EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

September 17, 2025

Hybrid meeting: Video Conference on Microsoft Teams and Med Ed 302

MINUTES

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

Absent: none

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

1. Minutes of August 27, 2025, approved as amended
2. RFAO Board Meeting
    a. Planning for the Annual General Meeting (determination of guest speaker and location; scheduling the Board elections: identifying candidates and balloting procedure).
        i. Chair Gurdon reminded the Board that the meeting needs to be successful and must be hybrid in order to be available to all members and to encourage questions. One of the venues under consideration was the Recital Hall but upon investigation audio-video support was not feasible without an accessory camera and musical instruments were not available. Therefore, he scheduled Memorial Lounge for November 4th from 2-4pm since it has been used successfully for prior Annual Meetings. It was suggested that speakers who are not available on that date could be invited to the spring meeting. In which case a date for the spring meeting should be determined soon. Board members were asked to determine the availability of suggested speakers.
        ii. At the Annual Meeting, Board officers and 5 at-large members are up for election. There was discussion of the possibility that one or more of the at-large members may want to step aside so that a new member can join the Board. It was suggested by Chair Gurdon that the retiring Board member could choose to stay as an *ex officio* member and, under the Constitution, can be approved as such by a majority vote of the Board.
        iii. Ballots for the election need to be prepared by the end of the month. An email will be sent to members soon to seek nominations, and members will have 2 weeks to respond. Completed ballots should be returned no later than November 2nd. The Board suggested that members who self-nominate indicate something about why they are interested in serving on the Board.
    b. Health Insurance issues to be discussed prior to the arrival of our guest.
        i. The Board received a copy of a letter to the University Benefits Advisory Council from Tim O'Brien. He served as UVM Benefits Manager for 22 years prior to his retirement in 2002. In the letter he discusses various legal issues he perceives with the proposed health plans. These concerns revolve around the various severance (buy-out) agreements and their provisions, which are legal contracts. In many cases these involved a commitment to provide medical insurance coverage comparable to active employees. He recommends that the administration come up with a plan that remains within the spirit of the promises UVM made to these retirees. Chair Gurdon recommended that the letter be discussed with Caitlyn Sisler when she joins the meeting as well as any need for a legal opinion.
        ii. Another issue for discussion is the status of the contract with the new vendor.

iii. Chair Gurdon wrote a letter to President Tromp and Interim Provost Schadler on September 2, 2025, in which he enumerated several concerns of the RFAO regarding the market exchange model. He subsequently received a response from Caitlyn which was the official response from the administration.
iv. The Board and members continue to have questions about the mechanism for payment of the insurance premium and re-imbursement from the HRA.

c. Other business: none
d. Caitlyn Sisler (UVM Benefits Director) will join us at approx. 3pm
  i. Caitlyn Sisler was welcomed to the meeting at 2:55 pm. She made the following comments and answered questions from the Board.
  ii. She was asked about the status of the contract with the vendor. The agreement has not been signed yet. The remaining issues are administrative rather than financial. An important concern is that UVM data be protected. The contract is for up to 5 years but there will be escape clauses.
  iii. Vermont BC/BS will be available through the marketplace as Blue 65 with various medigap plans. Blue 65 is more expensive than a plan for younger enrollees.
  iv. Caitlyn was not sure whether an enrollee could switch from one plan to another after choosing a medigap plan without underwriting. She would get back to the committee on that question.
  v. There probably will not be a Medicare Advantage plan offered in the marketplace in Vermont.
  vi. The $308 premium figure was based on the currently higher premiums in Vermont and determined by actuarial analysis to be adequate for 2026. This figure will be re-evaluated annually and adjusted for inflation but will not be adjusted by a fixed amount.
  vii. The health plans do not cover naturopathic practitioners, but the HRA could be used for their payment.
  viii. The first information sessions will begin in October, with open enrollment beginning October 15th. The enrollee or a responsible representative will be contacted by the vendor with follow-up by HR as needed so that all members are contacted.
  ix. Members who move to another geographic area can change policies without underwriting.
  x. Caitlyn discussed Tim O'Brien's letter. In her opinion the separation letters that members received contained caveats allowing adjustments to benefits by UVM. UVM estimates that the $308 premium figure will provide coverage comparable to the active faculty plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:10pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: **October 15, 2025, at 2pm**

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda