

CLOSING REMARKS AT RALLY AWARDS

D. Rosowsky, Provost and Senior Vice President

May 6, 2014 at the Flynn Theater

Good evening!

We have come to the end of the 10th Annual University of Vermont RALLY AWARDS, a ceremony – an EVENT – celebrating the academic and athletic success of Vermont Student-Athletes during the 2013-2014 season.

I will try to keep my remarks brief. But I cannot pass up this opportunity to tell you just how much you mean to our University and how tremendously proud I am of our student-athletes and our athletic programs.

I am – in case you have not heard – one of your biggest fans. I have had the great privilege of working as a faculty member (and later as an academic leader) for nearly 25 years at some of the top D1 schools in the nation. I have come to hold profound respect and deep admiration for student-athletes, for the role of the Athletics Program in any great university, and all that Athletics brings to an academic community, a student body, an alumni base, and a community. Clemson, Oregon State, and Texas A&M – all great schools with great athletics programs. But it was not until I arrived at the University of Vermont last year that I came to appreciate what it means to build programs around SCHOLAR-athletes. I am going to come back to that in a moment.

As the Provost of UVM, I am the Chief Academic Officer. This means I have responsibility for our academic mission, our commitment to student success, and to academic excellence. Those of you who know me also know these two things about me: (1) I show up (often with my family) at as many athletics events as my schedule permits, and (2) I tweet.

I use Twitter as a means to communicate with students and with alumni, but if you follow me on Twitter (@UVMprovost) you have seen that I use this social media platform for two main purposes. First, to shout from the rooftops about the amazing academic programs and the accomplishments of our students and faculty. And second, to brag about our scholar-athletes and our teams. As a result, at a recent event, I was introduced with yet another title: Cheerleader-in-Chief.

I would be remiss if I didn't commend the Student Athlete Advisory Committee for a very successful (first) Faculty Appreciation Night, held just a few weeks ago in Patrick Gymnasium. This event will surely become a great tradition for us. The relationships between our student-athletes and our dedicated faculty are as important to you as they are to us.

The scholar-athlete culture starts right here with your coaches and athletics staff. Each of these professionals is dedicated to your academic success as students at UVM. And you ARE successful. As a group, you perennially outpace the overall UVM student body in GPA. And you are recognized throughout the America East conference and across the nation for your academic awards and high standing. You should be very proud of how well you balance the demands of academics and athletics. WE are certainly very proud of YOU.

I'd also like to acknowledge a few students and teams in particular. An incomplete list for sure, but among the many highlights of this incredible year. Individuals like Dani Rancourt, a national finalist for

the Women's Hockey Humanitarian of the Year Award; and Luke Apfeld, who earned the America East Co-Scholar-Athlete of the Year Award and has twice been named to the Athletic Director's Scholar-Athlete Team; and Anja Gruber, a Business Administration major with a 3.9 GPA and a back-to-back national championship skier. And teams such Women's Soccer, who was recently honored for their collective work in the classroom; and teams like Men's Lacrosse and Women's Cross-Country, who posted their best-ever GPA's (3.62) this past fall. And we know many of your teams are in contention for best-ever GPA's this spring. So best of luck to you.

I have had the privilege of getting to know many of you – athletes, coaches, and staff – over the last year. And you ALL – individually and collectively, as teams and as an athletics program – have reinforced my passion for, and my personal commitment to, college athletics. I am so impressed by what our student-athletes do as students, as highly trained athletes, as teammates, as peer-mentors, as friends, as volunteers, as role models, and as citizens in our community. You inspire me as you do so many others.

And then I see how you work together and perform as a team on the court, on the ice, on the field, in the pool, and on the track. And I am in awe. YOU ARE THE MODEL SCHOLAR-ATHLETES. You are here for a UVM education (and a UVM degree) AND to be able to compete at the highest level in college athletics, Division I. You are privileged to be here, but you know that. You take seriously the opportunity you have been afforded to study at a great university, renowned for its academic excellence and its beautiful campus. And you are guided and coached by a dedicated athletics staff that knows you are students first, and athletes second. (Well, maybe there are times in the season where it's a tie.)

Our coaches and athletics staff are the reason you are successful as scholar-athletes. They guide you, push you, counsel you, and help you maintain priorities, set goals, and achieve success in academics as well as athletics. What makes a great scholar-athlete programs is this picture-perfect combination of dedicated, caring, and highly educated athletics staff and intelligent, balanced, and driven student-athletes.

YOU GET IT. And it is my sincere hope that those of you who are graduating next weekend GOT what we promised to you just four years ago: a great university education, a warm and supportive academic community, a vibrant campus and community life, and a place where you could grow – as a student and as an athlete. And if we succeeded, I hope you will continue to come back to UVM, and give back to UVM, in the years ahead. We are counting on your support. And more importantly, future student-athletes are counting on your support.

In closing, again let me congratulate not only our award winners this evening, but ALL of you for a tremendous 2013-2014 season. You have made all of us proud. Proud of you, proud of your accomplishments, proud Vermonters, and proud to be part of CATAMOUNT NATION.

Thank you for inviting me to share in this wonderful evening with you. ALL IN CATS.

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