EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

September 21, 2022

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES


Absent: Taka Ashikaga, Rachel Johnson, Jack McCormack, Mara Saule

Call to Order: Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 2:01pm

1. Minutes of August 17, 2022, approved as amended
2. RFAO Board Meeting
   a. Change of Insurance Carriers for our Retiree Medicare Insurance (Guests: Greg Paradiso, UVM Employee Benefits Manager, and Steve May, consultant to the university from Hickok & Boardman Insurance Group)
      i. Greg Paradiso presented a series of slides regarding the proposed new Retiree Medicare Advantage Plan. It is available for viewing on the RFAO website.
      ii. The contracting process was discussed. The first medicare advantage plan was offered to UVM in January 2021. At the time few insurers were licensed to offer this type of plan in Vermont, and VBA was contracted for 2 years at a fixed rate. In Spring 2022 UVM became aware of other insurers offering similar plans and requested proposals. There were four respondents (VBA, MVP, Aetna and Cigna). Key considerations were benefit design match, health care provider match, cost, and wellness and health management programs. Three insurers provided competitive proposals.
      iii. Cigna was considered to have the strongest proposal with high match to benefit design, 99% of current health care providers likely to accept Cigna insurance, the current drug formulary matched 99.4%, an overall 60% premium reduction, and a 3 year fixed rate.
      iv. In aggregate it is estimated that UVM retirees will save $1.4 million per year in premiums. On average, UVM pays 80% of premiums and retirees pay 20%. Individual member contributions vary and range between zero and 50%.
      v. Compared to the current VBA plan, there are additional vision and hearing aid benefits, coverage of mental health counselors and naturopaths, and a fitness program.
      vi. Cigna is a national provider with over 4 million medicare customers and provides a medicare advantage plan to the Vermont State College retirees as well as insurance to Green Mountain Power, Middlebury College, National Life and other Vermont employers.
      vii. During the question period, Board members shared concerns regarding reports in the press about Cigna not paying medical bills promptly and call center worker dissatisfaction. They also mentioned anecdotal reports of local providers not accepting Cigna because of its payment policies.
      viii. The Cigna call center is in South Carolina. In view of the problems that members have had with the VBA call center being out of state, the Board recommended that a specific, named
insider who is knowledgeable about this specific policy be identified who can be contacted directly when problems arise.

ix. It was noted that emergent and urgent medical problems occurring outside the USA would be covered; there is no pharmacy deductible; durable medical supplies are 80% covered.

x. UVM is negotiating a 5 year contract but it will be evaluated after 3 years.

b. Faculty Senate Reports: Detailed minutes are available at the Senate website.
   i. (Mara Saule) The August Senate meeting was held on August 29, 2022. This meeting was held in person but future Senate meetings for all Fall Semester will be held entirely remotely.
      1. The meeting was held in person in Memorial Lounge, attended by 67 senators and a great many administrators and visitors.
      2. Chair of the UVM Board of Trustees, Ron Lumbar, gave an overview of general Board responsibilities (strategic planning, financial stewardship, institutional policies, appointment and review of the President). He also gave an update of current University progress (such as in research funding, increase in applications, being among top 100 public research universities in rankings) as well as challenges (such as demographic declines particularly in Vermont, financial health and sustainability, and housing).
      3. President Garimella announced that the President’s Distinguished Senior Lecturer Award for this year is given to Karen Benway of the Department of Mathematics & Statistics.
      4. There was also a lengthy and lively discussion of Senate meeting modality for the upcoming semester: hybrid, remote, or in person. A vote was taken for each modality, with split results skewing slightly toward remote. Following the Senate meeting, the Senate Exec Committee voted to hold future meetings this semester remotely.
      5. The rest of the Senate meeting consisted of President Borchert’s overview of upcoming Senate issues (such as establishment of the Osher Center for Integrative Health and optimum organizational placement for the Fleming Museum). He provided the annual overview and orientation to the Senate and its standing committees. And, finally, Prof. Pablo Bose gave an update on the progress of the Catamount Core Curriculum Committee.
   ii. (Alison Pechenick) September 19, 2022, meeting.
      1. The meeting opened with Faculty Senate President’s Remarks by Thomas Borchert. He addressed President Garimella’s recent response to the investigation of Antisemitism at UVM, opened by the DoE Civil Rights Division, saying he wished Garimella had led with the Common Ground references included further in, and noting he was troubled by the statement’s implication that UVM’s Common Ground framework is limited to student groups operating under SGA auspices.
      2. With all documents available in advance, and items pre-approved by Curricular Affairs and Executive committees, the full Senate approved a) a new PhD Social Emotional Health and Inclusive Education (CESS), and b) No-Contest Termination of B.S. Athletic Training, (CNHS)
      3. The Senate discussed and approved a) Catamount Core (GenEd) changes, and b) the Proposal to establish Osher Center for Integrative Health. The Osher family is benefactor to Lifelong Learning institutes at many campuses, and now, inspired by Asian approaches to health, supports ten of these Integrative Health centers, including one in Sweden. UVM is the only center to be housed in the Provost’s Office (as opposed to medical schools), positioning it to lead the way as we leverage the many collaborations across our campus. Osher will not open any additional centers, intends to continue its funding; many
other promising sources are in the pipeline, with two UVM staff and the Provost (former Dean of CNHS) leading the way.

4. The Senate also heard Reports on a) University activities for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and b) Reconsideration of the Allocation of Senate Representation.

5. The University Admissions office has moved to the Davis Center.

c. United Academics Update (Beth Mintz):

i. UA continues to push for faculty on the UVM Board of Trustees.

ii. UA is formally inquiring about the status of the University Benefits Advisory Council. A more active Council could serve as a forum for future discussions of health care plans.

d. Other Business

i. Chair Gurdon met with Jane Okech who is the new liaison between the Provost’s Office and RFAO to discuss several issues. She was asked to provide the Provost’s nominee to the Retired Scholars grant program review committee. She said that she is aware of the ongoing issue regarding retiree access to software and that discussions are continuing. She agreed to attend the November board meeting.

ii. Chair Gurdon recently became aware of the existence of a modest amount of RFAO money in a local bank account. He will contact the bank and suggested that he and Richard Branda be co-signers on the account. In view of his new duties Branda after a vote was named Secretary-Treasurer.

iii. The current plan for the annual meeting is that it will start at 3pm with a lecture by Thomas Sullivan, followed by a brief business meeting and refreshments.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:34pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: **October 19, 2022; The Annual General Meeting is October 20, 2022, 1:30-3pm.**

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda