

United Academics— A Faculty Voice at University of Vermont

What is United Academics?

United Academics—AFT/AAUP is led by faculty for faculty at the University of Vermont. In 2001, UVM's full-time faculty voted to organize into a collective bargaining unit named United Academics (UA) with part-time faculty voting to unionize soon after. UA gives us a legal basis for defending faculty rights, strengthening faculty voice in governance and fiscal policy, and negotiating competitive salaries, benefits, and workloads. Moreover, through UA, faculty can advocate with students and others for a university and community defined by respect, equity, and social as well as environmental justice.

A majority of faculty have joined the union. The stronger the membership, the stronger our voice will be.

Why is a faculty union important?

Prior to unionizing, faculty were “consulted” about salaries, benefits, and curricular change, but the administration exercised sole decision-making power. The result was stagnant wages, reduced benefits, and misguided administrative initiatives. Through collective bargaining and union activism, faculty have worked toward improving salaries for all faculty and ensuring lecturers and other non-tenure track faculty have more job security, while insisting that UVM operate with fairness, consistency, and transparency.

What have faculty gained by unionizing?

Through the hard work of faculty negotiating teams at the bargaining table—and the active participation of faculty beyond to promote fair contracts and just conditions—United Academics has accomplished a great deal.

- Made significant gains in salary and compensation—resulting in more robust raises for other campus workers as well.
- Won family and parental leave policies—as a broadly distributed right rather than a gift that deans and chairs may choose to grant or deny.
- Secured multi-year contracts, professional support (including sabbaticals), and promotion opportunities for lecturers—improving the conditions for faculty while also decreasing administrative ability to cheapen faculty labor.
- Safeguarded faculty control over the criteria and process for reappointment, promotion, and tenure and blocked unilateral changes to class sizes and workloads.

Almost all full-time and part-time UVM faculty, except chairs and those with medical school appointments are represented by UA, enjoying the benefits and protections of our contracts and our contract administration work. This makes them part of the bargaining unit, but not necessarily members.

Am I a member? How do I join?

UA membership is optional. A wide majority of full-time faculty (about 80%) have joined UA as members, contributing 1% of base pay in dues, enjoying a direct voice in our union, and strengthening our ability to advance faculty priorities. Membership cards can be printed from our website (www.unitedacademics.org/joinus/). Signed cards may be given to your department/program representative or delegate, emailed to info@unitedacademics.org, or mailed to United Academics, UVM Waterman Building, Box 31, 85 South Prospect Street, Burlington VT 05405.

What are the benefits of being a member?

As a UA member, **you help make our voice stronger** and can participate in UA efforts to make UVM a better place for faculty, students, and staff. In addition, UA members can:

- Vote on collective bargaining agreements (negotiated contracts) and participate in the process of setting our bargaining priorities.
- Participate in union governance and leadership, including serving on our Executive Council and Delegates Assembly.
- Build community with faculty across the university through union work, social gatherings, and events.

How can I be an active participant in my union?

The first step is to join UA! Attend UA member meetings twice a year, or come to a UA event to connect with faculty across the university and learn more about our work. To get more involved, volunteer to join a UA committee that interests you, such as Civil Rights, Contract Administration, Membership, Scholarship, or State/Higher Ed Issues. Committee work is a chance to contribute to UA and an opportunity for professional growth. You can run for election to serve as a representative on our Delegates Assembly, which meets once a month to discuss issues and shape UA policy. For greater involvement, consider running for election to UA's Executive Council (for which you can get course release because of the time commitment these positions involve).

With what organizations is United Academics affiliated, and how can I learn more about them?

United Academics is associated nationally with the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and nationally and at the state level with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT Vermont). Through our affiliates, we are able to lobby for our issues in the state legislature and join with other faculty unions to make sure the voices of university scholars and teachers are heard in Congress and that such rights as academic freedom are defended and protected.

- **American Association of University Professors (AAUP)**- www.aaup.org
- **American Federation of Teachers (AFT)**- vt.aft.org

How do I contact my union if I have questions or suggestions?

Reach out to the representative of your department/program, the delegate of your school, or any of the officers of the UA Executive Council. You will find more information about who they are and how to reach them on UA's website:
<http://www.unitedacademics.org>

Any question can be directed to Katlyn Morris, UA's Executive Director & AFT Staff Representative:
katlyn.morris@aftvermont.org

For questions regarding your rights and responsibilities under collective bargaining agreements or other matters related to conditions of employment (workload, RPT, discipline, etc.), contact the **Contract Administration Committee (CAC)**:
contract@unitedacademics.org. Your communication with the CAC will be held in strictest confidence.

You may contact United Academics via e-mail and by phone, too.
E-mail: info@unitedacademics.org
Phone: 802-489-0964