

VSCS Thrive!'s Position on NVU Online, July 2020

NVU Online is, to use the administration's phrasing, an "outside of contract" entity. The administration has placed NVU Online outside of the academic governance structure – faculty have no control over how the programs are run, who is hired to teach the courses, or what the syllabi and assignments are. The Dean of Distance Education does the hiring and selecting of courses to run on NVU Online

- Dean of Distance Education does not need to consult the faculty to place their individual courses on to NVU Online.
- NVU Online instructors are outside of the bargaining unit, receiving less pay than part-time instructors – a "below regional wage" scale. This incentivizes the administration to utilize these courses in lieu of campus-based faculty. Some mechanisms the administration uses to outsource labor include combining course offerings on Summer Courses websites, with no differentiation between campus-based on-line and NVU Online on-line, as well as prioritizing NVU Online in our advertising and marketing. They have also created a no-cut policy for NVU Online courses, called "A seat for every student" while having a strict cut policy for NVU campus-based courses. In practice, this means that an NVU Online course will remain open and run with only two students enrolled whereas a campus-based class, even if on-line, typically must have 10 students to run. The administration has described this policy as effective in that the NVU Online courses will typically fully enroll after the cutting period for campus-based students has been completed – artificially inflating the number of students in NVU Online classes. Our students have rejected this policy, as they feel that since unification, they have been propelled into NVU Online courses to complete their general education requirements.
- As of Fall 2019, NVU Online had approximately 364 students, 70% of which were part-time. The information provided by the administration does not allow for any determination as to whether these part-time students are indeed active students, if they simply have enrolled in a single course in the last year, or if they are campus-based students being counted twice when they need to enroll in an NVU Online class following decisions not to run campus-based classes.
- The administration has refused to provide detailed information regarding NVU Online's operating budget. NVU Online receives approximately \$1 million each year in state appropriations, previously out of Johnson State College's appropriations – it is not known if they are currently receiving appropriations out of Lyndon's budget as well. Because the operating budget is small, this places NVU Online students or the NVU Online campus per se, as the most heavily state subsidized campus in the entire VSC, leaving Johnson's campus and now potentially, Lyndon's campus as the least state subsidized institution in the VSC. Faculty have spoken with policy analysts at The Century Foundation regarding this practice. Thus far, analysts at the Century Foundation have not been able to identify a similar situation – in which a wholly on-line separate institution attached to a state school campus is being utilized to undermine the faculty and campus-based offerings while receiving state appropriations for their operation. Purdue Global, attached to Purdue University, is barred by the state of Indiana from receiving any tax dollars for their operation. In addition, it is entirely separate, with no sharing of resources and separate degrees/transcripts for their students.

- The federation filed information requests for specifics on NVU Online’s marketing budget back in October 2019 but based on our understanding, have not received this information. They have been told by the administration that the NVU marketing budget is a “pooled marketing budget” that is “apportioned appropriately.” Yet, if NVU Online is marketed more frequently, in more diverse avenues, is this apportioned appropriately?
- SUNY OPEN is an example of something that could and should be implemented in the VSC; doing so would cost little to nothing in addition. SUNY OPEN is a website that compiles all on-line degrees and on-line course offerings across their SUNY system, enabling SUNY students to easily identify on-line classes that they need and enroll in any on-line course across SUNY. The faculty are their campus-based faculty – there is no separate unit or separate academic governance structure.