To: University of Vermont Students

From: Tom Sullivan, President

Re: Fall Welcome

A warm welcome to each of you as we start the 2016 fall term at the University of Vermont! The excited energy of new beginnings has been noticeable and growing over the past few weeks, as faculty and students return to campus and first-year students settle into their new home here at UVM. Thank you to the faculty, staff, and students who worked diligently through the summer to prepare for this new academic year. I look forward to another highly collaborative and interactive year of discovery and conversations with all of you.

As a premiere Public Ivy and an engaged community of learners and teacher-scholars, we are excited to bring opportunities for vibrant exchange to every part of campus life. We have an exciting program of renowned lecturers and artists visiting UVM this fall through the Burack Distinguished Lecture Series, the Marsh Visiting Professor Program, the Fleming Museum, and the Lane Series, among others.

This fall we are thrilled to welcome two distinguished Pulitzer Prize-winning nonfiction writers to campus. I urge you to mark your calendar for the September 14th First-Year Summer Read lecture and discussion with Elizabeth Kolbert, author of *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*, the deeply researched and highly praised book chronicling the mass extinction brought on—the author argues—by practices of our modern civilization. On October 5th Isabel Wilkerson will discuss her landmark book, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, chronicling the epic migration of six million African Americans from the Jim Crow South during the twentieth century that has shaped our nation in so many ways.

The Burack Distinguished Lecture Series brings to campus renowned Islamic scholar Omid Safi, Ph.D., on September 22nd; Professor of Sustainable Management Michael Russo on September 28th; and leading clinical psychologist David Barlow, Ph.D., on September 29th. The Marsh Professor-at-Large series begins the year with classroom engagements and public events with systems ecologist Dr. Sture Hansson and Professor of Ecological and Environmental Economics Stephen Polasky. On November 3rd we welcome world-renowned physician and humanitarian Dr. Paul Farmer, cofounder of Partners in Health, to deliver the annual George D. Aiken Lecture.

In support of our ongoing commitment to our students and the student experience, a series of strategic office relocations this summer brings together many core student activities, making it easier for students to find and access important services. For example, the Career Center moved from Living/Learning to the second floor of Davis Center, a new Advising Center that supplements the specialized advising programs in UVM colleges and schools has opened on the first
floor of the Davis Center, and the ALANA Student Center will move to Living/Learning E-Building this fall. The newly created Center for Academic Success integrates support for students’ academic achievement by bringing previously separate programs into one new department, with the program offices located on an axis of student services connecting the Davis Center and the Living/Learning Center.

We are excited to announce two new interfaith initiatives as part of our ongoing commitment to diversity, equity, and justice at UVM. This fall we will open and dedicate a new Interfaith Center in the former Christ Church Presbyterian building on Redstone Campus. Resulting from the dedicated efforts of students, staff, and faculty, this dynamic space will be open to all for prayer, meditation, conversation, education, and community-building activities. We look forward to its continuing development with the leadership and assistance of UVM’s inaugural Interfaith Coordinator, Rev. Laura C. Engelken. A staff member with the Center for Cultural Pluralism, Rev. Laura’s role will be to empower and equip students, staff, faculty, and the institution as a whole to engage more comfortably and competently with issues of spirituality and religion on campus.

Each year the individuals who comprise our UVM community receive national recognition for their exemplary work across many fields. You will find a selection of these accolades in the President’s 2015–2016 Annual Report. May we all feel the spark of pride and inspiration for the high honors and good news contained in this report!

I am honored to serve this University and I look forward with excitement toward its promising future, as we engage the important questions of our time and commit our resources to educating critical thinkers and compassionate citizens of the world. My promise to you is that we will continue lighting the fire of excitement during your discovery and learning at UVM. We will ask you to join us in conversations and dialogues on the big issues of the day—race relations, human rights, community safety, equal justice, inequality, ecological responsibility, and economic issues, and how to build and sustain a civil and respectful relationship and understanding among all in our community and society at large. These conversations and engaged dialogues will give all of us a chance to listen and learn as a community.

We look forward to hearing your perspectives on these issues and engaging them together with open minds. Together, we can continue our quest to build and advance an open environment and culture of learning and communication within our UVM community.

With every good wish for a great academic year,

Tom Sullivan
President