September 27, 2018

To:  David A. Daigle, Chair Board of Trustees and Co-Chair of the Presidential Search Committee  
     Ron Lumbra, Vice Chair Board of Trustees and Co-Chair of the Presidential Search Committee

Cc:  Gary Derr, Vice President for Executive Operations

From:  Steve Lunna, Staff Council President  
        Caleb Gilbert, Staff Council Vice President

Re:  Presidential Search Process

In response to Chair Daigle’s memo from August 29, 2018, Staff Council has developed recommendations to assist the Search Committee to identify the 27th President of the University of Vermont. We hope that these recommendations will assist the Committee in selecting candidates who are willing and able to handle the concerns of staff at this institution and ensuring that the University of Vermont remains an excellent workplace.

On behalf of the entire Staff Council, we wish to thank the Presidential Search Committee for engaging the entire university community in the search process, and for creating mechanisms that ensure that perspectives of community members, governance groups, and individual students and employees are represented, recognized and considered throughout the process. We have developed the recommendations in this memo utilizing input from Staff Council representatives as well as data from our various outreach initiatives over the past year regarding prominent issues of concern among the staff members at UVM.

Staff Council is an advisory group that works to serve the approximately 2,000 non-represented staff at UVM as part of the university’s shared governance structure. It is composed of elected representatives from all the units, divisions, and colleges within the university. Under the authority of the President of the University of Vermont, Staff Council is charged with listening to, pursuing and responding to the ideas and opinions of staff employees; conveying these ideas and opinions to the university administration; advising the President on all topics that affect employees classified as staff; and informing staff on issues and policies affecting them. In addition, Staff Council strives to create a cohesive community, have a positive impact on staff culture and promote the betterment of all.
Due to the Council’s close advisory relationship to the President of the University, it is important that the individual selected as President is committed to listening, acknowledging, and working to address the unique needs, issues, and concerns of staff at UVM. What we see as so vital to this working relationship is dedication to transparency that fosters ongoing dialogue, promotes the sharing of information, and encourages and supports collaboration between Staff Council, the Administration, and other university organizations and partners.

We understand that the modern university presidency is most prominently an externally-facing position and has innumerable responsibilities to internal and external stakeholders, but we hope with the guidance of the governance groups and university community, the Board will select a candidate that can guide this campus successfully toward its financial, cultural, and educational goals while also ensuring that UVM remains a great place to live, learn and work.

**Issues Specific to Non-Represented Staff**

- This is a deeply challenging time for institutions of higher education all around this country, and issues of institutional financial sustainability are at the forefront of everyone’s minds. While we have not experienced challenges of the magnitude faced by other regional institutions, staff continue to come forward with concerns about salary compression and slow salary growth, especially in comparison to the cost of living in Vermont. We are cognizant of the financial challenges facing administrators at colleges and universities in New England and around this country, but this is a significant and ongoing issue on which our staff are very vocal. As this group of nearly 2,000 staff is not formally represented, it is important to continue acknowledging staff concerns in this area and ensuring that staff salary growth is equitable to compensate staff for the important operational role they play in every area of this university. Besides issues of compensation, Staff Council urges the Board to ask how our incoming leader will look at the importance and value of staff as a part of the university community.

- The individual who serves as the next President should continue to build on President Sullivan’s history of working with Staff Council in an advisory capacity. Staff play essential roles in the daily operations of UVM and the implementation of UVM’s mission, but often express feelings of being underappreciated, replaceable, and expendable. These concerns persist year after year - in fact they were a central part of Staff Council’s input during the last Presidential Search Process in 2011. President Sullivan has continuously considered, taken seriously, and acted upon feedback from Staff Council Leadership and the Council’s representatives, and we have made significant strides in benefits and work-life balance that improve staff’s working lives. These initiatives help staff be recognized as a valuable, integral part of this institution and its mission to educate students. The new President should continue to build on President Sullivan’s work and the work of prior administrations in involving Staff Council and the voices of staff as much as possible. Staff Council engagement is at an all-time high, with record levels of participation and interest in representation, Staff Council’s standing committees, and nominations for opportunities to Council-appointed roles such as representatives to the Board of Trustees. Staff are more
interested than ever in making a difference, and we hope the new president will continue to partner with us to achieve our goals.

Responses to the Board’s Queries

1. What opportunities do you see facing the University of Vermont in the next ten years?

- UVM has done extensive work on diversity initiatives through the President’s Commission on Inclusive Excellence, HRDMA’s initiatives, and President Sullivan’s own engagement with this issue in response to campus concerns. However, Staff Council sees this as both an opportunity and a challenge as recruiting a diverse population of staff continues to be difficult and many employees report witnessing incidents of racism, sexism, transphobia, et cetera throughout their time on campus. There is a tremendous opportunity here to transform UVM’s culture and climate and become a campus leader in this area. Staff are invested in UVM as a community where people of all abilities, identities, socio-economic statuses, religious and philosophical orientations, nationalities, and other diverse identities can thrive. We aspire to uphold Our Common Ground and desire campus leadership who will do the same.

- UVM continually works to recruit talented faculty, but should also work to create an environment that will attract talented and passionate staff capable of transforming this institution. UVM’s mission-driven ethos helps attract employees with passion, something that is increasingly important in the modern workforce. Currently, little talent management policy and resources exist to ensure that we can retain our talented staff members, help them meet their professional development goals and advance in their careers here at UVM. This is a tremendous area of opportunity.

- The next President should be prepared to ensure that UVM’s status in the academic and research arenas continues to grow.

- The continued development, implementation and monitoring of IBB 2.0 as a means of improving the university’s budgetary structure.

- With strong fundraising campaigns, developing a budget model that sustains the university and reduces dependence on tuition and state funding.

2. What challenges do you see facing the University of Vermont in the next ten years?

- Year after year, compensation continues to be the number one concern of non-represented staff members at the University of Vermont. Many staff members report having second and third jobs, and we have seen an increase in the number of staff members requesting emergency loans for basic necessities such as heating oil.
Despite the financial challenges present across higher education right now, anything that can be done to ensure better wage growth would be the top priority of non-represented staff.

- The new president should be cognizant that this is a historic university with unique maintenance needs. The university will need to work not just to construct new facilities such as the Multipurpose Center and the new STEM facility, but also to engage in the continued maintenance of buildings. Both regular maintenance and “deferred” maintenance must be attended to if this university is to sustain our research and educational goals, work to attain carbon neutrality and other sustainability goals, and ensure healthy spaces for our campus population to live and work. Pursuant to these goals, the university should ensure adequate financial support for physical plant, maintenance, and custodial departments.

- Nationally, administrative costs are at an all-time high due to rising costs of employee health insurance and other benefits. This is a concern to UVM employees who see maintaining the current level of employee benefits as a crucial part of their working lives. Staff Council is hopeful that the next president will be committed to maintaining UVM’s current employee benefits, including tuition remission for employees and dependents. In addition, there are still inequities in certain benefit areas between faculty and staff that are a concern for staff members. Staff Council is interested in continually working to bring these benefits into parity.

- Parking is currently a challenge and will continue to be a challenge for all employees of this university, not just staff. There are multiple layers of complexity involved in this issue, which ideally requires solutions based both in policy (changing the parking permit structure, supporting more flexible schedules so staff can commute in ways other than single occupancy-vehicles) and infrastructure (devoting resources to additional parking facilities in satellite locations, altering traffic flows when people are leaving work). Staff and faculty feel a great deal of stress about parking and commuting, and as parking spaces continue to be removed, the stress only increases. We believe there is a way to address this issue which would alleviate some of this stress while still maintaining UVM’s environmental leadership. We hope the new President will be willing to address the issue and work with the governance groups and Transportation and Parking to develop a strategic plan and see it through.

3. **What professional qualifications/experiences should the next president possess?**

- Previous experience in higher education administration, preferably at a public land grant institution

- Prior administrative experience (not necessarily at the presidential level) at an institution similar to UVM in size and ranking
• Experience working with foundations in higher education and a proven track record in development and fundraising

• Demonstrated success with budgeting and fiscal responsibility

• Experience as an educator in a classroom setting, with knowledge of challenges faced by today’s faculty

• Experience in an institution that utilizes the shared governance model

• Experience working with bargaining units

4. What personal leadership characteristics should the next president possess?

• A commitment to social and racial justice, diversity, and multiculturalism. Demonstrated experience in supporting and implementing related policies in the higher education environment, and a willingness to listen to evolving student, faculty and staff concerns on these issues and evaluate them seriously. Recent student-led protests over the course of the previous academic year are a reflection of growing concerns that campus constituencies are excluded from many administration priorities in this area through the traditional shared governance model.

• A commitment to increasing the sustainability of this university community. The next president should be conscious of UVM’s standing as a green university, our leadership in sustainability initiatives, and our pedestrian and bike-friendly campus. UVM’s Climate Action Plan calls for the campus to be carbon neutral by 2025, and we hope the new president will continue to push these initiatives forward.

• The ability to identify with and relate to those who comprise the UVM community and be a visible and accessible presence within it. The president should have the ability to make decisions which can unite the various campus constituencies and to resolve problems using the input from staff, students, and faculty in a transparent and inclusive manner.

5. What other considerations should the Presidential Search Committee bear in mind as we initiate the process?

• We request that the Search Committee continue to involve the entire university community in this process as much as is reasonably feasible between now and the conclusion of the search. In prior searches, open forums have been held, and the Staff Council Executive Board has been invited to interview finalists and provide their impressions and input to the Board. There was a record-breaking level of staff interest in participation on this search committee, indicating the high level of investment that staff feel. We hope to see the continuation of the strong community engagement that
has been present in this search so far, and Staff Council will do our best to assist the search committee with whatever requests it may make.