Staff Council Officers’ Report
October 2012

INTRODUCTION

As we all know, in September, there was an election organized and run by the Vermont Labor Relations Board (VLRB) for non-exempt staff in the Administrative, Technical, and Specialist job families to choose a possible collective bargaining unit or union to represent them at UVM. While nearly 80% of the 777 individuals eligible to vote participated, this left about 155 whose voice was not heard. In this first election no one choice on the ballot received the necessary 50% + 1 of all the votes cast to make a firm determination as to whether or not this group of staff employees will be represented by a union. As a result, a runoff election will be organized and run by the VLRB at UVM in the coming weeks where the choices on the ballot will be no representation or representation by University Staff Union/NEA. If you are eligible to vote, you need to vote otherwise a decision could be made that does not represent your views. Staff Council has not formed an opinion or taken a position on the organizing efforts because our organization is built on the voice of staff and we always want to respect the freedom of choice for all staff at UVM. However, as a group we will continue to do our best to reach out and educate staff about the significance of this election which is in line with our mission to seek out and respond to the ideas and concerns of staff while keeping staff informed of major University initiatives, policy, and events.

STAFF COUNCIL LEADERSHIP MEETING WITH UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

The next meeting is scheduled for October 11th.

PRESIDENT’S CAMPUS LEADERSHIP FORUM

In mid-September, President Tom Sullivan sent an invitation to the governance leaders to serve on the President’s Council for the academic year 2012-2013. This newly formed Council will take the place of the former President’s Campus Leadership Forum. According to President Sullivan’s letter,

The purpose of the Council is to provide substantive advice and counsel on major university-wide strategies as we establish a course to advance the University. Members of the Council include faculty, staff, students, and alumni. The next ten years will offer the University opportunities many of which may not be unique to UVM. The Council will serve as an advisory body rather than a deliberative body and act as a sounding board for me to draw on the collective wisdom and impressive talents of this group. Meetings will be informative, data rich and content driven. At times there will be substantial preparation necessary; and sometimes when experts will attend the Council to present on specific topics. The Council will meet approximately every six weeks throughout the academic year and your appointment will be for the current academic year.
Thank you very much in advance for what I expect to be a rewarding and interesting opportunity to play an active role in planning future strategies and developing aspirational goals for the University of Vermont.

The first meeting has not yet been scheduled.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- The next Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 1st.
- The next Committee of the Whole is scheduled for November 7th and 8th.

OTHER

The Staff Council Retreat held on September 25th was a time for the Staff Council Representatives to spend several hours focusing on specific topics which we normally do not have the time to spend on during meetings. Our discussion focused on leadership and service answering the questions of what is a leader and how does service fit into leadership. The chapter we were asked to read on servant leadership proved to be an excellent resource for our discussion on how we can incorporate servant leadership into our role as Staff Council Representatives.

Provost Jane Knodell sent a request to the Staff Council announcing that she was initiating a national search for the Dean of the College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences and that she must constitute a search committee. President Sullivan and the Provost has appointed Dr. Sanjay Sharma, Dean of the School of Business Administration, as chair of the Search Committee. The University Manual process requires that the search committee include “a staff member from the College or School.” Consequently, Provost Knodell asked me to identify a list of at least four staff nominees from the College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences for membership on the Dean’s Search Committee. We submitted a list of five suggested staff nominees from which the Provost will select a staff member to serve on the committee.

Staff Council has been fortunate enough to have had a great deal of influence in bringing attention to and moving work ahead on many issues. Sometimes it is not always easy to see where Staff Council’s work has had the greatest impact because we are working together with others from staff in a particular department to our senior leadership, but that advocacy work continues and positive change is on its way, but change takes time and it is important to realize it doesn’t happen overnight. As an organization, Staff Council strives to build relationships and work collaboratively to address and solve issues of concern for staff, but that does not mean we always agree with the tough decisions that are made by our leaders. However, we pride ourselves on delivering our disagreement with respect so as to keep the lines of communication open for the whole UVM community and to further break down the barriers of an “us vs. them” mentality. We need to do more to encourage community building among student, staff, faculty, and the Administration because at the end of the day, we are all part of UVM and each of our individual actions contribute to the greatness of this institution.

CONCLUSION

I know that we’re all very busy with our jobs and family obligations, but if you can manage to attend any part of upcoming Precipice or Crossroads symposium, I’m sure you will find it to be a valuable experience. The Symposium is a chance for staff members to hear and to get into dialogue with leading thinkers from around the country about the many challenges and opportunities that mark the road ahead for institutions like UVM. There will be two
public lectures that don’t require registration: one on October 10th at 5:30 pm by the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the other on October 11th at 5:30 pm titled, “Between a New Rock and a Bad Hard Place: Public Research Universities at Risk,” by University of Pennsylvania Professor and Chair of the Learning Alliance, Robert Zemsky. The registration fee for the Symposium is only $40 for UVM faculty and staff which has been made possible by a grant from the NEH, the Offices of the President and the Provost, the Vice President for Research and Graduate Education, CALS, CESS and UVM Extension. Registration closes on October 5th.

And finally, I hope you’ve had an opportunity to view the video that the SGA made to thank staff during Staff Appreciation Week. Staff were also acknowledged at the September Faculty Senate meeting as well as at the last Board of Trustees Executive Committee meeting. While we appreciate being recognized during Staff Appreciation Week, it’s important that staff be recognized throughout the year for their hard work, dedication and commitment to the success of this University.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Catherine E. Symans, Staff Council President