



**To:** Vermont State Board of Education; Heather Bouchey, Interim Secretary of Education; Cassandra Ryan, Director of Regulatory Compliance

**From:** Vermont Higher Education Council Certification Review Committee – Wendy Koenig, Chair

**Date:** February 9, 2024

**Subject:** Recommendation on Renewal of State Certification for the Center for Cartoon Studies

Our recommendation is guided and driven by the purpose of the review process, which is to provide a vehicle that protects the integrity of the higher education authorization process in Vermont and offers assurances to the public that a college has both seriousness of purpose and resources to carry out its work.

VHEC's Visting Team consisted of David S. Wolk as Review Team Chair, former President of Castleton University (2001-2017); Jon MacClaren, former Executive Vice President and CFO of Landmark College and Bard College; Katie Flanagan Mobley the Dean of Enrollment and Community Relations at Community College of Vermont and Samuel Rowlett, Associate Professor of Art, for Landmark College. VHEC wishes to convey its sincere gratitude for the engagement and expertise these academic professionals brought to bear in this review and resulting report.

The VHEC Certification Committee consists of Wendy Koenig, University of Vermont serving as Chair, Peter Eden President of Landmark College, Sophia Howlett President of the School for International Training, and Laura Walker President of Bennington College. The Certification Committee interviewed Review Team Chair Wolk and CCS President Michelle Ollie at length about the site visit, CCS operations, succession planning, finances and its place in the community of White River Junction. VHEC confirmed through the Review process that CCS is a reflective and continually improving organization. VHEC offers its strong endorsement of the report and thought the following section said it well about the school. "CCS clearly articulates its unique purpose and goals, educates and nurtures its nontraditional students, demonstrates a creative entrepreneurial culture, serves as an intellectual and experiential national center for excellence in cartooning, graphic art and storytelling, embraces its Vermont community, and strategically plans for its future. There is a unique and energetic vibe there. As an innovative and exemplary source of pride to the cartooning community, CCS is a small institution that thinks big. During the visit, someone described CCS as the small school that hits beyond its weight class. We agree."

**The Vermont Higher Education Council (VHEC) Certification Review Committee, informed by the visiting team's report, recommends certifying The Center for Cartoon Studies for another five year period, without stipulation, to offer the MFA degree in Cartoon Studies.**