

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

October 20, 2022

Hybrid meeting, in person in Waterman Lounge and by Video Conference by Zoom

MINUTES

Call to Order: President Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 1:35pm.

1. President Gurdon introduced Emeritus UVM President Thomas Sullivan, who presented an overview of and insights from his new book on the First Amendment, titled *Free Speech: From Core Values to Current Debates*. He began with historical background, noting that from 1791-1917 the Supreme Court narrowly interpreted the amendment and favored the government. From 1918-1962 it opened its view of the amendment to debate. From 1963 to the present the consensus of the Court has been to focus on possible exceptions to the amendment such as obscenity, defamation, speech connected to a crime, and direct threats of physical violence. It has ruled that money is speech and thus campaign finance is protected by the amendment. Any public employee of a government institution is subject to the first amendment while employees of private institutions are not. With regard to academic freedom, although it has not been specifically addressed by the Court, President Sullivan thought that it would only be protected in the setting of the core material of a course and within the expertise of the professor. Thus, for example, political statements in a chemistry course might not be covered. He predicts that In the future the Court will look at free speech in school and internet speech.
2. President Gurdon gave a brief overview of Executive Committee and RFAO organizational activities during the past year.
 - a. It transmitted to UVM Human Resources and to VBA member experiences and concerns regarding the health plan. Its feedback led to improvements in benefits to members.
 - b. It has had continuing discussions with UVM regarding member access to computer software.
 - c. It has obtained stipends for member scholarship activity.
 - d. Faculty Senate meetings were attended.
 - e. There was representation on the United Academics and UVM Foundation Boards.
 - f. There are plans for a speaker series.
3. The meeting was then opened for questions.
 - a. Regarding faculty representation on the UVM Board of Trustees, RFAO is supportive of the effort.
 - b. There are continuing discussions on software access.
 - c. There was a question regarding access to a campus room for retired faculty.
 - d. There were a number of questions and concerns regarding the planned change in the health plan.
 - i. Concern about the Quest calls we are currently receiving and need to prevent similar calls supported by CIGNA.
 - ii. It is unclear whether the upper limit of the co-pay with CIGNA will be the same as with VBA.
 - iii. Concern that UVM health network is not in-network for CIGNA.
 - iv. Concern about coverage in other parts of the country.
 - v. The specifics of the medication coverage with CIGNA are not available. There is a concern that critical very expensive drugs may not be covered.
4. The meeting was adjourned at 3pm

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda