Summary of Staff Council Meeting

November 2, 2010

During this month’s meeting President Daniel Fogel addressed the Council and provided time for a Q&A session; the Council President provided an update of her previous month’s work; several staff-related announcements were made; the October 5, 2010 minutes were approved.

President Fogel began by acknowledging Staff Council representatives and officers for volunteering to serve on Staff Council. He reaffirmed his support of the Council by discussing the importance of this governance body and its advisory role to UVM’s Office of the President. He then proceeded to summarize his October 29th report to the Board of Trustees. He asked the Council to read, with care, the specific language in his report on the subject of post-retirement medical benefits (PRMB) and noted it is available on the Office of the President’s website. The President said he felt strongly that UVM should maintain a ‘defined benefit program’ for UVM personnel, verses a ‘defined contribution plan,’ to avoid the possibility of retirees outliving or “spending-out” their PRMB. President Fogel trusts that the Board will arrive at this same conclusion. Financially, he made it clear that UVM cannot postpone addressing the issue of PRMB indefinitely, but assured everyone that once a plan is decided upon, those employees who qualify for retirement will have at least a year to decide what the best course of action is for them before the plan is potentially implemented in July 2012 (FY 2013). (It is important to note that definitive decisions on the implementation of any plan has yet to be determined)

During the Q&A session, President Fogel was asked to speak about the University’s plans to establish a Foundation. He explained how most public universities in New England have foundations with the primary purpose of protecting the university’s money from the state. For instance, the tuition received by the University of Massachusetts goes directly to the state. Only their student fees stay with the University. While this is not the reason or even a concern for UVM, President Fogel said we need to engage more alumni in the financial sustainability of the institution. He further said, “Our institution is an odd public/private Ivy. Private universities usually have larger Boards of Trustees (40 – 80 people) who have the capacity for greater giving. It has been suggested that, in addition to our wonderful governing Board, we create a cohort of leadership volunteers who could potentially donate up to a quarter, or as much as a one-third of a future capital campaign. UVM’s stretch goal of a future campaign might be as much as $500 million dollars, with $150 million to be used for scholarships and $150 million for endowed faculty.”

President Fogel said UVM is currently conducting a feasibility campaign to get a clearer picture of its future Foundation members’ capacity to give. He expects the Foundation will be minimally staffed, campus-based and initially dependent on the administrative support that currently exists within the Development and Alumni Relations Offices. He hopes to avoid adding to UVM’s current fund-raising costs by duplicating existing administrative functions. He then concluded his visit and invited the Council to send him additional questions, care of the Staff Council Office.
Council President’s Update
Ida Russin reported that Staff Council leadership received invitations to address Human Resource Services’ Staff at their January meeting, and the Dean’s Assistants at their November meeting. Ida announced she has appointed Eric Hoefel as chair of the Ad Hoc Committee to create a Staff Council Survey and noted the following Staff Council Representatives volunteered to serve on this committee: Michelle Chapman, Yuliya Cruz, Isis Erb, Mark Hall, Allen Josey, and Susan Williford. The Ad Hoc Committee will present their preliminary survey model for consideration to the Staff Council at the March 1, 2011 meeting.

Standing Committee Structure
Staff Council Leadership recently met with Corinne Thompson, the Board of Trustees Coordinator, to talk about the Board’s process for examining the effectiveness of their standing committees, and how they found some committees had overlapping agendas and limited focus. Much like their process, Ida stated that Council’s goal is to align its standing committees with its mission statement and to adhere to the President’s policy for institutional efficacy which says: As an institution, we model the highest standard of ethical conduct, accountability and best practiced public service and strong commitment to lifelong learning. Since the Council hasn’t reviewed the functionality of its standing committees since its restructuring efforts in 2006, Ida has asked the Council’s Executive Board to begin its review using Several Overarching Guiding Principles that have been identified as commonalities that exist within each Staff Council Standing Committee. These include: build community; communicate to staff; promote efficient use of University resources; work collaboratively with University administration, departments, governance bodies, students, staff, faculty; work on problem resolution; promote transparency; promote social justice. The Executive Board has been asked to present its recommendation for possible restructuring to the full Council’s review and input by early spring. The objective is to conclude any restructuring by June 30, 2011 and implementation by August, 2011.

Announcements
Jeff Bukowski, Council Administrator, announced the deadline for submissions for the December edition of Staffline is Friday, November 12, 2010. Discounted Ski & Ride Season Passes are still available at Bolton Valley Resort and Sugarbush Resort and remain on sale through the Staff Council Office. Bolton has extended their discounted rates to UVM employees indefinitely and Sugarbush has a final deadline of December 14th. Discounted Ski Vouchers (day passes) for Jay Peak and Smugglers’ Notch, and discount coupons for Bolton Valley will be available on or around November 15th in the Staff Council Office. First Night Buttons may be purchased for a fee of $15 for adults and $5 for youth (ages 3 – 12). The adult button rate represents a $3 savings, as these buttons will be sold for $18 elsewhere and $25 on the day of the event.

Jeff told Council members that President Fogel will once again host an end-of-year luncheon for the Staff Council and all its participants, on Tuesday, June 7, 2011 at Englesby. As a result, the June Council meeting has been rescheduled to Tuesday, June 14, 2011 at 12:05 p.m. For those members who use Oracle, your calendars have already been updated.
The next Staff Council meeting will take place in the Livak Ballrooms, 4th Floor Davis Center, Tuesday, December 7, 2010 at 12:05 p.m.