, Northern Vermont University received a USDA Rural Development grant focused on the delivery of courses via telepresence classrooms. Approximately thirty partner sites, throughout Vermont as well as Sinte Gleska University in rural South Dakota, will offer synchronous distance learning classes for college credit from the Johnson campus. These offerings will expand the University's NVU Online program into synchronous as well as

asynchronous delivery modes. This development will expand the reach of Northern Vermont University as well as improve educational opportunities in underserved rural areas.

Finally, we address Human Resources, specifically the Commission’s concern that sufficient staffing characterize Northern Vermont University’s two campuses.

As noted above, as of December 2018, Northern Vermont University has surpassed the financial expectations of the Unification Report. In large part, the University achieved these savings through personnel reductions, primarily staff and administrators. Through careful redesign of work, Northern Vermont University has been able to take advantage of the opportunities presented by natural attrition, including retirements, resignations, and system transfers. For example, in addition to a single Executive Team comprised of one president, provost, dean of administration, dean of students, and dean of enrollment and marketing, the University now has consolidated leadership positions in finance, facilities, marketing, information technology, financial aid, registration, human resources, and athletics. These cross-campus positions resulted in substantial savings in wages and benefits in addition to significant operational efficiencies in these units.

As of this writing, the University is currently seeking to fill the following positions:

Tenure Track Faculty	Staff (Full-Time)	Staff (Part-Time)
Health Sciences	Alumni/Development Program Coordinator	Mental Health Counselor
Computer Science and Mathematics	Assistant Director of Student Life	Teacher Education Placement Coordinator
Applied Psychology and Human Services	Senior Associate Director of Admissions	Public Safety Officer
Early Childhood Education / Special Education	Mechanical Systems Technician	Broadcast System Engineer
Atmospheric Sciences	Maintenance Technician	

As noted previously, Northern Vermont University has chosen to replace those positions and functions that have the greatest potential impact on students. This includes five full-time, tenure-track faculty positions as well as several staff positions. The University chooses to replace positions that directly affect academic quality, health, safety, student life, and revenue.

Standard 1: Mission and Purposes

The University's Vision and Strategic Plan are aligned with its Mission. Areas across the institution are aware of the mission and have used it as a starting point for their own planning efforts. President Collins began the fall with a convocation address in which she asked students to find themselves "somewhere within the mission and vision described and begin to write the next pages, and eventually chapters of the history of NVU." In her current round of meetings, President Collins is encouraging units and departments to be explicit about the way the University mission informs their priorities and activities.

Projection: Monitoring the extent to which we "live" our mission is an ongoing project, and one which accords with Standard 1.4. As noted, the President's current discussions with various University constituencies will help us gain purchase on where we are, to date, on this fundamental and ongoing question.

Standard 2: Planning and Evaluation

NVU has achieved substantial progress on planning and evaluation since submitting the substantive change proposal for unification, drawing in as an integral part of that process broad constituencies from both campuses. That progress has been described and documented in our response (above) to the second of three areas to which the Commission directed special attention. There is no need to duplicate that discussion here. Important to reiterate, though, is that planning and evaluative efforts, as well as efforts to build institutional research and assessment capacity, are continuing vigorously beyond the time of this writing.

Projection: Monitoring progress on NVU's strategic plan is of paramount importance. Plans for academic restructuring should also move forward toward their timely realization and a subsequent evaluation of their effects. Developing the assessment component of the new general education program must remain on track, starting with the work that is planned for this summer. Finally, collaboration between the Lyndon and Johnson campuses on assessment of student learning in major programs, which has begun, deserves close attention so that these efforts produce tangible results.

Standard 3: Organization and Governance

Governing board:

The governing board has been informed about and involved in the unification efforts from their inception. As noted previously, the VSCS Board of Trustees reviewed NVU's Strategic Plan and approved it at its September meeting. Overall, the Board seems pleased with progress on unification. The PLT minutes for September 18, 2018, record that "Church Hindes, Board Chair, spoke to the Governor about how NVU delivered a 'turnkey' unification [the likes of which] he has never seen in all his professional years." An integral dimension of successful unification has been the ability of President Collins and Chancellor Spaulding to maintain their cordial and effective working relationship.

Internal governance:

Internally, faculty continue to have "a substantive voice in matters of educational programs, faculty personnel, and other aspects of institutional policy that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise" (3.15). At the same time concern continues to be expressed about the pace of rebuilding and increasing the number of faculty on both campuses in full-time ranks. This may be one of a number of issues that the two Faculty Assemblies and new Faculty Council choose to take up and discuss. That new faculty governance model has gotten off to a promising start.

Projection: As ever, it will remain important to ensure that the mutually supportive pattern of communications with the trustees and system office continues. It will be important, internally, to monitor the continued success of the new Faculty Council, especially its efforts to oversee the further alignment of academic policies and procedures, including graduation standards, on both the Lyndon and Johnson campuses.

Standard 4: The Academic Program

Faculty counterparts on both the Lyndon and Johnson campuses are engaged in program development in the context of academic restructuring. Although that restructuring is intended to affect departments more than individual programs, it is nevertheless a factor to keep in mind as the results may influence the ease or arduousness of future collaborative efforts. Eventual workflow shifts in the academic affairs offices on both campuses may also come to have some modest impact on the way faculty enact curricular and programmatic changes.

The "jewel in the crown" of faculty collaboration so far has been the new University general education program, described in a previous section. At the major program level, the forms of

collaboration have been varied. As projected in the substantive change proposal, “Some programs will combine, merging into a single major across the two campuses. Others will maintain separate identities, but share resources with their sister campus.” Indeed, the results of collaboration have already ranged from still-preliminary discussions to complete merger. To get a flavor of what has transpired so far, it is necessary to delve briefly into some of the details:

The **Business** departments on both campuses have gone the furthest, having effectively merged. Both now offer the same degree programs at bachelor’s and associate’s levels, as well as several concentrations, in both locations. The Johnson and Lyndon campuses have aligned curricula and offer nearly identical programs. Faculty have scheduled low-enrolled courses through telepresence, so that students on both campuses can take the course from a single instructor. This has increased student access to courses, for instance in accounting, and has made for an increase in average class size that is cost-effective and educationally supportable. Three-quarters of the on-campus faculty teach on both campuses, which gives students a larger faculty pool. As one faculty member wrote, “Our stories get old. With unification and a common curriculum we’re seeing a lot of cross-pollination...” A Business Advisory Board, which began to meet biannually starting this past November, has been established jointly. Currently faculty (and staff) from both campuses are working to align their internship procedures.

Faculty in **English** have met three times to discuss developing a common core for the English B.A., with separate concentrations to be offered at each campus. No action has been taken yet on developing a single degree program. It is still a work-in-progress. Faculty are wrestling with the question of whether the eventual result should be one program, with a single set of outcomes and one curriculum, or one program, with a single set of outcomes but varying curricula. In **Journalism**, the programs are not working toward alignment or collaboration. Rather, faculty affiliated with the NVU-J Journalism program are considering a transition to a professional writing degree. These conversations are in preliminary stages.

Mathematics faculty have met together and have effected changes in course numbering and descriptions. Others may follow. The campuses intend to offer one math degree. The faculty have met and created a preliminary degree model that includes a common core and applied and pure concentrations available at NVU-L and NVU-J respectively. The feasibility of this model is currently being examined based on historical enrollments.

History faculty are working with the Provost to arrive at a goal for collaboration. The programmatic context is that majors in history and political science exist at the Johnson location, but not at Lyndon; Lyndon, on the other hand, has a global studies major, and Johnson does not. Faculty have met and have developed a plan to offer a history degree at both campuses.

Faculty members in **Art** have had a few joint meetings and some collaborations. They met once as a group at each other’s campus, and once in the middle at a faculty member’s home. Attempts to bring courses and requirements in closer alignment have met with some success and some failure. An exhibition of student artwork took place at each other’s campus galleries. A Johnson

professor did a solo show at Lyndon, and a Lyndon professor taught and is currently teaching a course at Johnson. Art-related travel courses (for instance, NVU-J's Art and Culture of Cuba) have been publicized on and subscribed to by students on both campuses. All this has been promising, and faculty members recognize that greater collaboration in art is possible; yet they admit to feeling limited by the constraints of their modest numbers and the ongoing demands of their positions.

Faculty members in **Psychology** can point to an extensive timeline of collaborative activities dating back to Spring 2017. These have included several retreats in the state capitol, Montpelier, as well as meetings via Zoom. At these, faculty have tackled a variety of curricular matters as well as departmental policies. They have worked through the processing of agreed-upon course changes and have coordinated semester course schedules. Faculty also discussed which shared courses would be submitted for the new Common Core general education program, and who would be responsible for each of those submissions. Also broached was the need for curriculum review, especially when it comes to dropping, revising and sharing courses. At least one of these meetings included discussion of existing and anticipated graduate-level programming. Between meetings, faculty on both campuses continued to confer via email exchange, and chairs by phone, prioritizing the issue of identifying common courses for alignment. Chairs have also attended each other's department meetings. A pair of senior faculty, one from each campus, co-taught a psychology course and piloted a shared (hybrid) course model. Important to this process was their visiting each other's campus to introduce and thus demystify themselves to prospective students. They also took 16 students, 7 from Lyndon and 9 from Johnson, to London, Paris, and Amsterdam. Currently, faculty are working to eliminate kinks in coordinating course schedules, with an eye to Fall 2019. By consulting each other's five-year plans and rotating their offerings, as well as by consulting NVU Online's offerings, the hope is to reduce the costs of each program by decreasing part-time hires by one at each campus each semester.

In **Anthropology/Sociology** a senior faculty member at NVU-L has transferred home campuses and is now affiliated with the NVU-J faculty. In **Criminal Justice**, last spring, faculty from both campuses successfully worked together to create a restorative justice concentration. It is currently offered on the NVU-L campus and through NVU Online with the departure of the NVU-J faculty member.

Faculty in **Education** are hard at work on a plan for full unification. Already the two campuses share administrative personnel and have had multiple meetings to plan a unified curriculum. Their goal is to have the full merger in place by the time of the next ROPA approval visit in Spring 2020. The hoped-for result is a unified accreditation and education program across the University. Meanwhile, faculty from both campuses are involved in a faculty search (primarily) for NVU-L.

In the **Natural Sciences** department chairs have had several productive discussions about a number of issues, including offering courses on both campuses and course planning in light of

upcoming retirements. They also talked about the future of the Environmental Science programs that are offered on both campuses. A meeting has been scheduled—by the time of this writing, it may already have taken place—for NVU-L and NVU-J environmental faculty to discuss their programs. The biggest challenge in the sciences across all programs is how to insure continued high-quality lab experiences in a collaborative way. To date, faculty have been experimenting with different solutions but tend to agree on the need for a more systematic approach in the future. Results of collaboration to date have included Lyndon’s support for NVU-J’s request for a full-time faculty position in biology/health science; a Lyndon faculty member’s teaching much-needed physics courses at Johnson; and a Johnson faculty member’s offering advanced GIS at NVU-L. The GIS course includes a lecture via telepresence coupled with a lab section at each campus.

Atmospheric Sciences/Meteorology at Lyndon has no direct counterpart at Johnson, but there has been communication with NVU-J faculty in the sciences. Ideas for possible collaboration include sharing of seminars and the possible inclusion of various courses in degree programs which are only offered at the other campus. Some Johnson students are registered to take one of the NVU core ATM courses, which will occur virtually. ATM students at Lyndon took via telepresence Calculus III and other upper-level courses that were only offered at Johnson, though some coordination problems point to a need for better campus-to-campus communication.

Faculty in the **Exercise/Health Sciences** have met on a few occasions and have communicated by phone and email on numerous occasions to determine the best route for collaboration. Initially faculty participants sought ways to complement each other’s courses, and thus give students a greater range of elective offerings. Of late, a pair of faculty departures has set the stage for further discussions, this time involving faculty teaching required courses to students on both campuses, with the aid of telepresence and/or online instruction.

Faculty in **Mountain Recreation Management (NVU-L)/Outdoor Education (NVU-J)** have been meeting almost weekly, ever since unification came on the horizon as a likely prospect. Their goal is to create a shared curriculum and a new department—Outdoor Education, Leadership, and Tourism—to be in place by next fall. The process, though fruitful, has been difficult and time-consuming. According to one participant, “We are getting closer, but it is a slow and painful process involving lots of compromise and defending of turf.”

Performing Arts faculty have met twice, bringing together the full-time faculties of the combined departments. Participants discussed common as well as related courses, aligning their descriptions or making other changes deemed necessary. They also discussed potential areas for collaboration. As a result NVU-J students may have access to music business courses via telepresence from Lyndon, and students contemplating transfer from one campus to another should find their transition eased. Numerous musical collaborations have occurred (see Standard 5 for details).

The director of the **Center for Professional Studies**, housed at Lyndon, has engaged in ongoing conversation with **NVU Online**, housed on the Johnson campus, to identify potential industry-recognized certificate programs that could be synergistic with online degree programs. This illustrates one of the potential benefits of unification for NVU Online: the prospect of expanding course and program offerings. For instance, the bachelor's degree in criminal justice has been a Lyndon program, but efforts have begun to make the program available via NVU Online.

Projection: What was projected in the original substantive change proposal holds true today: “Efforts to effect strategic partnerships among academic departments and programs must continue energetically. NVU leaders, both among the administration and the faculty, are strongly committed to pursuing this project, which sits at the core of unification planning...All we can say now is that the eventual collaborations will take multiple forms; also, that elements of this academic project will continue to evolve well after the formal start of Northern Vermont University operations...” A number of areas have already built the momentum to move forward, but strong encouragement will need to be given to those further behind in their collaborative efforts.

Standard 5: Students

Admissions:

NVU Admissions and Marketing began working together in early 2017. As documented in the substantive change proposal, the earliest conversations centered on topics ranging from whether or not to require test scores, to processes within the admissions offices, to how staff would travel. By now Admissions has come together as one unit with offices on both campuses. Staff serve both campuses in multiple ways—from travel to operations to student outreach.

Full unification of the two offices took place during Summer 2018. That July, the Dean of Enrollment and Marketing began at NVU with the goal of driving up enrollment and integrating the two teams more fully so as to streamline processes and maximize efficiencies. Bringing the Admissions and Marketing departments together across the campuses has allowed the combined unit to improve processes, create backup of operations, and improve how we deliver communications, marketing, admissions and recruitment. We have been able to take the best practices from each campus to become a stronger unit serving Northern Vermont University.

Concrete results of that collaboration, all of which have conveyed benefits, have included:

- Implementation of a new Customer Relations Management System, Slate.
- One website for Northern Vermont University, launched in June 2018.
- Creation of a single internal and external application that represents both campus locations along with NVU Online and NECC.

- Unified file evaluation and decision making on applications.
- Consolidation of events equally for each campus location.
- Recruitment territories are set geographically rather than by campus or program.
- Traveled to college fairs and high school visits with individual counselors representing both campus locations.
- Purchase of search names as a unified institution along with prospects and inquiries.
- Common application requirements created for both locations.

Student services and co-curricular experiences:

The Student Affairs divisions at Johnson and Lyndon have collaborated on all areas of student affairs. The division meets twice a semester, alternating campuses to continue to connect, collaborate with, and support each other. Much communication goes on between these scheduled meetings. Within Residence Life, we now have one NVU housing contract and application, a standardized housing selection process for returners, and a single housing policy. With a common set of housing procedures in place, Admissions is able to route all housing inquiries to a shared email address. Although each set of staff members addresses inquiries related to their own campus, we are able to function as a single team in communications with prospective students. It should also be noted that students have access to meal plans on both campuses.

Student Affairs is currently working on an NVU student handbook and code of conduct, which will be in place by Fall 2019. We are also working on one NVU emergency crisis and response protocol. Our student activities departments have collaborated on events in which both campuses can participate. This has included a trip to watch a Red Sox baseball game, joint participation in the Burlington Pride Parade and Relay for Life, Casino Night (Johnson), Greggfest Music Festival (Lyndon), the HOPE Color Run (Lyndon), and an annual Leadership Conference (Lyndon). The Outdoor Education clubs from both campuses have traveled together, and a single NVU senior cruise on Lake Champlain is planned for this May. The two Student Government Associations have begun meeting regularly to discuss NVU-related issues. Already language exists in club/SGA constitutions which allows any NVU student to participate in either campus's clubs or organizations.

Our Wellness Centers have met to discuss the level of services provided on each campus and how they can better support each other and the students they serve. Among the ideas put forward has been to expand the internship program for graduate counseling students on the Johnson campus so as to provide support for interns at NVU-L. Discussions have begun as well on implementing an existing electronic record and scheduling system on both campuses.

The Advising directors on both campuses have worked together to convey a shared vision and message to faculty, staff, and students regarding the importance of progressing toward a degree in a timely manner. This is known as the "15 to Finish" initiative, and has taken several forms, including posters, FAQs, and a joint message for faculty shared at meetings of department chairs on both campuses. The directors also are sharing resources related to four-year plans and

academic maps, and intend to make those appear more uniform between the two campuses. Together they serve on a “15 to Finish” committee at system level. They have shared with each other their efforts to encourage returning students not yet registered to register, as well as data and reporting related to student persistence, processes for predicting student return rates, lists, and outreach plans.

First-year experiences have also been aligned, owing to the efforts of directors on the two campuses. Since the 2017-2018 academic year, both NVU campuses had access to the same book and common reading initiatives. All first-year students from NVU-L traveled to Johnson to hear the author of the book and participated in an “after event” of cookies, milk, and mingling. Plans are already underway for continued joint participation in the common reading activity next academic year. Both campuses now use the same “New Student Checklist” process for incoming students on Moodle (soon to migrate to Slate) and give the same “giveaways” to new students as they enter.

The Summer Bridge Program at NVU, a team effort of colleagues at Johnson and Lyndon, is a five-day program in August of academic support, skill development, and team building for first-year students. Summer Bridge is offered at both the Johnson and Lyndon campuses.

The Upward Bound programs on both campuses have worked very closely together for almost 20 years, collaborating on grant writing, program activities, cultural events, community service events, leadership trainings, and policy seminars. Students attend conferences together, and the campus programs share curricula, marketing, newsletters, staff trainings, AmeriCorps partnerships as well as strategies to improve recruiting, retention and, ultimately, college graduation rates. The formal collaboration that has come with unification has also allowed Upward Bound to do more with federal monies, by sharing buses on trips, rooming together, and extending services to a broader range of students.

Staff members who coordinate and provide disability services, together with VSCS legal counsel, worked jointly for a year to coordinate processes, forms, and documents for the two campuses. The result has been that both campuses serve those with disabilities in very similar ways. Students can take classes at either or both campuses with a support process that is seamless.

Veterans can look forward to a joint Veterans Summit on the Johnson campus in March. Comments from those who have attended the past annual summits at Lyndon show how valuable this event is in bringing veterans, their families, and veteran service organizations together. NVU-J and NVU-L now have a combined Student Veteran Association, as well as a Student Veteran Support Committee staffed by faculty, students, and staff from both campuses.

NVU-J and NVU-L counterparts in career services have met multiple times face-to-face, over conference call, and have collaborated asynchronously using Office 365 and Google docs. They have:

- Created an NVU Career Guide.
- Pooled online tools and resources for students to access on the NVU Careers website.
- Created an NVUCareers Facebook page, with both campuses contributing.
- Created Career Center marketing tools.
- Adopted an NVU Job and Internship database, which has now become a VSCS Consortium Job and Internship Database.
- Aligned internship practices more closely.
- Almost completed an online internship registration form for both campuses.
- Joined the professional association National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE).

Financial Aid functions as one office across the two campuses. Staff members from NVU-J and NVU-L reviewed and revised required forms and communications to students and families. They gathered and reviewed prior award data to determine new federal and institutional awarding parameters for incoming students. Staff members from the two campuses also worked together to fine tune data collection as well as the format of the billing letter. This has meant clearer and more concise communications to students.

Behind the scenes, at the operational level, a single Controller now oversees processes for both campuses of NVU. Student Service Consultants from each campus have been working together, primarily via emails, conference calls, and in-person meetings. At times the collaboration has involved Financial Aid. Results have included the streamlining and standardization of student billing processes and communications. Phone systems have been integrated, so Student Service Consultants, wherever they are located, can support students at either campus. One bursar performs most of the standardized processing, collections, and student refunds.

Co-curricular opportunities for students have increased in several ways that have already been cited in this report. Nowhere have enhanced opportunities been more evident than in music, where numerous collaborations have occurred. Jazz ensemble members from both campuses combined to play for the unification ceremony in Montpelier. Johnson choirs are now available to Lyndon students. NEKCOrchestra members at NVU-L and the NVU-J Chamber Singers joined forces in a December concert exchange. Each group joined the other's concert, performing on their own and together, at the events billed as unification concerts.

The Public Safety departments on both campuses, as guarantors of a safe environment for all, have been early and active participants in collaborative projects related to unification. The directors have created a simplified Emergency Operation plan and facilitated table top exercises for the President's Leadership Team on both campuses, to test and refine that plan. Public Safety Officers on each campus were similarly walked through a table top exercise so they could gain experience with the new plan. A larger scale table top exercise, with outside agencies and

participants from both campuses, took place this January. NVU Public Safety also implemented a change in ID cards, which has meant ID cards for meals could be used interchangeably at either campus. This past summer a further step was made: a unified NVU ID card background that is currently in use at both campuses. Additional steps have included new uniforms for NVU Public Safety, the adoption of the same parking management system, including permits standardized and branded for the University, and a complete merger of alerting systems (Rave Alert) for the whole of NVU. A more long-term project, which has begun, is the standardization of report writing systems, access control systems and camera systems.

Athletics:

In preparation for unification, administrators from the NVU-J and NVU-L athletic departments met four times in 2017-2018 to talk about ways they could collaborate. The meetings alternated campuses. While unification is intended to trigger a collaborative approach for most of the institution, it works a little differently in athletics. Both campuses have retained their NCAA Division III athletics programs and continue to compete against each other in the North Atlantic Conference.

With that said, athletics personnel have conferred about policies and practices in running their departments, vendors used, collaborating with intramural/SHAPE programming, and creating a friendly rivalry on the athletic playing surfaces by developing a President's Cup. In each contest pitting Lyndon against Johnson, the winning campus will earn a point. At the end of the year, the team with more points will be awarded the Cup by the President and that school will retain the Cup for the year.

Besides implementing the President's Cup, other results of collaboration include:

- Joint work by the intramural directors to provide tournament offerings in different activities, inviting the other campus student body to participate.
- Joint purchase by the athletic trainers of new concussion software. This allowed a break on pricing, and athletics also provided the software to academic support services on both campuses, for use by the general student body.
- The creation of a new position, Associate Dean of Athletics, to oversee both athletic departments and move them forward in ways that would enhance the student experience. The areas of focus will not only be increased competitiveness on the playing surfaces, but also on developing consistent student learning goals, and on increasing retention, GPAs, and graduation rates, as well as community service involvement.

Projection: In this area a great deal of momentum for collaborative activities and ventures already exists. Each unit within it has its own to-do list of initiatives, some of them having been mentioned in the previous paragraphs. Many are tied to the NVU strategic plan. Tracking the

progress of promising initiatives, through periodic check-ins and reportage, would help guarantee their realization and success. In the process, some units may require a modest infusion of resources to facilitate progress. It will also be important to evaluate the success of initiatives that have already been implemented.

Standard 6: Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship

As reported in the substantive change proposal, members of the original Transition Team for unification had considered Standard 6 and “concluded that little would change with unification that would affect our compliance.” Their conclusion is largely correct. What has changed, however, is the proliferation of novel teaching and learning arrangements that have been described in the section on academic programs (Standard 4). These have included teachers and students traveling to each other’s campus, co-teaching, courses via telepresence, as well as online and hybrid course models.

These collaborative arrangements have successfully filled teaching needs and provided NVU students with enhanced learning opportunities; but they have not, in and of themselves, mitigated the ongoing importance of assuring “an adequate number of faculty and academic staff” (6.2). The demands of collaboration, as detailed in this report, add another dimension to an already lengthy list of faculty responsibilities. (Standard 6.2 provides a list.) University leadership recognizes and appreciates this need as a priority; and current search activities—for five full-time, tenure-track faculty positions as well as several full-time staff members—would seem to provide a good start on addressing it.

Projection: The University’s overall financial strategy seeks to invest part of its improved financial position in personnel. Administrative cost-savings, consolidation of some functions with the system office, retirements, natural attrition, redesign of work processes, planned increases in enrollment, and improvements in retention, as well as revenues from expanded online programming are all part of this multifaceted approach. It will be important to monitor the continued success of this overall financial strategy in assuring the adequacy of faculty and staff numbers.

Standard 7: Institutional Resources

Human resources:

All key human resource functions have been consolidated. A single Human Resources office exists physically at NVU-L, but serves the entire University. Areas of oversight include the

faculty and staff search processes that have been detailed elsewhere in this report. Their successful conclusion will help ensure the sufficiency of personnel to achieve the NVU mission (7.1).

Financial resources:

In support of Standards 7.4-7.20 the University has developed a strategic financial plan:

As of the beginning of FY2019, Northern Vermont University’s unrestricted fund balance, excluding carry forward funds, was \$6,983,966. This amount was inclusive of a board required reserve equal to \$1,476,725 and quasi endowments equaling \$705,000. The result is a wholly available fund balance of \$4,792,241. In addition to these funds Northern Vermont University ended fiscal year 2018 with a surplus of approximately \$989K. This surplus will be used to offset an unanticipated shortfall in revenue for FY2019 due to changes in enrollment, persistence and financial aid packaging. The result will be usage of approximately \$1,000,000 of the unrestricted fund balance.

Northern Vermont University’s financial plan seeks to assure the financial stability and long-term viability of the institution. The goals of this plan are as follows:

- 1) Balanced budget by FY2022, remaining balanced thereafter.
- 2) Revenue growth through enrollment and persistence.
- 3) Cost reductions through academic program and administrative process efficiencies.
- 4) Use of strategic reserves for strategic initiatives that grow revenues and produce cost efficiencies.

Assumptions:

The allocation of the state appropriation will result in decreased non-operating revenues of approximately \$416,000 a year for each of years FY2020 through FY2023 for a cumulative annual reduction in state appropriation of approximately \$1,664,000 by FY2023. This reduction in state appropriation will be modestly offset by a proportional decrease in the University’s funding of the Chancellor’s Office staff and IT infrastructure. The reduction is estimated to be approximately \$70,000 annually for each of the years FY2020-FY2023 for a cumulative annual reduction in funding to the Chancellor’s Office of \$280,000.

Category	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Incremental Change in State Appropriation (revenue reduction)	-416,000	-416,000	-416,000	-416,000
Incremental Change in Chancellor’s Office (expense reduction)	70,000	70,000	70,000	70,000
Cumulative Change Since 18-19	-346,000	-692,000	-1,038,000	1,384,000

Annual increases in wages and benefits for faculty and staff will be less than or equal to 1% per year. The University will continue to target strategic investments in areas that will reduce academic and administrative program costs.

Grants will be used to fund strategic investments in equipment and personnel allowing the University to minimize equipment and service replacement.

Year 1-2 persistence for campus undergraduates (first time, full-time) will increase by 1-2% per year for each of the next five years resulting in a 72% year persistence rate for this category by FY2024. This increase, driven by work related to the Title III grant, will result in approximately 4-8 students per year increasing to approximately 24 students within four years.

Annual Change due to Persistence	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Incremental Enrollment Change	4	5	7	8	9
% Undergraduate Enrollment Change	.21%	.27%	.38%	.42%	.48%
Change since 18-19	4	9	16	24	33

Strategic enrollment plans will result in increased enrollment as follows:

Student Type	In State	Out of State	FPE Change	Headcount Change
Early College	30%	n/a	22 In State	22 In State
Assumes the early college program at NVU-Lyndon will increase to 40 students annually and that NVU-Johnson enrollments will remain flat.				
Campus Undergraduate	-3%	+8%	-32 In State 45 out of State	-33 In State 46 Out of State
Assumes undergraduate Vermonters will decline in relationship to Vermont's demographic shift between 2018 and 2024. This shift will be mitigated by increased emphasis on out of state admissions.				
Graduate	37.5%	34%	23 In State 32 Out of State	75 In State 36 Out of State
Assumes the weekend format counseling program will expand by 3 cohorts in Vermont and 2 cohorts out of state. Assumes two cohorts of 15 for the graduate leadership program by the end of FY2024				
NVU-Online	10%	208%	21 In State 102 Out of State	34 In State 150 Out of State
Decrease per credit cost of NVU-Online offerings while simultaneously increasing the number of academic programs and offerings.				
Total Change	5.3%	43%	55 In State 179 Out of State	98 In State 330 Out of State

Strategic plan initiatives will require investment to build our future. These investments will support revenue improvements and/or cost efficiencies. Currently identified projects are as follows:

Project Name	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Total
EXCEPTIONAL COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP							
Office of External Relations	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	180,000
INNOVATIVE PROFESSIONAL AND LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION							
Undergraduate Research/Creative Fellowships			20,000	20,000	30,000	30,000	100,000
Diversity & Inclusion/Social Justice Curriculum Review		10,000					10,000
Diversity & Inclusion/Social Justice Curriculum Action Plan			10,000				10,000
Center for Teaching and Learning Releases		10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	50,000
Center for Teaching and Learning Consultant	6,500						6,500
	6,500	20,000	40,000	30,000	40,000	40,000	176,500
TRANSFORMATIVE STUDENT EXPERIENCES							
Transportation between Campuses			150,000	150,000	225,000	300,000	825,000
Survey	500						500
Small Group Programming / Mixers		1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	5,000
Professional Development for Staff		600	600	600	600	600	3,000
Institutional Researcher					120,000	120,000	240,000
Institutional Research (Releases)	10,000	20,000	20,000	40,000			90,000
Grants Writer			105,000	105,000	105,000	105,000	420,000
Customer Service Training		2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	12,500
	10,500	24,100	279,100	299,100	454,100	529,100	1,596,000
VIBRANT THRIVING CAMPUSES							
Symposium	500	500	500	500	500	500	3,000
Social Justice/Diversity & Inclusion Training for Supervisors		500	500	500			1,500
Social Justice Training	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000			20,000
NVU-Online Advisers		15,000	20,000	25,000	30,000	35,000	125,000
Job Postings in Inclusive Journals		2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	12,500
Instructional Designer		95,000	95,000	95,000	95,000	95,000	475,000
Inclusive Hiring Training		6,500					6,500
Faculty Lecture Series	500	500	500	500	500	500	3,000
Common Event for Students	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	120,000
Common Event for Faculty & Staff	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	30,000
	31,000	150,500	149,000	154,000	153,500	158,500	796,500
Total	78,000	224,600	498,100	513,100	677,600	757,600	2,749,000

It is expected that each year of strategic initiatives will be funded by the general operating budget of the University. Incrementally, FY2020 will require approximately \$146,000 to fund strategic initiatives and FY2021 will require an additional \$273,500.

Looking forward, a potential five-year budget is as shown below. This budget assumes investment in the strategic priorities will be made by making difficult choices in what ongoing activities will be funded. As shown in the five-year budget, NVU would have a budget deficit through FY2022, showing a surplus balance for the first time in FY2023.

Northern Vermont University
5-Year Budget Projection
(Amounts rounded to \$1,000)

	2019 Q1 Projection		FY2019 Budget		FY2020 Roll-Forward		FY2021		FY2022		FY2023		FY2024						
	Baseline		Reference		Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4		Year 5						
	Pct of Total		Pct of Total		% Chg	\$ Chg	% Chg	\$ Chg	% Chg	\$ Chg	% Chg	\$ Chg	% Chg	\$ Chg					
REVENUES																			
Tuition and Fees	56%	32,724	56%	32,623	2.9%	949	33,673	2.9%	977	35,650	2.9%	1,034	37,366	2.9%	1,084	39,190	2.9%	1,137	41,121
Enrollment Growth					3.1%	1,001	1,001	2.0%	682	682	2.1%	741	741	2.1%	794	794	2.1%	833	833
State Appropriation	19%	10,930	19%	10,930	-3.8%	(415)	10,515	-3.9%	(410)	10,105	-4.1%	(414)	9,690	-4.3%	(417)	9,274	0.0%	0	9,274
Room and Board	16%	9,546	17%	9,699	2.0%	191	9,737	2.0%	195	9,932	2.0%	199	10,130	2.0%	203	10,333	2.0%	207	10,540
All Other Revenue	5%	2,790	5%	2,917	0.0%	0	2,790	0.0%	0	2,790	0.0%	0	2,790	0.0%	0	2,790	0.0%	0	2,790
TOTAL REVENUES	96%	55,990	96%	56,169		1,725	57,715		1,443	59,159		1,559	60,717		1,664	62,381		2,176	64,558
EXPENSES																			
Salaries and Benefits	58%	33,864	57%	33,286	3.6%	1,219	35,083	3.6%	1,263	36,346	3.6%	1,308	37,655	3.6%	1,356	39,010	3.6%	1,404	40,414
Efficiency Improvements-->					-1.8%	(620)	(620)	-1.9%	(667)	(1,286)	-2.6%	(930)	(2,217)	-2.4%	(885)	(3,102)	-2.6%	(1,010)	(4,112)
Services, Supplies and Travel	16%	9,474	16%	9,606	0.0%	0	9,474	0.0%	0	9,474	0.0%	0	9,474	0.0%	0	9,474	0.0%	0	9,474
Efficiency Improvements-->					2.1%	194	194	1.5%	143	337	0.0%	0	337	-0.1%	(7)	331	0.0%	0	331
Scholarships and Fellowships	12%	6,798	10%	6,048	10.0%	680	7,478	10.0%	748	8,226	0.0%	0	8,226	0.0%	0	8,226	0.0%	0	8,226
Utilities	4%	2,600	5%	2,775	0.0%	0	2,600	0.0%	0	2,600	0.0%	0	2,600	0.0%	0	2,600	0.0%	0	2,600
Chancellor's Office	5%	3,056	5%	3,056	7.0%	144	3,200	0.0%	(70)	3,130	0.0%	(70)	3,060	0.0%	(70)	2,990	0.0%	0	2,990
Debt Service	4%	2,376	4%	2,376	-0.8%	(19)	2,357	-15.3%	(360)	1,997	33.4%	666	2,663	0.0%	(1)	2,662	0.0%	1	2,663
All Other Expenses	0%	0	0%	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0
Transfers	0%	99	0%	22	0.0%	0	99	0.0%	0	99	0.0%	0	99	0.0%	0	99	0.0%	0	99
TOTAL EXPENSES	100%	58,267	98%	57,169		1,598	59,865		60,923		61,897		62,290		62,290				62,685
NET REVENUES/(DEFICIT)		(2,277)		(1,000)		(2,150)		(1,764)		(1,179)		92		1,873					
Percent of Total Expenses		-3.9%		-1.7%		-3.6%		-2.9%		-1.9%		0.1%		3.0%					
CUMULATIVE SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)		(2,277)		(1,000)		(4,427)		(6,191)		(7,370)		(7,278)		(5,406)					

State appropriation changes and strategic investments are as follows for each year:

FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023
869K	1,668M	2,097	2,514

Restated results:

FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023
-1,281M	-96K	918K	2,606M

A new budgeting process will help to determine the year-to-year implementation of this financial plan. It was previewed by President Collins at the spring 2019 welcome back events for faculty and staff. The new process, which will be used to develop the FY2020 (academic year 2019-2020) financial budget, is intended to: foster transparent, meaningful, and open dialogue; challenge assumptions; encourage collaboration and innovation; and allocate resources strategically.

The approach used will be modified zero-based budgeting. A budget review committee comprised of 12 individuals across all NVU divisions, campuses, and functional areas will hear and consider budget proposals and make recommendations to the Executive Team.

Recommendations will also be vetted by the finance staff for completeness before being conveyed to the Executive Team. That leadership group will review the recommendations from

the budget committee and offer a recommendation to the President, who will make the final decisions regarding distribution of budgetary resources.

Information and technological resources:

Following ten months of extensive planning by library staff members, on July 1, 2018, Samuel Read Hall Library on the Lyndon campus and Willey Library on the Johnson campus became Northern Vermont University Libraries under one director. The planning touched on each of the library's functional areas, including acquisitions and collection development, instructional services, electronic resources management, interlibrary loan, circulation and public services, technical services, and website and web services.

Several positive developments resulted from the months of collaboration:

- All NVU Libraries electronic resources are available to all NVU students.
- A single NVU Libraries website serves the entire institution.
- Library staff redesigned and improved the interlibrary loan workflow.
- We now have a single acquisitions specialist for NVU Libraries.
- Together with the NVU Office of Information Technology, library staff implemented the InfoDesk service model at Willey Library.

An NVU Libraries 2019-2024 strategic plan also came to exist. Its six goals are to: promote information literacy; provide and make accessible resources relevant to the programs and mission of NVU; provide and curate spaces that allow for collaboration, quiet study, and engagement with resources; offer unique and accessible special collections and resources to the NVU and northern Vermont communities; create a culture of assessment and improvement; and create a culture of collaboration. Strategies and actions support each goal.

The IT departments from the two campuses had already been meeting for several months prior to the official unification announcement. Their staffs recognized that it was critical for technology support to be in place before unification began, as IT support would be instrumental in a smooth transition to Northern Vermont University. Important, early discussions tackled the following items: a unified help desk; a new Microsoft Windows domain to combine NVU-J and NVU-L; staffing; and infrastructure at both locations.

