From: Tom Sullivan

To: University of Vermont Community

Re: Happy New Year to the University of Vermont Community!

Welcome back to campus! It is a privilege to be a member of this accomplished, creative, and ambitious academic community. We should all be proud of the progress we have made together, and I look forward to a semester that is uplifting, memorable, and filled with many notable accomplishments by members of our University community.

Please mark your calendars for the Martin Luther King Celebration, Education, and Learning Week January 20 – 24. This celebration includes a keynote address on Thursday, January 23rd from Julian Bond, former chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), activist and leader in the Civil Rights Movement, and founder of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Another highlight of the week’s events is “UVM Gives a Dollar”. At several locations across campus you will be able to donate a dollar. The funds raised will be invested in the work of three non-profits: Women Helping Battered Women, the Ronald McDonald House and the Chittenden County Emergency Food Shelf. Our hope is that every member of the UVM community will participate.

Recently, UVM received national recognition for our leadership in service and for the vibrant culture of our hometown. This fall The Atlantic praised our sense of community and volunteerism, and Travel and Leisure ranked Burlington the #1 college town in the United States, highlighting our abundant arts and food culture. In December, the Peace Corps 2013 rankings showed that Vermont had the most volunteers per 100,000 residents; earlier rankings of volunteer-producing colleges and universities indicated that UVM continues to hold 5th place among some very prestigious schools in our cohort of 5,000-15,000 undergraduates.

As you know, one of the foremost goals in our Strategic Action Plan for the University is to increase our four-year graduation rate and student retention from the first to the second year. Later this week at the invitation of the White House, I will be in Washington, joining other invited college and university presidents from around the country, in a dialogue with President Barack Obama and other senior administration leaders to address issues surrounding access to success for college students. More specifically, the goal of this summit hosted by the President is to find effective approaches to help more students graduate on time. I am honored to be able to participate in this White House meeting on behalf of UVM.

In the coming weeks, I will be announcing two new awards to recognize members of our community for their outstanding service and dedication. The first is the President’s Distinguished University Citizenship and Service Award, presented annually, to recognize a member of the University of Vermont faculty who has established a consistent outstanding-
ing record of service to the University community. The second is the President’s *Our Common Ground* Staff Award, presented annually, to recognize six members of the University of Vermont staff who exemplify the aspirations of the University of Vermont’s *Our Common Ground*, the statement of aspirations and shared values for the UVM Community. Information about criteria and the nomination process will be available shortly.

An important aspect of our investment in a bright future for UVM includes updating and building facilities and infrastructures that enhance the quality and impact of the University. Recently, the architectural partnership of Ellenzweig Architecture - Planning and Freeman French Freeman was chosen to develop plans for the new STEM Lab and Classroom Building, which when finished will become the largest facility of its kind on our campus. We also have received encouraging responses from several firms interested in partnering with the University on a Phase I housing project on the Athletic campus as part of the Student and Faculty/Staff Housing Master Plan.

The semester will come to a close with our 213th Commencement Ceremonies on the Green. We are honored to welcome U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Pulitzer Prize winning author Ambassador Samantha Power to campus as our Commencement Speaker.

Thank you all for your participation in making this community so special. I wish you a productive semester full of inspiration, insight, and learning!