

## United Academics Department/Program Representative Position Description and Frequently Asked Questions

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*Thanks for serving as a United Academics (UA) department or program representative--the front-line communicator with faculty in your department or program. Here's a description of your important duties:*

Department/program representatives are lobbyists for the needs of their departments or areas, resources for faculty seeking union-related information, and the persons to whom faculty may take concerns, questions, and suggestions.

Among a department/program representative's duties are:

- welcoming as a representative of UA newly hired full-time and part-time faculty (or welcoming back faculty returning from administrative roles) in your department or program;
- meeting with new faculty or with faculty who have not (yet) joined UA about what UVM faculty have gained through unionizing, how the UA contract and contract administration team serve all faculty, how to join our faculty union, and what questions they have about UA or concerns they have for UA;
- serving as a first point of contact for faculty in a department or program with questions about terms and conditions of employment that are included in collective bargaining agreement such as workload issues, sabbaticals, parental and family leave, and reappointment and promotion guidelines, and maintaining contact with the contract administration committee (currently chaired by UA Grievance Officer Keith Burt of Psychological Sciences) for their guidance in contract questions, potential contract violations and grievances, or a faculty member facing disciplinary action.
  - Even if a faculty member elects not to join UA, they should know that they still have the benefits and protections of the contract negotiated by UA and that UA's grievance officer and contract administration committee will serve them in case of a potential contract violation or disciplinary action.
- communicating with appropriate members of the full- or part-time faculty Bargaining Teams (who negotiate our contracts), the Delegates Assembly (which keeps UA informed about and responsive to college-, school, or library-wide concerns), or Executive Council (our top decision-making body) about faculty concerns and ideas;
- attending as your schedule allows and encouraging colleagues to attend UA spring and fall member meetings or other important events such as bargaining kick-offs and special member meetings on urgent topics;
- keeping an up-to-date membership list for faculty in the department or area and informing the UA office of the names and current addresses for all new hires, retirees, departing faculty, and faculty taking sabbatical or other leave.

*Some department/program representatives have also found the following to be helpful for staying in touch--and keeping United Academics in touch--with colleagues' concerns and recommendations:*

- holding and notifying colleagues of "UA Office Hours"--a time once a week or immediately before or following a department or program meeting when colleagues can come by to talk with you about questions, concerns, and suggestions;
- "walking the floor"--once every week or every two weeks making a point to visit with faculty in a department or program (in their offices or lab, at the copier etc.) to see what's on their minds that you may be able to assist with or bring to the attention of UA's contract administration committee, bargaining team etc.

- creating an email list (non-UVM email addresses preferred) of UA members in your department or program so you can easily pass on announcements, bargaining updates etc.
- convening if needed department- or program-level meetings of UA members to discuss a local concern that should be brought to UA's attention, consider challenges and goals that might be addressed in bargaining etc.

All department/program representatives are also invited and encouraged to attend Delegates Assembly meetings (usually on Friday afternoons once a month during the Fall and Spring semesters). Although department representatives cannot vote in these meetings, their on-the-ground knowledge of conditions and faculty concerns makes their contributions invaluable to the Delegates Assembly's discussions and deliberations.

## **Frequently Asked Questions about Serving as Department or Program Representative**

**Q:** How are representatives chosen?

**A:** UA recommends that each spring the next academic year's representative be determined through discussion among and polling of the UA members in a department or program.

**Q:** Can a representative serve more than one year?

**A:** The members of a department or program can decide to renew a representative's term for a second or third year. UA recommends that the role rotates at least every two to three years, so that more faculty can become involved in and knowledgeable about our union.

**Q:** My program is very large and/or has faculty with different appointment types and concerns or working in different locations. How can a representative serve as front-line communicator in these circumstances?

**A:** A department or program may choose to elect more than one representative. With an ideal ratio of one UA communicator for every 10 faculty, a unit may choose to have two or three representatives who may also have different appointment types and work locations so that a representative has only 10 or so faculty they are seeking to stay in ongoing communication with and so that the needs of non-tenure-track, tenure-track, full-time, and part-time faculty in a unit are being served.

**Q:** Can a representative also have other roles in United Academics?

**A:** A representative may also serve in the Delegates Assembly and on standing committees such as the Civil Rights, Nominations and Elections, Contract Administration, and Membership committees. They may not serve simultaneously on the Executive Council.