

# RFAO President's Report to the RFAO Membership

Presented at the RFAO Annual General Meeting, November 14, 2025

Dear Colleagues,

Yet again, the pre-eminent focus of the Board's work has been a change in the delivery of retirees' health care coverage. During the past year we held in-person meetings with Chief Human Resources Officer Lehman and Benefits Director Sisler. The core message that they separately conveyed was the need for UVM to break the cycle of unsustainable health care cost increases for both active employees and retirees. It was quite clear from the onset of this most recent iteration that the Administration, in the search for more predictable budgetary expenditure as well as a reduced administrative burden, was looking to the Medicare Marketplace model as an answer.

The one saving grace in this scenario was that there was more scope allowed for retiree input than in the previous company to company transitions that we have experienced in recent times. The University Benefits Advisory Council, on which retirees have two members, began to meet in late February and continued to meet into the summer to work on understanding the finer details of the Marketplace model and gather relevant data. When a decision was taken to issue a Request for Proposals, the Board was invited to name two members to sit on the RFP review committee.

Following presentations from the national firms which submitted proposals, VIA was chosen. As part and parcel of this radical transition from our long-standing group plan, it is notable that the University committed to maintain its existing defined benefit percentage contribution to retired faculty and staff. Having said that, there may remain an unresolved issue here that affects a segment of our population who signed voluntary separation agreements.

There is no doubt that there have been challenges experienced by some of us in navigating this new terrain. Problems and frustrations with establishing personal VIA accounts and/or processing enrolments with a selected insurer generated a lot of traffic on our interactive Forum listserv and in communications with Human Resources. This all led to a considerable amount of effort to be invested by several Board members in the compilation of a FAQ document, grounded in the lessons learned by fellow colleagues and ourselves as we all engaged in this experiential learning. This FAQ document is now posted on our RFAO website and will be updated as more information becomes available.

As for other matters addressed, the Board met with the Interim Provost when we exchanged ideas on how to improve the quality and timeliness of communications regarding events taking place on campus, including from the college and school level. While not yet satisfactorily resolved, there has been some progress, for example in the creation of a quarterly UVM Retiree newsletter. Within the Executive Board structure itself, we have recently established a standing committee on Events and Speakers, with the goal of bringing stimulating presentations to you. Finally, I am pleased to report that in the past few days we have been able to support, through the President's budget, the scholarly work of six of our colleagues.

Respectfully submitted,

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RFAO President

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