Summary of the January 8, 2013 Staff Council Meeting

The meeting included discussion of changes to draft minutes and approval of corrected minutes, an update from Staff Council President Catherine Symans, announcements from Staff Council Administrator Jeff Bukowski, a public comment presented by Scott O’Brien of Physical Plant and a continued discussion of topics from Staff Council’s Retreat.

Staff Council President’s Update – Catherine Symans

The next Staff Council Leadership meeting with Gary Derr, Vice President of Executive Operations, is scheduled for Friday, January 11. At this time, the Provost’s search committee process will be discussed, as will the President’s Commissions, the status of the Administrative Program Review, and a review of the breakdown of the units/colleges for the Spring 2013 Staff Council Representative Election cycle.

The President’s Advisory Council met on December 12. The sole agenda item was a discussion of UVM’s Enrollment Management Plan. Following a presentation on Strategic Enrollment Management Goals (particularly for undergraduate admissions) by Vice President for Enrollment Management Chris Lucier, the Council members discussed ways in which to attract potential students. A PowerPoint presentation is available if anyone wishes to refer to it. The next President’s Advisory Council is scheduled to meet on Wednesday, January 23.

The Board of Trustees is scheduled to meet on Friday, February 8, at which time Catherine will present her second Staff Council report to the Board.

Catherine represented staff at the December 2012 Commencement and offered brief remarks to the nearly 300 graduates along with their families and friends. An honorary degree was awarded posthumously to the late Professor Carl H. Reidel, the father of former Staff Council Vice President Jon Reidel.

Members of the Staff Council Executive Board participated in the Interim Provost Search on December 6 and 7. Four candidates were interviewed for the position and the results of those interviews were delivered in an online assessment form. Following this process, President Sullivan sent out an announcement to the UVM community that the process had “not yielded the clear consensus behind a single candidate” that he thought “was essential for success.” He also noted that “there were concerns raised about the process in terms of diversity, inclusion, and timeframe.” As a result, the President has appointed an interim provost, Dr. Robert Low, and has commenced plans to constitute a search committee for a permanent provost. He has contacted the governance leaders with a request to submit nominees to serve on the committee for the new provost search. The Staff Council has been asked to submit a list of at least six staff nominees, and from this group of suggested nominees, the President is to select at least two staff members to serve on the committee. The deadline for the list is Monday, January 21, 2013, and interested staff must submit nominations by Thursday, January 17, 2013 to Staff Council Administrator Jeff Bukowski in 313 Waterman or by email at Staff.Council@uvm.edu.

In addition, Catherine detailed some issues that arose during the interim provost search, such as inclusiveness. The University and University Officer Manual makes a distinction between search
committees and advisory committees. In the former staff are to be included, but in the latter, there is no protocol. In the Interim Provost Search, the group formed was an advisory committee whereas with the national Provost Search, a formal Search Committee was formed. This issue will be brought up during the Staff Council Leadership Meeting in hopes that mandatory staff representation will become a permanent part of future advisory and search committees;

Catherine concluded by stating she “look[s] forward to a productive and exciting spring semester.”

**Announcements**

Administrator Jeff Bukowski reminded Staff Council members to consider nominating a colleague or self-nominating to be part of the new provost search committee.

A reservation form for the upcoming Feb. 18 Casino Bus Trip to Montreal was distributed. Approximately 30 slots remain but due to the popularity of the event, these are expected to fill up quickly. SC Reps are encouraged to post them in their units.

**Ski vouchers** for Smuggler’s Notch and Jay Peak are still available for purchase in the Staff Council Office and Bolton Valley coupons are available as well.

The Staff Council Office is identifying which representatives are up for reelection in 2013. A few are in dual roles, or have changed roles, so those who are interested in continuing to serve on Staff Council are advised to let Jeff know as soon as possible. All representatives who are up for reelection are encouraged to nominate themselves for another term, though those who will not be able to continue another term should let Jeff know as well. Jeff will be contacting pertinent reps in about a week.

Representatives were informed that Jeff is accepting nominations for positions up for election with the Board of Trustees’ standing committees due to a three-year open process. These include Educational Policy and Institutional Resources and the Audit Committee. Three positions are open: one in EPIR and, as Marie Tiemann announced her inability to continue as a representative for the Audit Committee, two in the Audit Committee.

**Public Comment Period**

Scott O’Brien, a new member of the Staff Council Compensation, Benefits and Budget Committee and project coordinator in Physical Plant, offered comments on unionization. Citing pro-union staff members’ choice to make job security, benefits and income their main impetus for seeking union representation, he expressed a concern that unionization would damage Staff Council and lessen its power as a governance body. He referred to Article 50, #2 from the UE contract that expired in 2011, which he believes locks staff to a 2% pay increase (though Staff Council Vice President Renee Berteau offered an alternative perspective, that distributing raises equitably among all groups – whether unionized, or faculty, etc. – is the goal). Scott encouraged SC representatives to tackle this issue by “selling” themselves: showing up in offices with “power of presence,” as union reps had done, and find new ways to make connections and reach out.
By-Law Updates

The required 2/3 of the Staff Council Representation was not present, so changes to by-laws will be voted on at the next meeting.

Standing Committee Reports

The Social Committee, who will be meeting in January, is planning a trip to Boston on March 16 for a flower show (optional for participants). Tickets would be $40 per person, plus $20 to attend the flower show which would include seminars and tea. There is a discount for groups of 20 or more to attend. More information will follow.

The Ad Hoc Video Committee met at the end of December. They are working on a final script layout and have contacted another university to get design tips. Next month, the video will hopefully be shot and photos taken during the Staff Council meeting to provide a group photo for promotional materials. Members are encouraged to attend this meeting and to dress nicely. Those who are good candidates for individual speaking roles will be contacted; Jeff is scheduling a meeting for this week. The SGA weekly report is one inspiration for their project; weekly or monthly comments by the SC President are a possibility.

Retreat Discussion

The last group (4) was discussed. A handout was distributed to recap previous discussions. Many suggestions were offered, including:

- Posting each bullet point to a committee, so to distribute work evenly
- Developing an ad hoc committee to focus on SC publicity
- Merging publicity goals with current activities to reduce workloads
- Developing a master list to de-duplicate efforts
- Hosting a forum via EDU@UVM
- Combining the forum with a “what we can do with you” presentation
- Using social media to engage people in dialogue, get input and spread SC’s message
- Doing one-on-one outreach (“Hello, I’m your representative”) and hand out informational/promotional materials, taking more time to get to know who you represent
- Including a more comprehensive explanation of Staff Council during orientation (we’re not just for discounts, we’re an “objective sounding board”)
- Not acting in a reactionary way; promoting Staff Council outside of times of election discussion
- Encouraging staff to use SC as a resource

Many questions were posed, including:

- How do we identify demographics?
- How do we talk to pro-union staff?
• What are the physical challenges of connecting with staff? For example, there are those in the Graduate College who actually work in Given; how do we reach them?
• What has changed in recent years that Staff Council cannot take part in certain discussions?
• Why couldn’t Staff Council host a bi-partisan forum during the election?

Answers to these questions were shared. Already, the CBB committee is taking on #2 and #4 – highlighting the “Ten Essentials” and providing “real life” examples within the organization, and has created a subgroup to take on this task. Rodman Cory and Tara Messier are working on the upcoming EDU@UVM, which will be held in March, and the group agreed that it would be feasible to aim for this date for a forum to talk about issues facing staff and what Staff Council can do for others. To the question of why Staff Council couldn’t maintain an opinion during the union election, it was explained that SC is an governance body that serves in an advisory capacity and legally, UVM was not able to promote one stance over another or influence one opinion over another; additionally, SC as a voice for staff should listen to all opinions without preferring one over another.

In conclusion, these ideas will be brought to the Executive Board, work will be divided up among committees, and SC will aim to host a public forum as part of EDU@UVM in March. Catherine thanked the group for their insight, suggestions and discussion.

Other Business

Holly Pedrini informed the group that UVM’s Davis Center was chosen as one of only four student organizations nationwide to be featured on a PBS special on ACAI in the spring. Video footage will be taken in the Davis Center the week of Jan. 22.

The next Staff Council meeting will be held in the Livak Ballroom in the Davis Center on Tuesday, Feb. 5, from 12:05 to 1:30 p.m.