

**Statement Delivered to the UVM Board of Trustees,  
February 11, 2005  
by Nancy Welch, Associate Professor of English,  
on behalf of United Academics**

I know that your recent board meetings have been devoted to discussing, assessing, and deciding how to implement President Fogel's vision for UVM. That vision, as we all know, includes a projected half a billion dollars in new construction over the next ten years including the \$70 million student center to be started within the year. The vision also includes growing our student body by 2,000 — that is, some 25 percent — and it includes marketing UVM as the environmental university both by foregrounding environmental studies and by adhering to environmentally friendly procedures and policies.

What also seems to be part of the vision but isn't marketed to students or foregrounded in any document I've read is increasing the status and salaries of those who make up this university's top tier: In the past three years we've gone from having three vice presidents at UVM to, as of last week, twenty.

Nevertheless, in this same period, the administration has declared that it can't afford Blue Cross's health care premium increases and so UVM has cut benefits and shifted higher costs onto UVM staff. (The administration accepted the same cost increases; however, they don't feel those increases in the same way. Those in UVM's six-figure salary bracket pay only 2.43 percent of their salary for health care while those in the lowest \$15 to \$20,000 a year bracket pay twice that percentage, and of a much smaller salary.)

Also in this same period the administration declared it had no choice but to start eliminating faculty positions in Extension. All six of the Extension faculty whose jobs are being eliminated this year are over the age of 40; five are over the age of 50. Three had served UVM, receiving high performance ratings, for 23, 27, and 30 years. What does this tell us? That the university is prioritizing adding new vice presidents over allowing an extension professor with three decades of service and deep roots in this community to make it to retirement.

Most of the people who do the work of this university are not included in the president's vision. If all of the people who do the work of this university were included, there might be \$7 million less for Honors College dorm amenities and more money for much needed repairs to our dilapidated classrooms. (I invite you during your lunch hour to take a look around typical classrooms in this building or across the green in Williams Hall where we teach every day.)

If all the people who do the work of this university were included in the vision, the board would also negotiate a Project Labor Agreement and ensure that, when UVM contracts out construction jobs, it rewards employers who pay livable wages and provide health care for their workers. If it is true that most university contract workers already have health insurance coverage, that's terrific: You should have no problem with signing a Project Labor Agreement. If you're concerned about small companies not being able to meet all of the criteria, the university should be able to think creatively:

If these construction workers are going to be working on campus for the next ten years, let's get their health care covered through UVM.

Being an environmentally friendly university means including workers as part of the environment and making sure that a construction site is safe and healthy not only for the soil and groundwater but also for the electricians and ironworkers. Construction workers, secretaries, lecturers, custodians, librarians, professors: We're all part of UVM's environment. We're the people who will staff the new buildings and teach those 2,000 additional students. It's short-sighted to leave us out of UVM's vision for the next decade.

Short-sighted too is not considering how we can learn from the scandals of the Fletcher Allen Renaissance Project - the scandal of cost overruns, insufficient board oversight, and ironworkers asked to do dangerous work on a hospital construction site while they themselves had no medical coverage at all. The University can avoid the mistakes of Fletcher Allen by 1) recognizing that Mr. Pizzagalli, as president of the Board of Trustees and as head of the region's major construction company, has a serious conflict of interest and should not be a part of any of UVM's construction and expansion decisions and 2) by negotiating a Project Labor Agreement and getting UVM's construction off to a responsible, fair, and safe start.