

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

August 17, 2022

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Present: Richard Branda, Stephen Cutler, Ruth Farrell, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Judith Van Houten, Rachel Johnson, Dwight Matthews, Alison Pechenick, Mara Saule

Absent: Taka Ashikaga, Jack McCormack, Beth Mintz, Lee Thompson

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

1. Minutes of May 18, 2022, approved.
2. RFAO Board Meeting
 - a. Faculty Senate Report (Saule)
 - i. The next meeting is August 29, 2022, and probably not hybrid
 - ii. Mara is unable to attend the September 19th meeting and will need a replacement.
 - iii. May 19th meeting: attendance was good; degrees were conferred.
 1. There was discussion of the motion to deactivate the Physical Education (grades PreK-12) B.S. Ed. There is a limited number of faculty in the program and the program does not support graduates receiving a health education endorsement and thus could not teach in Vermont. The motion passed.
 2. There was a resolution regarding critical race theory, in support of colleagues, to oppose limiting curriculum and education about racism.
 3. There was a resolution to extend test optional admissions through spring 2027 to gather more data about its effects.
 4. The academic reorganization report passed for further consideration.
 5. There were committee reports.
 6. Thomas Chittenden reported on the effort to reconfigure the Board of Trustees and encouraged continued attention going forward.
 7. Elizabeth Palchak, Director of Sustainability, shared a Comprehensive Sustainability Plan that will guide sustainability at UVM with short- and long-term goals.
 - b. United Academics Update: There will be a renewed effort to add faculty to the Board of Trustees. Having an executive director has been helpful.
 - c. Current issues related to Health Insurance Coverage.
 1. There evidently are a range of medications that are not part of the formulary but might be covered with preauthorization. In some cases this may be needed yearly. Over the counter medications (OTC) are not officially covered but some can be if a provider prescribes them. This is not publicized by BC/BS, and it doesn't have a list of drugs that might be covered. There is a need to communicate with our members on how to

proceed. A request for such a list is probably best done through UVM Human Resources.

2. Currently there is duplicate coverage of eye refractions. There should be lowered cost by eliminating the annual refraction coverage from the VSP vision policy.
 3. The drug formulary is not applicable to retirees in some cases.
 4. The benefits list that is used by representatives is for 2022, but the list available to members is for 2021. The two lists are not identical in all cases and can cause confusion when members call BC/BS. The 2022 document is available at: <https://www.vermontblueadvantage.com/member-resources>
 5. It was recommended that a communication come from UVM HR to all retirees covered by the plan. Ruth Farrell will draft a letter regarding the drug issue and possible steps to navigate with VBA which can be offered to Greg Paradiso at our next meeting.
 6. Members should consider sharing on the forum which OTC meds might be paid for by VBA.
- d. Discussion of Timing and Format of Annual General Meeting/Fall Luncheon. Chair Gurdon will need to coordinate with Provost's Office. It may be held in Memorial Lounge again this year. A speaker for the general meeting is planned, and several possible invitees were discussed. Once a date is finalized Chair Gurdon will check speaker availability.
- e. Ideas for Guests to be invited in Coming Months. As noted above, Greg Paradiso will be invited for 09/21/22. Jane Okech, who is Jim Vigoreaux's replacement as the liaison to RFAO, will be invited to a future meeting.
- f. Other Business.
1. The Retired Faculty Scholars Program will renew this year with a stipend of about \$2,000 per application and a total fund of \$8,000. An alert will be sent on the listserv for applications.
 2. There was a discussion of whether future RFAO board meetings should continue by Video Conference or in person. There was concern that the usual meeting room is small and has poor ventilation. Can a larger room be identified?
 3. There was a discussion of whether the RFAO board should do longer term planning and more to foster community building of the RFAO. Possibilities might include an on-line newsletter, volunteer activities, or a quarterly lecture series. This discussion may be developed further at a future meeting.
 4. It was noted that some recent retirees are losing access to Microsoft 365 with loss of the annual subscription, which they now may have to cover themselves.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:39pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: **09/21/2022**

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

September 21, 2022

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Present: Richard Branda, Stephen Cutler, Ruth Farrell, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Judith Van Houten, Dwight Matthews, Beth Mintz, Alison Pechenick, Lee Thompson

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 3year 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 Lumbra, 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

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

October 19, 2022

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Present: Taka Ashikaga, Richard Branda, Ruth Farrell, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Judith Van Houten, Dwight Matthews, Alison Pechenick, Mara Saule, Lee Thompson

Absent: Rachel Johnson, Jack McCormack, Beth Mintz

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

1. Minutes of September 21, 2022, approved as amended
2. RFAO Board Meeting
 - a. Faculty Senate Report (Mara Saule) The next meeting of the Faculty Senate is Monday, October 24, 2022.
 - b. United Academics Update (Beth Mintz and Alison Pechenick)
 - i. UA filed a formal grievance objecting to the absence of a functioning University Benefits Advisory Council, asking for its reinstatement as a remedy. This might be helpful to us in the future but does nothing for our current situation.
 - ii. Faculty advisors met with UA to share concern about antisemitism and its effect on students.
 - iii. There is an impasse in negotiations with the part-time faculty.
 - c. RFAO Financial Affairs (Michael Gurdon) During the disruptions due to COVID a modest amount of money in an account at TD Bank was lost track of by the Board. This was brought to the attention of President Gurdon by the previous Secretary-Treasurer, Bill Meyer. President Gurdon and the current Secretary-Treasurer, Dick Branda, updated the signatures at the bank and will manage the account for the benefit of the organization. President Gurdon also learned in a conversation with Jane Okech that the organization gets a budget from the Provost's Office for stationary supplies, mailings and other needs. The amount for this fiscal year is \$1600.
 - d. Health Insurance Status: several concerns were raised and discussed.
 - i. UVM will mail an explanatory letter and a sheet of answers to frequently asked questions to members soon.
 - ii. Some providers have been identified that do not accept CIGNA, and the company will reach out to them.
 - iii. Out-of-network provider information services will be available in November.
 - iv. An in-home support network will be available from CIGNA.
 - v. The calls from Quest that apparently are of little benefit to our members were brought to the attention of Richard Cate and Greg Paradiso. Greg then requested that VBA stop these calls.

- vi. The transition from VBA Express Scripts to CIGNA Express Scripts is being addressed but at this time there appears to be some miscommunication at Express Scripts.
 - vii. Although there will be a CIGNA advocate for escalation through customer service, our members will need a direct advocate.
 - viii. There is concern that the UVM Health network, which is affiliated with MVP, is out-of-network for CIGNA. There have been reassurances from UVM that CIGNA coverage will nevertheless be readily available since the system is already working for Vermont State University retirees.
 - ix. Because CIGNA is registered in only 12 states, there is concern that appeals can not be elevated to the state insurance agency to settle a claim in most states.
 - x. The mechanism to carry over pre-authorization of medications is unclear. It is important that this be done without going back for a visit to each prescribing physician.
- e. Tomorrow's Annual General Meeting: There is a plan to record the meeting for later viewing on our website. If this goes well the RFAO may develop a regular speakers series for recording and viewing by members. Because there are no action items a quorum is not needed. The meeting will include a brief report from President Gurdon on the Organization's activities during the past year.
- f. Other Business
- i. Jane Okech will be available to attend the November 16th meeting and will discuss progress on access to software by members.
 - ii. Mara Saule attended the UVM Foundation board meeting where she can represent retired faculty interests.
 - iii. Greg Paradiso is retiring November 30, 2022. His replacement as Benefits Director has been announced as Caitlyn Sisler. She has been with UVM for 5 years and is fully versed in UVM benefit plans. Her contact information is: Caitlyn.Sisler@uvm.edu; 802-656-3103.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:53pm

The Annual General Meeting is October 20, 2022, from 1:30pm to 3pm.

The next board meeting is scheduled for: November 16, 2022.

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

November 16, 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, Beth Mintz, Alison Pechenick, Mara Saule, Lee Thompson

Absent: Ruth Farrell, Jack McCormack

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

1. Minutes of October 19, 2022, approved as amended.
2. Minutes of Annual General Meeting of October 20, 2022, approved.
3. RFAO Board Meeting
 - a. Introduction to and discussion of relevant issues with Jane Okech, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs
 - i. Chair Gurdon introduced Jane Okech, who is the new liaison between the Provost's Office and RFAO.
 - ii. Chair Gurdon asked for follow-up on the on-going issue of access to UVM software by retirees who need it for scholarly and development activities. She stated that she is meeting with Simeon Ananou to develop a protocol regarding the issue to present to the Provost and will update the RFAO soon after Thanksgiving break with a draft protocol.
 - iii. The question of RFAO representation on the University Benefits Advisory Council was discussed. RFAO currently has regular dialogues with HR but membership on the reconstituted Council will add a retiree member voice on benefits at an early stage of discussion. There is precedence for this representation going back to when the Council was first formed in 2007. Benefits are part of the salary package for retirees that should be represented on the Council. Ms. Okech said that she would put forward the RFAO preference for representation on the Council.
 - iv. Discussion turned to the spotty distribution of communications from senior administrators including the President and Provost and of faculty events. Ms. Okech will help to improve these communications.
 - v. Ms. Okech asked whether retired faculty would be interested in helping with her plan to expand mentoring programs to mid-career faculty. She feels that some are feeling stalled but do not have time for career development because of their other commitments. She suggested that retirees could offer sessions on professional development. The Committee felt that there will be interest among the retired faculty and that she should develop the type of help she is considering. The plan could then be offered to our membership. Ideas might include training for mentors and mentees, making the mentoring specific to avoid sensitive issues, getting input from people outside of the mentees' department for a broader level of the University, and applying the program to non-tenured faculty.
 - b. Faculty Senate Report (Mara Saule)
 - i. The following bullet points summarize items of note from the October 24, 2022, Faculty Senate meeting: Note: Senate meetings continue to be held remotely via Teams. The October meeting was attended by approximately 98 people. As always, full minutes with attachments of this and all previous meetings are available on the Senate website.
 - ii. President Tom Borchert announced that the Senate will soon receive a proposal from the College of Arts & Sciences to reorganize the language departments into a School of World Languages and Cultures.
 - iii. A resolution was passed to include the Juneteenth holiday on the Summer 2023 Academic Calendar (already a federal holiday and a recognized UVM administrative holiday since summer 2022).
 - iv. There was brief discussion of the on-going issue of rebalancing Senate and Senate committee representation across colleges/schools, with no action proposed at this point.
 - v. A draft proposal for Procedures to Establish Centers or Institutes is being reviewed by the Research, Scholarship and Creative Arts Committee, and input from senators is requested.

- vi. A draft proposal is circulating to change the Fleming Museum reporting line from the Provost's Office to the Director of the School of the Arts. This would necessitate a change to the University Manual. The Senate will vote on the proposal in November.
- vii. The Student Affairs Committee presented a report and held a discussion of outside of class expectations, and the importance of faculty including those expectations in the expanded course descriptions.
- viii. Michael Shirling, Chief Safety and Compliance Officer, gave an update on campus safety and strategies designed to create a safe and secure University. Discussion included active shooter information and awareness for classroom safety and avoiding conflicts in the context of student protests.
- c. United Academics Update (Beth Mintz). Further the discussion of retired faculty representation on the Benefits Council, it was suggested that RFAO ask United Academics to support its request for a representative and consider filing a grievance if the request is denied. Beth will draft a grievance for consideration by the Board if it becomes advisable to file one.
- d. Retired Scholars Awards decisions (Michael Gurdon). Chair Gurdon thanked the Awards Sub-committee--- Lee Thompson, Taka Ashikaga, Alan Gotlieb and Prof. Allan Kellehear---for reviewing the applications. A total of \$3,600 was awarded to Angela Patten (Senior Lecturer Emerita of English); Patrick Hutton (Professor Emeritus of History); Donald Ross (Research Professor Emeritus of Plant and Soil Science). A larger number of applications was anticipated but it seems likely that COVID limited planned attendance at meetings and other travel.
- e. Our review of the annual general meeting. The Committee favored having a speaker and should consider having more than one per year at meetings. The membership could be polled for suggestions for future speakers. There was some disappointment that the attendance was not greater. It is estimated that there were 22 people in the room and 18 more by video conference. It was suggested that a senior administrator be invited to a future meeting to hear concerns.
- f. Discussion of the state of the health insurance transition.
 - i. There was a sense that the CIGNA meetings were lightly attended.
 - ii. There was no assurance forthcoming that the membership will get a specific advocate.
 - iii. There currently are numerous errors in the mailings, with documents going out with the wrong names or addresses. HR is looking into this with a need to compare the HR and CIGNA lists.
 - iv. There is concern that hospitals that members depend on do not take CIGNA.
 - v. RFAO and HR should meet with CIGNA senior leadership to address feedback from members.
 - vi. There should be notification of which mailings have gone out and which ones to expect. There is particular concern that IDs will be mailed correctly next month.
- g. Other business. There was a discussion regarding the availability of parking permits for members. The Committee thought that few members are parking on campus and they do not contribute significantly to a parking space shortage. Parking now is monitored on an application so that documentation of the low usage by retirees should be relatively easy if needed.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:46pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: **January 18, 2023**

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

January 18, 2023

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Present: Taka Ashikaga, Richard Branda, Stephen Cutler, Ruth Farrell, Alan Gotlieb, Judith Van Houten, Rachel Johnson, Dwight Matthews, Beth Mintz, Alison Pechenick, Lee Thompson

Absent: Michael Gurdon, Jack McCormack, Mara Saule

Call to Order: Vice-President Beth Mintz called the meeting to order at 2:03pm

1. Minutes of November 16, 2022, approved
2. RFAO Board Meeting
 - a. Faculty Senate Report (Mara Saule)
 - i. The November 28 Faculty Senate meeting was attended by approx. 75 attendees in total, 69 of whom were Senators. Full Senate minutes can be found on the Senate website at https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/Faculty-Senate/FacSen_Draft_Minutes_112822.pdf
 - ii. **The consent agenda** included a vote on no-contest deactivations of two programs: the MA in German and the Gerontology Minor, both in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS). The motion carried.
 - iii. **A Resolution of Memorial was read for Carroll McClure Lewin**, Associate Professor Emerita of Anthropology (CAS). The full resolution is included in the full Faculty Senate minutes.
 - iv. **Fleming Museum changes within University Manual.** A resolution was proposed that the Director of the Fleming Museum (and thus the Museum itself) report to the Director of the School of the Arts in CAS. This is not an uncommon reporting line for academic museums, and at UVM would facilitate Fleming Museum fund raising in partnership with the School of the Arts and CAS. The resolution also advises the Provost to provide the Museum with sufficient resources to fulfill its mission. After some discussion, the resolution carried.
 - v. **Procedures for establishing Centers and Institutes.** Draft procedures had been presented and discussed at several previous Senate meetings. After a few minor corrections to the draft, the procedures were approved.
 - vi. **The Curricular Affairs Committee** presented a series of substantial revisions to several programs and other items which did not require a Senate vote.
 - vii. **Brightspace Implementation Update.** The learning management system (LMS) Brightspace will entirely replace Blackboard for the fall 2023 semester. During spring 2022, many courses will transition to Brightspace. LMS transition updates and training information are available at <http://site.uvm.edu/brightspace/> and the Senate presentation slides with detailed timelines and other information are available attached to the Senate minutes.
 - viii. **Update on University Finances.** VP Richard Cate updated the Senate on the UVM budget as well as on the process for updating the Campus Master Plan (last updated in 2006). The campus plan deals with the “acquisition and disposition of land, buildings constructed, demolished, or renovated,” and new beds in various residence halls and privately held locations. Again, slides from the presentation are available on the Senate site.
 - b. Highlights from the 12/19/22 Faculty Senate (FS) meeting, attended by Alison Pechenick on behalf of RFAO. Report was presented electronically. Agenda and Minutes can be found at: https://www.uvm.edu/faculty_senate/2022-2023-faculty-senate-meetings-and-materials.

- i. Discuss proposal to establish an Institute for AgroEcology
https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/Faculty-Senate/UVM_Institute_for_Agroecology_Senate_Proposal_Nov_2022final.pdf
 - ii. Discuss proposal to create a School of World Languages and Cultures
https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/Faculty-Senate/SWLC_proposal-For_Faculty_Senate.pdf
 - iii. Exploring the concept that our scholarly work should be freely available, following the precepts of HELIOS, which UVM joined in 2022. This preliminary and robust discussion was led by Mary Cushman, co-chair of FS standing committee on Research, Scholarship, and the Creative Arts.
 Link to meeting video, including faculty discussion, is available upon request.
- c. UA report (Alison Pechenick) UA Exec met on Nov 29. Topics included the following:
- i. Compared to similar statements by other institutions, UVM's land statement was somewhat underwhelming and *pro forma*. It's a complicated row to hoe; the statement was a compromise "first step" and written in consultation with local Abenaki leaders.
 - ii. After two years of bargaining with a less than forthcoming UVM administration, the Part-Time unit successfully negotiated a very good contract.
 - iii. The Contract Administration Committee (CAC) did excellent work on a wide variety of non-trivial issues.
 - iv. Blackboard did not renew UVM's contract. The new LMS is Brightspace. UA and Faculty Senate are both engaged in the transition.
 - v. UA and its Legislative Committee will continue efforts to democratize UVM's Board of Trustees, an effort that gained very encouraging traction in Vermont's last legislative session. UVM's SGA wants to help.
 - vi. UA is pleased that the University Benefits Advisory Committee (UBAC, on which RFAO now holds two seats) has been reinstated. EC agrees that UVM's unilateral move to cover retirees under a Medicare Advantage plan, without prior notice or conversation, was inappropriate.
- d. The meeting was joined by Caitlyn Sisler (Director of Benefits, UVM Human Resources Services), Shawna Rink (CIGNA Regional Sales Director), Tyriney Sims-Caudle (CIGNA Client Manager Group Medicare) and Rebecca Wells (CIGNA Medicare Client Account Manager) for a discussion of RFAO member experience with the CIGNA health plan.
- i. There was a lengthy discussion of prescription plan problems. Although member prescriptions should have transferred directly from the VBA account with Express Scripts to its CIGNA account, they were instead first transferred to Optima. When the error was discovered, Express Scripts identified our member information and is working to recover current prescriptions. The goal is for this to occur without the need for members to go back to their providers for new prescriptions. Express Scripts and CIGNA hope to complete this process in about a week. The Board expressed concern that some members may not know that there is a potential problem with their prescriptions. In addition, there appears to be a disconnect between CIGNA and Express Scripts data bases. Members who called or e-mailed HR or CIGNA were referred to the appropriate CIGNA customer service. The Board asked that there be further outreach by postcard to members who might be impacted since not all members are comfortable with the internet. Otherwise they may be unnecessarily spending time calling providers' offices for new prescriptions. In this communication members should be informed how to check the status of their prescriptions and who to call if there is a problem. If the answer is to call the number on the back of the insurance card, they should be told to ask for the department that handles retirement group plans.

- ii. The other current area of concern is a problem some members, particularly those residing in other states, have identifying which providers are out-of-network for CIGNA, because the website is inadequate, and then arrange payment with those providers. Some providers have refused to accept CIGNA insurance coverage at all, while others have refused to submit bills to CIGNA. In the former situation, members risk losing that provider's services (which in some cases is the local hospital). In the latter case, the member would need to pay the entire bill upfront and then seek reimbursement from CIGNA. The concern is that CIGNA may cover only part of the bill (so-called balanced billing). Although providers who accept Medicare are not permitted by law to balance bill, there is no easy way for a member to know what the Medicare reimbursement rate is for a service. The CIGNA representatives said that CIGNA has a team to reach out to these providers and is actively working with out-of-network providers who are reluctant to take CIGNA insurance. Members also can request that Service Coordinators facilitate contact with providers for network issues. CIGNA will explain to the retiree that usually this outreach is successful. If it is unsuccessful, the retiree may ask the provider to bill CIGNA directly. If the provider will not, the retiree will have to pay upfront, but if the provider accepts Medicare, the total payment should be no more than the Medicare reimbursement rate. CIGNA should provide information on how to determine what that rate would be. The Board requested that our members have an identified advocate if escalation is necessary. It was also noted by the Board that the UVM Health Network is currently not in-network for CIGNA. The representatives said that negotiations are ongoing and that UVM should be in-network soon.
- e. Software proposal. A proposal for RFAO member access to UVM software was received from Jane Okech and Simeon Ananou. Briefly, this proposal will have non-trivial costs for licensed software and IT support. An annual fee will be assessed on departments for each person with the active retired faculty affiliation to cover costs such as software licensing, user support, and Systems and Security team efforts. RFAO was asked to validate the list of software often requested by retired faculty members and to provide an estimate of the number of RFAO members who should be factored into the cost estimates for the proposal. Members of the Board found the proposed conditions for software access particularly problematic in terms of the calculation of hypothetical costs, as well as the application of these undefined fees and general restrictions not imposed on other affiliate cohorts. It was noted that many smaller departments do not have adequate financial resources to cover these expenses. The Board felt that there should be an initial informal discussion with Jane Okech about the proposed costs. Other avenues of approach may be to request the licensing arrangements for the software directly from IT or by Freedom of Information Act if necessary and seek assistance from the Faculty Senate committee on technology. There was a feeling that the Board should concentrate on specialized software rather than MS Office which is relatively inexpensive and widely available. The Board was disappointed in the tone of the proposal, which seemed to imply that retired faculty are unreliable internet users.
- f. New business. None

The meeting was adjourned at 3:58pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: **February 15, 2023**

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

February 15, 2023

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Present: Taka Ashikaga, Richard Branda, Stephen Cutler, Ruth Farrell, Alan Gotlieb, Judith Van Houten, Rachel Johnson, Dwight Matthews, Beth Mintz, Alison Pechenick, Mara Saule

Absent: Michael Gurdon, Jack McCormack, Lee Thompson

Call to Order: Vice-President Beth Mintz called the meeting to order at 1:33pm

1. Minutes of January 18, 2023, approved
2. RFAO Board Meeting
 - a. The death of UVM historian Neil Stout was brought to the attention of the Board in an e-mail from Lee Thompson.
 - b. United Academics meeting from 1/24/23 (Alison Pechenick)
 - i. UVM is moving to the Brightspace LMS (Learning Management System) this Fall. Since this transition involves extra work for faculty, UA and UVM are currently holding “impact bargaining” sessions to determine appropriate compensation, financial and/or other.
 2. The Civil Rights Committee is exploring ways to make UVM more welcoming to faculty of color and will host UCSD Professor Charles Toombs in early April.
 3. The Legislative Committee is active and hopes to help the Vermont Legislature decide to add a faculty member to the UVM Board of Trustees.
 4. UBAC (University Benefits Advisory Committee) held its first meeting. Childcare is one priority. Retiree concerns have also been received.
 5. The newly ratified contract (CBA, Collective Bargaining Agreement) between the Part-Time Unit and UVM is now in force, with retroactive benefits.
 6. UA is preparing for the next round of negotiations on behalf of the Full-Time Unit, meeting with various faculty cohorts and forming its bargaining team.
 7. UA has new staffers to assist in its mission, including a graduate student intern and administrative assistance from a longtime member of the PT unit.
 8. AAUP (American Association of University Professors) may hold its annual meeting at UVM.
 9. UVM support staff have petitioned to hold an election to form a union. See below for Vermont Public article from late December.
<https://www.vermontpublic.org/local-news/2022-12-22/uvm-medical-center-support-staff-successfully-petition-to-hold-a-union-election>
 - c. Faculty Senate meeting of January 30, 2023 (Mara Saule)
 - i. The January Faculty Senate meeting was attended by approximately 110 people. The following programs were approved for no-contest termination as recommended by the Curricular Affairs Committee: European Studies Major, Russian and East European Studies Major, Latin American and Caribbean Studies Major. A related resolution to establish a School of World Languages and Cultures passed Senate vote. In addition, a resolution to establish an Institute for Agroecology also passed. Detailed proposals are available via the Senate website as links through the January agenda.
 - ii. There was some discussion regarding Senate meeting modality (in person or via Teams) for the remaining Senate meetings during spring semester. The vote supported continuing to meet exclusively via Teams with 89% of senators voting in favor.

- iii. Finally, CIO Simeon Ananou presented an update on administrative systems at UVM, including a new version of MyUVM web portal. The upgrade from Luminis to Ellucian will occur in Summer 2023 and will keep current features and functionality. An update on the migration to BrightSpace replacement of BlackBoard was presented to the Senate at the December meeting. CIO Ananou's detailed presentation slides are also available on the Senate website.
- d. There was a preliminary discussion by the Board of issues and concerns regarding the Cigna health plan that have been brought to its attention by the membership. Then the meeting was joined by Caitlyn Sisler (Director of Benefits, UVM Human Resources Services), Shawna Rink (CIGNA Regional Sales Director), Tyriney Sims-Caudle (CIGNA Client Manager Group Medicare) and Rebecca Wells (CIGNA Medicare Client Account Manager) for further discussion of RFAO member experience with the CIGNA health plan.
 - i. Director of Benefits Sisler previously responded by e-mail to some of these concerns as submitted to her by Vice-President Mintz. Her edited response:
 1. The Express Scripts to Optum Rx data transfer has been reversed. Approximately 383 members (of about 2400 total) Rx's were transferred incorrectly. As of last week--138 members were contacted by phone to explain the situation. Second Attempts to contact the remaining retirees started on 2/8. If any members are unable to be reached Cigna will send a mailing.
 2. Cigna continues to work on gaining plan acceptance with Sarasota Memorial Hospital. I did speak with the billing department directly and they were able to bill Cigna--and Cigna paid the claim on at least one occasion. There is still not widespread plan acceptance for this location. We have set this as a top priority for UVM and have pushed for progress repeatedly. Cigna Executive leadership was scheduled to have a meeting this week and I'm hopeful for more information when I meet with them tomorrow.
 3. The following information was provided for the Duo-Authentication Issue: If you can't access your registered email for the initial setup, please call us at (800) 711-5672. We can change your email address if you no longer have access.
 Frequently Asked Questions | Express Scripts ([express-scripts.com](https://www.express-scripts.com))
 How does it work?
 Setup is simple. You'll need to use the email registered to your account. We'll send a code to confirm you have access to your registered email.
 Follow these steps:
 1. Enter your username and password.
 2. We'll send a single-use code to your registered email.
 3. Enter the code and access your account.
 Can my single-use code be sent to a different email address?
 4. After setup, you can change the email address that we send the code to at any time. Log in and go to Two-Step Verification under Account to change your email address. If you can't access your registered email for the initial setup, please call us at (800) 711-5672. We can change your email address if you no longer have access.
 - ii. There continues to be a communication problem when Express Scripts or Cigna customer service is called with a question regarding the UVM retiree policy. a) The representative may not refer specifically to our policy among the many that Cigna has issued to various groups, or the policy on the representative's screen is a newer and therefore a different version from that on the member's screen. b) Providers who call are sometimes given misinformation about coverage even when they call the correct phone number for the retiree group plan. c) It appears that myCIGNA.com and Express Scripts have different information regarding our policy. d) There was a perception that Cigna advocates were

- neither accessible nor responsive. e) There is a need for a quick efficient way for sick older people to get help with coverage questions. Ms. Rink will research these issues further. There may be a need for further education of providers. Cigna is monitoring calls from the membership to identify problems. In addition, Cigna offers the services of a nurse manager to sick patients who are having difficulty with coverage questions. Ms. Wells will place on the RFAO website a recording that gives an overview of tools that can be used by members. About 26% of members have registered with myCigna.com. Members are encouraged to join as an additional resource.
- iii. The discussion then turned to provider coverage. It is anticipated that the UVM Health Network will join the Cigna network in early April. Although the agreement will be proprietary information, there will be written notification when it is in effect. Some Florida health systems continue to not accept Cigna policies. It may be possible to arrange coverage for our members there on an individual basis. Ms. Rink pointed out that Cigna pays 100% of the medicare rate for providers who accept medicare and 115% to those who do not accept assignment. Members should not be billed a greater amount. However she said that Cigna can advocate for a member but it has no oversight over a provider. It is her impression that “balance billing” is a rare situation.
 - iv. There was a question about foreign travel coverage. There are no Cigna contracts outside of the country. However, UVM contracted \$50,000 per year coverage for urgent or emergency care. The member would pay the cost up front and then be reimbursed by Cigna.
- e. Software proposal.
- i. There was a discussion of retired faculty access to library electronic resources and whether retiree access was a violation of licenses. The most recent policy statement, dated March 16, 2017, stated that faculty and staff members who formally retire and receive UVM retirement benefits get UVM e-mail access for life and access to library databases and computers. It was noted that library licenses have broad bands, are highly specialized, and are very complex. They should be separated from other software licenses. Mara Saule will follow up on the status of this important issue to our members.
 - ii. There was further discussion of the draft letter dated January 12, 2023, from Simeon Ananou and Jane Okech. Board concerns regarding the letter include that it appears designed to discourage applications, it describes the costs as “non-trivial” without supporting detail, and it fails to consider that most departments have very limited budgets, which do not include funds for providing undefined fees paid for emeriti needing software. Moreover, the IBB structure already charges departments for software use.
 - iii. A possible approach would be for retired faculty to apply for UVM active affiliate or research affiliate status through their departments to obtain software access. Alternatively all retirees could be put in the category of active affiliate and have a process to apply for software access.
 - iv. The Board would like information on the terms (range of number of users; categories of users included in the license agreement, etc.) of the following small sample of software programs: Endnote, SPSS, Graphpad, and Microsoft Office.
 - v. The Board planned to draft a letter to Jane Okech to enumerate its concerns about the proposed policy statement and request supporting data. Then a Board officer may meet with her individually to discuss the draft letter and invite her to a future Board meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: March 15, 2023

