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### Executive Board Editors Note

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## EXECUTIVE BOARD EDITORS NOTE

The Executive Board of The Vermont Connection (TVC) is honored to publish the 40th volume of our student affairs journal of The University of Vermont (UVM). In our original intention for this volume of the journal, we wanted to invite higher education and student affairs professionals to reflect on how higher education is transformed and (re)shaped by innovative and restructured programs, services, and research. We wanted authors to focus on resistance and resilience as targets of constant building and rebuilding. We wanted to open the space for conversations about self-care, community-care, healing, coalition-building, and activism. We wanted to invite conversations about developing, supporting, and affirming resilience in us and in the students we serve. Hence emerged the theme for this year's journal: *(Re)Building, Resistance, and Resilience in Higher Education*.

The authors featured in this year's journal went beyond our expectation in the depth and breadth of their reflection and analysis by practicing the courage to be vulnerable, to share their stories, and to open themselves up for the world to see and hear. In their stories, they talked about pain, success, joy, failure, happiness, frustration, and hope. They shared with us what it is like to feel fatigued yet determined to create more inclusive and welcoming environments for students of color, to find refuge in stories of characters that reflected their identities, to flip dominance on its head, to redefine what is sacred, to reclaim identity, to empathize with students, and to affirm resilience. The authors were radical, reflective, and critical. They challenged the status quo and they brought attention to areas of higher education that are often neglected. They showed up with their flaws, successes, and pitfalls. They poured themselves onto these pages. With the theme of courage in mind, we chose the color ruby for this year's journal to symbolize the courage and power of all those involved in the production of the journal.

TVC's legacy is evident in the pages of this journal. The majority of the authors are HESA students and the majority of those is first-year HESA students. This serves to show that the program is helping graduate students find their voice

and share their views, visions, and experiences with the larger field. The journal features not only students and alumna of the HESA program but also friends of the program who are all part of The Vermont Connection. The journal ends with an article written by a HESA alumna who followed up on an article she wrote for the journal a decade ago that inspired the use of critical race theory in higher education and student affairs. As the editorial board, we are proud and humbled to have become part of TVC legacy.

As an editorial team, we strived to challenge dominant ways of engaging with academia and empower the voices of members of our community. Every decision you see made on the pages of this journal is intentional. As opposed to ordering the articles in this journal alphabetically, we took the time to arrange the pieces to tell a story. The story starts with intense and intentional reflection, followed by hope, and ending with calls to action. You as the reader will find your own story in the order. We gave the authors the agency to contribute to knowledge in ways that reflect their values, beliefs, and personalities. In this journal, you will find articles that draw on rigorous academic research and analysis and profound personal narratives. The journal features letters written in a raw and genuine language and a zine that invited the author's creativity and out-of-the-box thinking as valued and valid ways of expressing their narrative in the academy.

We hope this journal helps you to articulate what resilience means to you and how resistance and resilience are interconnected. We hope that this journal inspires you to be courageous and to know that your voice matters too. We hope that you amplify your resilience to resist and to build a better future for generations to come. We hope that you find the momentum to maneuver current structures in higher education and create new ones to support the success and wellbeing of you and the students you serve. We hope that you pause, reflect, and act. We hope that you disrupt higher education and the systems of inequity you encounter. We will leave you with these words spoken by Audre Lorde:

*"I have come to believe over and over again that what is important to me must be spoken, made verbal, and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood."*

**With gratitude,**  
The Vermont Connection Content Editors  
Musbah Shaheen & Soren Dews