



# *The University of Vermont*

## *Staff Council Office*

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*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: Future of UVM Forum: Staff Council President Opening Comments

Date: February 26, 2009

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First, I want to thank United Academics and the Student Government Association for sponsoring this Forum. I want to extend that thanks to President Fogel as well as each of the representatives from UA, SGA, GSS, Faculty Senate and UE for their willingness to engage the entire campus community in an open dialogue over the current issues facing the University of Vermont.

I have often talked about the importance of maintaining the sense of community that makes UVM so special and have reminded the administration on numerous occasions that transparency throughout this process is of the utmost importance. For staff, those impacted by the announcements of layoffs and those who remain, a sense of self worth, security, and, most importantly, community has been greatly threatened. With the uncertainty of the current economic situation, our sense of well-being will continue to be challenged. While we realize that UVM is not immune from the consequences of these times, the human cost on this campus has been difficult for us all.

The Staff Council has consistently challenged President Fogel, the Board of Trustees and the Deans of the various colleges to consider alternatives to the elimination of any position. We have brought forth the numerous suggestions and concerns that have been sent to us by staff to ensure that the administration had a clear perception of staff sentiment. While we all realize that action was necessary for the financial well being of this institution, and to ensure the quality of education students receive, the question that seems to remain for many of us here today is why this plan, why layoffs versus any other option available? It is difficult for many of us to come to terms with these decisions simply because we are not aware of all the circumstances surrounding them. It is troubling to hear of executive bonuses that often exceed the yearly wages of staff members. We need more transparency. We must adhere to our Common Ground which includes words like respect, integrity, innovation, openness, justice, and responsibility and these values need to guide us in all we do. We need answers to the questions and rumors that have been swarming on campus before and since last Friday in order to move forward.

I appreciate this opportunity for questions and clarification and commend everyone for participating today. While I believe this Forum is a step to address the pain and frustrations we have all been feeling, it is certainly not the last step. I hope that this is the beginning of a true cooperative and collaborative effort from all voices and all corners of UVM. We must all realize, whether staff, student or faculty that only collectively are we the University of Vermont.