



protecting academic quality

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

United Academics Tracks "Starvation" of Academic Programs with Planned UVM Cuts, April 6 Protest Will Urge Fogel to Use Restored State Funding to Restore Jobs, Positions, and Programs

Burlington, VT--An English major without courses in Charles Dickens or the Brontes. A Political Science major without International Politics. A civil and environmental engineering program so understaffed, its accreditation is at risk.

These are only samplings of the sobering realities facing the University of Vermont in the coming year, faculty report, if trustees next month give final approval to President Daniel Mark Fogel's current plans to reduce staffing and increase students.

To call attention to the starvation diet being imposed on UVM's academic programs, United Academics, the union representing most UVM faculty, is joining with students and staff this Monday, 8:30 am, in the Waterman building for a "Let Them Eat Gruel?" budget-cut protest. Co-sponsors include United Electrical Workers Local 267, United Staff, and Students Stand Up.

Said David Shiman, professor of Education and faculty union president, "We're concerned that our central administration may not be aware of how deeply their planned cuts will erode student experience and how desperate the situation is in some departments."

Monday's protest will feature findings from United Academics' recent survey of faculty about the impact of position cuts and layoffs. In English, for instance, the department's only professor positions in fiction writing, Victorian literature, and modern British and Irish literature are to be eliminated. With the layoffs of up to six lecturers who had taught as many as five writing courses each semester, the department's introductory writing offerings will be reduced by half.

But while members of Students Stand Up will serve bowls of oatmeal at the Monday morning protest, participants say they won't beg but insist that the university's resources be reallocated to safeguard academic quality, student experience, and the faculty and staff on whom both depend.

UVM's resources for safeguarding academics seem likely to receive a welcome boost from the Vermont state legislature. So that Vermont qualifies for federal stimulus money, the Vermont House of Representatives voted last night on an appropriations bill that restores \$5.4 million in state support to UVM for this year. The bill also sends the university an additional \$5.4 million in stimulus money next year to supplement the state's usual appropriation.

With no cuts in state support next year and \$5.4 million in additional stimulus funding, UVM's \$14.7 million budget gap for the coming year would shrink to \$4.3 million.

The \$5.4 million the House voted to return to the university for the current year could also be applied to next year's budget, wiping out the deficit entirely. Combined with an administration willing to place themselves on a strict spending diet, rally organizers point out, the stimulus funding could, as Congress intended, enable UVM to restore jobs and keep tuition down.

University administrators have faced sharp criticism in recent months for their spending priorities, including the \$41+ million PeopleSoft financial and human resources system, which will claim another half million from next year's budget, and the recent revelation that 21 administrators had drawn nearly \$900,000 in additional salary and bonuses.

"We believe that our Congressional delegation, in voting yes on the federal stimulus package, and our legislators, now considering a restoration of higher-ed funding, are doing so because of their commitment to keeping the faculty and staff needed to maintain academic quality at UVM," Shiman said. "We want to make sure our administration understands that whatever resources we have must go to shoring up our programs and the faculty and staff on whom students depend."

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