



# STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

## 2011–2016





## Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I want to thank everyone who contributed to the various aspects of the development of this document. From the focus groups that came together as part of our college's New England Association of Schools and Colleges re-accreditation process, to the planning day in May, to the Summit on the Future of the College in September, this overview was created with the input of faculty, staff, students, alumni, advisory board members, and community partners and supporters.

In the coming months we will continue to work together to develop a detailed plan and timeline for implementation. All these goals and strategies will be considered within the context of the following overarching themes: service to Vermont, one college geographically dispersed, sustainability in all that we do, and an evolving baccalaureate culture.

We plan to call upon all the members of our community, both internal and external, to generate, consider, and implement ideas that put in action the goals and strategies outlined in this document. I deeply appreciate your commitment to Vermont Technical College. You are helping us to move forward as an institution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip A. Conroy, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style.

Philip A. Conroy, Jr.  
President



## O V E R V I E W

# A Strategic Planning Process that *Listens*

Organizations that engage in strategic planning tend to greatly raise their prospects for success. Over the past 20 years, Vermont Technical College has grown into one of the top-ranked public colleges in the Northeast, while maintaining its traditional strengths, by embracing this inclusive, stage-by-stage planning process. During 2011 the college brought its commitment to strategic planning to a new level of participation, both internal and external.

The building of a new strategic plan began with the college's successful completion, early in 2011, of the re-accreditation process required by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. That work began the previous year with a thorough self-assessment; it continued in late 2010 with the NEASC team's two-day visit to the college, and it concluded in June 2011 when NEASC continued Vermont Tech's full, ten-year accreditation.

The college has committed itself to submitting an interim report to NEASC in 2015. NEASC has recommended that, in this interim report, Vermont Tech show success in four areas: developing a baccalaureate (four-year degree) culture; continuing to implement a systematic approach to assessing student-learning outcomes, and using that to improve academic programming; "achieving its goals to increase and diversify revenue in light of

declining state support"; and supporting the services that students need, especially students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

In April 2011, Dr. Philip Conroy became the college's new President. Meeting with faculty and staff, Dr. Conroy suggested that the period of transition to a new administration offered the ideal time to renew the strategic planning process. This, he suggested, would allow the college to build on the NEASC self-assessment by offering all members of the college community the opportunity to candidly share their ideas, hopes, and concerns for Vermont Tech. President Conroy asked Professor Greg Hughes from the Vermont Tech Business Department to facilitate the strategic planning process.

The first step in this process was to conduct an in-depth survey of the whole college community. A questionnaire was prepared that asked students, faculty, and staff to focus on the Vermont Tech Mission Statement and analyze its **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats** (known in strategic planning as SWOT). Respondents were asked to think about the college's mission statement, particularly its final sentence: "**Vermont Tech prepares students for immediate success and productivity in the workforce, for continuing formal education, and for life-long learning.**"

In April, more than 300 students, faculty, and staff members gathered to give their responses to the SWOT questionnaire in two sessions at the Randolph Center campus, one at the Williston campus, and one convened via Vermont Interactive Television. The next step was to assemble a team of faculty and staff members to review the SWOT questionnaire responses. The diverse makeup of the ten-person SWOT Team was drawn entirely from the operational levels of the college, not from top administration or dean positions. It included members of the NEASC accreditation committee, along with representatives from academics, admissions, athletics, residential life, student life, and the union representatives for the faculty and staff.

After reviewing over 300 questionnaire responses, the SWOT Team agreed that to achieve the college's mission and address the NEASC recommendations, Vermont Tech needs to focus on eight key result areas over the next five years. These **key result areas** are Financial Sustainability, Enrollment Management, Academic Programs and Standards, Physical Plant and Facilities, Professional Development, Social & Cultural Development of Students, College Climate, and External Relations.

On May 11 over 80 members of the Vermont Tech community gathered for an **Action Planning Day**. The results of the SWOT questionnaires were presented, and the key result areas identified. Participants broke into eight groups, each of which was charged with developing suggested Goals and Objectives for the eight key result areas. The hard and thorough work of that busy day produced a draft of the goals and strategies for Vermont Tech's Strategic Planning Initiative.

The SWOT team next decided it was time to bring in the external community — stakeholders, supporters of the college, and a wide range of leaders and decision-makers from all parts and sectors of Vermont. As part of the weeklong observance of Dr. Conroy's investiture, on September 28 the college convened a **Summit on the Future of Vermont Tech** at the Sugarbush Resort in Warren.

The nearly 140 Vermonters who devoted the day to attending included key representatives of the state's business, education, nonprofit, and public-agency communities. They heard an insight-sparking keynote by Robert J. Fritz, the Townshend, Vermont-based author, composer, and management consultant, on how organizations can bring the creative process to strategic planning — especially how they can work with the useful tension between where an organization is and where it wants to be. After a panel discussion produced more insights from government, business, and nonprofit leaders, the Summit attendees gathered at tables that each had a college facilitator with a Wi-Fi-connected laptop.

As these groups brainstormed their thoughts and responses to the draft goals and strategies, their expressed thoughts were transmitted, displayed, and collected instantly via Twitter. The Summit produced some 240-plus “tweets” — each a suggestion, idea, critique, or other piece of useful feedback on the draft. The college studied all of this feedback, and used it to produce the current draft of the goals and strategies that appear on the following pages. [▶](#) Samples of the Summit attendees' “tweeted” suggestions also appear throughout the next pages.



## The process is not complete...

The final narrative section of this report, “The Next Steps,” outlines how the college plans to continue and conclude this strategic planning process.

# Strategic Planning Initiative Goals and Strategies

*as of November, 2011*

## GOAL 1 FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

In order to enhance the quality and value of the education Vermont Tech provides to students, the college must be financially sustainable. To evolve into a great institution of higher education, Vermont Tech must enhance each of its revenue streams and allocate resources that are consistent with the college's needs and priorities.

### STRATEGIES:

- Increase revenue and control expense growth to ensure Vermont Tech's long-term financial viability. (2011-2016)
- Design, develop, and implement an inclusive process to facilitate a dialogue with the college community with respect to the college's financial position and the relationship between budget priorities and the strategic plan. (2011-2013)
- Develop a five-year planning and budget cycle to better manage college financial stability. (2011-2016)
- Develop a financial planning template for new programs. (2011-2013)



Provide channels of communication for creative suggestions by all members of the community.



## GOAL 2 ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

Vermont Tech will expand its role in meeting the educational and training needs of students and businesses at the state, regional, national, and international levels.

### STRATEGIES:

- Develop a strategic enrollment management plan. (2012–2013)
- Convert more applications into actual enrollment. (2011–2016)
- Expand and improve Vermont Tech’s linkages and partnerships with high school students, their parents, and guidance counselors. (2011–2016)
- Expand and improve Vermont Tech’s contacts with enrollment influencers in business and industry. (2011–2016)
- Increase non-traditional student enrollment. (2011–2016)
- Develop a broader understanding of the concept of one college geographically dispersed to include a variety of learning places — physical, virtual, and any combination thereof. (2011–2013)
- Develop a strategic relationship between evolving workforce development needs and academic degree programs. (2011–2013)
- Improve student retention and graduation rates, particularly at the baccalaureate degree level. (2011–2016)



Vermont has one of the highest high school graduation rates and not as impressive rate continuing to college. How to increase that?



Stop looking at the campuses as the only “place.” Instruction online needs to be a focus of that sense of place as well.

## GOAL 3 ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND STANDARDS

Vermont Tech will be a cutting-edge leader in applied education, will provide an increasingly high quality educational experience for all students, and will meet the evolving needs of the Vermont and regional workforce.

### STRATEGIES:

- Continue to develop academic programs that reflect the applied education needs of Vermont and the New England Region. (2011–2016)
- Develop a comprehensive strategy to ensure the success of students with varying incoming skill sets and learning styles. (2011–2013)
- Develop a college culture that embodies the identity of a predominantly baccalaureate institution. (2011–2013)
- Continue to implement a systemic approach to the assessment of student learning outcomes, and use the results to improve academic programming. (2011–2016)
- Develop an applied research program that compliments our academic program offerings, emphasizes technology, and contributes to the adoption of best practices. (2011–2013)
- Increase the utilization of Advisory Board members to ensure the coordination of Vermont Tech's curricula with the knowledge, skills, and abilities demanded by today's employers. (2011–2013)
- Emphasize the importance of teaching and learning through the allocation of resources to support a culture of continuous improvement in teaching, advising, and student learning. (2011–2016)
- Adopt Innovation Engineering as a creative process to address, evaluate, and prioritize new ideas and programs. (2011–2013)
- Provide a comprehensive program for the development of liberal education offerings for students destined to be leaders in their field. Such offerings should include general-education electives that directly relate to the student's field of study. (2011–2016)



We need to look at job descriptions across the country and set our course requirements to match these.



From a hiring standpoint: have to produce students who can offer employers what students at other colleges do not have.





## GOAL 4 SOCIAL & CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS

Vermont Tech will ensure that students have a positive college-life experience, by providing co-curricular and extracurricular activities that give each student the opportunity to develop as a total person.

### STRATEGIES:

- Develop a network of student organizations that supports the social and academic interests of the student body, and promotes the development of leadership and team-building skills reflective of a baccalaureate institution. (2011–2013)
- Provide activities that enhance the multicultural and international experiences of students. (2011–2016)
- Support and foster continuous improvement of student events and activities that are student-focused and reflective of the needs and desires of the student audience. (2011–2016)
- Provide the leadership-development opportunities for undergraduate students that would be expected of a well-developed baccalaureate college. (2011–2016)
- Develop a varsity athletic program that is appropriate to a multi-campus, geographically dispersed, baccalaureate college. (2011–2013)
- Provide programs and services that reflect the college’s commitment to the mental and physical wellness of students. (2011–2016)



Events need to be student driven with buy-in and participation by the entire campus.



Employers value students who have diverse talents and can move between disciplines: that includes the theoretical and the physical.



## GOAL 5 COLLEGE CLIMATE

Vermont Tech will attract and support students and employees by sustaining a welcoming and supportive environment for personal and professional growth.

### STRATEGIES:

- Create a college culture that embraces and commits to continuous improvement. (2011–2016)
- Continue to foster a college culture that is respectful of the needs of faculty, staff, and students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. (2011–2016)
- Engage members of the college community in an appropriate and effective system of shared governance, in keeping with the expectations of a baccalaureate college. (2011–2013)
- Enhance communication strategies to keep members of the college community at all levels apprised of key developments. (2011–2013)
- Increase the connections between and among the various organizations served by Vermont Tech. (2011–2016)



One can keep tradition while being an innovative industry leader. One is not mutually exclusive from the other.



Establish a model of a faculty, staff, student task force to find solutions to existing campus problems.

## GOAL 6 PHYSICAL PLANT & FACILITIES

Vermont Tech will upgrade and maintain the college's physical plant and facilities to accommodate the academic, athletic, social, and residential programs expected of a well-developed public baccalaureate college.

### STRATEGIES:

- Create a master plan that addresses the anticipated needs for current and future programs, including an analysis of the highest and best use of all space on all campuses. (2011–2013)
- Implement sustainable state-of-the-art technology in all college facilities, classrooms, and residence halls that meets the needs of the constituent user. (2011–2016)
- Commit to the ongoing assessment of the changing and emerging needs of academic departments for physical space and equipment. (2011–2016)
- Develop a continuous improvement plan for each of the campuses to incorporate sustainable practices. (2011–2016)
- Improve the quality of the residence halls on the Randolph Center campus. (2011–2016)



Facilities should not only accommodate students but should also attract students.



## GOAL 7 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Vermont Tech will commit to the development of the professional abilities of all staff and faculty within the means of and reflective of the aspirational goals of the college.

### STRATEGIES:

- Communication regarding professional-development funding and processes should be clear, concise, and disseminated to all employees annually. (2011–2013)
- Provide appropriate training for faculty to develop innovative methods of instructional delivery. (2011–2016)
- Ensure that all faculty, full- and part-time, are academically qualified, appropriately credentialed, and effective educators. (2011–2016)
- Provide appropriate training and professional-development activities and opportunities for staff in order to best serve our students and the college. (2011–2016)



Advisory boards are important to help us identify knowledge, skills, and abilities.



It's our responsibility as educators to motivate students and do our best to make them successful.



## GOAL 8 EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Vermont Tech will improve its reputation as an integral entity in higher education as related to its mission, with particular focus on workforce development, diversified agriculture, applied science and technology, nursing and allied health, business management, and sustainability in New England.

### STRATEGIES:

- Improve our marketing strategy to promote our achievements, the success of our students, and why Vermont Tech has a special sense of place. (2011–2013)
- Improve relationships with local/host communities that are home to Vermont Tech campuses. (2011–2013)
- Develop and implement a strategy for identifying key external relationships for the college. (2011–2013)
- Develop a long-term strategy for providing and increasing student financial aid, particularly grants, to support enrollment goals. (2011–2016)
- Expand and improve the college’s relationships with Vermont Tech alumni, so that the alumni may participate in and contribute to the growth and development of the college. (2011–2016)
- Increase activities (conferences, symposia, and facilities rentals) that bring different populations to all our campuses. (2011–2016)



We are a small school — market this! Take advantage of this to create well-rounded students with a broader education base.



Communicate to the larger community what we do, and where our place is.



# The Next Steps...

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Vermont Tech will be implementing a cycle of continuous improvement, and developing processes to foster efficiency and innovation. We will engage and draw upon the expertise of our partners and members of the college community as we gather input from our multiple stakeholders in a variety of in-person and technological formats.

Here are the planned stages as we continue, and eventually finalize, this strategic-planning process:

**DECEMBER 2011**

Presentation of the draft Strategic Plan

**JANUARY 2012**

Gathering input and feedback

**FEBRUARY 2012**

Identification of specific initiatives

**MARCH 2012**

Coordination of Strategic Plan with budget priorities

**APRIL 2012**

Action planning

**MAY 2012**

Implementation

**SEPTEMBER 2014**

Summit II

The success of the strategic planning process depends on the involvement of the stakeholders — they must be active and involved. The upcoming sessions are designed to gather your views, ideas, and suggestions! Please review the strategic plan, and plan on participating.



## We welcome your comments...

To comment on the current and/or future versions of Vermont Tech's strategic-planning material, please email us at [planning@vtc.edu](mailto:planning@vtc.edu).

# Attendees

*Summit on the Future of Vermont Tech,  
Sugarbush Resort, Warren, Vermont, September 28, 2011*

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## WELCOME & OVERVIEW

**Dr. Philip Conroy**, President,  
Vermont Technical College

## DELIVERING THE KEYNOTE, “CREATING THE FUTURE”

**Robert Fritz**, author of *Creating, The Path of Least Resistance, Your Life as Art*, and *Elements: The Writings of Robert Fritz*; co-author of *The Managerial Moment of Truth*

## PANELISTS

**Rick Cochran**, President & CEO, Mobil Medical International Corporation (MMIC),  
St. Johnsbury

**Tim Donovan**, Chancellor, Vermont State Colleges

**Bea Grause**, President & CEO, Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems

**Justin Johnson**, Deputy Commissioner, Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation

**Chuck Ross**, Secretary, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

## ATTENDEES FROM THE VERMONT COMMUNITY

**Roger Allbee**, former Secretary, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

**Mike Audet**, former member, Vermont State College Board of Trustees

**Bob Bacon**, Window Improvement Masters

**Maria Basescu**, consultant

**David Boehm**, Engineering Ventures

**Leonard Bull**, Emeritus Professor of Animal Sciences, North Carolina State University

**Gail Busch**, Algae Power

**John Butterfield**, Hallam ICS

**Mona Colton**, Randolph National Bank

**Lynn Dickinson**, Vermont State Representative

**Chip Evans**, Vermont Workforce Development Council

**Joseph Famolare**, Vermont Agricultural Business Education Center

**Patsy French**, Vermont State Representative

**Carrie Gendreau**, Mobile Medical International Corporation

**Steve Gold**, President, Lyndon State College

**Christine Gray**, Hewlett Packard

**David Hillman**, Fletcher Allen Health Care

**Tim Jerman**, Vermont State College Board of Trustees

**Helen Jordan**, Vermont Council on Rural Development

**Sam Lincoln**, Lincoln Farms

**Michael Livingstone**, Sharon Academy

**Karen Luneau**, Vermont State College Board of Trustees

**Bruce MacDonald**, Vermont Pure Holdings, Ltd.

**Mark MacDonald**, Vermont State Senator

**Scott McClure**, IBM

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**Glenn McRae**, UVM Transportation Research Center



**Gary Moore**, Vermont State College  
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**Patricia Moulton-Powden**, Vermont Agency of  
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**Pat Nagy**, Vermont Department of Labor  
**Randy Ouellette**, GE-Aviation  
**Amy Patenaude**, Vermont Energy Investment Corp.  
**Dick Pecor**, Consultant  
**Randy Ouellette**, GE-Aviation  
**Phillip Pouech**, NRG Systems  
**Lenae Quillen-Blume**, Vermont Small Business  
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**Chris Recchia**, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources  
**Terry Reynolds**, Control Technologies  
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**Nancy Shaw**, Vermont State Colleges  
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**Paul Hartmann** (*retired*)  
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