The Facts about Faculty and Spending at UVM

Burlington Vermont. We are happy to hear that the UVM administration thinks that, "working together constructively and in good faith with United Academics, the University will reach a mutually satisfactory outcome.” We are disappointed that, in their press release this morning, they preferred to deliberately distort and cherry pick facts instead of working constructively.

Our proposals aim to move the administration to re-prioritize education; if UVM were to devote the same share of its operating budget to the educational mission as our peers do, we would net nearly $12 million annually--to improve lecturer conditions, replace retiring senior professors with a new generation of assistant professors, fund the entire curriculum and not just administrative pet projects, AND give students some tuition relief. Students and lecturers--plus departments trying to deliver academic programs with too few professors--have been paying for this administrative party. Our proposals aim simply to get the priorities straight.

On national averages: it is true that, thanks to the formation of United Academics in 2001, UVM average faculty salaries have risen from where they were in the previous years -- the bottom quintile of public research universities — to somewhere closer to the middle. Using the comparators that UVM often uses in its own sourcebooks, however, tells a more precise story: the AAUP average salaries in the Doctoral 1 category show that in 2004 UVM was at 84% of the average, rose to 95% of average in 2011, and has since fallen to 92% in 2016. (The Oklahoma State salary survey contains schools like branch campuses of Arkansas State, which UVM does not compare itself to for any other purposes.) A two percent raise would push us further back down the ladder, even in the Oklahoma State survey. We do not apologize for wanting to remain average.

Tuition increases are not driven by faculty salaries: Over the last decade, as the attached charts show, tuition has increased faster than faculty salaries, but administrative salaries have increased even faster yet. Over that time UVM has been spending ever more money on non-instructional/non-research spending. Compare the spending increases at UVM between 2003
and 2016, spending on faculty salaries has increased more slowly than tuition, whereas administrative salary increases have grown substantially faster than tuition. (Please note that most of the rise in spending on faculty reflects a rise in numbers of faculty, to keep up with the rise in numbers of students, not in faculty pay.)

Administration: From 2003 to 2016, the amount spent on administrative salaries has gone up 143.43%...$2,867,010 to $6,979,136. This is an annual increase of 7.08%.

UVM FT Faculty (Bargaining Unit): From 2003 to 2016, the amount spent on FT faculty salaries has gone up 76.34%...$33,355,233 to $58,817,966. This is an annual increase of 4.46%.

Tuition (Out of State): From 2003 to 2016, the annual tuition price for an out of state student has gone up 82.28%...$21,484 to $39,160. This is an annual increase of 4.73%.

**On class size:** a majority of classes may have twenty or fewer students, but that does not mean a majority of students are only in small classes. UVM faculty regularly teach large classes of 100 or more. Furthermore, teaching a small class of, say, future nurses in the hospital is hardly an easy task: all UVM faculty work very hard directly with students to give them the best education possible (and the administration is very aware that if they brought class sizes up to the average of public universities nationwide, that could threaten the appeal of UVM to the seventy percent of our students from out of state, whose tuitions provide UVM’s single largest revenue stream.) Small class sizes are good, but they do not make our lives easier.

**“Nine month” faculty positions do not mean that faculty spend their summers fishing.** To imply otherwise, as the press release seems to, is an insult to the professionalism and training of UVM’s faculty. Most faculty spend their summers and sabbaticals working hard on research, research they are required to do as part of their jobs. The faculty that UVM promotes to the world on their website for all the fascinating research they are doing — for example, a biologist studying the mechanisms of diversity in ocean environments, or an anthropologist studying refugees and minorities in Europe — can not do their research on an occasional Saturday afternoon.
How UVM Shortchanges Education: The Story in Four Graphs

The gap is wide between fast-rising executive pay and the incremental growth of faculty pay. Tuition at UVM is too high but faculty salary increases aren’t the cause.

In fact, only $1 out of every $3 UVM spends goes to supporting faculty engaged in instruction and research.

Administrators are short-changing education—and threatening the future of UVM’s “Teacher-Scholar”—by replacing secure professor positions with insecure lecturer positions.

But if UVM followed peer institutions and spent 3% less on administration and 3% more on academics, we would net $11.7 million every year: to hire new professors, support lecturers, and give students tuition relief.

UVM United Academics AFT/AAUP is the union of full-time and part-time faculty at the University of Vermont. Follow us on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/VermontUnitedAcademics/