

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

September 23, 2020

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

### MINUTES

**Present:** Richard Branda, Jeanine Carr, Fred Curran, Stephen Cutler, Mary Jane Dickerson, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Judith Van Houten, Dwight Matthews, Beth Mintz, Jack McCormack, Lee Thompson, Mara Saule, John Forbes (invited guest)

**Absent:** none

**Call to Order:** Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 11:17am

#### 1. RFAO Board Meeting

- Presentation from and Q & A with Human Resources Director Jes Kraus and Employee Benefits Manager Greg Paradiso, who asked that this information be held confidential until October 1, 2020.
- Jes Kraus introduced the topic for discussion as a proposed change in the health plan for retirees. He stated that the UVM health plan is self-insured for claims and its management is put out for bid every 5 years. Currently retirees are offered health insurance to supplement Medicare by Blue Cross/Blue Shield of VT through Plan J or Medcomp and dental insurance by Delta Dental. Now BC/BS of VT in partnership with BC/BS of Michigan is offering a Medicare Advantage Plan (Vermont Blue Advantage). This new medical health plan appears to offer the same coverage with a 20% reduction in cost to members.
- Ingrid Temer and Pam Getsie from BC/BS were introduced to the Board to give an overview of the new plan. A copy of the PowerPoint slide presentation was provided to the Board. In summary,
  - Medicare Advantage (MA) plans have a long history of popularity and success nationally with a 34% increase in enrollment in the past year.
  - BC/BS of VT holds the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) contract for the UVM insurance. It plans to partner with BC/BS of Michigan, which has a long experience and a large number of enrollees in its market leader MA plan, while BC/BS VT has a strong local network. Both are non-profit. With the formation of an MA, CMS transfers risk to BC/BS.
  - An MA integrates medical and prescription coverage into one enrollment. There is decreased cost to UVM and retirees because the financial risk is taken on by the MA and administration is more efficient and cost-effective for BC/BS.
  - There will be no change in benefits and networks in VT and nationally. There will be enhanced telehealth visits, better worldwide urgent and emergency care, and preventive care. Cost sharing is unchanged.
  - Medicare Parts A and B are unchanged.

- UVM will make a public announcement to retirees around Oct. 1, 2020. There will be welcome kits mailed, new ID cards, and a call center for questions.
- Retirees need to take no action to enroll. They can decline enrollment but cannot stay in the old plan.
- The plan becomes effective 1/1/2021.
- Following the presentation there was a discussion and question period.
  - The prime motivation for a change was that a VT MA was not available previously. It is a new plan and offers the same coverage for less cost.
  - VT MA will also be offered to other companies.
  - Coverage for retirees who live outside of VT will be unchanged. The local Blue provider will connect to the VT MA. There will be no change in the current rules for preauthorization and no additional preauthorization.
  - The drug formulary will change from CVS Caremark to Express Script. There will be some changes in drug costs with higher co-pay for some drugs but generally costs should be lower.
  - No change in Delta Dental coverage or cost.
  - No exclusion of pre-existing conditions.
- Because of the lateness of the hour, the balance of the planned agenda was deferred to the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:06pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: **October 2, 2020 at 11am.**

**The following meeting will be October 20 at 1pm. Provost Patty Prelock has been invited to join us.**

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING (Continuation of September 23, 2020, Meeting)

October 2, 2020

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

### MINUTES

**Present:** Richard Branda, Jeanine Carr, Fred Curran, Stephen Cutler, Mary Jane Dickerson, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Dwight Matthews, Beth Mintz, Jack McCormack, Lee Thompson, Judith Van Houten, Mara Saule

**Absent:** none

**Call to Order:** Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 11:06am

1. Minutes of August 21, 2020, and September 23, 2020, approved as written
2. RFAO Board Meeting
  - Report from United Academics (Beth Mintz)
    - Further negotiations regarding contracts and collective bargaining will continue on Oct 20, 2020.
    - There is an impasse on the negotiations about conditions of employment in the COVID world.
    - UA has been supportive of RFAO efforts to understand the proposed changes in retiree health benefits.
  - There followed a discussion of the proposed changes in the health care plan for the University of Maine system. Under the proposal, retirees will have to file for reimbursement of health care costs after paying upfront and choose new health care plans. It was estimated that this change would save the System \$2.5 million / year. However, lawmakers, the union and retirees raised concerns to the chancellor and asked for reconsideration of the decision.
  - Faculty Senate Report (Mara Saule)
    - Since the last Board meeting, there have been Faculty Senate meetings on August 24 and September 21, 2020. Details of the agendas and minutes are available on the Faculty Senate website.
      - The August 24<sup>th</sup> meeting discussed proposed changes to the spring academic calendar, provided an update of the Childcare Working Group with a final report due in December, and gave an overview of the activities of the by-laws committee.
      - At the September 21<sup>st</sup> meeting, degrees were conferred. The spring 2021 academic calendar passed nearly unanimously, with classes to begin February 1 and end May 11<sup>th</sup> and no spring break. In Curricular Affairs, there is a new credential, a Micro-Certificate of Graduate Study, and an online option for existing CGS in Complex Systems & Data Science. There were discussions of the Liberal Arts General Education Requirement and of a UVM reorganization committee. The latter is in an

exploratory phase and is reviewing past studies. There will be further discussion of 4 possible reorganization models during spring semester. These models range from doing nothing, to changes within academic units, to changes of the structure of units to improve efficiency and synergy, or to a radical reorganization with fewer colleges. There was no discussion yet of reorganizational changes at other institutions.

- Website and Listserv update and discussion (Dwight Matthews)
  - Additions and proposed additions to the website
    - The Board minutes back to 2016 have been added for transparency. They are edited to remove confidential material.
    - The President's annual report has been added.
    - There is a suggestion to add recent publications by retirees to show that we remain active scholars.
    - There is a plan to add the PowerPoint presentation by HR regarding the proposed changes in the health plan.
    - It was suggested that a statement to members be added indicating that the Board has met with HR regarding the health care plan and approves of the changes.
  - There is an ongoing issue regarding a gap in the history of the Board. There is a large file of historical data that needs to be reviewed and archived.
  - The RFAO forum listserv has about 50 members but no posts. It was suggested that Board members post to the forum and indicate that they are available to answer questions and discuss the changes to the health care plan or any other concern.
- It was suggested that the Board e-mail all members to inform them that we are available for discussion on the forum, that there is information on the website regarding the health care plan changes, and that BC/BS will be providing a phone helpline and concierge support during the transition
- .
- New Business. At the next Board meeting there should be further discussion of access to IT by retirees, and of our role and how we can help during the COVID era.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:56 am

The next meeting is scheduled for: **October 20, 2020 at 1pm. Provost Patty Prelock will participate as our guest.**

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

November 17, 2020

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

### MINUTES

**Present:** Richard Branda, Jeanine Carr, Fred Curran, Stephen Cutler, Mary Jane Dickerson, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Dwight Matthews, Beth Mintz, Jack McCormack, Lee Thompson, Judith Van Houten, Mara Saule

**Absent:** none

**Call to Order:** Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 10:01am

1. Minutes of October 20, 2020, approved as delivered
2. RFAO Board Meeting
  - United Academics Report (Beth Mintz)
    - Negotiations between UA and the University are ongoing, but no progress is expected soon.
    - The question of whether UA would represent the retiree position on access to UVM e-mail as part of these negotiations was brought up again by RFAO board members. The general sense was that this was a low priority issue for UVM and would probably not be pursued since the University was more concerned about a possible computer security issue than cost.
    - There were continuing discussions by the UA executive board of a potential relationship between UA, retirees and the RFAO. Possible models being considered are a voluntary relationship between a retiree and UA, an Associate Membership with UA after paying the current national, state and local Association dues adjusted for associate membership (about \$145/yr), or an affiliation of RFAO members with UA.
    - If RFAO was affiliated with UA, the status of members who were never members of UA would have to be determined. It would be undesirable to split retirees into union and nonunion RFAO groups. It would be preferable for RFAO to represent all eligible retirees.
    - UA is open to discussion about whether fees would be paid by affiliate RFAO members and appeared willing to change their by-laws to be inclusionary.
    - There was a feeling by our board that a small fee might be acceptable to our members to become voluntary or associate members but might be cumbersome. It seemed preferable for UA to change their by-laws to form an affiliation with RFAO. Then any retiree who is interested could be included in interactions with UA regardless of prior relationship to UA.
    - As a starting point RFAO already has an affiliation with UA in that we have a position on their executive board.
    - It was concluded that Beth should continue discussions with UA, that written proposals should be prepared for UA consideration, and that a UA representative be invited to a future meeting to discuss these proposals.
  - Faculty Senate Report (Mara Saule)
    - The Faculty Senate met on November 16, 2020. There was an unusually large attendance of about 265 members.
    - The main subject of discussion was the proposed academic reorganization chaired by David Jenemann, Dean of the Honors College.
    - To be implemented by 2050, there would be 4 possible colleges:
      - Agricultural, biological and environmental sciences
      - Arts, letters and the human experience
      - Societal health

- Engineering, business and technological innovation
  - The main points of discussion were the rationale and context for this long-term vision and a concern that consideration now will distract from the serious short-term problems of UVM.
  - It was noted that there has not been much in-put and engagement by faculty and emeriti to date.
  - Never-the-less the timeline is to refine the plan in the period of January-March 2021 and begin implementation in April.
  - During the RFAO board discussion, there was a question of whether our organization should be involved in the process. The board shared the concern that proceeding now will distract from dealing with serious current UVM problems. There was also a question of how the reorganization would impact the research component of the University.
- Review of and feedback from the webinars explaining the new Medicare Advantage Plan.
  - There were about 50 attendees at the Thursday session and about 20 on Friday. A recording of the Friday session is on our website.
  - A message will be sent to the membership informing them that the recording is available for viewing by those unable to attend the “live” sessions.
  - Chair Gurdon has sent a thank you to Greg Paradiso and will do the same for the BC/BS participants.
  - The general sense was that the sessions were well timed and well received.
- Determine a consistent day of the week for future monthly meetings: the board settled on **the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month from 2-3:30pm.**
- Suggestions for invited guests to upcoming meetings.
  - Richard Cate, Vice President for Finance and Administration, to discuss HR issues
  - Greg Paradiso and Jes Kraus to discuss benefits for retirees
  - Simeon Ananou and Julia Russell to discuss e-mail and other software issues
  - UA representative
  - President Garimella in the spring

The meeting was adjourned at 11:14am

The next meeting is scheduled for: **December 16, 2020 at 2pm**

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

**December 16, 2020**

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

**Present:** Richard Branda, Jeanine Carr, Fred Curran, Stephen Cutler, Mary Jane Dickerson, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Dwight Matthews, Beth Mintz, Jack McCormack, Lee Thompson, Judith Van Houten, Mara Saule

**Absent:** none

**Call to Order:** Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 2:02pm

1. Minutes of November 17, 2020, were approved as delivered
2. RFAO Board Meeting
  - Faculty Senate Report (Mara Saule): There were 186 in attendance.
    - Two memorials were read.
    - Two new programs were offered for consideration: a doctorate in occupational therapy and a major in community center design. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the appropriateness of bringing on new programs when others were being cut in the College of Arts and Sciences. Afterward the programs were approved.
    - There were discussions of revised guidelines to terminate programs and of academic planning.
    - This was the last meeting with Thomas Chittenden as chair because he was elected to the Vermont legislature. The Vice-Chair will succeed him until the next election.
  - United Academics Report (Beth Mintz)
    - UA has several concerns regarding the proposed cuts to programs in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS).
      - Loss of jobs for staff, non-tenured faculty and tenured faculty lines
      - A diminished role for liberal arts education at UVM
      - Budgeting issues. There is a concern that CAS subsidizes programs in other Colleges and that these subsidies should be eliminated before the loss of positions.
    - Bargaining. The contract is still in mediation, with no movement on salary differences, and probably will go to fact-finding by the VT Labor Relations Board.
    - Affiliation. A role for the RFAO on the UA executive board as a non-voting member was finalized in their constitution. There was discussion of another type of affiliation such as a listserv for UA to communicate to retired UA members who might then become more active in UA affairs. The role of RFAO in an invitation to retirees to express an interest in being a part of UA will be discussed further at our next meeting.
  - Richard Cate, Vice-President of Finance and Administration, joined the meeting at 2:31pm. Several issues in the areas of Human Resources and Finance were discussed.
    - Mr. Cate feels that UVM finances are sound overall because of financial discipline over the past decade. He stated that there is a structural institutional deficit that requires budget reductions each year, but each budget is balanced. He suggested that the College of Arts and Sciences budget needed more adjustments than most because of changes in student interests and class enrollment. It was important that the institution continue to evolve to stay strong, he said.
    - He addressed the question of the College of Arts and Sciences subsidizing other Colleges. With incentive-based budgeting, 85% of funding goes to the college where the subject is taught and 15% to the major. As students migrated from CAS, there was an adjustment in funding. Currently there is a \$2 million deficit that needs to be covered for CAS. There is a feeling by some that CAS is contributing more funding than it is

getting back. Mr. Cate believes that perception is more apparent than real because funding shifts can be hard to follow through complex budgets.

