

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

**December 17, 2025**

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

### MINUTES

**Present:** Takamura Ashikaga, Jay Ashman, Ralph Budd, Claire Burlingham, Gary Derr, Ruth Farrell, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Judith Van Houten, Rachel Johnson, Dwight Matthews, Beth Mintz, Alison Pechenick,

**Absent:** Mara Saule

**Call to Order:** Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 2:06 PM

#### **Approval of the Minutes of November 19, 2025.**

Minutes were approved.

#### **Faculty Senate Report (submitted by Mara Saule)**

The Faculty Senate met on December 15, 2025 online for its final meeting of the Fall semester, with an attendance of approximately 90. As usual, the meeting began with Senate President Abby McGowan's remarks. She asked senators to review the recently-released AAUP FAQ's regarding academic freedom and to provide input and share any concerns for adoption by UVM; the FAQ's are available on the AAUP website at <https://www.aaup.org/issues-higher-education/academic-freedom/faqs-academic-freedom> .

President McGowan also noted that the University's draft strategic plan is now available for UVM community review and the planning committee is seeking input by early January; the draft plan is available at <https://www.uvm.edu/president/strategicplanning/strategic-plan-draft-community-review> or one can just search for "UVM strategic plan draft." She emphasized that while the plan is in draft and the committee welcomes input from all, the goal is to present a draft for Trustee approval at its February meeting so that community input should be submitted on the comment form without much hesitation.

After routine Major and Minor degree revisions and program adjustments were approved through the consent agenda, two larger topics were addressed: 1) The "Catamount LEAP" project ("Leverage, Align, Empower, Progress") update which seeks to streamline operational procedures and focus on replacement of current administrative systems, and 2) The AI (artificial intelligence) Task Force Working Group on AI in the Curriculum update. Both updates focused on the work its committees have been doing on setting foundational principles, defining competencies and assessment criteria, and clarifying governance questions. Details can be found through their respective sites on the UVM website.

In addition to the above two major update reports, the Senate also accepted the Curricular Affairs Committee's program review committee report for the Religion Program. It also discussed potential modifications to the University Attendance Policies to better clarify student expectations for making up work when excused from class for unforeseen and unpredictable reasons. Finally, under "New Business," the Senate was alerted to syllabi language being considered regarding students recording class lectures or discussions without prior notification of the faculty member.

As always, more detailed meeting notes and attendant materials can be found through the Faculty Senate website.

### **Recognition of the passing of Jack McCormack (RFAO President, 2008-19)**

Michael highlighted that Jack made important contributions to the governance of the University as well as in his own field. Jack served on the Executive Council of the Faculty Senate. He also served as president of RFAO. Alan noted that Jack always made sure all ideas were considered at RFAO meetings. Jack was chair of the Financial Policy Committee with Takamura and was dogged in his attention to detail. Jack was also an excellent tenor voice. Judy noted how collegial and collaborative he was.

### **Update on United Academics (submitted by Beth Mintz)**

UA and UVM are now in discussion – read negotiating -- about their *procedural* grievance on retiree health insurance. This is not about the content of the new health plan or the university's right to change plans, but about the university's obligation to inform UA of proposed changes and do so in a timely manner. It sets the stage for strengthening UBAC as a committee and for positioning UA as a representative of retired UA members in matters relating to benefits.

Five additional grievances at VLRB:

Dependent Audit: this is in settlement talks with the likely outcome that WTW will be prohibited from sharing or selling UVM employee data and employees will not be compensated for the time spent complying with verification requirements.

Active enrollment: Up until last year, UVM used a passive enrollment model for benefits, meaning that employee benefit choices were automatically rolled over from the previous year. Last year, this changed to an active enrollment model, requiring active employees to elect benefit choices during the November enrollment period. Fearing that some UA members – and others – would inadvertently lose health insurance, UA grieved. This is currently in discussion – i.e. negotiation – with the likely outcome that this change would have to be negotiated.

Three cases currently being heard are all about workload.

Alison noted there is an active effort to get a faculty member on the Board of Trustees.

### **UBAC activities (submitted by Ruth Farrell)**

UBAC November meeting: UBAC met on November 20<sup>th</sup>, the day after the last RFAO Executive Board meeting. Two agenda items were discussed:

1. Update on transition to Via Marketplace:

Caitlyn reviewed the transition activities that had occurred in October and early November and reported number of enrollees as follows:

As of November 20th:

1,882 retirees/spouses had enrolled in health coverage through Via. This group includes both those currently in the group VBA plan and those who are not currently in the group VBA plan.

