

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

January 19, 2022

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Present: Taka Ashikaga, Richard Branda, Stephen Cutler, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Judith Van Houten, Rachel Johnson, Dwight Matthews, Jack McCormack, Beth Mintz, Mara Saule

Absent: Lee Thompson, Ruth Farrell

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

1. Minutes of November 17, 2021, approved as amended
2. RFAO Board Meeting
 - a. Faculty Senate Report (Mara Saule)
 - i. The Faculty Senate is currently reviewing a proposal to create a School of the Arts and is expecting a proposal to move the Department of Physics from the College of Arts and Sciences to the College of Engineering & Mathematical Sciences.
 - ii. The Senate discussed no-contest deactivation of various environmental science/studies related programs in CAS, CALS and RSENR. These deactivations are in support of an overall realignment of environmental science and studies across academic units.
 - iii. A resolution in memoriam for Lucien Paquette (Extension) was read and approved.
 - iv. There was a discussion of whether Senate representation from academic units should be reconsidered, in the context of academic reorganization and rebalancing. A Senate study committee will review senator allocation across units.
 - v. Dean of Libraries, Barynn Geffert, gave an update on the status of the Libraries budget and collections after the Elsevier ScienceDirect and Clinical Key cancellations. A new Libraries strategic plan will help focus new investments with the support of the Provost.
 - b. United Academics update (Beth Mintz): The UA Executive Committee meeting was dominated by discussion of faculty concerns over COVID policies:
 - i. Everyone who hasn't been granted a waiver is required to hold in-person classes even if it risks bringing COVID home to young children/immune compromised/elderly.
 - ii. UVM is providing only 3 masks per faculty member for the semester.
 - c. Retired Scholars Award recipients (Chair Gurdon): A subcommittee composed of Steve Cutler, Jack McCormack, Beth Mintz and Provost Office appointee Richard Galbraith reviewed the submissions. The successful applicants are Howard Ball (Political Science), Christina Melvin (Nursing), Kathleen Schneider (Art), Angela Patten (English), and Carolyn Elliott (Political Science). The letters of congratulation are now signed by the University President and the RFAO President and will be in the mail as soon as the checks have been issued.
 - d. Discussion of strategy to be pursued regarding the university administration's lack of software support for retirees. Several possible approaches were discussed to reenergize the President and Provost and express concern that decisions are being made regarding retiree software and I.T. use without adequate data.
 - i. Consider letters from broad groups of affected members, as opposed to individuals, to personalize the problem.
 - ii. Consider enlisting a senior development officer for support.
 - iii. Perhaps rephrase the issue as showing diminished value for retirees leading to a fraying of the social contract. At present this contract includes student contacts and furthering research activities.
 - iv. Enlist Tom Sullivan and Tom Gustafson for better arguments and insights.
 - v. Consider bringing the issue to VT Digger and Seven Days.

- vi. Bring the issue of the treatment of older faculty by the university to the attention of *The Cynic* student editors.
- vii. Use Foundation Board members as contacts.
- viii. It would be useful to know the cost to the University of the requested software for use by retirees. Looking at EndNote might be a starting point.
- e. Discussion of Board policy regarding requested access to the RFAO listserv by individual members.
 - i. This issue was raised by a member who lost coverage of providers in the transition to VT Blue Advantage and wished to enlist similarly affected members to organize and lobby for change. The member was reminded that the RFAO forum was designed for this purpose, but the member wanted to reach a larger number of other members.
 - ii. The discussion revolved around the facts that the RFAO listserv is maintained by the University for communication of university related issues and for the Board to communicate with all members, that members in the past have expressed a wish for a limited number of communications on the listserv, and that only the RFAO president has access to the listserv.
 - iii. Following this discussion it was recommended in a motion by Beth Mintz that in the future the President should evaluate a request from a member and if it is of sufficient generality and importance to the membership, communicate it by the RFAO listserv, and the Board should be consulted. In most cases the RFAO forum should suffice.
 - iv. With regard to the present request, it was suggested that the President consider polling the membership about loss of provider coverage.
- f. Kirk Dombrowski, VP for Research, was welcomed to the meeting at 3pm.
 - i. In his introductory remarks he pointed out that the University has moved up in national rankings overall and particularly in research where it is now among the top 100 institutions.
 - ii. To build on this research strength, the University is planning to acquire R1 research institution status. He views this as a research “diploma” that will open opportunities for funding from Foundations and will help to recruit research-oriented faculty.
 - iii. R1 research institutions have research strength broadly across the institution. At present, UVM has considerable strength in STEM programs but is lower in non-stem research expenditures for faculty members. In part this is due to the university not reporting its outcomes as well as its peer institutions. In addition the university awards a relatively low number of doctorates in the humanities. At present tuition dictates most hiring. He felt that there is a need for mentoring to change the culture in some departments to encourage grant writing.
 - iv. During the discussion, Chair Gurdon pointed out that many retirees continue to do research and have grants but have no access to soft-ware programs such as EndNote.
 - v. Judy Van Houten brought up the fees for open access publishing and wondered if there could be funding for retirees. There was also a problem with timely access to science journals for retirees who are still writing manuscripts.
 - vi. There was a question whether faculty should be warned about predatory journals.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: **February 16, 2022, at 2pm as a Videoconference**

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda