



Across the Green  
January 2017

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

***The University: Agent of Change in a Changing Age***

As I write this, we sit on the cusp of a new year and new administrations in Montpelier and in Washington. We use times such as these to look back and reflect on goals reached, accomplishments shared, challenges faced, and lessons learned. And we look ahead with excitement, hope, uncertainty, and sometimes anxiety. Such is the nature of time. Such is the nature of transitions.

I have always regarded America's top universities as agents of change. Social movements are started on our campuses, come of age on our campuses, and move out into our communities. Political and economic theories emerge from our lecture halls and scientific revolutions are born in our laboratories. Our college and university campuses are places where ideas are hatched, theories are examined, practices are studied, and philosophies are debated. In our halls and on our grounds, young people are nurtured to be thinkers, skeptics, analysts, and dreamers. Our universities are the breeders of ideas and ideologies, and they are places where the next generation takes its first steps.

American higher education has come under increasing criticism in the last decade for a variety of reasons. There is debate – in living rooms and boardrooms, and certainly in the media – about the cost and value of higher education. There are accusations that higher education has become politicized, too liberal, or too ideological. And there are some who feel our campuses have become too tolerant, too nurturing, and too protective of students and their sensibilities. We are being accused of coddling students and creating generations of fragile intellectuals. These are serious accusations and there may be merit to some, but they are not new. American higher education has always had its critics, even from within the academy. Yet it remains a compelling model and powerful force, one that is still envied around the world, and one that continues to drive innovation, our economy, the arts, discovery of new ideas, scientific and technological advances, and, yes, social movements.

The criticisms must not be dismissed, however. Even as we remain committed to principles of inclusiveness and accessibility, and equity and justice, we must ensure we are challenging our students (and ourselves) with difficult and controversial subjects, with opposing and inconsistent viewpoints, and with perspectives and even principles that differ from our own. Critical study, higher learning, and ultimately deeper understanding comes from debate and from discourse. We must be made to feel uncomfortable, uneasy, and uncertain at times. But we must also ensure our students feel their classrooms and campuses are safe environments in which to examine difficult topics, debate polarizing issues or even hear from polarizing figures, and criticize established as well as emergent theories. Tall orders, I would agree, but we are up to the challenge. Universities are remarkable institutions.

As we enter the new calendar year, we bear witness to another American tradition – a presidential transition. This follows a particularly partisan and divisive election season, one in which the spectrum of emotions was on display, angry rhetoric seemed more the norm, and the frustrations and fears of many Americans came to the surface. It was not the best of times for our leaders nor was it an easy time for our country. As a university provost, my role is not political. It is, however, to seek every opportunity to elevate our university's academic mission, programs, and stature. And the experience of the recent election season provides ample opportunity for us all.

In the days and weeks that followed the election, I made it a point to sit and speak quietly with students wherever I found them – in the Davis Center, walking across campus between classes, and in the residence halls. I especially sought out students that seemed worried, or sad, or were sitting alone. We talked about the election season, the democratic process, and even the outcome of the local elections in their home states. Some students wanted to talk about their families and their homes. They shared conversations they had with their parents about the election. We talked about the privilege of being at a university, part of a diverse and supportive academic community, and having opportunity to study, debate, and learn – from great faculty and from one another. In the end, I asked each student “where else would you rather be than at a university right now?”

I hope this brought some comfort to the students with whom I spoke, at least those seeking it, but I share this here because it seems apt for us all. In a time of transition, where large segments of our population are expressing frustration and even anger (whether with their vote or in the aftermath of the election), what could possibly provide a more intellectually stimulating and nurturing environment than a great university? If there are challenges to face, questions to ponder, processes to evaluate, and outcomes to understand – where else but at a university to do this? I feel most fortunate to be at the University of Vermont, part of *this* community of teacher-scholars, and feel confident and hopeful that we will be part of the great intellectual movement ahead – and help bridge the divide. We will do this in our role as a public research university, as a land-grant university serving the people and the state of Vermont, and as an academic community deeply committed to public service, social justice, and inclusion. We are political scientists, economists, doctors, engineers, sociologists, historians, artists, authors, environmentalists, behavioral scientists, religious scholars, philosophers, botanists, cultural anthropologists, entrepreneurs, computer scientists, and more. We are scholars of our discipline and students of the world in which we live. We are members of the academy, drawn together by our passion for teaching, learning, and discovery.