318 retirees/spouses who are currently in the group VBA plan had engaged with VIA, but had not yet enrolled.

363 retirees/spouses who are currently in the group VBA plan had not responded.

2. UBAC purpose and charge:

Members reviewed UBAC's purpose and charge as described on the UVM UBAC webpage and suggested changes to reflect contractual agreements, to clarify that UBAC's scope extends beyond health benefits and that UBAC's recommendations are not confined to any particular group of employees.

UBAC December meeting: UBAC will meet tomorrow, Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>, to discuss recommendations from an ad hoc group of UBAC members (Wade Carson, Katherine Elmer, and Holly Zane) for UBAC operating procedures, annual schedule, selection and term limit for chair, decision-making process, and minutes. The Council will also consider nominations for a new UBAC chair at this meeting.

As UBAC is now looking for a new Chair, this is a good time for RFAO to consider how the best interact with this group.

**Status of Health Care Transition**

Mention was made that retirees who get medical coverage from another source outside VIA/UVM might appeal to the University to get their HRA allotment, although this seems unlikely.

Retirees need to enter their banking information a second time at the VIA site for their HRA account to receive their UVM allotment.

Concern was raised that some providers may not be accepting United Health Care Medigap, but it was pointed out that anyone who accepts Medicare must accept any Medigap plan. That is not necessarily the case for Medicare Advantage plans.

Acknowledging that getting the last few retirees who have not made a plan with VIA may be difficult to reach, HR is planning to work through the holiday vacation if necessary.

The last payment for VBA will be the November charge, which covers December. The December bill should be reduced to just the dental coverage.

Apparently, if someone chooses to get their health care policy outside VIA (e.g. BCBS-VT), VIA will register that no plan was chosen and will not allow setting up the HRA account. But UVM will not reimburse for costs outside the VIA system.

**Thoughts on expanded goals and functions of the RFAO organization (Michael)**

Michael reminded us that one of RFAO's mission is to help provide cultural and educational opportunities to retirees. In this regard, Michael attended a meeting on Nov. 19 of a retired faculty organization at U. Michigan. Examples included an annual health day to answer health care concerns (these are recorded), grouping people based on interests (e.g. travel, books, chess, etc.). Also posted on their website are opportunities for community involvement. They have also now included all U.

Michigan retirees, not just faculty/administrators. Alan added that he attends a similar group at the University of Wisconsin.

Judy mentioned that the new committee on securing speakers for our meetings would fit well into this expanded mission.

Alan mentioned that recordings of the University Scholars lectures could be made available and that would provide 4 interesting lectures annually. In this regard, it was noted that we still need to have HR include the retiree listserv on University announcements. We can then post these announcements on the RFAO website.

Michael has been in contact with Manon O'Connor (Associate Vice President for Development, UVMMC) who is concerned about some of the negative feedback we received during the 2024 retired faculty survey. She is going to share this with Dean Page in LCOM and the UVM Foundation. This raised the idea of inviting some of the Foundation as well as President Tromp to meet with us.

We were reminded that despite the concerns we have had with the finances of the University, on balance we have received a quite generous benefits package compared to other institutions.

#### **Other business**

A brief discussion occurred around use of UVM email accounts and new restrictions to prevent forwarding UVM emails to non-UVM accounts. This was based on the following communication from the University:

Dear UVM faculty and staff,

As part of our continuous efforts to strengthen our privacy and information security practices, we are clarifying expectations around the handling of university email.

UVM already has policies and requirements for safeguarding non-public protected data; however, expectations related to email have not always been stated explicitly. We are in the process of updating our policies to make these expectations more clear. In the meantime, we are clarifying that **existing policy requirements effectively prohibit employees and affiliates from automatic forwarding of UVM email to external, non-UVM accounts**. Additional clarification is described in the [Auto-Forwarding Email memorandum \(pdf\)](#) posted on the Institutional Policy website.

Thank you for your attention and for your continued commitment to protecting university data.

Kellie Campbell  
Chief Information Officer

Tessa Lucey  
Director of Compliance and Chief Privacy Officer

The meeting was adjourned at 3:13 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 21, 2026 and will be virtual.

Respectfully submitted, Ralph Budd