

RFAO EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

August 4, 2025

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Present: 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: Taka Ashikaga,

Call to Order: Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 2:04pm

1. Minutes of May 14, 2025, approved
2. RFAO Board Meeting
 - a. Ruth Farrell began the meeting by reviewing briefly the University Benefits Advisory Council (UBAC) and Health Insurance Working Group (HIWG) progress developing a retiree health insurance plan for 2026 in coordination with UVM Human Resources.
 - i. An RFP review committee, which included RFAO's two UBAC representatives, reviewed material regarding two finalists for a health exchange agent, and met and reviewed additional material in response to questions. There was agreement by the parties on the best agent for a health exchange. The negotiations continue and it is expected that a contract will be sent out soon. UBAC endorsed the premium developed by the HIWG team. The expectation is that the rate will be relatively stable but UBAC will continue to work with the actuarial staff. The Committees have been impressed with HR's benefits consultants who are knowledgeable with a lot of data. Once the plan for health insurance is finalized, it will be shared with retirees by information sessions, some in person and some on-line. The Committees expressed some frustration about the slow pace of decision-making since members will need definitive information soon to make a decision regarding their plan to go into effect January 1st.
 - ii. Under a private exchange, the University will continue to offer a similar defined contribution to premiums as it has in the past, based on age, length of service, and salary at retirement. However, it intends to use a standard or base premium on which to calculate the contribution, independent of the plan a retiree chooses. Its contribution will be deposited in a Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) for each retiree. It is anticipated that this premium will cover a better health plan than the current one. The premium is comparable to medigap plans G and N plus an additional calculation for an average Plan D. The sense of the Committee is that our base premium is generous compared to other institutions.
 - iii. There will be a network in each state for retirees living outside Vermont managed by licensed representatives. Members can review the network on-line by zip code.
 - iv. There is no change in the Delta dental plan.
 - v. Given the history of health care premium inflation, there is a concern about what the multiplier should be going forward. At this time UBAC does not have the data to determine escalation after 2026 but will use 2026 as the initial amount for future escalation. The calculation is complicated because it includes many factors beyond the inflation index.
 - b. There was discussion by the RFAO Board about when and how to inform members about the new health plan. Since currently there is no final statement and approval of the plan, there was a concern that supplying tentative information subject to change would cause confusion. But

there also was acknowledgement that transparency is important and that members can make up their own minds about incomplete information. The Board plans to transmit to HR and the administration its concern about the delay in decision making and the need to expedite information to the membership.

- c. Following this discussion Ruth Farrell volunteered to contact Caitlyn Sisler from HR to urge the release of more information to our members soon and to begin the information sessions this month. Chair Gurdon will contact President Tromp to assure that she is aware of the marketplace and other decisions related to the retiree health plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:16pm

The next meeting is scheduled for August 27, 2025.

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda

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

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

October 15, 2025

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams and Med Ed 201

MINUTES

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

Absent: Dwight Matthews

Call to Order: Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 2:10pm

1. Minutes of September 17, 2025, approved as amended
2. RFAO Board Meeting
 - a. Faculty Senate report (Mara) The Faculty Senate most recently met on September 22, 2025. The following summarizes topics covered (as always, full Senate minutes and associated materials are available through the Senate website):
 - i. Senate President Abby McGowan introduced the Faculty Senate Ombudsperson, Keith Burt, Associate Professor of Psychological Sciences. Keith is a neutral party, and independent of the Faculty Senate Office and the University Administration. He is available to consult on any issues concerning UVM faculty in resolving conflicts. He can be reached at Keith.Burt@uvm.edu [Note: Keith is available to retired faculty and has served as an important resource to retirees]
 - ii. As part of the Consent agenda, a new PhD in Computational Studies of Culture and Society was approved. Prof. Pablo Bose reported that two new faculty (Anthropology and Linguistics) have been hired through grant funding.
 - iii. University Strategic Planning: Katie Shepherd, Dean of the College of Education and Social Services, and chair of the 2025 Strategic Planning Committee. Thus far, the Committee is gathering input for elaboration on four draft "Pillars" or goals: "1) Forge Bold Futures: Community, Purpose & Path for our Students. 2) Study What Matters: Values-driven Research & Teaching that Impacts the World. 3) Open Every Door: Access, Engagement & Partnerships. 4) Fostering Excellence: People, Systems & Infrastructure." Vetting of the "Pillars" will be followed by delineation of strategies, tactics, and metrics. In addition, the University's vision and mission statements are being considered for revision and updating.
 - iv. Faculty Senate Committee Updates: The Senate Financial and Physical Planning Committee and the Catamount Core Curriculum Committee (responsible for the General Education requirements for undergraduate students) each gave routine updates on their respective committee's work and solicited faculty input.
 - b. United Academics update (Beth)
 - i. UA has filed a step 3 grievance (university level) and met with the Provost, who has 15 days to respond. UA cannot represent (or grieve for) non-active faculty and the grievance, currently, is not on the content/changes of the plan, but on procedure. The grievance is about UA not being able to evaluate what the university is doing, arguing that the university did not give them complete info as required by Article 20.1 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Evidently UBAC has no by-laws, does not record minutes and appears to have a governance problem. In contrast the Health Insurance Working Group has functioned well and has benefited our members.

- ii. Further grievances may or may not follow, but the advantage of this strategy is that it affords the opportunity for access to all sorts of info on the plan, the process, and the most important actors.
 - iii. Retirees should not delay enrollment in a health plan pending a grievance resolution.
 - iv. UA has reached a MOU on increasing bridge funding for those who have recently lost grant funding.
- c. Discussion of the status of the Medicare insurance transition and the role of the RFAO. Chair Gurdon introduced the discussion by saying that the RFAO Board needs to consider its role and develop an action plan.
 - i. Judging from correspondence on the member forum and list-serv there is a need for FAQs for members that include questions that have been posed on the RFAO forum and during information sessions. The pages should be updated frequently, as questions emerge. Evidently HR and VIA are working on FAQs, but the RFAO can develop its own and also review the FAQs produced by HR and VIA prior to distribution. The FAQs need to be clear, “crisp”, how-to documents.
 - ii. Possible topics include:
 - 1. How Medicare works. There is some misinformation among members. The sense of the Board was that there is good information available already.
 - 2. Getting the process to work: signing onto the VIA website, entering profile information, and reviewing health and pharmacy insurance plans. This is an immediate need and where the Board should focus.
 - 3. Relationship of enrollment in Plan D to VIA
 - 4. The availability of BC/BS policies to members in Vermont
 - 5. Questions about the HRAs: how funds flow and what the funds can be used for.
 - 6. The Board’s role in monitoring enrollment
 - 7. The encouragement of members to enroll by Thanksgiving because the University will be on break in December. Those who are having problems enrolling on the portal should be encouraged to enroll by telephone.
 - 8. The RFAO’s role for staff retirees, who have no list-serv and more limited access to information.
 - iii. As a starting point Ralph Budd and Alison Pechenick will draft a FAQ with technical tips for using the VIA portal. This will be distributed to Board members for comment and suggestions.
 - iv. The Board again expressed concern about how disabled members will be helped with enrollment. They felt it would be useful if HR provided periodic, perhaps weekly, updates on enrollment.
 - v. The RFAO is not a recognized University governance or advisory body, and as such cannot initiate grievances or formally engage in negotiations on behalf of its members. However, the Board can provide information about the grievance process. United Academics also cannot represent retired members. Members who consider filing a grievance must use the University process first. However, there are limitations on who the ombudsman can represent. RFAO is organized as an advocacy group for a subset of retirees, and in this role, it is able voice questions and concerns to the University regarding changes to member benefits and seek resolution.
- d. Details of the Annual General Meeting (on November 14th) and election reminder:
 - i. Dr David Churchill, CTO at Beta Technologies, was invited to speak.
 - ii. Five Board members are up for re-election and were asked by Chair Gurdon to decide whether they plan to stand for election. An alternative offered was to continue to serve in

an *ex officio* capacity. There is no specific limit to the number of *ex officio* Board members. Chair Gurdon moved that Rachel Johnson, Lee Thompson and Alison Pechenick could move to an *ex officio* role if they chose to, the motion was seconded by Ralph Budd and passed. Richard Branda said that he did not plan to seek re-election to the Board and as Secretary Treasurer.

- iii. Chair Gurdon will send out a call for nominations soon and will ask that nominees provide a brief expression of interest in the Board.
- e. Motion to establish an "Events and Speakers" standing committee. Chair Gurdon noted that the RFAO should have a regular educational component that will provide outreach to our members from the Board. This may be in person, electronically, or most likely both. Chair Gurdon moved that a committee be formed, Ralph Budd seconded the motion and it passed. Judy Van Houten and Ralph Budd volunteered to serve as members.
- f. Request for volunteers to review submissions to the Retired Scholars Award Program. There are currently 3 applications to consider for funding and adequate funding is available. Lee Thompson, Alan Gotlieb, Ralph Budd and Taka Ashikaga will form a committee for the review.
- g. Other business: None

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for: November 14, 2025, the Annual General Meeting

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

November 19, 2025

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Present: 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, Mara Saule

Absent: Takamura Ashikaga

Call to Order: Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM

Introduction of our newly elected members-at-large

Results of elections for 2-year terms:

1. Officers:
 - a. Michael Gurdon, President
 - b. Beth Mintz, Vice-President
 - c. Ralph Budd, Secretary-Treasurer
2. At Large Executive Board Members:
 - a. Jay Ashman, Claire Burlingham, Gary Derr, Alan Gotlieb, Alison Pechenick

Approval of the Minutes of October 15th and annual meeting of November 14th

Minutes were approved.

Faculty Senate Report (submitted by Mara Saule)

There have been two Faculty Senate meetings since our last Exec Board meeting (Oct 15)

Faculty Senate meeting October 27, 2025 (in person, Memorial Lounge with a full house):

1. After the routine Senate President's remarks, degree conferrals, and approval of minutes, two resolutions in memoriam were read for Prof. Ted B. Flanagan, professor of Chemistry, and Prof. Jackson JW Clemmons, professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine.
2. Bettyjo Bouchey, Chief Officer for Professional and Continuing Education (PACE), gave an initial overview of a proposal for Credit for Prior Learning that would grant graduate students credit for skills and knowledge gained outside of academic settings, largely through portfolio assessment and prior credential. The presentation highlighted various means of assessing such credit and cited national trends in this direction.
3. Discussion of the implications of standardizing teaching/advising workload effort of faculty to 10% per course. There was much engaged discussion of this move by faculty attendees and student guests, a move for which the Senate is advisory and not determinative. The motivation for this is new federal compliance regulations for uniform charging frameworks on grants across departments and disciplines which need to be consistent with non-grant-funded faculty. There are several faculty working groups in different colleges further exploring implications on workload and on different faculty cohorts (tenure track and non-tenure track) and across varying disciplines.

4. Finally, President McGowan lead the faculty in an online poll regarding how the current political climate is affecting research. While this poll focused on impact on research, there will be continuing discussion in the Senate to gather information on the impact on teaching and classroom practices.

Faculty Senate meeting November 17, 2025 (virtual, on Teams with approx. 80 attendees):

1. In her introductory remarks, President McGowan highlighted two important initiatives emerging during the current and upcoming semesters: an Artificial Intelligence Task Force, and the Catamount LEAP project which aims to identify potential efficiencies across different functional areas of the University (such as in technology).
2. The Curricular Affairs Committee and the Student Affairs Committee gave general overviews of their work and processes.
3. The two frameworks for Credit for Prior Learning for graduate courses (by portfolio and credential) were approved.
4. Artificial Intelligence Task Force member Prof. Susanmarie Harrington presented the proposed draft Framework and Guiding Principles for use of AI in research and pedagogy. She presented draft principles, including a focus on ethics, integrity, and literacy and the responsible use of AI. Details of the AI Task Force's current work can be found at go.uvm.edu/guiding-ai-principles
5. Regarding the survey of faculty regarding impact of the current political climate on research, results from the October meeting were shared and additional input gathered at this meeting (via online poll).
6. The Curricular Affairs Committee reported that it had completed the Academic Program Review process for the Economics program, and the Senate Executive Council reported updates governing the review of changes to administrative structure (largely involving committee membership).

As always, detailed minutes and materials are available on the Faculty Senate website. The next Senate meeting is December 15 via Teams starting at 3 pm instead of 4 pm.

Update on United Academics (Beth Mintz)

UA apologizes about being unclear about the dependent audit. About 100 dropped dependent coverage. Question raised whether HR is following up with these individuals. It was unclear whether they had taken any action on this.

Faculty morale is at a significant low. A dividing issue is that administration is pushing for a standardized credit for courses taught. This is believed to help in equalizing teaching load. Administration says this is federally mandated, particularly for grants. There is concern this could lead to increased course loads.

UA is pushing to have a faculty representative on the UVM Board. UA has filed a grievance to obtain information regarding health insurance for retired faculty.

A separate grievance is being filed by some retired faculty regarding the new health insurance plan. It was offered that clarification of exactly what the grievance is would be helpful. UA attorney feels the group should have a lawyer involved when they go to the Vermont Labor Relations Board. Point was raised that RFAO could help re-establish the precedent that a grievance process for retired faculty was

established several years ago and signed off by Faculty Senate and the administration. Some retirees have found a cheaper health insurance plan outside VIA despite even losing the UVM contribution. Point was raised that if rates increase significantly next year, UVM will need to raise their contribution. Concern was raised about getting information on this topic to retired staff.

Review of the Annual General Meeting

There was a widespread sentiment that the keynote speaker was excellent and that the overall event went well.

Assessment of the status of the Medicare insurance transition

Sentiment raised that the VIA enrollment period has been a highly dysfunctional experience and whether UVM should cancel contract earlier than 5 years currently planned. But any separation must be made with considerably more lead time than we have experienced recently. However, in future years there will be far fewer retirees needing to sign up, limited to just the new retirees.

Concern raised about helping retirees with cognitive problems and how RFAO might assist them. We should request weekly updates on what percentage of retirees have signed up and what the HR plans are for reaching out to those who have not signed up.

Alan had issues getting information to Humana and is working with higher level VIA staff on this. Michael reminded us that HR has committed to “no retiree left behind.” Possibility raised of having “peer-to-peer” counseling in which retirees help one another. Could get a classroom with several computers and have someone teach it to get remaining retirees enrolled.

Other business

Michael expressed his appreciation to Alan, Lee, Taka and Kieran Killeen for their work on the Retired Scholars Award Program review committee. As a result, six applications received funding.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 17, 2025.

Respectfully submitted, Ralph Budd

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 20th, 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. 18th, 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

RFAO EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

January 21, 2026

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Attending: Michael Gurdon, Mara Saule, Alison Pechenick, Ruth Farrell, Claire Burlingham, Gary Derr, Taka Ashikaga, Dwight Matthews, Alan Gotlieb, Jay Ashman, Beth Mintz, Judith Van Houten

1. Minutes of the December 17, 2025 meeting were approved.
2. Report on the United Academics meetings: Beth Mintz indicated that there was nothing that would impact UVM retirees.
3. Report on UBAC: Ruth Farrell reported on the UBAC Update to the RFAO Exec Board - 1/21/2026. Her report follows.

The UBAC met twice since the last RFAO board meeting, on December 18th and on January 15th.

December Meeting:

- A. The Council elected Holly Zanes, retired staff representative, as chair with a two-year term limit. Genevieve Anthony agreed to act as secretary.
- B. Priorities for the coming year: (Caitlyn)
- C. Review the PPO1 plan for current employees and recommend changes for plan design: There have been no changes in the plan for many years and HR is considering whether it is time to update the plan and make it a better option – perhaps more in reach – for more employees.
- D. Research the addition of voluntary health benefits for current employees:
 - a. These are optional, employee-paid, plans to help cover out-of-pocket costs that an employer's primary health insurance doesn't cover – filling in the gaps. Examples include accident insurance that pays additional costs for injuries from covered accidents, critical illness insurance that provides additional coverage for major illnesses, and hospital indemnity that offers daily cash for hospital stays. These plans are usually offered through employers, allowing for discounted rates and payroll deduction for premiums. They often pay cash directly to those enrolled.
- E. Simplify long-term disability and life insurance with the goal of offering better benefits at lower costs.
- F. Working Group assignments: For the spring semester, the Health Insurance Working Group will take on the review of PPO1 and a separate working group will take on voluntary health benefits and the simplification of long-term disability and life insurance.

January UBAC Meeting:

- A. Updates: (Caitlyn)
 - a. CHRO Search: The search for the new CHRO has launched and it is expected that applications will be available to review in February/March.
 - b. Move to Medicare Marketplace: At the close of 2025 there were approximately 40 Medicare-eligible retirees enrolled in the 2025 VBA group plan that did not enroll through Via Benefits and were non-responsive to inquiries and follow-up by HR. HR is continuing efforts to reach out to these individuals during the first two months of 2026 and continues to have the option of covering them if needed.
- B. UBAC Website: The Council discussed creating a small ad hoc group to work on updating the UBAC website, listing current priorities, providing opportunities for feedback, listing openings for membership, etc.

- C. Membership: The Council discussed membership, both for the Council, and the working groups. The Council is lacking UBAC members from both the UE and Teamsters. HR continues to reach out to these groups. Working group memberships were finalized for the coming year.

4. Personal Experiences on the transition to the Via Marketplace for health care insurance

Most reports were of success in signing up for Medicare Supplements and a drug coverage plan. Most experiences included some confusion and frustration, which occasionally needed the intervention of Caitlyn Sisler. Delays in processing transactions have started to be reported.

Caitlyn Sisler is actively trying to identify the approximately 40 retirees who have not yet signed up through Via for health insurance that will receive a UVM contribution.

5. Progress of the faculty grievance process for retirees:

Mara Saule provided a summary of the history that recently culminated in a grievance filed by retirees in response to the new retiree health care market place:

For the RFAO Executive Committee Meeting 1/21/26

Developments in the grievance access question within the Faculty Senate:

Since early Fall 2025, there have been increasing questions about grievance processes available to retirees, prompted in part by concerns regarding the transition to a new model for post-retirement health insurance benefits. During the past few months, Retired Faculty Senator Mara Saule and RFAO President Gurdon have had several conversations with Faculty Senate President McGowan, Senate staff, and Faculty Ombudsperson Keith Burt regarding past actions of the Senate and the potential for incorporating retired faculty explicitly in the Faculty Senate Bylaws and Constitution. A draft resolution for Senate consideration is forthcoming.

