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Greeting. On my own behalf and on behalf of eight hundred faculty members of the University of Vermont, thank you for inviting me to speak today. It is an honor. And thank you for the work you do to maintain state support for education – including higher education – in challenging economic times. As teachers, and as parents and community members, we are indebted to you for your efforts.

My purpose today is to introduce you to United Academics and share the perspectives of our faculty on issues that are likely to come before you. United Academics is a diverse union. Our members include tenured and tenure-track research faculty; full-time lecturers who are primarily teachers more than researchers; library faculty whose specialized knowledge supports classroom learning; and part-time lecturers who may teach as little as one course per year. We are all passionate about our shared project of teaching the next generation. Many of us have national and even international reputations as among the most important scholars in our fields. My colleagues pursue cutting-edge research that truly has the potential to change the world. Economically, we range from those who are comfortably middle- or even upper-middle-class to those, especially in the non-tenured ranks, who are truly struggling. Even at senior levels, many UVM faculty find it difficult to navigate the housing and child care markets of Chittenden County.

We stand alongside the Faculty Federation of the Vermont State Colleges as co-equal and mutually supportive members of the Higher Education Division of the Vermont state chapter of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). United Academics is also a chapter member of the American Association of University Professors, a one-hundred-year-old organization that works to preserve the intellectual freedom and fair treatment of higher education faculty across the U.S.

Given the diversity of our membership, our views are also diverse. However, there are several points about which we agree – and agree as well with the senior administration of the University:

* Preserve State Appropriations for the University of Vermont

We urge you to understand that the State Colleges and UVM are complementary and not competing institutions, and they should never be asked to compete against one another for public resources. The faculty of UVM provide extraordinary value to our students. We educate some of the most talented and promising students who emerge from Vermont high schools. And we teach students who come from out of state – many of whom become leaders in Vermont after graduation, and all of whom participate in a thriving Chittenden County economy while they are enrolled at UVM. Our students are the next generation of Vermont teachers and social workers, innovative farmers, engineers, and nonprofit leaders. Moreover, our research provides great value to Vermont, as it does to national and international intellectual communities: in agriculture, science, and in the social sciences and humanities, UVM faculty research is something of which every Vermonter can be proud.

One example: The UVM interdisciplinary program in Food Systems, which has developed one of the leading graduate programs in the country, linking practical perspectives on developing new agricultural products with critical perspectives on Big Food and the hurdles faced by its alternatives. UA member Dr. Shoshanah Inwood's research focuses on the needs of small farmers for social services such as health and child care – as critical to the survival of small and medium-sized farms. Another example: Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies, the Program I used to direct: Faculty research has informed debates over paid sick days, equal pay, civil unions and the accessibility of

marriage to same-sex couples, family welfare, and many other issues.

* Make UVM More Affordable for In-State Students

Beyond preservation, we must make UVM more affordable and accessible for Vermont students. And obviously, we cannot compromise the quality of education for students when they arrive. Individual classes must remain at manageable sizes; in the opinion of many faculty, classes have in some cases already become too large to allow for the most demanding instruction. Faculty must continue to pursue research and professional development that allows them to maintain their knowledge base – and to give students access to the most current information. UVM faculty are eager to teach even more Vermont students than we do today.

One idea that has been floated is to retain nearly all of the funding support currently provided by the Vermont State Assistance Corporation (VSAC) for in-state college and university tuition. By nearly eliminating the portability of VSAC grants – that is, by limiting the range of states to which Vermont students can take assistance to those states that reciprocate with Vermont – we may gain an additional \$4 million in revenue for UVM and the State colleges. We think this is an idea worth exploring. As UVM faculty, we endorse a policy that says to our high school students, in effect, ‘You can get a world-class education right here at home. Our faculty are as good as those in any other state.’

* Solve the Long-Term Challenges to Higher Education in Vermont

Data from the Center for the Study of Education Policy at Illinois State University (reported yesterday on the reputable website, Inside Higher Ed.com) make it clear that Vermont has fallen behind other states, in the trend in support for higher education over the past five years. Adjusted for inflation, Vermont public support for higher education dropped by 3.6% over the five post-recession years 2011-2016. The drop for last year was slightly under 1%. Compare this to Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, states that often compete with us for students from this region. Connecticut increased funding over 5 years by 11.1%, Massachusetts by 23%, and Rhode Island by 9.1%.

University of Vermont faculty don’t have all the answers for the question of how to address this and the other challenges facing higher education in our state. But we are eager to be partners in finding solutions.