

December 18, 2009

Kirsten Merriman Shapiro, Special Projects  
Community and Economic Development Office  
Room 32, City Hall  
149 Church St.  
Burlington VT, 05401

Dear Kirsten,

Please accept the following Letter of Interest for Burlington College's potential occupancy of 4,000-7,000 square feet of the Moran Plant, located on the west and north of the building.

**I. Name of Organization:** Burlington College

**II. Contact Person:** Jane O'Meara Sanders, President

**III. Business Address:** Burlington College, 95 North Ave., Burlington, VT 05401

**IV. Telephone:** 802-862-9616; 802-846-3041; Fax: 802-846-3072

**V. Email Contact:** [Jsanders@burlington.edu](mailto:Jsanders@burlington.edu)

**VI. Type of Organization:** Burlington College is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

**VII. Key Personnel:** Jane O'Meara Sanders, President; Christine Plunkett, Vice-President for Administration & Finance; Arthur Hessler, Dean of Academic & Student Affairs; Sarah Judd, Director of Development

**VIII. Proposed Use:**

Burlington College intends to use the Moran Plant space to create a multi-use community gallery/art space and event/meeting space in order to expand our existing educational programs and provide additional educational offerings to students and the public. Burlington College is a small liberal arts college located in Burlington's Old North End. Our main building, the Colodny Building, is a 16,000 square foot, turn-of-the-century former grocery store overlooking the Burlington waterfront and the Moran Plant. Through creative planning, the Colodny Building houses all staff, faculty, and administrative offices, financial aid and student services, a media facility, computer labs, a community room/art gallery, a small library, and all of our classrooms, most of which are multi-purpose. Our

community gathering space is minimal, requiring most of our major academic, public and fundraising functions to be held off campus. Our classroom space is limited to six rooms and our library has reached maximum capacity. We have no on-site cafeteria or health club, and our art gallery doubles as a classroom and community event hall in the evening.

While we make creative use of every square inch of the Colodny Building, the property will reach the limit of its ability to accommodate students, staff and programs in the next two years. In order to grow to meet the needs of a growing number of students, and continue to serve our diverse community, we had planned to break ground on a 3-story LEED certified building in 2011. However, the geological studies performed in Stage 1 of our process have shown that the cost of building on our proposed site would be significantly more than originally intended. The College has been considering scaling back on the scope and size of our original building plan and finding additional space nearby to house our planned expansion. Given the proximity of the Moran Plant to our existing campus, and the appropriateness of using the facility as a community space and art gallery, with classrooms and studio spaces, we would welcome the opportunity to become part of the renovation plan of the Moran Plant.

Our proposed use of the available space would reflect the architectural plans we had drawn for the public floor of our planned building. Our intention would be to create a multi-purpose facility with moving/collapsing walls that would serve as a community gallery and public art space for art shows and painting, crafts and dance workshops; an event space for lectures, conferences, and events; and classrooms – at the start, a living classroom for students interested in green building and environmental retrofitting as we undergo the renovation of the available space. If chosen, Burlington College would utilize the Moran Plant space for the following purposes:

### **Institute for Civic Engagement**

In fall 2005, Burlington College founded the Institute for Civic Engagement in order to engage people in critical thinking and raise the level of cultural and social discourse on issues of import in an interactive, inclusive community format. Begun as a free lecture series for students and local residents, the Institute is now a recognized consortium of scholars, engaged Vermonters, scientists, artists, writers and students dedicated to the ideals of participatory community involvement and the essential importance of an informed, critical and active citizenry. We occasionally have nationally recognized speakers when our budget permits. The Institute provides a bridge between the academic community and the resources and voices of local Burlington residents and Vermonters, providing a forum for students and the community to articulate diverse viewpoints and test their ideas in a real-world context.

