Castleton

A VERMONT STATE COLLEGE

A TIME FOR ACTION:
PRIORITIES FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR

Convocation Address
President David S. Wolk
August 27, 2002

Good afternoon, and welcome back to an exciting academic year.

Today we celebrate our progress, new initiatives and new members of the Castleton family. We have much to celebrate, and much to accomplish.

First, the celebration. We are blessed with a very impressive group of faculty and staff who are new to the college, and it is my privilege to introduce them to you now. I would ask our new colleagues to please rise as I extol your virtues.

Lara Carlson is one of two faculty joining the Physical Education Department this semester. Lara, who just successfully defended her doctorate last Tuesday, is part of the special exchange program we seem to have going with Springfield College. Some of you will remember Stevie Chepko, of the Physical Education faculty, who left Castleton to take a position at Springfield several years ago. When Stevie left we made her promise that she would send one of Springfield's fine graduates back to Castleton to take her place. She did so when she sent us Tracey Fogarty. Most recently, of course, Tracey Fogarty left to go back to Springfield College; and she too was obligated to send a high quality replacement from the recent ranks of Springfield's doctoral students. For those of you who like to keep track of faculty slots, Lara has been hired to take Bob Grace's place. Lara has coached men's and women's track and field, and has been a successful track and field competitor herself, specializing in the discus and hammer throw. If she's talking to you and holding a hammer, don't try to run away from her. She's got terrific range.

It is a special thrill to re-introduce **John Larkin** to you in a new Castleton role for one year. As most of you know, to the regret of a great many people at Castleton, John retired as

Associate Academic Dean this past summer. Many of us were also disappointed when Patrick Ryan of the English Department announced this summer that he would be leaving to take a position in Texas. In the face of what would otherwise have been a problematic vacancy in his department, English Department Chairperson Denny Shramek quickly made the wonderful suggestion that we see whether John Larkin might want to return to his faculty roots. Indeed he did. Last spring, prior to his departure, I asked John to tell me about his dream job. He now has it. Welcome back, John.

Please join me in welcoming the newest member of the Natural Sciences Department, **Steve Reynolds**. A native of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Steve successfully completed his Ph.D. at the University of Alabama this summer. Still at a very early stage in his career, Steve has already accumulated a record of numerous publications and professional paper presentations. If I correctly interpreted the title of his dissertation research, his interest in midges may give him much to teach to any member of the audience interested in fly-fishing for trout. Look him up.

The Physical Education Department is fortunate to have a second excellent new faculty member join it this year. In addition to Lara Carlson, **Maura Rosenthal** has assumed Tracey Fogarty's slot in the department. Last year she completed her Ph.D. in Kinesiology at the University of Minnesota. While she has taught many "hard science" courses such as Kinesiology, it is clear from her resume and from talking to Maura that she is particularly enthusiastic about topics such as the history of girls and women in sport, race and sport, the sociology of sport, and depictions of women athletes in the media. I would be quite surprised if faculty on the Women's Studies Committee didn't find an eager new member in Maura. She is also a dedicated ice hockey player and has already joined the Manchester, Vermont, women's league in that sport. Welcome, Maura.

Last January at spring convocation I was privileged to be able to introduce Ann Gregory, at that time the newest member of the Nursing faculty. Today I am pleased to introduce yet another nurse educator by the name of Anne, **Anne Smeglin**. Since 1976 she has held numerous nursing positions of increasing responsibility in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York. She began teaching medical-surgical nursing in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1982 and most recently was on the nursing faculties of Southern Vermont College and Berkshire Community College. With the expansion of the nursing program that's been taking place of late, especially with the program now in its second year at the satellite location in Lyndonville, Vermont, the nursing team is quite enthusiastic to get Anne's help in discharging their important mission of service to the state. Welcome, Anne.

The History, Geography, Economics, & Politics Department, too, is extremely excited about its new member. **Jonathan Spiro** gets this year's new faculty long-distance award, as he

comes to the HGEP Department from Berkeley, California, to teach American History. After 11 years of teaching high school in Los Angeles, he earned a master's in American Studies at Pepperdine. Most recently, in 2000, he completed his Ph.D. in History at the University of California, Berkeley. Students and faculty alike in the audience will be interested to know that he received the Distinguished Teacher Award at two different University of California system institutions and was elected "favorite teacher" by his students in five of his eleven years of high school teaching.

I am pleased to re-introduce **John Vojtisek**, who, after many years of part-time and interim appointment service, now joins the Psychology Department in a tenure-track position. John earned his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at the University of Maine. For the last twenty-one years he has been engaged in private practice in Psychology in Middlebury. In addition to his extensive work at Castleton, his part-time teaching experience includes contributions at Middlebury College and Massachusetts' Lesley College. He also co-authored an Internet course for the continuing education of psychologists, made available through The University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth. John also has a long-standing interest in the topics of health and sport and is a regular contributor to the publication, Vermont Sports Today. I'm pleased you are here in a full-time capacity.

If Jonathan Spiro gets the long-distance award, the short-distance award probably goes to **Greg Wolynec**. It was our good fortune that Rutland native Greg Wolynec was on a Fulbright scholarship in Prague, Czechoslovakia, when most of his colleagues around the country were campaigning in the job market. We were immediately impressed by what he had to offer and got him under contract quite quickly. Greg attended Rutland City schools. He recently completed his doctorate in Wind Conducting at Michigan State. His professional experience includes being an elementary music teacher, teaching part-time at St. Lawrence University, conducting the orchestra at Clarkson, and serving as band director of the Parishville-Hopkinton, New York Central Schools. Participation in the band program there more than doubled under his leadership. While in graduate school he was Assistant Director with the Michigan State Spartan Marching Band, so we should be in good shape when Castleton adds a football team. Welcome, Greg, and Happy Birthday.

Lois Wunderley has joined the Sociology, Social Work, and Criminal Justice Department for one semester to teach sociology courses. Lois has been teaching at Castleton on a part-time basis since January 2001, but before that she had been a professor of sociology for twenty-seven years at Palomar College in California. Having met many students over lunch in the dining hall who were excited about Professor Wunderley's excellent teaching, we were very pleased that we would be able to have her join us on a full-time basis, if only for one semester.

It is perhaps old news that **Peg Richards** has returned to her Business faculty position. The good news is that she will be continue to work part-time with me as a mentor for the new Human Resources Director who we hope will be on board soon.

I would also like to introduce our new Spanish Teaching Assistant, **Karina Azucena Sauceda**, who recently completed her degree at the University of Guadalajara in Mexico. Karina is interested in sharing her knowledge of her own culture, language and country, and we are glad you are here.

Along with the terrific new full- and part-time faculty who will be starting at Castleton this semester, I also want to introduce to you two administrators who will be working in the academic area. We are pleased to have **Honorée Fleming** joining us as Associate Academic Dean. A biochemist, Honorée was most recently associate professor and chair of Natural Sciences and Mathematics at Trinity College in Burlington, Vermont. Before that she was on the faculty of Middlebury College in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. Honorée is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of NYU where she earned her bachelor's degree in Biology and Chemistry. She later earned a Ph.D. in Biophysics at the University of Chicago and also did post-doctoral work there in biochemical endocrinology. Her résumé includes numerous presentations and papers, the titles of which are long and opaque enough to choke a horse, but my personal favorite is "Rapid changes in specific estrogen binding elicited by guanosine 3',5' cyclic monophosphate or by cAMP in cytosol from human endometrial cells"! Note to Professors Kimmel and Fox: I am aware that I butchered that title, so save yourselves another sarcastic email. Other aspects of Honoree's commitments that are evident in her professional history include her support of first-generation college students, her interest in undergraduate research in science, and her enthusiasm about pursuing interdisciplinary approaches to science and technology. Welcome, Honorée; we know that you are going to add a great deal to the dean's office and to the college generally.

I am pleased to introduce **Peter Mello**, who will serve as the first Director of the Castleton Center for Schools. Over the past months the college had decided to focus and increase our outreach to schools by establishing the Castleton Center for Schools. The purpose of the Center will be to support school improvement in this region, both by promoting collaboration among schools and by providing high quality professional development for schoolteachers and administrators. The Center will also strive to bring resources of the college, including the expertise of faculty in the liberal arts, to bear on school improvement in our area. We also intend to use the Center as a way to promote the creation of a school-college network that will allow us to offer the strongest teacher preparation program in Northern New England. To help lead this outreach effort we have hired Peter Mello, who just concluded twelve years of service as the respected principal of the Neshobe School in Brandon. Peter completed a CAGS in Educational Leadership at Castleton. Peter is highly regarded

across the region and an ideal person to help Castleton inaugurate its Center for Schools. I trust that many faculty will get to know Peter early in his career and will find ways to support the inaugural efforts of the Center for Schools.

Many of you have had the pleasure of working with our new Registrar this summer. **Lori Patten** comes to us from Green Mountain College, where she also served as Registrar. Lori has her BA from the University of Vermont and has earned her Master of Arts from St. Michael's**.** Please stop by to meet Lori.

Also in the Registrar's Office, we are please to welcome **Melissa Paradee** home to Castleton. Melissa graduated from Castleton in December 1996 with a degree in Psychology with certification in Elementary and Special Education. For several years she worked at Huntingdon College in Montgomery, Alabama. Melissa is now the Records Specialist with primary responsibility for degree audits and transfer evaluations.

We are very pleased to welcome back another Castleton alumna, **Sam Chandler**, as Alumni Affairs and Development Officer. Sam graduated from Castleton in 1982 with a BS in Business. She has worked in the Addison Central Supervisory Union since 1994, most recently as Business Manager. She has been with us since April and is already making some important and needed improvements. Welcome, Sam.

Joining Lori Phillips in the Conference and Events Office as Technical Assistant is **Bridget Ladabouche** from Rutland. Bridget is a 2001 graduate of Castleton, majoring in Exercise Science.

In the Business office, we have two new folks to welcome. **Barb Betit** from Poultney is our new Accounting Specialist. She works directly with students regarding their accounts. Barb joins us from Journal Press.

Deborah O' Connell from Middlebury is our new Accounts Receivable Supervisor. Deborah has ten years experience in the field and has worked extensively with Datatel at Roger Williams College in Rhode Island.

Also in the Business Office area, **Heidi Whitney** was promoted last spring to Controller. Heidi has five years of Business Office experience in payroll, accounts payable and student accounts.

Suzanne Goodman, who was the accounting specialist in the Business Office, is now a Loan Officer in the Financial Aid Office, continuing Bill Allen's raid of other offices. Sue is a 1999 graduate of Castleton with a degree in Business Administration.

Congratulations to all of you.

The Physical Education Department is happy to welcome **Joy Doolittle** back to Castleton as Secretary/Receptionist. Joy has recently returned to the Castleton area, and we have already benefited from her part-time help in Admissions and Financial Aid. I know that Joy Doolittle will live up to her first name, but not her last.

In Student Life we are fortunate to welcome **Jim Fuller,** our new Director of Public Safety. Jim comes to us with 18 years of police work in Florida, with many years of experience devising and implementing community policing in the city of Jacksonville. This past year he has been teaching writing at CCV in St. Johnsbury. Welcome, Jim.

Our newest Resident Director is **Audrey Place**. Audrey comes to us from Quinnipiac College where, last May, she received her Bachelor of Science in Health and Science Studies with minors in Psychology and Women's Studies. Audrey is the RD in Ellis Hall and is the Assistant Learning Center Coordinator in the STEP Center.

Christie Wilkerson and **Larry Sabourin**, both Castleton graduates who served as Resident Directors last year, have been promoted to Area Coordinators. Christie is the AC for South Campus, which includes Ellis, Morrill, and Wheeler Halls. Larry is the AC for North Campus, encompassing Babcock, Adams, and Haskell. Congratulations to you both!

In Admissions, we are pleased to welcome **Maurice Ouimet** as Assistant Director. If you don't catch his last name, he'll tell you we met, and then it really gets embarrassing. Maurice has over six years of admissions experience, most recently at the College of St. Joseph. Maurice has a BA from Boston College and is completing his MA at St. Joe's. He and his family live in Tinmouth.

Also in Admissions, **Chris Beldon** has been promoted to Assistant Director. Chris graduated with a degree in Physical Education from Castleton in 2000.

Julie Welch, formerly the Admission office manager, is now the New Student Counselor in the Financial Aid Office. And **Linda Sheridan**, formerly administrative assistant in the Wellness Center, has moved over to Admissions as Office Coordinator, completing at least for now Bill Allen's raid on Castleton. Congratulations, Julie and Linda.

Other promotions of note include **Gerry Kilduff** who has moved from part-time to full-time Security Officer, and **Mariko Hancock** who has been promoted to Director of the Fine Arts Center. A final promotion is that of **Ennis Duling**, who has been enormously

helpful to me in my transition and who is now, officially, the Communications Director and a valued member of my Cabinet. Congratulations.

I also want to recognize several of you who have ventured well beyond the call of duty for Castleton over the past few months. **Dan Seaman** and the Physical Plant staff have shouldered increased responsibilities since my arrival, and more attention to their work, and I am grateful to them for their extra efforts. The library project was a major endeavor this summer, and the Physical Plant staff, IT staff, camps and conferences staff, the library and media services staff and student workers demonstrated an inspirational dedication to improving the library. There will be an Open House in the new and improved library on Tuesday, September 10. I especially want to thank **Ruth Parlin** for her leadership and **Ginger Johnston** for envisioning the rearrangement of the first floor and making it happen. I am grateful to all of you.

