



Dear Colleagues,

June provides an opportunity to reflect on our good work over the last year. It has been a very productive twelve months at the University. This letter is meant to give you a sense of some of that activity and progress.

It is important, however, not to get lost in the specifics and miss the broader picture: UR is an extraordinary community of talented students, outstanding teacher-scholars, and incredible staff. We offer an unparalleled education to our students, and this education is evolving and improving each year. Higher education is facing significant headwinds across the country. Our ability to focus on educating students, further strengthen our intellectual community, and concentrate resources on priorities will ensure that our future trajectory remains strong.

In January, I made an appeal to come together in a spirit of mutual trust and understanding in a time of contentious debate in our society and on our campus. Many people have rallied to that call and we hosted a number of fora — including on inclusive pedagogy, general education, and free speech — where those values were modeled. We still have much work to do, but Spring Term events showcased how to bring together mutual respect for all in our community and the productive exchange of ideas. In the coming academic year, we will have further opportunities to make progress as we implement the recommendations from the forthcoming University Report on Inclusive Excellence and further consider, led by President Crutcher's faculty taskforce, free speech initiatives at the University. I look forward to working with all members of our community to ensure that these activities continue to help shape our work in positive ways.

This year saw concrete progress in key areas that undergird our aim to continue to be one of the best undergraduate institutions in the country: students, faculty, and curriculum.

Students

Our Enrollment and Admission team is hard at work finalizing the incoming class of 2023. With a record number (12,000 plus) of applications, this class will also be the most academically talented class ever to join the University and one of the most diverse.

Our students are continuing to thrive in the classroom and produce academic honors. UR was named to the list of Top Producing Institutions for Fulbright U.S. Students. Over 100 students applied for fellowships through the Office of Scholars and Fellowships. Their portfolios were competitive and resulted in three Goldwater scholarships (tying the best performance in the state and UR's best number ever), the first ever Beinecke Scholar, first ever Schwarzman Scholar,

three Critical Language Scholarships (tied the record), five Fulbright award offers, nine Gilman Scholars (a UR record), a Davis Project for Peace Grant, a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program recipient, and UR's second ever finalist for the Gaither (formerly Carnegie) Junior Fellowship.

This past year also saw the strongest period of academic achievement on record for our student-athletes.

Faculty

Our faculty have generated a range of impressive accomplishments this year. Their work has garnered teaching awards, new grants, and fellowships. They have had articles, chapters, and books accepted or published. And they have mentored successful student projects and proposals, and provided strong service to the University and beyond. Kudos to each of them for their achievements.

TOP Hires

We have an exceptional class of new faculty arriving this summer and fall. Look for more information on the background and high quality of all our new colleagues over the summer. Here I want to highlight that two of our hires were the first from the [Target of Opportunity Program](#) (TOP) that aims to recruit exceptional candidates at all levels with speed and flexibility not available in conventional searches. Joining the Jepson School, Professor David Wilkins is a leading expert on indigenous governance in North America and comes from the University of Minnesota where he was McKnight Presidential Professor of American Indian Studies. Joining Political Science, Professor Claudio López-Guerra comes from the faculty at the Centro de Investigacion y Docencia Economica (or CIDE) in Mexico City and has an international reputation for his cutting-edge work in democratic theory and the ethics of public service.

New Leaders

July 1 marks the official beginning of leadership for three key people. [Miguel "Mickey" Quiñones](#) becomes Dean of the Robins School of Business. Professor Carol Parish assumes her new role as Associate Provost for Academic Integration, and Professor Linda Boland takes up inaugural directorship of the Teaching and Scholarship Hub, the new faculty development center.

Teaching and Scholarship Initiative: The Hub

Associate Provost for Faculty Sandra Joireman and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the Jepson School of Leadership Studies Crystal Hoyt led an effort that addressed a widespread faculty desire: reimagining teaching and scholarship support at the University of Richmond. With much input from all corners of the University, the Teaching and Scholarship Hub will launch this coming summer with the aim of supporting the significant efforts of our committed teacher-scholars. Stay tuned for Hub priorities for academic year 2019–20.

Inclusive Pedagogy Initiative

We aim to provide the best teaching anywhere. There is a high demand among our faculty for inclusive pedagogy training — which reflects best practices of pedagogy for all students. The

[Inclusive Pedagogy](#) (IP) Cohort for the 2018–19 academic year held a campuswide, daylong workshop on May 8, 2019, for over 100 faculty who will be putting those skills into use in the coming academic year. The IP Cohort for the academic year 2019–20 has also been selected, and like last year, the demand to participate was greater than the available number of spaces. We anticipate more opportunities.

Program on Academic Leadership

The [Program for Academic Leadership \(PAL\)](#) had a successful initial year. The fall semester focused on leadership in higher education and across the University. The spring semester focus was on skills development with sessions on data-based decision-making, case studies in academic leadership, and a crisis simulation run by the URPD. In March, we selected the next class of participants in PAL. This academic year concluded with a joint event between those who completed PAL this year and those who will be participating next year.

Mindfulness

In February, the law school hosted [a lecture](#) by Professor Rhonda Magee of the University of San Francisco on Mindfulness and Revolutionary Equity. Several faculty members took advantage of the [small grants program](#) to receive additional training and/or participate in conferences on mindfulness and well-being. The week after graduation, 21 faculty and staff members participated in a training workshop in Koru, a mindfulness practice targeted at young adults. A number of our faculty and staff are now pursuing Koru teacher certification.

Curriculum

General Education Review Committee

Professor Eugene Wu (Biology) chaired a [committee that determined](#) “our general education curriculum contained a number of weaknesses, particularly in teaching writing, numeracy, and wellness. In addition, the curriculum is fragmented, with each portion not well integrated with other portions and with the rest of the University. A new committee will be assembled for the 2019–20 year to sculpt a proposed curriculum. That new curriculum should bring purpose, coherence, and integration to the curriculum and address the specific weakness of the current curriculum.” The Senate has named a new committee to begin work this summer.

First-Year and Living-Learning Programs

Associate Provost Dr. Scott Johnson and Director of Living-Learning/Roadmap Programs Andy Gurka continue their work leading the effort to create a “signature first-year experience” as charged in the strategic plan. The first stages of this work involve the development of a “UR 100” course, enhanced academic advising, and improved New Student Orientation. This year, the initial shape for a UR 100 course covers topics around wellness, crafting an academic path, inclusivity, substance abuse, and sexual-assault, and it will involve students in a variety of co-curricular programs as well.

As a first step toward improving academic advising, for 2019–20, faculty teaching in the Roadmap to Success program will begin serving as their program-students’ academic advisor during the summer, rather than in the fall as has been the case previously. New, more intentional training and communication will be provided to Roadmap advisors and Endeavor faculty, who

also advise their students beginning in the summer. During 2019–20, the first advisors for the new enhanced advising program will be recruited, selected, and trained to begin working with students in the class of 2024 in June 2020.

Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship

The Committee on [Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship](#) took on two major initiatives this year: (1) launching a new UR Innovation Fellows program for students, and (2) inviting and selecting meritorious CIE-themed projects and courses.

UR Innovation Fellows: Professor Todd Lookingbill will oversee six undergraduates selected by the CIE program to serve as UR Innovation Fellows in 2019– 20. The students will learn principles of design thinking and campus innovation through Stanford University’s Innovation Fellows training program, will develop ideas for enhancing innovation at UR, and will present their work to the University community. Fellows will travel to Silicon Valley for a meet up with the national cohort of university innovation fellows.

Support for three projects and one course:

Entrepreneurship, Environmental Justice, and Equity Microfinance Program is an exploratory effort that builds curricular connections related to environmental justice, equity, and green microfinance in eight UR classes involving each of UR’s five schools and identifies pathways for alumni and community involvement in a future Spider Green Bank.

Mapping the Foundations creates an interactive mapping interface that spatializes patterns of giving from major foundations to reveal their priorities and relationships with foreign policy. Summer research students will integrate spatial analysis, quantitative methodologies, and archival research to help build the interface, which will then be used in undergraduate courses at UR and by scholars and the public.

East End Cemetery is an ongoing collaboration between UR faculty, students, and community partners that will use the latest GPS technology and high-resolution drone photography to document headstones in Richmond’s East End Cemetery, an African American cemetery founded in 1897. They will combine that data with archival documents in a public repository that will serve as an important resource for students, scholars, and the Richmond community.

Legal Design Workshop in Human Rights is part of a course offered by faculty from UR’s law school and the City University of London. Students in this workshop will apply design thinking methodology to human rights law. The course concludes with a competition where students present group projects that combine substantive work in human rights with applied legal design principles.

Please do note that a new call (with different guidelines) for CIE courses and projects is currently live [here](#).

Ethics

The university has achieved excellent progress on its [ethics initiative](#) in three concrete areas: establishing the “Ethics Fellow” program; planning an all campus conference; and reimagining

space for ethics teaching and programs. This year's Ethics Fellow was Dr. Jess Flanigan who has engaged student, staff, and faculty groups on topics related to ethics (e.g., speech). The Ethics Committee has begun planning a conference, the Ethics of Choice, on a broad theme that will engage all Schools and invite nationally recognized speakers. Finally, the University now has a physical space in the newly renovated Ethics Suite in Jepson Hall, an exciting physical presence for our strength in ethics.

International Education

Spring semester marked the launch of the EnCompass program, which is designed to help students who are less likely to graduate with an international experience. At UR, first generation, minority, and male students, as well as student-athletes and science majors, have been much less likely to travel abroad than the University average of 67%. This year, these students joined faculty-led programs to Chile, Cuba, India, South Africa, and Thailand/Cambodia.

External Reviews

Next year we will begin a process, common in higher education, of reviewing units within academic affairs. The goal of this initiative is to build on the work of recent internal reviews by inviting experts from other institutions to bring an outside eye to our practices and planning. Funding will be centrally provided and we will work to ensure all units are externally reviewed once every ten years.

In the next eight weeks, we will be working on plans to advance student success, curricular quality, and faculty development in the coming academic year. I will be back to you at the beginning of next semester with more information. In the meantime, best wishes for an enjoyable and productive summer!

Sincerely,

Jeffrey W. Legro
Executive Vice President and Provost