Currently, five University documents guide grievance procedures for current faculty and staff, none of which includes retirees:

- a. Faculty and staff union collective bargaining agreements (CBA) and contracts, which take precedence for processes affecting represented members and do not address retiree grievance processes.
- b. The "UVM Non-Union Employee Handbook" which applies to "full-time and regular part-time non-union employees."
- c. The Larner College of Medicine (LCOM) "Faculty Handbook" which explicitly excludes retired faculty from its grievance policy: "It does not apply to faculty who are retired, volunteer faculty, adjunct faculty or visiting faculty,"
- d. The "Faculty Senate Bylaws and Constitution" which, since March 2011, establishes an "Ad Hoc Grievance Committee for non-represented faculty" but does not explicitly include retired faculty.
- e. The "University and University Officers' Manual" (formerly called the "Officers' Handbook" and later simply the "University Manual") currently does not include any grievance processes, those having been superseded by union contract language for represented members, the Senate Bylaws and Constitution, and the Non-Union Employee Handbook. Originally, the "Officers' Handbook" included specific faculty grievance processes. In 2010, as a result of the advocacy of the RFAO Board and its then-president Jack McCormack, the Senate passed unanimously a resolution to revise the "Officers' Handbook" grievance procedure to include retirees. However, as the "Handbook" was revised not long afterward, all faculty process language was removed.

- f. It is important to note that in 2008, the State of Vermont Statutes specifically included University of Vermont retirees in the scope of practice for the Vermont Labor Relations Board, stating in part that “The Board shall hear and make a final determination on the grievances of all retired individual employees of the University of Vermont, groups of such retired individuals, and retired collective bargaining unit members of the University of Vermont.” Vermont Statutes, Title 3, Chapter 27, paragraph 926(i)
- g. The VLRB does not require that an employer have an internal grievance process. The language of the VLRB “Rules of Practice” (Section 18.1) states that “Grievances of persons not covered by a collective bargaining agreement, when permitted by law, are heard by the Board only after exhaustion of any administrative procedures that may be required by the employer. . .” In other words, the employer may or may not have an internal grievance process, but if there is one it must be exhausted by the grievant before going to the Board.

Following this report, there was a robust discussion among board members about the history of the grievance process for faculty and retirees. Several members of the board have had experience with the processes in the past. As noted above, the formal records of these processes have been lost from faculty handbooks more than once. It seemed important to reinstate a process for grievances to advance to the Vermont Labor Board.

Some members questioned whether having a formal process worked against a grievant, considering that there is not a strict requirement for an employer to have a such a process. That is, having a process that then must be exhausted may work against a grievant going to the VLB.

The RFAO board members unanimously approved a motion for Mara Saule to approach the Senate with wording to establish a model for a grievance process for retirees. It is hoped that this outcome for the retirees could become a model grievance process for staff, administrators and others (outside the RFAO).

- 6. We have been mindful of the wording in the RFAO constitution, that the purpose of the RFAO includes “enriching the lives of all members of the university community.” The board discussed ways to broaden the impact of the retiree organization to fulfill this purpose.

The new committee on Events and Speakers is organizing to address future activities of the board and organization. While we contemplate a broad array of potential activities and study other organizations as models, our first order of business is to make a robust list of potential speakers. This will allow us to plan and schedule events in a timely manner. We will endeavor to avoid concentration in one area of scholarship.

One pressing issue is the need to identify potential speakers for the 2026 summer and fall business meetings of the RFAO, and to make invitations in a timely manner. The existing list of nominated speakers was reviewed and a new name added.

- 7. The date of the next meeting will be moved to Feb. 11 to accommodate travel schedules.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 pm
Respectfully submitted, Judith Van Houten

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

February 11, 2026

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Present: Jay Ashman, Ralph Budd, Claire Burlingham, Gary Derr, Ruth Farrell, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Judith Van Houten, Rachel Johnson, Dwight Matthews, Alison Pechenick, Mara Saule

Absent: Takamura Ashikaga, Beth Mintz

Call to Order: Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM

Approval of the Minutes of January 21, 2026.

Minutes were approved.

Faculty Senate Report (submitted by Mara Saule)

The faculty Senate first meeting of the spring semester was January 26, 2026 via Teams online. It was attended by approximately 160 faculty and others.

- I. Faculty Senate President Abigail McGowan started the meeting as always with her president's remarks. There are currently several positions open on the Executive Council, including President-elect and two seats for Executive Council member-at-large. Elections will be held early in March. In addition, the proposed revisions to the attendance policy are now being reviewed by the Student Affairs Committee.
- II. After conferral of degrees, there was a discussion and presentation by President Marlene Tromp and Strategic Planning Committee chair Dean Katie Shepherd of the final University of Vermont Strategic Plan. The plan includes updated mission and vision statements, and is organized around four pillars: student success; teaching, research, and innovation; engagement and partnerships; and university infrastructure and people. Dean Shepherd informed the Senate that the university Board of Trustees would discuss and vote on the final draft at its February 6-7 meetings [Note: The plan was, in fact, passed by the Board at its February meeting]. The plan and its attendant materials are available via the UVM President's website.
- III. Michael Gurdon, Professor Emeritus of Business Administration, presented a resolution in memoriam for Malcolm Severance, Professor Emeritus of Business Administration. The resolution is attached to the Faculty Senate's own meeting minutes. Professor Gurdon's resolution captured beautifully the long, engaged, and impactful life of Professor Severance.
- IV. Several Faculty Senate committee chairs presented reports on their committee activities: the Educational and Research Technologies Committee, the Faculty Affairs Committee, and the Curricular Affairs Committee (routine written report only)
- V. The next meeting of the Faculty Senate will be held on February 23 via Teams and will include the annual budget update from Alicia Esty, the Chief Financial Officer and VP for Finance, Administration, and Human Resources.

Update on United Academics (submitted by Alison Pechenick)

The grievance statement drafted by Tim O'Brien and Ron Frey was filed on Nov. 24 and VLB suggested in response that we try to develop a letter of understanding with UVM before VLRB weighs in further. But

it remains an active case. The collective bargaining agreement (CBA) also has details on benefits for retirees.

President Gurdon has made a request that the line of communication of RFAO with UVM be via the Provost's office and this has been agreed. It was suggested that RFAO might have regular periodic meetings with the Provost. Of note, it was just announced that a search for a new Provost has been initiated.

UBAC activities (submitted by Ruth Farrell)

UBAC has not met since the last RFAO meeting. Next meeting is 2/19/26.

Current state of the Medicare plan transition

Most are now seeing their HRA reimbursements from UVM appearing in their bank accounts. Alison noted that prescription mail order costs can be more than pharmacy pickup costs.

The billing for office visit has two parts (doctor visit and facilities use).

Important that your physician not use the term "annual physical" because this is not covered by Medicare. Rather, it should be called "wellness exam". Also, the next wellness exam must be 365+ days since the last one or it will not be covered by Medicare.

Ruth noted that HR says we are now down to only 30 retirees who have not converted to the new plan.

Still some miscommunication for those who have chosen the VT BCBS plan, as VIA seems to not always understand this is offered. Caitlyn knows the person at VIA who understands this.

Some retirees do not realize that they need to submit their bank information to both the insurance company for automatic payment as well as to VIA for HRA reimbursement.

Available and desired communication resources for retirees

Judy and Rachel are developing a list of URL links that retirees would like to have to keep informed of UVM events, such as the President's Lecture Series. These will eventually be posted on the RFAO website.

Dwight noted that he and Gary Derr will talk with UVM Communications to get retirees back on the general UVM email list. Rachel has also had discussions with UVM Communications about this.

"Women of UVM" is actually not officially affiliated with UVM (it was originally founded by the wives of UVM faculty). Membership for new members is open each fall. This following email was received by Rachel from Jane Smith, the Women of UVM president:

Hello Rachel,

Thank you for your interest in The Women of UVM.

We do have a website, but it is for members only.

This page, however, does provide some information about us:

<https://www.womenofuvm.com/newmemberregistration/>

Our membership totals 1,113 at the moment and everything is led by volunteers.

Membership is open to anyone, although we love getting women with ties to the school to join us. About 46% of our members have some relationship to the school, mostly as graduates and retired staff/faculty.

New members can join during the first two weeks of Sept. every year, and that's when current members must renew, as well.

The fee is \$25. The registration process is all done online. If you read to the end of that page, you will see that it says registration has expired for this year. That is the url one would go to between Sept. 1 and 15 to register. A new form will be posted on that page. The Sept. 15 deadline is hard and fast.

Most of our members are retired, as most of the interest groups are held during the day, Monday through Friday. A few book groups are the exception and are held in the evening. I will say that many of our interest groups are full, but a member can start a new group at any time, with guidance from our interest group chair, who sits on the Board.

Given that we are run by volunteers, we do not advertise ourselves anywhere, and our website does not come up in a Google search. We are not trying to be exclusive, by any means. Our membership has grown by leaps and bounds in the past few years.

If you have any other questions, don't hesitate to email me.

Thanks again for your interest.

-Jane

For upcoming speakers, Wolfgang Mieder will be spring speaker. President Marlene Tromp has been suggested as speaker for the November 2026 meeting. President Gurdon has also reached out to President Tromp's office to meet with the RFAO Board, which has been a tradition with new UVM presidents.

Also suggested that retirees that receive scholarship awards from RFAO should give some type of brief presentation that could be recorded and made available to retirees on the RFAO website.

Spring luncheon plans and ideas for other possible presentations

The plan is for a late spring/early summer RFAO luncheon, perhaps in early June, and need to determine location and cost since retirees do pay for this event. Separately is the annual President's luncheon with retirees, usually in August.

Other business

Suggested that we update the information sheet we put together for navigating the VIA website so that it can be available to future retirees.

The Lane series offers discount prices for retirees. That could be placed on the website.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:57 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 18, 2026 and will be virtual.

Respectfully submitted, Ralph Budd

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

March 18, 2026

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Present: Takamura Ashikaga, Jay Ashman, Ralph Budd, Gary Derr, Alan Gotlieb, Rachel Johnson, Dwight Matthews, Mara Saule, Judith Van Houten

Absent: Michael Gurdon, Beth Mintz, Clare Burlingham, Alison Pechenick, Ruth Farrell

Call to Order: Chair Ralph Budd called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM

Approval of the Minutes of February 11, 2026

Minutes were approved.

Meeting scheduled: There will be an in-person meeting of the RFAO Board in the Senate Conference Room at 2 pm on Wednesday April 15. President Tromp will join us at 3:00 PM for 45 minutes.

June 5 Luncheon:

Wolfgang Mieder will be our luncheon speaker for the June 5 luncheon, at the Grand Maple Ballroom in the Davis Center. The Assoc. Provost's staff are helping us with this event. The luncheon will be from 11am-2pm. Lunch will be an assortment of sandwiches, salad, cookies, soft drinks and coffee. The cost exclusive of coffee is \$20.99 per person. It is difficult to predict how many retirees will attend and pay for their meal. We have until two weeks before the event to finalize our order with Sodexo. We have some resources in the Provost's budget to cover expenses from a short fall of retiree payments.

Update on communication resources (Judy Van Houten and Rachel Johnson):

We have organized the links to various programs that might be of interest to our retirees into a page for the RFAO web site. A copy of the page with its links was provided to the board members and approved for posting on the web site. As more organizations, programs, and series become known to you, please forward their links to us.

Communications from UVM to Retirees (Gary Derr and Dwight Matthews):

We still seek to have retirees receive important notifications from the University that automatically go to active faculty. Gary is making inquiries about this issue.

Faculty Senate Report (submitted by Mara Saule):

The Faculty Senate met on February 23, 2026 online via Teams, with approximately 95 attendees.

1. President Abby McGowan announced that the University's Strategic Plan had been approved by the Board of Trustees and is moving forward with identification of next steps for implementation. She also announced that the Provost's Search Committee is in the process of being constituted, with Pres. McGowan and VP Alicia Estey as co-chairs. Finally, elections for

Senate President-Elect and 2 Members at Large of the Executive Committee are soon to be launched.

2. Resolutions in Memoriam were read for both Profs. Jack McCormack and Sid Poger. Jack's work in the Faculty Senate and then later in RFAO was particularly highlighted and its transformative impact recognized.
3. The bulk of the meeting was devoted to a presentation by Alicia Estey, Vice President for Finance, Administration, and Human Resources regarding the University's financial status. The following are highlights of her presentation, the entirety of which is available through the Senate website.

In FY25, revenues, excluding use of over \$11M in reserves, exceeded budget. Even without reserves, the University would have ended the fiscal year with a positive balance.

For FY26, General Fund revenue and expenses are projected to meet budget.

FY26 Support Center budget allocations reflected reductions ranging from 0% to 3% with the highest cuts leveled on administrative units. For FY27, Support Centers submitted potential budget reduction scenarios of 1%, 1.25%, and 1.5%.

FY27 budget planning parameters include an in-state tuition increase of 2% and an out-of-state increase of 4.5%; operating budget expenses increase by 7%; and a requested 3% increase in state appropriation. The FY27 budget is projected to be structurally balanced without reserves.

Other updates included plans for an IBB "health check," an update to the administrative Enterprise Resource Planning platform (a.k.a., "PeopleSoft), addressing deferred maintenance with a six-year capital plan, and completing the Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) search process.

4. The Student Affairs Committee presented for vote the resolution to revise the "Attendance Policy" as it applies to intercollegiate and academic competitions. It was voted on and passed.

The next Faculty Senate meeting will be held on Monday, March 23, in person in Memorial Lounge

Update on United Academics (Alison Pechenick)

United Academics continues its robust work on behalf of UVM faculty, with plenty to do. With respect to the health insurance grievance filed recently by our two retiree colleagues, UA's grievance officer reports that UVM is responding to VLRB request to draft a side letter for retiree healthcare. The letter will address procedure only, not plan offerings.

UBAC update (Ruth Farrell)

UBAC met once since the last RFAO exec board meeting. The UBAC meeting focused on questions regarding possible changes to the PPO1 health insurance plan for active employees. No items directly relevant to retirees were discussed.

Assessment of the current status of the Medicare insurance transition

The FAQs that the RFAO created should be updated especially for new retirees. The issues in this newer set of FAQs presumably will be different now that Via has been implemented. Caitlyn will have her own version. We will need a copy of that set of FAQs. We presume that Michael will request this.

Comments from a board member: The only VIA “issue” mentioned recently to RFAO members were by two people asking how we can predict when VIA will reimburse us each month (the March payment seemed to lag UVM’s contribution date by more days than expected). With only three data points thus far, it’s early days to draw any conclusions, if there’s even any cause for concern in the first place.

Comments from a board member: I heard from Caitlyn that HR has a process and materials in place for current retirees as they become Medicare-eligible, and those 65 and older retiring now. It might be good to review these items and find out more about how things are going for retirees signing up now that the tsunami has passed. Questions and answers about wait times, guaranteed issue, and others will be different.

Other business

There have been messages about Provost and HR Director searches and other issues that have not reached retirees. These other issues include auto-forwarding of email will not be allowed in many instances in the future, and a module for training to avoid scams has been developed. The former does not appear to apply to retirees, but the latter would be of interest. Dwight and Gary are exploring these issues.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:44 pm

Respectfully submitted, Judith Van Houten

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

April 15, 2026

In Person Meeting with Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Present: Michael Gurdon, Jay Ashman, Gary Derr, Alan Gotlieb, Rachel Johnson, Mara Saule, Alison Pechenick, Beth Mintz, Ruth Farrell, Claire Burlingham, Judith Van Houten

Absent: Taka Ashikaga, Ralph Budd, Dwight Matthews

Call to Order: Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM

1. Approval of the Minutes of March 18, 2026

Minutes were approved.

2. Faculty Senate Report (submitted by Mara Saule):

The Faculty Senate met on Monday, March 23, 2026, in person in Memorial Lounge, Waterman Building. There were approximately 80 people in attendance. As always, minutes of the Senate meeting and attendant materials are available through the Faculty Senate website. The next Senate meeting will be held on Monday, April 27. The following is a summary of the March meeting.

- I. Faculty Senate President's Remarks: 1) Amy Trubek has been elected President-Elect of the Senate beginning July 1, 2026, after which she will serve as Senate President from July 2027-June 2029. Prof. Lizzy Pope (CALS) and Abby Crocker (CEMS) were elected as Members-at-Large each for two-year terms. 2) The Provost's Search Committee has now been fully constituted. 3) Faculty have been asked to review and complete an evaluation survey assessing a new stand-alone AI module intended for first-year students.
- II. AI in the Curriculum and in Grading: Two ad-hoc committees are being formed regarding how AI should be incorporated in the curriculum and, how AI should be used in grading. Both committees will seek faculty input and will focus on "campus norms, principles, and potential guardrails."
- III. Assessment Report: Richard Cohen, Assessment Coordinator in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessments, presented the initial results and summary of the Catamount Core Curriculum outcomes. This assessment process is part of an ongoing assessment of student outcomes that will inform future continuous improvement to the core curriculum across disciplines.
- IV. Update on recent legal developments and campus inclusivity: Sharon Reich Paulsen, VP for Legal Affairs and General Counsel, provided a detailed update on the history and status of recent federal regulations related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). After several executive orders, subsequent "dear colleague" letters to institutions, and legal challenges it was determined by the courts that it is the federal agencies that determine how those executive

orders will be implemented, For UVM, we continue to be guided by our long-standing "Our Common Ground" values while ensuring compliance with evolving research funding parameters and federal guidelines. UVM remains true to its core mission and values. Both the Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees have reaffirmed our commitment to academic freedom.

- V. Update from working groups on 10% workload allocation: The Faculty Senate has received input from four academic units--CAS, CESS, RSEN, and CEMS--regarding on-going work to standardize teaching effort allocation at 10% per course. Each unit presented its Task Force's work on concerns and recommendations for implementing the 10% allocation and its impact across cohorts of faculty and teaching configurations. There was an open discussion about the implications of the various task force considerations.
- VI. There were two reports that did not need approval: the Curricular Affairs Committee Report and the Faculty Affairs Committee Report regarding safety concerns in classrooms.

The RFAO must hold an election for the next Senate member who will represent the retirees because there is a three year limit for representatives. Michael Gurdon will organize this process.

3. Update on United Academics (Beth Mintz)

United Academics is included in the search for the new head of HR. Our retiree group is not included, but our concerns are conveyed to UA.

4. UBAC update (Ruth Farrell)

Meetings Held: UBAC met on March 19th and its Health Insurance Working Group (HIWG) met on March 24th. Both meetings focused on data HR presented regarding health claims and utilization for the PPO1 health insurance plan for active employees. Note that there is a small population of retirees - those who are not yet eligible for Medicare, on the active employee PPO1 plan. We are waiting to find out how many retirees that is.

Membership: Ashley Bolger replaced Diana Nasser as the Staff United representative.

Next Meetings: UBAC will meet again on Thursday, April 16th and an HIWG meeting will be scheduled for early May. The topic of recent increase in Medicare supplement premiums will be added to the April 16th meeting agenda and will be the focus of the May HIWG meeting.

Communication to Retirees about recent premium increases: Caitlyn will be addressing this in the next retiree newsletter, due out on April 30th.

5. Evidence of large projected midyear premium increases

Retirees first brought to our attention through the RFAO Forum that there will be significant increase in premiums effective on July 1 for United Health Care Plan G. (Other plans might be affected, but our knowledge of the Via plans is not complete.)

Retirees were under the impression that the premium levels at the time of joining the health care plans through Via would apply for the entire first year. Some members of the Board explained that in Vermont health care insurers, with approval by the State, are allowed to change premiums once per year, usually at the same time each year. This does not have to be on the anniversary of the initial plan. Not all the plans offered by Via will raise their rates on July 1, 2026, and the ones that do will not necessarily use the same rate increase. These mid-year raises do not apply to the Drug Plans, which must make rate changes on the calendar year.

We considered this situation to be due to a very serious failure of Via to communicate with retirees. We will communicate with HR about this situation and invite Caitlyn Sisler and Leslie Melo to our May board meeting.

6. Updates on communication

Messages from the administration (Gary Derr) Gary Derr described his work with Susan Davidson to improve the communications from the administration to the retirees. More to come soon.

Resources for retirees (Judy Van Houten and Rachel Johnson):

We have collected the links to various programs that might be of interest to our retirees. They now reside on a page on the RFAO web site. A copy of the page of links was previously provided to the board members and approved for posting on the web site. As more organizations, programs, and series become known to us, we will amend the web page.

Because our web site cannot be updated very frequently, new announcements and links that might be of interest to retirees are being distributed by way of the Forum. We hope that by next academic year, it will not be necessary to release dates and information about special events on the Forum.

7. Planning for June 5th luncheon

Wolfgang Mieder will speak at the Spring Luncheon on "Proverbial Democracy: Government of the People, by the People and for the People." The luncheon will be held in the Davis Center 11:30-am-2 pm. Lunch will consist of sandwiches, salad, cookies, beverages and coffee, at a cost of \$20 per attendee. The form for the retirees to fill out was discussed. Name tags were requested.

8. Invited Guest: UVM President Marlene Tromp

There was a congenial discussion with Pres. Tromp about the state of higher education in Vermont, the new athletic complex, the helpful work of the new communications officer, and the search for a new CEO of the UVM foundation. The demographic cliff is a concern for the future of UVM. Pres. Tromp described some plans to address this cliff, such as scholarship support and showcasing UVM across the country.

Specifically regarding retirees, Pres. Tromp emphasized the importance of including retirees in the UVM community. She discussed a model from Arizona where students and retired faculty are housed together to facilitate mentoring across generations. Michael Gurdon provided Pres. Tromp with a summary of our RFAO surveys of members' continuing contributions to UVM. Pres. Tromp will return in the near future.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:43 pm

Respectfully submitted, Judith Van Houten

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

May 20, 2026

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

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

Absent:

Call to Order: Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM

1. Approval of the Minutes of April 15, 2026

Minutes were approved.

2. Faculty Senate Report (Mara Saule)

The Faculty Senate met on Monday, April 27, in Memorial Lounge. Senate President Abigail McGowan's remarks highlighted UVM's marketing efforts in new student recruitment efforts, as well as the city of Burlington's new "planBTV 2050" initiative.

1. Two resolutions in Memoriam were read for Professor Edwin Owre, Emeritus Professor of Art, and Professor David Huddle, Emeritus Professor of English.
2. Jamie McGowan, Executive Director of International Partnerships and Programs, gave an extensive overview of services to UVM's approximately 430 international students from 75 countries and our approximately 330 international employees. She addressed the evolving immigration challenges that students and employees have been facing recently and outlined the various methods helping international students and employees navigate the immigration climate in all its aspects. Discussion noted that there is a shortage of immigration attorneys in Vermont, and Ms. McGowan noted that there are efforts to engage attorneys from neighboring states to help fill the gaps in Vermont counsel.
3. Kirk Dombrowski, VP for Research and Economic Development, gave an update on UVM's R1 status and grant activity. Overall, grant awards are only slightly down but there has been a shift in funding patterns. Overall, individual grants are seeing less funding; however, large collaborative and cross-college grants have had more success.
4. The resolution to amend the Attendance Policy was discussed. After lengthy discussion, with multiple concerns and questions arising, the motion to amend the policy was tabled until the October 2026 Senate meeting pending an ad hoc committee to address concerns and broader faculty input.

The Faculty Senate met on Thursday, May 14, in Memorial Lounge. The main goal of the meeting was to confer degrees in preparation for the May 16 Commencement ceremonies. In addition there were several significant agenda items.

