

Summary of Solicited Feedback

Names have been removed to provide anonymity

Respondent #1

First, let me begin by saying, the draft plans were terrific. I appreciate all the hard work that was obviously done by many. I have a few questions and comments and will take it page by page.

Page 2, 3.1 number 3, Satisfaction of key stakeholders, I believe should have a specific goal, from what to what, like the other metrics have.

On page 3, numbers 6 and 7; what is the Marshall survey and we want to increase it from what to what.

As for Programs, less than 32 doesn't mean much. Hopefully to what number?

On page 4, under Marketing Plan, Strategic Goal 5 should have something. How can you develop a true marketing plan and not identify VTC as part of the VSCS system. If you don't, I believe you will be making a real mistake.

Page 9, Tactics, reinstating a VTC Yearbook could be very costly and time consuming.

Under Support Development, there is "creating a regular major donor visit plan including regions outside Vermont, but it fails to say for Presidential visits. The visits may include your Development Director if you believe that is productive, but this section should show that it is for the President.

On page 10, where you project that a fully staffed development office should be able to raise at least 2.5% to 3.2% of the budget, where does that come from?

On page 13, you refer to VTC as one of VT's best kept secrets, but for years VTC was known as the crown jewel of the VSC system. I certainly would prefer you to refer to the school as "one of the crown jewels" of the system, even though unknown and unrecognized by many in Vermont.

On page 16, under Tactics, you want to conduct market studies of compensation and benefits. Isn't that something more appropriate for the VSCS to do? Afterall, the Chancellor's office has to negotiate with all faculty and staff system wide. I for one, at least initially, would strenuously oppose VTC or any of the other schools using precious dollars to do their own market studies.

No changes or questions to the Williston portion of the plan.

Respondent #2

As promised, some tiny points about what you shared with us [sic] last week.

- Could the metrics described in 3.2 be worded to give us a better sense of "stretch" --...if achieved this would represent a XX% improvement over our current levels..."
- Might it be appropriate to mention the new Policy 403 incentives on the SWOT on page 10. Scenarios that may increase (or decrease) VTC's share of the state appropriation are within the realm of possibility now...
- Not sure what the "30,000 level" references on page 21 means. Square feet? Altitude/vantage point?

- Forgive me if you've already shared elsewhere, could we see a table showing the year by year growth from 100 to 500 FTEs at Williston and what we might expect the numbers to be year by year over the next decade or so? And, the same for the Randolph campus?

Then to repeat a couple.

- The HR section strikes me as quite generic, relevant for all employees. Might you want to include something to address your outlook for faculty and faculty life in the years ahead? What in the plan is personally important to them?
- The Technology section feels much like "will the desktop and printer in my office be up to date?". Might there be more explicit reference to the sometimes heavy duty technology used in the classrooms and labs—snazzy tools such as 3D printers, lathes, simulated circuits, engine systems and the like...

Thanks for all you and your team are putting into your plans.

Respondent #3

I made the deadline so am rescinding my request for a homework extension. The plan review survey instrument was pretty good but maybe I missed where I would have provided one piece of input: it would have been great to have a question "what did you like best about the plan?" Thus, I'm including it in this email...I am very happy to see program specific enrollment targets in the plan so that we can all be on board with the Marketing-Admissions-Program efforts needed. If most people cite one or two things they liked best about the plan, those 2 things would become the items to report on constantly. It's water over the dam now but food for thought for later...maybe a one-question survey one year from now.

The only other thing that might be done a bit differently in the future was the requirement on the survey for a person to confirm he/she watched the video and read the entire plan (which means every single sub-plan also) might have been handled differently, allowing someone to comment on one section if that's all the time they had. I understand why people would want to know if someone read the entire plan, but phrasing more choices such as "I watched the video," "I read the entire plan and all sub-plans," "I read much of the plan but not every sub-plan" and "I only read a few sections so my comments may be biased or miss aspects stated elsewhere in the plan" would allow someone with 10 minutes to at least comment on a section. Otherwise, to read the entire plan and every sub-plan attached was quite an undertaking of time. I worry that some people did not have time to read it all and thus were unable to comment at all.

Respondent #4

Overall, I'm worried by what I see as a lack of emphasis on the academic side of the college, particularly regarding student success, delivery to non-traditional students and teaching effectiveness, and the proposals to hire additional staff and administrators that I find throughout the plan. In many ways, this draft strategic plan doesn't seem to focus on what we do (education) but on our business model. If we're assuming that we don't need to work much harder at education, I disagree.

