OFFERS HIS INITIAL THOUGHTS AS HE BEGINS HIS LEADERSHIP OF THE UVM LARNER COLLEGE OF MEDICINE.

RICHARD PAGE:
I had been at the University of Wisconsin for about eight years when I first heard about this opportunity. I had loved my time in Madison, heading the Department of Medicine. At the same time, my wife and I were beginning to wonder what was next, what new adventure might be out there. What further impact might we have. I had already worked with Dr. Parsons (Larner Department of Medicine Chair Polly Parsons, M.D.). We were both Leaders in the Association of Professors of Medicine, the national group of chairs of medicine. I contacted her and, as she always had in the past, she spoke highly of the institution. I had already learned about the exciting things going on here in education, through a piece on NPR. The news of UVM’s extraordinary innovation in medicine and health care had been a natural connection to explore.

When did you first learn that the deanship was open at the Larner College of Medicine? 

RICHARD PAGE: I grew up in Storrs, Connecticut. It’s a college town. My father was an educational psychologist at the University of Connecticut until about 1979. He retired from that state institution and then taught for the rest of his career, another 15 years or so, at Duke University. So coming back to a New England college town was kind of coming full circle for me.

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How has settling into this community been for you?

RICHARD PAGE: How has settling into this community been for you? My days have been filled with excitement, new experiences, new people. Just moving the household, when you’ve been in a place for close to nine years, is a big endeavor. We still have some boxes by now! We have three grown children, ages 28, 30 and 32, who all have significant others. We were lucky enough to find a house with enough room to fit everyone at holiday times. Arriving at the College was exciting from the very beginning. The White Coat Ceremony for our Class of 2022 stands out as a highlight of my very first week. It was a truly moving experience. I received my own first Larner white coat that same day. To wear that and be part of that event was tremendously meaningful. I’ve made a point of listening to as many people as possible since I arrived. This has been done through town halls and through ongoing interactions with the chairs of our departments—both clinical and basic sciences. I’ve had the privilege of hearing from many different groups: students, staff, residents, fellows, faculty of all sorts, clinicians, educators, scientists, and all in different combinations. We’re very fortunate to have such an enthusiastic, talented group of people here at the Larner College of Medicine.

What I’ve especially enjoyed is the people I meet while walking around the campus. I’ve gotten lost many, many times, and even that is fun, because when I’m lost, I knock on the nearest door. I get to introduce myself to the person in the office or the person in the lab. I ask directions and, more often than not, end up chatting with that person about what they do.

Any other standout moments so far?

RICHARD PAGE: Any other standout moments so far? Oh yes. High points have included meeting members of our local community, such as the chamber of commerce; and I’ve had the opportunity to meet Lieutenant Governor Zuckerman and our whole Vermont congressional delegation. I was honored to spend time with Senator Leahy at a reception at the Washington, D.C., home of our alumnus, Dr. David Reines, from the Class of 1972, and his wife, Nina Totenberg.

I’m very impressed by the enthusiasm of the alumni of UVM and its College of Medicine. People have a palpable love for this place. They give back in terms of their efforts on behalf of the College, their talking to prospective students, and their philanthropy. I’ve been inspired by the generosity and the way people stay in touch. The number of alumni who give back to the Larner College of Medicine, I believe, is among the top in the country. Our alumni recognize that their careers were launched by the opportunities they had here.

A high point in these first weeks was hosting a 100th Birthday celebration for Dr. Gordo Page—no relation—a member of the Class of 1945, and a prominent surgeon and emeritus professor. To hear his stories from
across 70 years of practice was a special experience. [Editor’s note: page 32 for more about this meeting.]

By now you’ve probably also met many people across the University. Yes, and I’ve certainly learned to bring boots for work to the Waterman Building! Really enjoy walking across campus by Ira Allen’s statue. I have regular meetings with the president and the provost. And President Sullivan has been good enough to come over and visit with me at office on a couple of occasions. I’ve enjoyed getting to know my fellow deans. We have our unique challenges, but we have great opportunities for interaction.

I’m currently looking into how we might collaborate further with the Nutrition and Health Sciences, the College of Engineering and Mathematics, and the Larner College of Medicine, School of Business, and with other groups throughout the University.

What has impressed you most about this place?

I’m impressed by the tremendous spirit of collaboration. And I’m impressed by the quality of clinical care. As I was being recruited, I emphasized that I would only want a position where I could truly be a “three-mission dean.” By that I mean committed to, and directly involved in partnership with the clinical operations, in addition to education and research. In medicine, we use the analogy to a three-legged stool with those three missions supporting the academic medicine enterprise. The clinical operation is very strong, and we’re tremendously fortunate to have an excellent relationship with the UVM Medical Center and Health network, as well as the medical group. Dr. John Brunstedt and Dr. Claude Deschamps have welcomed me and embraced the idea of my being a partner with them in the clinical mission.

And as an aside, I am already seeing patients in clinic, and very much enjoy that! I’m only been a dean for a little over three months, but I’ve been a practicing cardiologist for closer to 30 years. I never want to stop practicing and have come to look forward to my Tuesday mornings, where I spend my time in a completely different way from the rest of the week.

I also have a keen focus on community. You also have a keen focus on professionalism mean to you, and how do you see it as a part of the culture here at UVM?

Everyone should feel that they are in an environment where they can do a job well, and they are aware of the people who are committed to treating each other—all our colleagues and collaborators, our patients, and the people who work for—in a professional manner. It makes patient care better when individuals are setting a fully realized example for others.