

---

## From the President

---

# A Midsummer Night's Review



On July 1, the first day of my 10th year as president of the University, I took a long walk around campus. I do this regularly, but on that Sunday I was struck by how the campus has changed since I first arrived. No false modesty here: there is much for all of us to be proud of in the renaissance of the University of Hartford. If you haven't been on campus in a while, I invite you to come by and see for yourself.

We have new buildings (the University of Hartford Magnet School; the Integrated Science, Engineering, and Technology Complex; the Renée Samuels Center addition to the Hartford Art School; and Hawk Hall, our newest residence hall). We have renovated buildings (Abrahms Hall, which houses our new media and cinema studies faculty; East Hall, which now houses both our undergraduate and graduate psychology programs; the Konover Campus Center; and all of our first-year residential complexes). We've constructed new athletic fields, new sidewalks, and a new roadway system, which is what most alumni who haven't been on campus in the past decade notice immediately. And this summer we began work on what may well be our most ambitious project: the Mort and Irma Handel Performing Arts Center for The Hartt School.

This physical rebirth symbolizes a much more fundamental change that we as a university have accomplished together over the past nine years. We have dramatically improved the financial strength of the institution, significantly improved the competitiveness of our undergraduate and graduate admissions, markedly increased our fundraising success, improved the academic quality of the student body, and improved faculty and staff compensation. We have also rededicated the University to be both an internationally recognized institution and one that is committed to the community that gave it birth.

There is indeed much to be proud of, but much remains to be done. I believe we need to focus for the next few years on improving our collective sense of community, and establish a

set of shared values that will serve as a basis for everything we do as a teaching, learning, and research institution.

Our challenge and the challenge facing the nation's colleges and universities, especially in the wake of the Virginia Tech tragedy, is to set a tone for community values in a secular, multicultural, coeducational setting. Our students come from diverse backgrounds—economically, socially, racially, religiously, ethnically, and geographically. They bring with them very different sets of values and personal experiences and may never have been exposed to those of other groups. Rather than dictate the values that I feel are important, I am asking our community to reflect and articulate its own set of values. The discussion should be even more interesting than the end product.

The University of Hartford has much to draw on in beginning this discussion. First, we have our long tradition as a student-centered university where relationships with faculty and students matter deeply. Second, we have a faculty and staff who are dedicated to working with students both inside and outside the classroom. Third, our very strong tradition in the liberal arts, the sciences, the professions, and the arts encourages and promotes just this sort of discussion. Finally, and most importantly, we have a creative and energetic student body who will become engaged in setting the tone for the future of this University.

My first task is to put together a group of students, faculty, and staff who will lead the effort to create a statement of shared values. The Faculty Senate has already pledged to be part of that effort. I will call on staff and students to join this fall. I will also ask the Alumni Association and the Parents Association to be part of this discussion. I am energized by this challenge, and I hope they will be, too.

On a Saturday evening in early August, I paid a visit to Alumni Plaza, a new gathering place between Hawk Hall and University Commons. It is connected to the academic side of campus by the footbridge that has become such a central symbol

This physical rebirth symbolizes a much more fundamental change that we as a university have accomplished together over the past nine years.

— Walter Harrison, President

of our campus. I have watched carefully over its planning and construction. In many ways I see the creation of this student plaza as one of our most important initiatives in creating a campus community.

A bright moon shone overhead, interior lighting from Hawk Hall poured out onto the plaza, and new outdoor lights added a bright glow. The plaza and all of the surrounding buildings were completely empty. In that warm August evening, however, it was

easy to imagine students gathered in groups, talking, playing, and joking with each other. It was easy to see a bright future for a university, founded on a proud past and based on shared values and mutual respect. It is a future I dedicate myself to in the years ahead. I invite you to join me.

*Walter Harrison*

Handel Center 2008

Hawk Hall 2007

Renée Samuels Center 2006

ISSET 2005

1530 Albany Avenue  
Hartford, Conn.