The Institute for Civic Engagement hosts a free public lecture series on a different topic each semester. Some examples of our past lecture topics and presenters include:

- *Water Wars*, a series lectures done as part of a State Dept. Arab-Israeli Peace Partners Program bringing students from the Jordan, Israel and Palestine to focus on the emerging issue of water resources and its increasing scarcity;
- *Think Globally, Act Locally*, a series focused on Burlington's strategy of sustainable development and how it has evolved to include increased citizen participation, environmental responsibility, social equity, and an invigorated economy.
- Debates on issues of interest to our local community, such as instant runoff voting, school redistricting, racial profiling, community policing, Burlington's Master Plan, and the future of the Moran Plant.

Lectures are frequently filled to capacity in our limited Community Room, which has a capacity of 75 people. Creating a larger, multi-purpose community space at the Moran Plant would enable us to expand and increase public access to the Institute's offerings.

### **Community Gallery**

Burlington College utilizes its largest classroom as a public art gallery. As part of our community-based mission, we offer local artists the opportunity to show their work in our gallery for public viewing. We have hosted shows by well-known artists such as Lance Richbourg, Nathan Farb, Marjorie Ryerson and John Douglas. We have also spearheaded larger scale community-building art projects such as the ONE Woman Photography Project, a show of photographs taken by 176 women from 15 countries of origin depicting their lives in the Old North End. Since the gallery is also used as a classroom, the hours available for the public to view shows is limited to evenings and weekends. We would like to create a community gallery in the Moran Plant that would be open daily and provide more space for local artists to show their work and to also showcase work that complements our educational offerings and partnerships, including international artists, installations, and furniture design. We would also use the gallery space to host public workshops on painting, dance, crafts, photography, and creative writing and poetry. Burlington College recently added majors in Expressive Arts, Craftsmanship and Design and several certificate programs. Due to our space limitations, we have had to move several student classes to off campus locations and limit the number of public participants interested in taking workshops and classes offered in these new majors. Consistent, appropriately designed, space at the Moran Plant would allow us to offer more cultural opportunities, art exhibits and openings, and courses to the public and our students.

### **Events/Meeting Space**

Burlington College offers our classrooms, community space and computer room free of charge to over 70 local organizations. Local organizations that have used our facilities include the Sara Holbrook Center for summer English classes for refugee children, the Vermont Division of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society to organize their annual MS Walk event, and the Vermont Bhutanese Association to enable new residents to take their first-ever computer classes. In addition, we host many events for our surrounding community, including: magic shows by Tom Verner, Burlington College faculty member and Executive Director of *Magicians Without Borders*, for local refugee children; an annual Human Rights Day event, including lectures, films and performances; an annual Constitution Day event featuring discussions around current issues which serve as continuing education programs for local attorneys; a community breakfast and art show as part of the annual Old North End Ramble; and our annual Home Movie Day, a free film education/restoration workshop that provides participants information on how to restore their old or damaged home movies.

We would like to offer more opportunities such as these to the community, but our lack of space prohibits it at this time. For instance, as a member of the Executive Committee of the Association of Vermont Independent Colleges, we would like to plan consortiums, educational conferences, and professional development opportunities for teachers and professors. There are also several other organizations that we would partner with to offer lectures, readings and exhibits, given the space. We anticipate that most of the current and potential events could be moved to the larger Moran Plant space, thereby increasing our capacity to offer meeting rooms to local organizations and increasing our ability to provide more free programs to larger audiences of local residents.

In addition to programs offered to the local community, we would also use the Moran Plant space for our own meetings and events. Because of our capacity issues, Burlington College must move almost all of our events, including New Student Orientation, Parents' Weekend, our Independent Degree Program

Orientation programs, events such as our annual President's Gala, and Board of Trustees meetings, off-campus. The Moran Plant space would enable us to reallocate the expenses we incur each year from having to rent multiple outside facilities and provide us with a consistent base for these large events.

### **Pro Se Legal Clinic**

For the past six years, Burlington College's Pro Se Legal Clinic has taught low income and disadvantaged Vermonters how to manage their own legal issues in Vermont's courts, and provided workshops and public education relating to the courts and legal matters. In 2007/08, we expanded the clinic to include services to Burlington's expanding immigrant and refugee populations, and have helped Somali, Bhutanese, Nepalese, Iraqi, Bosnian, and Moldovan clients. Because of the increased number of new populations in the Burlington area, there is increased demand for classes and civic skills workshops provided by the Clinic. We would like to use the larger Moran Plant space for workshops on topics important to refugee communities. Since many new residents are not aware of how our local or state government works, we will offer workshops on basic local and state government functions, acquaint them with their city council and state representatives, and inform them on how they may effectively participate in open meetings and public hearings on issues that concern them. Additional workshops will include landlord/tenant rights and how to navigate social service agencies.

### **Green Build and Environmental Retrofitting Classes:**

Many Burlington College students, particularly our Individualized Major students, are interested in sustainability studies and green build design. Since our plan to retrofit the Moran Plant would include energy efficient construction and new green technologies, we would use the Moran Plant as an on-site learning opportunity for students, an interactive classroom for students interested in green architecture, design and technologies. In addition to Burlington College students, green build (and all other) classes will be available to St. Michael's College and Champlain College students through our consortium agreement that allows students from these colleges to take Burlington College classes. We also anticipate that these classes would be of particular interest to veterans, some of whom are already taking classes in woodworking and furniture design through the Yellow Ribbon Program.

## **IX: Evaluation Criteria**

### **A. Financial Capacity & E. Organizational Capacity**

Burlington College is a four-year liberal arts college. We have recently (2007) received a ten year extension of accreditation, the longest period of time allowed for any college, by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. In awarding their accreditation, NEASC required the College to conduct an intensive self-study, followed by NEASC's own extended on-site visit to evaluate eleven standards of performance. The standards include such areas as organization and governance, planning and evaluation, academic programs, faculty and students, physical plant, technological resources, and financial stability. In their review, NEASC congratulated the College for "...a strengthened and effective governing board, increased capacity in planning, and improvement in the College's financial situation including growing levels of operating surpluses..."

Burlington College is licensed by the U.S. Department of Education, which also looks specifically at financial stability in their review process. An independent auditing firm reviews our financial statements on an annual basis, and the recently completed audit of the 2009 fiscal year identified no issues of noncompliance, no significant deficiencies and no material weaknesses. We would be happy to provide copies of the audit upon request.

As a result of improved financial oversight and operating surpluses, the College was able to recently refinance our existing mortgages through the issuance of Vermont Educational and Health Buildings Financing Agency (VEHBFA) Revenue Bonds. This \$1.75 million project provides financially advantageous 4.75% financing on all six of our properties, and also makes available over \$600,000 in additional funds earmarked specifically for campus improvements. The College was also awarded a federal grant from the Department of Energy last year, which will match up to \$228,000 of the College's expenditures on campus-wide energy improvements.

We have complete financial pro-formas and preliminary architectural drawings for building a 16,000 square foot structure in the next few years. A stepped approach that would allow us to renovate the space at Moran first and to construct a smaller building later would be preferable and easier than our original plan.

## **B. Development Experience**

Development at Burlington College has been rejuvenated in recent years. We have quadrupled the number of people who contribute to the College and increased the amount of overall fundraising tenfold over the last four years. Trustees have doubled their contributions over the last two years and the college has received many grants and individual donations over recent years. The president and the Director of Development work together and have ensured all development goals have been met.

Sarah Judd came to Burlington College as Director of Development in December 2006. Sarah has lived and worked in Vermont for the past 15 years. She is the former Vice President of the Vermont Forum on Sprawl (now Smart Growth Vermont), where she helped develop the award-winning Healthy Neighborhoods/Healthy Kids program. She is also the former Development Director of the Vermont Public Interest Research Group, and was a civil rights investigator for Vermont's Human Rights Commission. Sarah is an attorney, and occasionally does pro bono work through Burlington College's Pro Se Legal Clinic. Sarah has a B.A. in English Literature from St. Michael's College, a M.A. in English Literature from the University of Vermont, and a J.D. from Western New England College School of Law.

