



The University of Vermont

Office of the President

January 24, 2009

Daniel Mark Fogel

From: Daniel Mark Fogel, President

To: Members of the Deans' Council
Members of the Faculty Senate Executive Council
Ms. Beth Walsh, President, Staff Council
Mr. Jay Taylor, President, Student Government Association
Mr. Clinton Jasperson, President, Graduate Student Senate

Re: **A Call for Participation in a Transformational Change Process**

But our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions—that time has surely passed. Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America. The state of the economy calls for action, bold and swift, and we will act. . . . And we will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age.

—President Barack Obama, Inaugural Address, January 20, 2009

Our vision for UVM to be among the nation's premier small research universities remains central, attainable, and compelling, but it requires our most earnest attention if it is to be realized. By some measures, we are there; in other areas we must significantly improve our position, especially in the realm of undergraduate education (the foundation of our capacity in research and graduate education). Let me be clear: We do many, many things well, but there is ample room for improvement. UVM can improve significantly on its present position by:

- Enhancing student success and satisfaction in order to increase retention and graduation rates;
- Strengthening and making more readily apparent our academic quality;
- Reducing administrative redundancies and increasing efficiency;

- Delivering a single general education program proposed and approved by the University Faculty;
- Reducing academic redundancies in disciplines such as biology and environmental science;
- Enhancing academic collaboration, removing all institutional barriers to interdisciplinary teaching and research.

After nearly seven years at this wonderful University, I have concluded that we cannot accomplish these objectives within our current academic structure. Accordingly, I want to move quickly to charge a working group to develop no more than three organizational structures to compare against our current structure. One of the courses of action I want the working group to consider is consolidating all the undergraduate colleges under one dean (a concept outlined in the attached “thought piece” titled “Transforming UVM—The College Option”). Other planning parameters for the working group will be:

- To present recommendations to me no later than March 15, 2009, understanding that these should not be detailed plans, but feasible concepts, that we will develop details collaboratively later, and that I will meet with the working group initially to share some of my ideas (and biweekly thereafter for feedback and collaboration);
- To assume no additional revenue, though any savings realized through any model will be reinvested in academic programs;
- To consider environmental factors, including the financial situation and demographics at the state, regional, and national level;
- To include in any recommended courses of action a student success center that includes capability for centralized, professional advising for lower division, undeclared students, or students wishing to transfer between academic units;
- And to eliminate academic program redundancies that confuse prospective and enrolled students.

It is my thought that the working group will be chaired by a senior faculty member and that it will include other faculty members, deans, staff members, and students. I invite suggestions for how the working group might best be structured as well as nominations (including self-nominations) of persons to serve on it. Because I would like to appoint and charge the working group quickly, I ask that these suggestions be submitted to me no later than close of business on Wednesday, January 28th. These are challenging times but as I have said repeatedly, they present us with remarkable opportunities to enhance the academic enterprise and the quality of the student experience at UVM. I am not sure what the best approach is to

achieving the objectives I have outlined here, but I am convinced that this is the right conversation for us to be having now, and I very much look forward to your participation in the process. Thank you.

cc: Board of Trustees