1. Four resolutions in Memoriam were read for Professor Bud Etherton (CALS), Carol Miller (CAS), Jim Barbour (CESS), and Jean Harvey (CALS)

2. A resolution on AI Principles/Framework and Recommendations for Implementation of an AI module was discussed extensively. The Resolution serves two purposes: To provide an outline of guiding principles for the use of AI in the classroom, and to encourage (but not require) the use of an online orientation directed at students as a potential discussion prompt in classes, when desired by the faculty member. The Principles/Framework are not required but only offered to faculty and students as an optional tool for understanding AI while recognizing that AI is a rapidly evolving technology and thus the tool itself will need to be revised in an on-going fashion. After lengthy discussion, the Resolution passed.
3. Provost Linda Schadler gave an overview of the current enrollment situation for UVM, especially in the context of its competitors for students. In essence, while the University had anticipated the enrollment "cliff" now affecting especially New England institutions, we did not anticipate the effect of the confluence of increased student financial need and the loss of international students, in combination with the predicted decline in the potential student population. Loss of international students is particularly prevalent in the graduate school. This is complicated by the current uncertainties of grant funding, which is needed in many cases to hire graduate students, especially in the biomedical field.
4. Mara will be stepping down as RFAO rep on the Faculty Senate so a new appointment will be recruited.

3. Update on United Academics (Beth Mintz)

The procedural grievance by UA regarding health care was resolved with an understanding that UVM will give UA advanced notice of any changes to health care. The University cannot do anything that is considered to be "arbitrary or capricious". Previous use of the faculty senate ombudsman to file grievances appears to have been supplanted by the UA. But UA does not represent retirees. The state legislature permits UVM faculty, including retirees, to file grievances with the Vermont Labor Relations Board.

4. UBAC Activities (Ruth Farrell)

University Benefits Advisory Council (UBAC) Update 5/20/26

Since the last RFAO Executive Board Meeting, UBAC met once, April 16th, and its Health Insurance Working Group (HIWG) also met once, on May 7th.

UBAC Meeting April 16th:

The principal focus of this meeting was the proposed changes to the PPO1 health insurance plan for active employees as presented by HR. Caitlyn Sisler also gave an update on the annual premium increases going into effect as early as June 1 of this year for retiree Medicare supplement plans, noting that the HIWG would take up this topic at its next meeting.

HIWG Meeting May 7th

This meeting focused on retiree health insurance premium increases as follows:

Current situation: (Caitlyn Sisler)

- Many retirees, particularly those on United Health Care (UHC) plans have received notices of premium increases for the next 12 months, effective June 1 of this year, with increases much higher than expected. These are full-year annual increases. Humana has a November rate change date. The rate increases need to be approved by the state.
- There are many factors behind these increases: Vermont is a small state with an aging, smaller than average, population and high health care costs. It's a community-rated state (insurance

companies must charge the same) for age or gender. There were a lot of changes in the insurance market last year; most Medicare Advantage plans left the state.

- A marketplace has a wider risk pool than the approximately 2,400 enrollees that UVM would have had under a group plan. Even with the high increases, the open market is still likely more affordable than a group plan.
- Enrollees can voluntarily change insurance carriers for supplement plans at any time; they are not limited to a specific enrollment period. When voluntarily applying for coverage from a different carrier, one may have to go through underwriting (a medical risk assessment). This could lead to higher premiums or even denial of coverage from the new carrier depending on the results. But there are no negative consequences for applying for a Medigap plan and being denied or deciding not to enroll because of higher premiums. Your current coverage remains until you decide to cancel it. So no downside to inquiring. This was felt to be where VIA should be helping. Also the State Department of Financial Regulation would know about rate changes since insurance companies must file with this department and be approved for any rate increases.
- HRA receipts submitted for reimbursement (5,000 claims submitted so far this year) appear to confirm that \$308 for the base premium was a good estimate for providing adequate buying power for a retiree's supplemental medical plan and a prescription drug plan in Vermont before the new annual increases were announced. A mid-year increase of UVM reimbursements is being considered. There was discussion whether returning to a group plan would be better and not divide the retiree group. However, many insurance companies are eliminating group plans, and the few remaining ones are quite expensive. A brief historical look by a couple RFAO members at premiums under previous group plans suggests most are paying less currently, although this could change in the near future.
- Two new insurance companies (Mutual of Omaha and Cigna) are joining the exchange in Vermont. Uncertain whether one would be subjected to underwriting for previous medical conditions.

Goal:

Caitlyn Sisler stated that the goal for setting the base premium is that it adequately allows someone who gets 100% cost subsidy to buy a supplemental plan G or N or something in between, and a prescription drug plan. There was general agreement in the group that this was the correct goal.

Next Steps:

HR is working on projecting costs and determining what increase would be needed for the HRA to have similar buying power for calendar 2027 overall, and for the remainder of 2026, so that the UBAC/HIWG can make recommendations for proposed HRA increases going forward.

Other business:

The meeting concluded with a final discussion of the proposed changes to PPO1 for current employees.

5. Status of the Spring Luncheon (Judy Van Houten and Rachel Johnson)

Have 67 retirees attending. Wolfgang as a speaker has drawn considerable attention.

6. Guest -- Alicia Estey, VP for Finance, Administration and Human Resources

Alicia acknowledged that UVM is currently in a "tricky" spot financially. Enrollment is the biggest challenge, due to cliff of demographic changes and reduced foreign students. Applicants are getting into their first and second choices more often. Perception is that students were offered more financial aid at other institutions. Complicating this are the several recent years when there was no tuition increase.

UVM housing rentals are higher than current market levels and is only 50% occupied.

Alicia noted that she cannot be certain that there will not be layoffs. UVM has a projected \$12m deficit and the need is to take this from base costs.

The recreation facility construction is to be paid by private funding. There was discussion that it felt there was a bit of a disconnect to have President Trompe asking the state for partial funding for the project. There was a feeling that it would be better to fund this completely privately.

Alicia noted that UVM's health care plan is quite "rich" but also costly. They are working to open up additional available health care plans to faculty/staff, beyond the current single PP01 plan. Point was made that UVM should maintain a progressive plan, in which those with lower salaries get higher benefits. A suggestion was made to consider a health care investment fund (similar to a Roth IRA) where faculty could contribute during our active years.

Alicia is aware of the mid-year increase from UHC.

New CHRO begins next Tuesday with slight re-alignment.

Research grants are down about 3% so not as bad as anticipated. Still getting full indirect costs from NIH grants, and not 15%, which is still under litigation.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Ralph Budd