In March and April, 2015, Staff Council conducted outreach among the non-represented staff at the University to better understand their concerns and input about how Staff Council and UVM can improve. Common themes were determined and objectives were formed from the brainstormed suggestions in the areas of Salary Equity, Benefits, Professional Development and Career Growth, Institutional Integrity and Respect, and Inclusive Decision Making.

The final report was submitted in early July and Staff Council received a letter in response from President Sullivan and Provost Rosowsky expressing their appreciation for our work and a shared commitment to creating an outstanding work environment for all employees. They support Staff Council in taking a greater leadership role in defining and determining appropriate courses of action to benefit staff and the rest of the University. We are excited to partner and collaborate with others to address several areas and have already begun preparing for this effort.

This summer, Staff Council leadership has worked closely with Gary Derr, Vice President of Executive Operations, and Wanda Heading-Grant, Vice President for Human Resources, Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, to discuss each of the themes and objectives from the final report. We discussed current initiatives underway at the University, which leaders, units or governance groups would be working on them, and possible directions for Staff Council to take.

This year, we have charged each of our standing committees with work that focuses on the objectives that emerged through our outreach effort. We have made a commitment to report on our progress to the staff involved in the initial focus groups and brainstorm session, to staff at large, to UVM leadership, and to you, our Board of Trustees. In my verbal report to you on October 2, I look forward to reporting on early progress by our committees and leadership on this work.
Staff Council President’s Comments to the Board of Trustees Committee of the Whole
Friday, October 2, 2015

Renee Berteau, Staff Council President

This weekend is an exciting time for the entire UVM community. I’d like to thank you, trustees, for the time and dedication you give to the University, and like you, I am very hopeful and proud of the future we are building with the public launch of our Comprehensive Campaign. Staff Council is proud to state that we have risen to the challenge presented to us by Chair McAneny at the last Board meeting and have achieved 100% participation of our Executive Board in this campaign. Staff look forward to the future and seeing the impact this campaign will have on their experiences as employees, in addition to its impact on the education we provide our students, the research our faculty pursue, and the contributions we make together to the State of Vermont, the United States, and the world.

As we imagine what the future looks like for the University of Vermont, Staff Council continues to focus on its mission to create a cohesive community, have a positive impact on staff culture, and promote the betterment of all through a strategic outreach effort that began in the spring of 2015. I wanted to take this time to provide you with an update of the progress we have made.

As you remember, our final report to you and the University community, established objectives that were designed to address concerns identified in focus groups and brainstorming sessions. Throughout the summer, we worked with Vice President for Executive Operations Gary Derr and Vice President for Human Resources, Diversity and Multicultural Affairs Wanda Heading-Grant, to discuss these objectives in more detail, understand what areas are currently being addressed, and those with whom we should partner to achieve positive outcomes. We have been working diligently to frame these objectives within specific contexts and overarching goals so as to understand how our advocacy work can impact staff experience at the institutional level.

For example, one of the objectives highlighted the need to update the Staff Handbook to a more user friendly model and one that staff can have confidence in as a record of benefits and employee responsibilities. We see this objective speaking to concerns around total compensation, but also one around communication that impacts employee satisfaction, as well as institutional efficiency and effectiveness. By identifying the context and building partnerships with departments, organizations, and leaders who oversee these functions, we can work together at different levels within the institution to achieve University goals while making a difference for staff.

At this point, our standing committees have been charged with evaluating which of the objectives they can reasonably address this year and timelines are being established to guide their work. In spring 2016 Staff Council will also complete the third iteration of its biannual staff survey, and questions regarding those objectives selected for further investigation will be incorporated.

We appreciate the support we’ve been given from President Sullivan and his senior leadership for making these connections. Thank you. I am happy to take any questions.