I hope that ours will be a university that chooses not simply to be critical, or to be dismissive or worst yet to disengage or separate from mainstream discussions, issues, and needs. We must, instead, be *part* of those discussions, help to lead those discussions, and provide the knowledge, data, insight, and perspectives necessary to ensure those discussions are productive.

For sure we cannot back away from the study of issues we know to be timely and critical, such as climate change. Rather, I hope we will commit as a university to knowledge discovery, integration, and dissemination – the science, the economics, the policy, the human and planetary impacts – around climate change and adaptation.

But we can also use our place and time in American history to better understand the recent election outcomes and voter demographics. We know, for example, that this is the first presidential election in US history to split so clearly along lines of income, race, age, education, and even urban vs. rural population. What will be our role, as a university, in addressing the issues that divide us? How will we seek to close the education gap or the income gap? How do we provide access to higher education to rural or historically underserved populations? How do we, and all universities, operationalize our role as institutions of higher learning to continue to educate future generations of voters?

There is so much we can and must do. I ask our faculty to consider the audacity of this challenge in preparing syllabi, crafting courses, creating degree programs, and – most importantly – engaging with our students. We all are bearing witness to a remarkable time in history. And how our University emerges in this time of both political transition and mounting scrutiny of American higher education is up to us.

#### THE TEACHER-SCHOLAR MODEL AND BOYER'S DEFINITION OF SCHOLARSHIP

I often use the 'Across the Green' memos to highlight one of the pillars of our mission as a land-grant, public research university: teaching, research and scholarship, and public service. I have written about our pedagogical innovations and commitment to excellence in teaching. I have written about our research activity, our investments in support of faculty research and scholarship, the success of our faculty in securing extramural support for their labs and their research, and the impact of our research and scholarship nationally and internationally. And I have written about the meaningful and important work our faculty, staff, and students are doing in our communities and throughout the state of Vermont.

In many ways, the *Teacher-Scholar* model we embrace at Vermont embodies all three pillars. The Teacher-Scholar model has been part of the UVM ethos for generations, likely from the very inception of the University. It has been embraced and emulated by other leading universities over the years. But, I believe, we are alone in our consistent and unwavering commitment to this modality of teaching, learning, discovery, and discourse. We recruit faculty who are committed not only to undergraduate teaching, but to engaging undergraduate students in scholarship and discovery. We maintain a diverse and robust portfolio of graduate and professional programs, many highly ranked, but never at the expense of our commitment to undergraduate education. We have created a *continuum* of learning and discovery engaging undergraduate students, graduate and professional students, and faculty and staff. In part because of our size and in part because of

our culture, our undergraduate students are afforded opportunities not found at most other research universities.

The Teacher-Scholar model at UVM is a *beacon* to would-be students, attracting those who seek an intimate and engaging undergraduate experience but also the benefits and opportunities of a research university. It also is a *signal* to would-be faculty of the value we place on teaching excellence, student mentoring, and bringing their scholarship into their classrooms and their students into their laboratories.

We continue not only to promote our commitment to the Teacher-Scholar model, but to *invest* in it as well. In the last year we have added new resources to enable and expand opportunities for students as well as for faculty; new recognitions of excellence and exemplars; and new professional development opportunities around teaching effectiveness, advising, and mentoring.

At our senior leadership retreat last summer, we dedicated a session to the Teacher-Scholar model, its place at UVM, and definitions of scholarship that could capture and excite (reflect and inspire) the greatest number of faculty on our campus. The discussion, which I led with Vice President for Research Richard Galbraith, was intentionally provocative and unexpectedly robust. It ended up becoming a highlight of the retreat for me and others, a focal point for the new academic year, and a presentation that we repeated to other audiences (including the Board of Trustees, the Faculty Senate, and other campus leadership groups). There was broad support for the definitions of scholarship first articulated by Ernest Boyer (1990) in his seminal report, "Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate," published by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Boyer proposes four different categories of scholarship: (1) the scholarship of discovery, (2) the scholarship of integration, (3) the scholarship of application (also called the scholarship of engagement), and (4) the scholarship of teaching and learning.

The *scholarship of discovery* refers to original research that advances the state-of-the-art or our knowledge. The *scholarship of integration* refers to the synthesis of information across disciplines. The *scholarship of application* refers to the application of disciplinary expertise beyond the university, in such a way that it can still be evaluated by peers. Finally, the *scholarship of teaching and learning* refers to the systematic study of teaching and learning processes, also in a form that can be evaluated by peers. (Note this final category is not the same as scholarly teaching, which generally is not shared publicly or subject to peer review.)

Note that three of Boyer's categories of scholarship map directly onto the three missions of land grant universities: teaching, research, and service. The fourth category explicitly identifies interdisciplinary scholarship. This is both timely and relevant as it reflects the trends toward greater interdisciplinary teaching, research, and scholarship. It is especially relevant for us at UVM it has long been a priority for the University and, in fact, is both protected and incited under the new budget model.

What I find so compelling about Boyer's categorization is that it spans the breadth of scholarly activities, allowing all members of the professoriate to align their scholarship with one or more categories, and provides both a justification for our work and a confirmation of its value and importance. It also smooths the continuum between teaching/learning and research/discovery – a hallmark of our Teacher-Scholar model. I have asked the deans to engage their colleges and

schools in a discussion of Boyer's scholarship classifications, to seek ways to incorporate them into their strategic plans, and ensure high achievement in all four types of scholarship is both valued and recognized. I hope all faculty members will choose to participate fully in those discussions.

## FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE

Last year, the campus-wide *First Year Experience Task Committee* provided President Sullivan and me with a series of recommendations to improve student success and satisfaction, which ultimately will result in increased first-to-second year retention and four-year graduation rates. The work of the task committee included benchmarking against successes at other universities as well as a careful assessment of what we are doing well at UVM. Indeed, many of the best-practices that have been shown to positively influence retention and student satisfaction already exist at UVM. Two notable exceptions are (1) a common first-year course taken by all incoming undergraduate students, and (2) the number of first-year students participating in residential learning communities. While we have first-year introductory courses in most of our colleges/schools, we do not (at present) have a course that is taken by ALL undergraduate students in their first year. And while about 40% of our first-year students live in some type of residential learning community, this percentage is far below the figure at those schools with the highest first-to-second year retention rates. Based on the recommendations provided by the task committee, President Sullivan directed us to (1) develop a proposal for a common first-year course for all undergraduate students, and (2) increase the percentage of our first-year students participating in residential learning communities, with a goal of 100% participation within the next few years.

At this time, we are making good progress toward both goals. Over the past year, numerous discussions and listening sessions were held across the campus – with students, faculty, student services professionals, and residential life staff – to build support, understanding, and engagement. This also afforded us the opportunity to learn about the challenges facing us as we implement these changes. Thanks to the hard work and thoughtful input from so many on our campus, we have confidence in the path forward. For example, we recognize the value and importance of retaining first-year courses in the college/schools, and for providing students with the opportunity to choose highly structured OR less structured living-learning communities. As a result of our campus conversations, we also recognize the best option for a common first-year course (“University 101”) is one offered through the residence halls and living-learning communities. Such a course, taught jointly perhaps by faculty and student affairs professionals, will focus on topics such as navigating the university, engaging with faculty, the importance of advising and mentoring, high-impact practices such as undergraduate research and study abroad, managing priorities and time, seeking co-curricular and other enrichment activities, the availability of student support services (academic, health and wellness, mental health, safety), building and following a four-year plan for graduation, and understanding university policies.

In the coming months, you will hear more about these evolving plans and hopefully choose to become engaged in the planning and launch of the first-year course. You will also hear from Vice Provost for Student Affairs Annie Stevens and Director of Residential Life Rafael Rodriguez about our plans to expand the number of living-learning communities (as well as the range of options for students) in each of the next few years.

## FIVE-YEAR BACHELOR'S/MASTER'S STRATEGIES

Embedded in the University's [Academic Excellence Goals](#) are clear goals for improving retention and four-year graduation rates. We have reviewed and refreshed strategies around academic advising, career planning and advising, and monitoring of student progress. We also have invested in new resources and new programs for student success such as the [Career+Experience Hub](#), the new Advising Center, and expanded programs around health and wellness (including the new [Wellness Environment](#) program). We have built clear expectations into our recruiting materials as well as our on-campus welcome and orientation programs. And colleges and schools are directly involved in monitoring students' progress toward graduation.

