

United Academics—

A Part-Time 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 PT 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—resulting in more robust raises for other campus workers as well.
- Professional development funds to attend conferences and workshops, now available to all who have taught at least 20 credits.
- Longer-term teaching contracts: Full-year appointments for part-time lecturers who’ve taught at least 24 credits in the bargaining unit, based on the average of their past 2 years.
- Between-semester and post-employment privileges – such as library privileges and access to athletic facilities – similar to those received by emeritus full-time faculty.

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?

We encourage all faculty to join their union, United Academics. Roughly half of part-time faculty and 80% of full-time faculty have joined UA as members, contributing 1% of base pay in dues, enjoying a direct voice in our union, and bolstering our ability to advocate for faculty. Membership cards can be found on our website (www.unitedacademics.org/joinus/). Signed cards may be 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, you gain a voice in UA and 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.
- Participate in governance and voting, and attend conferences of our national affiliates, AAUP and AFT.
- Meet and work with faculty across the university while doing union work or attending union social events.

How can I be an active participant in the union?

The first step is to join UA! Attend UA member meetings twice a year, or come to a UA event to mingle with faculty across the university and learn more about what UA is working toward. To get more involved, volunteer to work on 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 significant 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 the 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 or info@unitedacademics.org
United Academics office phone: 802-489-0964,

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. The CAC helps UA members and non-members alike, and your communication with the CAC will be held in strictest confidence.