



David V. Rosowsky, Ph.D.

Thankful Is As Thankful Does

To say this has been a difficult year is an understatement. In fact, the events of this past year are beyond any we thought possible, any we imagined. The confluence of events, circumstances, and where we find ourselves as a nation and a planet have led to an unimaginable set of challenges – distinct and mutually amplifying, pressing and urgent. But we have also witnessed unimaginable resolve, resilience, and acts of humanity. We are facing challenges that call upon the best of humanity to address. We do so in against odds, in the face of fear, and profound loss. But we push forward, we adapt, we persevere, we respond with humility and humanity.

This is also the season for giving thanks, a time we reflect as individuals, families, and communities. For me, this year has been one of reflection and gratitude, introspection and exploration, and staying connected and reconnecting with those who matter most to me. It is an inflection point in my life and career. Not one that arises out of crisis or loss, but one that many face at a certain point in their journey. Not a mid-life crisis so much as a *mid-journey check-in*. A time to take stock of what's most important and look ahead to how you want your journey to proceed next. For me, this has also been a time to write, to return to teaching engineering, to spend time with my family, and to explore new ways to contribute to the success of those around me. It's also been a time to learn new skills, whether teaching online or writing for the public, and even incorporate some new pre-run stretches to reduce risk of injury.

Above all, whether looking at my children or my students, my family or my colleagues, in-person or online, I am profoundly thankful. Feelings of gratitude wash over me at times when it is most expected, like when I watch our teenage children interacting or when I walk across our beautiful campus to my office each morning. But they also come when I least expect it, when I am sitting alone at my desk looking out the window, walking the dog in the morning, or turning off the lights and walking upstairs at the end of night. Feelings of gratitude, really of gratefulness, are as nourishing as my morning coffees. I look forward to them. I savor them.

¹ *Across the Green* was started as a series of periodic [letters](#) from Provost Rosowsky to provide updates on current initiatives and information on topics of interest to the broader UVM academic community. Started in 2013, *Across the Green* was published three times per year during the six years Dr. Rosowsky served as UVM's Provost and Senior Vice President. The *ATG Brief series* continues in the spirit of this communication with topics focused on higher education and leadership.

The institution of higher education and our respective higher education institutions, too, are challenged this year. And the confluence of challenges we are facing will take some time to work through, implement responsive and responsible adaptations, and move into a new-normal. But we *are* and we *will*. We will do so with humility and humanity. We will learn new skills and incorporate new stretches to reduce risk of future injury. And we will continue, as we have always done, to serve our students and our communities in ways that go far beyond the classroom and the campus.

So let me close by saying I am thankful for YOU. YOU are my students, my colleagues, my co-workers, my collaborators. YOU are the people that keep our campus clean and safe and welcoming. YOU help us write and tell our story. YOU lift others when they are down, give selflessly of your time and treasure, and share wisdom with future generation. YOU help bind our family together across miles and generations. YOU see each individual for who they are as a person, each having their own human story. YOU open your mind and your heart to new ideas and to others. YOU ask questions to learn more. YOU share freely your hopes and your dreams, but also your fears and your anxieties. YOU find ways to see humor, to laugh, and to spread joy.

I extend my sincere thanks to each of you for challenging me and supporting me, for grounding me and lifting me up, for opening my mind and changing my views, for inspiring me and humbling me, for your enduring friendship in good times and bad, for your patience and forgiveness, for your trust and confidence, and for your laughter and tears. YOU make my world better and I hope that in some small way I do the same for YOU.

To my students, thank you for the privilege of being your professor and for your incredible resilience during this pandemic year. And to my faculty colleagues, thank you for all that you do for our students and for one another. This year and every year.

Happy Thanksgiving.



David V. Rosowsky is Professor of Engineering at the University of Vermont and served for six years as UVM's Provost and Senior Vice President (2013-2019). These personal reflections are based on 15 years of experience leading organizational and institutional change in higher education. Prior to joining UVM in 2013, he served as Dean of Engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and before that as Head of the Zachry Department of Civil Engineering at Texas A&M University. He previously held the A.P. and Florence Wiley Chair in Civil Engineering at Texas A&M University and the Richardson Chair in Wood Engineering and Mechanics at Oregon State University. He is a Fellow of the American Society of Civil Engineers, the Structural Engineering Institute, and the Institute of Science, Technology, and Public Policy at the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University. In 2019, he was a Fellow and member of the inaugural cohort of the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) Institute for Leadership and Governance in Higher Education.

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