Summary of Staff Council Meeting

April 6, 2010

April's meeting focused on Staff Council’s annual elections for unit/division representatives and the leadership positions of Council president and vice-president, as well as several announcements by Beth Walsh, Council President and Jeff Bukowski, Council Administrator.

Jeff explained the many ways in which University of Vermont staff are being informed of Staff Council’s annual elections for representatives. He referenced the announcement in the April edition of Staffline; the memo from President Fogel sent to all staff and faculty via the President’s listserves; and the individual announcements that will be distributed to staff by the unit/division vice president, dean or director. Council representatives were asked to distribute today’s meeting summary to the members of their unit by end of business Wednesday, April 7th, as yet another way to ‘get the word out’ regarding the many openings and opportunities for staff who wish to become involved in Staff Council. Jeff reminded everyone that anyone wishing to run for an elected representative position will need to complete the required Self-Nomination Form for their unit/division by Friday, April 16, 2010.

Staff Council is also seeking Applications for Candidacy for the leadership positions of President and Vice President. Anyone interested in running for the position of President or Vice President will need to complete an Application for Candidacy Form by Wednesday, April 14, 2010, for university-wide elections to be held in early May.

Staff Council President Beth Walsh will host two Outreach Tables beginning Friday, April 9th (11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.) in the Hoehl Gallery of the College of Medicine, and Tuesday, April 13th (11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.) in front of Waterman Café. Staff are encouraged to stop by and visit with Beth to learn how they can become involved with UVM’s Staff Council. A flyer promoting this effort will be sent to Council members to post in their units.

Beth reported having a very busy month of meetings, on behalf of Staff Council. She, Council VP Jon Reidel and Jeff Bukowski met with the VP for Executive Operations Gary Derr twice since the Council last met in March. The topic of paid release time for grant-funded staff who wish to serve on Staff Council was discussed and resolved. Funding will be made available for any grant-funded staff member who wishes to participate on Staff Council. This information will be shared with those units who have grant-funded staff during and after elections. Beth explained to VP Derr that paid release time (as outlined in the Staff Handbook) is not being granted to all members of Staff Council, and asked that President Fogel include a reference to UVM’s policy on release time for this activity in his letter to the campus community regarding elections (and it was). President Fogel asked in his memo, for administrators to support staff participation by providing the necessary and expected paid release time to serve in this important role.

Provost Jane Knodell and VP of Finance and Administration Richard Cate called a meeting with members of Staff Council’s Executive Board and Salary and Budget Committee to discuss the administration’s response to the Council’s recommendation for the FY 2011 Salary Pool Increase. Beth reported how both she and all those in attendance appreciated the clarity provided
by both Provost Knodell and VP Cate, as they explained how the Council’s recommendation was factored into their budget decisions. And although Beth would have preferred a different outcome, she appreciated the opportunity to discuss the reasoning behind the administration’s decision to make the same recommendation to the Board of Trustees as last year: 2% for salaries up to $75,000, and no increase for those above that amount.

Beth and Jeff met with Associate VP Barbara Johnson to discuss the following matters:

- **Performance appraisals/merit pay** ~ Assoc. VP Johnson asked that members of the Council’s Salary and Budget Committee provide feedback on the current performance evaluation format that is available on the HRS website, e.g., what has been their individual experience; what do they think of the evaluation; what do they use? Beth reported that HRS is working on automating the distribution and collection of employee evaluations. She also learned that HRS is working to make job descriptions available (via PeopleSoft) sometime this fall.

- **Mentor program** ~ Assoc. VP Johnson was supportive of Staff Council’s Education and Professional Development Committee’s work on the creation of a mentor program. She suggested that Tara Messier’s team in HRS Learning Services may be able to offer training and support to the mentors; she suggested there could be monitoring and feedback opportunities and that this could be promoted on the HRS website. The Education and Professional Development Committee will continue its efforts to finalize this recommendation.

- **Tuition remission benefits review** ~ HRS has a graduate student intern working on collecting information from UVM and other peer institutions. This review should be completed by the end of the semester. Once completed, HRS will contact the Council’s Benefits Committee to both review and comment on this report.

- **Short-Term Disability** ~ Assoc. VP Johnson asked to be given what the Internal Affairs committee has learned thus far and said the topic of Short-Term Disability is coming up on several fronts.

- **Staff Advocates (Staff Grievance Process)** ~ HRS expects to schedule training in the near future. Assoc. VP Johnson shared the training outline used in past years for Staff Advocates and requested Council input on the process.

At the March Campus Leadership Forum, Enrollment Management reported ‘Admitted’ student visit reservations were up 14% and the target for incoming first-year students is 2,400 (600 VT & 1800 Out-of-State) noting that as retention is increased, the target number for incoming first-year students will decrease. They expect 31 Chinese students to attend a bridge program this summer and begin as first-year students in the fall. There are changes coming with regard to student loans - all loans will originate with the federal government with ½ pt. less interest rate.

Beth raised the following issues at the Campus Leadership Forum:
- **Federal Health Care bill** ~ her question concerned the change in the maximum age for children on a parent’s health care plan (increased to 26). There are no answers yet, but Beth will continue to ask the questions;
• Paid Release time for Staff Council Representatives ~ she reminded those in attendance that UVM has a policy that supports paid release time and she informed them of the administration’s decision to provide funding for grant-funded staff who wish to participate on Staff Council.

Beth reported that the Student Government Association’s 14+ page Student Vision Report includes a recommendation for a Smoke Free Campus. She asked the Council if there was interest in revisiting UVM’s Smoking Policy to ask the question, is UVM ready for a smoke free campus? Michelle Smith, Employee Environment and Facilities Chair, volunteered to bring this topic for discussion to her committee.

The deadline for submissions for the May Edition of Staffline is Friday, April 16th. The next Staff Council meeting will take place in the Davis Center Livak Ballrooms, Tuesday May 4, 2010 at 12:05 p.m. and will be dedicated mostly to an open forum for staff to ask questions of presidential and vice-presidential candidates.