



Across the Green  
April 2016

TO: University of Vermont Academic Community  
FROM: David V. Rosowsky, Provost and Senior Vice President

### “The Flywheel”

#### INTRODUCTION

Ours is a university with momentum. You see evidence of this all around you, you can feel the energy, and I hope you feel connected to the changes taking place. Because you are! The changes are driven by expressed shared goals for the University of Vermont, by collective aspirations and expectations, and by the time and effort of so many across the campus. UVM is a public research university with a strong culture of service that goes beyond its land grant mission. The University of Vermont has a deeply held commitment to elevating humankind. And I am profoundly grateful to the many contributions being made by our faculty and staff every day to continue to elevate our University.

We have been careful and purposeful in planning for the changes underway at UVM, with critical input and participation by faculty and staff, but the flywheel is most certainly spinning now. If I can extend this metaphor just a bit more, I would characterize the flywheel at maximum rotational velocity now. We took about three years to get to this point, but we should not expect the rate of change to increase without bound. We are moving at a good pace and are guided by a clear set of goals. The key now is to remain engaged and committed to our shared goals of *academic excellence* and *student success* – to keep the flywheel spinning.

#### ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER

As discussed in my last campus update ([Jan. 2016 ‘ATG’](#)), a series of strategic office relocations this summer will bring together core student functions, making it easier for students to find and access important services. Also discussed were initiatives around creating a common first-year experience (FYE) that will complement, leverage and extend existing first-year programming. Integral to the success of all of these initiatives is a structure that will support a high level of organization and collaboration across all colleges, schools, administrative units, and academic and student affairs. To that end, and as a result of a consultative evaluation of our current structure, we are establishing an Academic Success Center (ASC) through a re-organization of existing offices and functions, and a redeployment of existing resources. The Academic Success Center will provide early support to students in their transition from high school to college, and promote academic achievement and effective academic advising for undergraduate students across the University.

The ASC will bring together our Orientation Program, a new First-Year Experience Program, a new centralized Advising Center<sup>1</sup> and the Learning Cooperative (tutoring services). The staffing necessary to support this innovative and integrative model has been assembled by restructuring and reorganizing existing positions. The director of the ASC will work closely with the new Provost's Faculty Fellow for Advising and First-Year Experience and will report to both the Vice Provost for Student Affairs and the Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning.

## PROVIDING TIMELY COURSE INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

In recent years, the Student Government Association (SGA), the Faculty Senate, and the Council of Deans have been discussing the value of providing timely and relevant course information to allow students to make informed choices as they schedule classes. This, in turn, promotes timely decision-making and active engagement by students in the advising process, and thereby improves retention and four-year graduation rates. I have asked the Council of Deans and Faculty Senate leadership to work closely with SGA to develop a consensus set of recommendations to bring forward to the broader Faculty Senate for discussion and, hopefully, endorsement.

A small number of faculty have expressed concerns that providing syllabi in advance presents issues around intellectual property or academic freedom. The Office of General Counsel has looked at this matter and concluded that there is no cause for concern, noting that this is a widespread practice at other universities. Nonetheless, these faculty concerns led to the previous recommendation (and largely standard practice at UVM) of providing expanded section descriptions. To the extent these include (i) a description of the scope and goals for the course, (ii) information on the (anticipated) textbook, and (iii) basis for course grade, these expanded section descriptions seem sufficient.

Many faculty have indicated they already post their syllabi online in advance of the class's start date. The SGA and Council of Deans may find that posting of the information requested by the students is already being done by most (but not all) faculty. Our commitment to student success (including academic advising, student retention, and the Four-Year Plan) suggests we should move, as a campus, toward robust and consistent practices in this regard.

## UPDATES ON FACULTY AFFAIRS

Earlier this year, I was pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Jim Vigoreaux, Professor of Biology, as Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs. This appointment provided an opportunity to reaffirm the position's focus and primary responsibility for *enabling faculty success* – including faculty recruitment, retention, recognition, and promotion. I asked Jim to focus his efforts in his first year on faculty recruitment and faculty development.

Through Jim's leadership, the Office of the Provost and the Division of Human Resources, Diversity and Multicultural Affairs have solidified their partnership in providing high level support to units conducting faculty searches. Our policies, procedures and expectations also are being revised to more clearly align with the strategic diversity and inclusion goals of the University.

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<sup>1</sup> The Advising Center will be located in the Davis Center, and will supplement the specialized advising systems that are currently in place in each of the colleges and schools. The center will provide students with an easily accessible resource for general advising issues.

The Faculty Mentoring Program, previously administered by the Faculty Senate, has been moved to the Office of the Provost and will be re-designed and administered by the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs. This is consistent with best practices nationally and will allow for effective and timely faculty mentoring to become a best practice at UVM.

Looking to expand faculty mentoring opportunities, and building on our successful decade-old partnership with the Northeast Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate, a select group of female faculty in the biomedical fields is participating in a virtual mentoring network as part of the NIH National Research Mentoring Network. This is just one example of how we can effectively leverage the experience and resources of other organizations to enhance our own mentoring and faculty development opportunities.

The administration of the Retired Faculty and Administrative Officer's Organization (RFAO) has also been moved from the Faculty Senate to the Office of the Provost. This, too, is consistent with best practices nationally as Faculty Affairs is taken to include the full continuum of faculty, from recruitment of new faculty through supporting our retired and emeritus faculty.

You can learn more about the efforts of the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs (including those around faculty recruitment, development, and mentoring) on the office's [webpage](#).

#### THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN STEM AND LIBERAL ARTS

While I use the '[Across the Green](#)' memos to provide regular updates to and share progress with the broader academic community, I also (from time to time) post a blog essay [online](#). Some of my essays relate to ongoing campus-wide discussions or activities, while others evolve from my engagements beyond our campus. In my most recent post, I was motivated both by internal and external discussions to offer my own thoughts on the "[Power of Partnership and Pairings](#)" of STEM and the Liberal Arts. I encourage you to read the essay and, as always, I welcome your feedback.

While written for a broader readership, my hope is that the essay can initiate a richer discussion around this topic on our own campus. The University of Vermont is exceedingly well positioned, through its culture and blend of academic programs and priorities, to innovate and to lead in this space. As always, such efforts can only be successful with advocates and leaders from the faculty. I hope that the observations I share in my essay – based on my own experiences as a faculty member and academic leader – can be helpful. I look forward to UVM being an innovator in creating programs, program pairs, and opportunities for our students to blend STEM and Liberal Arts.

#### GENERAL EDUCATION, CORE COMPETENCIES OF THE UVM GRADUATE, AND STUDENT SUCCESS

I fully support the ongoing discussions within the Faculty Senate around General Education requirements and core competencies we should ensure for all graduates of the University of Vermont. These are important discussions. We currently have general education requirements around (1) diversity, (2) writing and information literacy, and (3) sustainability.

Strong cases also can be made, in my opinion, for requirements that ensure our students possess competencies, by the time they graduate, in (1) quantitative reasoning; (2) personal finance and financial literacy; (3) science, technology, and society; and (4) health and wellness. I hope that the Faculty Senate will consider these recommendations in their ongoing discussions.

In discussions about core requirements (whether formalized through required courses or other structured learning experiences), care must be taken to balance the goals of ensuring core competencies and maintaining the flexibility needed for students to satisfy requirements for their degree and explore disciplines and topics beyond their major. The trend toward using outcomes to verify student learning, rather than simply requiring one or more courses, seems to have as one of its objectives providing more flexibility to departments and programs as they set up their curricula.

Another approach is for students to be purposeful about how they use their electives, how they select certificates or minors, to complement their major and best prepare them for success after graduation. As faculty, we have a role to play in helping students make informed, strategic, and purpose-driven choices.

Smart selections of courses could result in *program pairings* between a disciplinary major and a complementary certificate, minor, second major, or post-graduate degree. We should encourage our students to pursue these enabling program pairs, while discouraging them from simpler paths (e.g., a random selection of introductory courses to satisfy elective requirements, or a minor or second major that is very close to the original major). As faculty, we should be thoughtful about designing program pairs, clearly articulating (and demonstrating) their value, and promoting them as part of the University's commitment to student success.

I believe we should be purposeful and strategic in empowering our students to make good choices in rounding out their curricula, realizing the fullest value of their UVM education, and leveraging all that the University offers.

#### FY17 BUDGET, FIRST YEAR OF INCENTIVE-BASED BUDGET (IBB)

We are nearing the end of our first year under the [IBB](#) model at the same time we are finalizing the FY17 budget. The budget process has been smooth and without major issues, thanks in large part to (1) the extensive and very thoughtful planning over the last (nearly) three years, and (2) the authentic and productive discussions that have been taking place within each academic and administrative unit. In addition, thoughtful and productive discussions *across* and *between* academic and administrative units have been taking place, leading to better understanding of mission and scope and to more strategic allocation of resources. In particular, I want to acknowledge the deans for their commitment to transparency and open discussion within their schools and colleges, for engaging faculty and staff to inform their strategic goal-setting and decision-making, and for their leadership. We are learning *together* as a University about the potential and opportunity the new budget model offers. I have been impressed by the level of understanding, insight, and forward-thinking already evident in the deans' budget presentations this spring, and how that understanding is shaping strategies that will allow units to deliver on our promise of *academic excellence* and *student success*.

While I have used earlier memos (e.g., [Jan. 2016 'ATG'](#)) to highlight the new, largely interdisciplinary, academic programs (degrees, minors, certificates) that have been proposed and approved recently, I thought I would use this memo to share some of what the transition to IBB is incenting and enabling, beyond just new or re-envisioned academic programs.

- The colleges/schools are taking a more thoughtful, strategic, and creative approach to summer including (a) more strategic student-centered offerings; (b) more consistent, equitable, and appropriate class sizes; (c) increased online and hybrid offerings to reach and

attract broader audiences; and (d) a focus on efficiency to increase effective net revenue back to the unit.

- The colleges/schools are thinking strategically about true costs of extramural research, and in particular how to accommodate grants that are central to meeting the unit's highest priorities but do not pay full indirect costs.
- The colleges/schools are looking carefully at the true costs of externally funded centers and grant-funded service activities to fully understand the level of subsidies that must be provided by the unit to support them.
- Budgets of the colleges/schools have been "hardened" to reflect (a) long-time ongoing commitments from the University to the unit, and (b) expense commitments that had been paid previously from (e.g.) gift accounts or other one-time sources.
- The deans are engaged in forward-looking discussions about library holdings and acquisitions (in particular, serials subscriptions), with full benefit of actual cost and actual usage statistics. The deans will be engaging with their faculty in trade-off analyses and discussions in the coming year.
- The colleges/schools are able to make multi-year investments in new academic programs and new scholarly activities, monitoring for progress and verifying that expectations (e.g., enrollments, degree completion, scholarship, visibility, rankings) are being met.
- The colleges/schools are actively engaged in student recruitment and retention efforts, and to the success of their students upon graduation.

This transparency, dialog, and engagement will enable units to make decisions consistent with their highest priorities, and create the best overall educational experience possible.

As is required by our Board of Trustees, the University must deliver a balanced budget each year for the Board's approval in May. We will once again deliver a balanced budget this year.

#### EDUCATIONAL STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Fall 2015 marked the launch of a new joint committee of the Faculty Senate and the Office of the Provost, the *Educational Stewardship Committee* (known previously, and briefly, as the Strategic Curriculum Oversight Committee). The Educational Stewardship Committee (ESC) was established as a shared governance instrument to monitor the impact of the new budget model on curricular matters, academic initiatives and educational priorities, ensuring good stewardship, safeguarding, and coordination of the University's educational mission.

To carry out its charge, the ESC monitors curriculum and instructional data (e.g., section sizes, changes in course enrollments, cross-listed or duplicative courses) and looks into concerns that are brought to its attention by faculty, chairs, or deans. The ESC then reports on its findings (with recommendations where appropriate) to both the Provost and the Faculty Senate Executive Council. You can view the Committee's charter, roster, working documents and reports on its [website](#).

I am grateful to the Faculty Senate leadership for their partnership in this important committee.

## INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM

Over the course of the academic year, University Communications has been following a strategy to promote activities around [innovation and entrepreneurship](#) throughout the University. You may have noticed an increase in the number of news releases and media stories around these themes. The goal has been to both celebrate the breadth of innovative learning and discovery activities at UVM and increase our visibility and reputation in this important space. Great universities are leaders in innovation and entrepreneurship, and the University of Vermont is a great university.

Part of our land-grant mission is our role as an economic engine for the state and the region. We take that role seriously and work closely with the state and with other Vermont colleges and universities in preparing graduates to succeed and creating economic opportunity for our graduates and for all Vermonters. As Vermont's land-grant university, its only research university, and its public flagship university, UVM must seek to lead the state in innovation, job creation, and economic development.

Innovation and entrepreneurship activities and successes are not limited to the scientific, technological, or medical fields. There are impressive and important activities around social innovation and educational innovation, social entrepreneurship, and sustainable entrepreneurship, for example. A university should be innovative by its nature, as fields and disciplines evolve and new cross-cutting disciplines emerge.

The *Innovation and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem* I have described in previous memos (e.g., [Feb. 2015 'ATG'](#), pp. 3-4), and continue to promote in and around the University, is a true collaboration between the University of Vermont and the City of Burlington. It is a 'true' collaboration because it is authentic, it is mutually beneficial, and the results are more than just the sum of its parts. The partnership between the University and the City is exciting and energizing. People are taking notice of what has been happening here. For example, Burlington has been ranked by Forbes as a [top 10 tech hub](#) in the US, Vermont was ranked [#5 in the nation for start-ups](#), and VCET@BTV was ranked the [5<sup>th</sup> best university business incubator](#) in the US. If you haven't already done so, I encourage you to read the "[Wired for Success](#)" feature in the most recent issue of *Vermont Quarterly*. You will be impressed and inspired by all that is taking place, and you will be proud to be at the University of Vermont.

## INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENT

As we move toward a final vision for an [Institute for Environment](#), the highest priority to come out of the *Envisioning Environment* report prepared by a faculty group three years ago, we are actively seeking philanthropic support that will enable the institute's launch and provide sustaining funding to ensure its future. Since the [2013 faculty report](#), other groups of faculty have been engaged in developing (1) a mission statement, scope, and expected goals and outcomes; (2) a resourcing model; and (3) a governance plan for the institute. As I said in my [December 2014 communication](#) reiterating our commitment to developing a resourcing plan that provides sustainable funds sufficient to ensure the institute's success, "We will not launch an institute unless and until the resources are available." While university resources have been identified through the President's and Provost's Strategic Investment Fund to support this highest priority identified by the faculty in the area of Environment, it is essential that we also have significant new philanthropic support in place prior to launching such an institute. Work is continuing apace and we will be sure to keep the University community updated.

## CAPITAL PROJECTS

One need only look across campus to see the cranes and the changing skyline. And one cannot walk through our beautiful campus without experiencing the progress and, occasionally, being redirected (temporarily) around a favorite route. Excitement has been building for the last year with groundbreaking ceremonies, webcams, construction updates and signage, and even construction tours. You can learn more about some of the most visible projects (Alumni House and Pavilion, STEM Complex, First-Year Residence Hall, and the UVM Medical Center Patient Care Facility) and timelines, and watch real-time webcam footage, at the [Building UVM website](#). Information about these and other projects (e.g., Billings Library, Virtue Field) also can be found on the [UVM Facilities Design and Construction website](#).

Many of these projects would not be possible without the generous support of alumni and others through the [Move Mountains](#) campaign. Several projects, such as the new first-year residence hall and the Medical Center's new facility, of course, also have an income stream behind them. Continuing to upgrade our campus facilities for living, learning, and discovery, while also remaining vigilant in attending to our highest deferred maintenance needs, are priorities for the University.

The Alumni House and Pavilion is on-schedule to open this fall, while the first STEM Complex building ("Discovery") and the new first-year residence hall will open in fall 2017.

## ACADEMIC ECOSYSTEM: PROMOTING SUCCESS, GROWING VISIBILITY, RECRUITING THE BEST

The University has implemented a 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 communications resources. We are working closely with the firm 160over90 to assist with developing and implementing strategies aimed first and foremost at achieving and sustaining our ambitious enrollment goals (quality and diversity). 160over90 has worked with many other top universities (e.g., UCLA, University of Virginia, Miami University, University of Florida, Drexel University) in a similar capacity, with impressive results.

Many faculty, staff, and students have participated in information-gathering sessions with 160over90 during this academic year, and committees of faculty, staff, and administrative leadership have gathered on multiple occasions to review 160over90's findings and recommendations and to provide feedback on the new creative strategy as it evolved.

By the end of the semester, as part of our broader University communications strategy, colleges, schools, departments and programs will be provided with tools (e.g., style guidelines, templates) to assist in their own communications efforts.

In the coming months, and throughout the next year, you will see other elements of this coherent communications strategy, including new campus banners, viewbook, video, and admissions materials. 160over90 is also assisting us in developing and implementing a consistent communication narrative for students and families from first contact through enrollment. This includes campus, admissions, financial aid and academic messages.

There has been considerable excitement around these efforts and the commitment that is being made by the University to more effectively communicate the outstanding research and scholarship of our faculty, 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*.

## NEW ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

We were excited to announce the [appointment](#) of Dr. Bill Falls as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), effective March 1<sup>st</sup>. Bill brings to the position a deep understanding of the College (having joined the UVM faculty in 1998 and having served for nine years as chair of the Department of Psychological Science) and commitment to its vibrant and important future. He has energized the College and brought renewed focus to discussions around *academic excellence* and *student success*, and is leading conversations around the value and importance of the Liberal Arts at a great university.

We were also excited to announce the [appointment](#) of Dr. Scott Thomas as the next dean of the College of Education and Social Services (CESS), effective July 1<sup>st</sup>. Scott served most recently as dean of the School of Educational Studies at Claremont Graduate University and brings an impressive record of scholarship and leadership to UVM. He brings tremendous energy and enthusiasm to the deanship and recognizes the exciting opportunities that lie ahead for the College. In the coming months, Scott will work closely with the University and College leadership to effect a smooth transition into his new role.

President Sullivan and I are both grateful to Dr. Cynthia Gerstl-Pepin for her willingness to serve as interim dean of CESS during this transition year. Dr. Gerstl-Pepin brought patient, thoughtful leadership to the College, working closely with faculty and staff to resolve a number of open issues, initiate a college-wide strategic planning exercise, and continue important work with CESS alumni and donors.

## CLOSING

Our flywheel is indeed spinning at a good clip. With so much happening, so many changes being made within our colleges and schools and throughout the University, some amount of uncertainty and anxiety is to be expected. It is important to recognize that the changes come about through shared goals articulated over the last few years, consultative and authentic engagement, and of course exogenous forces affecting our institution (e.g., rising healthcare costs, increased compliance and regulatory costs, among others) and to which we must be responsive. The good will and commitment shown by so many as we take stock of where we are, envision our future, and set ourselves on a pathway toward that future is *the same* good will and commitment that will, in time, remove uncertainties and calm anxieties. Thank you for your patience, your trust in one another, and your continued commitment to a great university and our highest ideals of *academic excellence* and *student success*.

If you are like me, the students' return from Spring Break begins what feels like a steady slide toward Commencement. This is a busy and exciting time of the academic year for everyone. I hope you will take time to enjoy the pageantry and celebration surrounding UVM's 215<sup>th</sup> [Commencement ceremonies](#), May 21-22. I look forward to seeing you there.

As always, I invite your comments or suggestions anytime. Please feel free to stop me on campus or send me a note. I value your feedback and input. I also encourage you to participate in the dialog within your academic units. Dialog is essential to achieving shared goals and our ambitious agenda. It also is foundational to the principles of shared governance, to which I stand firmly committed.

As always, thank you for all that you do for our students, for your colleagues, and for the University of Vermont. Go Cats! -dvr

*“Our graduates must be skilled disciplinary integrators with common language and common understanding.”*

From [essay](#), “The Power of Partnership and Pairings:  
Why STEM and Liberal Arts are Better Together”

*“A university should be innovative by its nature, as fields and disciplines evolve and new cross-cutting disciplines emerge.”*

*“Great universities are leaders in innovation and entrepreneurship, and the University of Vermont is a great university.”*

*“You will be impressed and inspired by all that is taking place, and you will be proud to be at the University of Vermont.”*

Webpage: [www.uvm.edu/provost](http://www.uvm.edu/provost)



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