

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

November 15, 2023

Video Conference on Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

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

Absent: none

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

1. Minutes of October 18, 2023, and Annual General Meeting November 2, 2023, approved as amended.
2. RFAO Board Meeting
 - a. Faculty Senate report. Chair Gurdon attended the October meeting which was a rare in-person only gathering.
 - i. Presentation of degrees from the Graduate College
 - ii. There was an action item, being a Resolution in favor of Eclipse Day on April 8, intended to encourage alternative instruction for most classes, but which would also permit instructors who hold Monday-only courses or labs to petition to hold those if they believed that cancellation would adversely impact student learning. The Resolution passed on a 51 to 6 vote.
 - iii. Provost Prelock led a discussion of a draft document describing the university's Academic Success Goals. This is a process commenced in Spring 2020 and updated this Fall to support President Garimella's "strategic areas of impact", reflecting our priorities in Teaching and Learning, in Knowledge Creation, and in Engagement. She explained the evolution of the collaborative process across campus as well as the action steps that are being clarified. Questions from the assembly focused on the challenge of evaluating and rewarding interdisciplinary research.
 - iv. Dean Bryn Geffert presented on the reorganization of departments within the library system. The core issue is that many of the new hires have position descriptions which don't have natural homes within the current organizational structure. This is most evident in a lessened emphasis on purchasing (e.g. in cutting journal subscriptions) and consequently greater emphasis on borrowing. Several questions from senators revolved around concerns over support for the Health Sciences Dana Library).
 - b. United Academics update. (Mintz) United Academics is preparing for bargaining and the team will submit its final platform to membership on December 15th.
 - i. President Garimella is up for renewal of his 5 year contract and, as yet, there has been no announcement to that effect and no outreach for participation in the review process.
 - ii. UA has filed a record number of grievances this year with more coming.
 - iii. Filed an Unfair Labor Practice with the VLRB for the way it implemented its new classroom software.
 - iv. Underfunding of the university is really showing e.g. no soap in bathroom
 - v. Workload creep is taking its toll.
 - vi. UA leadership will bring these issues to the Dec board meeting.
 - vii. UA is partnering with retirees in multiple ways in addition to Alison on the Legislation Committee (e.g. retired faculty member working on Bteam in the role of consultant; retired faculty member to be on the Contract Administration Committee).
 - c. University Benefits Advisory Council. (Ruth) Notes from Oct 19th meeting:

- i. The UBAC met with CHRO Chris Lehman on October 19th. By way of introduction, he shared the following:
 - 1. One of his first actions was a reorganization of HR. He has created a much flatter structure with 6 direct reports.
 - 2. One of his top priorities is streamlining the hiring process – he believes that the many steps in the current process have resulted in the loss of potential new hires.
 - 3. He characterized his approach to benefits as one of not taking away benefits but in adding options.
 - 4. Discussion specific to UBAC and its role followed. Chris Lehman expressed an interest in utilizing UBAC for input, particularly given his unfamiliarity with higher education, as a sounding board, and as a group to vet HR communications.
- ii. The council then discussed soliciting input from its various constituencies regarding benefits priorities. A small group, Genvieve Anthony, Cara Feldman-Hunt, and Katherine Elmer, agreed to meet to begin work on a broad communication to the University about UBAC and its role, followed by a survey/focus group.
- iii. Other notables: UBAC is still lacking membership from several constituencies.
- iv. The November meeting has been cancelled because of scheduling conflicts. The next meeting is in December.
- v. The RFAO board discussed having Chris Lehman meet with it soon.
- d. Review of the Annual General Meeting. The consensus was that the speaker was excellent, with positive feedback from members. It was agreed that this format should be continued. The low attendance was disappointing. Prior to COVID there were luncheon meetings with good attendance. This could be considered for a spring meeting or the Annual General Meeting.
- e. Letter to President Garimella: status and next steps (Gurdon) The letter was sent on October 24th. When there was no forthcoming response, Chair Gurdon sent a second letter reminding the President that the Board was awaiting his response. Chair Gurdon then was contacted by Chris Lehman who indicated that he would look at the data with Caitlyn Sisler and follow up with Chair Gurdon.
- f. Discussion of retiree-relevant issues which might be conveyed to the UA negotiations committee. Formulation of the negotiations for the collective bargaining agreement will begin in December. The RFAO Board should send a memo for consideration by the bargaining team. Although retirees are not covered by the contract, parts of the contract are relevant to retirees such as HR benefits (parking, library access and e-mail) and health benefits. Drawing the attention of UA and active faculty to retiree issues highlights them.
 - i. There is continuing concern that e-mail access might be curtailed by the administration, and the Board should call attention to this concern. E-mail access is critical to retirees for communication with UVM. Tech support for retirees should be requested.
 - ii. The administration apparently continues to attribute the campus parking shortage at least in part to retirees and this could become an issue again. The Board has requested that data be collected on retiree parking utilization but this has not been done. The sense of the Board is that on any given day few retirees are parking on campus.
 - iii. Retirees have guaranteed access to library books but it is not clear that this extends to on-line books and journals.
 - iv. Retirees should be involved in health care benefits discussions. UA should collaborate with retirees on the wording of the contract regarding health care.
- g. Determination of the optimal modality for our Board meetings during the remainder of the academic year. During and since COVID the Board has met electronically, which has been efficient. In discussion the Board favored meeting periodically in person with electronic support for members who reside at a distance. The Senate Conference Room was not considered satisfactory for an in-

person meeting given its size. Ralph Budd will look into an adequate meeting room at the Medical School with the goal of having a hybrid meeting on January 17th and again in the spring.

h. Other business

- i. Retired Scholars Awards: Applications were reviewed by a committee consisting of Alan Gotlieb, Lee Thompson, Taka Ashikaga and a Provost's Office nominee. The successful submissions are recorded below.
 1. Daniel Baker (Associate Professor Emeritus of Community Development and Applied Economics). To support the project "Utilization, Impacts and Sustainability of the Ecological Sugar Project: Assessment and Recommendations for Technology Transfer". The award will assist in funding field interviews by local partners of 30 sugar producers in Honduras regarding their use of adapted maple syrup evaporators, utilizing a survey instrument developed by Baker. The findings will be submitted to a respected rural development publication. \$2000
 2. Cameron Davis (Senior Lecturer Emerita of Art and Art History). To complete the set design for Emergent Universe Oratorio (composer Sam Guarnaccia). In partnership with Albany Pro Musica, the EUO Set Design is a video animation design projected onto a screen behind the choir, orchestra, and orator throughout the 80 minute performance which is scheduled to take place at RPI in Troy, NY. \$2000
 3. Scott Morriscal (Professor Emeritus of Biochemistry, and of Microbiology & Molecular Genetics). To cover publication costs for a journal article to be based on research data already collected on the virus but not yet publicly available. The running title is "Expression, purification & characterization of cyanobacteriophage-encoded glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase enzyme". \$2000
 4. Robert Rodgers (Professor Emeritus of Classics). To support research assistance in the verification of citations from medieval manuscripts and other publications. This will facilitate the timely completion of a Critical Edition of *Res Rusticae* which Rodgers has under contract with Oxford University Press and its Classical Texts series. \$1000
- ii. Retirees are not receiving newsworthy announcements from UVM or the administration. Part of the problem is that these announcements come from Communications and may include information not relevant to retirees. It may be necessary to develop another listserv for members who want these announcements since some complain of too many contacts on the current listserv.
- iii. The Board discussed polling members about their academic activities to demonstrate to the administration that retirees continue to contribute to the academic enterprise. Ralph Budd and Dwight Matthews will draft a survey to include research activities, mentoring and committee membership.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:21pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: **January 17, 2024 at 2pm; there will be no December meeting.**

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda