The GSS is happy to provide the following feedback from a large pool of constituents, in conjunction with the GSS senators (representing almost 50% of graduate programs) we also reached out and held several smaller open forums for input on this matter from graduates. The following are the compiled thoughts regarding each of the bullet points given in the original memo distributed by Chair Daigle.

1. **What opportunities do you see facing the University of Vermont in the next ten years?**

   As a land locked college, UVM has a unique and robust community that will allow it to undergo substantial growth. This, however, is not seen as conventional growth via the growth of the student population. This is seen as an opportunity to grow research, collaboration, educational programs and graduate engagement. New research facilities show potential in “top of the line research” provided the university is bringing in well-rounded and top candidates as graduate students and faculty. This offers potential in obtaining prestigious and substantial funding to the university amidst economically challenging times. Given the facilities and personnel and programs implemented thus far here at UVM, it is very possible for the research here to grow substantially.

   Collaboration amongst students, staff, faculty and the Board of Trustees also has the potential for further growth amongst alumni and the greater community. The symbiotic relationship between all these entities results in financial gain in the long term in the form of donations and reliable donors. The university has the potential to strategically invest in people and facilities to strengthen its ties with
alumni of the future. This not only presents the opportunity for long term benefit but short term as well. Visible and substantial improvements have been shown to enhance community and the overall mood of its members.

Growth of unique educational programs is seen as a great opportunity for the growth in prestige here at the university. Concurrently, with the opportunity of greater research comes the opportunity for interdisciplinary programs that are considered “non-conventional”. This gives the university the opportunity to express its core values while “staying ahead of its competitors” in its growth of academic prestige and essential personnel.

Investment in graduate engagement has the potential for substantial returns to the college regarding both its academic prestige and financial returns. Where as many graduate candidates are applying to several of our competitor universities, the opportunity of recruitment and retention of highly qualified graduate students has the potential to bring research and academic prestige. Furthermore, the use of graduate students rather than “professional teaching assistants” has added potential in research and academia. In addition, the culture here facilitates the unity and atmosphere to attract a more diverse population than other universities given the current political climate. Active investment in a larger graduate population promotes student to faculty collaboration, student to student collaboration and in turn enhancement and growth of the UVM community. The University, currently given its size and current graduate population, has the opportunity to increasingly invest in its graduate students as it looks toward competitive growth amongst other R1 institutions.

2. What challenges do you see facing the University of Vermont in the next ten years?

Because it is the view of the graduate students that the university is at a critical juncture with regards to its direction, many of the opportunities presented above could also be adversities. It is critical to remember what makes the “University of Vermont” the University of Vermont. There is an underlying fear that in the future out of financial obligations that the core values of the university could be challenged to favor specific entities over others. That being said, it does not mean that growth and change overall is feared just a shaking of the universities core values. Concurrently, it is believed that recruitment and retention, space/the growth of Burlington, and
diminishing interest in specific programs and financial restrictions based on space could be substantial challenges to the university.

Recruitment and retention should be a top concern moving forward. As the main revenue source to the university, it is necessary to recruit not only full classes of students but high-quality individuals to the university. Specifically, regarding graduate students, it has been seen that a combination of higher stipends, housing, insurance, policies, overall academic prestige, quality of overall student experience and potential quality of life over the next 5+ years are the key factors that are pertinent when recruiting and retaining graduate students. If the university wishes to remain competitive in respect to research and prestige these individual aspects need to be addressed to promote growth amongst students.

Physical space and the expansion of Burlington also will be a challenge in the future. In the eyes of recruitment, it will not be physically possible to continue to substantially grow class sizes to accommodate financial constraints on the university without changing tuition. This makes the challenge for the university and the new president to find other ways of obtaining substantial channels of revenue outside tuition revenue. Where as continued development of housing in surrounding communities allows for this to be a short-term solution. If there are not simple means of transportation to and from the university or ample space on campus to park to accommodate the growth over the next 10 years it could prove to be problematic even trying to recruit quality students, faculty and staff.

Finally, interest in different programs fluctuate greatly with the times. UVM in this aspect has always been dedicated to not just the mathematics and sciences but specifically to the liberal arts. It is essential that just because specific programs or colleges make more money than others that the university does not change its identity. Where higher education is becoming more the “norm” it will be a challenge of the university to maintain high prestige if it is to focus on growth as a singular college. Not only would retention plummet but if all the programs are not as prestigious the university would only attract a single type of student. Therefore, over the next few years the removal of programs, classes and experiences outright could be considered a sizable challenge moving forward.
3. **What professional qualifications/experiences should the next president possess?**

As with many high-ranking members of the administration, it is the view of the graduate population that regarding professional qualifications, the selected individual hold either a masters or PhD degree, and preferably had also held the title of dean, provost, or president in the past. In addition, demonstrated experience and dedication to the core values similar to those of the University of Vermont at a similar university. Someone that has a keen understanding of education or educational background and demonstrated success with fundraising is also desirable. It is of the utmost importance that this individual not only be apt intellectually but personably as well.

Specifically, although difficult it would be nice to see the coming president involved in student government as a graduate student. This aspect offers a unique perspective of the student experience through the eyes of an engaged individual that may have more interaction with other administrative personalities in university aspects that otherwise go unnoticed to students.

4. **What personal leadership characteristics should the next president possess?**

The preferred personal characteristics are almost more important than some of the professional ones in the eyes of the graduate students spoken to. The coming president must be open to: 1) interactions with all students be it in a professional or casual setting, 2) have an attitude that is caring and compassionate to the needs of the UVM community, 3) a dedication to scholarship and all of the UVM community. It would be preferable for a president to be open to diversifying and extending interdisciplinary collaboration not just academically but socially as well. But most of all, the University of Vermont has a rich community and environment of aid, integrity, communal wellbeing and growth. The new incoming president needs to share these common values that the current president has so far demonstrated.
To summarize, this candidate will already have the ideology that successful universities not only exist but grow in a complex symbiotic relationship between students, staff, faculty, and the Board of Trustees. In order for the new president to be successful here and for the overall university to thrive under his leadership, there is a delicate balance that needs to be grown simultaneously in order to ensure the preservation, growth and wellbeing of the UVM community.