



Across the Green
May 2014

TO: University of Vermont Academic Community (Faculty, Staff, and Students)

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

What a wonderful academic year we have just concluded, capped off by a spectacular Commencement weekend and the “launch” of the Class of 2014. By all measures, this was one of the most academically talented, broadly educated, and well prepared classes of graduates we have celebrated. As evidence, we need only look at this year’s number of national scholarship award winners, the 100% placement rate of our College of Medicine graduates, and the impact that members of the Class of 2014 already have had in our community through service, volunteerism, and engagement.

This issue of “Across the Green” comes at the end of my first year as Provost. I hope you will agree it has been an exciting year! In this communication, I will discuss both early progress as well as clearly defined plans and goals for the coming years. We have established an ambitious agenda, in support of the President’s *Strategic Action Plan*, and laid important groundwork – an essential prerequisite for progress. This includes broad campus-wide engagement, extensive communications using various platforms, and clearly articulated goals for (1) academic excellence and (2) student success.

As I wrote in the last “Across the Green” memo and as I have stated publicly in many settings, the University of Vermont is at a critical juncture in its evolution as one of the nation’s top universities. We must, as a campus, take stock of challenges we are facing in higher education and in Vermont, and position ourselves for new opportunities that will both enable us to grow as a university *and* ensure an intellectually and financially sustainable future.

In this memo, I provide brief updates in four areas: (1) academic excellence, (2) student success, (3) STEM initiatives, and (4) budget.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Academic Excellence Goals

Among the most important, and I anticipate impactful, accomplishments this year was the development of a concise set of *Academic Excellence Goals*. These goals were established to animate President Sullivan’s *Strategic Action Plan* and facilitate university-wide discussions, engagement, and initiatives around Academic Excellence. Success in these areas will lead, authentically and in a sustainable way, to increased selectivity, improved student quality, and improvements in national

rankings and other reputational indicators. These goals also serve as drivers to the university-wide IBB development process initiated in fall 2013. The eight *Academic Excellence Goals* are:

1. Increase the percentage of undergraduate students graduating in four years
2. Improve undergraduate student retention, Years 1-4
3. Improve student advising, both academic and pre-professional/career
4. Increase interdisciplinary teaching, research, and scholarship
5. Expand programmatic offerings to include distance and hybrid modes of instructional delivery
6. Increase research and scholarship in areas that generate high impact, recognition, and visibility
7. Increase domestic diversity and grow international student enrollments across the University
8. Increase enrollments in graduate and professional programs

These goals guide decision-making, resource allocation, strategy, and forward planning at all levels of the organization. They focus our attention, our discourse, and our efforts. Progress against these concise and actionable goals positively impacts the metrics by which we are ranked as a national university. In many cases, progress also leads to greater efficiencies and lower costs. But above all, these goals were established to ensure we are providing the best possible education and educational environment for our students.

We are focusing particular attention this year on the first two goals: four-year graduation rates and student retention. This is driving important and productive discussions about advising, academic quality, and career services.

Institute for Environment

The vision for a university-wide institute, the first of its kind at UVM, evolved out of the campus-wide conversation that led to the *Envisioning Environment* report last year. I have created a university-wide task committee to take us to the next step in this process, toward what I hope will be a successful launch of the institute by the end of the calendar year. This task committee will develop (1) a mission statement for the institute, (2) a strategic vision for the institute (with goals, measures to assess progress, and metrics to assess impact), and (3) an operating plan (financial and governance) for the institute. These will be transmitted as a series of recommendations for my consideration in the fall.

General Education

In fall 2014, we will be implementing our first General Education outcome requirement, a required first-year course in foundational writing and information literacy. The second phase of the broader plan for writing and information literacy is the Writing and Information Literacy in the Disciplines (WILD) program, which we are developing with a grant from the Davis Educational Foundation. Work is continuing on two other General Education initiatives around sustainability and cultural and global competencies.

Academic Program Review (APR)

This past year, we initiated the new, more rigorous *Academic Program Review* system and hosted nine program site visits by external reviewers. The program reviews affirmed the strength of our academic programs and offered constructive suggestions to further elevate program quality, visibility, attractiveness, and impact. We continue to refine the protocols, goals, and expectations for these important academic program reviews.

Internationalization and Global Impact

The University of Vermont recognizes that global engagement is crucial to our teaching, research, and service missions. The President has established a goal of increasing international undergraduate enrollment to 5-7% over the next five years. In January 2014, we officially launched the UVM *Global Gateway Program* (GGP), a pathway program for academically well-qualified international students applying for admission to UVM. Combining coursework fulfilling subject area requirements with targeted preparation in academic English, the *Global Gateway Program* provides newly arrived students with a strong foundation for transitioning to American university life and successful entry into UVM degree programs. With a curriculum taught entirely by UVM faculty and broad student engagement in UVM residential and campus life as program hallmarks, GGP is already garnering national attention. Our strong entering cohort (January 2014) of forty students from five nations pursuing majors in ten different academic disciplines is testimony to UVM's reputation for academic quality. This fall we will be welcoming more than 150 new GGP students.

Strengthening Academic Advising

The *Student Affairs Committee* of the Faculty Senate, in collaboration with the Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning, has developed a report with recommendations aimed at strengthening academic advising. The report has been vetted with key constituencies including the Student Government Association, the Student Services Collaborative and the Faculty Senate's Executive Council. The goal is to enhance the academic experience and student success as reflected in retention and graduation rates and the success of our alumni. I am hopeful we can make significant progress in this area in the coming year.

Recognition as a Sustainable Campus

The University of Vermont has received the prestigious Gold rating as a sustainable campus through STARS, the national tracking program sponsored by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education¹. This new recognition brings greater visibility to our academic programs, scholarship, research, and engagement in the area of sustainability. UVM scored well particularly in credits for research, co-curricular education, water use reduction, and initiatives to address diversity and affordability (two priorities in the President's *Strategic Action Plan*).

STUDENT SUCCESS

Student Experience

In parallel to the establishment of the *Academic Excellence Goals*, we developed a concise *Student Experience* action plan, to create an experience in which students are healthy, engaged, and successful. The following specific action items are intended to motivate, drive, and track our ongoing commitment and our progress in the areas of student success and student satisfaction:

1. Implement the *Career Success Action Plan*
2. Promote healthy engagement among our students
3. Ensure progress on the *Housing Master Plan*

¹ See UVM's submission: <https://stars.aashe.org/institutions/participants-and-reports/>

Here I report on two major areas of focus, career development and student retention.

Student Career Development

In early 2013, the University adopted a [*Career Success Action Plan*](#) (CSAP) authored by Honors College Dean Abu Rizvi. The plan was developed through wide consultation with campus constituencies, incorporation of best practices at other universities, and a review of literature on career planning and success. The CSAP seeks to: (1) enhance internships, on-campus student employment, and other experiential learning opportunities that lead to career and academic success; (2) involve employers, alumni, parents, and other stakeholders and friends in supporting student career success; (3) engage students in career preparation; (4) provide a central and accessible physical location for student engagement with careers and experiential learning; and (5) ensure accountability and progress tracking.

Implementation is proceeding as planned with the following milestones achieved: hiring of personnel to support internships, student employment, and employer relations; opening of The Career + Experience Hub in the Davis Student Center²; new internship programs in engineering, environment, and food systems; engagement of students in a four-year career development plan; new career-relevant curricular offerings; development of metrics and benchmarks to gauge the effort; and the development of a *Career Center Advisory Board* and a *Trustees Career Services Work Group*.

Student Retention and Success³

UVM recognizes that the foundation to retaining students and supporting their persistence to graduation is grounded in a focus on academic excellence and promoting the quality of the entire student experience, in and out of the classroom. The key is a balance of challenge and support.

We have established a goal of increasing first to second-year retention from approximately 85% to 90% and the four-year graduation rate from 66% to 70%.

An extensive UVM retention study was conducted by an external enrollment management consulting firm in 2011. Since 2012, the University has acted on many of the recommendations from the retention study and used its findings to develop a number of other initiatives. These have included:

- A web portal where students conduct all their university business and can receive communications specific to a student's school or college, the time of the academic year, and the student's progress.
- A Facebook application that allows students to quickly find and make connections with other students with similar majors, classes, and interests.
- A web-based Academic Alert early warning system to identify students who are struggling early in the semester and to alert the proper offices who can intervene and provide support for students to achieve successful academic outcomes.

² The Career+Experience Hub has had a great first year, with large numbers of student visits and engagements in both semesters. A full update will be provided by Vice Provost for Student Affairs, Annie Stevens, in a separate report.

³ Note that this really lies at the intersection of the *Academic Excellence Goals* and *Student Experience Goals*.

- An Academic Major Choice Fair to help students learn more about the range of majors available to them and to make informed choices.
- The Student Employment Office⁴ opening in September 2013. This office helps students find on-campus jobs and works with on-campus employers to increase the quality of these experiences such that they will be useful in the student's career trajectory and academic growth. This was an area of emphasis in the *Career Success Action Plan*.
- An *Intent to Leave Survey* to gather information about why students choose to leave UVM, to inform our strategic planning and programming to promote student success and retention, and to assist students in making informed decisions about continuing their education (at UVM or elsewhere).

