



# *The University of Vermont*

## *Staff Council Office*

*Serving as a voice and advocate for all staff at UVM, since 1971.*

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### **Staff Council President's Report**

**Friday, February 6, 2009**

**Board of Trustees – Committee of the Whole**

**Prepared By**

**Beth R. Walsh, Staff Council President**

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During this difficult time of financial challenges for the University, many staff members have found themselves asking questions about how the administration plans to overcome these hurdles and what effect this will have on staff. On January 6<sup>th</sup> over 200 staff members took the opportunity to attend the Staff Open Forum held during the monthly Staff Council Meeting to ask questions of President Fogel, Provost Hughes and Interim Vice President of Finance and Administration Cate. Questions put forth varied from the potential loss of benefits to employees to the cost savings of changing to a four-day academic calendar. Concerns about the quality of education students would receive with fewer faculty, fewer staff and a larger student body were also raised. President Fogel did an admirable job answering these questions honestly and openly with straightforward and direct responses. As the University prepares for budget cuts, staff continue to contact Staff Council with their questions and concerns. We have been working with the Office of the President to bring these issues as well as suggestions to the attention of the administration.

While budget cuts and lay-offs have taken precedence over other concerns across campus, Staff Council's eight committees have been focused on the mission of the Council. The following are a few examples of their efforts:

- The Communication Committee, chaired by Joanne Montanye, has been busy with the translation of the Staff Council brochure into Vietnamese, Bosnian and Chinese, to help our non-English speaking staff understand the purpose of Staff Council and how we can assist them. This committee is also working with the Staff Council Office to make the Council's website more user-friendly and informative.
- The Employee Environment and Facilities Committee, chaired by Michelle Smith Mullarkey, is busy coordinating activities for February's Focus the Nation (FTN) to address the needs of Staff. FTN is a project of the Green House Network, a 501(c)3 non-profit based in Portland, Oregon which connects community members, students and educators to make their vision of a just and prosperous clean energy future into reality. By incorporating staff into the event, this committee is expanding both the mission of FTN and employee awareness of these issues.
- The Rules and Election Committee, chaired by Rob Rohr, has been crafting a new Election Policy Statement to better guide the election process for Staff Council Representatives. Part of the new policy will change the schedule of elections to earlier in the spring. We believe that by moving the elections away from the end of the semester it will be easier for all departments across campus to devote energy to these elections and enable more staff members to participate in the voting process as well as in Staff Council.

The Staff Council continues to work toward better serving the Staff at UVM and encourages Staff to get involved in our organization. I look forward to updating you on the future efforts of the Council the next time we meet.