



Statement from Julie Roberts, United Academics President to UVM Board of Trustees. Delivered during public comment 5/15/20

The pandemic has turned everyone's lives upside down. For faculty at UVM, in the space of a few days, we turned face-to-face classes into online ones, sometimes 4 of them at once. We faculty have committed ourselves wholeheartedly to being there for our students during this crisis, both academically and emotionally, which for most of us has meant round-the-clock work 7-days a week since early March. We heard many thank you's from deans, and the president and provost. This was great. But then planning for the future began. Faculty were told cut-backs were necessary. A planning committee was formed, completely without faculty input, and deans began the difficult task of cutting the budget. One of the main ways this was done was to reduce many full-time non-tenure track faculty, lecturers, from 100% time to 75% time with an accompanying loss of pay. They were told that they might be brought back up to 100%, but then again, they might not. Further, because fall classes are already scheduled and full, lecturers will be teaching their full load in the fall, while being paid for $\frac{3}{4}$, making it difficult or impossible for them to seek another job or collect unemployment. Our faculty are devastated. Let me share with you a quote from one of our lecturers, whose situation is not atypical: "In 2019 the Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office published the "Vermont Basic Needs and Livable Wage Report" which states that for a single parent with two children living in Chittenden

County an annual salary of \$81,317 constitutes a livable wage. After the sanctioned 25% reduction in my salary as a lecturer at UVM, [...] my salary will be 41% below the livable wage.”

Why was this done? We were told that this was the only solution open to the administration because of the collective bargaining agreement. This is false. Reducing the lecturers’ time was not the *only* option, it was the unilateral option. Our union, we are told, has been denied the opportunity to participate in planning a way forward for our university because we are bargaining for a new contract. The truth is that although we cannot publicly discuss details of current bargaining, there is absolutely no reason that United Academics, representing faculty, and the administration cannot get together, look at the numbers, and consider a progressive plan for budget adjustment. We can do this. We should have done this, and we can still do this, if the administration takes a step back, puts cuts on hold, and works with us for the good of UVM faculty and students as well as the mission of the university. I urge you, the board of trustees, to ask the administration to commit to increased economic transparency and a progressive, collaborative way to meet any budget shortfalls going forward.