Summary of Staff Council Meeting
June 1, 2010

June’s meeting focused on the Council’s overview of work done by UVM’s Athletic Advisory Board by Appointed Staff Representative Patty Redmond, a Staff Mentor Connection Recommendation, discussions regarding the Staff Council’s position on union formation and post-retirement medical benefits, as well as several announcements by Beth Walsh, Council President and Jeff Bukowski, Council Administrator.

Patty Redmond, Appointed Staff Representative on UVM’s Athletic Advisory Board (AAB), highlighted and summarized the important activities and accomplishments of the UVM athletics program in the 2009-10 academic year. The focus of her report was on matters that are most relevant to university staff. Patty was particularly proud of the AAB’s nomination for the Dan and Carole Burack President’s Distinguished Lecture Series. Their nominee, Dr. Michael Messner of the University of Southern California, is a pioneer in the scholarly study of U.S. sports culture, with a particular strong focus on gender issues. This nomination was recently approved for the coming academic year and reflects the AAB’s effort to increase and enhance connections between the academic and athletic cultures at UVM.

Todd Stewart, Chair of the Education and Professional Development Committee (EPDC), explained to the Council his Committee’s recommendation for the creation and implementation of a ‘Mentor Connection for Staff Employees’. He reported that the EPDC believes that developing and implementing a mentor connection for staff at UVM would provide a very low-cost and effective professional development solution. The Committee envisions a web-based database allowing both potential mentors and mentees to input their personal data and search for potential matches. The recommendation proposes that HRS would manage and implement this initiative. Todd reported that SC President Beth Walsh and Council Administrator Jeff Bukowski met with Associate VP for Human Resource Services Barbara Johnson where they reviewed this recommendation. He shared that VP Johnson was very enthusiastic about the Mentor Connection proposal and added that she felt it would be beneficial for HRS to consider providing training for future mentors. The Council voted to approve this recommendation and forward it on to the Office of the President.

Staff Council President Beth Walsh introduced the topic of staff forming a union and explained how the Council has held the position of ‘neutrality’ since 2005, when United Staff (US) began their efforts to build interest in unionization. The Council’s ‘position’ on this topic has not been examined since that time, other than to educate Staff Council Representatives to hold a position of neutrality when they are speaking on behalf of the Council and to differentiate their personal opinions from that of Staff Council. Council members suggested more education is needed to understand how the Staff Council is functioning in relationship to the US union proposals and their efforts. This matter was tabled for further discussion at the August 2010 meeting.
Beth Walsh addressed President Fogel’s May 29, 2010 letter to the University Benefits Advisory Council (UBAC), and Staff Council’s letter to the President dated May 25th - in response to the Board of Trustees’ discussion regarding post-retirement medical benefits. The primary focus of the Council’s discussion stressed the importance of transparency and university-wide communication surrounding the topic of changes to post-retirement medical benefits. It was agreed that the role of Staff Council should be to advocate that the UBAC communicate regularly to employees as well as retirees about their work, to allow all meetings of the UBAC to be open to the UVM community, and to provide at least one Open Forum to allow the UVM community an opportunity to discuss possible options for solutions before the final recommendation is made on September 29, 2010.

Jeff Bukowski announced the deadline for submissions for the Summer Edition of Staffline is Friday, June 18, 2010 and the publish date will be August 1st (there will be no July edition). The Staff Council Office is now selling Great Escape Tickets and Champlain Valley Fair Tickets; and registration is now underway for two events: The Council’s 6th Annual Golf Tournament on July 30th and a Bus Trip to Montreal on August 14th. Information regarding all these announcements can be found in the June edition of Staffline.

Beth Walsh concluded today’s meeting by thanking everyone and especially Diane Trono and Jeff Bukowski, for their support during her two-year tenure as Staff Council’s president.

The next Staff Council meeting will take place in the Memorial Lounge, Waterman Building, Tuesday August 3, 2010 at 12:05 p.m.