STEM INITIATIVES

The STEM Initiative set has three elements: (1) growth in our STEM programs (defined here to include chemistry, computer science, mathematics, physics, and the engineering disciplines), with a target of increasing undergraduate enrollments in STEM disciplines by 50% and doubling graduate enrollments in STEM disciplines, in the next 10 years; (2) construction of the new STEM Complex (a new teaching and laboratory building, a new office and classroom building, and a selectively renovated Votey Hall); and (3) new and expanded K-12 programs aimed at partnering with K-12 educators and growing the pipeline of Vermont students with interests in STEM fields.

Taken together, this is an ambitious and far-reaching set of initiatives for the University of Vermont. I encourage you to read the text of my statement⁴ before the Board of Trustees in February, after which approval was given for the STEM Complex.

The STEM Complex represents the largest capital project in the history of the University of Vermont⁵. This ambitious and transformational project for the University has captured the imaginations of everyone at and around UVM. Excitement for this project continues to grow among alumni, industry partners and those who employ our graduates, current and future students, faculty and staff, donors, and friends of the University.

We have recently completed the space planning exercise for the new STEM Complex. A committee of faculty and leadership from the College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences (CEMS) and the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), led by Dr. John Evans, Interim Vice President for Research, worked closely with campus planners and the architecture firm selected for the project to assess space needs, learn from other universities about their projects and best practices, envision how teaching and learning spaces may evolve in the future, and consider their own plans for strategic growth. The result was a recommended space plan for the entire STEM Complex. In April, I reviewed their recommendations, made some adjustments to allow for future growth and incentivize innovation, and the overall space plan for the new complex is close to being finalized. This is being communicated to the architects as they move into the final design phase of the project.

⁴ Interview with new SEO Coordinator: <http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmpr/?Page=news&storyID=17364>

⁵ See: <http://www.uvm.edu/provost/The%20Case%20for%20STEM.pdf>

I have been working closely with the UVM Foundation to develop a case statement for support of the STEM Complex and related initiatives, including (1) K-12 STEM pipeline programs for students and educators, and (2) programs to increase representation of women and minorities in STEM. We anticipate the final case statement will be available in the next few weeks, as we move into the next phase of fundraising for this project.

We have begun assembling a *STEM Leadership Council*, which I will Co-chair, to attract and engage senior leaders from industry to help us vision and plan for expanded STEM programs. The members of this council will also assist in developing new resources and new partnerships that will be necessary to complete the STEM Complex. The first meeting of the *STEM Leadership Council* will take place this summer, either in Burlington or New York City.

BUDGET

FY15 Budget

Vice President for Finance Richard Cate and I presented the FY15 budget to the Board of Trustees for their approval at their May meeting. The proposed (and subsequently approved) budget was developed following more than 50 meetings with governance groups and campus leaders held over the past eight months. A website⁶ was also created to share information with the campus and provide a portal for feedback and suggestions. The feedback collected from the campus constituencies informed priorities and decision-making throughout the year as this budget plan was developed. The result is a budget that is balanced, meets the goals established at the start of the process, and maintains our highest priorities on people and programs that directly support our academic mission and our students.

Incentive-based Budget

In 2012-13, the UVM community engaged in a campus-wide discussion about the characteristics and operation of its existing budget model. What we heard, loud and clear in those discussions, was that the University would be better served by a new budget model. In September 2013, President Sullivan asked me to lead the campus in a process to develop an incentive-based budget (IBB) model for UVM.

Initial activity included establishing guiding principles for the model, naming a Steering Committee that I Chair, and assigning each of eight Subcommittees with responsibility for providing specific recommendations for key components of an IBB model. A robust communication plan has been central to our IBB efforts and has included development of a comprehensive website⁷, an electronic portal by which faculty and staff could provide feedback, distribution of several campus-wide written communications, 4 campus-wide open fora, an engagement campaign including 9 meetings with governance groups, and more than 40 meetings with various campus constituencies. The total number of campus engagements⁸ relating to IBB (since October 2013) now exceeds 150.

⁶ See: http://www.uvm.edu/~provost/?Page=budget_fy15.html

⁷ See: <http://www.uvm.edu/provost/IBB/>

⁸ Includes (a) all steering committee meetings, (b) all subcommittee meetings, (c) all presentations to governance groups, administrative offices, and other campus constituents.

The Subcommittees provided their recommendations to the Steering Committee in January 2014. Since that time, the Steering Committee has met regularly to evaluate these recommendations and to begin knitting them into a cohesive whole. This involved considering the subcommittees' specific recommendations (algorithms) to assess how they meet or reflect the guiding principles, their alignment with the values and ethos of UVM, and their fit with one another. Once this was completed, the University's finance team provided the Steering Committee with financial models to help the group more fully understand the implications of each aspect of the model and the model as a whole.

