



*Staff Council*

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*Serving as a voice and advocate for all staff at UVM, since 1971.*

May 12, 2011

To: Robert Cioffi, Board of Trustees Chair

From: Ida Russin, Staff Council President

Michelle Smith, Staff Council Vice President

Re: Staff Council Presidential Search Document

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On behalf of the entire Staff Council, we wish to thank the Presidential Search Committee for transparently engaging the university community around the search process to identify the 26<sup>th</sup> President of the University of Vermont and for creating mechanisms that ensure that multiple perspectives are represented and considered in these efforts.

Staff Council is an advisory body that advocates on behalf of the nearly 2,000 non-represented staff at UVM and is composed of elected Representatives from all the units/divisions within the University. Under the authority of the President of the University of Vermont, Staff Council is charged with listening to, pursuing and responding to the ideas and opinions of staff employees; conveying these ideas and opinions to the University administration; advising the President on all subjects that affect staff employees; and informing staff on issues and policies affecting them. In addition Staff Council strives to create a cohesive community, have a positive impact on staff culture and promote the betterment of all.

Due to our organization's unique relationship and reporting line to the President of the University, it is extremely important that the individual who takes on this challenging role is committed to listening, acknowledging, and working to address the unique needs, issues, and concerns of staff employees at UVM. What we see as so vital to this working relationship is dedication to transparency that fosters ongoing dialogue, promotes the sharing of information, and encourages and supports collaboration between Staff Council, the Administration, and other university groups.

Staff play essential roles in the success of the University but often express feelings of being underappreciated and expendable. Institutions of higher education across the United States have been faced with many challenges over the past several years and while UVM has not been immune to these, it is clear that our university has fared significantly better than others. Still, staff continue to share their fears and frustrations around changes to benefits and the leveling of salaries. Staff worry that their commitment to UVM is not valued.

The individual who serves as the next President must be able to build a strong rapport with staff and continue the work that has been done to improve the way staff contributions are viewed within the UVM community. This individual must be a leader who is visible, charismatic, hands on, approachable, a clear communicator, and a creative thinker with financial savvy. This individual must be dedicated to efforts that expand social justice, diversity, sustainability and green practices, and internationalization at all levels of the university.

As part of the creation of this report, Staff Council Representatives were asked to contribute answers to the five questions provided by the Presidential Search Committee. The responses received were varied, but clear themes emerged. To better articulate these individual opinions, we provided a bulleted list under summarized themes. We would be happy to clarify anything that you may question.

## **1. What opportunities do you see facing the University of Vermont in the next ten years?**

### **Academic**

- Create of a School of Journalism with a strong focus on new independent media developments and ever-changing modes of communication
- Create a fast-track bachelor degree program that can be achieved in 3 years that is promoted as an 'affordable' option
- More academic offerings in the summer months, more diverse and quality student body, more focused and in-depth degree programs
- Focus more attention on degree programs in the sciences while maintaining the quality and distinction of offerings in the humanities.
- Maintain and expand the necessary support services for the needs of our students
- Increase collaboration between the colleges

### **Efficiency**

- Consolidate duplicated services (e.g., email systems, room scheduling, etc.)
- Maintain enrollment levels of undergraduate students

### **Financial**

- Develop a budget model that sustains the university over concerns that the current model focuses on high-tuition, high-financial aid, and low state capital funding.
- Support and sustain the new Foundation, ensuring that staff moving from UVM to the Foundation as employees are treated equitably
- Foster and support the creation and growth of income generating programs and departments (e.g. Conferences & Events Services)
- Increase grant revenue

### **Professional Development**

- Implement a career ladder system that will educate and strengthen staff skills and provide opportunities for advancement

### **Research**

- Develop medical research opportunities in collaboration with other disciplines (e.g. engineering, informatics, robotics, chemistry, music, arts/dance, physical education, etc.)
- Expand research opportunities across all disciplines
- Support Transdisciplinary Research Initiatives

### **Sustainability**

- Environmental sustainability *must* become integrated into all aspects of operations and curriculum. Otherwise, the university faces the imminent "reality check" when it will no longer truthfully be able to make claims that other universities can. In order to stay competitive UVM must implement more sustainable practices otherwise the university may lose its distinction as a leader in green initiatives as more and more institutions of higher education make strides beyond what UVM is currently doing or planning.

### **Social Justice/Diversity/Internationalization**

- Develop and expand diversity training and social justice education to University leaders, and the University community, in order to support university wide initiatives around this commitment
- Develop and expand training and education around internationalization efforts for University leaders and the University community.
- Increased opportunities to prepare staff, students, and faculty for service opportunities
- Increased outreach to surrounding communities and continued support for collaboration and partnerships with community initiatives, businesses and organizations

### **Other**

- Promote the current branding of what UVM is as a university while thinking about where we are going and what we wish to become.