Earlier I mentioned the good work of **Bill Allen** and his admissions staff for their impressive results. I also want to thank his Financial Aid staff for their hard work during the transition, and especially to **Audrey Reed** for devoting countless extra hours in helping us solve some difficult problems.

I want to single out **Gayle Malinowski** and the IT staff for your optimism, work ethic, loyalty to the college, and high levels of service you provide all of us.

I am also grateful to the student life staff and all of our Residence Life colleagues who organized exceptional orientation and registration sessions as well as FYS sessions for our new students. These were wonderful programs for an impressive group of new students. Thanks to **Deri Wills** and the entire residence hall staff for finding places for everyone to live and for figuring out how to let Datatel know where they are.

I also want to mention the extra efforts of the Education Department this spring and summer in preparation of our ROPA self-study for our visiting team review in November. We are among the first colleges to undertake this rigorous process, and I am particularly appreciative of the work of Judy Meloy and the entire Department in going the extra miles necessary for success.

I especially want to thank all of you who have contributed to SASI and the implementation of Colleague. This has been a very difficult task, but a very important one as we improve services for students and become more efficient. I appreciate your patience with those who are working on this project. Many of you have worked very long hours during this period of transition. I admire your perseverance, flexibility and diligence, and I am confident that your hard work will reap rewards for our students and the college.

Now I would like to discuss what I expect we will accomplish this year. I have enjoyed my many discussions with you over the past semester. I have taken lots of mental and written notes. I have learned from you. In light of that learning, and in recognition that now is the time for action, I would like to briefly describe seven major initiatives planned for this academic year.

1. **Restore the college to a secure financial footing, with predictable revenues and strategic expenditures in a fiscal environment that fosters enhanced accountability as well as innovation.**

As I mentioned in passing in January, there were several unpleasant surprises on the financial front when I arrived at Castleton. I believe that we have rectified these problems, but not without some pain and sacrifice. I need to tell you about some of these issues now.

We were fortunate last year in that revenues exceeded our budget for the year in most categories, such as tuition and fees, room and board, and other areas such as camps and conferences, fund raising and the bookstore. Most of that was due to the excellent work of college employees who are responsible for those areas. The only category to fall short was interest income earnings on our endowment and other funds, which came in about $221,000 under the budgeted revenues. This was due to factors beyond our control, such as the unforeseen changes in the national economy and the stock market. Revenues in those areas were estimated last year to be much higher than what was realized.

Unfortunately, three significant, and unforeseen, financial challenges offset the current year's revenues. In each case, I had to use this past year's money to compensate for errors that originated in prior years.

First, we discovered in January that the reconciliation process for student loans was inadequate and as a result many students had received funds without the appropriate loan paperwork in place. Over the last several months, we have reinstated more than half the loans in question and put processes in place to prevent this from happening again. In the final analysis, this cost the college over $200,000. No students were penalized in any way.

Second, while preparing to close the books in June and July, we learned where accounting errors had been made in the closing of the fiscal year 2001 books, over a year ago. Interest earnings had not been credited properly and accounting entries were made in

reverse. In the final analysis, these mistakes cost the college over $300,000.

Lastly, I recently received notice from the Department of Education about funds that we owed back to them related to the processing of student loans in 1996 and 1997. Mistakes from that period totaled just over $100,000. We sent those funds back to the DOE last week. It is my hope that the payment to the DOE will mark the end of the budget inconsistencies, budget mistakes and budget surprises.

Although the past difficulties totaled over $640,000 in increased, unexpected expenditures since my arrival, the good news now is that the college budget for the year ahead looks healthy. Our enrollments are up and our residence halls are full. Thus far we have escaped rescissions from Montpelier. We are planning for growth and development with a new spirit of confidence in our future.

2. **Invest in academic quality as our top priority through a strategic infusion of available funds to support educational resources for Castleton faculty and students.**

When I arrived last year I was, quite frankly, stunned by the very low level of financial support for educational resources that allow our faculty to teach and students to learn, in and out of the classroom. Last spring I requested the Faculty Assembly Educational Resources Committee to survey the faculty and to develop a short-term and long-range funding plan. They did so, and they did it well. I am pleased to report to you that we will be radically increasing our investment in the faculty through a quintupling of the budget, from $60,000 to $300,000, in this area. I fully expect to continue this increased level of funding at least for the future. I want to do whatever I can to help you do your jobs well.

3. **Continue efforts to improve the quality and increase the numbers of new students through upgraded and targeted recruitment and retention initiatives, including the creation of an honors program.**

We all owe a debt of gratitude to Dean of Enrollment Bill Allen and his very able staff for bringing in such an excellent group of new students. Our new student numbers exceed last year's record and, furthermore, our total enrollment is the highest since 1998.

The quality of our new students has measurably increased as well. In an effort to improve the educational preparation of our students, we were very strategic about our ac-

ceptances. We doubled the number of students denied admission to Castleton, with the hope that many of them can prove to us through enrollment at CCV or other colleges that they will be ready for the Castleton challenge in the future.

Of course student retention is as important as student recruitment. As we analyze our overall numbers of returning students, our focus will continue to be on improving the quality of student life. We have bolstered our athletics program, with the introduction of field hockey, ice hockey, skiing and snowboarding. We are exploring new ways to engage students in their learning. On Saturday I encouraged our new students to pursue a myriad of new opportunities here in the arts, campus activities and community service.

It is the quality of these interactions among us, in and out of the classroom, that makes Castleton so special. I told the students that we judge our success, at least in part, in how well they are engaged in their own learning through "active learning" strategies, service-learning approaches, and internships. Castleton can and should take the lead in service learning, and I am impressed by our progress to date through the Stafford Center and faculty initiative.

4. **Upgrade external fund-raising and grantsmanship, and improve development efforts and alumni connections around the country.**

Very soon we will be introducing a new Director of Development who will be working with others and me to improve our relationships with alumni and other potential contributors. I will be spending an increasing amount of my own time in working with colleagues to secure grants and other external revenues for the college. Our future depends on it.

5. **Increase the quality and variety of education and training opportunities for individuals preparing for teaching and leadership positions in the schools of Vermont and eastern New York, and expand school improvement outreach efforts to the Rutland region, southern Vermont, and throughout the state, through the new Castleton Center for Schools and the Woodruff Institute for School Leadership; and, also for the benefit of Vermont, increase opportunities for nursing education and training in order to address current shortages.**

I am very excited about the new Center for Schools as well as the early success of the Woodruff Institute. We plan to reach out to teachers, school leaders and other educators as we improve our efforts to provide professional development opportunities. Furthermore, we are expanding our initiatives to provide nursing education and training to the

Northeast Kingdom, the Rutland Regional Medical Center and the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center.

6. **Enhance the attractiveness of the Castleton campus through short-term beautification projects, library improvements, and renovations to campus dining areas, Leavenworth and Woodruff, including an innovative and exemplary new Student Services Center; and prepare a long-term Master Plan for improvements to facilities and buildings, including the expansion of residence hall capacity, a new fitness center, fine arts center renovations, and improvements to academic and student life space on campus.**

There is a long list of achievements here, and a longer list of what we need to accomplish. I am excited about the prospect of new one stop shopping for students in the renovated area of Woodruff, and I am pleased that Leavenworth will receive the first real attention in its thirty years. We will be renovating the campus dining areas, including our new coffeehouse, yet to be formally named, in Moriarty that will open soon. A long list of deferred maintenance issues has begun to be addressed this summer, including electrical, mechanical, heating and air conditioning improvements, the painting of Old Chapel and installation of new steps there, new fire alarms, and a major investment in the library, where new carpeting, painting, and a rearrangement of the first floor will bring new life to the center of learning at Castleton.

There are a number of other campus beautification projects that will be acted upon this year. We will be improving the quality and consistency of signage within buildings, across campus, and on roads leading to the college. We are literally putting Castleton on the map. We will also be embarking upon a major campus-wide initiative to develop a Master Plan for Castleton, which will involve architects and other planning experts, along with you and me, in the careful and strategic planning for building and facilities improvements. Related to this will be the more focused attention on a new fitness center, with architectural designs to be reviewed by the campus community over the next few months as we prepare, finally and appropriately, for a private fund-raising campaign. I will remain focused on these campus beautification efforts.

7. **Support improvements to the quality of community life and esprit de corps at Castleton through the creation of a new coffeehouse, better employee participation and camaraderie in college planning for the future, expansion of college athletic programs to benefit more students and spectators, continuation of successful community events to build morale, and improved communications within the campus as well as through media across the state.**

I plan to reinvigorate the College Council in order to involve more of you with opportunities for meaningful input into meeting our challenges and planning for the future. I want you to feel, and to be, immersed in the life of the college.

So I offer my heartfelt appreciation to all of you in this new year as we celebrate Castleton. We have much to celebrate, and much yet to accomplish. On behalf of our students, and on behalf of Vermont, together we will make history.

Thank you.