



The University of Vermont

Office of the President

November 19, 2009

Daniel Mark Fogel Jane Knodell

From: Daniel Mark Fogel, President
Jane E. Knodell, Interim Senior Vice President and Provost

To: University of Vermont Community

Re: **Commencement 2010**

While Commencement 2010 is just over six months away, we want to let you know about a significant change to the events of that weekend. The annual Commencement ceremony is arguably the single most important event in the life of the University, and following discussions with many groups, including the deans and the leadership of the Faculty Senate, of the Student Government Association, of the Graduate Student Senate, and others, we are implementing measures to enhance and improve the overall experience.

Beginning next May, we will have a single main ceremony where all graduates' names will be announced, along with any special awards and honors (cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa, etc.) they may be receiving. Every graduate will cross the stage to receive a diploma cover (appropriate diplomas will be available later that day), including doctoral, master's, and bachelor's degree candidates. All doctoral students will be hooded during the ceremony in order to recognize the highest degree awarded by the University. Tickets for friends and family to attend the ceremony will not be required, even if the event is moved inside due to weather. The College of Medicine will hold a separate ceremony later in the day.

Formerly, in addition to the main ceremony that takes place on Sunday morning on the University Green (weather permitting), each school and college held additional individual ceremonies throughout the weekend, including the Graduate College hooding and Honors College Recognition ceremonies. Space limitations also forced several colleges and schools to hold their ceremonies at off-campus venues. Moreover, graduates often chose to attend one, but not both ceremonies, detracting from the overall sense of University community on this important day.

We believe that a single ceremony has several additional advantages. First, it will allow faculty members to celebrate the accomplishments of students with whom they have worked across the entire University. Second, our students will also be able to celebrate together with others since their friendships are not limited by their choice of major or college. Third, awarding all of our degrees collectively will, we hope, serve to motivate students to pursue even higher levels of education, and will help them better appreciate the significance of the community of learned persons they have just joined. Finally—the least important reason but one that is material nevertheless in these challenging times—the combined ceremony will represent a savings to the University of between \$150,000 and \$200,000 annually.

Many universities hold a single commencement ceremony, and we are learning from their best practices. Our planning for this ceremony will continue to be thorough and thoughtful, and we will do everything to create an inclusive celebration that is significant and meaningful. The anticipated length of the combined ceremony is three hours—around an hour longer than the morning ceremony from past years, but less than the combined length of morning ceremony plus an additional college/school diploma ceremony.

Faculty Senate President Dr. James Burgmeier spoke well to the point of what we are trying to achieve in a message he sent earlier this semester to the faculty: “One main ceremony will convey the unity of the university in ways not possible with the current separate ceremonies, and it should be an enhanced experience for the graduates, emphasizing that the ceremony is for their benefit.”

We are confident that the new format we are pursuing will be very special and memorable for all participants. For more information and updates on Commencement 2010 please go to the following website: [Commencement 2010](#). We look forward to working with other members of the UVM community to make this a cherished day of celebration for all who participate.