University of Vermont Staff Council

End of Year Reports

2009 – 2010

Benefits Committee
Rita Lemire, Chair; Eileen Kristiansen, Vice Chair

The Benefits Committee started out the season by reviewing several contact sheets regarding different aspects of UVM’s tuition remission benefit. Several employees had questions about a possible tuition exchange program, reimbursement for spouses taking courses for credit at UVM and reimbursement for courses taken at other State colleges (courses that are not offered at UVM). Barbara Johnson, Associate Vice President for HRS, was sent a list of questions compiled by the Committee and was invited to attend a meeting, which she did in December. The Committee was told this benefit is currently under review to see how UVM employees utilize it. Ms. Johnson indicated that once the review is completed, the Committee will be able to see the results and offer suggestions based on past contact sheet questions. The outstanding contact sheets were closed without recommendations from the Committee as we await the result of the review.

We closed out the year with much discussion on the new health care legislation and how it may affect UVM employees. Questions regarding dependents that are under the age of 26 were brought to the Committee’s attention and were relayed to HRS. A communication from HRS was distributed on June 2nd providing more information to UVM employees. We hope to look at the implications of this legislation on our benefits again next year and contribute to the ongoing conversation around post-retirement medical benefits.

Communication Committee
Joanne Montanye, Chair

The Communications Committee explored a number of innovative ways to broaden the outreach of Staff Council that were aligned with the committee’s mission of gathering and publishing information and facilitating communication on issues and policies affecting staff employees.

Perhaps the most visible and significant accomplishment of the year was the redesign of the Staff Council website http://www.uvm.edu/~stffcncl/. Discussions focused primarily on content, but also touched on accessibility, function and aesthetics. The actual redesign of the website was carried out by Staff Council Administrator Jeff Bukowski who went to multiple Web Team help sessions where he learned how to design and build the website. Discussions regarding Staff Council’s other primary form of communication, Staffline, focused on how to improve “Spotlight on Staff” by creating a basic template with a set number of interview questions to enable any staff member to interview a colleague about their job or special interest. Committee members felt this approach would provide a consistent size and content format to minimize editing.

Other topics of the discussion throughout the year included the promotion of more information on conducting meetings with the use of Robert's Rules; assisting the Staff Council Office to develop a
historical retrospective celebrating the Council's 40th anniversary next year; and preparation for upcoming Staff Council elections that were held in June, which included videos produced by Joanne Montanye of presidential and vice presidential candidates making brief campaign statements.

**Education and Professional Development Committee**

**Todd Stewart, Chair; Eric Hoefel, Vice-Chair**

The Education & Professional Development Committee began the year with continuing discussion of the Lunchtime Learning Series program and the Technical Training initiative (offering more on-line or classroom educational opportunities that were not PeopleSoft related) recommendations. Both recommendations had been forwarded to Human Resources after the last meeting of the committee for the Academic Year 08-09. After some further refinement and discussion it was determined that the Lunchtime Learning Series program was going to be too difficult for the committee to administer successfully and the initiative was tabled. The Technical Training recommendation along with discussions with Learning Services encouraged the implementation of more on-line technical training options for University employees that were not PeopleSoft related. The committee worked very diligently on reworking the committee charter so it more closely fit with the current Staff Council By-Laws. The revised charter was brought before the Executive Board and the Staff Council as a whole for approval. The committee worked very hard to craft a recommendation for the creation of a Mentoring Program for new (and not so new) members of the University staff to work with more experienced University staff in a mentorship role. The recommendation was approved by the Executive Board and Staff Council as a whole at the June 2010 meeting. The recommendation was forwarded to members of the Administration including Human Resource Services shortly after the Staff Council Meeting. The committee wrapped up the year by brainstorming goals for the upcoming year. Based on these preliminary discussions, the committee will have many opportunities to continue to enhance and improve the education and professional development of University staff.

**Employee Environment and Facilities Committee**

**Michelle Smith, Chair**

The Employee Environment and Facilities Committee (EEF) continued to work with Transportation and Parking Services (T&PS) to support and promote the existing programs and initiatives, while advocating for new staff needs, such as enhanced shuttle schedules from the Gutterson Garage to central campus. Other concerns addressed included the safety of bus shelters, what it means to staff for UVM to become a “pedestrian campus”, better communication to staff from T&PS regarding the ever-changing lot assignments (and permit designations), and ways to take advantage of our affiliate organizations, CCTA and CATMA transportation and programs.

Susan Williford was our committee contact to communicate with Mary Provost in T&PS to coordinate a T&PS submission into every Staffline, in support of our effort to promote the existing programs.

Jim Barr, Director of Transportation and Parking Services, and Sandy Thibault, CATMA, also attended our January meeting to discuss T&PS issues. Mary Provost, Transportation and Parking Services, followed up with us in March during our monthly meeting.

EEF Committee member, Ernie Buford worked with Rose Leland regarding the positioning and number of available bicycle racks on campus, which affect numerous staff members as well as students. We were pleased to hear how many staff use bicycles to commute to and from work, as well as on campus for meetings!
Marty Burrows agreed to be the representative EEF member to TAPSAC (Transportation and Parking Advisory Committee), which meets four times annually. Marty also spear-headed the Green Up Day coordination here at UVM in collaboration with the City of Burlington. He did a stellar job with little advanced organization, and over 100 volunteers participated in the areas designated at UVM “zones”. Nearly 100 bags were given out and picked up!

Another initiative the committee focused on included partnering with the Office of Sustainability and Recycling and Solid Waste to present "Greening Your Workplace" at Mastering the Maze. The presentation educates staff about the ways they can help lower the University's carbon footprint. EEF remains available to give the presentation to any staff member or department that might be interested in learning more.

Our committee member Scott Lewins has also partnered with Recycling and Solid Waste and has been piloting a composting project within his department. Scott made himself available to assist staff members with beginning their own composting projects, and there were several staff members interested in doing so.

The EEF committee has drafted questions concerning health and wellness of staff members that we have tabled for use pending an HRS survey creation. We originally drafted the questions two years ago with the plan to administer a small survey of staff to better identify how the committee might best serve staff members, but tabled it originally due to the lay-offs, and subsequently because we were told HRS was also working on a survey. The questions are nearly ready to be administered as part of a larger survey or as a separate individual survey.

In an effort to encourage leadership development, the EEF committee also created a “Vice Chair” position to run meetings in the absence of the Chair. The purpose was to keep action items moving forward and provide shared leadership without burdening one member as the Vice Chair all year long. The Chair still provided the agenda, and the minutes were submitted by Secretary Anne-Marie Resnik during the Fall semester, and various committee members during the spring semester.

Internal Affairs Committee
Sharon Mone, Chair

The Internal Affairs Committee (Committee) began the year by electing a new Chair in June.

Customer Service Award
In the past a Customer Service award had been given out to a staff member, but was discontinued around 2000. The Staff Council Executive Board asked the Committee to investigate bringing this back. The Committee felt that more direction is needed in order to complete meaningful work on this project, and sent this agenda item back to the Executive Board for further discussion in 2011.

Employee Evaluation Process:
Early in the year, the Committee was urged to take on the Employee Evaluation Process as a long term project which would encompass marketing, morale, greater consistency in the process, as well as a more meaningful tool for supervisors and employees. However, by the end of this year, it was determined that the Salary & Budget Committee, not Internal Affairs, will assume the responsibility for investigating this issue specifically looking at the inequity issues present in the current process. Salary & Budget has a specific interest in the way Performance Appraisals are tied to merit based pay increases.
Mission Statement and Sub Committee charge:
Committee members reviewed bylaws and approved Staff Council Mission Statement. The Committee also reviewed the charge of the IA Committee “…to make recommendations concerning conditions of employment, recruitment, retention, problem resolution and other personnel issues assigned by the Council”. Since much of the work performed by this Committee in recent years has been “benefits” or “policy” in nature, and additionally, since enrollment numbers within all Committees has been declining, the Committee believes it is time for the Council to revisit restructuring all Committees in 2011.

Shared Leave for Sick Pool:
The Committee maintained their focus for much of the year by continuing work on the Shared Leave for Sick Pool. This work included collaboration with HRS as questions and requests for data continued. In March, the Staff Council received a formal response from HRS, Barbara Johnson, regarding Shared Leave Pool. This response represents many years of work by the Committee, looking at how best to serve all employees at the University. This response reads as follows: (with the history of this contact sheet(s), and in the interest of all employees, the response is presented in its entirety.)

To: Sharon Mone, Chair, Staff Council Internal Affairs Committee
From: Barbara Johnson, Associate VP for Human Resource Services
Re: Shared Leave Pool Inquiry
Date: March 8, 2010
I appreciate your ongoing desire to respond clearly to inquiries regarding establishment of a Shared Leave Pool at UVM, and I hope that the following information is useful to you. At UVM, available paid time off is an unfunded annual expense. Departments have funds for each person’s regular pay, and this same funding is used to pay the employee during an absence from work. Since this is an unfunded benefit, there is no separate funding available to be “pooled” for the use of other employees. Policies regarding the use of vacation, sick, and personal leave, in particular, are designed to provide flexibility for employees while minimizing the exposure of the University to a financial liability. Vacation and sick leave accruals, for example, are credited to employees according to specific, service-based schedules. UVM’s sick time accrual policy is unusually generous in that it does accrue indefinitely. In this way each person, in effect, has an available “bank” of time to provide income protection during unexpected absences for health reasons. Catastrophic illness and injury are handled through integrated short- and long-term disability insurance programs.

Short Term Disability (STD)
While working towards resolution of the Shared Leave Pool, the Committee still recognizes the lapse of income replacement for employees not having enough sick leave, or any other option if they were absent for periods of time, shorter than when an employee would be eligible for long term disability (LTD). Thus, this past year, the Committee began a more thorough investigation into STD options and the potential need for a guaranteed acceptance STD insurance program at the University. The Committee contacted UVM Peer Institutions and chose to concentrate on those institutions that most closely fit UVM’s profile. This data included University policies as well as STD plans. The Committee met with Barbara Johnson in May to collaborate once again with HRS. Over the summer, HRS will be investigating possible plans/models for STD by looking at peer institutions and compiling a feasibility study. IA formally, in writing, supports HRS efforts and will assist in reviewing the research obtained.
Recreation Committee
Marie Tiemann, Chair

Local & International Travel  Golf Events  Community Service Awards  Discount Programs & Fundraising Events

We meet monthly to plan and organize various social events, activities and programs to enhance the well-being of UVM community life. A very successful Golf Outing was held in July. The $40 profit from this event was donated to the Staff Emergency Loan Fund. The Champlain Valley Fair was once again a popular event attended by many staff. More than $9,000 in tickets were sold and $1,127.00 was contributed by the Recreation Committee for tickets to 161 staff members and retirees. An enjoyable Boston Bus trip took place in September with 50 persons attending. The fall meetings concentrated on planning and organizing the annual Holiday Bazaar held in December. This event was a tremendous success with 38 tables filled with locally handmade products and artwork. The many artisans and crafts-persons included staff, faculty, students, and retirees. Due to the extended efforts in advertising the 2009 Holiday Bazaar was well attended and the vendors expressed their pleasure with this year’s improvements. Additionally, we hosted a local Food Drive at the Holiday Bazaar and collected 230 lbs of food. The annual Casino Bus Trip occurred in February with a full bus of 50 people who traveled to Montreal for a fun and exciting time. We made two donations of $50 each to Camp-Ta-Kum-Ta and Champlain Adaptive Mounted Program (CHAMP) for Community Service Awards thru the volunteer efforts of James Read and Sue Tebbetts.

We continue to foster and promote discount programs with area businesses including everything from seasonal resorts (ski-passes and golfing vouchers) to home-heating and cell-phone service. These discounts, although promoted by Staff Council, are offered to all University employees. Some programs are extended to our retirees as well.

The Recreation Committee has reviewed and revised its charge and it is now pending approval by the full Council. The proposed change reads: “To enhance and promote the University of Vermont community life by planning and coordinating recreational events and activities, including community service opportunities”. Additionally, we have proposed renaming this committee to “Social Committee” to better reflect the purpose of what we do. The committee is also in the process of creating an “Events Binder” to capture the various details and logistics for planning each event. We have more ideas on how to enhance our work/life experience here at UVM, and as a result we will need to enlist more committee members to assist us. If you enjoy casual and social gatherings, please consider joining us at any of our monthly meetings. The agenda and schedules are posted on the Staff Council website.

Rules and Election Committee
Rob Rohr, Chair

As in the previous year, this year’s Staff Council Rules and Elections (R&E) Committee focused on streamlining Council bylaws and policies towards a smoother operation of the new larger Council. Of particular note, the committee crafted changes to the term of the Nominating Committee to align the term with that of the Council President and Vice President (every two years). The mission of the R&E
Committee was studied in light of new Council mission and goals and was deemed to be sufficient as stated in the bylaws. The Election Policy Statement for which the R&E Committee has responsibility was studied in order to clarify the election oversight responsibility for which the committee is tasked. In clarifying the meaning and activities required of “oversight,” the Committee decided to split the Election Policy Statement into two parts, one dealing with Officer elections, and one dealing with unit representatives, reflecting the different timing and nature of the two types of elections. The committee certified the process and results of the recent Presidential and Vice-Presidential elections and has begun the process of investigating replacement voting software for unit and campus-wide elections.

Future activities will include the continued investigation and recommendation of election software, managing the changes to bylaws required in incorporating any future changes caused by Committee restructuring and reorganization, and improving the process of selecting new committee leadership at the end of a Council year, especially in light of drastic changes in committee membership.

I have enjoyed my years of service to the council and to the committee, and thank everybody in my unit, in the Staff Council and in the Committee who have allowed me to serve in this capacity. Thank you all very much.

**Salary & Budget Committee**  
Mary Reilly and Eileen Kristiansen, Co-Chairs

The Committee spent the majority of the first half of the year focused on its FY 11 Salary Raise Pool Recommendation for non-represented staff. Based on the total cost of salary increases from FY 10 and taking into consideration the financial challenges facing UVM and the nation, the Committee considered several proposals including a single percentage increase for everyone, a graduated percentage increase based on salary levels, no increase and an increase based on a dollar amount instead of a percentage. Ultimately, the Committee recommended that all employees earning up to $75,000 receive an increase of $1,200 and those earning greater than $75,000 receive an increase of $750. While this recommendation was not accepted by the Administration, Richard Cate, Vice President for Finance and Administration and Jane Knodell, Interim Provost & Senior Vice President, met with members of the Committee and Staff Council’s Executive Board to review the budget process and explain their reasons for not accepting the recommendation.

The Committee will continue to look into ways to improve the performance appraisal process and link it more closely to merit-based pay increases. Despite the lack of increases the past two years, the fact that many UVM staff still do not receive annual performance reviews remains of serious concern to the Committee.

The Committee continues to work closely with the Staff Council Office to assist with the Staff Emergency Loan Fund (SELF) when and where appropriate. The committee met with Diane Freiheit, team lead of WorkLife Services, to learn about the services provided by the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and to explore other services to which we can direct individuals seeking financial assistance.