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

March 15, 2023

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Present: Taka Ashikaga, Richard Branda, Stephen Cutler, Ruth Farrell, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Judith Van Houten, Rachel Johnson, Dwight Matthews, Alison Pechenick, Mara Saule, Lee Thompson

Absent: Jack McCormack, Beth Mintz

Call to Order: Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 2:08pm

1. Minutes of February 15, 2023, approved as amended
2. Faculty Senate Report (Pechenick) **Faculty Senate Meeting, 2/27/23**
 - a. A national survey is conducted every three years. From the draft minutes:

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) will be distributed to 1st and 4th year students on Wednesday, March 1st. This survey is designed to gain information about the undergraduate experience. The data will be used by the university as a whole and achieving participation of 67% or greater will increase the likelihood of receiving department level data. The survey will be open through May 14th. Alex Yin [Executive Director, Office of Institutional Research and Assessment] provided a link to the NSSE Survey:

- b. The bulk of the meeting was devoted to small group discussions, with participation limited to eligible faculty, as defined by the Faculty Senate bylaws. The faculty were divided into breakout rooms to consider the following questions:
 - 1) *What are the academic initiatives that you would like to see the administration pursue, or the Faculty Senate pursue or advocate for?*
 - 2) *The President and Provost have said that they would like to grow the graduate program at UVM – what are some areas that you would like to see us expanding our graduate education?*
 - 3) *What are your impressions/view on pandemic recovery? Are there areas that you would advise the administration to change policy or increase investment?*
 - 4) *How has this academic year influence your views on these issues? What has gone well and what are you anxious about?*
- c. Motivation for this activity can be found in the Senate minutes here:

https://www.uvm.edu/faculty_senate/2022-2023-faculty-senate-meetings-and-materials

3. United Academics Update
 - a. **Executive Council meeting 03/07/23** (Pechenick)
 - i. The UA Legislative Committee had a constructive day at the Statehouse, met with many legislators. Efforts continue to pass the bill placing faculty member(s) on Boards of Trustees. Vermont State University faculty are also interested. UA requests RFAO encourage its cohort to support this bill by contacting our legislators.
 - ii. Concern was expressed about the well-being of students, due to significantly over-populated dorm rooms.
 - iii. The Contract Administration Committee is very busy addressing a number of the University's alleged contract violations.

- iv. Retired colleague Joel Goldberg will assist bargaining team with upcoming round of full-time contract negotiations. To inform the team, a very productive meeting was held with the lecturer cohort; a tenure cohort meeting is imminent.
 - v. This AAUP Summer Institute will be held this year at UVM.
- b. **UA February 28, 2023 meeting** (Mintz)
- i. The move for faculty representation on the UVM Board is moving along, with a number of sponsors for the bill, this time around.
 - ii. BAC meeting: issues raised include lack of consultation in the switch to CIGNA, retiree access to digital resources, childcare center
 - iii. UA is signing on in support of the proposed legislation to link the # of UVM admissions to the rental vacancy rate in Burlington and requiring that every student should have at least 90 sq feet of living space.
4. University Benefits Advisory Council (Saule, Farrell)
- a. The meeting began with a review of the committee charge by Caitlyn Sisler:
 - i. *The University Benefits Advisory Council (UBAC) serves in an advisory capacity to the Administration concerning policies and decision-making processes that bear on the full range of employee benefits programs at UVM . . . within institutional constraints of projected budget allocations and available resources.*
 - ii. *To review and evaluate the University's benefits programs and to make recommendations to the President and Provost with regard to the modifications of existing employee benefit plans and the design of any new benefit programs.*
 - iii. *To review, on at least an annual basis, a report and analysis from the Office of Human Resources, complete with appropriate data and comparative information regarding:*
 - 1. *Responsiveness of the benefit plans to the needs of faculty and staff, with attention to the needs of UVM's lowest-paid employees*
 - 2. *Competitiveness of the benefit plans with plans of peer and aspirant institution*
 - 3. *Competitiveness of the benefit plans within the regional market*
 - 4. *Cost effectiveness of UVM's plans*
 - iv. *To advise its constituent groups whenever appropriate of changes being contemplated, in advance of decisions to finalize them.*
 - v. *To submit a report to the University Community and other interest parties at the end of each AY.*
 - vi. UBAC Members as of 2/16/23

Ellie Miller	UA/Sociology
Wade Carson	UA/Clinical Professor, Medicine
Katherine Elmer	UA/RSENR lecturer
Michael Casarico	UE/Custodian Services Maintenance Specialist
Julia Shaw	UVMSU/Researcher - Psychiatry
Andrew Frost	UVMSU/Lecturer, Media Tech Art & Art History
TBA	Teamster Rep
Ruth Farrell	RFAO/Retired AVP Research
Mara Saule	RFAO/Retired Dean Libraries
Aimee Gale	Staff Council/Admin Professional ObGyn
Jane Knodell	Faculty Senate/Economics
Guillermo Rodriguez	Faculty Senate/Romance Languages
Genevieve Anthony	Asst Dean Honors College, UBAC Chair
Cara Feldman-Hunt	Assoc. Director Osher Ctr.
Claire Burlingham	Controller
Carrie Hopkins	Budget Analyst - FAB
Steven May	Benefits Consultant/Hickok and Boardman HR Intelligence

Andrea Mast HR Assoc. Chief
Caitlyn Sisler Benefits Director

- b. The only agenda item for this meeting was the election of the chair. The Council elected Genevieve Anthony, Asst. Director, Honors College, to chair UBAC.
 - c. What followed that action was a wide-ranging discussion of benefits issues including the lack of child-care options following the closure of the UVM childcare center, tuition remission and its intersection with financial aid, lack of access to electronic resources for retirees, and retiree medical benefits. Much of the discussion focused on retiree health benefits, including the lack of consultation on both the change from a gap plan to an advantage plan (VBA) and on the change to Cigna; the rocky transition to the Cigna plan, specific benefits on the Cigna plan; and its contract term. The current Cigna contract term was explained as follows: the term includes two one-year renewal options for a total of five years. UVM may cancel without penalty at any time.
 - d. Following the discussion, UBAC members agreed that a retired staff-member should also be appointed to the Council.
5. Discussion of the Cigna Medicare Advantage Plan: key problems and a compilation of issues to be raised at next week's special meeting
- a. The Board reviewed issues and concerns regarding the Cigna Medicare Advantage plan that it has received from members.
 - i. It is difficult to find information specific to our plan, particularly regarding the need for pre-authorization.
 - ii. Members have complained about not getting medical care they are entitled to and denial of procedures that should be covered.
 - iii. The Board questioned whether the Cigna representatives it has been meeting with are in a position in the organization to implement the changes needed by our members.
 - iv. The numerous public relations and marketing materials being sent to members do not address the critical questions they have asked.
 - v. What is the role of the telephone calls from Alegis Care. Are they simply data mining for health information or do they provide value to members' health care.
 - vi. What is the status of the UVM Health network becoming in-network with Cigna.
 - vii. Is there on an update on the problem in Florida and with local physical therapy programs accepting Cigna insurance.
 - viii. There has been some overlap of correspondence from the previous Vermont Blue Advantage plan and Cigna regarding claims.
 - ix. The Board questioned how often members pay a deductible or co-pay unnecessarily and whether Cigna tracks and re-imburses these charges.
 - x. There have been reports of providers being required to call Cigna repeatedly to get evidence of coverage instead of being able to find it easily on-line.
 - xi. The literature from Cigna is confusing about drug cost shares, stating that there is a \$750 out of pocket maximum but elsewhere suggesting a possible total cost of \$7,400 to members.
 - xii. Will there be training of Cigna reps so that the retiree and rep are reading from the same contract? This assumes that we will be receiving a copy of the correct plan/contract/EOC
 - b. Individual Board members then volunteered to lead the discussion of many of these concerns at the special meeting on March 20th.
 - c. Chair Gurdon prepared a summary outline to facilitate the discussion:
 - i. There is widespread frustration with understanding our precise coverage. Even the evidence of coverage on the MyCigna site itself makes it very explicit in the footnote that the information provided there is not a contract and that the terms of the plan document "will control" regarding coverage and limitations. Where are these plan documents for us to consult? This would address many uncertainties.

