

General Meeting, Retired Faculty and Administrative Officers

November 5, 2021

Waterman Memorial Lounge and videoconference on Zoom

MINUTES

1. A quorum of 30 members was present: 12 in person and 18 on videoconference.
2. President Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 3:03pm. He welcomed the group and made introductory comments in a President's Report.
 - I. He noted that during the pandemic the RFAO board continued its activities with monthly videoconference meetings and e-mail. Contacts were maintained with key members of the administration including Provost Patty Prelock, Vice-President for Finance and Administration Richard Cate, Chief Information Officer Simeon Ananou, Dean of Libraries Bryn Geffert and representatives from Human Resources.
 - II. The Board provided input to HR during the retiree health plan transition to Vermont Blue Advantage and met with representatives of BC/BS to review issues that arose during implementation of the new plan. While the Board acknowledged that the plan offered financial benefits to both retirees and the University, members noted initial shortcomings in the depth of knowledge of the service center, confusion over some procedure codes and prescription services, and a problem with exclusion of some providers who were covered in the prior plan. President Gurdon noted that there has been improvement of performance generally and there will be no increase in premiums for 2022. Some shortcomings for vision care in the plan (for example, in relation to the purchase of frames and lenses) can be partially offset by a new plan being offered to retirees by the University through VSP Vision Care.
 - III. Despite several meetings with Richard Cate and Simeon Ananou, access to software by retirees remains an issue. While many retirees continue to engage in research and teaching and perform other activities such as fund-raising and committee membership that are beneficial to the University, retirees have had limited access to software. The University does not consider retirees as affiliates for the purpose of software licensing.
 - IV. A representative of the RFAO has been added to the executive committee of United Academics, the faculty union, as a non-voting member. This position has provided information about pending issues.
 - V. After a pause due to the pandemic, the President's Luncheon was held in August.
 - VI. The Retired Scholars Award, funding of which was suspended in 2020 because of budgetary uncertainties, will resume this year. Proposals should be submitted by November 22nd.
3. An election of officers and executive board members. There are 8 elected members and 6 *ex officio* members.
 - I. Officer nominees and academic affiliations are:
 - a. Michael Gurdon, Business Administration, president
 - b. Beth Mintz, Sociology, vice-president
 - c. Richard Branda, Medicine, secretary-treasurer
 - II. Nominees for the board are:
 - a. Alan Gotlieb, Plant and Soil Science
 - b. Steve Cutler, Sociology
 - c. Rachel Johnson, Nutrition and Food Science
 - d. Lee Thompson, English
 - e. Alison Pechenick, Computer Science

The election was for 2-year terms, with no limitation to the number of terms. A motion to endorse the slate of candidates passed without objection.

4. Revision of the Constitution. Consideration of revisions to the Constitution was moved and seconded. President Gurdon noted that the pandemic has affected the activities of the committee and its ability to conform to the Constitution. After review of the Constitution by a subcommittee consisting of Ruth Farrell, Steve Cutler and Judith Van Houten, several changes were suggested to update the document. The major changes include:
 - I. "Officers of Administration" is changed to "administrative officers" because the former has a particular and very restricted definition at UVM. The new term is more inclusive.
 - II. More specific goals are included.
 - III. Board election timing is changed to an annual business meeting.
 - IV. There will be electronic balloting open to the entire membership. Ballots will be sent out in advance of the meeting.
 - V. The annual meeting will include at distance participation.
 - VI. Regarding *ex officio* members, the editor of the HERMES newsletter has been removed (not a functioning activity) and our representative to United Academics has been added.
 - VII. The reference to dues has been dropped.
5. There followed a discussion of the proposed changes to the Constitution. The term "administrative officers" includes classified executive staff. It was suggested that amendments to the Constitution be submitted in advance for vote by a majority and there be a 3week period for comments regarding proposed amendments. Following the discussion the question was called and the motion passed.
6. Open discussion.
 - I. The lack of Microsoft support for retirees was a major concern of attendees. Class officers are sent information and spread sheets to facilitate fund raising but cannot effectively use the information. Retired faculty who are teaching courses, often without pay, would like to work from home but lack adequate support. Retired faculty who are performing research that is beneficial to the University do not have access to software. Members felt strongly that further follow-up and action was needed.
 - II. There was concern that retired members will lose access to UVM e-mail, which would be a serious hardship for them.
 - III. It was noted that some retired faculty from the medical school lose access to the list-serv and thereby the announcements and information from the school.
 - IV. Members have limited access to Teams for meetings with outside agencies, interfering with work that is of benefit to UVM.
 - V. It was noted that the Jeffords library is back on-line after advocacy.
 - VI. President Gurdon recommended that any issues regarding the health plan be conveyed to the Board.
 - VII. It was noted that United Academics welcomes more retiree involvement.
7. The meeting was adjourned at 4:25pm
Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda