NVU Strong Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, June 4, 2020

In Attendance:
Committee Members: Nolan Atkins, Isaac Eddy, Alan Giese, Janel Hanrahan, David McGough, Mary Fafard, Elaine Harvey, Anna Maziarz, Brian Michaud, Melissa Clark, Brian Lamoureux, Patrick Wickstrom, David Bradbury, Beth Foy, Katherine Sims Unable to attend: Keith Chamberlin, Robert Maher  
Executive Team and Resource Staff: Elaine Collins, Sharron Scott, Jonathan Davis, Mike Fox, Leah Hollenberger, Sylvia Plumb  
Notes by: Darcie Miles

Agenda:

1. Minutes and Updates  
The meeting minutes from the last meeting will be circulated via email for review and electronic approval. Once approved, they will be placed on the www.NorthernVermont.edu/StrongFuture page.

2. Final Meeting  
Today is the last committee meeting and at the last meeting, we talked about coming up with final draft recommendations that would help inform the model, but also help us realize our charge, which is to come up with a 15-25% adjustment to the budget that President Collins can present to the VSCS Board of Trustees at their June meeting. Since the last meeting, a document that included vision language and the subgroup recommendations was shared with the committee. There has been a lot of good conversation around the vision. Realizing that it was a difficult task for the committee to put dollar figures related to the budget adjustment next to the recommendations, the committee provided approval for the Executive Team to develop a balanced budget for FY22 that supports and moves forward the new NVU vision created by the committee.

3. Review of Vision  
The committee added a lot of good ideas and thoughts to the draft. To make sure the expectations are clear, ultimately, as a group, we are making a recommendation to President Collins and what we are putting forth today, might not be the final language verbatim in the final version that President Collins shares with the VSCS Board of Trustees. There might be some additional modifications, but the essence will not change. Two examples as to the language modifications potentially needed: 1.) broaden the idea of lowering tuition – change to driving down the overall cost earning a degree and 2.) tuition credits – from a financial aid/fiscal perspective, we just need to make sure it makes sense and it is doable.

Discussion:
• The idea of the tuition credits, so the partner would provide the tuition credit directly to the student so that we are not paying the student for the work. The tuition credit is the central key idea that makes this model separate from others. Stress that this is not just an internship, it is course work and it will essentially drive down the total cost of earning a degree. A big part of it is for recruitment, but, for the business partners, this also provides accountability. Not just paying the students, but paying the institution that is backing this work—that is important for the businesses backing this.
To note, the faculty on the committee have been meeting with faculty across the schools and there is a lot of enthusiasm and excitement, support, and acknowledgement that we already do some of this. We have a lot of resources in our background with this and to support this vision in a practical manner. Where do the liberal arts come up in this work model? Finding ways that when we talk about work, we continue to incorporate the holistic approach.

Need to keep all stakeholders in mind and represent all stakeholders with the language in the vision.

4. **Review of Recommendations to Share with the VSCS Forward Committee**
Based on the community input and the committee conversations and work, the committee reviewed the recommendations that seem appropriate to move up to the system-wide VSCS Forward Committee for their consideration in exploring and taking action and agreed upon the following.

a) One accreditation model
b) System-wide core curriculum/competencies
c) VSAC portability
d) UVM collaboration (with a statement that we do not support including the VSCS within the governance of UVM as our access missions are very different)
e) Decentralize/reduce the Office of the Chancellor
f) Appropriations formula
g) Initiate conversation with Unions regarding employee wages and benefits issues
h) Additional telepresence or telepresence-like technology
i) Academic calendar – explore the notion of a year-round calendar

5. **Overview and Endorsement of Subgroup Recommendations**
The subgroups provided an overview of their draft final recommendations that they would like to move forward.

**Facilities and Student Experience:**

a) Establish partner services support and project management.
   - Approved
b) Invest and repurpose library and business space to allow for optimization of space and more flexible space.
   - Concern: Broaden the language that allows flexibility as to how NVU uses the space. No cubicles.
   - Approved
c) Student Services in a shared working environment.
   - Approved
d) Student help desk model to answer student questions – one-stop shop.
   - Approved
e) Pool removal at Lyndon given potential public/private partnerships.
   - Concern: Depending on what goes in for revenue in its place, removing it would take a few years to realize savings from the upfront removal cost versus the annual upkeep and expense of the pool.
   - Approved
f) Contract out Physical Plant (maintenance and custodial).
   - Concerns: This is a system conversation based on the scope. Move up to VSCS Forward Committee and wrap into employee wage and benefits issues.
   - Approved to move the following to the VSCS Forward Committee: Initiate conversation with Unions regarding employee wages and benefits issues.
g) ADA compliance – as needed as we partner with partners.
   - Approved
h) Telepresence and telepresence-like technology.
   - Concerns: Do we need a dedicated space or are students more transient with a laptop? 28 high schools are connected to telepresence—we could offer more classes directly to the high schools if we have

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more telepresence technology. We can leverage the system and reduce barriers if we have telepresence options.

a. **Approved to move to the VSCS Forward Committee.**

**Lifelong Learning:**

a) Lifelong learning from high school through career perspective as a continuous process of job skills acquisition development, and improvement leveraging Center for Professional Studies and NVU Online. Moving to stackable degrees and credentials that are quick and affordable, but mesh with our traditional programs. Align our offerings with the Vermont Department of Professional Regulations.

a. Concerns: Work with partners to build out programs. Programs compatible with federal financial aid regulations or targeting businesses to help support their employees. Expand campus ecosystem to on the job training (adapt to specific needs of the employer). More oversight of NVU Online and move it into Academic Affairs. Centralize online classes—flexibility of taking classes, NVU Online versus online classes (easily accessible). Expanded graduate offerings.

b. **Approved with wordsmithing to the bullet under NVU Undergraduate Students related to online offerings.**

**Athletics:**

a) Proposal submitted by the NVU Athletic Department re: move coaches to full-time and eliminate a number of teams from each campus.

a. **Approved (with one abstention) the following recommendation:** The Associate Dean of Athletics will identify a minimum of four programs across both campuses for potential closure using the methodology and metrics outlined in the proposal provided to the committee and one coach to a full-time position as the appropriate positions become available. Starting with one coach will allow NVU to test whether this model results in increased athletic recruitment.

**Academic Calendar:**

a) As submitted by many community members, move to a year-round calendar.

a. Concerns: The academic calendar is now a system-wide negotiated matter. Break up to three, 15-week terms or break the entire year up into four blocks. It needs to tie into the needs of the partners. This will allow students flexibility as to when they take classes.

b. **Approved to move it up to the VSCS Forward Committee and explore the possibility of a year-round calendar within our governance.**

**Academic Programming:**

The committee faculty met with faculty from all four of the schools, which guided the below broad recommendations based on the ideas the faculty had with working with partners and their current partnerships.

a) Collaboration with CCV as appropriate.

b) Program transfer with Castleton.

c) Make common courses available across campuses using telepresence rooms and other technology, alternating home campus.

d) Accelerate unification by reducing program clusters from 20 to 18 (managed by Johnson and/or Lyndon).

e) Large-scale integration of Gen Edu fundamentals (Math, Science, Writing) and Gen Ed-themed course competencies (learning objectives) with degree-pathway courses.

f) Suggested protocols for ongoing academic decision making.

a. Concerns and discussion for all of the above:

i. Balance by attrition model, we will need to revisit based on what is best for our business partners.

ii. How do we determine which program is best for each campus?
iii. Feedback from faculty – fear that if we cut, we will die, so we just need to make sure that when we consider cutting programs, make sure our identity is intact and fortified and we are offering exciting things on campus and we remain a liberal arts institution.

iv. Can we put in our vision statement that we recognize there is a need to right size, but we do not want to gut beyond viability and we are really focused on the future of a brand and vision for NVU that can grow and be sustainable for the future by right sizing and investing in areas to create that future. We can’t overcut, but do need to right size. This is the time to make difficult choices as the alternative is no NVU, so we are doing our best to ensure that NVU goes forward.

1. Approved to add broad language to the vision in the draft recommendation.

v. Support most of it, but not all of it.

vi. Hard time seeing the duplication across the campuses. This is not enough in the way of a bold vision for our academic offerings, but I know how difficult this work is.

vii. Can we share this proposal with Eduventures to see what they think? They have already stated that we have too many bachelor programs, but we have two campuses.

viii. Cutting degrees does not mean that we are cutting faculty or cuts.

ix. Have we really gone far enough?

b. Approved with the following vote: 7 yes and 5 abstention.

6. President Collins Closing Remarks

President Collins thanked Provost Atkins for chairing the committee and getting us to this point. For the next steps, we will take the document and craft it into a final form so that the recommendations are clear as President Collins presents it to the VSCS Board of Trustees. We will try to incorporate the committee’s spirit and the direction laid out in the document. We would like to be able to hold another Community Catch Up meeting to share the recommendations with the community. As President Collins has shared the work of the committee, the reception of the plan has very enthusiastic at the Board level and with individuals with whom she has shared it with. She hopes that the committee members understand the work for the Executive Team is now going to be equally as difficult as they figure out the budget adjustment. We are all going to have to sacrifice in some way to get to where we need to go as we have to ensure that we are in a form that can endure time moving on understanding that we are going to have another demographic challenge in 2026. We have to make sure that we are ready for FY22, we are going to have to make some hard decisions.

President Collins expressed her thanks to the committee for all of their time and help provided to address our challenges, particularly in the middle of a pandemic and in the middle of perhaps your own stress within your jobs. Your commitment is appreciated. The work of the committee has resulted in us pivoting the entire mission of NVU and that happened in 24 hours after the Work and Learn model was introduced. We are taking huge strides forward solely because of your work and by what you have contributed, you have made it possible for NVU to stay and serve high-quality education for generations to come. We hope you will continue to serve as a strong ambassador for NVU in sustaining and growing this model. Please tune in for the June 17 VSCS Board of Trustees meeting.

Notes:

2. NVU Strong Advisory Committee work can be accessed at www.NorthernVermont/StrongFuture by clicking on the Committee Meeting Information drop down under the NVU Strong Advisory Committee tab.