I. Executive Summary

The Transdisciplinary Research Initiative in Culture and Society (TRICS) proposes as its “spire of excellence” a University-wide Transdisciplinary Center for the Study of Culture and Society (CSCS) that would, on an annual basis, permit faculty from across UVM and around the academy to join together as innovative “communities of inquiry,” creatively exploring the intersection of the human sciences with multiple fields of knowledge and various methodological approaches. We imagine this Center as a place where new disciplinary connections will be forged and strengthened, new fields of knowledge cultivated and nurtured, and where the world-class faculty at UVM can work collaboratively with innovative scholars from around the world to enhance the research profile and international reputation of UVM as a hub of cutting-edge research. As a long-term goal for this Center, we envision an institution of regional, national, and international prominence that people think of as the intellectual and scholarly proving ground for emerging disciplines and interdisciplinary research in Culture and Society.

II. Proposal for a Transdisciplinary Center for the Study of Culture and Society

A. Building an Infrastructure for Collaborative Transdisciplinary Research

UVM has a long and influential history of cross-disciplinary research in Culture and Society. From the pioneering work of Raul Hilberg and his colleagues that helped inaugurate the field of Holocaust Studies to the collaboration between UVM faculty and Michel Foucault, which resulted in the French theorist’s last major work, Technologies of the Self, UVM has been a leader in innovative research that transcends disciplinary boundaries. For the most part, such exciting work has taken place spontaneously, through the initiative of individual faculty members working alone or in small groups. Until now, UVM has not had a consistent support system to nurture and sustain this type of cross-disciplinary innovation. A Transdisciplinary Center for the Study of Culture and Society (CSCS) would provide the necessary infrastructure for ground-breaking faculty members from all units of the University to participate in sustained and supported collaborative research projects. The inherent value of CSCS is that it will cultivate unique collaborative constellations over time while adapting to the intellectual and cultural landscape as new scholars participate and new fields emerge.

As we envision the Center, each year CSCS will support yearlong projects on a theme addressing critical issues in Culture and Society proposed, planned and organized by members of the UVM faculty.
To this end, CSCS will award 10-12 University Fellowships to UVM faculty members. In addition, the Center will grant 4-6 competitive postdoctoral Visiting Fellowships to scholars from outside of UVM. These scholars would be housed at the University, and both UVM Fellows and external Fellows would receive office space at the Center. Of the University Fellows, 2-4 will be designated “Organizing Fellows,” competitively selected based on yearly themes proposed by the Organizing teams. After a project is approved by the Director and the CSCS Advisory Committee, Organizing Fellows work with the Director to select participating faculty and to develop a program of related seminars, visiting speakers and public events. Organizing Fellows may receive course releases and/or faculty development funds to aid in strategic planning, networking, and program development.

To be selected as an Organizing Fellow, faculty members will be asked to propose themes that involve more than one department, with preference given to proposals that originate from more than one College. Faculty members whose thematic proposals are selected will then participate in a peer-review of applications for Center Fellowships. To encourage inter-College collaboration and truly interdisciplinary work, no more than two Fellows may come from any one department in a given year. The Center’s administrators, Advisory Board, and the Fellowship selection committee will strive to ensure diversity among the Fellows and that Fellows come from as many University units as possible. Efforts shall be made to reward junior faculty as well as established scholars. This emphasis on diversity shall also guide the selection of Visiting Fellows. To cultivate interaction with the broader UVM community, as part of their Fellowship year, Fellows will be expected to present a public lecture on their research, and Visiting Fellows will be asked to teach 1 interdisciplinary course of their design. All Fellows will be required to submit five annual reports detailing the impact of the Center Fellowships on subsequent research and pedagogy.

Since we anticipate that the process of developing themes and recruiting Fellows will operate on a two-year cycle, for the first 2 years of CSCS, the TRICS working group proposes that the theme be “Borders, Identities and Networks.” This theme, developed in consultation with members of the faculty (see below), will attract a broad spectrum of scholars, and reflects some of the initial aims of the Center.
Among the many appeals of this theme is that it is inherently trans- and interdisciplinary. We imagine borders not merely in terms of the lines between nation-states, but as the interface between disciplines, bodies of knowledge, communities and historical epochs. Identities speak both to the categories falling under “Identity Politics” and to the different modes of knowledge production and their varying methodologies. Finally “networks” suggest the multiform points of connection (social, technological, and physical) that link people and ideas across borders and identities. These points of connection offer the potential for the humanities, social sciences, and the creative arts to speak to “hard” sciences at the intersection of culture and society. As an inaugural theme, we believe that “Borders, Identities and Networks” engages the broad research interests identified by our faculty and points the Center in exciting directions.

III. Justification for Strategic Investment in CSCS

“It is important for research and teaching to be relevant, for the university to engage with the public culture and to design its investigative paradigms with actual social and cultural life in view. To continue to do this, academic inquiry, at least in some fields, may need to become less exclusionary and more holistic…Academics need to look to the world to see what kind of teaching and research needs to be done, and how they might better train and organize themselves to do it. But they need to ignore the world’s demand that they reproduce its self-image.”—Louis Menand, The Marketplace of Ideas

A. Rationale and UVM's Strengths

The TRICS working group believes that to maintain a healthy, vibrant, and rigorous curriculum, the University must offer its faculty and students opportunities for cross-disciplinary research and collaboration. We envision CSCS as an agent in creating “communities of inquiry” that link UVM faculty with scholars from around the world. We use the term “community of inquiry” because it evokes the legacy of John Dewey (and hence the “philosophy” of UVM) and for its implication of the relationship between investigation, creativity, deliberation, and participatory democracy. In that same spirit, the TRICS working group polled members of the faculty from around the University about their research interests, their desire for collaborative, transdisciplinary work, and the form they would like to see transdisciplinary work take at UVM. TRICS also targeted selected faculty members to write memos addressing these issues. Altogether, working group members received nearly 200, articulate, thoughtful responses, which identified (with certain points of
overlap) approximately 600 research interests. Some noteworthy findings emerged from these results. First, *UVM is already very strong in well-established interdisciplinary fields in “Culture and Society”* such as cultural studies, critical theory, intellectual history, global studies, creative arts, and certain disciplines that examine “identity” as their primary object (e.g. ALANA, Post-colonialism, Women and Gender Studies, and Holocaust Studies). The University has tenured full and associate professors in these fields with international reputations and active research agendas. Further, *UVM is currently distinguishing itself in emerging fields* that consider the relationship between developing technologies, social media and cultural expression.

With the faculty already in place, *UVM is poised to advance knowledge in critical issues in 21st century society, while having considerable expertise in the history and traditions of interdisciplinary research.*

However, the sheer breadth and diversity of research interests reported suggests the difficulty in identifying one or two areas of excellence around which TRICS could develop a program. Further, given the variety of research excellence at UVM, it is hard to predict how—and how best—these interdisciplinary interests might intersect in the foreseeable future. This proliferation of research fields simultaneously points to the greatest strength of our faculty and the biggest anxieties of our colleagues. Time and again, faculty members expressed a hunger for cross-disciplinary collaboration and research support. That desire was tempered, however, by a fear that a “spire” in culture and society would necessarily exclude the work of many excellent faculty members whose work fell outside the TRICS. Further, many faculty members expressed deep reservations about instituting a graduate program in Culture and Society at the University of Vermont at this time. Some of that concern dealt with the unknowns of funding, staffing, and impact on current resources, but many faculty also felt uneasy about the ethical implication of developing an interdisciplinary graduate program in the current economic climate and in light of hiring trends in the social sciences and humanities.

That said, many faculty members did express cautious support for the concept an interdisciplinary graduate program if developed over the course of the next 5-10 years and given the appropriate investigation, creativity, deliberation, and participation of members of the faculty. Far more enthusiasm, however, was voiced for a Research Center that promoted the collaborative transdisciplinary work of the
faculty, rewarded excellence, and cultivated new and unforeseen fields of knowledge. Therefore, at this
time, we do not propose developing a graduate program in Culture and Society and feel that CSCS will
best serve UVM by augmenting existing undergraduate and graduate studies in all areas of the University.

Hence, the TRICS working group believe that:

• Resources in Culture and Society can best be used to develop a Research Center that taps into existing
strengths of the UVM faculty and cultivates our enormous potential for interdisciplinary research.

• CSCS will function as an engine to promote UVM's research successes. Internally the Center will
develop and maintain a searchable database of research interests/projects of UVM faculty. Externally,
The Center will be positioned to take advantage of the growing faculty interest in scholarly
communications issues, and will establish an online open-access journal as a means of rapidly and
widely promoting the research and discoveries that emerge from the Center's interdisciplinary
partnerships.

• Over the next 5-10 years, such a Center could—and we believe will—be instrumental in identifying
emerging disciplines in Culture and Society. As new disciplines emerge, CSCS will be poised to develop
a viable graduate program that will best capitalize on the innovative work performed by Center Fellows
and their peers and be internationally competitive in terms of scholarship and job placement for
students.

• CSCS would garner for UVM national recognition as an “idea incubator,” adaptable to emerging ideas
and well-situated to lead in the development of new fields of knowledge.

• As such, the work of CSCS Fellows will appeal to the broader community interested in developing
trends in Culture and Society, and the Center’s Director will promote an open exchange between
CSCS and community stakeholders (legislators, business leaders, the media, etc.)

• Working collaboratively with ALANA, Women and Gender Studies, Global Studies and other
interdisciplinary programs, CSCS will enhance diversity at UVM and will actively appeal to diversity
when developing themes and recruiting Fellows.
• CSCS will attract vibrant new faculty to UVM, both as Visiting Fellows and when recruiting. Further, CSCS will forge collaborative networks across the Academy.
• Finally: A Research Center that encourages interdisciplinary collaboration, invites the participation and rewards the excellence of the full spectrum of UVM faculty will have the broad and enthusiastic support of our colleagues.

B. Contribution to Graduate and Undergraduate Education at UVM

Although CSCS is not at this time proposing a graduate program, the TRICS working group feel that a widely renowned Research Center will contribute substantially to the value of graduate and undergraduate education at UVM. First, it will mark UVM as a site of innovative new research where students will be trained in rigorous interdisciplinary fields and methodologies vital to their success in a changing marketplace. Center Fellows would therefore be invaluable resources as formal and informal advisers to students at all levels. In addition, part of the Center’s Development should involve discussions with the Honors program to consider the possibility that Visiting Fellows could teach Honors College seminars, thereby alleviating some of the pressures on departments to staff these valuable courses and—as an added benefit—introducing the best and brightest students at UVM to the best and brightest new scholars in the country. Further, CSCS will offer opportunities to students ranging from internships and RAships to participation in Center-organized seminars. If conditions in five to ten years merit creating a PhD program, the efforts of the Center would provide a platform upon which to build such a program. Finally, participation in CSCS would lead to the development of new interdisciplinary pedagogy, and as part of their post Fellowship reports, Fellows would be required to describe the impact of the Fellowship on their teaching.

C. Contribution to other “Spires of Excellence”

CSCS looks forward to working with the other TRI spires to foster collaborative research and promote interdisciplinary inquiry and pedagogy. Since the primary focus of CSCS is research, the Center will ideally function as a site where faculty from each of the spires can meet, share ideas and collaborate on integrated research projects. CSCS will promote the work of the other TRIs and help coordinate joint projects and events with these units.
D. Existing Models of Research Centers

The TRICS working group has identified a number of Research Centers at institutions around the country, broadly focused in the liberal arts and culture and society. Noteworthy among these are the Kahn Liberal Arts Institute at Smith College, The Center for Twenty-First Century Thought at UW Milwaukee and the Institutes for Advanced Study at Princeton, Stanford, and the University of Minnesota. Where appropriate, the TRICS working group has adapted procedures and best practices from these Centers, and has used them as a guide to necessary resources. We hope, should the TRICS spire go forward, for the opportunity to collaborate with these exemplary Centers as we develop CSCS.6

E. Resource Needs and Funding

Each of the Spires of Excellence will require an allocation of internal and external resources, and whatever spires are selected, each will have its unique profile of costs and possible sources of funding. We believe that while there are certain larger expenditures associated with CSCS (the establishment and/or renovation of the Center’s physical space, course releases for faculty, and the annual stipend paid to visiting Fellows), in other areas, a Research Center with a Culture and Society theme is highly cost-effective (fewer technological and overhead needs, no graduate fellowships—or graduate courses to staff, no new faculty lines, and external Fellows covering some of the released courses). Detailed below are anticipated resource needs, assets, and possible sources of funding that the TRICS working group has identified for a successful Center.

1. Resources

a. Faculty

It should go without saying that the faculty members at UVM are our greatest asset and instrumental to the future success of any of the spires. This is particularly true in the case of a Research Center, where each year new faculty members will be asked to collaborate with colleagues from outside of their disciplines and outside of their Colleges. Further, the strength of the Center will depend on the broader community of colleagues who will attend the year’s events and ultimately serve as the initial sounding board for the ideas
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generated by the Center. Supporting faculty research is paramount for the Center’s success. The TRICS working group sees that support taking on a number of forms:

- **Course releases for UVM faculty.** To further the research agenda of CSCS, Fellows of the Center will receive course releases during their Fellowship. The number and duration of these releases shall be negotiated during the development of the Center. However, we recommend that each Fellow receive 3 course releases as we feel strongly that the reward for being selected a Fellow should be a release substantial enough to truly facilitate sustained research.

- **Stipends and housing for visiting Fellows.** Visiting Fellows shall receive a competitive stipend (to be determined during the Center’s development) and housing furnished by the Center and the University. As part of their Fellowship year, Visiting Fellows will be expected to teach 1 class per year and present their work in a public lecture. While Visiting Fellows will not have official advising assignments, they will be expected to interact with students and participate in colloquia and seminars sponsored by the Center.

- **Honoraria for Invited Lectures and Seminars.** As part of the annual budget for the CSCS, funds will be made available for visiting scholars to present public lectures and lead seminars for Center participants. (As detailed below, these public lectures could dovetail with some of UVM’s current lecture series to enhance interest and participation).

b. **Physical Space**

Beyond the members of our faculty and the Fellows, the biggest asset of the CSCS will be its physical home, and central to its identity as a “Center” will be a recognizable and distinctive physical space that facilitates collaboration and open research. The TRICS working group proposes the designation of a site for the Center that would include offices for Center Fellows and its administrators (preferably following collaborative office/open design practices). The Center should consist of four discrete but connected units: a central meeting place, a lounge that can be transformed into an intimate lecture or seminar space; individual work spaces for the Fellows and, ideally, a lecture hall in the building with a capacity for 100-150 people. The goal of this spatial configuration is to offer the private autonomy that many scholars need for
their work while maximizing the opportunities for both planned and unplanned interactions among the Fellows, visitors, Director, and administrative assistant.  

c. **Technology**

The Center should meet the current “best practice” standards for technology and communications at UVM, including: Wireless connections in seminar, lecture and meeting rooms, public spaces and living quarters and “smart classroom” technology in seminar and lecture rooms (data projectors, sound and video projection capabilities, etc.). UVM Fellows will use their own computers (if deemed feasible and cost-effective); Visiting Fellows shall have use of University computers and computing services (if necessary).

d. **Staff**

The **Director** should be an excellent and vibrant advocate for the Center, UVM, and transdisciplinary research. Pursuant to these goals, and to ensure the smooth operations of the Center, the CSCS Director (with the support of an **Administrative Assistant**) will develop new funding streams, oversee the construction and maintenance of searchable electronic databases of UVM faculty research interests and Culture and Society-related publications, and promote the Center and its accomplishments through media and other appropriate venues. More specific tasks of the Director will include supervising Center staff, students, and facilities; organizing and publicizing the speaker series; coordinating the evaluation committees for University and Visiting Fellows; maintaining the Center’s Web and social media presence (Facebook, Twitter) and communicating directly with UVM faculty, administration, the Faculty Advisory Board, and the Center’s numerous external stakeholders.

The **Faculty Advisory Board** will be made up of a University-wide team of UVM faculty with strong research track records who are experienced with both transdisciplinary research and the operations of Centers. Ideally composed of 8-10 members, the Board will be charged with advising the Director on development, will review the Annual Report, will participate in the oversight of the Fellowship program, and will strategize the Center’s future themes and mechanisms for fostering vigorous collaborative research.
e. Current UVM Resources supplementing/augmenting CSCS:

**Existing Programs:** Although UVM has a number of longstanding interdisciplinary programs (ALANA U.S. Ethnic Studies, Area and International Studies, Canadian Studies, European Studies, Holocaust Studies, The Humanities Program, Vermont Studies, Women and Gender Studies, etc.), their excellent pedagogical and research activities are often compartmentalized, minimizing participation by the broader UVM community. The TRICS working group anticipates that when established, CSCS will bridge the gap between these programs, encouraging collaboration, sharing ideas, and organizing joint academic events with them. As it grows, the Center will not only become a vibrant link between these programs, it will also enhance their administrative efficiency, event planning and promotion.

**Lecture Series:** In addition to the above-mentioned programs, UVM has a number of lecture series at the Departmental, College, and University levels (The Buckham Scholars in English, the Aiken Lectures, the Burack Lectures, etc.). Again, with notable exceptions, these lectures often have difficulty generating University-wide appeal. The TRICS working group envisions CSCS playing a pivotal role in coordinating these lecture series to complement the research projects of the Center and publicizing these lectures to the broader community.

2. Funding

There are two types of funding that will support a Center: limited-term funding in support of specific projects, and long-term funding to support the basic operations of the Center on an ongoing basis. Many of the potential themes and related research projects of the Center can be expected to involve grants from diverse sources ranging from the NSF and NEH to private foundations. While such sources might provide start-up funds for basic Center operations, they are unlikely to provide long-term funds for such a purpose. Ideally, therefore, the Center would be funded through a mixture of an endowment—something like the Buckham Fund that supports UVM's English Department—and grants in support of specific Center activities.

Likely public sources for specific Center activities include the NEH, NEA, Dept. of Education, NSF, and the Vermont Humanities Council. Working group members have also identified a number of
private funding organizations for potential CSCS projects. Many of these have sponsored activities specifically dealing with emerging disciplines (e.g. The Mellon Foundation). Others, like the Rockefeller Foundation have historically used their philanthropic clout to leverage participation and financial support of “Culture and Society” research projects by media corporations likely to benefit from that research. The Center’s Director will be responsible for pursuing funds from these sources, and, in collaboration with Organizing Fellows, coordinate targeted funding requests and lend administrative support to grant applications where appropriate. Given the widespread recognition in both the scholarly and funding communities of the need for transdisciplinarity, we believe that partnership with the Center could lend a competitive edge to grant applications addressing transdisciplinary issues.

Base-budget funding for Center operations will depend, however, on two sources: cost-sharing agreements with other units (perhaps including faculty course releases) and restricted endowment income. The proposed Center offers an attractive opportunity for major gifts in the upcoming capital campaign, including naming rights. Academic Centers and institutes of all kinds are typically established through private giving, and we believe that the promise of innovative and groundbreaking research our Center offers will prove very appealing to prospective donors. We would encourage UVM to make CSCS a development priority, and in consultation with the Center’s Director, the TRICS working group and affiliated faculty will help identify and cultivate potential donors.

IV. Questions determining best practices and metrics for success.

In an effort to position CSCS for success both in its development and for the future, the TRICS working groups have generated the following questions and metrics.

A. When Developing the Center:

- Have we engaged all faculty and faculty units in the work of the Center?
- Have we been successful in identifying funding sources and pursuing grants?
- Are we actively involved in community outreach such that Vermoneters as well as the University community take pride in the Center?
• Have we developed professional connections with colleagues at other institutions that advance the
goals of the Center?
• Has the Center identified organizing themes for research and curriculum development that have
resonated with faculty, stimulating their interest and participation?
• Has the Center created a physical space on campus that promotes the values of collaboration and
openness and incorporates appropriate technology to serve our goals?

B. For the Long-term Health of the Center:
• Does the Center continue to attract innovative Visiting Fellows and does it represent the forefront
of new research at UVM?
• Is the Center attracting a diverse applicant pool of Fellows?
• Are Center Fellows and the Director sought out by external sources (the media, other scholars,
legislators and business leaders) when discussing trends in culture and society and emerging
disciplinary fields?
• Is the Center reaching out to Vermont constituencies (e.g. education, health and social services)
and striving to contribute to their work?
• Is the Center self-sustaining? Is it “resource neutral” for the University? Do its endowments and
grant funding cover its annual operating expenses?

C. Metrics for Fellows of the Center (to be measured by the five annual reports required of
Fellows in years following their Fellowship):
• Publications per Fellow deriving from research while at the Center.
• Awards per Fellow in five years following Fellowship.
• Citations per Fellow for work deriving from Center-related research.
• Transdisciplinary courses taught at the undergraduate and graduate level.

V. Conclusion

A Transdisciplinary Center for the Study of Culture and Society offers UVM the best opportunity for a
broad range of faculty to investigate paradigms in public culture and social life; to collaborate with scholars
from outside of the University; to promote UVM and enhance our reputation as an innovative “idea incubator;” and to identify and develop emerging fields of study. CSCS would honor the traditions of UVM by promoting “communities of inquiry” that would examine the “total structures of beliefs” that constitute society and lead those communities to “new surveys of possibilities” (Dewey). At the same time, CSCS would position UVM to advance the conversation about the study of culture and society in the decades to come.

Notes:

1 Based on our survey of faculty research interests at UVM, subsequent themes could include: Youth; Democracy; Peace and Justice; and Praxis and Collective Action.