- Access of retirees to software. Mr. Cate believed there were budget implications, but the magnitude was unclear. The funding would involve both licensing and IT support. The RFAO board suggested that the number of interested retirees would be small, perhaps 10% of our members. Mr. Cate will discuss the issue further with Simeon Ananou.
- Mr. Cate was asked whether retiree health insurance payments could be moved from student financial services. He stated that part of the problem is that some retirees are active on the internet while others only use paper. Therefore exclusive electronic billing is not an option. He was willing to look into other options.
- There was feeling by board members that the HR website is updated too slowly and that it is more oriented to people about to retire than to those already retired.
- Retirees can not set up Teams.
- Review discussion with Richard Cate and plan any next steps.
  - Invite Jes Kraus and Greg Paradiso to discuss the HR website to separate information for those planning to retire from information for retirees.
  - Get an update on vision care, which may be a software issue for billing. Beth Mintz will write a note to Mr. Cate regarding vision care.
  - Poll members for those who need access to specialized software for academic activities. A first step could be to ask members to check to see if they already have access to software.
- New Business. Steve Cutler brought to the board's attention a letter he wrote to Patricia Prelock as an individual retiree rather than as a member of the RFAO board. In the letter he declared that UVM is an ageist institution with rampant ageism. In his opinion retirees are not included in the university community. As evidence he cites retiree exclusion from university COVID testing and from related university communications. This letter led to a video conference involving Steve, Chair Gurdon, Dwight Mathews and Jim Vigoreaux. Concerns were expressed regarding how retirees are viewed by the administration and about an apparent lack of respect for their contributions to the university.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:43pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: **Wednesday, January 20, 2021 at 2pm**

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda



## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

**January 20, 2021**

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

### MINUTES

**Present:** Richard Branda, Fred Curran, Stephen Cutler, Mary Jane Dickerson, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Dwight Matthews, Beth Mintz, Jack McCormack, Lee Thompson, Judith Van Houten, Mara Saule

**Absent:** Jeanine Carr

**Call to Order:** Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 2:02pm

1. Minutes of December 16, 2020, were approved as amended following a discussion of the New Business section. Chair Gurdon proposed that the last sentence is redundant and could be eliminated. There were additional examples noted of retiree exclusion from the University community such as computer support and health and wellbeing programs. Beth Mintz moved that the minutes be amended as proposed and that this issue be brought up with Human Resources. The motion was seconded by Steve Cutler and passed unanimously.
2. RFAO Board Meeting
  - a. Faculty Senate Report (Mara Saule). There was no meeting of the full Senate in January. There are ongoing outside meetings regarding the academic reorganization proposal.
  - b. United Academics Report (Beth Mintz). Mediated bargaining sessions continue, but after one year of discussions there has not been much movement.
  - c. A proposal for initiating a communication link between UA and RFAO members (Michael Gurdon). Chair Gurdon offered for discussion a new listserv between RFAO members and UA that would be similar to the existing RFAO forum. To enroll, a member would contact either Michael or the UA communications person and self-select to a group that wants to get involved with UA activities. During the discussion it was suggested that this proposal be tabled until the next meeting to give board members time to consider the ramifications. One concern is that it may not be desirable to have a subgroup of RFAO operating outside of RFAO. One possibility is that a board member who participates in the new forum report on its activities periodically to the board.
  - d. Progress on recording of retiree obituaries (Lee Thompson). In memoriam notices are archived during the period 2010-2016, but it has been difficult to locate more recent obituaries. Some issues of HERMES are missing and identification of retirees in newspapers is erratic. There is considerable variation in the length and detail of obituaries. The Senate certificates are lengthy, while others are little more than name, dates and department. During the discussion it was recommended to find out if HR tracks the deaths of retirees, perhaps through health insurance coverage.
  - e. Software access survey (Michael Gurdon). A subgroup of Judy, Dwight and Michael was formed to survey members. A memo has been prepared and will be sent out soon. Members will be asked for their feedback regarding the impact of restricted

software access on their scholarship and about which software packages they would use if they were available and free. The goal is to determine how many members are affected by the restrictions and the extent of the limitations.

- f. Administrative Officer representation on the Board (Chair Gurdon). After many years of valuable service, Fred Curran is considering retirement from the board. Chair Gurdon asked the board to think about former senior administrative officers who could be invited to join the board and suggest candidates.
- g. New Business. Greg Paradiso will attend the next board meeting to discuss HR issues of concern to the board. In addition Pamela Getsie and Ingrid Temer representing Vermont Blue Advantage will be available to answer questions raised during the introduction of the program to members. These have included the dollar amount of deductibles for specialists, the lack of informational mailings to members, medications that will be more expensive with the new plan, and the availability of wellness activities for members.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: **February 17, 2021 at 2pm**

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

February 17, 2021

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

### MINUTES

**Present:** Richard Branda, Fred Curran, Stephen Cutler, Mary Jane Dickerson, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Dwight Matthews, Beth Mintz, Jack McCormack, Lee Thompson, Judith Van Houten, Mara Saule

**Absent:** none

**Call to Order:** Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 2:05pm

1. Minutes of January 20, 2021, approved
2. RFAO Board Meeting with invited guests.
  - a. Representatives from Blue Cross/Blue Shield (Pam Getsie, Ingrid Temer, Jessica Nelson, Kathleen Clark) and Human Resources (Greg Paradiso, Andrea Mast) joined the meeting.
  - b. Ms. Getsie reviewed the experience to date of the transition to the Vermont Blue Advantage (VBA) health plan for retirees.
    - i. On January 1, 2021, 2300 retirees transitioned to the VBA.
    - ii. VBA considers the technical implementation successful, the systems functioning as designed, and the operative metrics on track.
    - iii. With regard to member experience, there have been 42 inquiries that have been investigated.
      1. 8 were to UVM HR, looking for an ID card or welcome kit. These inquiries should be referred to VBA customer service directly in the future.
      2. 9 credible coverage letter issues. These are documents to cover a gap in coverage notified by CMS. The documents were provided or the retiree was helped to provide the information.
      3. 7 retiree cases of dissatisfaction with customer service. VBA found a gap in training materials. In addition, since primary customer service is located in Michigan there was a gap in materials for the Vermont plan.
      4. 3 enrollment issues
      5. 11 drug benefit issues. Some drugs were not listed in the formulary that should have been included. Some retirees were unclear about the change to ExpressScript or had difficulty making the transition. VBA will provide forms for prescriptions for members uncomfortable with computer access.
      6. 4 cases of provider not medicare eligible. VBA could not make an exception for coverage but offered to transition to an eligible provider.
    - iv. Other issues were also brought up and Ms. Getsie will provide additional information: for questions regarding the pharmacy the call number on the ID card is different from the number in the guide materials; the guide and formulary do not describe our plan benefits exactly; customer service cannot find our exact J plan. When VBA returns a call, it is not identified on caller ID which can delay a response since most people screen their calls. Many retirees have not received the promised welcoming call; the program was started in late January but now is on pause for further training. When a member is asked for a medical plan number should they use the VBA number or the medicare number. Members will no longer receive a medicare claims statement but will receive one from VBA.

- c. The discussion then turned to plan coverage. Some members would like to have the plan include the Silver Sneakers plan, a vision plan, and a hearing plan. Mr. Paradiso responded that UVM considered adding these plans initially but that each would add \$100,000-200,000 per plan and result in a substantial increase in premiums. It is possible that these plans could be added at a later date.
  - d. Mr. Paradiso then discussed problems with the data base for retirees. He estimates that he has spent part of the past 3 years transitioning from an outmoded system to a Microsoft data base. He would like to add a billing line for retirees but there is not much flexibility in the system at present and is looking at the cost of switching. At present there are 1600 retirees and 700 dependents in the system and there is variation in benefits and cost sharing among them, adding to the complexity and cost.
  - e. There was further discussion of the sense that retirees are excluded from the UVM community in the areas of communications, policy actions, and Wellness initiatives. Mr. Paradiso responded that adding Wellness programs for retirees would involve obtaining permission and funding from Blue Cross/Blue Shield but could be considered. It was pointed out that Wellness programs might result in reduced health care costs in the future.
  - f. A final HR issue discussed was the website. It was the feeling of the board that the website is more user friendly for people who are about to retire than for current retirees. Mr. Paradiso indicated a willingness to revise the website with guidance to address retiree benefits specifically.
3. Faculty Senate Report (Mara Saule). There was approval of a resolution regarding retention of faculty of color. There was a long discussion of child care because the child care center has been phased out.
  4. United Academics Update (Beth Mintz). Bargaining between UA and the university has moved closer together. UA wishes to create its own listserv of retirees as affiliates by identifying retirees who are former members.
  5. Decision on proposal to establish a UA interest group among RFAO members. One proposal is for Chair Gurdon to e-mail members offering a way they can contact UA for affiliation. A question was raised whether UA would consider including former administrators as affiliates. Beth will contact UA to determine whether they want only former UA members as affiliates.
  6. Results of the Software Access Survey (Gurdon). There were 40 responses. He will send feedback to the board.
  7. Executive Board replacements. Fred Curran and Jeanine Carr have resigned from the board. The board was asked to consider replacements, particularly an officer of administration. However there was a question of who is eligible for RFAO membership. It was suggested that Gary Derr be contacted for a list of officers of administration as a starting point.
  8. New Business. None

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: **March 17, 2021 at 2pm**

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

**March 17, 2021**

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

### MINUTES

**Present:** Richard Branda, Stephen Cutler, Mary Jane Dickerson, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Dwight Matthews, Beth Mintz, Jack McCormack, Lee Thompson, Judith Van Houten, Mara Saule

**Absent:** none

**Call to Order:** Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 2:02pm

1. Minutes of February 17, 2021, approved as submitted
2. RFAO Board Meeting
  - a. Faculty Senate Report (Mara Saule): The meeting scheduled for March 15, 2021, was not held because of a video conference technical issue. Information regarding commencement was provided, indicating that it will be held on May 20 and 21, 2021, at the Virtue soccer field. There will be platform speakers but no guests or faculty.
  - b. United Academics Update (Beth Mintz):
    - i. It appears that the contract talks are approaching agreement and the provisions to drop software access will not be included.
    - ii. There were continuing concerns expressed about UVM retrenchment and consolidation as it might affect loss of faculty positions, programs cuts and recruitment of students, and about a lack of transparency in the process.
    - iii. There has been a petition circulating indicating no confidence in the administration, but its dissemination using UVM IT is being discouraged.
    - iv. Chair Gurdon sent a letter to RFAO members via listserv informing them that members can receive information from UA directly if they op-in at [info@unitedacademics.org](mailto:info@unitedacademics.org). That office will then compile a group list. This involvement would be open to any members who have some interest. Not only former UA members, but also College of Medicine retirees who were outside the bargaining unit, and even former administrative staff. It is unknown how many responded.
  - c. Discussion of Further Experiences with Vermont Blue Advantage
    - i. Another zoom conference with members was urged to address various problems being encountered by members and whom to call for information about our specific plan.
    - ii. There has been confusion about deductibles and copays and a sense that members are not getting accurate information about these from the reps in Michigan. Because many members are elderly they cannot carefully watch these costs and advocate for themselves.
    - iii. From the responses RFAO has had from members, it is clear that VBA call center personnel need additional training about our specific plan. The

Board would like to know when it will happen and when this communication problem will be resolved.

- d. Summary Findings from Software Access Survey (Chair Gurdon)
  - i. Chair Gurdon surveyed RFAO members regarding their use and need for access to software for their continuing academic and scholarly activities. There were 40 respondents. Eleven research-based analytic programs were noted but all but one (EndNote) was listed by less than ten members. EndNote use was less than twenty. It appears that the cost to UVM of adding retired faculty use of these software packages should be low.
  - ii. Although students, staff and faculty have access to myUVM, many retired faculty do not. This is a problem for retired faculty who need access to continue their academic activities. It was suggested that Simeon Ananou be invited to a future board meeting to discuss further.
- e. Response from Cate/Prelock. Richard Cate responded promptly that he would follow up to Chair Gurdon's letter but would have to confer with the legal office and others. Chair Gurdon will contact him again and mention the software access survey results.
- f. Revisions to RFAO Constitution needed. Chair Gurdon noted that sections of the Constitution need to be brought into compliance with our current practices. The sections on meetings and elections, term limits, and a definition of an administrative officer should be looked at again. Judy Van Houten and Steve Cutler volunteered to review the document and bring suggestions for revision to the Board.
- g. Nominations for Board replacements. As noted at our last meeting, Fred Curran and Jeanine Carr have resigned from the Board. Several names were brought forward and these candidates will be contacted to assess their level of interest in serving. At this meeting Mary Jane Dickerson said that she is considering resignation after many years of faithful service on the Board.
- h. New Business. none

The meeting was adjourned at 3:36pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: **April 21, 2021 at 2pm**

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

April 21, 2021

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

### MINUTES

**Present:** Richard Branda, Stephen Cutler, Mary Jane Dickerson, Ruth Farrell, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Dwight Matthews, Jack McCormack, Rachel Johnson, Mara Saule, Lee Thompson, Judith Van Houten

**Absent:** Beth Mintz

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

He warmly welcomed two new members of the Committee, Ruth Farrell and Rachel Johnson, filling the positions of Fred Curran and Jeanine Carr, respectively, who recently resigned for personal reasons.

1. Minutes of March 17, 2021, approved as submitted
2. RFAO Board Meeting
  - a. Faculty Senate Report (Mara Saule)
    - i. The March 15, 2021, meeting was delayed until March 22, 2021, for technical reasons.
      1. There was a presentation of a structure for greater academic integration with Residential Learning Communities, including 3-credit courses offered by schools/colleges.
      2. There was a review of the process/procedures to evaluate 3 proposals to restructure within an academic unit (colleges/schools outside a college, school within a college, department), with a vote at the May meeting.
      3. A resolution passed with 98% approval to support the Black Lives Matter movement and fly its flag outside the Davis Center.
      4. There were Senate Constitution and Bylaws revisions to clarify procedures such as electronic voting.
      5. The Senate urged the State of VT to prioritize higher education instructors for vaccination and the administration to allow unvaccinated faculty to switch to remote learning only.
    - ii. At the April 19, 2021, meeting Evan Eycler (COM) was elected for a two-year term as Vice-President starting July 1, 2021. Ignacio Lopez-Vicuna (CAS) and Anthony Julianelle (CEMS) were elected Members-At-Large to the Senate Executive Committee. Previously, in February, Thomas Borchert (CAS) was elected Senate President for the upcoming two-year term starting July 1, 2021.
      1. There was a review of the process/procedure for restructuring, Senate authority, and CAC role.
      2. Richard Cate provided a financial overview which reiterated that most income is from tuition and most expenses are for salaries. UVM is continuing with incentive-based budgeting. There was a discussion of differential tuitions and of restricted and contingency funds. Patty Prelock spoke of proposals to increase revenue.
      3. There was an update on Academic Restructuring with a formal presentation of status planned for the May meeting.
  - b. Update from United Academics (report from Beth Mintz). UVM and U/A have reached a tentative contract agreement. The details will be released after ratification. The e-mail changes proposed by UVM were dropped.
  - c. Discussion of the Administration's position on limiting retiree access to software and technical support (Michael Gurdon). Chair Gurdon reviewed his correspondence over the past month with

the Administration regarding retiree access to UVM IT resources. The RFAO Committee had raised concerns because the latest voluntary retirement agreement severely restricts access.

- i. The Administration, in a March 30<sup>th</sup> letter, indicated that software and IT support for retirees will be limited because of cost, limited IT staffing and cybersecurity issues. In an April 8 letter to Richard Cate and Patty Prelock, Chair Gurdon expressed our disappointment with this stance. In an April 15 response it appeared that this policy of restricted access to UVM IT resources will apply to all retirees.
  - ii. Chair Gurdon proposed that the Administration communicate these changes directly to our members. At this time it is unclear exactly which services are affected and how the changes will be implemented.
  - iii. Board discussion followed. It was reiterated that many retired faculty continue academic activities such as writing letters of recommendation for students, committee memberships, and scholarly pursuits. Many also continue to use UVM e-mail. Loss of NetID and access to the libraries will severely impair these and similar activities. There was a question as to whether there is provision for an exception, such as a letter from a Dean.
  - iv. It was recommended that Simeon Ananou be invited to a future Board meeting to discuss these issues.
- d. The Vermont Blue Advantage Plan----next steps. (Michael Gurdon). Although the membership was assured that the transition to the new plan would be seamless and transparent, in fact there have been some changes and problems with co-pays and coverage. It is unclear how widespread and significant these are. Chair Gurdon has requested that Pam Getsie hold a Q & A forum for members. She has agreed and will find a date in early May with an optimal time around 2pm.
- e. Revisions to the RFAO Constitution (Judith Van Houten & Steve Cutler). Proposed revisions were submitted to the Committee. Additional changes discussed at the meeting were altering the category of Officers of Administration to administrative officers, the timing of nominations and voting in relation to the annual business meeting, and stating explicitly that *ex officio* members are voting members. The future of HERMES needs to be clarified. There should be a statement of purpose but there will be further discussion as to whether this is incorporated into the Constitution or is stated separately.
- f. New Business. Mary Jane Dickerson has indicated that she plans to resign from the Committee for personal reasons. Chair Gurdon encouraged Committee members to propose possible candidates and to keep Committee membership diversity in mind.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:39pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: **May 19, 2021 at 2pm**

