

**Questions Gathered by Staff Council Representatives  
for the Q&A with Senior Administration  
University of Vermont, July 2020**

**Budgets & Salary Cuts**

- 1) I would like clarification on the justification to not deeply consider that people making under 100,000 a year in Chittenden County have significant cost of living challenges – and as such, the brackets outlined for the staff wage cuts disproportionately effect these staff; head of households and single parents; and BIPOC. There is not justification for a 5% wage cut for the \$80,000 to 100,000 bracket. UVM should be exercising a higher wage cut for \$100,000 to 150,000 and then for 150,000 and up. It is not equitable to suggest that a cut to someone making 200,000 a year is simply a larger amount of money as given as an example in their response to staff council. The way that cut is experienced (groceries, car payment, medications, kids in college, housing) is not proportional. They have more discretionary money and options. UVM is suggesting that they save jobs on the backs of their most vulnerable employees (those making under 100,000 a year) and doing so with a population that is not represented. Furthermore, they are not addressing the issues faced by the BIPOC staff who disproportionately are called on to step up be of service without compensation.
- 2) During the Staff Council meeting on June 9th, someone asked how the salary reductions aligned with Our Common Ground to which Richard Cate responded "Even Our Common Ground relies on a certain amount of resources." This sentiment comes across as the budget being our guiding principle rather than respect, integrity, innovation, openness, justice, and responsibility. If we have to wait for enough "resources" to hold these values paramount, then we are failing as a University. My question is, do you agree that Our Common Ground cannot be followed if the resources do not exist? Could we get some kind of assurance that Our Common Ground will continue to be a guiding force moving forward, even if we continue to face economic hardship?
- 3) I would like to know what is being done to ensure both represented and non-represented staff are equally sharing the burden of these new cuts. If there isn't parity here, surely it will fuel another push to unionize.
- 4) Why is staff facing permanent salary cuts while management/leadership is only for a year?
- 5) Do they foresee offering another early retirement package next year or later for those of who are just shy of being eligible?

- 6) Are they looking into cutting more benefits such as tuition remission or increasing insurance cost paid by the employee?
- 7) Will they be looking at salaries of those they cut who now have added responsibilities due to hiring freezes?
- 8) When will other FY21 salaries be announced for faculty (F/T union, P/T union and non-union), faculty-administrators (Deans, Associate Deans, Chairs) and administrators (President, Provost, Associate Provosts, Vice Presidents)? What parity will they have with the staff announced decreases?
- 9) Can we have a list of administration who are giving up the voluntary portion of their salary, and those who are not?
- 10) Please explain why the construction is continuing on the athletic campus. (Related) We are not raising tuition, but we are charging a fee to students to pay for this construction? Why not halt it to save money?
- 11) Please explain why in this climate Police services will be receiving raises while faculty and staff take cuts to their pay.
- 12) As staff salaries fall below a livable wage, can you still call that equitable treatment, when others are making (after cuts) well over 100,000?
- 13) Families that have both partners working for UVM are doubly committed, and yet UVM is implementing a salary cut that is a double penalty. Have you considered accommodation to pay cuts that hit the same family twice?
- 14) The way that decisions are being made and communicated are making me feel that I need to look for another job and leave the University after being a dedicated employee for over a decade. How do the decisions that are being made result in a positive climate for employees and how do you plan to regain the trust of employees to avoid the cost of replacing employees who decide to leave as well as paying out the vacation time on the books for those who leave prior to June 30, 2021? While removing the vacation payout is a cost-saving measure in the long-run, have you considered the implications on the FY21 budget now that there is a clock on those contemplating leaving or retiring from UVM?
- 15) Why is salary equity the only factor being taken into consideration with the cost-cutting measures? There are unfair disparities across the university in how these cuts are being applied (for example, faculty cuts only for 1 year, staff cuts are permanent, etc.), so it just doesn't make sense to preserve equity in one area when it's not being preserved in all areas. For example, grant-funded positions should not be subject to pay cuts as a cost-cutting measure because then indirects will be lower – necessitating more cuts in a

vicious cycle. It feels like these decisions are being made too quickly and in a vacuum without input from a wide range of stakeholders.

- 16) The earned time or vacation time should respectfully not be eliminated. Rather, doesn't it make more sense to phase this new UVM HR policy in with new hires and not impact existing (unrepresented) staff that have been planning on this payout upon retirement? This has been seen as a payout for those individuals that have had to accept lower annual salaries than comparative employees in the private sector for this demographic area. Another option would be to provide existing employees a "one-time" payment of this earned time. Right now, there is so much accrued vacation on the UVM books that the efficiency of the University, especially when school is back in session, will be reduced. Many individuals will be taking their earned time up to the mandated July 1, 2021 deadline. There has to be staff on-site to perform the existing jobs. With everyone on vacation, who will be at UVM to perform the necessary duties to safely, efficiently and effectively run this University for our students? There have been so many budget cuts over the years that campus departments are already very lean with support / front-line staff.
- 17) It is sickening that the administration has taken away pay-out of vacation time if one were to leave UVM. That accrual has been hard earned and it is completely disgusting that they would come up with that idea. Some staff are not even allowed to take their vacations except for very specific times in the year, so they have built it up over time and now they are basically getting it stolen from them. It's shameful.
- 18) I just received my salary reduction letter. I wasn't expecting one because I went to .8 FTE on April 1, 2020. However, I was told that calculations were based on the 1.0 FTE. THAT IS NOT WHAT I EARN!!! Care to comment on the fairness of this decision?
- 19) While I support the salary reduction for all staff on campus instead of laying off some staff, it would be a little difficult to motivate to do more work with less salary for this coming year. Would you consider to give us some kinds of one-time extra vacation hours? This can be separated from existing vacation/personal/cultural hours for the staff whose experience salary reductions w/expiration date.
- 20) Efficiencies of Central Admin Offices: We should look into the efficiencies and effectiveness of the current central administrative support. Under the IBB, all academic units have been working hard to generate more revenue and reduce expense, but we have not seen the improvement or changes among the central administrative offices. A number of required documents is increasing every year. We manage SO MUCH paperwork and they go through many people. There must be room for an improvement.
- 21) I will be missing the cut off date for the Early Retirement for Staff by 4 days. The cut off date is 9/15/2005 but I was hired on 9/19/2005. I asked HR about a possible exception to

this and I was told that this would not be possible. Would it be possible to have a grace period instituted one week before or one week after the 9/15 date?

- 22) Richard Cate's notice informed the staff that this budget cuts did not have much to do with the actual pandemic situation. That being said, why did UVM not defer the "tuition freeze" when it would make more sense for this budget shortfall? I do not believe the general public nor UVM students would object to a deferment, since the pandemic situation is wide spread. That \$8 - \$9 million dollars would be very helpful, right now. It was also said that these budget cuts would not be "on the back" of UVM staff employees. What changed, President Garimella?
- 23) I am horribly frustrated at the blatant disregard (displayed by Richard Cate's email on budget problems) for the feelings of our UVM community and especially our Black and Brown colleagues. I don't disagree that we need to cut, nor with the cuts that were made. However, to have communicated so abruptly during such a terrible time was insensitive at best. Why didn't all campus leaders know this was coming? Why weren't people who are known for their compassion involved in how these decisions should be communicated? The distrust this process engendered is huge. I am incredibly loyal to UVM and know we will have to suffer to survive, but I expect more respect and engagement.
- 24) The added stress in the last two weeks with the pay-cuts and lack of forth coming details have made this an even more challenging time. I am struggling to see anything strategic about the way the budget issues are being handled and am very concerned that pay-cuts on the backs of the unrepresented staff (myself included) are going to be the "go-to" solution.
- 25) Was restructuring benefits considered before reducing jobs and/or pay?
- 26) I wonder how UVM plans to retain hardworking reliable non-represented staff when the administration continues to take away the benefits that set it apart from other institutions/employers that pay better? UVM has been able to get away with lower salaries for years because of the benefits it offers, but this is soon no longer going to be a viable response for the administration. UVM used to have the best and least expensive health benefits in the state. I believe that although we still have affordable and good benefits they are no longer the best and only comparable with other places. I anticipate our costs going up again in the new year and possibly making them more expensive than places like UVMC. Which also means another salary decrease in the next few months. And now the new rule about no pay out for ANY vacation time accrued. It is disappointing that in order to earn a livable wage one can't rely on hard work and yearly salary increases, but there is a need to transition into other positions to get a salary increase for a more equitable and livable wage.

## **Child Care Center**

- 27) Why was the childcare work group formed AFTER the closing CCS instead of using the work group to better inform your decision about the closure?
- 28) Regarding the decision to close the Campus Children's School, why has a childcare work group been established now, instead of a year ago prior to the decision to close the school in an attempt to save the school? Also, why was CCS's IBB status not switched to a Support Center under IBB modeling in an attempt to offset the debt due to the university's space fee charge?
- 29) As for the purpose of the UVM Childcare Work Group, the December 2020 deadline for the report is six months away and not helpful for employees/ families in need of care now. Why is the deadline for the report so far out and corresponding with the deadline for when all federal COVID-19 relief funding will have to have been spent by?
- 30) Closing the day care and then saying there will be a committee to look for solutions, that won't have any suggestions until December isn't sufficient for those folks being immediately impacted. Not allowing people to give their sick/leave time to others and then also saying we lose our vacation time if we have to leave UVM is antithetical to caring about staff in the coronavirus moment we are in.
- 31) How do you intend to use the work group's report to create real, tangible early education schooling solutions for employees, families, undergraduate students, EE faculty, and children?
- 32) Why has the President and Provost not replied to our CCS parent group's repeated requests to meet?
- 33) If faculty and staff are unable to find childcare in the fall or public schools close again due to COVID how will you change policies so faculty and staff do not have to use personal vacation or sick time to cover their absence from work when they are caring for their children?
- 34) Why was UVM's Campus Children's School not made a Support Center under the IBB model in order to offset the \$130+K annual charge by the university (as this would have helped offset a large portion of the deficit). Also, all businesses, schools, and places of employment are facing the same COVID challenges regarding space and regulations. Why did UVM choose to close a school due to the challenge of COVID instead of face the challenge and create a solution?
- 35) I feel completely unvalued by this University, especially given that my child is now directly affected. Fortunately I feel that my supervisor and department head is working

hard to make all our staff feel that our work is important. Other than a University-wide e-mail that contained no information, University leadership has not responded to the supporters of CCS with acknowledgement of our concerns and the issues regarding the closure of the school. How do you maintain that you value input and Our Common Ground but you have not respected these members of the UVM Community with a response to something that not only directly impacts us but also our children?

- 36) Need the administration to stop making inequitable decisions! I know have to decide how to put my child in an early childhood development center, with someone who is not qualified/state approved, or quit my job...real cool UVM! I already work my tail off for a sub par salary and now I'm being asked to work harder for less money!
- 37) All businesses, schools, and places of employment are facing the same COVID challenges regarding space and regulations. Why did UVM choose to close a school due to the challenge of COVID instead of face the challenge and create a solution?

### **Return to Campus**

- 38) Will the university be liable for anyone who is infected by Covid that is traced to contact on campus? Or will we have to sign a waiver to return to work, releasing the university from all fault?
- 39) With the upsurge in Covid-19 cases across the country, and UVM expecting thousands of out-of-state students to return to campus soon, will UVM protect the Burlington and campus community by requiring mandatory testing of all staff, faculty and students prior to classes restarting on Aug 31?
- 40) I would like to know/understand the rationale why numbers of active cases on campus will not be shared with the campus community. Privacy was cited but when it was the mumps a few years ago, the community was informed – and that's for something with a vaccine that most of the community has received. I think we owe it to our UVM community and their health and well-being to be transparent and allow folks to make their own informed decisions (particularly those who are not high-risk, but moderate risk).
- 41) Is there a threshold of active cases that will prompt us to move back to remote operations?
- 42) I have asked Physical Plant as well as Senior Admin about if there will be an upgrade to the ventilation systems in the spaces used for exercise due to the additional expiration. The blanket answer I keep getting is that UVM is not upgrading any ventilation systems or filters. No one seems to have information on what other standards should be in place

for indoor exercise, as this is beyond the general CDC guidelines. I am concerned for our student-athletes and those who take classes and workout in our facility. How is UVM researching adequate standards for ventilation beyond the CDC guidelines, and how are they supporting departments to implement best practices for ventilation in spaces where people are exercising?

43) I work in an office space that has little to no ventilation-how will office spaces such as this be addressed?

### **Inclusiveness and Transparency**

44) Front-line staff are hurting and angry. I think that being given the opportunity to be meaningfully represented in committees and processes, and so to be able to contribute to eventual decisions, is an important way to address this. Would you consider making a commitment to including lower-positioned staff on important committees whose purview extends across campus?

45) UVM Administration is not being transparent nor inclusive with the university community (eg. Staff Council) in finding solutions for UVM's systemic budget shortfalls. Why will UVM Administration not engage the entire university community in proposing, vetting, and implementing budget solutions?

46) We the staff, especially women and BIPOC, deserve more of a voice in the decisions of the University. The white patriarchy has failed us once again.

47) Faculty and Staff would appreciate if Central administration could provide more insight to their processes not just the final outcome.

48) Will all of the questions submitted be organized and typed up with their answers and sent out or posted for all staff/employees to see?

49) Faculty and Staff would appreciate if Central administration could have and provide more awareness to their processes, time frames and setting expectations.

50) Would be appreciated that communications be sent in a more considerate manor, not just 4:30 or later on Fridays.

51) Why is the communications team (not) provided information and then their comments make the University look bad and like things are being hidden? On May 28, a statement made by Enrique Corredera was published in the Burlington Free Press, ""to date, no permanent positions have been eliminated in response to the COVID-19 crisis"" which appeared in the paper on May 29, the same morning that the teachers, staff and parents of

CCS were notified of its closure."

- 52) Why are you both noticeably absent in the support of Richard Cate during this salary and benefit reallocation process? Thank you.
- 53) To me, the bigger question with these types of decisions is whether senior leaders like the President, Provost, and Vice Presidents are using an equity lens when making these kinds of decisions. Specifically, are they asking themselves, will this decision have a disproportionate impact on those most vulnerable within our community? If so, I do not think illogical decisions like the salary reductions would have been made.
- 54) Moving forward, what plans do the President and other senior leaders have for reviewing our University's policies and their impact on community members? Will there be a comprehensive review at all levels? If not, why not?
- 55) What does the anti-racism training and work look like at the administrative level?
- 56) The Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion recently hosted a miniseries on systemic racism. What is administration doing to audit their polices and the ways decisions are being made?

### **Additional Comments & Statements**

- 57) Will Richard Cate be reprimanded for his racist comments in a staff council meeting?
- 58) My morale is at an all-time low and I'm struggling with mental and physical health issues that have been worsening with my decreased time outside, less social interaction, and worse ability to exercise due to COVID-19. I feel completely alone and lost, and on top of all that I now feel like my career is going nowhere here because budget cuts mean I won't get a raise or even a cost-of-living increase for multiple years. That's an impossible situation for someone who is at the very beginning of their career--if I can't get a raise now, I'll be years behind at my next job when they ask me what I was making before and I have to give them the wage of someone fresh out of college rather than a professional with a few years of experience. I took this job on the assumption that it would provide me mobility--but that is off the table now. Between the financial instability here and senior leadership's consistent failures to listen to and thoughtfully answer tough questions about race, class and privilege.
- 59) I need my salary and my colleagues' salaries not to get cut, or at least get cut equitably with a higher cut proportionate with salary.
- 60) Hey UVM Senior Staff..... Good God,!! Honestly, I know you are all a bunch of bean counters and engineers with no actual training or ineffective leadership training, but use the people you have working for you who do know how to do this. Get a pulse from your



employees, to get a clue on how to talk, build relationships and make hard decisions. You are leaders of people and intellectual growth, not of widgets and a task list of problems to solve. Its fine that that you don't know how to do this. [Actually, it's not, you should have these skills already to have your jobs, but you don't and that's ok for the current timeframe] You DO have people on campus who can help train you, proofread your work, remind you to talk to people, to lead with heart counts not head counts. I could go on and on about how many GOOD skilled people are at UVM that you as senior leadership are not using to HELP you, help our students and help our whole community. Everything is really hard right now, we get it, we are all in this. But WOW get a damn clue! Communicate early, often, transparently and with empathy for the person behind the email account.

- 61) I do not feel fairly treated by the University, and the lack of any transparency about budget and budgeting is unfortunate. I have worked here for decades, am grateful to have worked here--and am seeing a great deal of inequity for UVM staff. I see that women are being unfairly impacted as well, both as in the below 60K pay range and since we are often the primary caregivers in the home. Thus telecommuting can be more challenging, and the loss of the childcare center is yet another blow. I do appreciate the work of the staff council, especially since I do not have the resource of union representation.
- 62) Richard Cate's email last week broke a lot of us... We know we are very lucky to have jobs and benefits still - and our lives and our health; however, to be informed we will be making less for more work during a time when most of us are giving a lot of sweat and tears to keep things running and moving forward...It just broke a lot of us. And during our current social unrest and the pandemic? Feeling low, Staff Council. Many of us are feeling really low, right now.