

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

**August 27, 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,

**Absent:** Rachel Johnson, Lee Thompson

**Call to Order:** Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 2:02pm

1. Minutes of August 4, 2025, special board meeting approved as amended
2. Faculty Senate Report (Mara) Please note: The May 2025 Senate meeting occurred on May 15, after our final meeting of the Spring semester (May 14); Rachel served as substitute and shared notes from the meeting via email on May 18. Thank you, Rachel! As always, full Senate minutes and access to supporting materials can be found through the Faculty Senate website.
  - a. The Faculty Senate's first meeting of the 2025-26 academic year was held on Monday, August 25, in person. It was also Prof. Abby McGowan's first meeting as Senate President. New UVM President Tromp attended and remained throughout the meeting.
  - b. President McGowan's remarks:
    1. Pres. McGowan announced that Pres. Tromp would be convening a University strategic planning committee and solicited nominations/volunteers from each school, college, and libraries to serve.
    2. Pres. McGowan discussed a change in format for Senate meetings, limiting speakers to 6 minutes of presentation, and encouraging them to prompt discussion among senators of the pertinent topics.
    3. Pres. McGowan gave the usual Fall meeting overview of the Faculty Senate role in governance and the nature of its committees.
    4. Changes to the PRISM Center organization. During the summer, the Division of Intercultural Excellence restructured and renamed the PRISM Center. Now called the PRISM Intercultural Center, the Center includes three entities: the Women and Gender Equity Center (WAGE); PRISM @ UVM (LGBTQIA+ support and programming); and the Men and Masculinities Programs. As per the new Senate format, speakers prompting the change and speakers with questions about the reorganization each had 6 minutes to present and then the Senate as a whole engaged in lengthy discussion with the speakers.
    5. Pres. McGowan announced that Past Senate President Borchert shared his welcome letter to President Tromp. It is available on the Faculty Senate website.
  - c. The Board questioned whether a retired faculty member should be included on the new strategic planning committee.
3. Dependent documentation issue (Beth et al)
  - a. There has been considerable confusion and many questions from members regarding the process for documenting dependents for continuing health and dental insurance coverage. Some members have not received a communication from UVM regarding the need to provide this information, others have questioned the need to submit documentation in their own cases, and many are concerned about submitting sensitive information to the vendor, WTW. At present the Board's understanding is that only retirees who list a dependent for health and/or dental insurance are required to submit documentation. If retirees are uncomfortable submitting documents to WTW, they may bring it directly to HR, although there is a concern that if many people choose to do this, it may overwhelm the office. In any case the documentation will end up at HR and will be stored by

UVM for 7-10 years. The plan is for HR to follow-up with retirees if it detects a problem, and no one will lose insurance.

- b. Beth introduced a recent communication from United Academics:

*Dear UA Colleagues,*

- i. We have received questions from members about the updated process for dependent verification that was communicated on Friday. We wanted to clarify a couple of main points:*
    - ii. UVM's General Counsel's Office confirmed the following language in an email to our lawyer: **"There will not be any negative consequences for faculty who do not submit their dependent's documents to WTW. Faculty are free to bring their dependent's documents to HR and are encouraged to do so in the period leading up to September 19. It is anticipated that UVM will work individually with faculty who chose to work with HR. UVM requests that faculty does not overwhelm HR and any faculty who are comfortable with submitting documents to WTW voluntarily are still free to do so. In addition, [WTW will be sending the documents received from faculty back to UVM for storage (and WTW will not keep copies)]. This applies to paper and digital files...We have agreed to revisit settlement discussions after September 19, 2025, when we can identify any outstanding issues."** (emphasis added)*
    - iii. Our grievance is still active at the VLRB and so is our Unfair Labor Practice filing.*
    - iv. We hope this clears up any confusion, and that these changes assuage the concerns many have had about the security and privacy of our families' information. These changes are a testament to the power of collective action!*
  - c. Beth volunteered to communicate with Caitlyn Sisler regarding these concerns of members. She plans to request clarification of which retirees need to document dependents (for example, Delta dental plan, VT Blue Advantage) and a fuller description of how the documents will be handled by WTW and UVM. She also will urge HR to communicate by mail with retirees, since HR may not have correct e-mail addresses for all members and some do not use computers. Given the compressed time frame, she will suggest that this material be mailed out as soon as possible.
4. Status of retiree health care insurance and related plan for communications (Ruth et al)
- a. There was agreement by the Board that Caitlyn and HR did a good job of presenting the information sessions on the new health plan. However, some concerns remain before a contract with a vendor is signed.
    - i. VT BC/BS does not appear to be included in the marketplace, either as an advantage plan or medigap. Many members are likely to want to continue their relationship with a VT plan. The Board requests that VT BC/BS be included in the marketplace, or alternatively, that a member be able to use the UVM HRA contribution to purchase a VT plan outside the marketplace.
    - ii. At present the marketplace options for Vermonters evidently do not include a medicare advantage plan. It is likely that many of our members would like that option.
    - iii. It is not clear from the information sessions that members who were assured that they will have full premium coverage as part of their retirement agreement will be guaranteed continuation of this commitment.
    - iv. The Board is concerned that financial numbers from 2025 used to develop the new premiums will be too low because of inflation of medical insurance premiums in 2026.
    - v. It appears that there is limited insurance coverage for naturopathic practitioners in the options. This has been important coverage for a segment of our membership.
  - b. Following this discussion Chair Gurdon agreed to write a letter to HR and senior UVM administrators to transmit these concerns. The Board agreed that our members should be informed in a timely manner of the Board's concerns about the information session presentations.
  - c. Other discussion by the Board suggested that the planned UVM premium contribution for 2026 will provide better coverage than the current VBA plan. The exact mechanism for money transfers has

- not been defined by HR, but it appears that the vendor will set up and manage the HRA, UVM will contribute the base premium to the HRA, members pay the premium directly to the insurance company, and then they are reimbursed from the HRA.
5. Preparations for the annual general meeting (contact identified potential speakers, election protocol). The meeting is tentatively planned for the first week in November. Chair Gurdon is checking on the availability of a meeting room. The Board voted to rank choices for a speaker, and the first will be contacted. The officers and five Board members are up for election. According to the by-laws nominations should be solicited by the end of September and members have at least 2 weeks to respond.
  6. Other business: none

The meeting was adjourned at 3:48pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: **September 17, 2025, at 2pm**

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda