

REPORT of the
Basic Needs and Equitable Compensation Task Force

The Basic Needs and Equitable Compensation Taskforce was charged on April 24 2006 by President Fogel to “make recommendations concerning principles and policies that should guide the University’s employment practices for lower-paid members of UVM’s workforce in regard to wages, benefits, and other terms of employment, including access to education and training.” The Task Force is pleased to present this report to President Fogel for his consideration. We want to acknowledge the leadership of our students, through their advocacy and activism, in bringing this issue to the fore at this time.

The Task Force met nine times, for two hours a session, between April 28 and September 27. Two subcommittees were created to work on research and communications, and each met outside of regular meetings. The Research Subcommittee collected information on livable wage methodology, how other Vermont organizations and institutions of higher education have approached the problem of low wages, and the characteristics of UVM employees earning less than is required to meet basic needs. The Communications subcommittee did some work on an employee survey, which was subsequently suspended in favor of a broad campus outreach effort in September, which included meetings with key constituencies on campus and a town meeting for the entire campus. The results of the public process are reported in Appendix B of this report. Virtually all of the feedback received by the time of our final meeting indicated that there is broad support on campus for our recommendations. The Task Force wishes to express its appreciation for the outstanding assistance provided by staff in the President’s Office, Human Resources, and Finance and Administration.

While some work was done in committees, the Task Force as a whole became conversant with UVM’s benefit package, wage-setting practices, and education and training programs. At each meeting, the Task Force heard from interested members of the UVM community during a warned public comment period on our agenda. In conducting its work, the Task Force was careful to respect the role of collective bargaining “as the legally mandated means by which employers and unionized employees, through their representatives, jointly determine the specific terms and conditions of employment for represented employees,” as we were asked to do in our charge.

Assessment of current conditions:

Based on the data reviewed in May 2006, there are just over 250 UVM employees who are not earning an hourly wage that would allow them, if they worked full time, to meet the basic budget expenses of a single-person household. (See Appendix A for discussion and supporting data.) This is a conservative statement of the problem since some employees with children have additional expenses which they may struggle to meet on their UVM earnings.

The Task Force believes that this situation calls for corrective action on the part of the University for three main reasons. First, it is the right thing to do on social justice grounds, as is increasingly recognized by private and public sector organizations within the State of Vermont and within higher education nationally. Secondly, there is evidence that paying employees higher wages has payoffs for the employer in terms of higher productivity and less turnover.¹

¹ Akerlof, G. and J. Yellen. *Efficiency Wage Models of the Labor Market*. (Cambridge, UK and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press), 1986.

Finally, we believe that there is also an economic return to the University in terms of enhancing its external image as an institution that values equity and community.

Current wage, benefit, and training practices:

UVM has a generous benefits package that is based on the principle of income protection and that incorporates to some extent the principle of ability to pay in allocating the cost of benefits to employees. UVM sets wages based on the following broad principles and objectives²:

- wages are based on job characteristics and an individual's level of qualifications for the job
- jobs are valued based on competitive labor market conditions because that is a consistent standard to apply, and also because it helps the institution recruit and retain quality employees
- wage setting is based on the principle of equal pay for equal work

In setting staff wages, UVM uses job families modeled after categories established by the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Within each family, jobs are placed into a series based on similarity of work, and each series has a pay band. UVM uses broad pay bands, with a spread of 70% or 90% between the minimum and maximum, in recognition of the fact that employees' skills can vary broadly within a single pay band. There is one centralized system; every hire, promotion, transfer, bonus, and salary increase goes through the Human Resources department to ensure horizontal equity ("equal pay for equal work").

One rationale for the broad pay bands, which were relatively recently adopted, is to make it easy for employees to understand what kind of skill development would be needed to move up within the pay band. Toward this end, the University offers a reasonably comprehensive range of training and education programs through Human Resources, CIT, and Continuing Education. We did not receive quantitative data on participation in these programs, but anecdotal evidence suggests that participation by lower-earning employees is sub-optimal from the perspective of both individual employee and institutional advancement.

The University's wage, benefit, and training practices reflect a commendable institutional commitment to equitable and competitive compensation, and to providing opportunities for upward movement in the UVM job ladder. However, the current practices do not ensure that all UVM employees earn enough to cover the expenses associated with a basic-needs budget.

Recommendations

The University should add an additional wage- and benefit-setting principle to the 3 identified above: all employees should earn, on an hourly basis, at least enough for a single person to meet his or her basic needs if working full-time. That is, at the lower end of our pay scale, the "basic needs" principle should trump the "market" principle. We also believe that the University should retain the "equal pay for equal work" principle. This means a less than full adoption of the "basic needs" principle, since two employees doing the same job may have different basic needs budgets due to different family obligations. We discuss this problem further below.

To implement this additional principle, the University should adopt a wage floor; that is, it should establish a minimum hourly wage that is not based on labor market conditions, but on the basic needs of a single person household. Above the wage floor, standard wage-setting policies and procedures (those currently used by the University) should be applied. The University could

² Source: Human Resources website and presentation to Taskforce.

achieve the goal of the “single-person basic needs” principle with a variety of combinations of wage floor increases and benefit enhancements. For example, a smaller wage floor increase could be traded off against a reduction in the employee cost of the health insurance benefit.

To define the level of the floor, the University should modify the State of Vermont’s basic budget calculation for the UVM environment. Realistic assumptions should be used and these should be transparently communicated to the campus community. The level of the floor should be adjusted when the JFO’s basic budgets are updated, which takes place on a biannual basis. In between JFO updates, UVM’s floor should be adjusted for changes in the cost of living in our region using data released by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston for New England.

The University should consider benefit enhancements to meet the specific needs of lower paid employees with children. As shown in Table 2 of Appendix B, about half of the identified group of employees have children, based on the type of health insurance coverage they elect. The University’s share of the cost of the family health plan could be increased for employees whose annual income falls below some threshold, or the University could subsidize individual employees’ child care expenses on a means-tested basis.

In terms of training and education programs for lower-paid employees, we see room for improvement in removing the barriers to participation that currently exist. Currently, it appears that employees in certain settings at UVM are able to participate in training programs on their work time, but others are not. Where a training program is directly related to an individual’s work assignment at the University, the employee should be able to attend the training on work time.

We applaud the efforts that are currently underway to survey employees about the kinds of training they would find most useful, to possibly develop a new English as a Second Language course option, and to deliver more training activity within current budgets through reducing duplicative and less-valuable courses. We also applaud the University for its tuition remission benefit, and believe that UVM employees would benefit from a program which would allow them to use this benefit to enroll in vocational certificate programs and courses at CCV.

Implementation

We have identified several implementation issues: cost; compression; and possible unintended consequences. We estimate that it would cost somewhat over \$700,000 to bring the 250+ employees identified earlier up to the basic-needs hourly wage floor. When the 39% fringe is included, the total increase in compensation would be almost \$1,000,000. While this is not a trivial amount, we believe it to be a manageable expense, particularly if the implementation of this policy takes place in a phased manner, over two or three budget years (as has been done at other universities).

Establishing a wage floor above current wage levels will create the problem of compression, in which customary differentials between employees’ earnings, based on years of experience, skill, and so on, are compressed. This is also an equity problem, in the sense that affected individuals feel that the difference between their wage and another (newer, less experienced) employee’s wage is too small. We recognize this problem, and understand its adverse effect on morale. Even so, in light of the urgency associated with being unable to meet one’s basic needs, we believe that the lack of identified funds, at the current time, for addressing the compression problem should not prevent the University from adopting a basic-needs wage floor.

We believe the policy needs to be implemented in a way that explicitly addresses, and seeks to prevent, unintended adverse consequences. For example, we would not want to see the adoption of a wage floor lead to increased outsourcing of jobs or layoffs. Finally, we believe that the issue of accountability over the long run needs to be addressed in the implementation of a Basic Needs policy. It is our expectation that an institutional mechanism will be created that will allow us, as a community, to monitor our progress on a continuing and sustained basis after our Task Force completes its work.

If the University adopts our recommendations, it would be taking a significant step toward the goal of ensuring that all UVM employees earn enough to meet their basic needs. At the same time, it should be understood that the basic need standard is just that -- a very basic standard of living. For this reason, the University's efforts to enhance compensation levels of lower-paid employees, as well as access to education and training, should not stop with the implementation of our recommendations.

Other issues

We were not asked as a Task Force to consider the basic needs issue as it applied to individuals who work on our campus, and who are members of our campus community, but who are employed by other entities. However, the Task Force believes that the rationale for corrective action, stated above, applies to this workforce as well as UVM's. The University is in a position to influence the wages paid by companies that contract with it, and the Task Force encourages the University, as a second step in its equitable compensation agenda, to use this influence to bring the wages of contract employees up to a basic-needs level.

Appendix A: Assessment of current conditions

This appendix provides the information used in our assessment of current conditions, including the basic-needs budget calculation and the number and characteristics of employees currently earning less than is required to meet basic expenses.

Discussion of general approach to defining basic needs

There was extensive discussion in the Taskforce about how to approach the definition of basic budget needs. Although it is clear that “basic needs” vary significantly across households of different sizes and personal histories, there was broad agreement that it would be impracticable to tailor individual wages to individuals’ household size, composition, etc. We agreed that in formulating a basic needs compensation policy, the University should work with a single standard.

But which standard? The Joint Fiscal Office (JFO) of the Vermont Legislature produces a report biannually with the basic budgets of six different household types. The Taskforce debated whether to use the single person household type or one of the family household types. If one of the family budgets is adopted as the standard, it would adequately compensate employees whose personal circumstances match the selected standard, but it would create other kinds of inequities in the pay structure. Single employees without children would be paid far in excess of their basic budgets, and employees with children could earn more, in entry-level, less-skilled jobs, than seasoned employees without children in jobs that require significantly higher skill levels.

Using the single-person budget as the standard minimizes (but does not altogether avoid) these kinds of problems. Other large organizations in Vermont with livable wage policies, such as the City of Burlington, use the single-person-household standard for similar reasons. Still, it is clear that not all of the University’s lower-paid employees are single persons without children or otherwise conform to the single person household model (by living alone, for example). While we recommend adoption of the single person household as the basis for establishing a basic-needs wage policy, we acknowledge its limitations and our report recommends ways for the University to address them.

Discussion of assumptions and sources in calculation

We estimated the basic-needs budget for a single UVM employee based on modifications to information presented in “Basic Needs Budgets and the Minimum Wage,” January 15, 2005, prepared by the JFO (see Table 1, below). The purpose of this calculation is not to proscribe the wage floor that the University should adopt at this time, but to illustrate a methodology for estimating a basic-needs budget, and to apply this methodology to the UVM setting. Our estimate is not perfect. Some lower-paid UVM employees have extra expenses (such as those associated with the care of children), but no extra sources of income; others have no extra expenses, but they do have other sources of household income. To the extent that the former error is larger (smaller) than the latter, the problem is no smaller (larger) than we estimate.

The starting point for our estimate is the urban, moderate-cost budget of the JFO report. The moderate-cost food budget is more realistic than the low-cost food budget for an urban area. We used the JFO budget numbers for food, housing, transportation, child care, clothing & household, telephone, personal expenses, and renter’s insurance, and we used UVM-specific numbers for health care, dental care, term life insurance, and savings, since basic needs can be met either with money wages or through benefits. The assumptions used in these UVM-specific estimates are shown below.

Table 1. Estimated basic needs budget for a single UVM employee who lives in Chittenden County

Budget item	
Food	253
Housing	638
Transportation	331
Child Care	0
Clothing/household	159
Telephone	37
Personal expenses	68
Renter's insurance	14
Health care	83
Dental care	0
Term life insurance	0
Savings	38
Total monthly expenses	1621
Federal & state taxes on monthly basis	384
Annual income to meet basic needs	24066
Hourly wage to meet basic needs (2004)	11.57
Inflated to 2006 dollars (3%/year) ¹	12.28

Assumptions:

Health care monthly expense: employee pays premium, averaged over the 3 plan options, charged to non-represented employees earning between \$20,000 and \$30,000 per year (\$29/month). Monthly co-pays are estimated at \$54 based on BCBS VHP plan and following usage: 1 visit/month to PCP, 1 hospitalization/year, 2 emergency room visits per year, paying the full prescription drug deductible, and having 1 generic prescription drug that is filled once a month. Employee stays within the network in choice of physician and hospital. The assumptions used to estimate co-pays could be improved by using information about actual usage of UVM employees, or by following the JFO methodology, which uses national Medical Expenses Panel Survey data.

Dental care: employee opts for the “base” plan and incurs no co-pays. JFO does not include dental co-pays in their calculation.

Term life insurance: employee opts for the basic level of coverage and incurs no premium cost.

Savings: the employee pays 2% of her/his annual income (based on an hourly wage of \$11/hour) required for participation in the UVM retirement plan. Tuition remission was not valued as part of savings. (Note that out-of-pocket contribution, at \$12.28 hourly wage, would be \$42 instead of \$38.)

¹ These estimates are based on a January, 2005 JFO report issuing livable wage data for 2005. The JFO estimates are based in part on 2004 data (apparently unadjusted for inflation), and in part on 2005 data. If the JFO estimates were inflated over one year instead of two, the hourly wage required to meet basic needs would be \$11.92. This would slightly reduce the number of affected employees.

Number and characteristics of UVM employees earning less than \$12.28/hour

Data provided by Human Resources as of May 2006 indicated that 256 employees earn less than \$12.28 an hour. Of the 256, 16 are employed part-time (less than 100% FTE) and 240 full-time; 150 are women, 78 in their child-bearing years (under 45 years old); 181 are represented by the UE in collective bargaining, 2 by the Teamsters, and 73 are not represented by a union. About half of the 256 employees are in the “custodial maintenance worker” job title, and represented by UE. The next largest group, 33, are in the “office/program support general” job title, and are not represented by a union. In most cases, these employees are placed at the lower end of the pay bands for their job titles (below the 30% percentile in relation to the total spread between minimum and maximum). There are 726 employees in the same pay bands as

these 256 employees earning more than \$12.28 an hour; some of these individuals would be potentially compressed by the adoption of a wage floor in the area of \$12.28 per hour.

Benefit utilization by UVM employees earning less than \$12.28/hour

The Task Force recognized that benefits are a significant component of the overall compensation package offered to UVM employees. Still, these benefits involve costs to the employee and are not available to all employees. We asked how and whether lower-paid employees utilized the various kinds of benefits offered by the University; results are shown below.

Table 2. Utilization of medical, long-term disability, and retirement benefit by workers with hourly wage less than \$12.28

	Number	Percent of eligible employees	Percent of all employees with wage < \$12.28
Medical			
Eligible ¹	250		98%
Waived	20	8%	8%
Single coverage	89	36%	35%
Employee & spouse	14	6%	5%
Employee & children	43	17%	17%
Family	84	34%	33%
Long-term disability			
Eligible ¹	198		77%
Covered by benefit	181	91%	71%
Retirement			
Eligible ¹	174		68%
Covered by benefit	156	90%	61%

¹ Source: UVM Benefits Office. See UVM Benefits webpage for eligibility rules applied to employees not represented by a union.

Almost all of this group of employees use the health insurance benefit, reflecting the fact that most of them are full-time employees, and therefore qualify for the benefit from day one of their employment. Utilization rates are lowest for the retirement benefit, which begins after three years of employment. The long-term disability benefit applies after one year, and employees pay 30% of the premium (regardless of their rate of pay). A relatively high proportion of these employees who are eligible for the long-term disability and retirement benefits utilize them.

Appendix B: Campus commentary on report

Summary

In addition to the public comment period held during each of its meetings, the Task Force created several venues for members of the campus community to comment on our Preliminary Report (the penultimate version of this report). This Appendix summarizes the comment that was received by the time of the Task Force's final meeting.

