

April 18, 2020

To: Honorable Governor Phil Scott
Distinguished members of the Vermont Senate and House of Representatives
Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees

As members of the Northern Vermont University – Lyndon and Johnson Alumni Councils, we have embraced and promoted the mission and vision of the Vermont State Colleges System. We have faithfully and enthusiastically volunteered to serve as state and regional ambassadors to the Vermont State Colleges. Moreover, we have embraced and promoted the mission and vision of our home institution Northern Vermont University – Lyndon and Johnson.

Each member of the Lyndon and Johnson Alumni Councils has dedicated significant time, energy, and expertise to each school including mentoring of current students; annual giving in support of student scholarships and special projects; volunteer service in support of yearly university initiatives; and collaborative work with individual faculty, academic departments, and student affairs. Also, we have actively engaged in the advocacy for our alma mater and the Vermont State Colleges system in supporting the continuation of life-long relationships across alumni and community groups.

During the past few years, one of our primary points of service to our home institution has been the unification of Lyndon State College and Johnson State College under one institution, Northern Vermont University. When the unification was first presented to us by Chancellor Jeb Spaulding, and in subsequent presentations to the Lyndon and Johnson campus community by Chancellor Spaulding and representatives of the Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees, we took direct, formal action to embrace this initiative in total.

The Lyndon and Johnson Alumni Councils understand that the actual operational model of Northern Vermont University with two campuses has not played out in the manner that was first presented. We understand that the downward trend in the demographics of Vermont and in surrounding states has resulted in fewer high school graduates. In turn, this has challenged recruitment efforts in order to maintain healthy enrollments. We understand that change is needed to improve the overall health of the Vermont State Colleges, but over time we had been assured that significant progress had been made toward meeting vital benchmarks established by Chancellor Spaulding and supported by the Vermont State College Board of Trustees.

Chancellor Spaulding's recommendation to the Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees to close both campuses of Northern Vermont University took students, faculty, staff, administration, community members, and legislators by surprise. What is deeply troubling about Chancellor Spaulding's recommendation is that there is no detailed plan for how such action will be unfolded and executed in a manner that addresses anticipated administrative, academic program, faculty and staff, and student transition issues. Moreover, Chancellor Spaulding's public recommendation comes under the supervision of the Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees.

As members of the Northern Vermont University – Lyndon and Johnson Alumni Councils, we have formally and unanimously approved a vote of no confidence in Chancellor Jeb Spaulding; his public recommendation, as well as his leadership capacity to carry through such significant actions. We also formally and unanimously approved a vote of no confidence in the Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees in supporting such action. We strongly advocate that no vote by the Board of Trustees be taken on Chancellor Spaulding's recommendation, and that a precise, efficient and evaluative feasibility review be conducted by a group of individuals who hold significant experience in higher education.

Please know that we do not take such a formal action lightly, as this is the first time in the history of the Lyndon and Johnson Alumni Councils that we have done so. We have been strong advocates of the Vermont State Colleges and Northern Vermont University, as well as goodwill ambassadors of necessary changes that have needed to be enacted over time in order to maintain and foster the overall mission of who we are as alumni.

Now more than ever, we all need to remind ourselves of the purpose of higher education opportunities that have been afforded to Vermont students, students from other states and countries, as well as the overall benefit of each community that serves and supports each institution. We present you with a reminder below as to that purpose, and a reminder that collectively, we need to do what is right for our current students to ensure that every one is afforded the educational experience that was expected.

"For the benefit of Vermont, The Vermont State Colleges system provides affordable, high quality, student-centered, and accessible education, fully integrated professional, liberal, and career study, consistent with student aspirations and regional and state needs."

Respectfully,

Northern Vermont University – Lyndon Alumni Council

Marie Myers Heath	Beth Ward Fraser
John Kascenska	Patricia Dobbs Leduc
Meaghan Meachem	Gail Heidtmann Marine
Alexandra Huff	Russell Pander
Camryn Kruger	Steve Cormier
Kyle Amadon	William Johnson
Robynn Beams	Christopher J. Scott
Tyler Cadorette	Ethan Coppentrath

Northern Vermont University – Johnson Alumni Council

Kate Abdel Fatah	William Baker
Alli Compagna Lewis	Julia Compagna
Kevin Grace	Robert Heim
Anna Liccione	Stephen E. Malo
James Osborne	Megan Haggerty Panek
Christopher Reed	James Rowell
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