Specifically, I'd like to see more about:

- improving **teaching and learning**;
- helping underprepared students succeed; and
- dealing with student mental health issues.

My specific comments:

3.3 SMART objectives

- Accessibility: Do we need to look further outside the box? What approaches are we taking other than 'traditional' online? I'm convinced we need to rethink delivery in a more holistic way to reach non-traditional, older audiences.
- Technology: It appears that this addresses IT and only IT. Is that true? Is IT the answer? Do we need to target where IT needs to be cutting edge and up to date?
 - zB: We replaced classroom projectors that were very functional and working well.
 - Doesn't technology need to include other specific science, engineering, health care technologies that we use to educate students?
- Recognition: Does our score on the Marshall Survey correlate with admissions numbers? How does the score relate to the demographics we seek to attract?
- Programs:
 - Why are we emphasizing the number of programs we offer rather than making a real effort to understand what makes some programs succeed and others fail?
If we want to tell the state we can only afford x number of programs at the current funding level, let's say that. If not, I see a program cap as window dressing that avoids the real issue.
 - Starting new programs while closing others is troubling unless we really understand why programs succeed or fail, and look realistically at the potential and problems of new programs.
 - If program champions are the only ones tasked with assessing the potential of new programs, the result will always be rosy and optimistic. Create a larger group to prepare the study and ask the hard questions while creating the proposal.
 - What are the core capacities of the college in terms of faculty and facilities? How do we tailor new program development to our capacities?
 - Later in the plan there appears to be an assumption that non-traditional programs will be allied health programs. Is this true? Why? Don't we have to think this way about all of our programs?

Alumni

- Is projected hiring of **director and staff for alumni issues** dependent on success in fundraising? Where does the funding for these positions come from?
- Have surveys of alumni showed that the tactics proposed here are relevant and resonant?

Development

- Same concerns about **increases in staffing** here. I've been here since 2001. A number of administrations have added staff and started capital campaigns with little effect (at least that I'm aware of).
- Gifts are easy, but grants can be challenging as they require activities that I don't think we've been successful with:
 - Savvy decisions about use of funding and a focus on sustainability;
 - A focus on results and reporting;
 - Inadequate facilities, staff and resources; and
 - Basic lack of follow-through due to over-commitment and shiny-object syndrome.

Enrollment

- We must add under preparedness of HS grads to enrollment challenges?
- Is there a concern that increasing enrollments may be bringing us students who are not emotionally or academically prepared for success? Decreasing retention rates suggest this might be the case. And lower retention, and more importantly word-of-mouth of failure, poisons our reputation.
- Why not 'borrow' CCV's introductory module for students taking online programs now?

External relations

- CTEs can be valuable partners, but I think we need to identify programs in which CTE students can be successful and skills and academic requirements that challenge CTE grads. To ensure their success we must be aware of their weaknesses and have plans to help them succeed academically. My experience suggests that many CTE grads are underprepared for SGE courses: math, English, science. If we accept these students we must understand how to help them succeed.

Marketing

- Why isn't there a focus on identifying tactics that increase enrollment in valuable and relevant, but enrollment-challenged, programs? Does this exist? Faculty don't seem to be aware if so.
- Why don't we market alumni / graduate success stories for each program? Why isn't this sort of peer-to-peer marketing the first thing one sees on accessing the website? Or is this on social media and thus invisible to me?

Students

- I support increasing graduation and retention rates for all students, but wonder why this is associated with/assigned to Student Affairs, Admissions? What is the role of **academics and faculty**?
- Do we need a **new staff position** to advocate for students?
- OER approach should be widely embraced today! Are OERs for very technical fields available? They certainly are for SGE and many of our courses.

Technology:

- Why does technology seem to be IT only?
- What percent of our budget is IT?
- What is the role of faculty in identifying IT that works in classrooms and teaching?

Student academic success sub-plan

- Take-home:
 - More under-prepared
 - More students needing non-academic and mental health counseling
 - TRIO works, so get funds to expand services to all students.
- Could we consider a day-long training for advisors? Other colleges have done this to good effect.
- I was involved in our Math & Science Upward Bound program. I'd be happy to work on this grant. Could we develop summer activities with the State Labs?

Diversity, inclusion and cultural competency:

- I was interested in the Alternate Break experience idea. Does this target all breaks? Within or between semesters?
- Should all faculty be briefed on (become familiar with) the content and objectives of INT 1005 so that we can echo (or apply) those concepts throughout the curriculum in each program?
- I support the faculty training on diversity, especially the focus on empathy training and implicit bias. Orientation and one training won't be enough. What about reviewing incidents and issues that have come up each year as a refresher?
- Not all students must take INT 1005 now. Is the plan making it mandatory for all?

Hartness library: I support the OER initiative!

Mental and physical health:

- I notice that faculty aren't mentioned. What's faculty role? Where do we fit in? Don't we need training?

10.1 Schools model

- I'm surprised that there isn't more description of what the schools model is meant to do and how we'll measure the success of this 'reorganization'. I don't understand why we've identified leader and salary before creating a job description. Is this simply window dressing or moving the deck chairs on the Titanic? I know it isn't meant to be.

10.2 Retention

- Would we benefit from adviser training?
- Would monthly lunches of students and faculty within a program or school help establish relationships and discussion?
- Retention: For me, the elephant in the room is student unpreparedness and retention. Since I started teaching at VTC in 2001, the level of incoming student preparedness has dropped even as we abandoned measures we used to help those students succeed: 1) three-year programs; 2) summer bridge; 3) remedial courses. And we haven't increased tutorial services for DFW courses. If I were making decisions, I'd emphasize this area, and teaching effectiveness, above most others.
 - Which courses does the data show are our gatekeepers or DFW generators?
 - Who's teaching them?
 - What are the biggest issues preventing student success in those courses?
 - Are co- and pre-requisites present and working?
 - Embedded tutors who attend class with students at least once a week are wonderful. But as we have lost one math-science tutor can we still do this?
 - Recitations could be an answer because they:
 - Don't add credits;
 - Can be used specifically in freshman DFW courses, particularly fall courses;
 - Can be applied to all students at the beginning of the course and then focused only on students with need using test-out policies. This is particularly important as we don't apply placement testing or effective pre-requisites across the board. And we know that high school classes sometimes don't deliver competencies they should; so high school grades can't be used as a predictor of success.
 - Challenges with recitations?
 - What is recitation? What are it's goals? Methods?
 - How can we schedule recitations?
 - Has the recitation pilot been effective? We're doing pilots now in some MAT and SCI courses.

- How do we continue and pay for recitation? Is the 'Problems in physics' course run for Carl Brandon's students a model? I'm happy to volunteer my time, but this won't be universal.
- Dual enrollment: See my notes under enrollment.

Classroom space needs:

- I agree that projectors are essential, but conflict with black or whiteboards by using up much of their space.
- If the college expects Science faculty to take on small projects or grants then the back room of the chem lab should be cleaned out for this purpose. If this is done there won't be room for additional equipment from CET.

Closure/merger/expansion:

- What can we learn, forensically, from recent programmatic changes?
 - How well has VetTech expansion worked? What went well and what was problematic?
 - How successful have CIS's post-BS certificates been?
 - How successful have Auto and Diesel's certificates been?
 - How have the online only BS-degree completion programs been?
 - How well has the NUR 7.5-week semester worked?
- The closure and merger sections of this plan are great and should be enacted.
- New program section asks for little data or justification. Again, what can we learn from recent new program history? Were reasons for subsequent failure anticipated but ignored?

General Education: I'm both underwhelmed by this section and scared that we aren't more focused here. We know that MAT and SCI challenges affect retention. But I would argue that we know how to teach MAT and SCI to our students, and that recitation might be a way to be more successful. But our students can't write their way out of a paper bag. They are better at presentations, and we give them the knowledge that allows them to have confidence when they are presenting in areas of expertise. But I teach a writing intensive course and we need to focus on teaching writing.

And, while we gutted EHSS, we never came up with solid plan to deal with that. And where we did have plans, I don't think we've really followed through.

- Should all faculty know more about INT 1005 so that it's topics can be touched on in successive courses?
- 3000-level AH and SS survey courses: What are they? Are the pilots to be offered in S'19 rather than S'18?

10.3 Accreditation

The draft final recommendations are extremely concise. I'd like to see more detail here. I was involved in the summer work aimed at planning and preparation for accreditation, but don't see much of that work here.

10.7 External relationships / stakeholders

I notice that the diagrams in this section include an 'institutional assessment and research' group. I think we'd benefit immensely from such a group and I'm pretty sure we don't have one. I worry that we often point to the importance of being data driven, and start initiatives that include plans to assess outcomes and improve process. However, we have a history of failing to take follow through; we begin some data collection and then efforts stall. Unless we understand where we succeed and why, and where we fail and why, improvement can only be hit or miss.

I see two major issues contributing to our reputation issues ('low promotor score') as:

- Persistent financial issues that are a constant topic of conversation and focus of energy, on campus and elsewhere. We should be discussing students, graduates and teaching, but we don't; we worry about money at every level of this institution all the time.
- Frequent changes in leadership. Pat is the 8th change in leadership in my 17 years here. Upheaval reached new levels under Phil Conroy and hasn't settled yet.

10.6 Enrollment (Discounting)

Tactics:

- Dual enrollment: on the academic side we are worried about dual enrollment because we don't think we are doing our part in oversight and evaluation. It appears that NECHE believes that we or dual enrollment partners should share out academic outcomes for each course and should be assessing them as we should be. This is not being done and will require massive efforts; we don't have either the system or the personnel.
- Orientation module for on-line students: CCV has a good one we should 'borrow' now. Let's not reinvent the wheel or spend money or wait.
- Delivery and non-traditional students: I think we need to look beyond on-line only delivery as it's not a great match for the hands-on education that we do well and are known for. I don't think we've ever seriously considered or studied low-residency options that combine on-line or telepresence delivery with weekly, monthly or intensive on-campus time for labs and group experience. We need to look at those types of models.
- Day-care: Dave Rubin mentioned that grant funding for on-campus day care is available. While I realize that grant funding comes with strings and may not be worth the risk, have we ever seriously looked at how on-campus day-care could impact enrollment of non-traditional audiences?
- Inexpensive peer-to-peer marketing: Why can't students in first year program orientation classes interview recent grads from their programs about the jobs they have now? These inexpensive student-made videos could then be posted on the website and used in recruitment.

I don't believe that professional production is essential for student-to-student marketing and we should try this.

Discounting and FTE enrollment both increased from 2013 to 2016, but while spending on discounting continued to rise at the same rate from 2016 to 2018, FTE declined.

- From 2013 – 2014, the cost of increases in discounting were \$3500/FTE
- From 2015 – 2016, “ \$7171/FTE

10.8 Financial strategic plan

As presented this plan is simply a very 30,000-foot level summary of fiscal data that does not allow:

- 1) Determination what part of the college is responsible for these revenues and expenses: academics? Particular programs? Non-academic units? Affiliated organizations like VMEC, SBDC and CEWD.
- 2) Determination of which contribute to direct vs indirect costs.

We've projected rates for changes in enrollment, health care spending, inflation and funding from the state. Can we create a projected rate of change for indirect costs and apply this to see what level enrollment, or what degree of cost cutting, is needed to keep us afloat?

Randolph Student Council Summary

- One student remarked on expanding advertising not only to prospective students out of state that have no idea Vermont Tech exists, but to employers that are not aware of the quality of students we provide. A couple other students chimed in as well saying the only reason they as out of state students from MA and NH were aware Vermont Tech exists is because someone they knew went here. They suggested specifically having admissions reps on the road constantly out of state at college fairs.
- One asked for more engaging activities like Homecoming Festival and Try a Major Day. Additionally, to do outreach on behalf of individual majors to try and recruit people.
- Students suggested the school TV commercial be aired out of state and many wanted to see their major featured more in it as opposed to heavy into manufacturing and engineering.
- Students spend much of the time speaking to thinking cutting the number of majors not being a direction they want the school to go into.
 - Many of the majors are offered at few other places in NE
 - One of the great things about VTC is the variety of different sorts of majors from Dairy to Software. It is one of the strengths of the school and reducing the number would take away from that.
 - The majors here are unique and hard to find. Cutting programs would be counterproductive. Most of the room agreed.

- One student spoke to online programs not being a threat, but an opportunity. He suggested expanding our online offerings and alluded to removing the push to live on campus with the residency requirement actually bringing in more money for the school by increasing the number of students through making going to Vermont Tech requiring less of a change to prospective students' current lives.
- One student spoke while many others in the room hummed in agreement about clarity for transfer students about credits transferring. He said almost all the transfer students he speaks with were told things specifically about the number of credits that would transfer that turned out to be false. He also spoke to the complicated and unclear process of transferring being a deterrent and much lost opportunity. Additionally, the burdensome amount of work students have to do to transfer and an overall lack of clarity in that process. If I recall correctly the phrase, lured in under false pretenses, was used.
- Many students communicated, while commuters are the bulk of the population, students feel the bulk of services and attention go to residential students. A student mentioned to me at a different time that commuter students have no rights, just commuter coffee. They suggested making the school a more commuter friendly environment with a lounge and more lockers in Hartness. They say 6 isn't enough for 2/3 of the campus.
- The conversation ended as they spoke to the deficit of things to do around campus, and students recognizing the school cannot really change that. They joked about moving the school to PA or MA.