

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

January 15, 2025

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

### MINUTES

**Present:** Taka Ashikaga, Ralph Budd, Richard Branda, Ruth Farrell, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Judith Van Houten, Dwight Matthews, Beth Mintz, Alison Pechenick, Mara Saule, Lee Thompson

**Absent:** Rachel Johnson

**Call to Order:** Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 2:05pm

1. Minutes of November 20, 2024, approved as amended
2. RFAO Board Meeting
  - a. Faculty Senate Report (Mara). After President Tom Borchert's welcome remarks and approval of the consent agenda, the following items were discussed:
    - i. Acting Provost Schadler announced the Waterman Manor will open again for lunch on February 3rd, initially offering a self-service salad bar and panini station with the potential of expanding to full service if the initial offering proves profitable. All options, including self-service, would be available for "sit and eat" in the Manor. UVM faculty/staff are encouraged to take advantage of the Manor's reopening, especially for hosting guests (such as job candidates).
    - ii. Provost Schadler also announced the commencement configurations for 2025. The main commencement ceremony will be held on the Green on Sunday, May 18, 2025. The college/school ceremonies (except for the Honors College and the College of Medicine) will be held at the Champlain Valley Expo Center on May 17th and 18th. The proposed Friday events will not be held. Details to follow.
    - iii. Vice President for Finance Richard Cate provided information about FY26 budget planning. The biggest challenge to the budget is increases to health care costs. While the University had budgeted 7% annually for increases in health care costs, actual increases were in the 12-15% range, however, now have gone up to a 19% increase. In all, the University is facing a \$7M deficit. Each UVM unit will be asked to model 1%, 2%, and 3% reductions to base budgets. Growth in health care costs is targeted to be reduced by \$3M through collaborations with the hospital and reductions in costs for medical services and prescription drugs. The University is exploring continued revenue generating programs as well. During the Q & A period, a question was asked whether retirement incentives are being considered for current faculty, and VP Cate confirmed that it was not under consideration. Another Senator asked whether medical expenses for older employees were higher than for others. VP Cate indicated that it was not the case, and that expenses were higher overall for medical care/procedures and prescription drugs--as is the trend nationally. VP Cate outlined the budget process for FY26 for both Responsibility Centers and Service (Cost) Centers.
    - iv. President Borchert gave a detailed summary of proposed changes to the Faculty Senate Constitution and Bylaws.
    - v. Meg Little Reilly and Richard Watts presented an overview of the proposal for a Center for Community News.
    - vi. As always, presentation slides for the above agenda items and detailed minutes of the meeting are available on the Faculty Senate website.
  - b. United Academics Update (Beth). U/A settled the contract. There were no changes to the health care agreement and coverage is unchanged. U/A is interested in working with UBAC on the negotiations for a health care plan for retirees and they understand that the University seems to be moving away from a progressive cost model. This is illustrated by the new health care options

offered to non-unionized staff, which is not fiscally progressive and not approved by UBAC. UBAC is the principal and perhaps only group that looks at benefits. The union thinks that the premiums for the new retiree health plan should be progressive. However the concern is that UVM wants a flat rate premium contribution to the menu of health care plan options offered to retirees.

- c. The Board discussed surveying the membership regarding satisfaction with the current health plan in the second half of February. Although their experience with the plan will be relatively brief, it will take some time to get and collate the results. The results then could be considered in the new negotiations. A concern was raised that an electronic survey favors results from more recent retirees because older retirees may have a problem accessing the survey. It was suggested that the survey include a question about the year of retirement.
- d. There was discussion about whether the Vermont Labor Relations Board should be approached to have a role in the discussion for the retiree health plan, but the sense was that this could not be done in the necessary timeframe.
- e. Discussion of the status of the procedure for collecting updated and accurate contact information from our membership. Chair Gurdon and Dwight Matthews had a video meeting with Liv Townsend to discuss the HR database for retirees. During the recent attempt to communicate with members regarding the health plan it was found to be incomplete, omitting for example the UVM email address and current home address. In addition, retirees may move or change phone numbers or email providers without informing HR. HR developed a new form to supply this contact information for future communications from UVM. It now provides a link at the bottom of the UVM Retiree Resources webpage. Dwight composed a draft email to RFAO members to facilitate this collection of data to update HR's records. A review by Board members suggested further modifications to make it more comprehensive and to request preferred and alternative email addresses. Dwight suggests having the HR retiree page as a main page in their website.
- f. New RFAO Website (Dwight). Dwight developed a new RFAO website with a new platform. It makes it easier to find the RFAO constitution and minutes of Board meetings.
- g. Other Business. Judy Van Houten is collecting a list of possible speakers for future meetings and requests suggestions.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:29pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: February 19, 2025, at 2pm

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda