INTRODUCTION

With the announcement at the February 20th University Benefits Advisory Council (UBAC) that dependent tuition remission and retirement were “off the table,” it was clear that the feedback from the UVM community greatly influenced this decision. On March 5th, we will be submitting to the UBAC, 27 pages of feedback that the Staff Council Office has collected from UVM staff who are concerned how this issue will affect them. A cover letter addressed to the President and Provost will highlight some common themes that came from our review of the comments and concerns. We do appreciate the opportunity to participate in this process and continue to serve as the voice of staff.

STAFF COUNCIL LEADERSHIP MEETING WITH UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

The Staff Council Leadership met with President Sullivan in February to discuss several issues including the FY15 Budget and Incentive Based Budgeting (IBB), the UBAC’s review of cost share benefits, and the tobacco-free initiative. We shared some of the feedback that we had received from staff on cost share benefits and expressed our concern about the way campus-wide communication was handled. We again stressed the need for timely and thoughtful communication being widely distributed in advance of campus-wide issues which tend to cause alarm for those who are not well informed. The President thanked us for sharing this information and agreed with the continual efforts toward improving communication.

We also met with Vice President for Executive Operations Gary Derr on February 20th concerning some of the same issues we discussed with President Sullivan. We were also asked to promote the President’s Our Common Ground Staff Award to ensure full participation by UVM staff.

HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES QUARTERLY MEETING WITH STAFF COUNCIL LEADERSHIP

The Staff Council leadership met with Associate Vice President for Human Resource Services Barbara Johnson on February 12th and discussed the same items we discussed with President Sullivan (see above). At top of our list was the UBAC review of cost share benefits. Associate Vice President Johnson informed us that she would be sharing various scenarios at the February 20th UBAC meeting in order to help faculty and staff better understand this issue will affect UVM employees. We also discussed the status of the HRS Survey results which have been delayed due to Vice President for Human Resources and Diversity Wanda Heading-Grants leave. Once completed, the results will be shared with the University Community.
PRESIDENT’S ADVISORY COUNCIL

The President’s Advisory Council will be meeting on March 12th. The sole agenda item is a Student Wellness presentation by Annie Stevens, Vice Provost for Student Affairs and Dr. Jon Porter, Director of the Center of Health and Wellbeing. Dr. Porter will also be our guest at the April Staff Council meeting to address the reps about this issue.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The February meeting of the Board of Trustees Committee of the Whole took place on February 7th at 8:00 a.m. in the Silver Maple Ballroom at the Davis Center. I presented my report on behalf of the Staff Council along with the other governance groups. The report was well received and can be read here.

OTHER

Vice President Renee Berteau and I were invited to participate in a presentation of the results of the University of Vermont’s Salary and Equity Study which was recommended by the former President’s Commission on the Status of Women and strongly supported by the other Presidential Commissions. The services of Dr. Murray Clayton, Professor of Statistics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, were secured to help with this effort. Dr. Clayton presented his findings in response to two questions: 1) is there equity in salary based on gender and 2) is there equity in salary based on minority status for faculty at the University of Vermont. The overall conclusion is that “there is essentially no statistical evidence of an overall gap in salaries due to gender or minority status.” You can read the Executive Summary here. While this study focused on faculty, a study of salary and equity for staff will be conducted in the future. No date has been determined at this time.

Sincerely,

Catherine E. Symans, Staff Council President