The following opportunities to comment on the Preliminary Report, and to engage in discussion with the Task Force, were provided:

- a presentation and discussion with the Staff Council (September 5);
- a presentation, discussion, and deliberation on a resolution supporting the recommendations of the report with the Faculty Senate (September 11);
- a presentation to the Student Government Association followed by deliberation among the Senators on a resolution supporting the recommendations of the report (September 19);
- a Town Meeting on our report (September 21);
- a comment box on the Basic Needs website, where the preliminary report was posted on September 18; and
- public comment period at the Task Force's final meeting.

The members of the Staff Council expressed support for the broad recommendations of our report, with the proviso that they would like to see a commitment from the administration that compression created by the implementation of our recommendations would be addressed over time. The resolutions considered by the Faculty Senate and the Student Government Association, recorded below, were both adopted -- unanimously, in the case of the SGA, and with one dissenting vote in the case of the Faculty Senate. In the Faculty Senate meeting, discussion centered on the problem of unintended consequences of adopting a basic needs-based wage floor, specifically the possible conversion of full-time to part-time jobs.³ In the SGA meeting, most of the questions concerned the possible impact on tuition and particularly on students who receive loans and financial aid. The comments from the town meeting and from the web site are recorded below.

Faculty Senate Resolution on the Preliminary Report of the Basic Needs and Equitable Compensation Task Force

WHEREAS President Fogel appointed the Basic Needs and Equitable Compensation (BNEC) Task Force on April 24 2006 and charged it to "make recommendations concerning principles and policies that should guide the University's employment practices for lower-paid members of UVM's workforce in regard to wages, benefits, and other terms of employment, including access to education and training"; and

WHEREAS the UVM community describes itself as a "just community" that "unites against all forms of injustice" (from Our Common Ground statement of values); and

³ Since our recommendations apply to both full- and part-time employees, our report does not create an incentive for the University to save money by converting higher-wage full-time jobs to lower-wage part-time jobs.

WHEREAS the BNEC Task Force has determined, after fact-finding and analysis, that there are employees at UVM whose wages and benefits do not allow them, working full time, to meet the basic budget expenses of a single-person household; and

WHEREAS President Fogel requested that the Task Force solicit the views of the campus community on its findings and recommendations;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate broadly supports the BNEC Task Force's recommendation that the University establish a wage floor based on the basic budget expenses of a single-person household; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate recognizes that the implementation of such a policy will require the identification of new base-budget resources by the University's central administration.

Student Government Association Resolution in Support of the BNEC Task Force
Recommendation:

WHEREAS a livable wage is the hourly or yearly wage necessary for an employee working a full time job to meet their basic needs,

WHEREAS the Student Government Association Senate at the University of Vermont expressed its support for livable wages for all UVM employees through a unanimously supported Resolution Supporting the Adoption of a UVM Basic Needs Budget (RF06-12) in the fall semester of 2005,

WHEREAS the Basic Needs and Equitable Compensation Task Force (BNEC) was created by President Daniel Fogel to research the issue of a livable wage for the lowest-paid campus employees and to make a recommendation on such,

WHEREAS the current recommendation addresses many of the issues that are of concern to the SGA Senate, including Cost of Living Adjustments and a wage floor based upon UVM-specific information and methodology from the State of Vermont's Joint Fiscal Office,

WHEREAS the current recommendation only applies to directly-employed workers, and does not include contractors working on campus, such as Sodexo and University Dining Services,

WHEREAS a livable wage policy will further UVM in its mission of being a "socially just institution," and is in line with the UVM Our Common Ground's statement of justice,

WHEREAS a livable wage policy that applies to all workers will reflect positively on UVM, and will make the University a leader in labor issues in Burlington, the State of Vermont, and the United States,

LET IT BE KNOWN that the Student Government Association of the University of Vermont supports the BNEC Task Force Recommendation and encourages President Fogel and the UVM Administration to support the recommendation,

LET IT BE FURTHER KNOWN that the Student Government Association would like to see a livable wage policy based upon the BNEC Task Force recommendation implemented in a timely and efficient manner, that is transparent and public,

LET IT BE FURTHER KNOWN that the Student Government Association strongly encourages the University of Vermont to include contracted workers in its future livable wage policy.

