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<tr><td>**PROJECT MANAGEMENT DOCUMENTATION**</td><td>**VERMONT TECH**</td><td>**TRANSITION ADVISORY TASKFORCE**</td></tr>
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PROJECT UPDATE REPORT

Project Name: Non-Traditional Pathways	Author/Date: Kellie Campbell & Ana Gaillat (co-chairs), March 26, 2021

1. Project Update

Reporting Period (From Date/To Date):

February 2, 2021 – March 26, 2021

Work Completed This Period:

-Four full committee meetings and start of sub-committee meetings:
a) Initial kick-off call to set charge, scope, operational structure, teams norms and values.
b) Drafted a document, informed by EAB research, titled: Considerations for Addressing the Equity Gap. The committee wants to ensure we have a focus on access and equity as a critical focus of our work.
c) Full discussion with Jeff Higgins, current Coordinator of Summer, to discuss what is working and what is not with our current summer programming and policies. A sub-committee is working on this effort.
d) Drafted a number of research questions to collaborate with EAB on. This committee wants to ensure the focus of this group and identified opportunities and action steps are informed with current and relevant data. Group did review current and available resources around non-traditional students.
e) A group is gathering to draft a framework for discussion with Chairs/Directors about opportunity for future program delivery.

Work to Be Completed in Next Period (Date):

-Summer group is continuing to meet, drafting specific action items.
-We will be gathering data across our programs to understand enrollment trends based on gender, geographic trends, etc. Looking to ensure a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion lens.
-Initiating discussion about how this work fits in with the broader transformation work/rpk work.
-Carrying on work noted above.

What's Going Well:

The group is working very well and bringing very diverse perspective. Our work is being documented via notes, grounded in action, and the sub-committees is an effective way to move sub-topics along.

What's Not Going Well:

All positive, but items to continue tracking as we do our work:

We have to be sure our work aligns with broader system changes. We also have to be sure the scope of our work – especially the expanding focus on equity as we build – intersects with the work of other charter committees.
KPIs (key performance indicators): N/A at this time.
Resources Needed (data, funding, other): -Data from EAB (questions have been submitted). -Summer sub-committee defining areas where future investments might be needed.
Suggestions: -Ensuring Chairs meet and there is discussion about where our work intersects with other committees and how to ensure alignment with transformation work.
Project Changes: N/A at this time.
Other Information: N/A at this time.
2. Project Schedule
Insert or attach a current Tracking Gantt Coming soon.

Higher education has a well-documented equity gap problem. Countless studies show that colleges graduate low-income students, first-generation students, and students of color at lower rates than their peers from majority populations.

Adapted from:

Considerations for Addressing the Equity Gap

Observations/Truths

- Recognize **the population of incoming college students will only become more diverse**; students of color, especially Hispanic students, will continue to grow as a share of the student population.

- Understand that low-income, minority, and first-gen students in particular tend to question their place at university and may take any one misstep as a sign that they shouldn't be there; common early-semester obstacles, like doing poorly on an exam, can reinforce students' fears about belonging in college and lead them to *stop out*.

- Acknowledge that too many first-generation and underserved students cannot participate at the same rates as others as they must work to afford college or do not have the requisite personal contacts.

Admin/Policies/Education

- Commit to scrutinizing policies and practices to **find sources of disenfranchisement and even discrimination** affecting some demographic groups more than others.

- Create spaces for the community to regularly reflect and think about what equity means for their institution and its stakeholders.

- Learn how practices build on each other to create a more holistic student success and education equity strategy.

- Shed light on the structural and systemic approaches that have hindered the progress of Native, Black, and Latinx students.

- Develop a mindset change to **create a culture of education equity**; move away from viewing underserved students as problems to fix and move towards viewing them as learners to cultivate.

- Use data and focus groups to reckon with barriers limiting the success of students in departments and offices.

- Remove financial and administrative barriers to participation while also providing financial support to encourage equity in participation.

- Infuse race appropriate approaches into every aspect of the institution through *the strategic plan* that includes hiring, promotion, and tenure policies that supplement the role of diversity statements.

- **Rethink language** (e.g., instead of calling students "underrepresented," call them "underserved"); this shift in language can consequently shift our mindset.

Pathways

- Invest and streamline programs to help students clarify their college goals; invest in advising programs coupled with student-centered technology that encourage students to make meaningful progress towards those goals, day-to-day and week-to-week.

- Engage students prior to their arrival on campus and **proactively address challenges by preparing students** to meet the rigor of college-level coursework and navigate the college system.

- Leverage the combined motivational platform of advising and technology to reinforce students' sense of potential via student-friendly design, messaging, and an expanded "success network."

- Provide flexible course offerings, online student services, and emergency aid grants.

In the Classroom

- Understand early courses such as developmental education or introductory requirements can signal future success for most students.
- **Promote inclusivity and equitable outcomes in the classroom**; revise day-to-day pedagogical strategies and existing course materials to ensure coursework is engaging and accessible for all students.
- Redesign courses to emphasize active, collaborative learning in an inclusive classroom; this will improve student learning for all while closing student equity and inclusion disparities.

Support

- Make sure the right supports are in place and **remove barriers to full participation in the educational experiences**.
- Train peer advisors to become the first point of contact for students, especially first years, to build a sense of belonging and create essential advising resources to populations with greater needs for intensive support.
- **Include measures for supporting the increasing number of underserved students** and closing equity gaps on campus.
- Zero in on student psychology to couple access initiatives with more empowering student success practices.
- Incorporate success-oriented interactions among peers as well as "champions" beyond the institution, such as alumni and prospective employers.
- Create scalable interventions that build academic confidence, sense of belonging, and college navigation skills.

16 Best Practices to Erase Equity Gaps

Equity

1. Train leaders in effective **change management**
2. Provide equity-focused professional development
3. Conduct **campus climate** assessments
4. Expand community-based partnerships
5. Offer second chances for adult learners
6. Audit registration holds and revise policies
7. Offer retention grants for in-need students
8. Assess and align math requirements
9. Offer college-level **gateway courses**
10. Provide pre-college career exploration opportunities
11. Create undergraduate academic degree maps
12. Leverage meta-majors to ease student pathways
13. **Create pathways** for transfer students
14. Leverage technology for proactive advising
15. Make student care a coordinated effort
16. Foster **student belongingness**

Consider one experiment: UT Austin asked incoming students to read articles on different subjects and write reflections over the summer before matriculation. One group reviewed material about the growth mindset, read messages from current students about their difficult transition to campus, and gave advice to future college students about academic perseverance. [Read more about the growth mindset experience](#).