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda



## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

May 19, 2021

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

### MINUTES

**Present:** Richard Branda, Stephen Cutler, Mary Jane Dickerson, Ruth Farrell, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Dwight Matthews, Beth Mintz, Jack McCormack, Rachel Johnson, Mara Saule, Lee Thompson, Judith Van Houten

**Absent:** none

**Call to Order:** Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 2:20pm after a technical delay

1. Minutes of April 21, 2021, approved as submitted
2. RFAO Board Meeting
  - a. Faculty Senate Report (Mara Saule): The Senate has not met since the last RFAO meeting. At the next meeting there will be a report on the status of Academic Restructuring.
  - b. United Academics update (Beth Mintz): The contract between the University and United Academics was settled and covers a 4 year period. There will be no raises in the first year and then incremental raises over the next 3 years. The issues of removing e-mail, library borrowing and parking privileges from retirees were dropped. U/A was made aware that 5 retirees did not have their providers covered by the new health plan and is negotiating for coverage.
  - c. Appraisal of Retiree Health Insurance Forum held on May 18, 2021. It was estimated that 30 people attended. The meeting started a half hour late because of technical difficulties and used a video conference system, Webex, that was unfamiliar to many viewers. There were organizational shortcomings in that there was no protocol for asking questions and there was considerable repetition of information previously presented to retirees. Some of the problems discussed were lack of coverage for some providers, particularly naturopaths, pharmacy coverage, and the wrong telephone number provided for ExpressScript problems. There was a general sense that the Forum was inadequate. Chair Gurdon will look into scheduling another Forum sponsored by Greg Paradiso in several weeks.
  - d. Chair Gurdon thanked Judy Van Houten for providing several names for consideration as future board members and asked for other suggestions before the August meeting.
  - e. Continuation of discussion of changes proposed in the Constitution was deferred to a future meeting. Chair Gurdon will follow up with further editing that Judy Van Houten and Steve Cutler sent to him.
  - f. Thoughts on a (possible) initiative to schedule a President's Luncheon this August: Chair Gurdon will enquire.
3. CIO Simeon Ananou joined the meeting at 3pm. Chair Gurdon thanked him for making time to join the meeting.
  - a. Mr Ananou reviewed recent significant activities by information technology including changes for shared resources, addressing digital inequalities, and providing support for remote learning. In his view there has been no change in access to software by retirees.
  - b. He stated that UVM e-mail for retirees is a given and it is protected by UVM security. He encouraged retirees to have a separate e-mail for their personal matters because if there is a security issue UVM e-mail will be scanned and personal matters could be disclosed. Net ID remains available for e-mail and services such as the library. VPN (Virtual Private Network) software should be available, but Mr. Ananou would get back to us.
  - c. A continuing interest of the RFAO has been gaining access by a relatively small number of retirees to software for academic activities. Mr. Ananou stated that the charge to UVM by software vendors is

- determined by the number of affiliates, which he said is defined as students and employees but does not include retirees. UVM subscribes to numerous software packages, and the number of people needing access could shift, so it is not practical to negotiate individually with vendors because of time and cost factors. Since students in effect pay for software, he felt it was unfair to ask them to support others. However, he thought it might be possible for retirees to obtain Microsoft Teams individually and to apply to their department or college for an exception and obtain other software access.
- d. Another interest of the RFAO is member access to MyUVM. This is a portal that aggregates services. Some recent retirees retain access during a grace period but others do not have access. This is not a change in policy for retirees. Access is needed, for example, for writing letters of recommendation for students and for some financial reporting. Mr. Ananou suggested that retirees might obtain individual services as needed without access to the aggregated services. He offered to check with the Registrar's Office to find out about access to student grades by retirees when needed for letters of recommendation and access to financial information through PeopleSoft.
  - e. There was a discussion of the availability of the help desk for retirees. He stated that the help desk is available to help with e-mail but not non-university personal computers. The help desk was overwhelmed by remote access problems, and active teaching and learning were a priority.
  - f. Mr. Ananou suggested that retirees could assist with cybersecurity by being vigilant about links and not giving out passwords.
  - g. Finally he was asked if retirees are considered part of the university community. He stated that they are part of the community but not affiliates for licensing purposes.
4. Mr. Ananou left the meeting at 3:47pm. Following this discussion, the Board felt that there needed to be further clarification of affiliate status.
  5. No New Business

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: **August 18, 2021 at 2pm**. The RFAO constitution provides for a break in meetings during June and July.

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda