**Steering Group of the Vermont Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education**

**Tuesday, October 27, 2020 - 3:00pm**

**Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

**Present:**

Members: Briar Alpert, Heather Bouchey, Sarah Buxton, Megan Cluver, Joyce Judy

Others: Sally Johnstone, Dennis Jones, Joyce Manchester, Brian Prescott, Michael Thomas, Candace Williams

**Minutes:**

1. Debrief from 10/19/20 Select Committee Meeting

Joyce J. found the Select Committee meeting very engaging.

Megan found it interesting to hear the discussion about what the legislature had in mind, in terms of funding. There were differing perspectives about the interest of the legislature in funding the status quo of the system. Is there a way to get some clarity on that front?

Joyce J. would find it helpful to know when NCHEMS and NEBHE are talking with the stakeholder groups (focus groups). As she continues to talk to the legislative leadership, there is some conflicting information and they should be brought in soon.

Briar feels the meeting was very engaging and that the outcome of the Select Committee is viewed seriously by the members. Sen. Baruth’s comments were interesting, implying there is money that he’s targeting for the expansion of investment in higher education and recommending the Select Committee’s recommendations should respond to this possibility. The Select Committee needs clearer direction on budget potentialities to target recommendations appropriately, whether it’s based on various fiscal scenarios.

Heather was also pleased about the level of engagement but remains a bit disappointed. It’s the one opportunity to rethink our postsecondary system, which didn’t seem to be the way others were thinking about it. She had hoped the financial discussion would consider the funding of the state’s entire postsecondary system, beyond VSC. Money aside, what are we trying to accomplish?

Joyce M. offers some information on the fiscal picture. Having received a lot of federal support, Vermont is doing well fiscally. Next year will be harder, with an expected budget gap of $200-250 million.

Megan adds that we should think of lowering the costs for students, rather than enabling the system at hand.

Briar thinks that Heather’s point brings up a triangle – scope, budget, schedule – where all sides must come together. The triangle can change but we need to start from the same place for this project.

Brian notes that they are trying to put numbers to purchasing power for change.

1. Overview of 11/9/20 Select Committee Meeting agenda and meeting objectives

The main agenda item will be a draft outline for the report due on December 4.

Brian welcomes feedback on the prospective criteria for developing the Select Committee’s recommendations.

Heather mentions that CTE is a missing piece – everyone should understand what the current system looks like because it’s not easy to navigate and there needs to be innovation in that space. There are opportunities to think beyond CCV and VTC’s roles.

Joyce asks for clarification – the relationships between those sectors or partnerships? Heather says if we’re pushing toward closer linkages with employers, it’s worth looking at where that’s currently happening. We don’t want to present that there’s nothing going on in that sphere because there is, although it’s integration with the system has not been well defined.

Dennis notes that they’re trying to get their hands around this piece. Joyce adds that local control is alive and well and Dennis responds that it’s largely due to how the money flows. Joyce then notes that there are four ABEs and CCV has to develop individual relationships with those organizations, as well.

Brian posits whether the Select Committee wants to take this on in its scope of work. Joyce thinks this has to be secondary, although it is really important, and noted in the report as an area for future recommendations. The time crunch begs for it to put prioritized outside the scope of this charge. Heather agrees and think this is fair – it needs to be noted and understood for progress to be made. There are have been efforts to change governance and include ABE under DOL due to funding.

1. NCHEMS Update

NCHEMS has completed its individual calls with Select Committee members, which have been fruitful.

Recommendations will center on:

* The need to address affordability
  + The costs of providing education
* Think about academic renovation
  + Program offering
  + Credential offerings
  + Outreach to adult learners
* Systemic approaches to the above and sharing of administrative services
* Effective delivery of student supports so that once individuals decide can enroll, they can be successful

Buckets for recommendations:

* System and structure
  + From status quo to something transformative on the accreditation side
  + NCHEMS is likely to come down somewhere in between, calling for greater clarity on institutional missions
* Administrative services
  + Payroll processing, procurement, financial services, legal offices, LMS, SIS, etc.
  + These could be better shared with leadership from institutions with most capacity
  + Vermont could create a services corporation to collaborate with VSC and UVM
* Program array and delivery
  + CTE, workforce alignment, program duplication, as well as innovative solutions on credit and credential attainment like CPL, CBE, etc.
* Resource allocation
  + The model within VSC to distribute funds to institutions
  + At the legislative level, the ways in which the legislature may play a role to get the outcomes its looking for
* Physical space
  + VSC may have a larger footprint that it needs, old buildings with a lot of deferred maintenance. NVU is leasing its spaces to create public-private partnerships.
  + What to do with obsolete buildings that can’t be renovated?
* Affordability
  + NCHEMS has worked on state affordability standards, which is necessary as the number of students dwindles and competition grows
  + NCHEMS has also received data that suggests a lot of autonomy given to HEIs to disburse institutional aid has resulted in aid going to higher income students
* The role of public higher education in the state’s economic development strategies

Joyce finds the buckets comprehensive but the value will be in the details of the recommendations. NCHEMS approach to physical space is necessary. The discrepancies within VSC’s tuition discounting schemes. The success of this report depends on legislative and gubernatorial buy-in and it has to be messaged such that the public is behind it.

Megan asks if NCHEMS will tie recommendations to overarching goals? Dennis responds that that’s the intent, and they’ll provide accountability metrics too.

1. Next steps

These buckets will be presented to the Select Committee on 11/9, as well as the outline of the draft report.

Briar asks if we’d be well served by putting out an assumption about the budget to see how well that sits. Joyce thinks it’d be prudent to start low and be able to go higher than make assumptions that aren’t in the cards. Heather paused because we need to know how much is needed, as well.

1. Public comments and questions
   1. Members of the public, please share comments and questions at [higheredcommittee@leg.state.vt.us](mailto:higheredcommittee@leg.state.vt.us)
   2. *Please be advised that with few exceptions, any submitted documents are open to the public*

Respectfully submitted,

Candace Williams

New England Board of Higher Education