Comments from Town Meeting

- Speaks as someone at the bottom of the wage scale. Pays \$590 for a one-bedroom apartment in Burlington and receives a check for \$650 every two weeks. Has lost weight because he doesn't eat. Doesn't mind because he chooses to be here – the benefits are excellent. Has a masters degree in education but doesn't want to do that and has chosen to go back to school which is why he's here. The two weeks before the 2nd check of the month are really tight.
- Is a local resident. Applauds the Task Force – great direction. The cost of living has risen, it's almost impossible to find affordable housing in Burlington. Also, the fuel costs make earning a living outside of Burlington and Chittenden County not an option. City of Burlington has a livable wage for the City – similar policies are being considered by the Burlington Schools. Lives on Bright Street and there is a tremendous amount of poverty in the Burlington community. This has large social costs. One thing not in the report is anything about the contracted workers at the University, e.g., Sodexho which is now a big corporation with a spotty history of workers' rights. Would not want to see UVM contracting out to avoid paying livable wages.
- Works in the Library. The report is phenomenal and courageous and it's a step in social justice. Just makes good sense all around. Feels there's a lot riding on this process. Feels like the expectation of this campus through this process has been raised. If the President's Office doesn't follow through, can't imagine the fallout. UE workers are being offered less than the livable wage.
- It's very difficult for people to come here to tell how close to the edge they are. A faculty member pays \$1100/month for a one-person apartment. Some Sodexho workers, after 20 years, make \$9 – 10/hr if they're lucky. It's disappointing what the gap is between what BNEC says it should be and what the workers are being offered. They receive \$10/hr after probation. That's a \$.34 increase in starting rate and there's no proposal to raise that starting rate in the next year or the year after. Concerned – the idea that the administration has to be at the bargaining table and they don't seem to be listening.
- Works in Res Life. Is a truck driver – moves furniture for the students and sometimes moves the students. Has four children. It's very difficult to raise a family when you depend on two incomes. Makes probably more than the housekeepers. They make \$10/hr after 10 -15 years. Doesn't understand unless management just doesn't want to pay anything else.
- Works in Patrick Gym. Wondered if the Task Force looked at various ways the University could offset that \$1m. Everyone could do more in just energy savings. Suggests to the Committee to look at ways to save money as unit in terms of energy savings.

Comments from website

message: Lower wage earners need to be respected and supported. Our department makes it a point to make a gift to our custodial employees around the end-of-year/new year holidays. However, I don't believe just increasing their wages is the best answer. I would support a campus fund designated to assisting lower wage earners (as defined by the task force) with meeting out-of-the-ordinary expenses. For instance, if a person might benefit from physical therapy but cannot afford the copay, this fund could be used.

message: You need to do a comparison between the cost of living in Chittenden County and the rest of Vermont.

Since not all of the UVM population lives in Chittenden County, and it is the most expensive County to live in Vermont, this could be skewing the data results.

Of the UVM population you identified, they all could be living outside of Chittenden County and their hourly wage could be livable based on the standards of Vermont.

message: I have been trying for years to get tuition remission for spouses/partners at UVM. Other universities DO have it. When my husband was laid off, UVM would not allow tuition remission for him to get credit for classes that he wanted to take to expand his job opportunities. Since he is in his 50s, getting a job is harder than for younger people. Although he did audit one class, having the credit for a class helps towards another degree and helps in obtaining jobs. I don't imagine there would be a large number of spouses /partners who would take advantage of such an expanded benefit, so UVM isn't looking at spending a lot of money on it. Since we don't have children of college age, we essentially are losing the tuition remission benefit that UVM says we should take into consideration in our salary levels.

message: Bravo!

message: I think the task force recommendations in general are good. I especially agree with the section of the report on training and education programs for lower-paid employees. I think employees should be able to access training DURING work time when the training relates to their job skills. I also really like the idea of reimbursement for training at vocational programs and CCV since these programs often offer the kinds of training that these workers might need/want in order to improve their skills, make themselves more marketable, etc. In this area, I think it would be very wise of UVM to be in touch with Vermont Adult Learning (adult literacy and work training programs) who has so much experience with ESL and job training for folks with lower literacy. This organization has done worksite courses offered on site in the past and is well respected.

These are my thoughts for the moment. This is a much needed piece of work and the task force, the students who brought this to the forefront, and president Fogel are to be commended for taking this on.

message: I was surprised to read in the preliminary report that there are UVM employees who work full time and yet make less than \$12.28 per hour. (The going rate for 16 year-old babysitters in Chittenden County is \$10.00.) There is no question that the responsible response to this situation is to offer all full-time UVM employees a liveable wage.

Many years ago, Ben & Jerry's observed that its lowest paid full-time employees needed to moonlight just to make ends meet. Believing the company's part in this was socially and economically irresponsible, the company devised what it called its "liveable wage" which was based, like the UVM calculation, on the reasonable bare-minimum expenses of a single person household. Since then, many, many Vermont companies have followed Ben & Jerry's example. Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility (of which UVM is a member) assists Vermont companies to design liveable wage compensation plans through advocacy and its Liveable Wage Toolkit.

This being said, there were proposals in the preliminary report I found troubling. These related to the University adjusting pay and/or benefits relative to assessed "need." Is it the role of a University to be a social arbiter? Does a single father with two children have more needs than a middle-aged woman supporting elderly parents? How do you factor in the tuition benefit which is worth about \$10,000 per enrolled child per year? Don't go here. As the human resources professional responsible for closing down the Ben & Jerry's child care center in Waterbury a number of years ago, I can say from experience that when an organization attempts to determine and differentiate need among its employees, it opens up a can of worms best left to the government agencies designed to deal with it. Even the best intentions can lead to glaring and subtle inequities that have the potential to undermine morale at all levels, leak as bad press and/or lead to organized employee action.

Concentrating instead on offering and making more accessible training, development and career counseling programs that enable employees to qualify and apply for better paying jobs is a far wiser pursuit. As an educational institution, this is our business and we should be good at it. Providing someone with the means to improve his/her life through education is the ultimate, lifelong benefit.

 message: Excellent, comprehensive, and thoughtful report. I would emphasize that these recommendations not only make sense because of the social justice it supports but it is also consistent with the Common Ground values that the University says forms its foundations and is committed to and I would also support the end note of livable wages for contracted employees.

message: Your estimates of 2 emergency visits, 1 hospitalization, and 12 physician visits per year are high.

A quick search for data on ED visits found approximately 35 visits per 100 population in California in 2001 (Health Affairs Web Exclusive March 24, 2004).

A quick search for hospitalization rates found that in Massachusetts, there are 11,656 hospitalizations for every 100,000 residents (http://www.mchcf.org/special_initiatives/link_health_atlas.html, see Hospitalization Data All Causes). A report in Health Affairs (cited below) also shows a rate of 118 admissions per 1,000 population. More than 90% of adults have no hospital stays in the past 12 months (www.census.gov/prod/2006pubs/p70-106.pdf).

Data on physician visits was located in Health Affairs (May/June 2003; 22(3): 89-105). The US average in 2000 was 5.8 visits per capita.

Regarding prescription medication, 45% of adults took none during a 12-month period, while 41% took prescription medication throughout the 12-month period (www.census.gov/prod/2006pubs/p70-106.pdf). Data from Canada show approximately 300

days of prescription drugs sold per capita in 2003 (bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/331/7520/815). If drugs are dispensed in 30-day supply, that would be 10 prescriptions filled per person per year. Therefore the estimate of 1 drug per month seems reasonable to me.

Sent via email

Hi Jane,

As a part-time faculty member who has been teaching History at UVM since 2001, I would like to comment that part-time faculty members deserve better treatment from their respective departments. Of particular concern is that part-time faculty receive due consideration in hiring when full-time faculty positions become available; it also would be nice to have access to offices and telephones so we can meet with our students outside of class times.

Sent via email

Dear Jane,

After a quick skim of the report I noticed that there is only one graduate student on the committee to three undergraduates, although graduate students comprise a large body of underpaid workers. These are individuals who often have families and, in addition to their own research and classes, teach virtually all of the lab classes on campus. The hours estimated in the job descriptions are more often wishful thinking, or the minimum hours required to do a really rough job. All grad teaching assistants I know work many more hours than paid for, to improve students writing skills, to tutor them one on one, to grade papers and tests and, more importantly, to prepare stimulating and interesting material for their students. I am fortunate to be on a fellowship right now, but if I were required to teach two labs of 15 students every semester for the entire time I were here to do research and take my own classes I am not sure I could finish. I believe that something should be done to better compensate graduate students, and lighten their load a little so they have a few semesters that they don't have to teach, as at other schools. I suggest that initiation of a dialog with graduate students would lead to even better research (and credit for that to UVM), and an even higher standard of undergraduate education at our fine University.

message: I don't recommend using Medical Expenses Panel Survey data, which I examined in preparing my previous message, because out-of-pocket costs vary greatly with the structure of the insurance package. It is more accurate to estimate utilization and then determine the out-of-pocket costs associated with our particular insurance package.

message: I am also forwarding the following comments to the Staff Council, as it is also an appropriate issue for that group to act upon. However, in regards to the preliminary report's comments on training opportunities, I think this comment applicable here as well.

It appears that the tuition remission program applies to current UVM employees taking classes at UVM, or their dependent children taking classes at UVM or certain other Vermont Colleges (even though this has no direct benefit to the University). It can be extended to current UVM employees living outside a 40 mile radius of the campus taking courses at other sites. However, it does not apply to UVM employees living within the 40 mile radius of the campus who wish to further their education in a program not offered by UVM (i.e. offered by one of the other Vermont Colleges), even if that training would ultimately benefit the University.

message: The recommendations are as fair as they can be given inevitable problems of compression and market forces. ESL should be a strong recommendation. I have always believed that employees whose salaries are less than a certain minimum - or for whom their share of insurance premiums is above a certain percentage of their salary (another way of looking at the same thing) - should receive an extra subvention from their employers.

message: I am not sure which employees are on the list of not being paid enough but I wanted to add Lecturers in case they are not already there. I am a lecturer who currently teaches 7 classes per year and I do not make enough money to cover my mortgage; not even to mention any other bills. Since I am not employed 100% of FTE I am also not eligible for dental, retirement or disability benefits. In addition although I can buy medical benefits, I am forced to do so at a much higher rate than full time employees, which I therefore cannot afford.

UVM offered me this job with the idea that I would be working full time by this year (my second) and that I would get a contract. Neither have been offered to me although I have repeatedly asked. If I do not get a contract or full time workload I may need to move outside of Vermont if I want to afford a house and children.

message: September 20, 2006

To whom it concerns,

This "Preliminary Report" for which comments are solicited appears to apply to staff only.

I am a part-time unpaid faculty member at UVM who has been rendering service at the department, college and university levels.

In less than a year, my 'fixed' income (as from Social Security) will go down to about 2/3 of what I'm receiving now on disability, when I reach retirement age.

I would be nice to know then (i.e., mid 2007) that I had some options, too, to earn more than my present level of zero income from UVM to supplement what I receive from other sources, while continuing to do what I have been doing for UVM.

To this end, is there at UVM a "Basic Needs/Equitable Compensation Task Force" for the case of FACULTY, and a report put out by it that I could access?

I have been working at about the 50% full-time level.

Thank you.

message: The fact that you only find 250 employees at risk for not being able to support a single person household is a joke. I believe you have many more people than that at risk. I think that you must want them to go to the food bank and definitely not have a car and only live in burlington. Wake up you fat cats and look at apt prices, food prices and the cost of everything else that can't be met on most UVM salaries.