Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Brendan Andrews, Renee Berteau (Vice-President), Michelle Chapman, Rodman Cory, Jacqueline Drouin, Mark Hall, Scott Hipko, Laurie Juskiewicz, Troy Kralh, Gwen Landis, Karen Lemire, Robin Lockerby, Noel McCann, Sharon Mone, Joanne Montanye, Mary Parent, Holly Pedrini, Parvin Pothiawala, Judy Riani, Catherine Symans (President), Marie Tiemann, Lynn Tracy, Floyd Vilmont, Susan Williford, Bethany Wolfe

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Ann Barlow, Naima Dennis, Isis Erb, Ida Russin (Immediate Past-President), Karmen Swim, Wayne Tetrick, Nicole Todd

ALSO PARTICIPATING:

Jeff Bukowski (Ex-Officio), Staff Council Administrator

Staff Council President Catherine Symans called the meeting to order at 12:06 p.m.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

The November 6, 2012 draft minutes were accepted with corrections from Rodman Cory.

STAFF COUNCIL PRESIDENT’S UPDATE – CATHERINE SYMANS

Catherine, Renee and Jeff met with Gary Derr the week of November 26th and discussed how to handle internal communications and listservs. Any related questions can be directed to Jeff. In addition, their discussions touched on how to treat UVM Foundation employees, with some pieces left to figure out. The Staff Council Executive Board will be one of several campus constituent groups to interview candidates for the position of Interim Provost. Four candidates have been identified and two interviews have been scheduled for Thursday, December 6th, which will take place during the Holiday Bazaar. The Quarterly Meeting with Human Resource Services Associate Vice President Barbara Johnson occurred in mid November after the Vermont Labor Relations Board union election results were announced. It was determined that Staff Council needs to “stay the course” but improve its communication by clarifying our role as a governance body and being more visible to staff. Unresolved issues need to be identified and brought forward to be addressed.

Upcoming meetings include the President’s Advisory Committee on Wednesday, December 12th; and on Wednesday, December 5th, the Envisioning Environment group will hold its final public forum and all member of the campus community are welcome to attend. Information from previous meetings is posted online at http://www.uvm.edu/provost/envisioningenvironment/. December Commencement will be held on Saturday, December 15th, during which Catherine will deliver a greeting on behalf of staff. In addition, Catherine reported on a recent meeting with Staff Council Leadership and two members of the Post-Doctoral Associates and Fellows community at UVM, who voiced their concern of not being represented at the University. They requested the meeting to begin dialog with Staff Council about how to
develop a possible representative body and to tap into the resources and expertise of the Council. The Associates are seen as staff within the HRS system and receive some of the same benefits as non-represented staff. The Fellows, on the other hand, are considered independent contractors. Staff Council Leadership agreed to provide support to this group in the way of information and collaboration in their efforts to pursue some sort of representative body. Post-doctoral students have expressed enthusiasm at the prospect of collaborating with Staff Council.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No public comments were offered.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The **Holiday Bazaar** will be held on Thursday, December 6, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in the Davis Center. Jeff will distribute an email with the list of volunteer bakers. More volunteers are needed during the move-in from 7:00 - 9:00 a.m. and during the break-down from 3:00 - 4:30 p.m. The Staff Council Office now has **ski vouchers/coupons** for Jay Peak, Bolton Valley and Smuggler’s Notch.

**First Night Burlington buttons** will be sold at the Holiday Bazaar. There is a limited quantity so sales are on a first-come, first-served basis. The last day to purchase these will be December 17th. **Buy Local coupon books** will also be sold during the Holiday Bazaar. Proceeds benefit the Social Committee.

**BYLAW CHANGES**

Vice President Renee Berteau presented the **bylaw update** to the Council for a vote of approval. The update regarded the **removal of language referring to the role of the liaison that was created for the UVM Foundation**. Upon further review by the UVM Foundation, the liaison role posed a conflict of interest and with the guidance of Legal Counsel we have been asked to remove this language. From time to time we will still welcome a representative from the UVM Foundation to address the Council on their work and initiatives. The Council approved these changes.

**STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS**

The **Social Committee** reminded representatives to visit the Holiday Bazaar this Thursday and purchase raffle tickets for great prizes. This year boasts a record number of vendors, so many that the welcoming tables have been moved to the Fireplace Lounge outside the entrance to the Bazaar. The committee will track the number of attendees this year.

**Personal and Professional Development & Occupational Environment** requested information from the other governance bodies at UVM regarding the tobacco-free campus initiative. The committee presented questions that inquired about how these governance bodies stand on the issue of creating a tobacco-free environment on campus and whether they had a history or involvement in these efforts in the recent past. The responses from two groups (Faculty Senate and the Graduate Student Senate) were middle of the road; although they support a tobacco-free environment, they have not formed a position yet on the issue.

**Compensation, Benefits, and Budget** has created three new work groups that will focus on 1.) Parental Leave/Nursing Mothers, 2.) Access to Tuition Remission for Employees, and 3.) Understanding/Communicating the University Budget. This will allow the committee to focus as a
whole on educating itself about the University Budget as it continues its discussions with University leaders on this subject.

**EDUCATION OUTREACH CAMPAIGN DISCUSSION**

The discussion focused on how Staff Council will move forward following the election, particularly in terms of outreach and communication. The Council feels it is important to foster a sense of empowerment among all staff members, especially in light of a pervasive sentiment that faculty is considered more important than staff within the University. A few representatives noted that long-time employees of UVM have been more vocal about their disappointment and leanings towards union representation, and it is speculated that this may be due to the relative decrease in benefits over the past 10 years (i.e., these individuals have seen more taken away, whereas newer employees may be satisfied with what they have when compared to what is offered in the local market). However, it was noted that UVM employees enjoy far greater benefits than other local businesses (such as IBM) and the question was posed whether HRS could provide a side-by-side comparison of benefits (medical, retirement, tuition remission, paid time off, etc.) to other companies in order to visually illustrate the perks of working for UVM.

The Council revisited the idea of hosting a town forum in which all staff would be invited to speak and it could also serve as a way to educate the community about Staff Council. For those who could not make it, or may not feel comfortable, the possibility of submitting comments or questions electronically was suggested.

Representatives were again encouraged to speak with their constituents about what they enjoy about working at UVM and where they feel improvements need to be made. It was noted that the ways in which questions were asked could put Staff Council in a pro- or anti-union light, in spite of its commitment to maintain no position, but remain informative.

Another point was raised regarding non-exempt versus exempt staff. Some employees who had an opinion on unionization were not eligible to vote based on their employee status, which raises the question of how does Staff Council handle this.

Some new suggestions were brought to the table, including “propagandizing” Staff Council’s role, and questioning whether or not Staff Council could speak with a former representative who has since unionized to learn more about what makes employees favor unionization.

However Staff Council chooses to gather information or reach out to staff, it is important to remember that everyone should be able to express their opinion regardless of where they stand on the issues of unionization so that all voices are heard and represented.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

**Volunteerism Proposal**

At the November meeting, a presentation was given regarding a proposal that would request that UVM staff be granted up to two days of paid release time to participate in volunteerism as a representative of UVM. This proposal came from several individuals who played a major role in UVM’s volunteer response efforts to Tropical Storm Irene throughout Vermont. Many questions remain regarding the volunteerism proposal, such as: Who would staff this initiative? Where will the funding come from? What influence will this initiative have on the Community Service Award currently run by Staff Council? Why should Staff Council feel obligated to recognize volunteerism if it’s something a person just “ought to do anyway?” Which organizations/efforts should and should not count towards volunteerism? What happens if you’re volunteering for an organization that benefits you, such as your child’s school or your church?
Can you save up your paid volunteer time and take off a week for a mission trip? What if you normally volunteer on weekends or after business hours; how does this affect paid time off for volunteer work? What if you’re volunteering for an organization whose values don’t align with UVM’s values?

A detailed edited draft of the proposal incorporating these concerns was sent to the group working on the proposal. The Staff Council will revisit the proposal when an updated draft is provided and it will then be put to a vote for possible endorsement.

**Retreat Follow-Up**

The Council reviewed the ideas for incorporating servant leadership into the organization and focused on the goal of communication. Group 4 ideas will be discussed at the next meeting.

The next Staff Council Meeting will be held in the Livak Ballroom in the Davis Center on January 8, 2013 from 12:05 to 1:30 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:21 p.m.