



THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT **STAFF COUNCIL**

Staff Council President's Report

Board of Trustees
Friday June 4, 2021

Prepared by
Caleb Gilbert, Staff Council President

This is the last report I will make to you as President of Staff Council, as we'll be transitioning this summer to newly elected officers—President Jon Reisenweaver and Vice President Laura Clayton. It could also be the last report you'll receive from Staff Council in its current configuration, as we await the outcomes of unionization efforts.

A successful union drive for either of the two new potential bargaining units would greatly impact the breadth and shape of our representative body. However, it would not change the mission of Staff Council, “...to serve as an advocate for staff by seeking out and responding to their ideas and concerns, representing them to the University administration, and keeping staff informed of University initiatives.”

Although we have often received feedback from our constituents criticizing our ability to deliver the kinds of changes that many staff desire, our role in Staff Council has never been to implement policy—that is the role of administrators. Our job is to make sure the collective voice of staff is heard by those administrators as they navigate decisions and choices that will shape our community, business, and culture. Staff will not have all the right answers about each institutional decision, but we will often have the right questions.

My question to you as I depart this office is: What can the Board of Trustees do to ensure that the voices and questions of staff will continue to be heard by campus leadership, regardless of the pending union election outcomes?

As our society transitions away from an era of complicity with racist structures and towards more inclusive models of governance oriented around racial and social justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, my concern for the adequate representation of staff voices is more relevant than ever. It is my sincere belief that going forward, successful institutions will be those that embrace the energy and commitment of our era’s highest ideals to reshape institutional priorities.

Staff are watching closely as our campus leadership takes us further into this era of reawakened societal demand for social and racial justice. As we navigate together beyond the pandemic, staff are also anxious to hear how UVM administrations plans to handle vital polices, such as those affecting childcare and telework.

Above all, we are wondering what administration will do to ensure staff continue to be heard.

This is an open question for the Board of Trustees, the administrative leadership, and our newly elected Staff Council leadership team to consider. It has been an honor to serve in this role, and I look forward to seeing our university pursue greatness inclusively.