

Dear Colleague:

As a member of our part-time union, an elected member of the United Academics executive committee, and a strong union supporter, I would like to offer you a first-hand example of how UA is working to benefit those of us who are working part-time.

Recently, I had the opportunity to testify before the Vermont State Senate Committee on Economic Development and General Affairs regarding the Faculty and College Excellence Act (FACE). This bill would require Vermont's universities and colleges including UVM to pay part-time faculty pro-rata salaries (that is pro-rated to full-time faculty from comparable schools), and provide pro-rated medical and retirement benefits.

I was asked to testify because I am a part-time faculty member on the executive committee of United Academics, the bargaining agent for both part- and full-time faculty at UVM.

This bill was introduced last spring by the Committee Chair, Sen. Vincent Illuzzi. Vermont was one of eleven states in which similar legislation has been introduced over the past two years. Because of this bill, there has been significant progress nationally in educating legislators as to the problems facing part-time faculty with respect to their terms and conditions of employment.

During my testimony, I mentioned that on more than one occasion, I had taught 9 or more hours in a semester for more than one semester and yet was still considered to be part-time. I explained that this is because Continuing Education courses are treated differently than courses assigned through an academic department and cannot be counted towards a full-time bargaining unit load. The State Senate Committee reacted immediately, saying that this did not make sense and in fact, seemed unfair.

The University's lobbyist was requested to provide testimony as to why this was possible. She and others did offer testimony on that specific issue. As a result of my testimony as well as that of the university's representative, the Committee wrote a letter, signed by all the committee members and sent to President Fogel, which expressed strong concerns about this practice, which serves to deprive part-time faculty of the opportunity to be treated as full-time even though they are teaching a full-time faculty load.

While United Academics has yet to hear a response from President Fogel, I am confident that the letter has served to make this situation more visible and also am confident that future legislative bodies will continue to be interested in our situation.

I am glad to be part of a union that was able to arrange for this bill to be introduced and gave me the opportunity to testify, which in turn led to this pointed letter being written to President Fogel.

How can you be part of this important work that our faculty union is doing, not just for us, but for faculty across the nation? Write to info@unitedacademics.org if you'd like to get involved especially as negotiations for part-time faculty's next contract are getting underway late

next Fall. And if you are a part-time faculty member who hasn't yet joined UA, add your name to our list of members, and help make us a stronger union with a more vigorous voice at UVM. You'll find details at www.unitedacademics.org or send a note to info@unitedacademics.org.

Your part-time representative,

Beth Haggart
Department of Art

For more information on the Faculty and College Excellence Act, see <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/docs/legdoc.cfm?URL=/docs/2008/bills/intro/S-198.HTM> and for the national effort (<http://face.aft.org/>).