- ii. One example of Evidence of Coverage uncertainties can be found in the information on pre-authorizations. Our mailed booklet states that for a number of services authorization rules "may apply". Well what does that mean? Would it not be more accurate (and helpful) for it to read "will apply", if that in truth is really the case. There is need for clarity in the presentation of our UVM plan.
 - iii. When will the contract with the University of Vermont Medical Center be finalized?
 - iv. Has there been progress with the Sarasota Hospital System along with other hurdles experienced by some Florida-based colleagues?
 - v. Please explain the role that Alegis Care plays within the Cigna delivery of health care. We have begun to receive automatic calls from Alegis and it is not clear the purpose. What is the relationship between this "benefit" and our continuing relationship with our primary physician and specialists?
 - vi. Clarify whether it is true or not that the provider must put in a call to a Cigna representative prior to a procedure to receive a determination of coverage and the billing? Can evidence of coverage for a particular procedure not be obtained online without going through a human interpreter?
 - vii. Do the coverage and payment denials in the retiree cases relayed to Caitlyn reflect a standard operating procedure on Cigna's part, or are these likely an individual assessor's misunderstanding of our UVM plan coverage? (which circles back to the first bullet in this list).
6. New Business. There was a discussion of software access for our members and whether this issue should be raised with the technology committee of the faculty senate. Beth Mintz will be meeting with Jane Okech regarding the recent proposal from the administration and provide an update.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:07pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: March 20, 2023 at 2pm

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda

March 20, 2023

EXECUTIVE BOARD SPECIAL MEETING

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

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

Absent: Jack McCormack

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

1. RFAO Board Meeting: The meeting was joined by Caitlyn Sisler (Director of Benefits, UVM Human Resources Services), Tyriney Sims-Caudle (CIGNA Client Manager Group Medicare) and Rebecca Wells (CIGNA Medicare Client Account Manager) for further discussion of RFAO member experience with the CIGNA health plan. Prior to this meeting Chair Gurdon submitted a list of member concerns to facilitate the discussion.
2. *There have been reports of providers being required to call Cigna repeatedly to get evidence of coverage instead of being able to find it easily on-line.* If the provider is not contracted, he/she has to call CIGNA for verification of preauthorization coverage. CIGNA is working to make available on-line coverage information if the provider accepts CIGNA but is not contracted in-network. Contracted providers can find this information on-line. The member should let the provider know if preauthorization is needed. CIGNA only requires the same preauthorization as Medicare as determined by CMS. Denial of preauthorization is often caused by provider coding errors, and CIGNA tries to reach out to providers to get the correct code.
3. *It is difficult to find information specific to our plan, particularly regarding the need for pre-authorization.* The most comprehensive document is the 132 page “Evidence of Coverage”, but it is for all True Choice PPOs and is not specific to our UVM plan (it was not sent to members). Below is a link:

[eoc-cigna-true-choice-medicare-with-rx-ppo-egwp \(PDF 1.3 Mb\)](#)

- The “Summary of Benefits” in the 2023 Plan Benefits glossy book – “Retiree Plan Benefits for The University of Vermont” – is based on that generic EOC and includes the specific plan that has been tailored for UVM. This is the official document. The “Evidence of Coverage Snapshot-University of Vermont” (newsprint brochure separate from the glossy) also includes the plan tailored for UVM and serves as a briefer explanation and quicker reference than the Summary.
4. *What is the status of the UVM Health network becoming in-network with Cigna.* The contract is under legal review by lawyers from both parties. Mutual agreement is targeted for mid to late summer. Meanwhile UVM is accepting the plan.
 5. *Is there an update on the problem in Florida and with local physical therapy programs accepting Cigna insurance.* The Sarasota hospital will not accept the plan except for

emergencies. It was noted that less than 1% of providers across the country won't accept the plan. CIGNA will help find other providers in the area. Some members have moved to other health plans to continue with their providers. UVM will not contribute to other health plans for retirees.

We were led to believe that we could keep our current providers in VBA with little disruption in our care. It seems a viable option that in unusual cases UVM should put the Cigna funding for that individual towards an individual alternative plan that gives that person coverage. In cases of hardship, this would alleviate some of the burden of the small fraction of retirees that see it necessary to leave the plan in order to continue their care.

6. *What is the role of the telephone calls from Alegis Care. Are they simply data mining for health information or do they provide value to members' health care.* CIGNA has contracted with different vendors depending on the area of the country. Their goal is to close gaps in medical care. They can review medical records and drugs with members and spend more time than is often available to them with primary care providers. There is no obligation to use the vendors and contact with them can be turned off at MyCigna. Any information the vendors collect stays in the CIGNA system.
7. *Members have complained about not getting medical care they are entitled to and denial of procedures that should be covered.* Providers need to supply clinical documentation and the correct codes. CIGNA will work to straighten out balanced billing. If a procedure is denied, the member should call CIGNA at the telephone number on the member's card. If this does not help, ask to escalate to the account team. If this is not effective, contact the UVM team.
8. Other issues brought to the attention of the CIGNA team were:
 - a. The Evidence of Benefits (EOB) are a month behind on MyCigna.
 - b. There is no CIGNA approved source of hearing aid batteries locally.
 - c. The benefits award cards apparently expire at the end of the year.
 - d. Birchwood Terrace physical therapists are not taking the CIGNA plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:09pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: April 19, 2023, at 2pm

