



The
UNIVERSITY
of VERMONT

Daniel Mark Fogel
President

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To the University of Vermont Community:

Throughout last fall and this winter, I have sought input from all corners of campus on the challenges before UVM, particularly from governance leaders. At the UVM Board of Trustees meetings in early February—where I heard very important statements from student, staff, and faculty governance leaders and from faculty members at large—it became clear I needed to intensify my attempts to listen as well as to communicate our current situation and challenges. Realizing that I had to seek out even more actively the thoughts of our campus community, I embarked on a listening tour that has taken me to many meetings with the leadership of campus governance groups and to college and school faculty meetings (four college/school meetings to date, with more to come) as well as numerous one-on-one conversations with members of the campus community. I am writing to give you a brief report on some of the thoughts occasioned by—and some of the topics covered in—that listening tour, focusing on the areas of greatest concern and on the steps we are taking to address them.

The ongoing budget reconciliation process looms over all discussions as the decline in the national economy deepens. We must balance revenues and expenditures, though we are drawing on up to \$19.6 million in institutional reserves this year and next to lessen the extent and slow the pace of the cuts required to do so. *We are working closely with the deans and with the Faculty Senate and other governance groups to ensure that everyone has all information required to understand and assess the measures that are under way and what they mean for academic quality. To ensure that academic quality is not compromised, and within budget constraints, we are open to making adjustments responsive to this collaborative process of assessment and analysis, including changes in the allocation of budget cuts and in the methodology for calculating student-faculty ratios. We have agreed with Faculty Senate leadership that the long-term academic-impact analysis will be conducted by a task force including members of two Senate committees (Financial and Physical Planning and Curricular Affairs) and representatives of administration. Measures preparatory to that work are under way, even as we continue to assess whether we will need to move to phase 2 budget reductions in April.*

We share the view that the size and cost of senior administration should be held to the most moderate levels compatible with the continuing success of UVM as a competitive national university for the benefit of Vermont. *We have in progress a benchmarking study comparing UVM to relevant peers for both metrics—size and cost of senior administration—and we will share the results of that study widely in short order so that the community can assess the findings. We are committed to taking appropriate measures in response to those findings.*

We also intend to address the issues of executive compensation that have occupied so much recent community discourse. *Today the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees approved my recommendation, developed in consultation with senior Board leadership, that performance bonuses and other non-base elements of administrative pay will no longer be used at UVM except to honor existing contracts or, going forward, except when reviewed by the Board, and then only with full public disclosure and only when demonstrably required to be market-competitive in the context of higher education. In line with our commitment to full disclosure, we will publish later this week a schedule of all non-base elements of administrative pay that will apply in the 2010 fiscal year.*

Also of great interest to the community in the course of my listening tour have been the administrative transitions currently under way. I recognize, as does the Board of Trustees, that a strong leadership team is an essential foundation of confidence and institutional success.

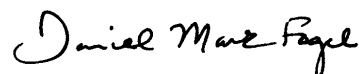
I am pleased to report that I have already received excellent nominations for the Interim Provost appointment. I expect to make that appointment next month following appropriate consultation. There will be a national search for a permanent Provost on a timetable to be determined in consultation with the Board and the campus community. We expect to complete in a matter of weeks searches for three deanships, with superb internal candidates in Agriculture and Life Sciences and in the Rubenstein School now in the final stages of the interview process and with campus visits just completed in a promising external search for Business Administration; the process of appointing a search committee for the deanship of Nursing and Health Sciences is also now in motion. I could not be more pleased that Richard Cate has accepted an appointment as Vice President for Finance and Administration and that Kathleen Kelleher has agreed to serve as Interim Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations. The search for a Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School is also approaching its final stages and is on track to be completed as originally scheduled. ***In view of what I now know about all of these processes and positions, I want to assure the community of my confidence that vigorous and timely search processes will put in place leadership at all levels as capable and as committed to the success of our academic enterprise as any UVM has ever enjoyed.***

I am very sensitive to the concerns I have heard about the timing of discussions of possible academic restructuring. ***Increasingly, I have found myself in agreement with those who feel that this is the wrong time to expedite, let alone to execute, even the best ideas for restructuring when we need to focus together on stabilizing the institution, protecting and consolidating the gains we have made in recent years, and building to and conserving our strengths and competitive advantages. We welcome the good thinking that we believe will come out of the working group chaired by Professor Robert Taylor in areas like the desirability of developing a core curriculum and a superior first-year experience for UVM undergraduates. Insofar as that thinking produces recommendations for consideration by the academic community, I say to you once again that they will be considered only through normal governance channels to which I am fully committed, notably the Faculty Senate, with ample time for reflection and deliberation, and with absolutely no agenda for retrenchment of programs or faculty.***

As to the controversy over this year's Commencement speaker and honorary degree recipient, I deeply regret the mistakes I made that created so much controversy and unease. I remain confident that UVM is open to the full range of opinion within the realm of ideas and of policy—as witness Mr. Stein's very successful Kalkin Lecture at UVM a year ago—and it is clear that we need a collaborative process to generate and review candidates appropriate to the nature of the celebration that Commencement represents. ***Today, I brought forward—and the Board's Executive Committee approved—a new process, developed in consultation with trustees, under which the recommendation to the Board on the choice of Commencement speaker will be made by the Honorary Degree Work Group. The new procedure also amends the membership of the Work Group to include the Staff Council President (joining already strong representation from students, the Faculty Senate, and alumni), provides that one of the Trustees on the Work Group will be an additional student member of the group, and requires a transparent and collaborative process for solicitation of honorary degree candidates and commencement speaker nominations.***

I have great confidence in the extraordinary faculty, staff, students, and alumni of our University. I believe that, by working together as a community, we will find that our current challenges are manageable. In these extraordinary times, it is only by working together that we can ensure that UVM will come through the economic storm a stronger, better institution, and I call on the University community to be a partner in this effort. Finally, I offer my sincere thanks to all of those who have given me their best thinking in the course of my listening tour, and my assurance that I will continue to listen.

Sincerely yours,



Daniel Mark Fogel