## **2. What challenges do you see facing the University of Vermont in the next ten years?**

### **Academic**

- Development and support of the Transdisciplinary Research Initiative (TRI) Spires
- Implementation of General Education Initiatives
- Gaining University-wide support for the new Dean of the School of Business Administration after a controversial hiring decision
- Support efforts that work to ensure that students depart with excellent communication abilities and strong life skills

### **Facilities**

- Support the continued maintenance of buildings to promote top-notch research and learning while working to attain carbon neutrality and other sustainability goals. (Focus on deferred and regular maintenance)
- Providing adequate financial support for physical plant, maintenance, and custodial departments

### **Financial**

- Maintaining the current level of employee benefits

- Overcome research and development funding models that promote inter-departmental competition for money instead of more productive collaboration
- Reduction of student financial aid while maintaining the affordability of a UVM education as well as room and board that does not significantly increase costs
- Creating a general fund budget model that integrates sustainability planning as a core value, which could drive greater facility efficiency, and therefore greater academic programming efficiency
- Balancing the University budget and developing a new model that is not as tuition dependent

### **Social Justice/Diversity/Internationalization**

- Implementation of internationalization efforts
- Increase diversity among staff, students, and faculty
- Development and implementation of universal design that meets the needs of staff, students, and faculty

### **Technology**

- Continued development of Peoplesoft, the financial and human resources software system

### **Other**

- Responding to increased competition from non-traditional learning opportunities
- Recognizing the value of non-represented staff
- Finding a balance between hiring quality staff and faculty while working in fair and equitable ways to balance the budget

## **3. What professional qualifications and experiences should the next president possess?**

### **Credentials**

- Doctorate level degree and a minimum of 5 years experience in HE administration (including land grant experience)
- Prior college presidential experience at an institution similar in size and academic rigor with demonstrated results
- A strong knowledge of University research processes
- Experience working with Foundations in higher education and a track record in securing donations and funding
- Demonstrated success with budget development and fiscal responsibility
- Membership in national organizations
- Tested commitment to ethical standards
- Experience in actual classroom teaching, non-profit management, community organizing, world health policy, and work with state legislators and government
- Proven business sense and experience
- Track record of volunteerism

### **Commitment to Social Justice/Diversity/Multiculturalism/Internationalization**

- Demonstrated experience in supporting and implementing cultural pluralism and social justice policies on campus.
- Commitment to diversity

### **Commitment to Sustainability and Green Practices**

- The next president needs to understand what it means to brand UVM as an environmental university, including climate action planning. This priority could be integrated into all facets of operations, academics, Foundation funding, and athletics.
- Demonstrated commitment to environmental stewardship

### **Leadership Skills**

- Motivator
- A university president must have the ability to craft a vision that the entire community can support, and take ownership in fulfilling
- The president should be able to state, in a clear and articulate manner what standards are expected of the UVM community, and how to attain goals for specific initiatives
- A track record of proven integrity
- Excellent oral and written communicator
- A team player with a collaborative business style
- Must be strong and confident enough to work with distinguished faculty.
- Must be able to listen and work well with all staff, students, and faculty

### **Other**

- Dedication to and love for the University of Vermont

### **4. What personal leadership characteristics should the next president possess?**

- Team player
- Respect and sensitivity to all identities and groups
- Dedication to social justice
- A critical thinker
- Unshakeable commitment to ethical standards
- Ability to hear and dispassionately weigh conflicting views
- Self-knowledge of personal strengths and weaknesses with willingness to consult a broad range of advisors
- Strong and confident leader with real competence who is willing to make difficult decisions while remaining transparent and communicative to provide reasoning and gain support
- Willingness to share in the praise and the hardships.

- Able to identify with and relate to those who make up the UVM community and be a visible and accessible presence within it
- Charismatic - able to generate support
- Ability to unite the various contingencies on campus to resolve problems using the input from staff, students, and faculty in a transparent and inclusive manner.
- Honesty, integrity
- Sense of humor
- Sense of servant leadership
- Emotional intelligence
- Mature self-knowledge

**5. What other considerations should the Presidential Search Committee bear in mind as we initiate the process?**

- A willingness to work collaboratively and directly with all governance bodies.
- Transparency in process
- Recognize the staff impact on student success
- Have a clear vision of UVM in 2020
- Willingness to change course of actions if necessary
- Awareness of the campus-climate from various perspectives (e.g. staff, students, faculty)
- The individual should share a personal commitment to the University of Vermont
- The individual should have a healthy appreciation of technology and its future projection

cc: Patricia Prelock, Dean, College of Nursing and Health Sciences  
Gary Derr, Vice President for Executive Operations & Chief of Staff