

Act 120.

Sec. A.10. SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE FUTURE OF THE VERMONT STATE COLLEGE SYSTEM; REPORTS

(a) Creation. There is created the Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education in Vermont (Committee) to assist the State of Vermont in addressing the urgent needs of the Vermont State Colleges (VSC) and develop an integrated vision and plan for a high-quality, affordable, and workforce-connected future for public higher education in the State.

(b) Membership.

(1) The Committee shall be composed of up to the following 15 members:

(A) one current member of the House of Representatives, who shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House;

(B) one current member of the Senate, who shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees;

(C) the President of the University of Vermont or designee and a representative of the UVM Board of Trustees, appointed by the President;

(D) the Interim Chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges (VSC) or designee, and a representative of each of the VSC Board of Trustees, VSC campus administration, VSC faculty, VSC students, and VSC alumni or donor community, each appointed by the Interim Chancellor;

(E) the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or designee;

(F) the Commissioner of Labor or designee;

(G) two representatives of the business community, appointed by the Steering Group created under subsection (c) of this section; and

(H) the President of the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation or designee.

(2) A Committee member may be appointed to fill more than one role as identified in subdivision (1) of this subsection.

(3) Appointers of members of the Committee shall seek to ensure that the geographical areas of the State hosting VSC campuses are represented on the Committee.

(c) Steering Group. On or before June 29, 2020, the Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore shall jointly appoint three members of the Committee, and the Governor shall appoint two members of the Committee, to serve as members of a Steering Group. The Steering Group shall provide leadership to the Committee and shall work with a consulting firm to analyze the issues, challenges, and opportunities facing VSC, as well as create a formal action plan to drive change and innovation in the VSC system. The Steering Group may form one or more subcommittees of the Committee to address key topic areas in greater depth.

(d) Collaboration. The Committee shall seek input from and collaborate with key stakeholders, as directed by the Steering Group.

(e) Powers and duties. The Committee shall study the structure of the current VSC system and build on previous studies and white papers in this area, including the ongoing work and work products of the VSCS Forward Task Force, the NVU Strong Advisory Committee, and the VTC Transition Advisory Task Force. The Select Committee shall also offer recommendations on how to increase affordability for students, access, retention, attainment, relevance, and fiscal sustainability, including the following issues:

(1) the financial sustainability of the VSC system and its impact on institutional capacity to innovate and meet State goals and learners' needs, including a comparison of higher education programs, delivery models, tuition, tuition-reduction and tuition-free programs, and structures in other states;

(2) the current organizational structure of VSC and its ability to promote student success;

(3) the alignment of the VSC system and workforce development goals, policy frameworks, and partnerships between businesses and institutions of higher education that are designed to meet the needs of employers and promote the public value of education; and

(4) collaboration with the University of Vermont to move Vermont toward meeting the concepts in subdivision (3) of this subsection (e).

(f) Consultant. The Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office, in collaboration with the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), shall issue a request for proposal to hire a consultant to assist the Committee with responses due from interested parties on or before July 17, 2020. On or before July 31, 2020, the Steering Group shall select the consultant.

(g) Assistance. The Committee shall have the administrative and technical assistance of the Agency of Education. NEBHE shall provide project management support to the Committee.

(h) Reports. Recognizing the need for short-term solutions on system structure, governance, funding, and sustainability, the Committee, through its Steering Group, shall use a phased approach to reporting. The first interim report shall be due on or before December 20, 2020 and shall focus on the topics described in subdivision (e)(1) of this section; the second interim report shall be due on or before June 15, 2021 and shall focus on the topics described in subdivisions (e)(2), (3), and (4) of this section; and the final report, which shall collate findings relative to subsection (e) of this section and include the action plan, shall be due on or before December 15, 2021. All reports shall be in writing and be delivered to the General Assembly and the Governor.

(i) Meetings.

(1) The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or designee shall call the first meeting of the Committee to occur on or before August 28, 2020.

(2) The Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore shall jointly select the Committee chair.

(3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

(4) The Committee shall cease to exist on January 31, 2022.

(j) Compensation and reimbursement.

(1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General Assembly, a legislative member of the Committee serving in his or her capacity as a legislator shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 406.

(2) Other members of the Committee, who are not employees of the State of Vermont, shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010.

(3) Compensation and reimbursement under this subsection shall be, in each fiscal year 2021 and 2022, for a maximum of:

- (A) six in-person meetings of the Committee;
- (B) eight in-person meetings of the Steering Group; and
- (C) four remote meetings of up to four subcommittees, assuming compensation and reimbursement for up to five members of each subcommittee.

(k) Appropriations.

(1) The sum of \$20,500.00 is appropriated to the Agency of Education from the General Fund in fiscal year 2021 for per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses for members of the Committee, Steering Group, and subcommittees.

(2) Of the funds identified in Sec. A.3(b) of this act, the Vermont State Colleges shall transfer to the Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office an amount sufficient to carry out the responsibilities and actions of the Joint Fiscal Office required under this section.