



## United Academics Member Spotlight: JB Barna, Senior Lecturer, Social Work

*JB Barna has held the position of Field Coordinator for the Masters and Bachelors of Social Work programs for the last 17 years. In addition to teaching, she is responsible for overseeing the Field Education Program, which includes placing, supporting, and supervising the practicums of over 100 aspiring social workers. She is also the Chair*

*of United Academics Delegates Assembly.*

### **How does your work sustain UVM?**

My work as a Field Coordinator sustains UVM because it fulfills the land grant mission – it's where I am connecting UVM to our community. My work also sustains UVM because our students (who are in the field for full academic years) bring their experiences back into the classroom. They're not only learning in the classroom. They're having real relationships with real people (those who are vulnerable and who have been marginalized) – this impacts the learning and teaching that happens here on campus. I think the university needs that and benefits greatly from it.

### **How has UA sustained you?**

Well, UA saved my life, basically. I experienced one major event (workload) that impacted me greatly. Additionally, I watched friends and colleagues go through worse things. UA was right there. The folks I interacted with were warm and smart and curious and practical. They said things like, "This is what we're going to do, and this is how we're going to do it." I was so impressed with how UA interacted with the administrators involved – balanced, clear, and focused. They supported me, not only in my work life, but emotionally as well. Who knew workloads could be so emotional. It is important as a faculty member to know somebody knows the rules and is going to fight for the rules on your behalf.

### **What makes it difficult to sustain you and your work?**

It's the shadow work. It's all the stuff that gets asked of us day in and day out. The workload plans can look okay– even good –but then it's the next thing we're asked to do, and the one after that. I understand that we can say no, but there is a consequence to saying no. It's our reputation as a Department that urges me to say "yes" to things I

simply do not have time to do. Faculty are put in the position of either doing what extra thing is asked of us, or risking the reputation of not being a team player or not pulling our weight or even being apathetic.

***What is your hope for UVM?***

I know that we want to put students first, but part of putting students first is giving faculty the support and resources we need in order to do so. We can't have our workloads take over our lives. We need to be there for the students **and** be there for ourselves. I know we shouldn't adopt a scarcity mentality, but it feels scarce to run all these programs with the skimpy resources we are told we have. My hope is that we are given the time we need to do the work. So my hope is that resources go into the faculty and departments in such a way that we can do what we love with our students and our scholarship and our colleagues – and that we can do it well.