



The University of Vermont

Staff Council Office

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

MEMORANDUM

To: Staff Council Representatives and UVM Staff

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

Re: Update on Staff Council Correspondence on Appointments of Working Group to Recommend Alternative Academic Structures and Policies; Staff Council Board of Trustees Address

Date: February 12, 2009

Last week I shared with you the letter which was sent to President Fogel expressing my concern over the small number of staff members on the Working Group to Recommend Alternative Academic Structures and Policies. Within 30 minutes I received the following response:

President Fogel wrote:

Thank you, Beth.

We thought long and hard about the group membership and believe that this is the right kind of body for looking at feasible concepts for academic initiatives. Any ideas that the working group comes up that are considered further will go through all customary governance processes. I appreciate greatly your leadership and support.
All best--Dan

The next morning I sent this reply:

Beth R. Walsh wrote:

Dear Dan ~

Thank you for considering my request and for your quick response. Although your response will disappoint some, you have been a friend to the staff and placed key staff members on other committees. Staff Council appreciates having access to you in a professional way and your willingness to listen to our concerns and ideas. I will ask those staff who continue to express concern to extend to you some good faith on this one, knowing that we will have other opportunities to participate in the transformation of structure and policies.

Within 10 minutes President Fogel responded again:

President Fogel wrote:

Beth--Thanks so much--with so much on our plates, I really appreciate your prompt and supportive reply. I am sure you know I hate disappointing anyone, but simply have to do what I think is right as we move forward. I cherish staff and their input and will continue to collaborate closely and appreciatively with Staff Council and with all of our colleagues.

Board of Trustees Report: Friday, February 6, 2009

At the Board of Trustees meeting on Friday, February 6th, I took the opportunity to expand beyond the report I had submitted for the BOT meeting packets a few weeks earlier. These reports are submitted in advance of BOT meetings for organizational purposes and often times there is new information to provide by the meeting date.

In this instance, it was important for me to relay to the Trustees, Administration, and the rest of the UVM community what the staff sentiment has been in regards to budget cuts and proposed layoffs as well as the Staff Council's position on these issues.

Below are the notes that I used when I spoke to the Trustees:

I first reported on the increased use of the Staff Emergency Loan Fund and stated that these are hard times for staff. I then said, more or less:

I need to make it clear that the Staff Council does not support balancing the university's budget by laying off any staff members. Difficult decisions are being made in the many corners of our campus and it is important that the impact on staff, faculty and students are considered at every step. Staff members are counting on Staff Council to make sure that their voices are heard. Those voices are expressing deep concerns and fears and frustration. They are waiting to hear if they still have jobs and are feeling like they have no voice in the process. The sense of community that makes working at UVM so special has been stretched thin over the last few weeks and we ask that the administration and Board of Trustees remain mindful of this as you finalize these difficult decisions.

This week the administration chose members for the Working Group to Recommend Alternative Academic Structures and Policies. The Staff Council Office and I received numerous phone calls and emails over the absence of staff members from the support staff and professional level, or from the Staff Council. While the Staff Council is confident that the two staff members who were chosen will provide wonderful contributions to the work group their upper level positions and titles caused staff to take this as another sign that the rank and file staff are not a part of the process.

As I walked into the Davis Center this morning I stopped to admire the beautiful glass sculpture in the Atrium and I wondered what it would look like if several dozen (President Fogel's estimate of staff layoffs) of the wires holding it together were removed. Some people might not notice the absence, but the sculpture would be altered and the affect would be reduced. Those of us who work here and walk by this sculpture day after day would notice that something was missing and that the sculpture was not the same....and we would definitely notice the shards of glass on the floor.

Many members of the Board approached me later that day to reassure me that they hear staff voices and that they appreciated our report to them. BOT chair, Ian Boyce was especially appreciative and made sure to let me know that the Board is listening to us.