## **C. Management Experience**

Through careful strategic planning, and responsible oversight of the combined bonding and energy grant funds, Burlington College expects to further enhance our ideal campus location overlooking the lake. We anticipate that these enhancements, combined with expanded academic offerings, will contribute to significant growth in our enrollment levels. Brief backgrounds of the college administrators that will oversee this project are listed below:

Dr. Jane O'Meara Sanders has been President of Burlington College since June 2004. The Board of Trustees recently extended her contract through June 2013. Jane received a B.A. in Social Work from Goddard College and an interdisciplinary Ph.D. Interdisciplinary Degree in Leadership, Political Science & Higher Education Administration from Union Institute & University. She has served as an elected School Board member at both the local and state level, and an appointed City official working for two Mayors as the Director of Youth Services for the City of Burlington. The Burlington Children's Place (day care center), 242 Main (teen center), CityKids (after-school program) and Kids Day (festival) are but a few of the initiatives she founded in the 1980s that are still in operation today.

Jane co-founded a Burlington based consulting firm that provided educational and political consulting and worked on federal, state and local political campaigns for several years. She also served as Interim President/Provost of her Alma-Mater, Goddard College, in 1996 and 1997. Jane is married to Senator

Bernie Sanders and has worked with him in a variety of capacities for twenty-five years, having the opportunity to contribute to Vermont through volunteer public service in Sanders' Congressional office as Chief of Staff and Policy & Press Advisor. Jane serves on the Executive Committee of the Association of Vermont Independent Colleges and is a member of the Vermont Higher Education

Christine Plunkett, Vice-President of Administration and Finance, joined Burlington College in the fall of 2007. A Vermont native, Christine earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Finance from the University of Vermont and a Master's degree in Business Administration from Northeastern University. Christine worked as a financial analyst and independent financial consultant in the Boston area for fifteen years, returning to Vermont in 1993. After owning and operating a family orchard and natural apple cider business in Orwell for several years, Christine spent twelve years as the Finance Director of the Gailer School in Shelburne and Middlebury. She also serves as the Treasurer of the Board of Trustees for the Bridge School, a small independent elementary school in Middlebury.

Dr. Arthur Hessler came to Burlington College as Dean of Academic & Student Affairs in 2008. Prior to coming to BC, he was a faculty member and then Associate Dean of the College at Saint Michael's College and the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College at Bridgewater college in Virginia. He has a doctorate in zoology from the University of Vermont and an honorary doctorate in science from Bridgewater. He has published more than forty scientific articles, most recently in December 2008 and has held significant grants from the National Science Foundation and the Department of Education. While teaching, he received several faculty appreciation awards and the Excellence in Teaching Award.

#### **D. Compliance with Land Use Regulations**

The College has had no problems with land use regulations.

#### **F. Ability to Work with Government Agencies**

Burlington College is regulated by the United States Department of Education, the Vermont Department of Education. We hold one of a handful of licenses granted by the United States Department of Treasury to offer a semester of study in Cuba. We have received, managed and reported on grants from both the federal and state, as either primary contractors or sub-contractors. These have included funds from the U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. Department of State, and the Vermont Department of Labor. We regularly interface with the City of Burlington as adjoining property owners.

#### **G. Adverse findings**

None.

#### **H. Compatibility with Other Proposed Uses at Moran Center**

Burlington College is a small school with no organized sports teams or onsite exercise facility. A majority of our students engage in individual or action sports, such as biking, hiking, snowboarding and windsurfing. Student surveys have shown that while our students are not interested in team sports, they are interested in year-round recreational activities that utilize city offerings, such as the waterfront and bike path. The access to the Community Sailing Center and Ice Factor would provide our students and employees with year-round recreational and adventure opportunities that we expect they would prefer to the usual offerings. We hope that both the Sailing Center and Ice Factor would partner with us to host student interns through our Gateway to Leadership Internship program. Perhaps we might also partner to offer some for-credit classes. Burlington College does not have an on-site food facility, so we were planning on building a café. If we

were to be located at the Moran Plant, the Ice Factor's café would meet an identified need for both our students and employees. This would also extend the time they, and the public, spend at our art shows, meetings, classes, workshops and events. Currently, we bring in food for all of our events, so an onsite café would be extremely useful to us, particularly if they offer catering.

The addition of 4,000 to 7,000 square feet at the Moran building will provide students and families with the space required to meet their needs, while taking advantage of the dining, fitness and other services offered by neighboring tenants. As the City of Burlington continues to showcase the lake and draw new businesses and residents to the area, the presence of our small and civic-minded college will provide an intellectually stimulating and creatively attractive gathering place in the Moran building.

### **I. Employment Opportunities and Revenue Generation**

We are increasing our enrollment and plan to expand our staff and faculty to meet those needs. Moving some of our operations to the Moran Plant would immediately increase our number of employees to curate the gallery, offer classes, and administer the site. Of course, the construction would create jobs as well.

### **J. Enhances Quality of Life**

Burlington College's proposed use of the Moran Plant will enhance the quality of life for a broad cross-section of Burlington residents as the additional space will enable us to increase our capacity and commitment to providing arts and educational opportunities to residents in the greater Burlington area. Our existing location at the intersection of North Avenue and North Street has allowed us to serve as a bridge between two very diverse populations: the Burlington waterfront, our city's wealthiest area, and the Old North End, the most culturally diverse area in the state and the most economically disadvantaged neighborhood in the city. In addition to serving our students, Burlington College is widely recognized as the cultural hub of our Old North End neighborhood, serving as a free public meeting place, art space, and educational center for the residents of our unique community, despite our limited capacity. Our presence at the Moran Plant would increase our capabilities and attract new, broader audiences to our classes, events, and art exhibits. The various cultural and educational activities that we have planned for the Moran Plant space will create countless opportunities to connect people from many backgrounds with different languages, cultures, religions and social groups.

Our plans to renovate the available space using green technologies would also reflect our commitment to creating a sustainable community in a changing world. As we focus on the economic, environmental and social health of our students, neighborhood and city, a greener, more energy efficient learning space will enable us to live our mission in a real way. By moving our gallery and many of our public offerings to an environmentally retrofitted facility, we will be able to stabilize and reduce our long-term energy costs during uncertain economic times while continuing to keep our tuition costs one of the lowest in the state.

### **K. Distinguishing Attributes**

The Shared Vision for the Future of Burlington College, adopted this spring by the faculty, staff and trustees of the college provides a sense of the distinguishing attributes of our school. The first two paragraphs of the Vision, along with excerpts from the rest of the document, are included below:

The Vision of Burlington College is to reflect the standing and the values of Burlington and Vermont and all that that entails: a strong sense of community; an intellectually-engaged population of students, staff, and faculty; progressive principles of inclusion, diversity, and integrity; creativity in the arts and an understanding of their role in our spiritual, intellectual and economic well-being; experimentation and innovation in our program design and

curricular offerings; sustainable development policies and practices; and environmentally sound and technologically current facilities. Every aspect of the institution will be actively engaged in the community-based mission of the College as we implement our shared vision for the future.

Burlington College will establish a reputation as an innovative leader providing the individualized educational opportunities that people need, when they need them, in a form that is accessible to them. We will be known for our rigorous academic programs and their relevance to, and integration with, the local and global community, for our focus on teaching and learning, and for our student-centered, supportive environment that facilitates both independent study and a rich community of learners.

...We will provide our students with the opportunity to contribute to, benefit from, and be fully engaged with, the broader community. Burlington will be our campus and students will design their education by integrating their strengths, interests, and skills with the needs, concerns, and opportunities of the community of their choice. A liberal arts college with a humanistic curriculum that emphasizes responsible citizenship and stewardship of the environment, Burlington College will offer a transformational experience for students, encouraging each of them to determine a unique path to a meaningful livelihood and an empowered life.

We will maintain a commitment to small seminar-style classes that encourage the discussional dialectic and a critical analysis of issues. Our students will have access to a wide breadth of academic disciplines and a diversity of perspectives through an expanded community faculty made up of practitioners in the fields they teach. Our faculty will be advisors and mentors first, working with students to understand their *raison d'être* at that stage of their lives, and assisting them to determine what and how they want to learn and to design their most beneficial program of study. This could include organized classes, mentors, community resources, internships, and/or independent study.

We will continue to strengthen our interdisciplinary approach to the academic program, and that will be reflected in our structure, hiring, and degree offerings. In keeping with our community-based mission and civic-engagement goals, we will be broadening our existing curriculum in the academic disciplines of the social sciences, particularly in the areas of sociology, political science, history, and economics. By hosting public lectures and discussions, and participating fully in the life of the city, our Institute for Civic Engagement will be an influential conduit in public discourse and will foster the participation of our students in the community and our community's participation in the College.

...We will internationalize the campus through student exchanges and articulation agreements with other colleges and organizations, including an expansion of our Cuba Study-Abroad Program and an expansion of our international studies. We will continue our commitment to achieve more diversity among our students, faculty and staff.

...We will respond to the city's, the state's, and the nation's need for lifelong learning opportunities grounded in the real world economy. We will offer graduate certificates, more professional tracks, and continuing education credits (CEUs) that provide mid-career workers the opportunity to keep current in, or broaden, their areas of expertise.

...Burlington College's location on the edge of the Old North End, a neighborhood rich in history and growing diversity, and overlooking the Lake Champlain waterfront, is an intrinsic strength that has yet to be realized. We will invest in our campus and physically

reorient ourselves toward the waterfront, while academically strengthening our ties with the community.

We will build a LEED certified building on the westernmost portion of our site, utilizing geo-thermal and solar energy, gray-water and green roof elements, and state-of-the-art energy-efficient materials and appliances. This new building will provide an open, multi-purpose space for large gatherings, several classrooms, studios and an art gallery, administrative, academic and student service offices, a student lounge and café. We will transform our campus into a community landmark with beautiful views and access to Lake Champlain. Walking paths with fitness stops, ecological interest, and beautiful landscaping are dotted throughout the property all the way down to the waterfront. We will work with adjoining landowners, the city and the Land Trust, to accomplish this urban retreat.

...We will continue to increase our donor base and our endowment, tripling our overall development revenues over the next five years. This will be achieved by expanding alumni support and involvement, increasing our involvement in and visibility to the local, state, and national community, and soliciting private and public grants.

This vision of growth and expansion is built on the foundation of a thorough and detailed financial plan that is bold, achievable, and adaptable to changing conditions. It anticipates ongoing and regular evaluation of all academic programs to ensure academic rigor, interdisciplinary focus and relevance in today's global environment.

This is a moment of opportunity for Burlington College, as we implement a plan of significant campus improvement, expansion of academic programs and investment in graduate initiatives. The success of this vision rests on our recognition of this strategic moment. If we understand who we are, and who we want to be, and we are willing to embrace the momentum of a promising future, albeit with some risk, we will secure a place at the forefront of progressive education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We hope our letter of intent and these closing paragraphs from our Vision for the future give the committee an indication as to why becoming a partner in the Moran Plant would benefit the college, the other partners, and the community. We are available to answer any remaining questions and to provide any further information you may require. We look forward to hearing from you and potentially partnering with you on this exciting project.

Sincerely,

Jane O'Meara Sanders  
President  
Burlington College