

Minutes

VSAC Programs & Services Committee Meeting

November 18, 2024
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Boardroom, VSAC Offices
10 East Allen Street
Winooski, Vermont 05404

Committee Members Present: Martha Heath (Chair), Dave Larsen, Ryan Dulude, Tim Chamberlin
Committee Members Absent: Caleb Elder, Clarence Davis
Other Members Present: Dodie Mitchell (Board Chair)
VSAC Staff Present: Scott Giles, Patrick Leduc, Meghan Metzler, Brad Fallon

Chair Martha Heath called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. With a quorum established, the Committee took up the first order of business.

Approval of September 16, 2024, Minutes

Upon a motion made by Tim Chamberlin and seconded by Ryan Dulude, the Committee Members voted unanimously to approve the Programs & Services Committee Minutes of September 16, 2024, as presented.

Public Comment

There were no public comments given during the public comment period.

Grant Policy – Ongoing Review

Patrick Leduc reviewed the 802 Opportunity Grant Program policy. He brought to the attention of the committee that the income parameters are not in the policy because these are established by the legislature, and that this new policy formalizes the process. The Committee discussed the policy and Patrick responded to questions.

Upon a motion made by Dave Larsen and seconded by Ryan Dulude, the Committee Members voted unanimously to recommend that the full Board approve the 802 Opportunity Grant Program policy, as presented.

Risk Assessment

Patrick Leduc reviewed a previously distributed document regarding the risk if VSAC is not able to renew or maintain the GEARUP, Talent Search or Education Opportunity Center (EOC) grants. These are competitive federal grants, and each grant is now or will be in its competitive

cycle in 2025. The Committee engaged in a discussion of the risk, during which members of the Executive Committee responded to questions.

Operations Updates

Patrick Leduc updated the committee on the search for a new private loan servicing system, and that we are in the final stages of selecting the system. He also reminded the committee that based on the last legislative season we need to make state grants available to non-citizens/undocumented students, and he reviewed the progress and complexities to achieve this. Finally, Patrick reviewed the previously distributed standing reports. Patrick Leduc and Scott Giles answered questions from the committee.

Federal Update

Scott Giles provided updates on FAFSA, and reported that based on the reports coming out of the beta testing cycle, it appears to be moving along better than the prior year. He further went on to discuss with the committee the implications from the recent election and what Congress and the new administration might be facing or looking at.

Vermont Update

Scott Giles provided updates on the Vermont Legislature post-election and on VSAC's budget submission, which included a 3.6% increase to base funding, that would be targeted towards increasing the income threshold of the 802 Opportunity Grant Program, recommendations on the continuation of some loan forgiveness programs and a new scholarship for VTSU students. Scott cautioned that since the legislature will be contemplating large topics this session we would need to wait and see what the interest will be. Scott also commented that there will likely be some discussion on the efficacy of the Dual Enrollment and Early College programs by the Legislature.

Looking Forward – *Exploration of a college award letter comparison tool*

Patrick Leduc spoke about a new VSAC project, the building of a mobile application that would help students and families compare financial aid award letters. These letters do not have a uniform set up or language, which makes it difficult for families to compare financial aid packages between colleges. This App will aid families in the comparison process. There has been scope work completed and we are currently wrapping up talks on a partnership. Patrick then entertained questions from the committee.

Other Business

There being no other business, the Committee adjourned at 12:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patrick Leduc, Assistant Secretary