

Minutes

VSAC Programs & Services Committee Meeting

**January 26, 2026
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, Clarence Davis, Mary-Katherine Stone

Committee Members Absent: N/A

Other Members Present: Dodie Mitchell

VSAC Staff Present: Scott Giles, Tom Little, Patrick Leduc, Meghan Metzler, Brad Fallon, Rosanne Nelson

Chair Martha Heath called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. With a quorum established, the Committee took up the first order of business.

Approval of November 17, 2025, Minutes

Upon a motion made by Ryan Dulude and seconded by Tim Chamberlin, the Committee Members voted unanimously to approve the Programs & Services Committee Minutes of November 17, 2025, as presented.

Public Comment

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

Grant Policy – Ongoing Review

Martha Heath requested that Patrick Leduc present the latest grant policies as part of the ongoing review, and he covered the following policies, previously distributed:

- **Grant Appeal Policy** – Patrick reviewed the policy; the changes were mostly grammatical and to clarify that it is a student who makes an appeal.
- **Residency Appeal Policy** – Patrick reviewed the policy and highlighted that most additions to the policy were added from the procedures. The policy update also included more options for a student to appear for their appeal. The Committee had a conversation and agreed that a student should be able to appear for their appeal: in-person, virtually, or on a phone call.

The Committee discussed the policies and Patrick responded to questions.

Upon a motion made by Clarence Davis and seconded by Ryan Dulude, the Committee Members voted unanimously to recommend that the full Board approve the Grant Appeal policy and the Residency Appeal Policy, as amended.

Operations Updates

Patrick Leduc briefed the Committee on the following:

- *Status of Grant Programs* – Grant funds have been spent down including any carry forward as planned. Applications from 12/31/25 forward are on hold until we can evaluate the impacts of any attrition. Both 802Opportunity, and Freedom and Unity Scholarships are still being awarded.
- *Loan Origination Updates* – Loans are on track to approve about \$52 million in total (\$44 million in student loans and \$8 million in parent loans). There is always a portion that will not be disbursed but volume increases are encouraging overall. The new Refi loan's soft launch recently ended, and the program is performing as expected.
- *TRIO Program Updates* – As a reminder VSAC's Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) grant funding was terminated, but VSAC continues to run the program without Federal funding. Client numbers dropped a bit after the termination because some partners thought the program was closed and they stopped referring to EOC. These partners now know EOC is operating and they are referring clients again. Also, the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) has filed a suit against the Department of Education (DE) on behalf of terminated programs. COE believes that the process the DE used to terminate funds was a procedural violation. VSAC is now joining the suit. The EC will report out as they get more information.
- *Award Advisor Updates* – The official role out is scheduled for the first week of February with seven other state agencies. There are three other agencies actively interested, and VSAC is in conversation with more agencies. VSAC continues to work with trade groups like COE and NCCEP to promote the App.
- *Item to Highlight in Standing reports* – VT Trades has seen a decline in students from the southern portion of the state and an increase from the middle and northern portions. This is being monitored to understand the reasons and to evaluate if changes are needed to make sure the program is appropriately marketed across the state.

The Committee engaged Patrick in questions that he responded to.

Looking Forward

Patrick Leduc began by introducing Rosanne Nelson, Director of Information Technology and Project Management, who presented with him. Patrick and Rosanne reviewed the VSAC Technology Path document, previously distributed. They demonstrated that VSAC is continuing to reduce stored data and test for system security gaps. VSAC continues its effort to move appropriate systems to cloud solutions. Patrick and Rosanne responded to questions from the Committee.

Federal Update

Scott Giles started by reminding the Committee that the Reconciliation Bill (HR1) contained the largest changes to financial aid in at least two decades. Many changes are expected to be coming out of Final Rule Making shortly. However, it is known that student loan caps change on 7/1/26. This likely means that more Graduate and Parent PLUS borrowers will need alternate financing to offset the reduction in Federal student loan amounts. Some state agencies, similar to VSAC, expect increase demand for their loans. So, these agencies are looking to preserve tax-exempt borrowing for all their student loans by trying to remove them from state bond caps. Scott responded to questions from the Committee.

Vermont Update

Scott Giles shared that the Governor's Budget proposal promoted a 3% increase to VSAC's base. However, it does not include money for the Freedom and Unity Scholarship. Also, while the budget was being built, the Federal Government provided more money to Vermont than expected through the Rural Health Transformation Grant that does support money for workforce initiatives. VSAC has done this with

DOH before, and VSAC is prepared to do this quickly again if given the opportunity. Currently, AHS is reviewing how best to utilize these funds.

Scott reviewed with the Committee what the Vermont Higher Education Trust Fund is and how the Trust's interest is used for need-based scholarships between VTSU, UVM and VSAC. This past year there was a significant amount of money deposited into the Trust. Scott went on to share that there are some discussions within the state to use a portion of the deposit for other priorities that are not need-based programs. The Committee and Scott discussed these proposals.

Other Business

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

Respectfully submitted,

Patrick Leduc, Assistant Secretary