



Office of the Provost and  
Senior Vice President

Across the Green  
April 2018

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

“We Come Together to Grow Together”

## INTRODUCTION

Spring in Vermont is always just a bit slow to arrive, but that affords time to both witness and reflect on the changes in season. It also gives us time to think about where we have been and where we are going. And we are reminded that seasons always give way to new seasons, and that the only real constant is change. Speaking personally, I enjoy the changes in seasons almost as much as I enjoy each season. Born and raised in New England, I only knew four equal seasons – equal in length, equal in character, and equal in beauty. In my career, I have lived in the south and the west, both beautiful regions of the country but neither possessing four distinct seasons. One of the greatest draws back to this region for me was the change in seasons. Each season speaks to me (my family teases me that I have four favorite seasons) and each change in season, it seems, signals a transition in the academic year. I imagine it is the same for many of you.

The past few months have been a challenging time for our campus community, and I want to take this opportunity to speak directly to that at the start of this memo. Many of our students, faculty, and staff have voiced their frustration and concern about both campus and national climate, and the same is occurring at colleges and universities all over the country. I am proud of our students for coming together, working together, and calling for positive change. I want to thank our students, and the many faculty and staff who have supported them, for their courage and commitment – to one another and to our university. Senior leaders at UVM have been listening, hearing, learning, and reflecting on this spring’s activism and are working to identify ways to engage more members of our community in our shared work around diversity and inclusion on campus.

This is important work. It is hard work. And it can be messy work. Some of the conversations over the past year have been difficult. But they have brought us together to share our experiences, and hopefully to learn from one another. They also have inspired a new sense of urgency that I believe will accelerate our progress toward shared goals around inclusive excellence. We may stumble and make mistakes, but respect for one another and love for UVM will carry us far.

I encourage you to follow our collective work on the *Facing Challenges, Advancing Diversity and Inclusion at UVM* [website](#). We have much work to do, and we will continue on our shared quest to ensure an academic community that is inclusive, diverse, just, and equitable. I am proud of our progress but know there is more work to be done. We will continue to learn and grow together.

This spring also has seen excitement and growth on our campus, with new programs, new facilities, and new partnerships. I will provide updates on several of these in this memo. This year has also been one of planning, with several new academic programs in development, and continued investments in students, faculty, programs, and facilities. [Move Mountains](#), the Comprehensive Campaign for the University of Vermont, is entering its final year and we are on track to surpass our ambitious \$500M goal when the campaign concludes in May 2019. The new Gund Institute for Environment has had a highly successful first year, we saw increases in both federal and corporate support for faculty research, and we are expecting another outstanding class of first-year students and new graduate students to be joining us in August. The 2017-18 academic year at the University of Vermont was both a year of challenges faced and opportunities realized.

## LEARNING COMMUNITIES

We have been developing a series of residentially-based [learning communities](#) as part of our commitment to high-impact practices for student success, including a robust First Year Experience program at UVM. The learning communities integrate students' residential and academic experiences by offering housing and courses built around a common theme. In addition to the [Wellness Environment](#) and the [Honors College](#), we launched three new learning communities in fall 2017: Leadership, Outdoor Experience, and Sustainability. We will be launching three more in fall 2018 (just a few months from now): Arts and Creativity, Cultural Crossroads, and Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Each of these newest learning communities offers a one-credit course for first-year students which explores the community's theme and engages students in related events and activities. All of these new learning communities were developed by faculty over the past year, and faculty are serving as directors of each learning community. A special thanks to Abby McGowan, Associate Dean in the College of Arts and Sciences, for her work with the colleges/schools and the Faculty Senate over the past year. I also want to thank all of the faculty who agreed to develop and provide leadership to these learning communities, as well as the faculty who have agreed to develop courses and become engaged with all of our learning communities.

## GUND INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENT

This has been a remarkable year for the UVM's first university-wide institute, the [Gund Institute for Environment](#). Established nearly one year ago, following several years of visioning and planning by faculty, and launched thanks to a generous \$6M gift from the Gund Family, the Gund Institute is evolving into a world class accelerator of interdisciplinary research on critical global environmental issues.

This year, the Gund Institute has more than doubled its ranks of [Gund Fellows and Affiliates](#), adding esteemed scholars from six UVM colleges/schools and 13 departments. The Institute has also awarded nearly [\\$250,000 in Catalyst Awards](#), supporting new research on global climate modeling, renewable biofuels, climate impacts on mountain communities, nitrogen 'trouble zones,' and sustainable agriculture. Five interdisciplinary teams received funding, pairing dozens of UVM scholars with colleagues at Harvard, Princeton, and Yale, and several global partners.

My thanks to Donna Rizzo, the Dorothean Chair of Engineering and Science and Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, for her service and leadership as Acting Director of the Gund Institute this year while Taylor Ricketts, Gund Professor and Professor in the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources, has been on sabbatical.

## CATAMOUNT DATA CENTER

The [Office of Institutional Research](#) provides accurate and unbiased information about the institution to students, faculty, the administration, and the public. OIR has always had a wealth of information available on its website; however, the reports were often difficult to navigate and did not provide a level of detail useful to many users. Over the past year, OIR has been working to provide the tools that help foster a culture of data-based decision-making throughout and across the campus. The first phase of this process is making information easily accessible to constituents. In fall 2017, OIR made data on enrollment, diversity, number of degrees awarded, and retention and graduation rates available through the [Catamount Data Center](#).

OIR also supports the *Educational Stewardship Committee* (ESC), a joint committee of the Provost's Office and the Faculty Senate, and the IBB Steering Committee. OIR and the ESC developed an [interactive report](#) around student credit hours, course enrollments, section sizes, and general education courses that can be easily disaggregated/filtered by academic unit, course type, and course level. This tool also allows for easier visualization of trends so that faculty, department chairs, associate deans, and deans can monitor a unit's progress and base decisions on timely and accurate data.

My thanks to Alex Yin, Director of OIR, and his outstanding staff for their great work over the past year. We have created a data-informed culture of accountability that also enables

effective planning and decision-making at all levels. If you have suggestions on how OIR can provide you with information needed to assess opportunities or risks, trends or projections, or in support of your unit's plans, please contact [OIR](#) directly.

## BUDGET MODEL

We have commenced the process of updating the University's Incentive-Based Budget model consistent with plans articulated when we transitioned to the new model three years ago. The work of the Steering Committee has been both informed and driven by the feedback received from the campus over the past several months. All information about the budget model (development, implementation, operation, and assessment) as well as the campus feedback can be found on the IBB [website](#).

Based on their review of the model assessments and campus feedback, the IBB Steering Committee ([expanded](#) for the Model 2.0 work) identified three areas on which it will focus:

- Algorithm 1 (Undergraduate Net Tuition), focusing on (a) weightings, and (b) whether the 85/15 split should be revised vis-à-vis any role it plays in curricular/course offering decisions;
- Algorithm 6 (Facilities), considering whether the current methodology can/should be revised to account for space weighting by functional use, deferred maintenance obligations, or utility costs; and
- Algorithm 7 (Support Center<sup>1</sup> Pools), focusing on (a) the headcount cost driver, and (b) whether or not the algorithm can be simplified.

The Steering Committee will also review and make recommendations on the role and authority of the [Educational Stewardship Committee](#), consider whether any refinements to the metrics used to evaluate the model are warranted, and undertake an exercise to map all elements of the IBB 2.0 model (Guiding Principles, algorithms, incentives, checks and balances) to one or more of the explicit goals in the [President's Strategic Action Plan](#).

As part of its work, the Steering Committee will be hosting a series of focus groups for deans, department chairs, and academic program directors in the coming weeks and into the fall semester. The goal for these sessions is to gather feedback on potential changes to specific algorithms.

As has been our practice since 2013, we will continue to post all information (reports, data, and communications) on the IBB [website](#).

---

<sup>1</sup> In January 2018, we transitioned from the term "Cost Center" to "Support Center" in recognition of the essential partnerships between the support units and the academic units ("Responsibility Centers").

## STUDENT ADVISING AND STUDENT SUCCESS

Improving undergraduate student retention and increasing undergraduate four-year graduation rates are two of our most important [Academic Excellence Goals](#). In support of these goals, and in response to feedback from the academic deans and student service personnel, the University has invested in a new Student Success Management System (SSMS).

Through an RFP process, and following extensive campus-wide consultation, we selected the Educational Advisory Board's *Student Success Collaborative* as the software solution that best meets our needs. The Education Advisory Board (EAB) partners with many colleges and universities including several in our comparator group (e.g., University of Massachusetts-Amherst and Stony Brook University).

An advisor-facing web application (**Campus**) and a mobile application for student use (**Guide**) make up the SSMS. The two applications will work together to: (1) enhance faculty advising; (2) support timely, multi-modal two-way communication with students; (3) provide predictive analytics to identify students who may be a retention risk; and (4) track student interactions across campus to assist in the provision of comprehensive and coordinated support.

Consultants from EAB met in January 2018 with the UVM Leadership and Engagement Teams who are working to configure the applications. The teams, which include representation from faculty, student services staff, administration and technical staff, are meeting regularly to establish content, customize application functionality, and discuss long and short term goals for the project.

The incoming class of 2022 will utilize **Guide** to view course schedules and campus resources at Orientation in June. A robust training schedule for faculty and staff is being established to support the phased roll-out of **Campus** beginning in fall 2018. Project information sessions are being offered at faculty meetings in each college and school in April or May.

This is an exciting realization of years of hard work for our campus, serving the needs of students, their advisors, and both enrollment management and student services staff. The EAB Student Success Collaborative has the potential to be *transformative* for the University of Vermont and our students' experience.

As we look ahead to welcoming the Class of 2022, we are continuing to explore ways to elevate the academic experience of our students. As examples, we are exploring exciting ideas such as highlighting our academic strengths and resources with a new audio-visual presentation at June Orientation, "It Starts Today," featuring students telling their stories of how they successfully integrated their academic interests with their life plan. We will also be providing every new student with a copy of our First-Year Reading book and launching the new EAB **Guide**.

We are also re-imagining Convocation as a place to welcome our new residentially-based Learning Communities and celebrate our faculty who are changing the world. In addition, during that first week of the fall semester (UVM Week of Welcome), we hope to strengthen students' out-of-classroom connections with faculty through social picnics hosted by each college or school throughout the week. We will also be launching a series of 'get started on the right foot' promotions for new students that highlight using Blackboard, provide tips on how to approach faculty advisors, and other key academic success tools.

So there is much to look forward to in the fall. And much work to be done between now and then. But the result will be an elevated student experience, greater academic emphasis in our programming for new students, and purposeful new pathways for connecting our first-year students with our faculty.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP

According to a [recent study](#), UVM annually creates \$1.33 billion dollars in economic impact and 11,287 jobs, both locally and across the state. UVM's research portfolio alone has an economic impact of \$158 million and creates approximately 810 jobs across the state. UVM has become a connector, an integrator, and key player in the many city, state, and local initiatives that form the 'Innovation and Entrepreneurship [Ecosystem](#)' in Vermont. These people, places, and partners are the underpinning of a system that fosters the lifecycle of an idea that transitions to job creation and the economic benefits enjoyed by a growing, sustainable economy. And, it has become clear that this effort, if managed properly, could lead to the desirable outcome of attracting smart, innovative people to move to the region and hopefully entice more of the bright young minds attending UVM and other Vermont colleges to stay in Vermont after graduation. This is a critical part of our land grant mission.

There is very strong and growing interest in entrepreneurship among UVM students. A recent survey showed that nearly 10% of the undergraduate respondents (156 students) indicated that they already owned a small business. Additionally, we have identified four student clubs that are directly or indirectly involved in entrepreneurship, including the Entrepreneurs Club, the Design for America Club, the Catamount Innovation Fund, and Enactus. The leaders of these clubs have organized themselves into the "UVM Innovation Collaborative" and they are looking into shared activities and fundraising efforts in an effort to make all of the clubs successful and sustainable. They welcome faculty engagement and support.

The [Catamount Innovation Fund](#) was created by students for students to provide modest funding to assist students in prototyping or building a business. The first student was funded at \$5,000 in 2018, and the Fund just received its first external funding in the form of a \$10,000 gift from an alumnus of UVM.

In 2016, the [OVPR](#) created the [Entrepreneurship Forum](#), which has been highly successful. OVPR leadership has been inviting faculty, staff, students, and friends from across the campus and region for ongoing discussions on how to foster the [entrepreneurial landscape](#) of the University and the region. The mission of the Forum is to catalyze entrepreneurship in all activities and coalesce and create value for stakeholders across all constituencies at UVM. There are now more than 50 Forum members and meetings are held monthly throughout the academic year, at Hills 20 - a “collision space” for all entrepreneurial activities - supported by the OVPR and Office of the Provost. Hills 20 is a free, accessible space and hosts classes, talks, meet-ups, student clubs and events related to entrepreneurship year-round. The OVPR also provides free memberships at Generator, Burlington’s not-for-profit maker space, for approximately 50 students per year.

## CORPORATE AND FOUNDATION RELATIONS

The University continues to build strong relationships with companies, both here in Vermont and nationally. Our partnerships with global companies like MassMutual and CA Technologies highlight the relevance of our research and the quality of our students. UVM recently reached the mid-point in a pilot project with MassMutual through the Vermont Complex Systems Center. This partnership provides funding for faculty research, a PhD fellowship, and a residency for a Data Visualization Artist. Through this collaboration, UVM is able to explore research at the intersection of human health and wellness, data science, and complex systems. In addition, CA Technologies recently provided a gift to support three PhD fellowships with the Center – an award that coincides with the launch of a new PhD program in Complex Systems and Data Science – enabling UVM to recruit exceptional doctoral students for this program.

Our partnerships with companies span many disciplines. Land O’Lakes is supporting a graduate fellowship in Animal Science, Seventh Generation created an endowed scholarship in the Sustainable Innovation MBA program, Sodexo supports graduate fellowships in Food Systems, and Delta Dental is supporting scholarships for a pre-dental continuing education program – clear evidence that the private sector recognizes the value of a UVM education and wants to support the cultivation of talent here.

UVM continues to build corporate partnerships in regenerative medicine and biomedical engineering through our membership in the [Advanced Regenerative Manufacturing Institute](#), a coalition of university and industry participants, as well as new regenerative medicine research with United Therapeutics, a global biotech company.

In addition to these corporate partnerships, we’ve seen significant new investments from philanthropic foundations to support faculty research this academic year, including a large award from the Laura and John Arnold Foundation to Psychiatry to support behavioral and pharmacological treatment of opioid dependence, and a large award from the Alfred P. Sloan foundation to support the Vermont Advanced Computing Core through a browser-

based computing initiative designed to engage UVM alumni and enhance UVM's computing capacity.

The UVM Foundation's [Corporate and Foundation Relations](#) Office has played a critical role in advancing these relationships, and is available to all faculty interested in expanding partnerships and diversifying funding opportunities. We anticipate that the partnerships currently underway will continue to evolve and look forward to more exciting developments and major announcements in the near future.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As the academic year winds down, we move into a busy season of end-of-year celebratory events and the University's Commencement Ceremonies. This is always an exciting time of year for the campus, for graduates, and for their families. I hope all of you will participate in the many events and ceremonies celebrating the accomplishments of our graduates and wishing them well as they move onward, degrees in hand, as our newest UVM alumni.

With my thanks for all that you do for our academic community, I wish you all a great remainder of the academic year and summer. Before long we will be welcoming the UVM Class of 2022 to campus and another academic year. That's the rhythm of our world, one in which we are so fortunate to work, to serve, to grow, together.

Go Cats!

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

 Twitter: [www.twitter.com/UVMprovost](https://www.twitter.com/UVMprovost)