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

April 19, 2023

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

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

Absent: Jack McCormack, Stephen Cutler, Mara Saule

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

1. Minutes of March 15, 2023, and those of special meeting on March 20, 2023, approved as amended
2. RFAO Board Meeting

Jane Okech, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, joined the meeting for further discussion of the software issue. A draft proposal to address and resolve this issue was offered on January 12, 2023, by Simeon Ananou, Chief Information Officer, and Vice Provost Okech. Although the RFAO Board acknowledged that the draft represented progress toward a resolution, there remained significant concerns and reservations. Chief among these was the method of payment for software use by retired faculty and an Information Security review that appeared to imply that retired faculty were less responsible users of UVM IT than other groups such as students, alumni and faculty. Jane opened her comments by saying that she is committed to supporting retired faculty, and that the Provost and UVM value us. Recent evidence of this commitment is her office support for our recent annual meeting and its support for the addition of retired faculty members to the University Benefits Advisory Council. She recognized that the Board was frustrated by the slow progress to resolve this issue, but she was disappointed that the draft was circulated beyond the Board since it was intended for feedback rather than as a final document. She then described a revised proposal that she felt addressed the concerns of the Board. The review process will not change. An application for "active retired faculty" will be submitted to the departmental chair, and then on to the Dean. If the application is denied at the unit level, the applicant can submit an appeal to Jane to assure that the review is fair. The application will be reviewed every 3 years instead of the originally proposed yearly review. Funding for software use will be centralized like all other software use rather than at the unit level. No application should be denied because of cost. She noted that one of the requests by the Board was to review software contracts but she has no control over that area. She recognized that the retired faculty want equitable treatment and that the statement regarding Information Security should be the same for all user groups. The revised proposal will be sent to Chair Gurdon soon. She went on to say that she was disappointed that the original draft proposal was presented to the Faculty Senate Educational & Research Technologies Committee and that Simeon Ananou stated that the assertion at the meeting that "the Chief Information Officer has continually really and what we believe is cited ageism issues with retirees as a reason for denial of access to software" is both inaccurate and out of place. He considers this statement defamatory and requests retraction of the statement with confirmation in writing. The Board responded that the assertion was that the process appeared to be ageism rather than Simeon personally. Members of the Board planned to review the transcript of the meeting and respond appropriately. The Board thanked Jane for advancing this issue. The final issue discussed was the Board's request that retired faculty receive significant notices from the President and Provost. Dwight Mathews will work with the Provost's Office to share the RFAO listserv and work with the Communications Department. It was noted later that the Faculty Senate committee was concerned by the problems brought to its attention about the draft software proposal and requested follow-up.

3. Faculty Senate Report (submitted by Mara Saule): The following are highlights from the March 27 Faculty Senate meeting. The next Senate meeting will be Monday, April 24. After the routine approval of minutes and President Thomas Borchert's introductory comments to the Senate, the following items were announced, discussed, and, when necessary, voted on:
 - a. Senate leadership election results: Evan Eyler was elected Vice President; Tony Julianelle and Ken Allen were elected Members at Large of the Senate Executive Committee. There was a call for nominations for another Member at Large vacancy.
 - b. A new Certificate in Semiconductor Engineering and Physics (CEMS) was approved.
 - c. Resolutions in memoriam were read for Prof. Richard Brandenburg (SBA) and Prof. Neil R. Stout (History).
 - d. The Curricular Affairs Committee and the Student Affairs Committee presented their respective reports.
 - e. An update on Student-Athlete Success and the expanded/renovated Athletic Facility timeline was presented by Prof. John Crock, Faculty Athletics Representative, and Jeff Schulman, Director of Athletics. Slides presented in support of the presentation can be found on the Faculty Senate website as part of the agenda.
 - f. Jay Jacobs, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, presented an early update on Admissions.
4. United Academics Update (Alison Pechenick): During their three most recent meetings, the United Academics Executive Council covered the following topics:
 - a. UVM faculty and staff continue to establish workload details related to transitioning to BrightSpace, the new Learning Management System. Adoption logistics seem less straightforward than expected.
 - b. UVM staff will now be required to use the Chronos time accounting software. Despite the existence of a Staff Council and Staff Union, this decision was taken without any prior staff engagement.
 - c. UVM is considering re-opening the Children's Center to address the inadequate opportunities for childcare in the region.
 - d. Discussions are underway regarding a policy surrounding ownership of research data. Whose intellectual property is it: Stakeholders, researchers, UVM? How to protect sensitive data?
 - e. The Vermont legislature is focused on several pieces of major legislation this session. While UA and other stakeholders worked hard and well, the bills proposing to add Faculty to several of Vermont's higher ed institutions (including UVM) did not "make crossover", i.e., get voted out of the House and Senate education subcommittees for broader consideration. Senator Sanders' outreach representative James Paradissis attended a UA Exec meeting to express the Senator's support for this legislative initiative.
 - f. **Action Item: UA Exec has asked if RFAO Exec would consider writing a statement of support for this initiative, for consideration by those committees. See below for links to the proposed legislation.**
 - g. On April 4, UA hosted Prof. Charles Coombs, SDSU, for a very rewarding workshop on antiracism, social justice, and inclusivity: <https://www.unitedacademics.org/ua-news/2023/4/6/ua-members-discuss-anti-racism-celebrate-labor-spring>
 - h. The excellent co-chair of UA's Contract Administration Committee (CAC) is Ingrid Nelson. She has invited Joel Goldberg and Dan Krymkowski - two UVM faculty retirees and veterans of previous UA bargaining teams - to discuss issues facing retirees. Beth explained the impetus for that invitation: the number of retirees who have directly contacted UA and CAC with questions. Alison proposed that we consider inviting to an RFAO Exec meeting UA's very competent Executive Director, Katlyn Morris (and possibly Ingrid Nelson as well?). The topics for conversation could be a) What concerns are UA hearing from the retiree cohort and b) What (if anything) can UA do for retired faculty in response to these concerns.

Links to bill proposals:

<https://trackbill.com/bill/vermont-senate-bill-116-an-act-relating-to-the-board-of-trustees-of-the-university-of-vermont-and-state-agricultural-college/2385609/>

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2024/H.446>

5. Review of member experiences with our Cigna Medicare Advantage insurance and the development, if needed, of an action plan going forward.
 - a. The Board felt that it should continue to monitor the problems that members are facing with the health care plan and the pervasiveness of the problems. Perhaps they should be collated and put into a database. A significant complication for monitoring is that members are bringing their issues to several groups such as RFAO and individual Board members, UVM HR, and United Academics. At present it appears that many of the early complaints are related to a new program and were temporary.
 - b. The Board needs to have a role in future negotiations regarding health care plans. Having two members on the Benefits Council will be helpful. RFAO needs to work with HR to monitor the effectiveness of the health plan not only for our members but also for staff and compile data for the next contract negotiation.
 - c. One possible metric is how many people have dropped Cigna because of coverage issues. The Board felt that the administration should provide at least bridging health care coverage for those individuals. This is an issue that UA may be able to assist with.
 - d. Other business. It was suggested to invite Caitlyn Sisler to our next meeting to continue monitoring healthcare insurance performance data for all retirees.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:36pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: May 17, 2023, at 2pm.

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

May 17, 2023

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Present: Taka Ashikaga, Richard Branda, Ruth Farrell, Alan Gotlieb, Michael Gurdon, Judith Van Houten, Dwight Matthews, Beth Mintz, Alison Pechenick, Mara Saule

Absent: Stephen Cutler, Jack McCormack, Rachel Johnson, Lee Thompson

Call to Order: Vice-Chair Beth Mintz called the meeting to order at 2:10pm

1. Minutes of April 19, 2023, approved as amended
2. RFAO Board Meeting
 - a. Conversation with UVM Benefits Director **Caitlyn Sisler** relating to feedback from retirees on their experiences with the Cigna Plan.
 - i. Caitlyn Sisler and Janet Metcalf from Human Resource Services joined the meeting. Janet will be taking on a major role with HR Benefits going forward.
 - ii. Hearing aid benefit coverage was discussed. This is outsourced by Cigna to Hearing Care Solutions. Cigna provides this benefit to in-network providers, but since there are none in Vermont, most of our members will be dealing with Hearing Care Solutions. The recommended procedure is to purchase the hearing aids from a provider such as COSTCO and then apply for re-imbusement using the Hearing Care Solution form rather than the Cigna form. Members who have used this benefit have reported that it works well. The hearing aid battery benefit is only in-network and not available in Vermont.
 - iii. HR has received feedback from members that Cigna customer service has been helpful and that escalation usually is not necessary.
 - iv. There was discussion of a member coverage problem as an illustration of something that may come up for others. A specific heart procedure was recommended that is not common but is of proven value in the medical literature. Coverage was denied by Cigna because the procedure was classified as experimental by Medicare. The denial was escalated within Cigna, then referred for independent review outside of Cigna. The denial was upheld, and the conclusion was that denial would occur with any Medicare plan.
 - v. An insurance coverage problem affecting an out-of-state retired staff member was discussed. The issue involved out of pocket payment for medical care and difficulty with reimbursement. The Board noted that many retirees, such as staff members, covered by the Cigna plan are not RFAO members and do not receive our communications. Perhaps they should receive similar information from HR. Caitlyn said that there is an issue with too many communications from Cigna and there needs to be a balance. In practice, retired staff members tend to call HR first and get help with escalation if needed.
 - vi. She noted that Birchwood rehab is willing to accept Cigna.
 - vii. HR staff meet for about an hour once a week with Cigna representatives to review concerns. The general sense is that problems are decreasing in frequency as retirees become more familiar with the plan.
 - b. Faculty Senate report (Mara)
 - i. The April 24, 2023, Faculty Senate meeting was attended, via Teams, by approximately 120 participants. Among other general comments, President Borchert highlighted the Curricular Affairs Committee's recommendation in support of the no-contest termination of the Special Education Minor (in CESS) which is also related to the Substantial Revisions to the Early Childhood Special Education Major. He also pointed to a call for nominations to an

- open seat on the Senate Executive Council [note: an election was held early in May and the election was won by Lizzy Pope].
- ii. A significant resolution and successful vote at this meeting was in support of a Resolution in Support of Open Access and Open Science, an initiative in support of “the free exchange of research and scholarly information.” Through a variety of financial, administrative, and operational incentives, the Senate resolved that “the Faculty Senate calls on the different colleges and schools of the University to develop policies and procedures promoting open access sharing of scholarly output . . .” The full resolution is available via the Faculty Senate website and its “minutes and meeting materials” sections.
 - iii. Another agenda item (not for vote) was a discussion of revisions to the Academic Freedom Policy as it concerns the use of social media, and to align it with the statement about social media provided by AAUP. It is currently under review by UA, and a final revision will be presented for Senate vote at the May meeting.
 - iv. Informational presentations were given about the transition in the UVM sponsored learning management system from BlackBoard to BrightSpace by the Center for Teaching and Learning’s Wendy Verrei-Berenback, and by Richard Cate on the current state of University finances. Regarding UVM’s finances, Vice President Cate specially highlighted the challenges in funding the final phases of the renovation and upgrade of UVM’s athletic facilities.
 - v. Under New Business, Prof. David Feurzig stated that a resolution was being framed for faculty signatures expressing concern about administrative reaction to antisemitic incidents on campus. Donna Harrington reported that the Student Government Association is seeking participation in exploring strategies for the retention of BIPOC faculty.
- c. United Academics update (Beth)
- i. United Academics EC Meeting: May 9th
 - ii. The committee processed the antiracism workshop of a few weeks ago and:
 - 1. Agreed to try to increase awareness of their own behavior
 - 2. Agreed to work on skill development to call each other (kindly) on microaggressions
 - 3. Agreed to use the “interrupt clause” (stopping discussions that have racist – or other negative – overtones)
 - 4. Explored ways of increasing the number of faculty of color hired
 - iii. UVM is introducing a new on-line teaching platform to replace Blackboard and wants summer money for faculty to train over; they have filed a grievance about this.
 - iv. UA endorsed a resolution condemning antisemitism on campus.
- d. University Benefits Advisory Council Update following 4/20/23 UBAC meeting. The first UBAC meetings were principally organizational. The following discussion summarizes the April meeting (Ruth Farrell):
- i. The administration did not appoint a retired staff member to the Council. In a meeting with the Staff Council, Andrea Mast, Associate Chief Human Resource Officer, stated that since retired staff do not have an organized constituent group it wasn’t appropriate. She invited the individual that the Staff Council was recommending for membership to reach out to retired staff to organize a retired-staff constituency group for the administration to consider. Also, the Teamsters have not come forward with a recommendation for a member to join the UBAC.
 - ii. The administration has reviewed and tweaked the language in the Council’s charge (attached).
 - iii. It was clarified that Trent Klingerman, Chief Human Resource Officer as well as Vice President for Legal Affairs, is the conduit to the administration for the UBAC and the two HR personnel on the Council (UVM Benefits Director and Associate Chief Human Resource Officer) are his delegates. Trent Klingerman has not attended a UBAC meeting.

- iv. A large portion of the April meeting was devoted to a presentation about the benefits RFP (request for proposals) process, using dental benefits as an example. We went over the current dental benefit plans' coverage and cost summaries and got an overview of the bid process. It is lengthy, starting with information gathering as early as a year and a half before going for bid and takes many variables into account.
- v. Next meeting UBAC will get an overview of the University's health benefits.
- e. Information on transition to a new email system from Geoff Duke of ETS.
 - i. The Exchange e-mail system is in the process of being transitioned from UVM-owned servers to Microsoft servers in the cloud. The goal is to complete this migration by the end of August.
 - ii. There are about 1600 accounts for retired faculty and staff that will be affected, but only about 800 have been used at least once in the past year. About 100 of the active accounts will be moved each week, starting in early June. The accounts will not be disabled and access will continue during this process. However it may be necessary to make some adjustments to e-mail afterward, and instructions will be sent along. Typical maneuvers to solve problems include clearing server cookies and removing and re-installing the app. Members will get a warning about migration and information by e-mail a few days in advance.
 - iii. Link to information: <https://www.uvm.edu/it/kb/article/transition-to-exchange-online/>
- f. Miscellaneous Business.
 - i. Software access proposal: Jane Okech agreed to incorporate a wording change suggested by the Board in the draft proposal. Subsequently she and Simeon Ananou presented the proposal to the appropriate University committee, where it was approved. The guidelines will take effect July 1, 2023, and will appear in both the RFAO and Provost websites. Beth Mintz will inform the Faculty Senate Educational & Research Technology Committee that the issue is resolved satisfactorily.
 - ii. Retired Scholars Award Program: the budget will remain \$8,000 for AY24.
 - iii. RFAO budget. The RFAO will receive its \$1600 annual budget funding from the Provost's Office. Regarding the spring luncheon, the event's timing will determine the availability of administrative resources to help plan and implement the event. The Provost Office recommended that instead of mailing invitations, electronic invitations be used.
 - iv. Chair Gurdon was contacted by a retired member of the University of Rhode Island faculty. Retired members there are interested in establishing a committee similar to the RFAO.
 - v. Chair Gurdon raised the question of whether a lecture series should be considered. To improve attendance, it might be partnered with alumni. He suggested that one or two members of the Board think about options for discussion at the next meeting.
 - vi. Chair Gurdon suggested that the Board consider changing the meeting format after the summer break to meeting alternately on-line and in person.
- g. New Business. At the next meeting, discuss whether there should be documentation of Board actions between meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:48pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: August 16, 2023

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda