



protecting academic quality

UNITED ACADEMICS NEWS RELEASE

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## **UVM faculty call for improving academic quality by investing in faculty positions**

Burlington, VT--With a decline in the number of instructional faculty and an increase in large classes, students at the University of Vermont are being shortchanged.

That's the concern University of Vermont faculty will address at a February 9 news conference, where they will call on the administration to fund the faculty positions needed for a quality undergraduate experience. This event, sponsored by United Academics (UA), which represents most UVM faculty, begins at 12:00 p.m. in the Davis Center's Silver Maple Ballroom.

Even as the University's student body, tuition, budget, and debt service have all grown by more than 40 percent in recent years, the share of the base budget devoted to academics has been shrinking. According to education professor and UA president David Shiman, it has fallen from 51.4 percent in 2005 to 46.8 percent in 2010.

It's a trend, faculty say, UVM can't afford to continue.

"Most of our peer institutions devote 50 to 55 percent of their budgets for this purpose," Shiman explained. "We need to reverse UVM's direction."

Between 2002 and 2010, the number of FTE students grew by 42 percent. During this same period, the number of full-time instructional faculty grew by only 8 percent.

What are the impacts of these trends?

"Faculty feel the squeeze with bigger classes and scores of advisees," said English professor Nancy Welch, "and students feel the squeeze as they pay higher tuition yet have less access to and mentoring by long-term faculty."

"If you look at the way UVM markets itself to prospective undergraduates," Shiman said, "we promote the image of the student-friendly, small university committed to an undergraduate education of quality. But there are growing signs that academic quality is deteriorating."

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Of 168 faculty who responded to a survey conducted by United Academics in the fall, nearly half reported giving fewer or shorter writing assignments, and more than a third reported changing their exams and reduced class interaction and discussions because of increased class size.

Wednesday's news conference comes as United Academics begins negotiations for UVM's 680 full-time faculty. Their current contract expires in July. The union will seek an increase in the number of faculty positions to keep pace with the growing student body plus improved professional treatment and job security for long-time lecturers.

"Faculty believe UVM can do better," said Shiman, who will serve as chief negotiator for faculty.

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