



Across the Green  
February 2015

TO: University of Vermont Academic Community

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

“Light on the Hill”

INTRODUCTION

In my role as Provost, I am fortunate to have occasion to promote and celebrate the many accomplishments of our faculty, staff, and students. These range from academic and scholarly achievements, to successes and innovations in pedagogy, to impactful community and statewide engagement, to enabling campus-wide improvements. *Together*, we are building an academic community – a community of teacher-scholars, researchers, and professionals – committed to academic excellence and the success of our students.

I know this is an experience we have all had – looking up the hill from downtown, or as we approach Burlington on Lake Champlain, we see the familiar collection of campus spires and rooflines highlighted by the magnificent steeple of Ira Allen Chapel. It is a beacon, an icon, a reminder of the importance of our university in the fabric of American higher education, and a familiar anchor to orient us to our campus and its place in our community. It is, in every sense, a *light on the hill*.

I have chosen to use this metaphor to help shape this ‘Across the Green’ memo. For me, this light is as compelling as it is constant. It reminds me every day of the powerful role that great universities play in our communities and our society, and of the tremendous opportunities afforded those of us who teach, learn, explore, discover, create, serve, and inspire at these institutions. The *light on the hill* is bright and warm, but we must not take it for granted. The *light on the hill* brings us together, as a community of scholars, and shines brightly on our shared achievements. It beckons us, and it illuminates our way.

In return, we must – every one of us – take steps to nurture our *light on the hill*. We do this with profound respect for our past and those who came before us, and with great hope for our collective future and those who will create it. A future shaped by actions and accomplishments – some great, some small, some heralded by fanfare, some known only to an individual – that build a better, stronger, lasting university. A lasting light.

I'm proud to share the following sampling of our progress, a reflection of the power and promise of our work together.

## TEACHING, PEDAGOGY, AND ADVISING

Colleges and schools have been engaged in important conversations about academic advising and the evaluation of teaching effectiveness. Driven by our commitments to teaching excellence, effective advising, and student success, these thoughtful discussions are leading to new and/or more robust procedures at the department and college (or school) levels.

Our efforts around academic advising are intended to be resonant with, and complement, those around career planning and the new 4-Year Plan. They also are intended to make clear the bilateral nature of student advising, clarifying our expectations not only for faculty but for students as well. This ongoing activity is in direct response to calls from the Student Government Association (SGA) and the Faculty Senate task committee on academic advising. Work is on-track to be completed this spring, with all colleges and schools posting their updated advising plans online and ensuring they are updated regularly. Learn more about our [academic advising](#) initiative.

Discussions and plans around evaluation of teaching effectiveness also are motivated by calls from the Faculty Senate and SGA. The focus of these important conversations within the colleges and schools is on helping faculty to develop into the best possible teachers, clarifying expectations for effective teaching, creating the best possible learning environments, and acknowledging teaching excellence. These efforts are also proceeding this spring with college/school plans expected to be fully vetted and posted online by the end of the semester. Learn more about our [evaluation of teaching performance](#) initiative.

The UVM Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) continues to offer a wide range of valuable opportunities for instructional faculty to improve, evolve, or enhance their teaching. The Center offers a variety of services to the UVM academic community including faculty development programs and pedagogical and technical support. Learn more about the [CTL](#).

I can report that the revised *Academic Program Review* (APR) system is working well. APR is a collaborative effort of the Faculty Senate and the Provost's Office. Since 2011, a total of nine program reviews have been completed or are nearly complete, and another six are in progress. Learn more about our [Academic Program Reviews](#).

Last week, I had the opportunity to tour the new Larner Team-Based Learning Classroom in the College of Medicine. This is one of the most remarkable and impressive technology-enabled learning spaces I have seen in recent years. In addition to providing state-of-the-art teaching and learning spaces for our medical students, the Larner Classroom will serve as a model for spaces being planned in the new STEM Complex. I am very excited to see the innovations in pedagogy and the investments in learning spaces on our campus. If you have not yet seen the Larner Classroom, I encourage you to arrange for a visit.

## RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

You will recall that last year, when we released the [research report](#) (*Discovery. Innovation. Impact.*), we indicated a subsequent signature publication on UVM's scholarship in the humanities would be produced. These important publications are part of our strategic efforts to celebrate and promote our scholarly achievements, engage supporters, and recruit talent to the University. Last week marked the release of this beautiful new publication, aptly called *Humanities*. Produced by the University of Vermont Humanities Center, *Humanities* demonstrates the rich diversity of scholarly productivity, creative works, and high-impact teaching and learning taking place at UVM and throughout the community. You can find a link to this new publication on the Humanities Center [webpage](#).

Over the last six months, we have focused on a number of new initiatives to assist faculty in obtaining grant and contract support for high impact research and scholarship. We are hiring additional staff to support the research enterprise, to provide training for new investigators, and to assist faculty in identifying and competing for large, center-level grants.

We continue to support the highly successful REACH program that provides competitive seed funding (a total of \$200K annually) to faculty from any discipline at the University. This year, we also launched the university-wide SPARK-VT program, built on the successful program created in the College of Medicine. SPARK-VT competitively awards funding to faculty, enabling them to take the first steps in advancing a promising concept toward commercialization. Proposals will be selected for funding by a panel of highly successful entrepreneurs who volunteer their expertise to the University. A total of \$200K on SPARK-VT funding will be awarded this year. Learn more about the [REACH](#) and [SPARK-VT](#) programs.

Recognizing the importance of interdisciplinary scholarship and research, and with our shared commitment to fostering and growing it at UVM, the Vice President of Research has initiated two new programs. The first, the Faculty Activity Network (FAN) is providing opportunities for faculty members to interact with those from disciplines, with whom they might not typically interact. The second, EQUIP, is similar in concept to REACH but specifically funds innovative and promising cross-disciplinary proposals from two or more faculty members in two or more colleges at UVM. The EQUIP program will be launched this spring. Learn more about the [Faculty Activity Network \(FAN\)](#).

Our commitment to hiring top faculty, providing a supportive environment for their professional development, and creating of new programs to accelerate growth in research already are having a positive impact. Our sponsored research awards have increased from \$78M in FY13 to \$92M in FY14. Our total sponsored awards have risen from \$106M to \$128M during that same period.

In the coming year, I hope to be able to report on more progress in our efforts to create an *innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem* between UVM and the City of Burlington. As many of you know, UVM is a strategic partner in the [Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies](#) (VCET). Last year, VCET was ranked the 11<sup>th</sup> best university and college-oriented business incubator globally, and the 5<sup>th</sup> best in the U.S., by the University Business Indicator Index. This past year, UVM partnered with VCET to open [VCET@BTV](#), an 11,000 square foot co-working and start-up accelerator space in downtown Burlington, just blocks from our campus. This is an innovative technology hub for start-ups, creatives, entrepreneurs and remote working professionals.

Two additional elements of the growing innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem between UVM and Burlington were launched in the past year, Generator and BTV Ignite. [Generator](#) is a "maker space" that serves Vermont's growing community of artists, makers, educators, and curious public by creating access to equipment, tools and materials as well as training opportunities and social events that advance design, prototyping and fabrication. Generator seeks to foster a culture of innovation that could have a direct impact on economic growth in the region. [BTV Ignite](#), with funding from the National Science Foundation, encourages public, private and academic institutions to develop next-generation Internet applications in the region. BTV Ignite seeks to leverage Burlington's powerful gigabit infrastructure as a tool, test-bed and accelerator for economic, educational and community benefit.

A major part of the University's innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem is the [Office of Technology Commercialization](#) (OTC), under the leadership of Dr. Corine Farewell. The OTC assists UVM researchers with bringing innovations to market. In the past year, the OTC has brokered a number of co-development and collaborative agreements partnering local and national companies with UVM researchers working on new medical devices, agricultural storage technology improvements, manufacturing process cleanliness, and virtual therapeutic development.

In the fall, we welcomed the inaugural class for our new Sustainable Entrepreneurship MBA program ([SEMBA](#)). This one-year, accelerated MBA program will "develop the next generation of leaders who will build, disrupt, innovate, and reinvent sustainable enterprises in a world that demands it." This year we also welcomed a large number of new faculty, including many with interests in innovation and entrepreneurship such as Erik Mosen, the Steven Grossman Endowed Chair in Entrepreneurship in the School of Business Administration. Finally, we are continuing to work closely with the state of Vermont and Vermont-based companies to create internship opportunities for our students as well as research partnership opportunities for our faculty. Burlington continues to be recognized<sup>1</sup> for its burgeoning innovation culture, and the University of Vermont is proud to be an important part of this excitement and success.

## CAMPUS CAPITAL PROJECTS

In the [President's Strategic Action Plan](#), President Sullivan cites as one of the highest priorities *Identifying Necessary Investments to Ensure a Bright Future*, saying "Our investments in facilities, infrastructure, information technologies, and green building advance the educational and research mission of the University." We are continuing to invest in our academic buildings, our IT infrastructure, and our campus facilities with unwavering commitment to financial and environmental sustainability. As with all of our investment decisions, we are guided by our goals for academic excellence and student success.

Aggressive fundraising targeted at strategic capital project priorities, timely and strategic refinancing of existing debt, and support from the Board of Trustees to finance through a combination of debt

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<sup>1</sup> In the last two years, Burlington was ranked #2 on a list of "the 20 Most Innovative Cities in the U.S." by *Business Insider* and was named a "Most Promising Tech Hub to Watch" by *Techie.com*. Also during that time, Burlington was ranked #1 on *Travel & Leisure's* list of "America's Best College Towns" and named "America's Capital of Education" by *Urbanful*.

service and non-debt funds (e.g., gifts and other commitments) has allowed us to move forward on a number of priority projects. Those that are now either in preliminary or final design phases include: (1) the STEM Complex (new building and renovation), (2) the Taft School (renovation), (3) Alumni House (renovation and new Pavilion), (4) Billings Library (renovation), and (5) a new residence hall and dining complex to replace the CBW buildings (new construction).

Also moving forward, and visible from our campus, will be the construction of the new in-patient building at the University of Vermont Medical Center. The final design work has been completed (and Phase 1 of the construction has just been started) for a significant expansion to teaching and learning spaces at the Miller Research and Educational Center located on Spear Street. Preliminary design work has been completed and active fundraising is underway for an expansion to Kalkin Hall. Finally, design planning is underway for a new Multi-Purpose Event Center and fundraising has moved into the active phase for this project as well.

Capital projects completed since 2010 include (1) the George D. Aiken Center (renovation), (2) Jeffords Hall (new construction), (3) the Courtyard at Given (new construction), and (4) Redstone Lofts (new apartment-style housing, privately financed and constructed).

Taken together, these represent significant investments in nearly all aspects of the University – agriculture and life sciences; arts and humanities; business; environment and natural resources; science and engineering; the health sciences; residential life and dining; and alumni affairs.

Among our top priorities for future capital projects related to the academic enterprise will be improved space for social sciences and possibly a new classroom building to meet evolving pedagogical needs (e.g., larger and more flexible learning spaces) throughout the University.

## INCENTIVE-BASED BUDGET (IBB)

The Final Report of the Incentive-based Budget Model Steering Committee was presented to President Sullivan at the end of January. The [full report](#), now approved by the President, has been posted on the IBB website. With the development phase of IBB now largely complete, our focus is on implementation. Vice President Richard Cate is leading the efforts to operationalize the IBB model. He has engaged expertise from across campus in support of this work, and related information is available on the implementation section of the [IBB website](#).

As the University transitions to IBB, we already are seeing exciting new ideas coming forward and new initiatives being launched. As academic units come to understand the opportunities afforded by the new budget model – to innovate, take risks, realize efficiencies, grow strategically, and expand programs to reach new and broader audiences – we can expect even more innovation.

I have been enormously impressed by the creativity and thoughtful discourse that has accompanied the transition to IBB. In particular, I have been impressed by the breadth of engagement and innovation by the academic units. Nearly every UVM college and school has launched, or is preparing to launch, new programs or initiatives. Examples include the SEMBA program in BSAD, Sustainability Leadership in RSEN, Biomedical Engineering in CEMS/COM, and Public Health in COM/CNHS. There

are also new summer programs being contemplated, new distance and hybrid models being explored, and new partnerships being forged both within UVM (e.g., between colleges) and with other institutions.

In addition, colleges and schools are examining enrollment patterns and trends, staffing, and faculty hiring priorities. Many are re-examining their organizational structure, their program offerings, and their strategic priorities in light of the transparency, revenue generation, and the ability to forward-plan that is afforded by the new budget model. Academic units are evaluating and enhancing their student retention programs, their academic advising procedures, and their incorporation of high-impact learning practices.

