To: University of Vermont Community  
From: Tom Sullivan  
Date: June 6, 2017  
RE: UVM’s Environmental Commitment

Since President Trump last week withdrew the United States from the Paris Climate Accord, many people across the country and globe have called for a recommitment to climate and environmental issues.

I write today to the UVM Community to state clearly the University’s deep, long standing and steadfast resolve on matters of climate and the environment. UVM has been in the forefront of the study, teaching, and research on issues of the environment and climate.

The University has been and will continue to be a university of consequence and importance in this area. On this point, our University’s vision statement is clear:

**To be among the nation’s premier small research universities, preeminent in our comprehensive commitment to liberal education, environment, health, and public service.** Our commitment to the environment is a key element in this declarative statement. That commitment remains fully intact and as strong as ever.

The University has long dedicated itself to investing its intellectual and financial assets in environmental programs and initiatives. A campus-wide Environmental Program was established by Presidential mandate in 1972 to meet the need for greater understanding of the ecological and cultural systems supporting all life on earth. The solutions to environmental problems ultimately may be revealed through the discoveries and problem solving of our faculty, students, and alumni in numerous relevant fields of study.

Some of the more recent examples of the University’s environmental leadership in academics, research, and sustainable practices include:

- The establishment of the Rubenstein School of the Environment and Natural Resources whose faculty are dedicated to applied environmental research in service and who collaborate nationally and internationally with other researchers.
- The recent establishment of the University-wide Gund Institute for Environment.
• UVM receipt of a STARS Gold Rating for Sustainability Efforts (Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System for higher education), this past semester. Our score placed us among the top 12 percent of all rated institutions.
• 350 UVM faculty members are involved in environmentally related research.
• 65% of UVM academic departments offer at least one sustainability related course. There are 717 courses related to sustainability at the University.
• 53% of research-producing departments are engaged in sustainability-related research.
• UVM continues to add new, distinguished faculty in environmentally focused disciplines.
• UVM is leading a $1.8 Million Energy Department Project to improve the power grid’s ability to accommodate renewables.
• Sustainability is included in the University’s General Education Requirements as of 2016.
• The University’s B.S. degree in Environmental Sciences allows for the exploration of areas of concentration that include Global Climate Change, Agriculture and Environment, Conservation Biology and Biodiversity, Ecological Design, Environmental Analysis and Assessment, Environmental Biology, Environmental Chemistry, Environmental Geology, and Water Resources.
• The Grossman School of Business created a Sustainable Entrepreneurship MBA Program.
• The Sustainability Faculty Fellows Program supports faculty from diverse disciplines.
• Student Eco-Reps teach peers environmental responsibility and support culture change.
• The student-led Clean Energy Fund supports lectures, plans, studies, and sustainable campus projects.
• The EPA named UVM the top Green Power School in the America East Conference.
• The UVM Foundation Green Fund endows a faculty member whose expertise is in the area of renewable energy production. The Green Fund offers a donation alternative free of investments in companies that engage in the production of fossil fuels.
• The UVM Office of Sustainability fosters sustainable development and promotes environmental responsibility at UVM by strategically bridging the academic activities of teaching, research, and outreach with the operations of the University.
• The UVM Energy Management program promotes conserving electricity, fuel, and water as part of its goals and has made substantial infrastructure improvements over the past decade to that end.
• The Environmental Council updated the University's energy guidelines, which outline methods and procedures to reduce energy consumption in campus buildings, the Central Heating Plant, underground service mains, new construction, lighting, heating, air conditioning, ventilation, water usage, transportation, and solid waste.
• Working closely with the Burlington Electric Department, UVM is creating more opportunities for the use of sustainable energy sources, including solar panels and the potential for district heating.

• Faculty in the Civil and Environmental Engineering program of the College of Engineering and Mathematics emphasize both rigorous technical education and social awareness, preparing students to become engineering leaders and innovators who are empowered to make the world a better place for all.

• The Community-University Partnerships & Service Learning Program supports sustainability across multiple disciplines.

• UVM participates in the LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) certification program, which is based on a set of design and construction practices that significantly reduce the negative impact of buildings on the environment in five broad areas: sustainable site planning; safeguarding water and water efficiency; energy efficiency and renewable energy; conservation of materials and resources; and indoor environmental quality. The University has adopted a policy requiring all newly constructed buildings to meet at least LEED Silver requirements, defining the University’s commitment to a high level of environmental sustainability in all new buildings and in major renovations of existing buildings.

• Sustainability-themed housing is offered in LEED-certified Residence Halls.

• UVM was the first public flagship university to ban the sale of bottled water. The University’s contract with its dining services vendor includes UVM’s commitment to the Real Food Challenge and the consumption of local drinking water.

• UVM has created a pedestrian and bike-friendly campus, which is supported by participation in the Community Transportation Management Association (CATMA).

• The University’s dedication to functioning in an environmentally responsible manner is further evident in UVM’s status as a Charter Signatory of the Presidents’ Climate Commitment in 2007. The University’s Climate Action Plan (2010) calls for the use of certified renewable power or carbon offsets by 2015 (accomplished) and for carbon neutrality by 2025.

This is an extensive but by no means an exhaustive list of the many initiatives, programs, and efforts across the campus that support environmental and sustainability research, education, and implementation. I share this with you to highlight our longstanding, expanding, and continuing dedication to these issues, and to assure you that our commitment will remain strong.

I look forward to working together, with members of our University community, to strengthen further our preeminence in environmental education, research, and sustainable practices.