When the University of Hartford opened for the fall semester, we welcomed our 10th school or college to the University campus.

"What?" you say. "Is this a strange way to make a surprise announcement? We all know the University is made up of nine schools and colleges. What's this 10th?"

Well, you only have to be a casual reader of *The Observer* to realize that this fall we opened the University of Hartford Magnet School. OK. So, I'm doing this for shock value. But the truth is that I believe the Magnet School will change the University in many important ways and will have an effect equal to its being a 10th academic unit on campus.

Now, it is true that this academic unit is very different from the other nine. It educates early-childhood through fifth-grade schoolchildren from seven school districts in the Greater Hartford area (Hartford, West Hartford, Bloomfield, Simsbury, Farmington, Avon, and Wethersfield). It is a public school, operated under the auspices of the Capitol Region Education Council.

But the school is in all other ways an integral part of the University. Our Education Division faculty played a central role in devising the curriculum. Our students will work hand in hand with the school's faculty on a daily basis. The school's faculty will become important members of our educational community, and its pupils will experience the joys and opportunities of being on a University campus.

I am really excited about the educational possibilities the school provides for our area's youth. It stands very much for the promise the future holds for our community. But it also hearkens back to an earlier vision of education, when elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education were all seen as part of an essential system. Indeed, this notion of an educational system is as old as the advent of nonsectarian universities in this country.

Thomas Jefferson understood this when he founded the University of Virginia in 1825. In 1818, when he was planning the nation's first public university, he wrote of his dedication to "a system of higher education, which shall reach every description of our citizens from the richest to the poorest. . . ."

The founders of the University of Michigan, in 1817, conceived of their university, which they called *Catholepistemid*, or "universal knowledge," as a system of education from early childhood years through college. In the late 19th century, James B. Angell, Michigan's longtime president, talked of the university's mission of providing "an uncommon education for the common man."

It is precisely in this spirit that the University of Hartford is joining forces with seven public school districts, which collectively serve the whole range of our citizens, from the richest to the poorest, to provide an uncommon education to the entire spectrum of our region's youth.

I know it will only be a few short years until many of these schoolchildren enter universities and colleges themselves. If we're lucky, some may choose the University of Hartford. Thomas Jefferson would understand our pride in beginning this great adventure.

We also welcomed a wonderful, and very large, group of traditional college-age students to campus. As of mid-August, as I write this, we are expecting 1,623 first-year students to join 2,667 returning full-time students, to give us a total of 4,290 full-time students, the largest number in our entire history. Counting graduate and part-time undergraduate students, we will come close to 7,000 students overall.

This is an amazing resurgence. In the three years I have been here, our applications have surged by an astonishing 70 percent. For the first time in our history, we closed our admissions on May 1. Since we are more popular, we are now more selective, choosing students who are best able to take advantage of a University of Hartford education.

At the same time, we remain dedicated to our fundamental mission of serving a wide range of students. As we have become more selective, we have also become more diverse. Last fall, over 17 percent of our students were students of color. We continue to educate students from the entire range of our economic system. Almost 90 percent of our undergraduate students receive financial aid.

All this is in keeping with the same vision that has made the University of Hartford Magnet School a reality. We are devoted to serving students from the widest range of society, to providing them with the best education regardless of their economic status, and to discovering the talent in all of us.

It is a proud season indeed for your University. Please join us in welcoming our 10th school.

*Walter Harrison*