

UVM Staff Council Monthly Meeting Minutes
February 2, 2020
12:05-1:30 PM
Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting

**Please note that the content below is in summary form only;
for the full context the video recording of the meeting must
be referenced, available on the [Staff Council website](#).**

Members Present

Heather Allard, Barbara Asiimwe, Brendan Andrews, Tatiana Andrievskaya, April Berteau, Robert Bolyard, Amanda Broder, Kristen Cella, Laura Clayton, Stephen DeVoe, Jenna Emerson, Bech Evans, Caleb Gilbert, Cheryl Herrick, Claire McCollough, Katherine McGinn Hall, Nichole Hathaway, Alex Howe, Rejeanne Jalbert, Mindy Kear, Jennie Keenan, Cindy Lee, Jen O'Donnell, O'Donnell, Michael O'Sullivan, Holly Pedrini, Jon Reisenweaver, Carri-Ann Rock, Allison Spain, Joe Speidel, Katherine Spence, Emily Taylor, Bridget Tully, Kenneth Viglucchi, Erin Wertlieb

Staff

Alan Shashok, Elisabeth Blair

Call to Order

President Caleb Gilbert called the meeting to order at 12:06.

Approval of Minutes

January 2020 minutes were approved.

Committee Updates

Personal and Professional Development Committee (PPD)

PDF committee will be meeting later this month to review 9 applications. A recent meeting with Richard Cate means there will be some updates soon hopefully on expanding tuition remission benefits. The edu@uvm planning meeting was held; there are about 10 proposals. It will be virtual and probably spread out over the course of about 4-6 weeks in March/April, 2 days per week.

Social Committee

Virtual bingo is still being considered. Virtual trivia will be launched this week, as will a number of Valentine's Day-related discounts from former Holiday Bazaar vendors. A discount with the Vermont International Film Festival (VTIFF) has been negotiated and is posted on the Staff Council website. Skate Night is scheduled for Friday March 26th from 6-8PM, with a maximum attendance of 25 people. 75 tickets to a late Boston Red Sox September 26th Sunday game against the Yankees have been reserved, without having to make payment.

Community Engagement Committee (CE)

The book club met and consisted of 46 people. It was a cross-divisional group engaging in discussions about breaking down cis-hetero patriarchy, as well as how colonialist thought impacts our lives. The Committee discussed how to best disseminate information to constituents, and best practices for SC Representatives to ensure folks stay informed beyond just *Staffline*, and to increase awareness of who each constituent's representative is.

Compensation, Benefits, and Budget Committee (CBB)

Announced today in a letter from President Garimella was news of the reinstatement of salaries. Caleb spoke about this. Human Resource Services (HRS) is working to get specifics to people, and right now there are still many questions. His sense is UVM prepared for the worst but did not ultimately get the worst. In a conversation with the President this morning, he feels/thinks staff's contributions to the institution (supporting students, taking on two roles during the job freeze, etc.) have been important for helping the university weather the past year. This restitution may not be enough, especially with regards to the lack of cost-of-living raises for those making under \$45k. For now, let's celebrate this as a victory, because for many people this is very meaningful right now. A huge thank you to CBB for their hard work.

One thing President Garimella noted in particular was that hundreds of study-abroad students stayed enrolled at UVM, which was somewhat unexpected.

Discussion of the Salary Reinstatement

Comment: There are many complex feelings right now – feeling thrilled yet also feeling confused about why and how this came about. Partly it must have come about as a result of our challenges.

Comment: The letter made it clear that although SC was given a nod, this action was ultimately done unilaterally, just as the cuts were made unilaterally. However, our organized power is powerful, and the stability of this situation is not great, because unilateral actions can continue to happen.

Comment: We need increased pay and benefits especially for staff on the lower end of the salary scale. The new base salary list was released for last year – at UVM we have a lot of people on the payroll who are making less than the livable wage in Chittenden County. And the top earner is in the top 1% of earners in the United States.

Comment: This is exciting, but some of the heart of the CBB memo is that the people who took those cuts were the lower earners, even though they were \$45k and over. And more money could have been saved by cutting higher earners rather than lower earners.

Comment: We have a sense of organization and dialogue with administration, and recommendations do influence people. It's important to hold space for administrators to be human in their own way. They have a lot of pressure on them as well. It's also important to continue to voice our perspectives.

Ombudsperson

Elisabeth presented on the idea of establishing an ombudsperson who would help non-represented staff navigate the Grievance process as well as be a hub of information and resources to staff experiencing special circumstances, such as taking leave due to racial trauma. Several staff expressed interest in helping to sponsor this idea.

Officers' Updates

Enhancing Tuition Remission

President Garimella has encouraged SC to work with HRS and Andrea Mast about enhancing tuition remission and what exactly that looks like. From preliminary meetings, they want to know from staff about what would be most impactful around professional development. We have some information from previous surveys but we may do a quick survey of SC representatives. We want to make sure that any changes we make will impact the greatest number of people. In Continuing Education, there are many certificate programs which are more achievable for people working full-time than perhaps a graduate degree. There will be a fairly quick timeline on these meetings. Richard Cate and President Garimella have emphasized that these changes are not regarded as a replacement for salary changes.

Search for New Diversity Officer

Caleb requested that a member of Staff Council be involved with the search for the replacement for Vice President Wanda Heading Grant.

Safety

It's important to maintain high levels of safety even if there is a downtick in cases. Caleb asked if there could be a program for people recovering from COVID-19 re-entering the workplace, because there are more people every day who are recovering and this could be a good community building exercise to ask questions from professionals who can give evidence-based responses around that.

Q: Are position descriptions part of the conversation around professional development? A lot of PDs do not have any line items about professional development. Because if it's not referenced in their PD, a staff member has to make up work time, but if it is mentioned, they do not have to make up time.

A: As we are having conversations, we are trying to bring in passionate people from our committees to strengthen the conversation. The administration would be open to hearing other ideas – they are coming to us saying, we'd like to make changes. Availability of time is a key issue – for instance, a single parent or someone doing elder care – personal time may not be available. So improving the PDs is a great idea, and there may be other ways to broaden access to opportunity. Another area of improvement might be supervisor reviews. We may need a new sub-group to work on these ideas.

Q: How is it that UVM is allowed to hold in-person gatherings that would violate government mandates if held off campus? And why are some campus offices that are providing all online services, and that are not essential for fiscal/academic functions required to open for in-person function?

A from Gary Derr: If we're talking about the Lake Monsters or Boston Red Sox games, and things like that, all of those operations have guidelines made by various state regulations. We can make plans for the future and adjust as needed. For instance, maybe 2-3 buses need to be rented for a trip instead of one, based on occupancy requirements. With the skating event we have to follow the use of the space there.

As to the second question, I don't think that's the case. I sent directions out to the Vice Presidents and Deans that they can determine the level of in-person services they need – but we have to be mindful that we have X number of students on campus at this point.

Q: Now that there is an outbreak on campus in Athletics, is now a good time to bring up Hazard Pay again?

A: If you feel you are in danger and your job doesn't allow you to follow safety guidelines, stop and report that. Otherwise however we do not have a system of hazard pay. The Safety and Logistics Officers have done amazing work and have been great resources. We are keen to have them continue beyond the scope of the pandemic. We do not have an outbreak on campus – the Department of Health has not declared an outbreak. We made a decision to pause athletics so we didn't have additional spread.

Telework Committee

They met to review the draft proposal, which is the letter they plan to send to Richard Cate. They have also gone through the current telework policy together. The finalized document should be ready to go by the end of this week or early next week, so by next Staff Council meeting we will hopefully have some kind of response or acknowledgement from Richard Cate.

Professional Development Proposal

The Committee is planning to submit a proposal to Administration, which was attached to meeting materials. We are asking to make it a permanent fund and to raise the amount to \$12,000 the first year, with an increase annually of \$1000 each year to keep up with increasing demand for the program.

Q: Is this fund available to all staff, including per-diem staff?

A: No, this is only available to part- and full-time non-represented staff.

Meeting Adjourned

The meeting was adjourned at 1:23 PM.