



TOWN OF RANDOLPH, VERMONT

April 30, 2020

J. Churchill Hindes, Chairman of the Board of Trustees
Vermont State Colleges
P.O. Box 7
Montpelier, VT 05601

Dear Chairman Hindes and distinguished board members,

I write to you today to convey a message of consolidated action that is being taken by stakeholders of Vermont Technical College (VTC). The Town of Randolph along with its partners, Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation (GMEDC), Two-Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Planning Commission, (TRORC), legislative representatives and many businesses including Gifford Medical Center, Applied Research Associates, LED Dynamics, GW Plastics, and many other local leaders, have developed cross-sector Task Forces to identify opportunities to strengthen VTC's Randolph campus.

It should come as no surprise that the recent recommendation by Chancellor Spaulding to close the Randolph campus was received with vehement disdain in large part because of how important VTC is to the economic ecosystem in central Vermont. Over the years, businesses have developed symbiotic relationships with VTC and their student body developing "cradle to career" pathways for Vermont's young adults. Gifford Medical Center operates a clinical site for VTC's RN and LPN nursing program and devoid of such a program, Gifford would be forced to utilize traveling nurses on a greater basis. The typical cost of a traveling nurse is 2x that of an employed nurse according to the report from the Vermont's Rural Health Task Force (reported to the legislature in January 2020).

Our manufacturing base relies on the talent pipeline from VTC to sustain and grow their operations. In fact, there are over 500 employees between GW Plastics, Applied Research Associates and LED Dynamics and many are VTC graduates. Investments by these employers in their production capacity are more than \$50 million. KAD Models, a silicon based advanced manufacturing company just began setting up machinery in their East Randolph facility in February. Their decision to locate here was solely based on VTC's presence and talent pipeline. Without VTC, these companies would simply move to other parts of the country where they already have business operations and access to talent.

VTC is not simply Vermont's highest Return on Investment according to Georgetown University's Center for Education's review of 4,500 colleges. The Randolph campus is in the center of Vermont with easy access from I89 that allows for many statewide conferences including Senator Leahy's Women's Economic Opportunity Conference, Vermont Environmental Consortium, Vermont State Police training programs and many others. Their athletic SHAPE facility offers residents in the

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Randolph area access to health-related activities that could not be otherwise met without a 40-minute commute. The VTC campus is also part owner of the Randolph Center water system or Fire District #1. This infrastructure and proximity to VTC was the central tenant in siting Gifford's Retirement Community, a \$20 million investment in Randolph Center. A newly Act 250 permitted hotel and conference center is slated to be constructed on the one mile stretch of road between I-89 and the VTC campus and is a facility that will bring the first large scale lodging establishment between Barre and White River Junction with the opportunity for more revenue generating events on campus and in the community.

Randolph residents and stakeholders have been engaged and galvanized over the last two years in community and economic development initiatives from housing and business developments to childcare. The same tenacity for positive change is now prepared to collaborate with the VSC Trustees, General Assembly and the Scott Administration to identify sustainable solutions for VTC's Randolph campus.

Our Manufacturing Task Force is working with local businesses and Randolph's Technical Career Center to identify initiatives that can foster further collaboration with Vermont's CTE's and strengthen the pipeline of talent for Vermont businesses. This is a continuation of the strong partnership developed with businesses, VTC and Regional Technical Centers to prepare students for post-secondary education and excellent jobs in manufacturing. Using the highly successful Nursing Program that delivers coursework remotely as a model, concept proposals are being suggested for course offerings in other fields with students in Williston, at sister colleges in the system, and RTCs throughout the state, with VTC acting as the "hub". They are also surveying area businesses to ascertain what the housing and childcare needs of their employees are.

Our Assets Task Force is reviewing the physical assets on the Randolph campus in collaboration with VTC staff to identify specific assets that could be repurposed through public/private partnerships and help meet the needs of a quickly changing higher education landscape. As part of the Town of Randolph's work to address the childcare needs of the region, we have identified VTC's off-campus Enterprise Center as a potential site to be repurposed. Furthermore, Randolph's designation as an Opportunity Zone may provide incentive for increased private investment in the coming years.

There are business owners and alumni, both in the greater Randolph area and around the state, that have signaled willingness to serve on a Task Force, one that we ask the Trustees to establish, that are prepared to roll their sleeves up to create a new vision for diversified programming for Vermont's working farms and forests in a post COVID-19 Vermont. Vermont's land mass is 75% forested and 20% agricultural and we must educate Vermonters for the coming generations to produce and process food and fiber in an economically and environmentally sound manner to satisfy the needs of our society. There is no better location to invest in than VTC's centrally located, 500+ acre campus in Randolph with many diverse agricultural and forest economy businesses within a short drive to offer students a host of opportunities to learn from and partner with.

Our Task Forces recognize the magnitude of the decisions that your body will be required to take in the coming weeks. We are taking a proactive role in evaluating solutions that meet the needs of residents and businesses in the Randolph region in partnership with solutions that can sustain and enhance VTC's presence and mission in Randolph. We are here as a resource as you consider what actions to take and welcome a collaborative conversation about the future of VTC and the Randolph campus.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh J", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joshua Jerome
Director of Economic Development

CC: Honorable Philip B. Scott, Governor
Timothy Ashe, Senator pro tempore
Mitzi Johnson, Speaker of the House
Mark MacDonald, Senator
Jay Hooper, Representative
Peter Reed, Representative
Sophie Zdatny, Interim Chancellor
Pat Moulton, VTC President