



Across the Green
January 2016

TO: University of Vermont Academic Community

FROM: David V. Rosowsky, Provost and Senior Vice President

“A Community of Scholars, an Academic Ecosystem”

INTRODUCTION

As we start the new calendar year, the University of Vermont finds itself in a period of exciting change. Preserving our academic heritage while creating innovative programs to reach new and more diverse audiences; respecting and maintaining our historic campus buildings while constructing new facilities to meet new pedagogic and research needs; and celebrating our history of important scholarly contributions while enabling promising new research and discovery in emerging fields that cut across and move beyond traditional disciplines – this all challenges us, but also presents enormous opportunity for our academic community, and the *academic ecosystem* in which we work.

Over the last year, I have witnessed a remarkable coalescence of vision, energy, commitment, and goodwill across our campus. Faculty, staff, students, and alumni have commented on the level of excitement they see and feel on the campus. It is palpable. People are engaged, hopeful, forward-looking, and energized around not only the changes taking place but the opportunities now afforded to every academic unit. The discussions within and across the colleges and schools already have resulted in new programs and exciting plans. Our intellectual horsepower has been unleashed, and our potential for innovation and for interdisciplinary learning and discovery has been unlocked.

As has become customary, I use ‘Across the Green’ to share some of what is happening at UVM with the broader academic community. My hope is that some parts of this memo will resonate with you, individually and collectively as communities of scholars (disciplinary and transdisciplinary) within our academic ecosystem, and provide useful and timely information. And I hope you share in the excitement around us – the excitement you are creating, and will benefit from in the months and years ahead. I think you will agree we live and work, teach and learn, create and discover, in an exciting time for the University.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Interdisciplinary activities, updates on new programs

In October, I was asked by the Board of Trustees to make a brief presentation on the interdisciplinary educational and scholarship activities taking place at the University. I provide the Board of Trustees' Educational Policy and Institutional Resources (EPIR) Committee with an update on one of the eight [Academic Excellence Goals](#) at every meeting. Goal #4 is "Increase interdisciplinary teaching, research, and scholarship." While efforts to support interdisciplinary research and scholarship are described later in this memo (Office of the Vice President for Research new faculty grant programs), I wanted to share with you some of what I shared with the Board about our interdisciplinary teaching activities. I was surprised (pleasantly) in preparing for that presentation to see how much interdisciplinary teaching is taking place, and how much more is being planned, as enabled and incented by the Incentive-based Budget (IBB) model. While a more complete list is included in my EPIR presentation, I offer just a few highlights here:

Examples of interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary degree programs¹

Public Health; Microbiology and Molecular Genetics; Neuroscience; Materials Science; Food Systems; Cellular, Molecular, and Biomedical Sciences; Sustainable Entrepreneurship; Environmental Studies; Leadership for Sustainability; multiple CAS Integrated Programs for first-year students; Sports Management

Examples of interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary courses

Human Diversity and Evolution; Museum Studies; Culture and Politics of Latin American Music; War and Genocide; Controversies in Modern Genetics

New interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary programs recently reviewed by the Faculty Senate

Biomedical Engineering major (CEMS, COM)
Data Sciences major (CEMS)
International Politics minor (CAS)
Behavioral Change Health Studies minor (COM)

Interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary programs currently under review by the Faculty Senate

Jewish Studies minor (CAS)
Neuroscience minor (CAS)
Epidemiology graduate certificate (COM, Graduate College, CDE)

On the value of interdisciplinary teaching:

"It is widely understood that interdisciplinary teaching (is) both a hallmark of UVM and a key to its future success. Under IBB, a dean (has) clear incentives to mount innovative high-demand interdisciplinary programs that will attract and retain students.

"IBB, through its transparency, simplicity, and predictability, will enable colleges and schools to more easily weigh trade-offs of costs vs. merit of interdisciplinary activities, to plan resource allocation accordingly, and to assess whether and when additional investments may be worthwhile. The IBB framework allows and encourages colleges and schools to enter into financial agreements/partnerships around interdisciplinary and cross-unit programs. Quoting

¹ Majors and/or minors, undergraduate and/or graduate level

from Indiana University's 2011 RCM² Review Committee report: 'RCM served to make transparent the actual costs and financial trade-offs involved in cross-RC activity, and as a result, fostered healthy conversations about the underlying substantive merits of interdisciplinary proposals.'

"In the move to IBB, a number of important steps (were) taken to ensure an environment exists for interdisciplinary activities to flourish and be sustained. (...) Ultimately, however, decisions about interdisciplinary activities reside with the deans and faculty. The deans (are) in a far stronger position under IBB to make informed, strategic decisions and investments in innovative, cross-cutting, interdisciplinary programs that are compelling, important, and sustainable, and that can serve as discriminators for the University of Vermont."

IBB Final Report, January 2015

Provost's Faculty Fellows

Recruiting talent at all levels is a goal firmly embedded in the President's [Strategic Action Plan](#). This includes identifying and preparing people from within the University to step into leadership roles. Planning for leadership succession is critical to any organization's success. Achieving the correct balance of internal and external recruitment into administrative/leadership positions is essential to sustaining forward momentum and organizational morale, as well as to making the most efficient use of resources and retaining outstanding people.

We are fortunate at the University of Vermont to have so many faculty with talent, interests, and commitment that extend beyond their own scholarly disciplines. In recognition both of the talent pool that exists and the need to provide administrative and leadership training opportunities for faculty having interests in serving the University in this way, I have established the Provost's Faculty Fellow program. Faculty Fellows will be selected, following an open call, to provide administrative oversight and/or leadership on a specific initiative. It is anticipated that a small number of Faculty Fellows may be appointed in any given year, perhaps 2-4, with terms ranging from one to multiple years depending on the initiative. Faculty Fellows will be compensated for the time they are expected to dedicate to their assignment through a combination of course buy-out and summer salary. Each fellow will be mentored by someone in the Office of the Provost and will be provided leadership development opportunities during the course of their appointment.

A call for the first Faculty Fellow was issued last semester and this month we are appointing the Provost's Faculty Fellow for University Assessment. I anticipate appointing two additional Faculty Fellows in 2016, one focused on the issue of alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs and their impact on the learning environment, and the other focused on the First-Year Experience (described later in this memo).

These are wonderful opportunities for faculty having interests in administration and leadership to explore such roles, to be mentored and receive professional development opportunities, and to serve the broader University. I hope some of you will consider participating in this program in the years ahead.

² Incentive-based Budgeting (IBB) is a form of Responsibility Centered Management (RCM)

Institute for Environment

As you know, I place priority on creating and supporting programs that are both distinctive and distinguished, that can leverage the tremendous intellectual talent that we have at UVM, and that can help to advance the University's visibility, reputation, and rankings.

Progress continues on the creation of a university-wide institute for environment, one of the highest shared priorities identified by the broader academic community several years ago. Our evolving plans and progress have been reported regularly in my 'Across the Green' memos over the last two years. I am excited to report that, thanks to the hard work of many faculty scholars from across the University, we are closer than ever to the launch of the institute with a visionary and ambitious strategic plan and goal set now established. Also completed has been a five-year, renewable plan for financing and evaluating the progress of the institute. Our current efforts are focused on fundraising as the institute's financing depends, in part, on philanthropic support. I remain hopeful and optimistic that we will be able to formally launch the institute this spring.

This university-wide institute continues to be one of my highest priorities for the University and, I believe, represents one of the greatest opportunities for the University to engage, collectively, in an area that is both a historic strength for UVM (and the state of Vermont) and can help us to achieve distinction nationally.

Office of the Vice President for Research faculty grant programs

As Richard Galbraith enters his second year as Vice President for Research, you may have noticed a number of new programs our offices are supporting to foster faculty scholarly collaboration, innovation, and creativity. This was the direct result of our re-imagining the role and potential of this office to stimulate research and scholarship, bring transdisciplinary teams of faculty together, and support faculty in moving their discoveries along a path toward commercialization.

In addition to redirecting modest existing resources, we have dedicated significant new funds toward these efforts. These resources, administered by the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR), are *in addition* to, or in some cases *leveraging*, resources being made available by the deans for similar purposes. I have been enormously impressed by the vision and commitment of each dean to provide resources in direct support of growing the research and scholarship enterprise within their college/school. All told, we are investing millions of dollars annually into broadening and growing our research and scholarship enterprise. This is above and beyond investments in facilities and new faculty.

The UVM Foundation also is supporting our efforts through the creation of two new positions focused on corporate and foundation philanthropy. In November, Lisa Townson joined the Foundation from the University of New Hampshire as Associate Director of Foundation Relations, and she is joined this month by Alexa Woodward, Director of Corporate Relations, who comes to UVM by way of Clemson University.

[Faculty grant programs](#) now being supported by the OVPR include:

FISAR	Support for promising interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary research, scholarship, and creative works
FAN	Support for groups of faculty to learn more about each other's work and explore opportunities for collaboration
OVPR <i>Express</i>	Funding to stimulate research and scholarship by new junior faculty members
REACH	Seed funding to promote promising research, scholarship, and creative works
SPARK-VT	Support to bring promising researchers together with business innovators, to facilitate the discovery-to-innovation-to-commercialization process
UVM-IFP	Graduate and post-doctoral fellowship support to match and leverage industrial funding for faculty research

Research, scholarship, discovery, creativity, and innovation are hallmarks of any great university. Last year, each college and school (and many departments) undertook an exercise to articulate their own goals and metrics for [scholarly productivity and impact](#). I hope that the deans and faculty will continue these important discussions to also consider goals for innovation – again broadly defined, yet nuanced by discipline and where appropriate – as part of their mission. I also hope all faculty will seek to take full advantage of the OVPR's many new programs to stimulate, seed, support, and translate faculty research and scholarship.

STUDENT SUCCESS

DegreeWorks

Our current degree audit system, CATS: Curriculum Audit Tracking System, was implemented in 2003. It served the University well for some time, but has grown outdated and is no longer supported by its parent company. After a review of our needs, and in response to calls from faculty, staff and students for a more robust degree planning and audit tool, the Registrar's Office will begin implementing a new system, DegreeWorks, this spring.

DegreeWorks is a web-based academic advising and audit tool with a clear visual layout that enables students and their advisors to review completed, current and planned coursework in the context of Catalogue degree requirements. The system will provide students with feedback, interactive "what-if" scenario planning, and easy access to related services and advice. The system will also allow academic advisors to provide more personalized guidance and clear, consistent information.

DegreeWorks will support improvements in retention, time to graduation, and completion rates. It will also allow colleges to monitor course demand and offer the right course at the right time.

The initial project plan includes coding the degree requirements for the last four Catalogues. Project planning and implementation will begin this spring/summer.

Strategic Space Planning: Improving the Student Experience

It has been our goal, and our plan for the last few years, to bring together core student services in one part of campus, making it easier for students to find and access important services. I am pleased to report on progress toward this goal.

Under the leadership of Vice Provost Annie Stevens, and with commitments and participation from a variety of academic, student services, and administrative offices on the campus, 2016 will see the relocation of several high-impact, high-visibility student services offices. This plan, developed over the last year, to both strategically co-locate offices/services and re-purpose some current spaces, will:

1. Improve current facilities;
2. Enhance visibility for offices/programs;
3. Create stronger coherency of purpose; and
4. Increase efficiency of service.

Once these moves are completed, we will have in effect created a “hub” of student services concentrated in the Davis Center, and an “axis” of student services connecting the Davis Center, Bailey-Howe Library, Billings, and the Living Learning Center. This will be a vast improvement over the current, disconnected and widely distributed (and not well known) array of student services offices across the campus.

In support of our ongoing commitment to improving student services and the student experience, the following offices will be relocated (roughly in the sequence shown) over the course of the next nine months:

- **Community-University Partnerships & Service Learning (CUPS) and the Office of Sustainability** will move from Billings to Harris/Millis and 12 Colchester Avenue, respectively, in order to prepare for the upcoming Billings renovation.
- A new **Interfaith Center** will be created in the former Presbyterian Church on Redstone Campus providing space for programming that will meet the diverse religious and spiritual needs of our campus community.
- A **Technology Center** will be located on the ground floor of Billings by collocating ETS hardware and software help services currently located in the Davis Center and Billings Round Room.
- The **CatCard Office** also will move to the Billings ground floor adjacent to the new Technology Center.
- With ETS services and the CatCard office moving to Billings, the following services will be able to move into the Davis Center:
 - ✓ The **Career Center** will move from Living/Learning to the second floor of Davis Center
 - ✓ A **new Advising Center** will be created where the CatCard Office is currently located
- The **ALANA Student Center** will move from Blundell House to Living/Learning E-Building

As you can appreciate, this represents a complex sequencing of moves. Each step requires careful planning and, in many cases, modification of physical space. The goal is to have all of the moves completed by fall 2016, so this is an ambitious schedule. But I think you will agree that the result will be vastly improved access to student services and many of the offices that support student learning and engagement. Thank you, in advance, for your patience with any inconveniences that may occur during the renovations or moves.

Creating the UVM First-Year Experience

A common first-year experience set is one of the most compelling high-impact practices that supports student learning and engagement, and correlates highly with student success as measured by (e.g.) retention and four-year graduation rates. Such a program would complement, leverage, and extend the first-year programming provided in many of the colleges and schools. It would augment, not replace, existing and planned college or school-based programs by providing a common set of curricular and co-curricular programs for all first-year students.

Aligned with the President's *Strategic Action Plan* and the undergirding *Academic Excellence Goals*, President Sullivan and I have approved moving forward with three specific recommendations of the Task Committee on the First-Year Experience (co-chaired by Vice President for Enrollment Management Stacey Kostell and Vice Provost for Student Affairs Annie Stevens) that will provide the foundation for a cohesive first-year program having the following goals:

- To create a positive, seamless academic and co-curricular student experience where first-year students can achieve high rates of satisfaction and success that ultimately result in improved retention;
- To create opportunities for intellectual and social engagement that provide interactions with advisors, promote intellectual discussions in and outside of the classroom, enhance critical thinking, and encourage first-year student involvement in campus activities; and
- To provide an important early step in supporting students' success in their transition from high school to college.

The three approved recommendations are:

1. **Increase Programmed Housing.** Provide all residential students with a consistent theme-based experience (e.g., leadership, sustainability) that creates a sense of community and facilitates connections with peers. These communities also will integrate high impact practices such as peer mentoring, a first-year course, and increased faculty engagement.
2. **Institute a First-Year Course.** This course will focus on academic success, transition to college, and integration through exposure to campus services and opportunities. Essential components of the course will include academic success strategies (study skills, time management, BlackBoard), personal growth and support (CAPS, wellness, diversity, healthy relationships), goal setting (Career Success Plan, course registration process, financial literacy), and an introduction to UVM's resources and structure. The course will also incorporate the first-year student reading. Colleges and schools that already offer a first-year course containing these elements, or that could be modified to include them, could use their course to satisfy this university-wide requirement.
3. **Create a Structure to Coordinate Academic and Co-Curricular Efforts.** A coordinated experience requires a high level of organization and collaboration across all colleges, schools, and administrative units. A full-time staff member and a faculty fellow (in the new Provost's Faculty Fellow model) are proposed to coordinate all first-year experiences. These individuals will provide vision and connectedness of efforts by working with a standing committee comprised of faculty and staff from each college/school and several key student services and administrative offices, to share best practices and coordinate a shared experience for all full-time first-year students. These positions and the standing committee will also be responsible for creating an infrastructure to track and assess outcomes of the first-year course and other key initiatives.

OTHER

Budget Transition

The transition to the University's new Incentive-based Budget (IBB) model occurred on July 1, 2015. This followed two years of thoughtful and careful work by committees of faculty, staff, and students to establish goals, identify best practices, and develop a recommended model for the President's approval. As I have said many times before, the *process* we employed as an academic community was no less transformative for the University than the new budget model itself. The process was authentic and inclusive. It was careful and purposeful. It was reflective and it was forward-looking. And ultimately, I am confident, it will result in a successful and much needed evolution for the University, one that enables us to achieve – *together* – our highest shared goals as an academic institution.

I am sharing two documents that may be of interest, both for the information (content) they provide and as examples of the type of timely, responsive, and informing communications we have shared throughout this process. The first is the [About Subvention](#) document that includes concise and complete information about how subvention is used, and how decisions about its adjustment are made. The second is the [IBB FAQ](#) document, developed primarily to answer students' questions about the budget model. This document also has been very well received by faculty, staff, alumni, and (interestingly) parents of our students.

Transitions such as the one we undertook over the last two years are never really over. They require careful monitoring, oversight, and sometimes adjustments in the early years. And they should undergo periodic review and assessment. These are features of every successful university budget system transition we have studied. To that end, as we bring to a close this ambitious and important multi-year effort to transition to the new budget system, I offer the following information about ongoing monitoring and planned reviews:

1. The IBB Steering Committee will remain in-place and active, meeting each semester to review the budget model's operation and functionality. As issues arise or are identified, the Steering Committee will recommend changes for review and approval by the Provost and President. We will continue to keep the campus updated about any changes to the budget model, as has been the practice over the last two years, through meetings with governance groups and others (such as the Council of Deans and the University Business Advisors, or UBA, group), memos to the campus, and the IBB website.
2. We will continue to be available to meet anytime with colleges, schools, departments, administrative offices, or other groups or individuals. Please contact University Budget Director Alberto Citarella or Vice President Richard Cate to schedule a meeting.
3. A new joint Faculty Senate and Provost's Office working committee, the Strategic Curriculum Oversight Committee (SCOC), was established in the fall to monitor the impact of the new budget model on curricular matters, academic initiatives, and educational priorities. The committee's charge is to ensure that decisions made by colleges and schools under IBB promote academic quality and excellence. If an issue arises or is identified by SCOC, it will be forwarded to either the Provost's Office or the Faculty Senate (likely the Curricular Affairs Committee), as appropriate, for action. The committee's charter, roster, working documents and reports are available [online](#).

4. As has been stated before, “IBB 2.0” is expected to be only a small number of years away. While the Steering Committee has determined not to make substantive changes in these first two years, for obvious reasons, it has been agreed that first discussions around more substantive changes that may be needed (should issues arise, either unforeseen or unintended) would commence in FY18. While we will of course continue to monitor and report on the budget, as we always have done, we would expect a full review to be conducted every five years after the expected FY20 release of IBB 2.0.
5. As always, there are many ways to share your observations or concerns about the budget model. The easiest is to speak directly with your department chair or dean, or your director or vice president, as appropriate. They can either address your concern or direct it to the right office for consideration and response. You can also bring your concern directly to a member of the IBB Steering Committee or the Strategic Curriculum Oversight Committee. Finally, you can submit your concern online at the IBB [website](#). As we have done for the last two years, we will respond promptly to all feedback received via this online portal.

Extending our reach, effective communications, recruiting top talent

As part of our strategy for recruiting students and faculty, continuing to elevate the visibility and reputation of the University of Vermont, articulating our distinctive value proposition, and making the most efficient use of our resources, we have retained the firm 160over90 to assist with developing and implementing marketing and communications efforts aimed first at achieving and sustaining our ambitious enrollment goals (quality and diversity). 160over90 has worked with many other top universities (for example, UCLA, the University of Virginia, Miami University, the University of Florida, Drexel University, the University of Oregon, and others) in a similar capacity, with impressive results.

Many faculty, staff, and students have participated in information-gathering sessions with 160over90 over the last few months, and committees of faculty, staff, and administrative leadership have been assembled to review 160over90’s findings and recommendations. Comments from all who have participated have been overwhelmingly positive. Indeed, there is considerable excitement around these efforts and the commitment that is being made by the University to more effectively communicate the outstanding scholarship of our faculty and researchers, the many accomplishments of our students and our graduates, and the many ways we are achieving against our highest ideals of academic excellence and student success.

We will continue to keep the campus informed as this work continues, and many results will be visible to all in the months ahead. (Sessions to view the new creative strategy will be held January 25 and 26 and all are welcome to attend.) As part of our broader University communications strategy, colleges, schools, departments and programs also will be provided with tools (e.g., style guidelines, templates) to assist in their own communications efforts.

To all those who have participated in this endeavor, thank you. This is, arguably, one of the most exciting new initiatives for UVM, one that is long overdue, and one certain to have significant impact.

Move Mountains: The Campaign for the University of Vermont

In October, we officially launched the public phase of *Move Mountains: The Campaign for the University of Vermont*. The launch events spanned a full week, and were attended by faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members. At the October launch, it was announced that we had already raised more than \$247M toward the \$500M goal. This amount has since grown to more than \$258M, so we are well on our way. This campaign, scheduled to conclude in 2019, is the most ambitious fundraising initiative in the University's history, and will benefit every corner of the campus.

Private philanthropy is increasingly critical to the long-term success of any great university. Comprehensive campaigns of this type raise essential funds needed to recruit and retain talented students and faculty, complete essential capital projects, and make strategic investments in educational and research capabilities and infrastructure. As you may know, the State of Vermont does not provide funds for capital projects. Our relatively low level of state funding and our commitment to keeping total cost of attendance affordable both underscore the need for successful fundraising campaigns that are comprehensive in nature – that is, they provide much needed support for students, faculty, programs, and facilities.

Being in a campaign is energizing and exciting. It does more than seek to engender loyalty and support among alumni and others, it builds spirit and affinity among us all. The success of the campaign is both predicated on our success as teachers and scholars, and a testament to the future we are building as a great university. It is an endorsement of the vision we have crafted together, as laid out in the President's *Strategic Action Plan* and our *Academic Excellence Goals*, and it represents the investments of many in our shared success. The success we have achieved thus far in the campaign has been remarkable. Thanks to the visionary and generous gifts from our alumni and many others who support UVM, we are well on our way to achieving our goal of raising \$500M for the University. *This is where* great things happen. Together, we will *Move Mountains*.

Learn more: [Move Mountains website](#)
[Public launch video](#)
[Crescendo video](#)
[Campaign Launch recap video](#)
[Campaign materials](#) (downloadable case statements)

CLOSING THOUGHTS

We live, work, learn, discover, create, innovate, educate, and inspire at one of the leading universities in the country. And we do this at a unique time in our university's 225-year history. We are privileged – all of us – to be part of our university's evolution, to charting our course and creating a great future.

As a campus, we take seriously our commitments to the teacher-scholar model, to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary education and scholarship, and to service to our community and the public good. We also place high value on diversity in all its dimensions, to sustainability in all its forms, and to inclusion and equity. In my time as provost, I have come to realize that it is this combination of intellectual ideals and humanity that makes our university great.

It continues to be my privilege and honor to serve as UVM's provost – to serve as *your* provost, at *our* university. Together, we are doing great things for our students, our colleagues, our communities, and our future. Thank you for creating this opportunity, for seizing it, and running with it. It's what Catamounts do.

I wish you a productive spring semester and I look forward to seeing you on campus.

Webpage: www.uvm.edu/provost

 Twitter: www.twitter.com/UVMprovost

#oneUVM #MoveMountains #GoCats

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