To: University of Vermont Students

From: Tom Sullivan, President

Re: Fall Welcome

Every new academic year is an invigorating beginning, a moment of excited promise for the explorations, collaboration, research, and discovery ahead. I extend my warmest welcome to you at the outset of this new semester. I look forward with you to a stimulating year of learning and discovery with our engaged UVM community.

As we step over the threshold into this new academic year, we arrive to a central campus physically transformed and ready to support 21st-century learning. Discovery Hall, the first of the new STEM Complex buildings, opens its classrooms and labs to explorations and collaboration in chemistry, computer science, mathematics and statistics, physics, and engineering. The new Central Campus Residence Hall is now home to 700 new Catamounts, providing a living and learning environment to support first-year student success and engagement. It’s thrilling to see these beautiful and innovative new structures welcoming students and scholars in the heart of campus.

Our vibrant academic ecosystem at UVM offers countless opportunities for engagement and immersion. We are excited to bring opportunities for vigorous exchange to every branch of the University and campus life. Renowned authors, artists, and scholars will be visiting campus this fall through the Marsh Professor-at-Large Program, the Burack Distinguished Lecture Series, the Fleming Museum, and the Lane Series, among others.

In September we welcome two celebrated journalists to UVM. I urge you all to mark your calendars for the September 25th First-Year Summer Read Lecture and discussion with Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Matt Richtel, author of A Deadly Wandering, a deeply researched chronicle of a fatal distracted-driving collision, the dangers of attention splitting, and the young driver’s redemption. Interweaving personal narrative with cognitive neuroscience and the research behind distracted driving, A Deadly Wandering is an illuminating parable for our time. On September 27th we welcome memoirist and journalist Calvin Trillin, whose work spans more than five decades. In his life as a writer for Time, The New Yorker, and The Nation and as an author of several books of fiction and nonfiction, Calvin Trillin chronicles American life and politics in humorous, piercing prose.

This fall the Fleming Museum presents a very exciting exhibition co-sponsored by the Office of the President. The multifaceted exhibit, Spirited Things: Sacred Arts of the Black Atlantic, showcases a collection of 35 years of ethnographic research by James Marsh Professor-at-Large
J. Lorand Matory, Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Duke University. The exhibition will include sacred objects from the West African Yoruba religion as well as Haitian Vodou, Cuban Santeria, Brazilian Candomble, and Caribbean Spiritism—faiths that emerged as enslaved Africans merged their ancestral cultures with that of their captors. A full program of complementary events, including altar making, ceremony, and a lecture by Professor Matory on September 26th, will celebrate the culmination of Professor Matory’s inspiring tenure as a James Marsh Professor-at-Large.

The Burack Distinguished Lecture Series brings to campus nine guest speakers across the spectrum of disciplines. We look forward to welcoming diplomatic environmental historian Professor Kurkpatrick Dorsey, New Yorker writer and author Larissa MacFarquhar, and developmental psychologist Professor Jelena Obradović, along with several other thought leaders in medicine, science, and the humanities. Full details on the Burack Distinguished Lectures for fall 2017 will soon be forthcoming on the program website.

Each year many scholars, students, and staff members of our UVM community receive high praise and recognition for their exceptional work. A selection of these accolades are gathered in the President’s 2016–2017 Annual Report. May we all be inspired by the good news and great work highlighted in this publication.

It is an honor to serve our University and to connect daily with the creative, forward-thinking scholars, students, and dedicated administrators and support staff who make up our UVM community. In my Convocation address I urged our new students in the Class of 2021 to open their minds—to new fields of interest, new experiences, and new viewpoints—to become engaged citizens of our UVM community and the world.

Our country is built on the foundational principles of freedom of expression and freedom of association, and our University community vigorously upholds those principles. We answer speech with better speech, debate with debate, and we model the best that an educated citizen can be. I look forward to another year advancing the culture of discovery, learning, and respectful and robust discourse with everyone in our UVM community.

With every best wish for a very successful academic year,

Tom Sullivan
President