

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

April 17, 2024

Hybrid meeting: Video Conference on Zoom and Med Education 305 in person.

MINUTES

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

Absent: Ralph Budd, Lee Thompson, Mara Saule

Call to Order: Chair Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 2:02pm

1. Minutes of March 20, 2024, approved as amended
2. RFAO Board Meeting
 - a. Faculty Senate Report (Mara) The March 25, 2024, Faculty Senate meeting was held remotely via Teams. The bulk of this Senate meeting was devoted to a presentation by Provost Patty Prelock of UVM's newly launched "Planetary Health Initiative" (see below). As always, detailed minutes as well as presentation slides can be found on the Faculty Senate website.
 - i. In addition to routine announcements about upcoming Senate elections and other general reminders to Senators, President Borchert summarized the results of February's roundtable discussions regarding UVM President Garimella's achievements and areas for improvement as part of his 5-year review. Three areas were highlighted: the faculty's confusion regarding his Strategic Initiatives and "Amplifying our Impact" priorities (including seeking R1 research status); faculty's appreciation of his focus on research and his handling of the pandemic; and the importance of communicating with faculty more often and more substantively.
 - ii. President Borchert indicated that he will be increasing communication directly with the Board of Trustees through regular meetings with the Board Executive Committee. Board Chair Ron Lumbra has been invited to the May Senate meeting.
 - iii. Regarding meeting modalities for the next year, the Senate will continue to alternate between meetings held remotely on Teams and meetings in person on campus.
 - iv. The rest of the meeting was devoted to an overview of the new Planetary Health Initiative. Planetary Health is generally defined as "the understanding that human health and human civilization depend on flourishing natural systems and the wise stewardship of those natural systems." (from a 2015 Rockefeller Foundation Report summarized in *The Lancet*). For UVM, this umbrella unifying theme will engage existing academic units and centers across the University to leverage programmatic synergies and provide opportunities for public and private funding. For more detail, please see Provost Prelock's presentation slides.
 - b. United Academics Update (Alison)
 - i. The UA Bargaining team continues its work negotiating the next Collective Bargaining Agreement between UVM Administration and the Full-Time Faculty. No further news yet about any language protecting the promised level of retiree healthcare benefits.
 - ii. The UA Legislative Affairs Committee has engaged long and well with members of the Vermont Legislature, in support of H.446, a bill that would put voting faculty and staff members on the UVM Board of Trustees. Success this legislative session continues to be logistically possible, yet elusive, especially as the Education committees are grappling with major, statewide issues: moving beyond property tax-based preK-12 funding models, remediating school campus pollution, and responding to the Governor's controversial appointment of Education Secretary.
 - iii. Beth Mintz attended the most recent UA Exec meeting and reports as follows:

1. The President's office has taken Waterman Manor and the Phi Beta Kappa room for their own; faculty are very upset about it.
 2. The new HR Director has an approach and style that does not mesh well with UA.
- c. UBAC Developments (Ruth) Meeting 03-21-2024
- i. Opportunity to broaden travel reimbursement. At the request of HR, the UBAC reviewed a proposed updating of UVM's current health plan to include coverage for travel costs for medically necessary procedures that can't be received locally. The current plan offers travel for some limited procedures – this would broaden the coverage. HR is still in the early design phase, looking for advice on annual caps, and per diems or limits on specific covered costs.
 - ii. Working Group Reports
 1. Health Insurance Working Group (HIWG) At its first meeting the HIWG clarified its scope as including active and retiree health insurance, as well as decision processes and transparency of benefits decisions. The HIWG agreed to a SWOT approach in developing recommendations. At its second meeting the HIWG received a detailed presentation about how UVM's current, self-insured health plan works and recent claims experience.
 - a. Employee Wellness Working Group (EWWG) The EWWG held its first organizing meeting. There are many issues to address, including raising awareness of current wellbeing programming, how to include other voices and offerings, incentives for participation, training for supervisors about the importance of employee involvement in wellbeing programs, and more. Funding is an issue that needs to be addressed – the current program is supported solely by BCBS.
 - b. Health Insurance Working Group 04-19-2024. This month's HIWG meeting is scheduled for Friday. The principal topic for discussion will be the potential for a lower premium/higher deductible plan and Health Savings Account (HSA) as an additional option for current employees. A faculty member from the Political Science Department, Alex Garlick, whose academic interest is health care policy, has been added to the Working Group.
- d. Spring Luncheon Status (Michael). June 4th was selected for the Luncheon. Enquires were made of the Delta Marriott hotel because that was the location for previous luncheons, but the cost would be considerably higher than in the past. Chair Gurdon and Liv Townsend found the Davis Center at UVM to be a more practical and cost-effective venue. A menu has been selected and a speaker has been identified. Rachael Floreani, who directs the Engineered Biomaterials Research Laboratory at UVM's College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences, will discuss her studies of cell-cultivated meat. Chair Gurdon is waiting to hear the final price and about potential sources of support for the luncheon. There will not be a business meeting during the luncheon. Cigna representatives will have a table at the luncheon and be available to answer members' questions about the health plan in person. A Hold-the-Date notice will be sent out soon to members.
- e. Discussion of implications of UVM account lockout on death of retiree (Alison). The death of a colleague brought this important and unexpected issue to the attention of the RFAO Board. His UVM account was frozen soon after his death, and his wife was unable to access any of his documents including an email account and "zoo files" material related to a book in preparation. The spouse has been working with UVM's Information Security Office & Identity and Account Management, whose staff coordinates such matters with the Office of General Counsel. Thus far, the survivor has been provided with a plain text list of folder names, so they may indicate which folders contain items of interest to the family. It is a long process, constrained by legal restrictions, several staff layers, and finite staffing resources. UVM's policy states that use of UVM email for personal use should be "occasional and incidental". This is contrary to the reality for many UVM affiliates, for many years, but it was cited in our case study by UVM General Counsel to the case-assigned IT tech staffer.

Given the complexity of myriad regulations; our litigious climate and institutions' corresponding legal concerns; the dependence on tech staff availability to mine the data; the fact that it's unlikely survivors will be able to retrieve all files, emails and attachments, even in the best of circumstances; and the time, shock, and energy required to engage in the retrieval exercise, RFAO members should be encouraged to back up, if not also move, all non-expendable electronic materials off of UVM-contracted servers. Note that this situation is not specific to retirees, nor solely to faculty and administrative officers. Finally, the Medical School has a completely separate IT presence. The consistent policies reflected in other institutions' websites suggest that this landscape is guided by Federal and State regulations, and not by institutional caprice.

Following discussion by the Board, Chair Gurdon asked Allison Pechenick and Dwight Matthews to draft a concise communication to alert our members to this issue and share this information with our point persons in other faculty and staff cohorts.. The Board recommended that someone from Enterprise Technology Services (ETS) be invited to our next meeting to learn more about the problem and possible solutions that can be recommended to members.

- f. Review of membership activities survey and next steps (Dwight). There were 121 completed and 33 unfinished surveys. Most were completed in under 10 minutes. Most activities were reported during the first 5 to 10 years of retirement. There were about 50 academic manuscripts, 25 book chapters, and 25 course and/or lecture participation at UVM or other institutions reported. There also were journal review and editing activities, mentoring, and board and committee activities. About 16% of respondents have contributed financially to UVM. These results will be collated and developed into talking points to present to the administration and foundations.
- g. Cigna issues. The Board was made aware of an issue involving breast cancer prevention. Following a mammogram, an ultrasound is recommended for women with dense breast tissue. A member was billed for the procedure because it was coded as screening rather than diagnostic. This matter was referred to Liv Townsend who confirmed that Cigna covers this diagnostic procedure with no copay.
- h. Other business. Chair Gurdon has not received a response yet from Chris Lehman regarding a possible opt-out for members from the health plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35pm

The next meeting is scheduled for: May 15, 2024, at 2pm

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda