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STATE OF MAINE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04330

January 30, 1979

Sen. Richard Pierce
Chairman
Legislative Council
109th Legislature
State House
Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear Senator Pierce:

In accordance with House Paper 2281, establishing a Joint Select Committee to study the Vocational-Technical Institutes and the Maine School of Practical Nursing, we enclose herein the final report of the committee.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Walter Birt".

Rep. Walter Birt
Chairman

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Charles O'Leary".

Charles O'Leary
Vice-chairman

FINAL REPORT

A STUDY OF THE
VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL
INSTITUTES AND THE
MAINE SCHOOL OF
PRACTICAL NURSING

Prepared by the
Joint Select Committee
to Study the Vocational-Technical
Institutes & the Maine School of
Practical Nursing

Submitted to the
Legislative Council
109th Legislature

January 30, 1979

Maine's vocational-technical institutes are at a critical crossroads. The public has consistently supported post-secondary vocational education and training by their approval of bond issues. The vocational-technical institutes regularly place a high percentage of their recent graduates in jobs for which they have received training. This public support and excellent record of job placement by the institutes contrast strikingly with conditions at the individual campuses. In the recent past, however, austere budgets have severely restricted program improvement. Services at the VTI's may be affected by this restriction and the VTI's may no longer be able consistently to meet student and employer needs. Restrictive budgets and limited services have been cited by employees as creating the negative climate they perceive as over-shadowing their efforts. Employee morale is extremely low. Based upon these factors, there are several clear choices facing the state.

With renewed and sustained support, we believe that the institutes can become the centerpiece of the state's efforts to provide Maine youth with job skills, to improve the skills of Maine workers and to encourage new and expanded industries. In the absence of such support, we believe that the present period of low priorities may be followed by a steady decline in the quality of service provided by the institutes. We commend the institutes for the job they are doing under severe limitations.

In what follows we identify the most pressing human and institutional issues of the vocational-technical institutes and present a set of recommendations as a framework within which an

immediate response to them should be initiated. We are unanimous in our recommendations and equally unanimous in our belief that these recommendations require immediate consideration and implementation.

The idea for a Joint Select Committee to study the vocational-technical institutes and the Maine School of Practical Nursing evolved from a joint meeting of the State Board of Education in the early spring of 1978. The focus of that meeting was the shared and growing concern that the problems of the vocational-technical institutes were in general insufficiently recognized and as a result were continuing to be neglected. As a result of this meeting a joint order to create an interim select study committee was presented to the Legislature and passed in April of 1978. The order directed the committee as follows:

"...this committee shall conduct a comprehensive review of legislation affecting these schools, including implications of collective bargaining and present conditions surrounding the operation and governance of the vocational-technical institutes and the Maine School of Practical Nursing...."

The Joint Select Committee to study the Vocational-Technical Institutes and the Maine School of Practical Nursing has examined the State's post-secondary vocational education and training programs since May of 1978. Subcommittees were established to examine specific problem areas. The subcommittees met and subsequently reported their findings to the full committee. The committee held meetings and site visits at four of the institutes

and received reports of site visits to the other campuses by subcommittee members on a regional basis.

The following recommendations are the result of our 9 months of study. They are supported by direct testimony and textual materials, copies of which are on file in the Law and Legislative Reference Library.

Recommendations:

1. We recommend that the State Board of Education, in its capacity as the policy-making body for the vocational-technical institutes, should certify and present to the Legislature its recommendations for the funding of the vocational-technical institutes for the ensuing biennium. The recommendations should be presented, along with the original requests from the institutes, annually prior to November 15. The State Board should also make a formal presentation at the budget hearings before the Appropriations Committee.

Presently, the State Board of Education is given the statutory authority to "establish, maintain and operate state technical and vocational institutes and schools of practical nursing." We believe that with the addition of more specific statutory authority over policy-making this general structure should be maintained.

The committee examined proposals for the establishment of a separate board of trustees to oversee the institutes and for a separate board with responsibilities for secondary and post-secondary vocational education. We also reviewed an approach which would have shifted the responsibilities for post-secondary vocational education from the State Board to the University of Maine Board of Trustees. Each of these proposals provides at best a partial solution to the problems of governance.

A separate board might give more attention to the needs of the institutes than the present State Board can provide, given its responsibilities for elementary and secondary education. The

coordination of secondary and post-secondary vocational education encouraged by the present structure, however, would be lost. A new board with responsibilities for both secondary and post-secondary vocational education would encourage the coordination of all vocational programs but would isolate vocational education from other secondary programs in a way which we believe would be undesirable.

Assigning post-secondary vocational education to the University of Maine Board of Trustees would assure coordination of all post-secondary education programs. This benefit would be secured, however, at the cost of the coordination of all vocational programs, secondary and post-secondary, by a single board. Substantial additional responsibilities would be shifted to an already heavily burdened board.

Underlying our rejection of these governance frameworks was our determination to allocate scarce resources to programs rather than to administration. The present structure can provide for the coordination of all vocational programs, all secondary programs and, with the addition of the screening committee described in Recommendation 2, all post-secondary public education programs.

We believe, however, that the State Board should assume a more active role in the development and presentation of the budget for the institutes. Greater participation in the annual budget process would encourage the State Board to become a more informed advocate for the institutes and would sharpen the Legislature's perception of the needs of post-secondary vocational education.

Presently, the budget requests of the institutes are received from the directors and reviewed by the Department of Educational and Cultural Services. These requests, either as received or as modified by the department, are then included as several items in the overall department budget request. The department's requested funding levels and the requested levels established by the Budget Office on behalf of the Governor are then presented to the Legislature as part of the budget document.

We believe that the State Board should review the original requests from the institutes and, working with the commissioner, establish the department funding level requests for post-secondary vocational education. We also believe that the board should certify its recommended funding levels and send them along with the original requests to the Legislature. These recommendations should be presented independently of the other parts of the department's budget.

2. We recommend that the Joint Screening Committee, with members representing the University of Maine and the vocational-technical institutes (VTI's), should be used to the fullest extent, meeting on a regular basis not only to act on the immediate problems of program duplication but also to anticipate long-range problems and thereby assure a more informed planning process for both the University and the vocational-technical institutes.

The Joint Screening Committee is composed of 3 representatives from the university, including a vice-chancellor, and 3 representatives from the department, including the associate commissioner for vocational education, a VTI director, and one other. It was established to provide a forum for discussing new programs and eliminating duplication of programs. The budget limitations of recent years have severely restricted the development of new programs and as a result this committee has not met on a regular basis until

this past fall.

We believe that the joint screening committee should meet regularly and should consider long-range program coordination as well as immediate program duplication. This committee should be a vital communications link between the planning components of both the University and the VTI's.

3. We recommend that an administrative council should be established to discuss the missions, programs and budgets of the VTI's as well as other important VTI issues.

The Presidents of each campus of the University meet regularly with the Chancellor as an administrative council. This council encourages closer coordination among the campuses, and provides a means of dealing with common and special problems.

We believe that the operation of the VTI's could be improved by the establishment of an administrative council composed of the directors of each VTI and the commissioner or his designee. Regular meetings would encourage better understanding of campus problems and improved planning to achieve campus and system-wide goals.

4. We recommend that the Kennebec Valley Vocational Technical Institute (KVVTI) should be placed under the authority of the State Board as are the other VTI's. Upon implementation of this recommendation, the Maine School of Practical Nursing should become one program component of KVVTI. KVVTI should continue to be authorized to purchase space for programs from the City of Waterville.

Presently, KVVTI is administered under the authority of the Waterville School Board and funded by the State. Personnel are considered as employees of Waterville for purposes of wages, salaries and benefits. In 1969 when KVVTI was created, this unique governance structure offered savings in costs which were important considerations in the establishment of the institute.

This structure was intended to be a temporary experiment in shared responsibility between the city of Waterville and the state which would assist the new institute in its first few years. We believe that the experiment has been a success. KVVTI has grown and become an important part of the greater Waterville community. It is time, however, for the experiment to end.

The sharing of space with the Waterville school system, which in the early years of KVVTI ensured lower costs, now restricts the program potential of the institute. The recently leased Gilman Street facility has relieved some of the program scheduling problems but adequate space for the trade shops is still not available.

The differences in salary schedules between the city and the state have made KVVTI less attractive to prospective faculty than other VTI's and have created what the existing faculty perceive as an inequity. Bringing KVVTI under the authority of the State Board would assure a single salary standard for all of the VTI's.

The Maine School of Practical Nursing shares the Gilman Street facility with KVVTI. We believe that this dual administrative arrangement is unnecessary and costly. Following the administrative structure of other VTI's, we believe that the School of Practical Nursing should become one program component of KVVTI.

The one-time cost of placing KVVTI under the State Board would be \$82,656, primarily in personnel costs.

5. We recommend that the University of Maine Collective Bargaining law as it pertains to the VTI's should be amended so that the State Board of Education is not limited to the Office of State Employee Relations in its selection of a negotiating agent.

The lengthy contract negotiations for VTI faculty were identified as a central issue during each of our campus visits and we recognize the great concern expressed by VTI employees about the collective bargaining process.

Presently, the VTI faculty is authorized to bargain collectively under the University of Maine collective bargaining law. The State Board acts as the employer representative for the state in these negotiations. The existing law requires the State Board to use the Office of State Employee Relations as its negotiator in this process.

The Office of State Employee Relations is a part of the Executive Office and acts as the negotiating agent for the State in the negotiations authorized under the public employees collective bargaining law. Because it is under the direct authority of the Governor, we believe that the Office of State Employee Relations might not be able to carry out effectively the directives of the board if the Governor and the State Board differed on major policy issues. Giving the board the discretionary authority to employ a negotiator other than the Office of State Employee Relations would provide an option that would avoid unnecessary stress in the collective bargaining process.

6. We recommend that a contingent non-lapsing account, not to exceed 2% of the state funds appropriated for the VTI's, should be established in the department. The State Board should administer the fund and the money should be used to respond to unexpected needs at the VTI's.

As one component of the Department of Educational and Cultural Services, the VTI's are subject to the limitations on the

transfer of funds which govern all other state agencies. Although these limits may be appropriate for these other agencies, we believe that the tasks of the VTI's require somewhat greater flexibility. In the absence of the greater flexibility we believe that the VTI's may be unable, for example, to respond quickly to the training needs of a new or expanding industry.

We do not suggest that the VTI's should be exempted from the restrictions placed on other state agencies. We believe, however, that the creation of a contingency account, administered by the State Board and allocated to individual campuses on the basis of demonstrated need, would make the VTI's significantly more responsive to any unexpected problems which require immediate action. The account should not exceed 2% of the state funds appropriated and should be non-lapsing.

The 2% figure, as applied to the funds appropriated for the current year, would yield a fund of \$152,690.

7. We recommend that the costs of maintenance and repairs should be included in the VTI budgets.

The costs of maintenance and repairs at the VTI's like the maintenance and repair costs of all other state agencies, are included within the budget of the Bureau of Public Improvements. We believe that separating these costs from the rest of the VTI budgets creates a fragmented and perhaps misleading impression of the needs of the VTI's. We see the VTI's as schools and, like other public schools, their repairs and maintenance costs should be included in their total budget.

The State Board should establish and present a budget for the VTI's which reflects the total needs of the institutes. Similarly, the Legislature should consider the VTI budget through a single funding request from the department, rather than in

pieces found in several different agency budgets. Including the costs of maintenance and repairs in the VTI budget request would encourage this comprehensive consideration.

8. We recommend that the credit programs of vocational education at the levels of grades 13 and 14, which are not part of the adult education program, and which presently may be offered in regional vocational centers and vocational regions, should be operated as satellite programs under the authority of the nearest VTI.

Under current law, regional vocational centers and vocational regions may offer courses at the level of grades 13 and 14, but no courses have yet been offered under this provision. These facilities are secondary schools. Course offerings beyond the 12th grade level should be the responsibility of a post-secondary facility. We believe that courses at grade levels 13 and 14 should continue to be offered in secondary facilities whenever the need and facilities exist. Since they are the responsibility of a post-secondary facility, these courses should be provided as satellite programs under the authority of the nearest VTI. The State Board should designate the VTI which is to be responsible for any satellite program which is approved.

9. We recommend that the Department of Personnel should revise those procedures which cause unnecessary delays in the approval process for positions at the VTI's.

The Personnel Law and its accompanying regulations and procedures often seem to be more of an obstacle than an aid to effective management. The VTI's often have to hire employees quickly in order to respond to the training needs of industries. In addition, the VTI's rely on the regular use of CETA employees for custodial services and for some teaching positions. All of these employees are needed for a specific period and prompt action on these positions by the Personnel Department is required if the VTI's are to use these additional personnel effectively.

We have found that between 6 weeks and 2 months have sometimes elapsed between application by a VTI and approval by the Personnel Department. Such delays have eliminated employment opportunities for some persons, have adversely affected programs and services and have caused needless frustration for VTI administrators.

We are encouraged to learn that a revision of the personnel regulations will be completed for presentation to the 109th Legislature. We believe, however, that even revised regulations can become a hurdle rather than a help to efficient personnel management if they are not clearly communicated and promptly administered. We urge the Personnel Department to work more closely with the VTI's so that its efforts as a service agency will contribute to the fulfillment rather than the frustration of VTI policy objectives.

10. We recommend that the Bureau of Purchases make a special effort to inform VTI administrators of the full extent of the flexibility available under state purchasing practices.

Maine's procurement law is considered model legislation. It provides a balance between competitive bidding and other uniform purchasing requirements and an area of flexibility which includes some open market purchasing.

We find that the purchasing law is not well understood by VTI administrators and business managers. The law, for example, permits the limited purchasing of lumber and other supplies by students. This open market purchasing by students would be a useful part of their training. Unfortunately, we find that the flexible features of the law have not been sufficiently understood by the VTI's. We urge better communication between the Bureau of Purchases and the VTI's to take maximum advantage of this sound legislation.

11. We recommend that the current efforts to ensure that all programs are equally available to both men and women should be vigorously continued.

In recent years the VTI's have initiated efforts to eliminate sex biases and to assure that programs which have been traditionally dominated by men are open to both men and women. These actions have accelerated as a result of Federal pressure. Even so, the enrollment of women and the number of women in staff and administrative positions at the VTI's are both still very low.

We are encouraged by these first efforts at eliminating the sex stereotyping in many vocational programs and we urge that the VTI's continue to strengthen their affirmative action programs.

12. We recommend that the State Board of Education initiate efforts to broaden and strengthen the planning at each VTI.

As it has been carried out, the present Federally-mandated planning process does not provide sufficient participation by individuals and groups in the area served by the VTI and, therefore, does not generate community interest in the process or an advocacy for the programs identified in the plan. The result of the process has been a passive document, rather than one which provides a focus for future direction.

We believe that the planning process is a viable one and can be reinvigorated, where appropriate, by the greater use of craft committees and citizens' advisory councils, more participation in the development of individual campus missions and the continuation of other efforts to increase community involvement. The State Board, with consultant participation, should take a leadership role in this effort by designing the general procedures which the VTI's might follow to improve the planning process. With

the cooperation of the VTI advisory committees, the State Board should develop and regularly review a state-wide mission for the VTI's.

13. We recommend that either a part-time or an additional full-time position should be created in the department (DECS) for the purpose of providing information and assistance to the VTI's about relevant Federal and private grants and other sources of funding.

The VTI's, like the University, rely on Federal funds as a supplement to their State appropriation. The University has an office which researches and publicizes additional sources of Federal and private funding.

For the VTI's, this function is performed by Department personnel who have other duties. We believe that the creation of an additional full-time or part-time position would provide a centralized source of information for the VTI's and encourage greater efforts to obtain these additional funds.

14. We recommend that the Legislature address the actual costs incurred in maintaining food and dormitory services at the individual campuses, but do not at this point recommend a separate fund for these services.

Under the present law the money which VTI's receive for providing food and dormitory services is deposited in the state's General Fund. Because of the particular problem faced by some of the VTI's, for example NMVTI, the committee has examined a proposal which would permit each VTI to retain all or part of this money in order to provide services for an increasing enrollment which cannot be offered within the funds appropriated. The committee acknowledges this problem and recommends that the Legislature address it during the current session.

15. We recommend that the position of Coordinator of the Vocational-Technical Institutes be redefined as an Associate Commissioner for Post-Secondary Vocational Education. The Associate Commissioner for Post-Secondary Vocational Education shall become the Director of a new Bureau of Post-Secondary Vocational Education.

In the DECS, the Associate Commissioner for Vocational Education directs the Bureau and has responsibility for federal funding, as well as all levels of vocational education. Redefining the existing position of Coordinator of the VTI's as the Associate Commissioner for Post-Secondary Vocational Education, heading a separate Bureau, would take some burdens from the current Bureau Director, emphasize the different character of vocational education at the post-secondary level, and provide for improved liaison and coordination between the department and the VTI's.

16. We recommend that the references to the VTI's in Title 20 of the Maine Revised Statutes Annotated should be consolidated into a single chapter.

References to the VTI's are now found in several different chapters of Title 20. Many of these references are included in provisions primarily relating to secondary vocational education. We believe that this placement in the statutes causes an unclear perception of the structure and role of the VTI's. Consolidating the VTI statutes into a single chapter would clarify this perception.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE
JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE
TO STUDY THE
VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL INSTITUTES
& THE MAINE SCHOOL OF
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Copies of the direct testimony
and textual materials sub-
mitted to the Committee are on
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