

**Sunset Advisory Commission
Board and Commission Review of the PreKindergaten Council**

The Commission reviews every State board and commission and takes testimony regarding whether each board or commission should continue to operate or be eliminated and whether the powers and duties of any board or commission should be revised. Each board and commission has the burden of justifying its continued operation.

The Commission also reviews whether members of a board or commission should be entitled to a per diem and, if so, the amount of that per diem.

In testifying before the Commission, you should be able to provide the following information:

Note: The following draft responses to the Sunset Advisory Commission's questions were prepared by Tom Little, VSAC's General Counsel. In the time available for responding to these questions to date, it has not been possible to survey the membership of the PreKindergaten-16 Council for input on answers to certain of the questions raised by the Sunset Advisory Commission.

1. In general, how often does the board and commission meet? Provide specific information on how often the board or commission has met in the past two fiscal years. Provide information on where agendas and minutes of meetings can be found.

The governing statute (16 VSA sec. 2905, at subsection (g)) states that the Council "shall meet at least quarterly." It has been a long time since the Council met quarterly, and it met sporadically in Fiscal Years 2019, 2020, and 2021. The Council's website is here:

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/committee/detail/2020/90>. It is a website maintained by the Community College of Vermont – but accessible from the General Assembly's "Committee's webpage. There is little information and documents available on the Council's webpage. For example, it has no information or documents for prior meetings of the Council. The State Archives site was not checked.

2. Provide the names of members of the board or commission, their term length and expiration, their appointing authority, and the amount of any per diem they receive.

Here are the names of the current members of the Council:

*Sen. Philip Baruth
Scott Giles, Chair
Rep. Kevin "Coach" Christie
Heather Bouchey
Tricia Coates
Dan Daley
Carlen Finn*

Jeff Francis
Karen Heath
Wendy Koenig
Holly Morehouse
Sally Redpath
Susan Stitely
Lisa Ventriss
Carolyn Wesley

The source of appointment is spelled out in 16 VSA sec. 2905(b):

§ 2905. Prekindergarten-16 Council

(b) The Council shall be composed of:

- (1) the Secretary of Education or designee;*
- (2) the Commissioner of Labor or designee;*
- (3) the President of the University of Vermont or designee;*
- (4) the Chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges or designee;*
- (5) the President of the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation or designee;*
- (6) the President of the Association of Vermont Independent Colleges or designee;*
- (7) a principal of a secondary school selected by the Vermont Principals' Association;*
- (8) a superintendent selected by the Vermont Superintendents Association;*
- (9) a teacher selected by the Vermont-National Education Association;*
- (10) a member of the Building Bright Futures Council or designee;*
- (11) a career technical education director selected by the Vermont Association of Career and Technical Center Directors;*
- (12) a representative from the business and industry community selected by the Vermont Business Roundtable;*
- (13) an advocate for low-income children selected by Voices for Vermont's Children;*
- (14) a member of the House of Representatives, who shall be selected by the Speaker and shall serve until the beginning of the biennium immediately after the one in which the member is appointed;*
- (15) a member of the Senate, who shall be selected by the Committee on Committees and shall serve until the beginning of the biennium immediately after the one in which the member is appointed;*
- (16) a member of the faculty of the Vermont State Colleges, the University of Vermont, or a Vermont independent college selected by United Professions AFT Vermont, Inc.; and*
- (17) a representative of after-school, summer, and expanded learning programs selected by the Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence.*

The governing statute (16 VSA sec. 2905) does not provide for any per diem compensation for Council members.

3. Provide an overview of the board or commission's purpose.

The Council's statutory purposes are set forth in 16 VSA sec. 2905(a), (c):

§ 2905. Prekindergarten-16 Council

(a) A Prekindergarten-16 Council (the "Council") is created to help coordinate and better align the efforts of the prekindergarten-12 educational system with the higher education community in order to increase:

- (1) postsecondary aspirations;*
- (2) the enrollment of Vermont high school graduates in higher education programs;*
- (3) the postsecondary degree completion rates of Vermonters; and*
- (4) public awareness of the economic, intellectual, and societal benefits of higher education.*

(b) The Council shall be composed of:

- (1) the Secretary of Education or designee;*
- (2) the Commissioner of Labor or designee;*
- (3) the President of the University of Vermont or designee;*
- (4) the Chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges or designee;*
- (5) the President of the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation or designee;*
- (6) the President of the Association of Vermont Independent Colleges or designee;*
- (7) a principal of a secondary school selected by the Vermont Principals' Association;*
- (8) a superintendent selected by the Vermont Superintendents Association;*
- (9) a teacher selected by the Vermont-National Education Association;*
- (10) a member of the Building Bright Futures Council or designee;*
- (11) a career technical education director selected by the Vermont Association of Career and Technical Center Directors;*
- (12) a representative from the business and industry community selected by the Vermont Business Roundtable;*
- (13) an advocate for low-income children selected by Voices for Vermont's Children;*
- (14) a member of the House of Representatives, who shall be selected by the Speaker and shall serve until the beginning of the biennium immediately after the one in which the member is appointed;*
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- (16) a member of the faculty of the Vermont State Colleges, the University of Vermont, or a Vermont independent college selected by United Professions AFT Vermont, Inc.; and*
- (17) a representative of after-school, summer, and expanded learning programs selected by the Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence.*

(c) The Council shall develop and regularly update a statewide plan to increase aspirations for and the successful completion of postsecondary education among students of all ages and otherwise advance the purposes for which the council is created, which shall include strategies to:

- (1) ensure that every high school graduate in Vermont is prepared to succeed in postsecondary education without remedial assistance;*

- (2) increase the percentage of Vermonters who earn an associate's or higher level degree or a postsecondary certification;*
- (3) identify and address areas of educator preparation that could benefit from improved collaboration between the prekindergarten-12 educational system and the higher education community;*
- (4) promote early career awareness and nurture postsecondary aspirations;*
- (5) develop programs that guarantee college admission and financial aid for low-income students who successfully complete early commitment requirements;*
- (6) enhance student engagement in secondary school, ensuring that learning opportunities are relevant, rigorous, and personalized and that all students aspire to and prepare for success in postsecondary learning opportunities;*
- (7) expand access to dual enrollment programs in order to serve students of varying interests and abilities, including those who are likely to attend college, those who are from groups that attend college at disproportionately low rates, and those who are prepared for a postsecondary curriculum prior to graduation from secondary school;*
- (8) develop proposals for statewide college and career readiness standards and assessments;*
- (9) create incentives for adults to begin or continue their postsecondary education; and*
- (10) ensure implementation of a prekindergarten-16 longitudinal data system, which it shall use to assess the success of the plan required by this subsection.*

4. Is that purpose still needed? What would happen if the board or commission no longer fulfilled that purpose?

The Council is the result of 2010 legislative changes to the former Commission on Higher Education Funding (CHEF), established in 1999 by Act 27 (H. 290), which enacted 16 VSA sec. 2886. The 2010 enactment of sec. 2905 include the repeal of sec. 2886. CHEF had focused exclusively on postsecondary education in Vermont. The repeal of CHEF and the enactment of sec. 2905 broadened the scope of the mandate to include Prekindergarten to grade 12 (and changed the name of the body to its current name). That broadened focus seemed to impair the functionality of the body and it slowly but surely became less and less active.

Elements of the Council's mandate continue to be important and compelling. Some may have been taken up by other public bodies and studies (e.g., the recently established Select Committee on the Future of Public Education in Vermont), and there are a number of ongoing efforts focused on various aspects of PreK-16 education and workforce development.

5. How well is the board or commission performing in executing that purpose? What evidence can you provide to substantiate that performance?
6. If the purpose is still needed, can State government be more effective and efficient if the purpose was executed in a different manner?

7. If the purpose is still needed, do any of your board or commission's functions overlap or duplicate those of another State board or commission or federal or State agency? If so, is your board or commission still the best entity to fulfill the purpose?
8. Does the board or commission's enabling law continue to correctly reflect the purpose and activities of the board or commission?
9. Provide a list of the board and commission's last fiscal year expenditures including staffing costs. How are these funded?

There were no such expenses, to the best of VSAC's knowledge.

10. Is the board or commission required by law to prepare any reports or studies for the Legislature, the Governor, or any State agency or officer? If so, have those reports or studies been produced? Does the board or commission have ongoing reporting obligations?
11. How would you measure the performance of the board or commission?