



**Faculty Senate
Minutes
Monday, April 27, 2026
4:00 – 5:30 PM, Waterman Memorial Lounge**

The meeting was called to order by Faculty Senate President Abigail McGowan at 4:00 PM

Senators in Attendance: 65

Absent: 15 Senators: Agriculture, Landscape, and Environment (Tracy), Anesthesiology Rep1 (Hoeft), Community Development and Applied Economics (Kostell), Counseling, Human Development & Family Sciences (Maianu), Emergency Medicine Rep1 (Schlein), Engineering Civil & Environmental (Bomblyes), Grossman School of Business Rep1 (Jones), Nursing Rep2 (Graziano), Plant Biology (Beckage), Radiology, Rep1 (vacant), Radiology Rep2 (Brennan), Social Work (Melekis), Sociology (Shaffer), Student Affairs Committee Chair (Prue/Van Keuren), Surgery Rep2 (Fuller)

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1. **Faculty Senate President's Welcome Remarks** – Abigail McGowan made the following remarks:
 - A. UVM is launching a new marketing effort to rethink how the university is positioned across different markets. Faculty are invited to provide input in a paid, half-day summer faculty focus group. Interested faculty should email Abigail.McGowan@uvm.edu.
 - B. Burlington's City Planning Office is working on planBTV 2050, Burlington's Unified Comprehensive Plan. The UVM community is invited to share ideas and priorities for what Burlington should look like in 2050 at a Community Open House in Burlington on Thursday, April 30, 3:30 – 8PM, One Main Street.

 2. **Consent Agenda** – The following items were presented as a consent agenda:
 - A. The minutes of the March 2026 Senate meeting
 - B. Curricular Affairs
 - i. Substantial Revision Cellular, Molecular, and Biomedical Sciences PhD Program
 - ii. Substantial Revision BS Exercise Science
 - iii. Substantial Revision Doctor of Nursing Practice Program
 - iv. New micro-Certificate of Graduate Study in Biomedical Entrepreneurship
 - v. No-contest Termination of the Physical Education B.S. Ed. Program

Motion: Abigail McGowan stated that the consent agenda came to the Senate moved and seconded by the Executive Council.

Vote: 52 approve, 0 oppose, 2 abstain. **The motion carried.**

3. Resolution in Memoriam

A. Paul DeCausemacker, Staff Member and Ace Lehner, Professor, presented a Resolution in Memoriam for **Edwin Merton Owre**, Emeritus Professor of Art. The resolution is attached to these minutes.

Motion: Abigail McGowan moved to inscribe the resolution in memoriam for Edwin Owre in the minutes of the Faculty Senate and have a copy sent to the family.

Vote: 55 **approve**, 0 oppose, 0 abstain. **The motion carried.**

B. Mary Louise Kete, presented a Resolution in Memoriam for **David Huddle**, Emeritus Professor of English. The resolution is attached to these minutes.

Motion: Abigail McGowan moved to inscribe the resolution in memoriam for David Huddle in the minutes of the Faculty Senate and have a copy sent to the family.

Vote: 52 **approve**, 0 oppose, 1 abstain. **The motion carried.**

4. International Post-Doc and Graduate Students

Jamie McGowan, Executive Director, International Partnerships and Programs/Senior International Officer provided an overview of UVM's international community and support structures (slides attached). UVM enrolls approximately 430 international students from ~75 countries and employs about 330 international employees. The Office of International Education (OIE), supported by UVM Global, includes 13 staff supporting study abroad and international students and scholars, with responsibilities spanning immigration advising, status maintenance, employment, training guidance, travel advising, and dependent regulations.

International student support extends beyond OIE to faculty, academic departments, Student Affairs, the Graduate College, Postdoctoral Affairs, and international student organizations. OIE offers extensive programming and communications, including orientations, advising, newsletters, workshops, cultural and social activities, community service, and online resources.

UVM has addressed evolving immigration challenges through coordinated campus teams, forums, individualized advising, and practical resources. Ongoing concerns include national policy, regulatory, and funding changes, with a potential 30% decline in international student enrollment projected for next year. The OIE is monitoring developments through national advocacy (e.g., NAFSA) and coordinating individual cases with government relations and congressional offices. Discussion also noted the shortage of local immigration attorneys, and the efforts to expand capacity by engaging lawyers from Boston and New York and establishing an immigration roundtable in Vermont.

5. R1 Update

Kirk Dombrowski, Vice President for Research and Economic Development presented an update on R-1 status and research activity (slides attached). The university

celebrated R1 classification in February 2025. The next Carnegie review will be in 2028 and institutions are already competing for the next cycle. The 2025 assessment introduced a new, simplified two-metric system—annual research expenditures (\geq \$50M) and production of research doctorates (\geq 70 averaged over three years)—both of which the UVM comfortably exceeds, with research spending well above the threshold and PhD production in the mid-to-high 90s. Current FY25–26 data reflect the success of investments made several years earlier, underscoring built-in time lags in research growth. While overall awards are only modestly down, there is a clear shift: individual investigator grants are declining due to national funding disruptions, while politically protected, large-scale collaborative programs remain strong and are driving growth. Application volumes are at record highs, but success rates and dollar totals are constrained by available programs. Discussion topics emphasized the need to strategically leverage large, protected initiatives and cross-college collaboration to support early-career faculty, sustain research capacity across disciplines (including humanities), reduce friction for international graduate students, and offset the limitations of decentralized, incentive-based budgeting during constrained times, reinforcing optimism that R1 status is already yielding access to significantly larger and more prestigious funding opportunities.

6. Resolution to amend the Attendance Policy

Abigail McGowan presented a resolution to revise the university attendance policy. The issue originated last year after student services staff and the Faculty Athletic Advisory Committee raised concerns about inequities faced by students experiencing extraordinary circumstances, particularly student-athletes representing the university and students with serious family or medical emergencies. Concerns focused on courses where a large portion of the grade is based on a small number of assessments and where “drop the lowest grade” policies disadvantage students who miss an exam for reasons beyond their control.

The Faculty Senate Student Affairs Committee (SAC) reviewed attendance policies at peer institutions and developed proposals in the fall semester. Initial ideas were discussed by the Senate in December, revised in January, and split into two tracks: one addressing athletic travel (approved in February by a vote of 46–6–10), and a second addressing broader extraordinary circumstances. The proposed revision focusing on the latter, under consideration at this meeting, sought to balance student support with faculty workload and academic integrity. It was emphasized that this policy is separate from the new acute illness notification system, which allows students to self-report short-term illness via an online form; accommodations in those cases remain at faculty discretion.

Resolution to amend the Attendance Policy

The members of the UVM Faculty Senate Executive Council, with the advice of the Senate Student Affairs Committee (SAC), recommend revision to the UVM Attendance Policy.

Whereas, the students, faculty, and administrators identified a need to review the current policy; and

Whereas, the current policy did not specify that reasonable assistance must be provided to a student absent for extraordinary reasons outside of their control; and

Whereas, the current policy lacks clarity regarding what qualifies as reasonable assistance to students with excused absences;

Therefore, be it resolved *that the Attendance Policy be revised as presented.*

**PROPOSED CHANGES:
UVM Attendance Policy**

CURRENT POLICY: *Students are expected to attend all regularly scheduled classes. With the exceptions outlined below, the instructor has the final authority to excuse absences. It is the responsibility of the instructor to inform students of their policy for handling absences and tardiness, and the consequences that may be imposed. Notification should be done both verbally and in writing at the beginning of each semester.*

It is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor regarding the reason for absence or tardiness from class, and to discuss this with the instructor in advance whenever possible. The instructor has the right to require documentation in support of the student's request for an absence from class and to determine the appropriate response (e.g., excused absence, deadline extension, substituted work). If an out-of-class exam or other activity (e.g., field trip, campus speaker or event, workshop) conflicts with a regularly scheduled class, the regularly scheduled class has priority. Any conflicts between student and instructor regarding this policy may be presented for resolution to the course department chair or college dean's office.

When a student is unable to attend classes for reasons of health, bereavement, or required legal appearances (e.g., jury duty, citizenship hearing), the student should contact their academic dean's office regarding support. An instructor may request through the appropriate dean's office documentation to support a student's request for an excused absence.

PROPOSED NEW POLICY, CHANGES ONLY TO THE LAST PARAGRAPH ABOVE:

Faculty are encouraged to make reasonable efforts to support students through unforeseen circumstances. Minimally, faculty must allow an excused absence when a student is unable to attend classes for reasons of hospitalization, family emergency, required National Guard/military service, or required legal appearances (e.g., jury duty, citizenship hearing), as notified by and in consultation with the student's Dean's Office. In the case of

excused absences, the instructor should provide reasonable assistance to the student to make up missed work; students must be allowed the opportunity to make up or do work, such as alternative assignments, for equivalent credit. Class policies which allow students to drop the lowest single grade in a grade category do not alone constitute reasonable assistance for students with an excused absence, in the situations listed above, to make up missed work. If the excused absence period will exceed 15 percent of course contact hours,¹ faculty are not required to provide accommodations to make up the work; in such cases, faculty should refer the student to their Dean's office to explore options.

Abigail McGowan opened the floor for discussion. Key concerns included confusion between excused absences and the acute illness notification process; clarification that acute illness check-box requests for accommodation remain at faculty discretion; perceived loss of faculty discretion and course micromanagement; unclear definitions (e.g., “family emergency”) and the Dean’s Office review process; and insufficient time for broader faculty consultation.

Bogac Ergene (History) moved to table the resolution. After discussion, the motion was amended to table the resolution until a time certain (October meeting) and to convene an ad hoc committee with broader representation to untangle related issues and gather wider faculty input.

Motion: Bogac Ergene moved to table the resolution to amend the Attendance Policy until the October 2026 Senate meeting. The motion was seconded.

Vote: 51 approve, 5 oppose, 2 abstain. The motion passed with a 2/3 majority vote.

7. **New Business - none**

Without objection, Bogac Ergene moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:24 PM.

¹ 15 percent is based on two weeks of a standard 14-week class