Currently the NVU IT staff meet bi-weekly using the telepresence rooms and the Zoom platform. The IT staff use Microsoft Teams to collaborate on a daily basis using the chat and file sharing features extensively. The individual staff switch campuses regularly, allowing for cross-training and collaboration. This has proved very successful.

IT also created a strategic information technology plan, with the following as its starting premise: "While the department has achieved much critical success, the University acknowledges that substantial work is necessary to bring both NVU campuses up to par with

technology. Substantial investment is necessary, primarily on the NVU-Johnson campus.” The plan goes on to present an environmental scan, set of assumptions, a list of critical projects and investments:

Environmental Scan

Northern Vermont University has a bifurcated Information Technology infrastructure. The NVU-Johnson campus has chronically underfunded technology while the NVU-Lyndon campus has made funding of technology a critical priority over the last ten years. At Johnson, classroom instruction stations are approximately six years old on average while Lyndon instructor stations are typically two to three years old. Similarly, faculty and staff computers at Johnson are typically six to eight years old while Lyndon workstations are typically three to five years old. Further, the critical knowledge, skills and abilities of staff members differed between the campuses with greater specialization and depth of knowledge housed on the Lyndon campus.

Monies appropriated by the legislature for the creation of Northern Vermont University helped considerably with infrastructure on the Johnson campus. Since 2016 the campus has received all new networking, fiber optic cable, and a new server farm. In addition, there has been a significant improvement in the overall stability of the network and services university-wide.

Assumptions:

- A consistent hardware replacement schedule will be developed.
- Computer lab equipment and classroom (instructor) workstations will be replaced every two to four years.
- Faculty and staff computers will have an average of no more than five years.
- Network infrastructure will be placed on a five- to seven-year replacement schedule.
- Two to four classrooms per year will receive technology upgrades (projectors/video switches/displays/sound).
- At least one pair of small conference rooms will be equipped with teleconferencing capabilities similar to ASAC 215/Freda Hebb.
- Information Technology will facilitate major projects across the University and Vermont State Colleges System.
- Access Control and CCTV systems will be replaced and placed on an eight- to twelve-year replacement schedule.
- Functional efficiencies support through programming and development such as JADU form development.

Critical Projects:

- Help desk unification.

- Classroom technology upgrades and telepresence support.
- JADU Forms Development.
- Access Control and CCTV Replacement.
- Infrastructure standardization.
- Computer lab replacements.
- Faculty and staff hardware replacements.
- Network infrastructure replacements.
- Maintenance and support.

Investments:

Critical investments in infrastructure are necessary throughout the upcoming years. The University will seek funding sources beyond operating revenues such as grants and state appropriations.

The plan concludes by laying out a set of 10 anticipated investments necessary, by project and year, to support the Information Technology plan. Proposed investments over six years total \$1.6 million.

Projection: Critical to the successful implementation of NVU's strategic financial plan is that the new, more transparent and participatory budgeting process yield high value and enjoy a widespread perception of legitimacy. It deserves to be monitored closely and tweaked if/as necessary. Also important will be the success of the staff and faculty recruitment processes already underway. Gauging progress toward the goals of library and technology plans will help determine the progress of Northern Vermont University in these two critical areas.

Standard 8: Educational Effectiveness

The development of protocols to assess student learning in the new general education program has gone more slowly than planned. It is nevertheless still on track with all the necessary building blocks in place. The sharing of major program assessments between the campuses has also proceeded slowly, but seems to be gaining force, as key personnel on both campuses have begun to gather and review annual assessment reports. Finally, much data bearing on student success does exist, but in multiple locations and on different campuses.

Projection: As has been noted previously, developing the assessment component of the new general education program must remain on track, starting with the work faculty have planned for

this summer. Collaboration between the Lyndon and Johnson campuses on assessment of student learning in major programs, which has begun, deserves close scrutiny so that these efforts produce quick and tangible results. It will be important to standardize the collection and analysis of data bearing on student success, and bring them together in a useable manner. To combat student attrition, and design appropriate and timely interventions, it may also be important to develop nuanced ways to get a handle on more difficult-to-assess factors indicative of “risk”—for instance, social/emotional issues. Hopefully, the work of the associate academic dean at NVU-J and the director of advising resources for NVU-L will move this important project forward. Engaging the services of an external consultant or educational research firm, using Title III grant funds, may also help.

Standard 9: Transparency, Integrity, and Public Disclosure

The areas of transparency and disclosure provide an illustration of two heretofore autonomous institutions having somewhat different stances and behaving slightly differently. The good news is that early discussions yielded quick consensus. This included agreement that, when future judgment calls might be close ones, the direction arrow would point toward transparency and public disclosure. The results have been pleasing. Now, for instance, a public disclosure page on the NVU website covers both campuses (<https://www.northernvermont.edu/about/depth/public-disclosure>), as does a page (<https://www.northernvermont.edu/about/depth/accreditation>) of links to documents that detail the accreditation histories of both campuses as well as the University as a whole. Transparency is also one of the prime goals of the just-announced budgeting process that will be used to develop the FY2020 (academic year 2019-2020) financial budget.

Projection: The University should continue to review and monitor its print and digital publications for completeness, accuracy, accessibility, and currency. As detailed in the section on Governance, faculty need to complete the project on aligning academic policies. The new budgeting process for FY2020 will require close monitoring to insure, among its goals, that the promise to “foster transparent, meaningful, and open dialogue” is realized.