Summary of Staff Council Meeting
October 5, 2010

October’s Council Meeting discussion centered on the Staff Council’s Update on Post-Retirement Medical Benefits (PRMB) that appeared in the October issue of Staffline; a decision to create an ad-hoc committee to research and create a survey for identifying staff concerns to assist the Council in advocating for staff and to measure the Council’s success; the approval of Staff Council Minutes from September 7, 2010; and several announcements from Standing Committee chairs, Council President Ida Russin and Council Administrator Jeff Bukowski.

UBAC Update
Ida reported that she, in concert with the Staff Council Office, thoroughly reviewed all of the comments and concerns expressed by staff to either the University Benefits Advisory Council (UBAC) or the Staff Council Office. The outcome was several common themes that are listed in the Update on Post-Retirement Medical Benefits (PRMB) that appeared in the October publication of Staffline. These themes or overarching concerns, as identified by staff, were reviewed by the Council in the context of asking representatives to brainstorm ways to advance these concerns through the rest of the decision and implementation process. Ideas put forth by SC Representatives included:

- Many staff do not understand their current retirement benefit plans. More outreach by the administration in collaboration with Human Resource Services (HRS) is needed on an ongoing basis to educate staff about retirement, perhaps at increments of 2, 5, 10, 20 and 30 years from retirement.

- Communication regarding retirement benefits needs to be directed differently toward a range of age groups. Maybe it’s a generational thing or perhaps a lack of understanding, but twenty and thirty-somethings don’t necessarily think the topic of PRMB pertains to them, especially when retirement is thirty or forty years away.

- It would be helpful if the administration in collaboration with HRS would provide UVM staff with context and let us know what other institutions have done to change their PRMBs over the years. This particular recommendation was expressed by Michelle Smith to the UBAC at the conclusion of one of their September meetings.

- Going forward, it would be helpful if future information sessions or open forums were scheduled on different days to accommodate greater staff participation.

Ida explained that the UBAC’s final advisory report has been submitted to President Fogel for his review, to make certain the report addressed his original charge and allow him time to ask follow-up questions if necessary. Once this final review concludes, the report will be made available to everyone.

2010 Retreat Follow-up
At today’s meeting, Council members were encouraged to sign-up and serve on an ad-hoc committee that will be charged with researching and creating a survey. This will not be a research-
based survey, but a vehicle to give the Council a tool to use to gain insight into staff concerns and a (metrics) way to gauge its success on a year-to-year basis. The creation of this committee is follow-up to the 2010 Council Retreat.

Committee Chair Reports
Salary and Budget Committee Chair, Carol Gross, reported that her committee met with Richard Cate, Barbara Johnson and Ted Winfield to discuss what administration’s outlook is for FY 2012. Carol reported that it’s too early for administration to report or suggest a percentage increase in un-represented staff salaries for FY12. There are far too many variables at this time to predict an increase in salaries; however, they do not anticipate any staffing cuts. The committee agreed on a January 2011 deadline for submitting Staff Council’s FY 2012 Recommendation for Salary Increase to the Board of Trustees and university administration.

Social Committee Chair, Marie Tiemann, reported this year’s Holiday Bazaar is scheduled to take place on Thursday, December 2, 2010 in the Davis Center’s Grand Maple Ballroom. She explained how it takes dozens of volunteers to help make this day a success and asked Council representatives to sign-up to donate a baked item for the Council’s bake sale and consider working an hour or so at this event (to assist with set-up, break-down or coverage for the Committee’s tables). She also asked that Council members feel free to extend an invitation to their colleagues to participate in this event, either by renting a table to sell their works of art or as a volunteer. Marie said the Holiday Bazaar serves as the primary fundraising event for the Social Committee, which helps fund the Champlain Valley Fair Tickets they give away each year. This event also promotes and collects non-perishable food donations that benefit the Chittenden County Emergency Food Shelf.

Employee Environment and Facilities Chair, Michelle Smith, reported that her committee is working to assist in the promotion of health and wellness activities on campus (both program and non-program).

Council President’s Update
Ida Russin reported attending the Campus Leadership Forum (CLF) where they discussed the October 29th Board of Trustees’ meeting agenda and President Fogel’s plans to make some broad recommendations regarding post-retirement medical benefits. Ida said President Fogel will recommend that all PRMB changes be deferred until negotiations with represented employees have concluded, in an effort to have the same benefit changes apply to all employees, starting with the President on down. The CLF discussed the formation of a new steering committee for the Transdisciplinary Research Initiative to include four to six faculty members per spire. And discussions regarding changes to UVM’s General Education Requirement are ongoing.

At the Staff Council Leadership Meeting (comprised of the Council president, vice president and administrator, and Gary Derr, Vice President for Executive Operations) they reviewed the purpose of these monthly meetings. They discussed the status of Staff Council’s Mentorship Program Recommendation submitted last July to the Office of the President. Administration, in collaboration with Human Resource Services, is currently researching several implementation concerns.
The Council’s leadership team met with Barbara Johnson, Associate Vice President for Human Resource Services (HRS). Also present were Rodman Cory, HRS Liaison to Staff Council and Lee Stewart, Director of HRS Operations. This was the first of four quarterly meetings established to further coordinate the Council’s many collaborative efforts with UVM’s Human Resource Services Division. Ida reported that Barbara is forming a task force to work discuss the impact of Health Care Reform; she is reviewing the Council’s Mentorship Proposal sent the Office of the President and is considering a possible pilot-program; and she is committed to providing training in late October 2010 for Staff Advocates appointed by Staff Council. Staff Advocates serve to support staff members through a grievance process, in accordance with UVM’s Staff Grievance Procedure.

Staff Council’s Executive Board met with Robert Cioffi, Chair of UVM’s Board of Trustees on September 20th. This precedent setting meeting was requested by the Board’s chair. Ida shared how BOT Chair Cioffi provided an overview of UVM’s current budget challenges and how bringing in more money at UVM will not necessarily mean more students or significantly higher tuition rates. Although the University of Vermont is tuition dependant, he explained that the focus going forward will be on new revenue streams and institutional excellence. He identified new revenue streams as greater research dollars, as a possible future online master’s degree program at UVM, and as retention (of first to second year students). UVM’s current retention rate is 86% and the goal is 90%. While on this topic, he took the opportunity to recognize staff for their important role in student retention. Staff Council Board members shared their concerns regarding the PRMB review and expected future reform and asked how the Council could better inform the Board of Trustees.

Announcements
Jeff announced the deadline for submissions for the November Edition of Staffline is Friday, October 15, 2010. Discounted Ski & Ride Season Passes at four mountain resorts remain on sale through the Staff Council Office. Bolton Valley Resort has informed us that they are extending their discounted rates to UVM employees indefinitely, with no change in rates. Sugarbush Resort has extended its discount rates to UVM employees through December 14th. The admittance fee for Great Escape is $15 through October 31st with a coupon from the Staff Council Office. Lastly, Vermont Women in Higher Education is now seeking applications for the Carol A. Moore Scholarship. This scholarship recognizes women currently working in higher education who are successful in their roles, who intend to engage in professional development or academic pursuits in order to further their career, and who demonstrate a commitment to supporting women’s leadership. The application deadline is November 30, 2010. For more information go to VWHE’s website.

Other Business
Rodman Cory reported that HRS may rethink the Staff Appreciation Dinner, and how to recognize UVM’s staff that have completed 15 years of service or more, mostly due to the size of this aging demographic.

The next Staff Council meeting will take place in the Davis Center, 4th Floor Davis Center, Tuesday, November 2, 2010 at 12:05 p.m.