Even as the results of these initiatives begin to be seen, and we become more widely recognized for our shared university-wide commitment to student success and student satisfaction, we continue to seek more opportunities for students to take the greatest advantage of their time at UVM. Examples include greater and more intellectually diverse opportunities for undergraduate research, new internship and co-op programs, and new minors and certificates.

Another way we are providing opportunities to exceptional and highly motivated students is through our accelerated master's programs (AMP's). These "fifth-year master's programs" allow students to earn both a bachelor's and master's degree in five years, saving as much as one year (time and costs) and providing an advanced degree. In the last two years, under the new budget model, a number of new AMP's have been developed and promoted, bringing the total number of fifth-year master's programs at UVM to 24 (with more currently under review). We will monitor enrollments carefully, and use this information to inform decisions about new AMP's or changes to existing AMP's to make them more attractive to top students.

If a department or program has interest in developing an accelerated master's program, or if multiple units wish to propose an interdisciplinary AMP, a good first step would be to discuss it with the college/school dean(s) and the dean of the Graduate College, Cynthia Forehand.

Fifth-year Bachelor's/Master's programs are growing in number and popularity at many universities, and are increasingly sought after by high achieving undergraduate students. UVM is well positioned to offer distinctive and compelling programs, both disciplinary and interdisciplinary, in many of the most desired fields of study. I see this as offering tremendous opportunity for the colleges and schools that wish to take advantage of such a strategy. Above all, I believe it provides our best students with an efficient option to earn a master's degree.

## SEEKING EFFICIENCIES, REQUESTING IDEAS

One of the priorities in the President's [Strategic Action Plan](#) relates to [efficiency and effectiveness](#). As we seek to reduce cost, realize efficiencies, and continue to be more effective and successful, we must also be careful not to overload faculty or take them away from core mission responsibilities. This is a challenge for every university given increased regulation and growing layers of compliance obligations (unfunded mandates); nonetheless it is something to which the President and I are committed. Faculty must be able to focus on their teaching and scholarship without undue burden from shifts in staffing or responsibilities, to the extent possible given today's budgetary and regulatory realities.

President Sullivan and I meet every month with the Faculty Senate Executive Council. (We also meet monthly with the Faculty Senate president and vice president, and attend all meetings of the full Faculty Senate.) Our meetings with the Faculty Senate Executive Council are especially helpful for us as they afford an opportunity to share ideas, air concerns, and brainstorm together. At one meeting this fall, I offered the idea that we solicit ideas for “improving efficiency” in any aspect of the University, and that we open this request for input to the entire campus. We currently have a robust and effective “Administrative Unit Review” process at UVM, a process that is similar to our “Academic Program Review” process but focused on administrative efficiency and effectiveness (rather than academic program quality); however, this does not provide opportunity for constructive ideation by all members of our campus community. While deans, vice presidents, directors, department chairs, and others are constantly seeking ways to optimize operations, increase efficiencies, and eliminate wasted time or resources, I felt certain there were more good ideas out there and we needed some way to collect them. The Senate leadership was enthusiastic about this idea and immediately offered to appoint a working committee to reach out to faculty for ideas to improve efficiency in any of our university procedures or offices. I would like to supplement this generous offer with a campus-wide call, perhaps with a simple web-based form to submit ideas, that would be accessible to all faculty, staff, and students.

My office will collect suggestions, parse them by general category, and (where appropriate) pass them to the cognizant university leader, office, or administrative unit. We will provide a report to the Faculty Senate and other governance groups at the appropriate time, both summarizing the constructive suggestions received and providing information on follow-up actions that have resulted.

The more efficiently we operate as an institution with finite resources, the more of those finite resources we can invest in our academic programs and personnel. Of course we must also follow state and federal laws as well as best-practices around financial management, compliance, safety, and audit matters. But there are always opportunities to improve procedures and realize cost savings, and we must look for these regularly and often.

#### INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD SYSTEMS INITIATIVE (UPDATES)

We continue to make progress on two important university-wide scholarly initiatives, each progressing along its own timeline. The first, on which I have regularly reported over the last two years, is the Institute for Environment. We reached two important milestones this fall, the first being receiving the Faculty Senate’s endorsement of the proposed institute’s structure, goals, operating model and budget, and governance. The second critical milestone was confirmation of the first major gift toward a permanent endowment for the institute. The University, Foundation, and Institute leadership are working together to secure additional permanent endowment funds and we will continue to keep the campus informed about plans to launch the new institute.

The second university-wide scholarly initiative currently in the planning stage is around Food Systems. This proposed interdisciplinary research and scholarship effort builds on earlier and highly successful efforts in the last few years to coalesce food system teaching, research, scholarship, and outreach activities throughout the University. As part of that work, a series of new food systems programs were launched, making the University of Vermont the first university

in the country to offer degrees in food systems at the BS, MS, and PhD levels. Over the last year, the Food Systems core planning team worked closely with a consultant to develop a strategic vision and plan for a more aggressive, more focused, and more successful initiative around food systems at UVM, one that would compete for both state and federal funds, as well as corporate and foundation philanthropic support, and that would be able to engage even more faculty, staff, and students from across the University. I anticipate receiving the planning team's revised strategic vision/plan this spring. Shortly after that, I expect the team will begin vetting their proposal with the faculty through the colleges, schools, and the Faculty Senate.

#### EDUCATIONAL STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE (UPDATE)

At the time of transition to the new budget model, and following specific recommendations of the IBB Steering Committee, a standing committee was created to monitor the functioning and integrity of our core academic mission. The [Educational Stewardship Committee](#) (ESC), a free-standing joint committee of the Provost's Office and the Faculty Senate, was thus established last year. The specific charges of the ESC are: (1) to safeguard the integrity of the University's educational mission with respect to stated tenets, particularly as those tenets may be impacted by the new incentive-based budget model (IBB); and 2) to provide recommendations to promote excellence in teaching and learning and the educational experience. To carry out its charge, the ESC monitors data provided by the [Office of Institutional Research](#) (*e.g.*, section sizes, changes in service course enrollments, changes in the number and type of cross-listed courses, etc.) and fields concerns that are brought to its attention by members of the academic community. The ESC reports to both the Provost and the Faculty Senate Executive Council. The Committee is co-chaired by the Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning (Brian Reed) and a member appointed by the Faculty Senate president (Rosemary Dale). The Committee has broad representation including five members of the Faculty Senate. The Committee's charter, roster, working documents, reports and monitored data all are available (and updated regularly) on their [webpage](#).

In its first year, the ESC has addressed three issues and the outcomes (resolutions) demonstrate the Committee is functioning as intended. The issues and the outcomes are fully documented on the ESC webpage. Regular reports of the activities of the Educational Stewardship Committee will be provided by the co-chairs to the Faculty Senate.

The ESC has demonstrated that it can take on challenging issues and concerns in an unbiased, thorough, thoughtful, and respectful manner. Faculty members are welcome (and encouraged) to contact any of the Committee members directly with ideas, concerns, or questions. I extend my thanks to the Faculty Senate leadership for their partnership and to the ESC members for their good work on this important oversight and monitoring activity.

#### FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

As part of our commitment to faculty success, the Office of the Provost seeks to provide all UVM faculty, as well as their mentors, department chairs, and deans, with timely and useful professional development opportunities.

Building on a series of successful faculty orientation events in the fall, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs Jim Vigoreaux has worked closely with faculty, department chairs, and deans, and with the Faculty Senate, to identify faculty professional development needs and opportunities. This fall saw the first two university-wide faculty professional development events, as part of the UVM Faculty Development Series administered by Associate Provost Vigoreaux's office. The theme for this year's series is "*The Role of Faculty in the Success of 21<sup>st</sup> Century College Students.*" On October 10, we welcomed Professor Maureen Reed (Ryerson University) who delivered a keynote address on teaching resilience and resourcefulness in the context of an academic course. Following the lecture, faculty had the opportunity to participate in roundtable groups to share experiences and best practices on how to help students develop resilience. The afternoon capped-off with a workshop guided by the keynote speaker on managing a classroom when problems and sensitive issues arise. On October 27, faculty met with Professor Corey Keyes (Emory University), keynote speaker at the Mental Health Matters conference and a pioneer in the field of positive psychology. The conversation with Dr. Keyes, as well as his keynote address, on how faculty can foster an environment in which all students can flourish was at once informational, inspirational and aspirational.

Associate Provost Jim Vigoreaux, working closely with Associate Provost Brian Reed, the Office of the Vice President for Research, and the Office of the Vice President for Human Resources, Diversity, and Multicultural Affairs, also has been building and promoting a wide range of activities that support faculty professional growth. Examples include a brown bag series on grant writing and a course on universal design for learning. A complete inventory of available resources is being compiled and will be available on the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs' [website](#) and the Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning's [website](#).

I also wanted to highlight evidence of our commitment to recognizing and celebrating faculty accomplishments. The first is the new publication, [INQUIRY](#), highlighting faculty research, scholarship, and creative work. The second is the beautiful new display case in Waterman (which we dedicated in a ceremony October 11) highlighting University Distinguished Professors, outstanding faculty holding endowed professorships and chairs, and Kroepsch-Maurice Award winners. The third was the Faculty Recognition Dinner on November 7, an event that recognizes all faculty who have been promoted or tenured as well as those appointed to endowed positions in the past year. And fourth is the new [President's Award for Lecturers/Senior Lecturers](#) announced this fall. I also include among these important recognitions and celebrations the annual Faculty Publication Reception hosted in November by UVM President Sullivan and Faculty Senate President Paris.

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS (UPDATE)

Now in our second year working with the firm 160over90, we are making great progress in coordinating our communications strategies and activities throughout the University, extending our reach and our visibility nationally, and executing a focused and strategic campaign to realize our ambitious enrollment management goals around quality and diversity. 160over90 works with many of the nation's top universities, including UCLA, the University of Virginia, Miami University, Texas A&M, Temple University, and the University of Florida. Our contract with 160over90 is quite modest in comparison to these other schools; however, the scope of work is also more focused (on enrollment management).

Some of the work we are executing with 160over90 is readily apparent, but much is behind the scenes and focused on building a sustainable communications infrastructure by working directly with the communications professionals within each of the colleges and schools. The first products of this important three-year partnership, however, can easily be seen. First, we have a coordinated approach to strategic communications throughout the University, including all colleges and schools including the College of Medicine and the Honors College, Admissions, Student Affairs, UVM Athletics, Continuing and Distance Education, the UVM Foundation, and the UVM Medical Center. Second, we have developed consistent guidelines and templates for all print and web design projects, and we have provided the communications staff throughout the University with templates and training in their use. Third, campus-wide communicators meetings, chaired by Creative Director Amanda Waite, bring staff from University Communications, the academic units, student life, the College of Medicine, and the UVM Foundation together monthly for professional development and collaboration. Amanda Waite, in her role as Creative Director, and Vice President for Enrollment Management Stacey Kostell serve as our primary contacts with the 160over90 team, coordinating our efforts together and prioritizing specific projects. Fourth is the suite of new communications materials built in support of our enrollment management strategy. These include the University's new viewbook, presentation and video content as part of our admissions and campus visit activities, and new banners across our campus. Also rolled out this year have been new webpages, new brochures, and new magazines and annual reports for departments, programs, schools, and colleges. By employing consistent (and attractive) design elements (see: [UVM Creative Style Guide](#)) in all of these projects, the University is building a consistent visual identify, one that leverages and reflects our academic strengths, our culture, and our ideals.

Even in just our second year, we are beginning to see clear evidence of the value of this communications strategy and partnership. Extending our visibility nationally, and focusing on our greatest strengths and distinctive advantages as a top university, and sharpening our recruitment, admission, and financial aid strategies resulted in (1) the highest quality first-year class in the University's history, and (2) nearly \$6M more in undergraduate tuition revenue. UVM's success, investments, and innovations are gaining national recognition at a far faster pace. Our more focused and well-coordinated strategy for promoting UVM research has resulted in more and better story placements in leading national and international publications. University Communications maintains a list of recent [top media placements](#). Finally, this year we have seen an increase in the quality of applications, clear evidence that we are succeeding in messaging the quality and value of a UVM education to Vermonters.

## LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

In December an [announcement](#) was made of the appointment of Chuck Ross as the next director of Extension. Chuck is completing eleven years of service as Secretary of the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets and brings a tremendous amount of experience, as well as extensive and important connections throughout the State, to his new position. He is a graduate of UVM (and University of Washington) and served as a member of the UVM Board of Trustees and chair of its Budget and Finance Committee. Chuck also recently concluded his service as president of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture.

This appointment coincides with the decision to move Extension back into the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, where it resided prior to 1998. The decision to reunite these two important units of the University was made, following extensive consultation and discussions statewide, in order to strengthen the abilities of both CALS and Extension to achieve their missions around teaching, research, and service to Vermonters and to Vermont. The appointment of Chuck Ross as director of Extension at UVM has been met with enthusiasm and praise throughout the State.

Chuck Ross replaces Doug Lantagne, who last fall announced his decision to step down as dean of Extension, a position he has held since 2003. Doug has been a tremendous leader for Extension and a valued member of the University's academic leadership team. Please join me in thanking Doug for his leadership and service to Extension, and welcoming Chuck to the University of Vermont.

#### LISTENING SESSIONS: COFFEE WITH THE PROVOST

In order to provide greater opportunity for me to hear from faculty, staff, and students, I will host a series of "(Bring your own) Coffee with the Provost" sessions this spring. These are informal, open to all, and without an agenda. We will try to schedule these sessions close to a café so you can grab a cup of coffee or tea on your way. As always, I welcome your comments, your feedback, your ideas, and your input.

The first two "Coffee with the Provost" sessions will be:

January 26, 2017	9:30-10:30am	Henderson's Café (Davis Center)
February 23, 2017	9:30-10:30am	Henderson's Café (Davis Center)

Check my webpage, my twitter feed, or University Announcements for additional dates later in the semester. I hope to see you there.

#### CLOSING THOUGHTS

I approached writing this 'Across the Green' memo differently from previous memos. I used this time of transition to reflect on opportunity<sup>1</sup>. And I shared some thoughts and offered some suggestions for our academic community as we move forward in 2017, as we seize this opportunity and seek to realize our best destiny as an institution of higher learning (and, I hope, deeper understanding).

As has been customary in these memos, I also provided some updates and, I hope, some useful information as we return to campus and start the new academic semester.

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<sup>1</sup> I used the occasion of reflecting upon the eventful and exciting year just completed at UVM to write some personal thoughts on the necessity and inevitability of change. I recently posted this brief essay on my [blog](#).

I hope you, too, can reflect on the great year just concluded and share the excitement I feel for the year ahead. The University of Vermont continues its own remarkable transition, one that will place it firmly and sustainably among the very best universities in the nation, increasingly attractive to the best and brightest students from across the country and around the world, and able to compete for the very best faculty and scholars.

We are focusing on people, programs, and place. We are being thoughtful, strategic, and inclusive in our decisions. By every measure, we *are* moving mountains. And we are doing all of this *together*, as an academic community and a campus.

I am deeply honored to be at the University of Vermont, and profoundly grateful to join with you in this shared journey. Thank you each and all. And my very best wishes for the spring semester.

Warm regards - and Go Cats!

*Selected social media posts from the provost—*

*“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.”*

*“Part of our commitment to one another and to the values that have shaped our university is how we engage with people with differing viewpoints from our own. Differing ideas and civil discourse are cornerstones of the American higher education system, and they underpin reflective inquiry, substantive debate, and deep learning. We must continue to not only tolerate differing viewpoints, but foster them.”*

*“We are excited by the curricular innovation, interdisciplinary activity, recruitment efforts, and campus-wide research and scholarship initiatives that are resulting from and being enabled by the new budget model.”*

*“Ours is a campus bound together by ‘Our Common Ground.’ We stand committed to the values of respect, integrity, innovation, openness, justice, and responsibility. Free elections and the peaceful transition of power are cornerstones of democracy. As a great university and academic community, let us once again lead by example, recommit to our values and to one another. Let us learn together, let us work together, and let us move forward together.”*

*“The distinguished faculty at the University of Vermont are passionate about their teaching and scholarship. Few universities can boast a stronger, more authentic commitment to the Teacher-Scholar model than UVM. This is something we cherish, nurture, and celebrate every day.”*

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