2 “Philosophy is criticism; criticism of the influential beliefs that underlie culture; a criticism which traces the beliefs to their generating conditions as far as may be, which tracks them to their results, which considers the mutual compatibility of the elements of the total structure of beliefs. Such an examination terminates, whether so intended or not, in a projection of them into a new perspective which leads to new surveys of possibilities.” (John Dewey, "Context and Thought,” 1931)

3 A handful of examples suggests both the success of our faculty and the diversity of our contributions. Emily Bernard’s essay “Teaching the ’N-Word,” was included in Best American Essays, 2006; Kathy Fox’s work on prison policy and education was instrumental in the development of the Wesleyan University Center for Prison Education, whose student organizer was just named a Rhodes Scholar. John Gennari’s Blowin’ Hot and Cool: Jazz and its Critics (University of Chicago Press, 2006) won both the John G. Cavelti Book Award (American Studies) and the Deems Taylor Award (Music). Artist Nancy Dwyer’s work was recently included in the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s exhibit, “The Pictures Generation: 1974-1984.” David Jenemann’s re-evaluation of the Frankfurt School’s American exile is the subject of the current issue of Telos. Urban social geographer Meghan Cope’s research on youth activism was recently featured at the Center for Regional Change (UC Davis). Alice Fothergill’s pathbreaking work on race, gender, childhood and the sociology of disaster is central to post-Katrina research and will, sadly, inform much of the debate regarding the Haitian Earthquake relief efforts.


5 To consider just a few relevant data points that militate against the immediate creation of a graduate program in culture in society:
• The Modern Language Association (one of the professional organizations most strongly affiliated with existing cultural studies programs) reports that in the last two years, tenure-track positions being searched at the MLA convention have declined 51%.

• At the University of Iowa, the Provost's Task Force on Graduate Education: Selective Excellence has recently (2010) recommended the elimination of the UI's comparative literature and film studies PhD degrees, and the comparative literature MA degree.

• The History of Consciousness Program at UC Santa Cruz, one of the flagship interdisciplinary graduate programs in the U.S., has, at least temporarily, stopped accepting graduate students.

• The 2004 Humanities Indicators, the most up-to-date comprehensive data complied by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, report that the percentage of students who pursue further studies in Humanities and Social Sciences (i.e. Post-Doctoral degrees) has more than doubled in the last few decades. At the same time, the average length of time to complete a Ph.D. program in the Humanities has grown to 11 years.  
  <http://www.humanitiesindicators.org/content/hrcoII.aspx> We can perhaps infer from these statistics diminishing potentials for employment and a correlated desire to continue (funded) study for as long as possible.

• The 1999 surveys by the Coalition on the Academic Workforce indicate that in the eleven disciplines that closely align with Culture and Society, “all but three of the disciplines reported that traditional full-time tenure-track faculty members accounted for less than half of the instructional staff in the responding departments and programs.”  
  <http://www.mla.org/resources/documents/survey_coalition/repview_coalition> While this data is a decade old, similar—and more dire—results have recently been reported by many of the represented disciplines.

This proposal is perhaps not the place to debate whether the tenure track position is the *sine qua non* of a Ph.D. in Culture and Society. However, unlike in other disciplines (e.g. medicine, engineering, etc.), where a reasonable expectation of full employment exists outside of the academy after a terminal degree, we feel it is worthwhile to ask whether a Ph.D. in Culture and Society, no matter how excellent, would produce a chronically and systemically under-employable body of students.

6 Rick Fantasia, the Director and Advisory Committee Chair of Smith’s Kahn Institute has graciously and enthusiastically offered his advice and support and invited the Chair of the TRICS working group for a visit should our “spire” proceed to the next stages.

7 The TRICS working group has identified certain existing spaces that suggest a range of possibilities for accommodating the design principles we consider important. 1) 589 Main Street, the former home of
Canadian Studies, a two-story house that could be renovated with office space on the first floor and living quarters on the second. Easy access to the Davis Center would make it possible for Center events (lectures, seminars) to be held at UVM’s signature public space. 2) The Taft School (14 S. Williams). Situated behind Fletcher Allen Health Care, the Taft School is owned by the Burlington School District. However, the District has been trying to sell the property since 2005. The charitable bequest that deeded the building to the District requires that the building be used for a school or a home for old and indigent men. 3) 101 Main Street. Perhaps less desirable for its distance to campus, this former Armory building with its beautiful red brick and ample open space (it was once used as a roller rink) would be an exciting collaborative work area right in the heart of downtown Burlington. It has been for lease/sale for nearly five years following a fire, and could be redesigned to suit the Center’s needs.


Members of our working group have had some preliminary discussions regarding notable Vermonters who might support the mission of the Center and who we could approach because of personal connections to UVM or to members of the working group. Should our spire be selected, we would be happy to share those ideas.