The Steering Committee will make its final recommendations on the design and overall methodology of an IBB model to the President by the end of June. President Sullivan will either approve the recommended model or send it back to the Steering Committee with requested changes. Assuming the model is approved in July, we will use FY15 to run the proposed IBB model in parallel with our current model. Based on those results we will further enhance the IBB model in preparation for its full implementation in FY16.

LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

I am pleased to welcome Dr. Cynthia Forehand to the position of Dean of the Graduate College. Dr. Forehand served this past year as interim dean, and before that she served for three years as associate dean. In her role as Interim Dean, Dr. Forehand has taken significant steps to improve and streamline policies and procedures related to graduate education and support. As a member of the IBB Subcommittee on Graduate Tuition and Aid, Dr. Forehand played a significant role in shaping the algorithms and broader integrated mechanisms for support of our graduate programs and our graduate students under the new Incentive-based Budget model (IBB).

We are in the final stage of our search for a new Vice President for Research (VPR) and hope to conclude this important search in the next few weeks. The new VPR will replace Dr. John Evans, who has served the University this past year as interim VPR. Dr. Evans brought his tremendous experience, visionary leadership, and great energy to this position, and I am enormously grateful for his many important contributions. John will continue to work closely with the President and me next year on a number of strategic priorities including the STEM Complex and expanding our role in statewide economic development.

Next month, Vice President for Enrollment Management Chris Lucier will leave UVM to start a new position at the University of Delaware. Under his leadership of the Division of Enrollment Management, applications have increased substantially and both student quality metrics and diversity have improved. Chris has been a great leader at the University and will be missed, but we wish him well as he embraces the challenges of his new position. As we conduct a national search for his replacement, Dr. John Ryan has agreed to serve as Interim Vice President for Enrollment Management. John brings his educational background (Ph.D. in Higher Education from the University of Nebraska) and rich professional experience (Ohio State University and UVM) to this interim position. In his role as Director of OIR, John has worked closely with the Division of Enrollment Management and nearly every other division of the university. He is highly regarded, both at UVM and in his national professional circles, for his analytical skills as well as his broad knowledge of higher education and the challenges universities face in a rapidly changing and ever more competitive field. During this interim period, Dr. Ryan will continue to serve as Director of the Office of Institutional Research.

Finally, next month marks the end of Dr. Abu Rizvi's highly successful tenure as Dean of the Honors College (HCOL), a position he has held since 2007. Dr. Rizvi has served the University and the Honors College remarkably, with passion and integrity, and has taken our Honors College to new heights. Under his leadership, HCOL has advanced in every dimension (academic quality, enrollments, program breadth, diversity, and student success). Dr. Rizvi will be spending his sabbatical next year as a Visiting Scholar at Harvard's Graduate School of Education. Dr. Lisa Schnell has agreed to serve as interim dean during the coming year. I expect to conduct an internal search for the permanent dean early in 2015.

CLOSING

Above all, this past academic year has been about listening and learning, and building support and a mandate. Members of our academic community have shown both their enthusiastic support and a sincere desire to work, together, toward shared goals. This has been an exciting year of trust-building, visioning, and planning. But it has also been a year of significant accomplishments and institutional evolution.

Despite economic challenges facing higher education today, and those specific to UVM as a result of demographic changes in the northeast and ever-increasing competition for top students, we are at an exciting point in our university's history. We have tremendous opportunity, energy, and enthusiasm. We have "an appetite for excellence" and are building a shared vision for growth, success, and impact. As I wrote in our NEASC fifth-year report, "We are committing ourselves, as an academic community, to shared goals of academic quality and rigor. We are taking seriously our own challenge and charge to articulate what defines a UVM graduate. And we are taking steps both to contextualize our departments and degree programs among peers and aspirants, and to develop metrics to measure our achievements, progress, and impact along important vectors of academic excellence and student success."

Finally, I am so grateful for the support I have received from faculty, staff, and students. Your spirit of cooperation, your passion for UVM, and your expressed commitment (though words and through actions) to working together to advance our university are remarkable. THANK YOU for all that you do for the University of Vermont. *Our Common Ground* is fertile ground indeed.

With my best wishes for a wonderful summer, here in Vermont or wherever the winds may take you.

“Anytime faculty and departments think and re-think about how they reach, engage, and excite students – it's a good thing.”

“The move to IBB, the refocusing of our efforts to meet the *Academic Excellence Goals*, and the shared challenges of competing for ever stronger students in an increasingly competitive higher education marketplace require that we move more strategically, more aggressively, and more swiftly.”

“Nearly all of the faculty members I have met since coming to UVM have said they want to see UVM ascend to even greater heights – and they are willing and eager to be a part of the lift.”



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