



Across the Green
September 2014

TO: University of Vermont Academic Community

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

Welcome to the 2014-15 academic year! What an exciting start – especially for our newest students, the UVM Class of 2018. Once again, our campus community pulled out all the stops in welcoming our newest Catamounts, a week that was capped off by the Convocation and Induction Ceremonies. It is so impressive to see students, faculty, staff, academic and administrative leadership, alumni, and community members gather together to welcome the newest members of our UVM family. What a great message this sends to our first-year students.

A very special welcome to the more than 100 full-time faculty¹ who have joined us since last fall. New faculty members bring new ideas, new energy, new opportunities, and new perspectives. All of these enrich our academic community.

One of the great privileges of working at a university is the change in pace that comes every summer. Regardless of how you spent your summer – conducting research, teaching, helping to prepare our beautiful campus and facilities for the new academic year, engaging our students, collaborating with colleagues locally or around the world, in public or professional service, in personal or professional exploration, traveling, or relaxing with friends and family – I hope that each of you enjoyed a productive, rewarding, and restorative summer.

While it may appear that the campus slows down in the summer months, I can assure you that this was a very busy summer at UVM. Progress was made on so many fronts and ambitious plans continued to evolve. Many have told me this has been the most dynamic time they have witnessed at UVM, with bold changes and exciting initiatives in virtually every area of the University. A renewed focus on academic excellence and academic advising, new academic and student success programs, exciting capital projects and other campus improvements, expanded international programs, and growth in research and scholarly activities and opportunities for students – you see evidence of all of these and all are contributing to a positive “buzz” in our academic community. This is indeed an exciting time for the University of Vermont.

¹ 104 total (65 in the College of Medicine, 39 in the other Colleges/Schools)

Last month, the academic senior leadership (deans and provosts) participated in a series of retreats. The focus of these retreats, including one with the President and administrative leadership (vice presidents and others), was squarely on (1) academic excellence, (2) student success, and (3) engaging and empowering faculty and staff to achieve at their highest level and to contribute to our collective success.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

As you may recall, a set of eight *Academic Excellence Goals* was established last fall. These goals were established to support and animate the *President's Strategic Action Plan*. Over the past year, conversations have been held at all levels and throughout all colleges, schools, and administrative units about these explicit goals. They speak directly to the highest priorities of the University and are already serving to focus discourse, planning, resource allocation, strategic visioning, and decision.

I was asked by the UVM Board of Trustees to develop a narrative around the *Academic Excellence Goals* that provides national context (benchmarks, trends), specific (quantitative, measurable) goals, and mechanisms for achieving those goals. This demonstrates both the Board's commitment to, and support for, our goals for academic excellence. It also sends a clear message that the Board of Trustees will be monitoring our progress. I welcome this.

The narrative document was written over the summer with broad input and vetting by the deans and other university leaders. It was then shared with the President for his comment and approval before it was shared with the Board of Trustees. Since the narrative contains clear and measurable goals, it also serves as an important guide document for the academic deans as the University transitions to IBB. The *Academic Excellence Goals* narrative (rev. 1, Aug. 2014) is intended as a companion document with this "Across the Green" memo. I encourage everyone to read this document and, as always, I welcome feedback.

Last year, we focused specifically on two of the eight *Academic Excellence Goals*, retention and four-year graduation rates. I do not believe it is a coincidence that our first-to-second year retention rate improved from 86% to 87% this year. The focus on retention, for strategic as well as financial reasons, has been evident throughout the colleges and schools.

This year we are expanding our focus to look specifically at academic advising. The launch of our *Four-Year Plan*² coupled with changes in our academic advising and career planning offerings for our students will quickly result in higher four-year graduation rates, an important part of our commitment to student access and affordability. Access is not only about gaining admission to the University of Vermont and having access to its outstanding academic programs, but also about access to a four-year university education.

I have asked each of the deans to work closely with their colleges/schools this fall to develop robust advising plans and procedures, to share them with my office and with one another, and to post them prominently on their web pages. Colleges and schools can learn from one another, just as individual faculty members can, about what works and what doesn't and about how to best serve

² <http://www.uvm.edu/~career/?Page=4yearplan.html>

the advising needs of our students. We also must make clear our expectations for student responsibilities in this important process. This is about establishing a bi-lateral “advising compact” between our students and the University that ensures students’ timely progression and four-year degree completion.

Consistent with conversations over the past year around our shared commitment to academic excellence, the deans also have agreed to engage with their colleges/schools to define indicators of academic quality and impact. This is intended to create a rich and productive discussion, starting at the department (or program) level, which feeds into a broader discussion at the college or school level. Once agreed upon, these can be shared with current students, prospective students and their families, employers of our graduates, alumni, and potential donors. We must, as stewards of the academic enterprise at the University of Vermont, be willing and able to show evidence of the quality and impact of our programs. We must be able to place ourselves into national context, show where we are distinctive and where we distinguish ourselves, and demonstrate the value proposition of a UVM education. We must set aspirant goals and demonstrate progress toward meeting them. This is how colleges and universities compete in the crowded (and increasingly competitive) higher education market.

NEW LEADERSHIP

Last spring, we announced the appointment of Cindy Forehand as the new Dean of the Graduate College and Lisa Schnell as the Interim Dean of the Honors College. These appointments were included in my May 2014 “Across the Green” memo³.

With the start of the new academic year we are very pleased to be welcoming three new members of the University’s leadership team: Richard Galbraith, Nancy Mathews, and Stacey Kostell. Dr. Richard Galbraith⁴, who joined UVM as Professor of Medicine in 1995, began his appointment as Vice President for Research this summer, replacing Dr. John Evans who served as Interim Vice President for Research last year. As I wrote last May, Dr. Evans brought tremendous experience, visionary leadership, and great energy to this important position, and I am enormously grateful for his many important contributions.

Dr. Nancy Mathews⁵, the new dean of the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources, joined us earlier this summer from the University of Wisconsin. We are indebted to Dr. Jon Erickson for providing outstanding interim leadership of the Rubenstein School for the last two years. His leadership, vision, and commitment to the School paved a smooth path for Dean Mathews as she assumed her new position.

³ <http://www.uvm.edu/~provost/DVR%20ATG%20memo%20May%202014.pdf>

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<http://www.uvm.edu/~provost/Richard%20Galbraith%20Announcement%20Vice%20President%20for%20Research%2006-13-14.pdf>

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http://www.uvm.edu/~provost/Sullivan%20Rosowsky%20Memo%20RE%20Nancy%20Mathews%2006_09_14.pdf

Stacey Kostell⁶ joined us at the beginning of September as our new Vice President for Enrollment Management. Stacey comes to UVM from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She made several trips to Burlington, since her appointment was announced earlier this summer, to meet with her division and to participate in the senior leadership retreat. We are grateful to Dr. John Ryan for serving as Interim Vice President for Enrollment Management since the end of the spring semester. In this role, John oversaw the final steps of building and welcoming the Class of 2018 and laid important groundwork for recruiting the Class of 2019. John's breadth of knowledge and thoughtful leadership enabled a smooth and very productive transition for Vice President Kostell.

It is clear that UVM is able to recruit proven and successful leaders from the nation's top universities. President Sullivan often reminds us that the University of Vermont is and must continue to be a "talent magnet" for outstanding people. The energy surrounding our bold plans and new leadership is garnering national attention. This is contributing to the excitement on campus and throughout Vermont.

INCENTIVE-BASED BUDGET MODEL (IBB)

In 2012-13, the UVM community engaged in a campus-wide discussion about the characteristics and operation of its existing budget model. What came through, loud and clear in those discussions, was that the existing budget model (a) lacked transparency, (b) placed too much responsibility centrally, and (c) lacked incentives. In September 2013, President Sullivan asked me to lead the campus in a process to develop an incentive-based budget (IBB) model for UVM. The campus was engaged over the last year in a broadly inclusive process to develop a new budget model. This effort culminated with the IBB Final Report⁷ being submitted to President Sullivan at the end of June.

As we move into Year 2 of our budget transition process, I can report we are on-schedule and on-track to transition fully to IBB in FY16. I hope you have taken the opportunity to read the IBB Final Report. This report recommends specific algorithms that, together, make up the overall IBB model that was developed through the campus-wide engagement process in FY14. The recommended model (a) is transparent, (b) distributes budgetary responsibility to the Colleges/Schools, and (c) provides clear incentives. This second year (FY15) is dedicated to model implementation. This includes creating the necessary tools, reports, training modules, and procedures for successfully operating under IBB. The Steering Committee will continue to meet throughout the year to review the proposed model (as it operates in parallel with our existing budget model this year) and to make minor changes that may be needed to specific algorithms.

Rather than restate details about the recommended IBB model or the thoughtful and inclusive process by which it was developed, I refer you to the website that was created to keep the campus informed of plans and progress, and where you can find all of the reports (including the Final Report) and presentations: www.uvm.edu/provost/IBB/

⁶http://www.uvm.edu/president/Sullivan%20Rosowsky%20Memo%20RE%20Stacey%20Kostell%2007_29_14.pdf

⁷http://www.uvm.edu/provost/IBB/IBB%20Final%20Report%20and%20Appendices_07_09_14-3.pdf

The following text was prepared in response to a series of interview questions I was asked last year about IBB. I thought it would be useful to repeat that information here, as it is very much still relevant and serves to answer questions I know many of you are asking.

IBB is a budgeting model that will more directly link strategy with resources at the appropriate level, namely the Colleges and Schools. Such models have been widely adopted by colleges and universities⁸, especially public universities, and have been in-place for many years now. One of the beneficial outcomes from IBB is that Deans will be able to predict revenues and costs – transparently and accurately – and therefore plan a multi-year budget to support their strategic goals. We are not looking for, or trying to identify departments or programs that are failing. We are trying to empower the Colleges and Schools to develop and manage their resources strategically and efficiently – and ultimately effectively – as they seek to continue to elevate the quality and reputation of their academic programs, meet the needs of our students, distinguish the University of Vermont, and continue to innovate our academic offerings.

At its root, IBB is about academic excellence. We want to continue to enhance our academic programs and opportunities for our students. We want to continue to invest in hiring outstanding faculty and our academic infrastructure. We want to grow in strategic areas – where student and market demand exist – and we want to strategically invest in programs that can generate national visibility and recognition for UVM. Academic excellence attracts the best students and the best faculty to a university. IBB also enables far better cost accounting and allows us to realize greater efficiencies across the entire campus. Any savings that can be realized will be directed toward UVM's academic mission – our core enterprise.

The Deans will have good and timely information about revenues, as well as exciting opportunities to innovate new programs and generate new revenues, and will be in a far better position (than they are under our current model) to forecast and manage through any budget challenges they may face. IBB is not conceived as a punitive budget model, but rather an empowering one.

All of our Colleges and Schools want the best students, want to fill their classes, and want their graduates to be successful. Students are our best indicators of what we are doing well. We stand firmly committed to remaining a comprehensive public university, but we seek to ensure excellence across our entire university. IBB keeps our focus on our highest goals: access and affordability, academic quality, preparing our graduates to be successful, and a four-year undergraduate degree.

The following are my closing statements from the IBB Final Report submitted to President Sullivan in June:

While we are all excited about the opportunities for transformation that IBB affords, I caution that IBB is not the solution to the very real and pressing challenges we face. It, in

⁸ In 2011, about 30% of universities (public and private) reported having an RCM-type model (such as IBB). The numbers continue to grow each year, with the fastest growth among public universities.

and of itself, will not reduce our expenses, create efficiencies or generate new revenue. It is not a surrogate for leadership, vision or innovation. It is a management tool that will empower our academic leaders to develop and manage their resources strategically, efficiently, and effectively as the academic units continue to elevate the quality and reputation of academic programs in order to meet the needs of our students. IBB links strategy with resources at the appropriate level. I have every confidence that it will support a positive transformation – but we all must play a role in that process. We must be willing to examine and question long-held practices and beliefs. We must be willing to change, to create, and to innovate.

In closing, let me say how enormously grateful I am to the members of the IBB Steering Committee, as well as the eight IBB subcommittees, for the countless hours they have invested in this process. Through their time, energy, careful study, critical discourse, and engagement with faculty, staff, and students across the UVM campus over the past year, we have arrived at this point where we are able to recommend an IBB model for your approval. It has been my privilege to work with all of the more than 100 members of our campus community involved in the development of IBB, and to witness such a collaborative, inclusive, and authentic process. This bodes very well for the future of the University of Vermont.

OTHER NEWS: UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT MEDICAL CENTER, STEM COMPLEX

This fall will see another important transition in our community and on our campus when the Fletcher Allen Health Center officially changes its name to the University of Vermont Medical Center. Many years in discussion, this name change was finally able to be realized through the visionary leadership, partnership, and mutual respect of the two CEO's, Tom Sullivan (UVM) and John Brumsted (FAHC). There are enormous benefits that will come from this name change, to both organizations and to the greater Burlington community. Coupled with a new, stronger, and more mutually beneficial affiliation agreement, this partnership with the University of Vermont Medical Center (and the broader University of Vermont Health Partnership encompassing regional hospitals) will create new opportunities for academic programs and degree combinations, clinical translational research, student internships and research experiences, and university-industry partnerships across the health science disciplines. Few universities will be more closely aligned, strategically and geographically, with their academic medical centers than UVM. This represents a tremendous set of opportunities for our academic community.

We continue to make important and timely progress in the planning for the new STEM Complex. Space planning is nearly complete and the architects have moved into the final design phase. We continue our fundraising efforts in direct support of this important project for the University. We have undertaken an alumni engagement campaign to build both awareness and support for this important project. And planning is underway to accommodate the changes in classroom and laboratory room assignments that will be necessary during the different phases of this construction project. The most recent presentation (including architectural renderings and selected floor plans) can be found here: http://www.uvm.edu/provost/STEM%20SLC%20Mtg%207_31_14.pdf

CLOSING THOUGHTS

I continue to be inspired by the generosity of spirit, time, and energy of our faculty and staff. Whether it's helping to move our students into their residence halls, stopping to answer a question from a new student or a visitor to our campus, meeting with students outside of class to discuss their academic plans or post-graduate plans, stepping up to serve on a college-wide or university-wide committee, or working quietly (often without notice) to ensure our campus grounds and facilities are beautiful and safe – each of you is contributing to building our academic community and ensuring its success.

I wish you all a wonderful new academic year – full of discovery and learning. We are privileged, all of us, to work at one of the nation's great universities, on this beautiful hill, in this beautiful city, in the great state of Vermont.

Thank you for all that you do for our students, for each other, and for the University of Vermont.

Webpage: www.uvm.edu/provost

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