

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

August 16, 2023

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

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

Absent: Stephen Cutler, Alan Gotlieb, Jack McCormack

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

1. Minutes of May 17, 2023, approved as submitted
2. RFAO Board Meeting
 - a. Ingrid Nelson, Associate Professor of Geology and Geosciences, grievance officer for contract issues for United Academics and co-chair of its contract administration committee, was introduced to the Board. She said that in her roles at UA she mainly answered inquiries regarding contract issues. Chair Gurdon invited her to discuss possible overlaps of interest for RFAO and UA.
 - i. A new bargaining year with a new team will begin in January, 2024. The current contract ends June 30, 2024. The Grievance Committee communicates problems to the bargaining team, particularly current gaps in coverage.
 - ii. It is her impression that the administration ignores retirement issues in discussions with UA because retirees are not in the bargaining unit. However UA members have an interest in protecting the interests of retirees because they recognize that they too will retire and face these issues eventually.
 - iii. UA finds that problems with retiree health care access and claims are often brought to its attention. UA also is asked by retirees to look into individually negotiated incentives but it has relatively little leverage outside of the general contract. These Voluntary Retirement Agreements are confidential, which serves to circumvent the CBA.
 - iv. Neither UA nor retirees have direct influence over health plan negotiations, but UA can exert influence politically and through publicity. Bringing issues to legislative committees requires complex interactions and this may involve hiring a lobbyist, which is expensive. UA cannot grieve individual arrangements made by retirees because they are not in the bargaining unit.
 - v. She suggested that RFAO prepare a list of concerns for the bargaining unit. The issues that ultimately are negotiated will depend on priorities, because everything cannot be covered.
 - vi. The Board wanted to bring to the attention of UA the fact that some retirees have no University supported health care because Cigna is not accepted by some health providers. The Board hoped that UA could look into this problem.
 - b. United Academics report. Alison Pechenick will join the legislative committee of UA. There now will be three retiree members.
 - c. Faculty Senate: Mara Saule.
 - i. The Faculty Senate's final meeting of the 2022-23 academic year was held on May 18, 2023, with approximately 115 attendees via Teams. Meetings for the 2023-24 academic year will be held alternating in person meetings with Teams meetings, starting on Monday, August 28 to be held in person (Keller Room, Ifshin Hall); the September meeting will be held via Teams.
 - ii. In addition to routine reports and conferral of degrees, the passing of Emeritus Prof. Canute VanderMeer was recognized through a Resolution in Memoriam.

- iii. The bulk of the May 18th meeting focused on two major resolutions. The previously discussed revision of the University Policy on Academic Freedom was slightly amended and passed. A discussion of a proposed resolution on the “University’s Response to the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) Investigation” prompted lengthy discussion. At their core, the faculty’s concerns were prompted by an OCR investigation into several bias incidents directed at Jewish students, the University’s response to those incidents, and subsequent lack of transparency by the UVM administration regarding release of the OCR report, its observations, and recommendations. The full resolution is available with the Senate minutes of the April 18th meeting. After extensive discussion and several amendments, the resolution passed.
 - iv. Discussion of the Catamount Core Curriculum Report was deferred until Fall 2023.
 - d. University Benefits Advisory Council: Ruth Farrell. There has been no meeting since the last scheduled meeting in April. The sense is that UBAC is relatively powerless so far with a heavy administration influence on the committee. Going forward it potentially may provide insights into future contract plans by UVM and be a strong voice regarding those plans.
 - e. UVM Foundation: Mara Saule. There is a sense that the Foundation will be attentive to RFAO and retiree member concerns and interests. The Foundation has a lecture series for alumni that highlights faculty members. There is a possibility that this series may coordinate in the future with a RFAO lecture series.
 - f. Discussion of lecture series. Chair Gurdon reminded the Board that there have been no lectures at our meetings since the last General Meeting. Renewing a lecture series would show members that the Board has additional roles. One possibility is to publicize UVM lectures that are available to retirees. There has been a problem informing our members of general UVM communications because the software is designed primarily for communications with students and faculty. The library will be coordinating campus-wide lectures. RFAO may be able to partner with the library to inform our members of these lectures. In addition Mara will express our interest in affiliating with the UVM Foundation lecture series. It will be important that this not be seen as primarily a fund-raising enterprise.
 - g. Treasurer’s Report: Branda
 - i. The RFAO has available to it a modest fund that originally derived from AAUP activity.
 - ii. It is titled: RFAO, a business account, At TD Bank
 - iii. Michael Gurdon and Richard Branda have access, and the Mailing Address is 385 School St, Shelburne.
 - iv. The account has been dormant for several years and was activated by a modest donation. The bank recommends yearly activity. The account will be dormant if there is no activity for 3 years.
 - v. It has accrued \$0.41 of interest over the past 2 years.
 - h. Health care plan issues.
 - i. A delay in coverage of RSV vaccine by Cigna was brought to the attention of the Board. Chair Gurdon communicated this concern to Caitlyn Sisler in HR, and a mechanism for prompt coverage was identified.
 - ii. The Board proposed that a letter to the administration be drafted to bring to its attention that some retirees have no UVM contribution to their health plan because of their geographic locations and that UVM has a responsibility to those retirees. Judy Van Houten, Alison Pechenick and Beth Mintz will prepare a draft letter.
 - iii. Members are still reporting problems with coverage of hearing aids by CIGNA.
 - i. Software access. There is a need for a common application form for use by retirees. Jane Okech will prepare one.

- j. Board meetings in person or alternating with videoconference. There was agreement by the Board that there is value to in-person meetings and they should be held periodically. There was a preference for a larger meeting room with more modern ventilation.
- k. The Board needs to plan for the next General Meeting and elections. There is a need to solicit nominations and to provide a 2 week voting interval, probably by the first week in October, with the goal of holding the General Meeting in early November.
 - i. The Current officers are:
 - 1. Michael Gurdon, President
 - 2. Beth Mintz, Vice-President
 - 3. Richard Branda, Secretary-Treasurer
 - ii. The additional elected board members are:
 - 1. Stephen Cutler
 - 2. Alan Gotlieb
 - 3. Rachel Johnson
 - 4. Alison Pechenick
 - 5. Lee Thompson
 - iii. There are 6 *ex officio* members (Jack McCormack, Taka Ashikaga, Ruth Farrell, Judy Van Houten, Dwight Matthews, and Mara Saule)
- l. The next meeting is scheduled for **September 20, 2023, at 2pm**. Michael Gurdon will be absent and the meeting will be chaired by Vice-Chair Beth Mintz. Richard Branda will be absent and Judy Van Houten will take notes.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:48pm

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda