

Unification Advisory Committee

Introduction

On January 7, 2016, the VSC Long Range Planning Committee requested that the Chancellor work with the presidents of Johnson State College and Lyndon State College, and with the presidents of Vermont Technical College and Community College of Vermont, to develop strategic alliances between these institutions.

The VSC Board of Trustees affirmed that request by the Long Range Planning Committee at their February 13, 2016 meeting.

On July 22, 2016, the VSC Board of Trustees approved, in concept, the Chancellor's recommendation to unify Johnson and Lyndon under one administration into a single larger and stronger college with two distinct campuses.

On September 29, 2016 the Board of Trustees is expected to vote on whether to approve the Chancellor's recommendation. Before that time, the Office of the Chancellor is to:

- Meet with students, faculty and staff at both the JSC and LSC campuses to solicit their feedback on the Chancellor's recommendation;
- Prepare a report that includes this feedback and identifies the legal, contractual, financial, academic, communications and other issues that need to be addressed in order to successfully implement the Chancellor's recommendation; and
- Outline a transition plan, including a timeline, for implementation of the Chancellor's recommendation.

In the very near future the Chancellor will be traveling to both campuses to meet with faculty, staff and students to explain his proposal, answer questions and take input on unification. In addition, the Chancellor will meet with alumni, union, community, and other interested groups to do the same.

The Chancellor has asked former Vermont State Colleges Chancellor Tim Donovan to convene a Unification Advisory Committee (UAC) to gather input and provide guidance to President Collins, Interim President Atkins, and his office on the many additional policy and operational issues, beyond the reports his office will produce for the Board of Trustees, that will need to be thoughtfully addressed for unification to be successful. Involvement of representatives from each campus will ensure that the interests, concerns, ideas, and expertise from both colleges are considered. It will tap in-house perspectives that will be critical in crafting a transition plan that ensures a successfully unified college.

Composition

The UAC will be comprised of twelve members, including:

- Four representatives from each of the Johnson State College and Lyndon State College communities,

- One student representative from each college community, and
- One representative from the Chancellor's Office, and
- Former Chancellor Donovan, as Chair.

Interim President Nolan Atkins and President Elaine Collins will recommend individuals to the Chancellor for possible appointment to the UAC. The Chancellor will appoint a committee that collectively should include a wide range of perspectives, though not specifically every possible constituency.

Charge

The UAC will serve two broad functions: gathering information and input from the college communities and identifying the decisions that need to be considered to ensure a seamless unification of the two institutions. For example, should both colleges utilize a unified financial aid policy? Strengths/weaknesses and implications of a unified financial aid policy will be provided to institutional leadership.

More specifically: the UAC will provide inclusive and transparent forums to identify and discuss the many additional policy and operational considerations. These may include community meetings, operational unit meetings, and online opportunities for communication and participation by members of the campus communities throughout the transition period.

Further, the UAC will inform and advise the Presidents and Chancellor, as well as inter-campus groups, on how issues and decisions may be thoughtfully addressed to ensure that unification will be successful in preserving and strengthening access to high-quality, affordable, and sustainable college on two distinctive campuses. The UAC will provide macro level recommendations in key areas of unification.

Timeline

Preliminary feedback. It is hoped the UAC will convene quickly to plan opportunities for input within the next six weeks in order to inform the Chancellor's report to the Board of Trustees prior to their meeting on September 29th.

Advising on transition and implementation. The UAC will coordinate with college and system leadership to develop a list of key areas of focus for their work, important deadlines, and to establish protocols for communicating guidance and recommendations to the Presidents and Chancellor over the course of FY2017.