From: Tom Sullivan
To: UVM Faculty
Re: Fall Welcome Back

I hope you all had a wonderful summer! As the fall term begins, the leaves already are turning on the Green and we have a new faster pace on campus. We have an action-packed semester ahead, and I anticipate another spectacular year of accomplishments, awards, events, and activities at the University. In addition to the renowned scholars who will speak on campus as part of our Burack Lecture series, we also have two very special events planned for the fall term. Please mark your calendars for former United States Poet Laureate Billy Collins’ reading on October 3rd and the Johnstone Professor of Psychology at Harvard University Steven Pinker’s Aiken Lecture on October 10th.

I am pleased to announce that three new Marsh Professors-at-Large will be joining our community of scholars this fall: Alison Bechdel, recent Guggenheim Fellow and renowned graphic artist, political commentator, and literary theorist; Amy Dickman, Kaplan Senior Research Fellow in Field Conservation at Oxford University; J. Lorland Matory, Lawrence Richardson Professor of Cultural Anthropology and Director of the Center for African and African American Research at Duke University.

As I move into my second year as President, I want to share three new University initiatives with you. First, in July 2013, we launched The President’s 2012-2013 Annual Report highlighting significant accomplishments of members of the University community and the institution as a whole. The report clearly demonstrates the strength and vitality of the University.

In the brief weeks since we issued the Annual Report, members of our community continue to exemplify how groundbreaking research and service to our local and global communities are intertwined at UVM. Alan Tinkler, Assistant Professor in the College of Education and Social Services, received the Engaged Partnership Award at the Vermont Campus Compact annual ceremony for his work with the King Street Youth Center. Aimee Shen, Assistant Professor of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics, was named The Pew Charitable Trusts’ biomedical researcher of the month for her research on health care-associated infections.

Additionally, Alessandra Rellini, Associate Professor of Psychology, recently completed a Fulbright-funded research project on cardiovascular disease in Florence, Italy, and Kathy Fox, Associate Professor of Sociology, was awarded a Fulbright Senior Scholar
Award to conduct research on offender reintegration. Meanwhile, rising senior Vienna McLeod has spent the summer investigating the effect of childhood obesity on brain function through a project funded by two UVM undergraduate research awards.

Second, during the 2013 spring term, I implemented the Conversations with the President. I met informally with groups of faculty, students, and staff to engage directly with members of our community, to brainstorm, and to gather suggestions about how to continue to enhance academic excellence, to nurture faculty research, to adapt to the changing needs of the students, and to recognize high achievement among our staff members. These productive Conversations, which we plan to continue throughout the next academic year, will help us to meet our mutual goals and to shape our future as a collaborative and cohesive community that promotes excellence and quality at each opportunity.

Third, I am pleased to announce the first major University-wide initiative that emerged from my Conversation with staff members this spring: the establishment of a new Presidential Staff Recognition Awards Program. We will give six distinguished awards annually in honor of staff members who have made significant contributions to our shared values on campus as they are expressed in “Our Common Ground” University statement. Any member of the UVM community will be able to nominate a staff member for a Common Ground Award. I strongly encourage you all to participate in the nomination process. Additional material on the establishment of the new staff awards’ initiative will be forthcoming.

Finally, I will be discussing shortly with the Faculty Senate leadership my goal to create a new Presidential Award to annually recognize faculty members who are great UVM citizens and builders of excellence in service to the University. We recognize faculty for outstanding research and teaching through the University Scholars Program and the Kroepsch-Maurice Award. Now we look forward to rewarding those who make exceptional contributions to the University through their departments, colleges, and the larger UVM community as extraordinary institutional citizens in service to all of us. I will share more details on this important University award as they are developing.

As we return refreshed from the summer break, I want to urge all of us set new standards of academic excellence this year. Together, we can embrace this call and create new opportunities and expectations for advancing academic excellence at this special institution. From a grateful University, thank you for all you do for UVM.