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

I hope you all had a wonderful summer! Welcome back to all of our returning students, and a big welcome to our new students, who are joining us for the first time. 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.

As I move into my second year as President, I want to share four 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 and the extraordinary achievements of our students.

Second, this spring the University adopted a transformational career counseling plan that will further advance integration of career planning into the academic experience for students. Central to this plan is the opening of the Career & Experience Hub on the first floor of the Davis Center. At the Hub, I encourage you to explore your interests and to find your niche and enhance your personal and career development through internships, studying abroad, undergraduate research, service-learning, fellowships, volunteering, on or off-campus leadership or residential learning. You can also create your own 4 Year Plan for Career Success. Stop by the Hub anytime to find out about more activities on campus or to prepare for life after UVM.

Third, 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.
Lastly, 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 new staff awards’ initiative will be forthcoming.

As we return refreshed from the summer break, I want to urge all of us to set a new standard for academic excellence this year. As the University increases its quality and value, so too will the reputation of this Public Ivy increase; in turn your degree from UVM will continue to have even greater value throughout your life’s journey. I look forward to another year of pursuing academic excellence with all of you. Have a great academic year!