Tuition is our largest revenue source at UVM. And the clear messages about enrollment (“Enrollment Management is everyone’s business.”) and revenue generation (“We cannot cut our way out of financial challenges. We must find ways to increase revenue.”) are being heard. IBB provides a framework to increase revenue in ways that are closely aligned with the mission of the University and the strategic priorities of each college and school. For example, our summer enrollments continue to grow as our offerings expand and we seek to make the most strategic use of summer at UVM.

In early January, I hosted two IBB mini-retreats for administrative and academic leadership teams, including department chairs. The questions and comments from the groups reflected deepening levels of engagement and an understanding of the power, and limitations, of the model.

IBB will enable innovation, strategic planning linked to resources, and the forward-planning that will ensure our sustainable financial future. In short, our new budget model has the potential to harness the power of the entire campus in support of our core academic mission.

Our continued commitment to transparency and effective communication is critical to the success of our transition to IBB. We must all understand that while our budget model has changed, our *core values* as a university have not; that our ongoing budget challenges fully mirror what is happening at universities across the country; and that IBB did not create, nor will it solve, our budget challenges. IBB is not a panacea. In and of itself, it will not reduce expenses, create efficiencies, or create new revenue. But the new model *will* enable thoughtful and strategic decisions to be made – following robust discussion and with benefit of full information and transparency – about how to address these challenges.

We acknowledge and respond to these challenges, as university citizens – to nurture the *light on the hill* and ensure that it continues to light the path of students, faculty, staff, and the state of Vermont for many years to come.

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND STUDENT SUCCESS

Exciting new programs have been implemented that both enhance the current student experience and prepare our students for success beyond UVM. Particularly noteworthy are the campus-wide efforts focused on *career success* and *first-year student retention*.



## Career Success

UVM's career enhancement initiatives continue apace. Our goal is for every UVM student to create a personal [4-Year Plan for Career Success](#), building knowledge and skills through academic and experiential learning. We are already seeing results:

- Requests by students for undergraduate research funding increased more than 40% over the last year.
- In January, our first Job Shadowing program matched 55 student applicants with 47 alumni.
- The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) and the College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences (CEMS) are launching new internship programs.
- [Academic internship standards](#) have been approved by the Faculty Senate, and the UVM Career Center will soon release an official Memorandum of Understanding for internship providers and faculty instructors.

All of these efforts are aimed at ensuring that our graduates are engaged and successful. To understand the outcome of our efforts, we need to better track where our students go after graduation. To that end, starting this month, we will be sending a "Share Your Success" survey to the members of the Class of 2015. They will be encouraged to participate whenever they accept a job or a graduate or professional school admission offer through November 2015. Because high response rates are essential to developing robust information at the college and departmental levels, department chairs, program directors, and deans are also being asked to promote student participation in the survey. In addition, we have created a [Career Outcomes](#) website where faculty and staff can document plans that students share informally.

## First-Year Programs

Three First-year Student Interest Groups (FIG's) were piloted in fall 2014. The College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Business Administration, and the College of Nursing and Health Sciences partnered with Academic Support Programs and First Year Experience to develop small cohorts of students enrolled in a set of common courses that received targeted academic support outside of class. The program provided a sense of community and helped students develop early strategies for academic success. Plans are underway to expand the pilot program to include residential components in the next academic year.

A new residential program, the Wellness Environment (WE), will be launched next year as a residence hall community for first-year students committed to living in an environment that promotes and rewards healthy activities, including living in a community that is free from the influence and impact of alcohol and other drugs. WE students will have the opportunity to explore the concepts of healthy bodies and healthy minds through curricular offerings while they receive free workshops and peer coaching on nutrition, fitness, and mindfulness.

## Advising Center

During the fall 2014 semester a task force with broad university representation and led by Associate Provost Brian Reed undertook a visioning and feasibility study for a centrally-located advising center. Such an advising center would not replace the advising systems that are currently in place in each of

UVM's colleges and schools, but rather supplement and support those systems, with particular focus on advising for first-year students and those who have not yet selected their major field of study. The advising center would therefore serve as a starting point for students and as a quick response resource on general advising issues.

The findings and recommendations of the task force are being considered as this memo is being written. The implementation of such a centralized model will require reallocation of resources as well as buy-in and support from each of the colleges and schools.

### High-Impact Practices

The Provost's Office is working with the Faculty Senate, the academic leadership of the colleges and schools, and the offices that provide faculty and staff development opportunities to promote engaged teaching and learning practices. The *American Association of Colleges and Universities* identifies ten [High-Impact Practices](#) that have been shown to be highly effective for enhancing student engagement and, therefore, the quality and impact of the college experience. Many of these High-Impact Practices are already in use at UVM, in one form or another and to varying levels.

We are now taking a more focused and purposeful approach to promoting high-impact, engaged practices. To stimulate the development of innovative efforts to increase student engagement, the Provost's Office is initiating the *Students Achieving Success and Satisfaction* (SASS) Grant Program. This program will make available up to \$50,000 in grants next year to support well designed, promising proposals to increase student engagement through high-impact practices which can be sustained beyond the term of the grant. A request for proposals will be issued in the coming weeks.

### NATIONAL RECOGNITIONS

We continue to receive favorable national attention for our efforts and successes around academics, student engagement and success, and faculty achievements. Here are just some of the recent accolades and recognitions we have received in recent months:

- UVM was ranked 35<sup>th</sup> among 176 public universities in the 2015 *USN&WR* "Best Colleges" ranking.
- *USN&WR* lauded the University of Vermont Medical Center for its initiatives to eliminate health care-associated infections.
- UVM once again received the *Community Engagement Certification* from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- Professor Joshua Bongard (Computer Science) was selected as one of the respondents to Josh Brockman's yearly *Edge Question*, a major intellectual event and honor. This year's question was "What do you think about machines that think?"
- UVM alumna Sasha Fisher was named one of *Forbes'* "30 Under 30 Social Entrepreneurs".



- UVM was ranked 35<sup>th</sup> among all universities (public and private) in *Washington Monthly's* “Best Bang for the Buck” ranking.
- The UVM School of Business Administration was ranked among the top-50 “Most Innovative” business schools in America for its new MBA in Sustainable Entrepreneurship (SEMBA) by *Business Management Degrees*.
- UVM ranks among the top-10 “Green Colleges” according to a new guide to be published by the *Princeton Review* in April.
- UVM was ranked a “rising star” by *Forbes Magazine*, citing UVM as the second fastest rising school among the top 200 colleges and universities in the *Forbes'* rankings, and offering this commentary:

“University of Vermont continues to float near the top for many reasons. UVM posts a high graduation rate, and students borrow much less than we expect. In fact, UVM is in the top 6% of all our 650 in both of these categories in our component ranking. Additionally, student debt default rate and overall debt burden rank highly. UVM exceeded our expectations by keeping debt loads low while remaining dedicated to graduating students in four years.”

In short, we are a top-50 national university and we are on the rise. We are being recognized for academic quality and commitment to student success, for innovation, for impact in our community, and for our commitment to access and affordability.

As we focus our attention, resources, and efforts on our highest priorities as a university (academic excellence and student success), and we continue to recruit outstanding faculty members from the very best programs and universities, our visibility and reputation will continue to grow and our academic profile will continue to improve. This elevates the University and each of us.

## CLOSING COMMENTS

The University of Vermont is - first and foremost - a community of talented and committed people, without whom we cannot achieve shared goals or deliver on our promise of a world-class education. UVM is one of the nation's best small research universities, built around immutable core values including commitment to liberal education and the teacher-scholar model. UVM is also at an inflection point in its history, necessitated by economic and demographic factors, but one filled with great opportunity.

Change is a natural part of our lives and our endeavors. It is a natural part of any organization or institution. We cannot fear or resist change. We must embrace and welcome it. We do not seek change for change's sake. We seek change as a strategic imperative, to continue to meet our goals and fulfill our mission, as the world itself changes.

As a great university, we must commit to evolving as an institution and as an academic community in order to best serve our students, to provide the best possible teaching and learning environment, to extend our impact as a leading national university with global reach and global vision, and to ensure a sustainable future.

What has impressed me most about our university is the willingness and commitment by so many in our community to stepping up and helping effect positive change. We are a community of many voices, and many opinions and ideas. But this community is welcoming and affirming of this intellectual diversity. Indeed it is this diversity of ideas, this inclusivity of viewpoints, and this commitment to robust and authentic discourse that gives rise to so many positive changes.

The *light on the hill* inspires me, comforts me, and reminds me how privileged we are to work at a great university. I look up at it when I walk across the campus, I scan the skyline for it as I fly back into Burlington, I have a picture of it on my computer desktop, and it is the first image in my mind when I think of the University of Vermont. It lights my way and it reminds me of what's important. I hope it does for you as well.

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

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

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

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