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Before the Senate Committee on Education

State of Vermont

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Senator Baruth and other members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for hearing our concerns. I am a tenured professor at the University of Vermont, and a former Director of the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program and president of the faculty union, United Academics. But I am here today as a member of an ad hoc group of deeply concerned members of the university and Vermont communities known as UVM United Against Cuts.

This group formed barely two weeks ago in response to the draconian, unfair, and undemocratic proposals the UVM administration put forward as the spring semester was closing. At a time when UVM's top administrators could have provided solace and a positive vision for the future – where they could have drawn upon the extraordinary work of my colleagues, who saved the spring term by pivoting rapidly to online instruction, and could have underlined the value of our humanistic and scientific research in a time of national crisis – we

were appalled to discover these spokespeople for our university instead pushing a cramped vision of UVM as a hierarchical institution in which those who are closest to the central educational mission are asked to bear the brunt of proposed budgetary cuts.

Members of UVM United Against Cuts come from a cross-section of faculty ranks, tenured and non-tenured, fulltime and part-time, across multiple colleges of the university. Our group includes students who know that their educations are imperiled whenever courses are cut and faculty are mistreated. And it includes UVM alums and community members who know that UVM plays a special role in our state – and that when any group of employees of a major institution is underpaid and disregarded, we are all at risk.

We have been driven to action by the administration's hypocritical talk about "shared sacrifice." Thus far, there has been **plenty of proposed sacrifice but no sharing**: President Suresh Garimella has pledged to cut his base salary from \$480,000 to around \$440,000 (although his real compensation is more like \$630,000). Several deans have offered cuts in their own base pay of just over 8% per year. In the College of Arts and Sciences, the Dean has imposed a cut of 15% in the extra compensation his associate deans receive on top of their regular salaries. By contrast, the deans of Arts and Sciences and the Rubenstein School of Environmental and Natural Sciences have informed a total of seventy-two of their non-tenure-track faculty – professors who helped UVM weather the crisis this spring – that their workloads will be cut, from 100% of their usual number of courses to 75%, with a concomitant cut in income of 25%.

The average salary of 72 top executives of UVM is \$251,293. The pay cut needed to produce \$1.1 million in savings from the ranks of these highest-paid university employees – the

equivalent of a 25% cut for 72 non-tenure-track faculty facing cuts – is 6%. By contrast, the average annual compensation for the 72 non-tenure-track professors facing cuts is \$58,609. If administrative proposals succeed, and their income is cut by 25%, then it will drop to \$43,957.

There are four things we ask you, as elected officials of the State of Vermont, to demand of UVM's administrators before you approve the disbursement of any state or federal funds to help UVM weather this period in its history:

1. **Open the Books**: The administration says these cuts are necessary because of the effects of COVID-19. We would not want to underestimate the pandemic's impact on our society or, potentially, on our university's finances. But we cannot judge the administration's claim because *they refuse to reveal the complete budget and revenue figures that have driven their proposals*. Therefore, you must insist that the administration **open the books**, and answer the question: What is the bottom-line number the administration seeks in savings, and why? UVM administrators must share this and all relevant financial data with the university community. And they must use those data as the basis for engaging in democratic deliberation and negotiation with representatives of all categories of UVM employees who may be asked to accept cuts in benefits and/or salary.

2. **Chop From the Top**: If indeed cuts are necessary in the salaries and benefits of UVM employees, then they **must** come from the people with the greatest security and highest incomes, and not from those who work hardest and make the least. Thus far, the UVM administration has suggested that its proposals are unavoidable, that there is no other way to move forward. One instructive contrast is with the University of Wisconsin at Madison, whose

chancellor has instituted a 15% pay for the top administrators for six months and a progressive system of furloughs in which those making over \$150,000 per year take the largest number of furlough days and those making less than \$50,000 take the fewest. Another is with Longwood University, whose president took a 25% reduction in full salary for the coming year and each of whose vice presidents took a 20% reduction. All other reductions for 2020-2021 are to be progressive, with those earning the least facing the lowest percentage cuts and those earning most facing the highest percentage – unlike the UVM approach, which is precisely the reverse.

3. **Use all available funds:** If this is a crisis, then you must insist that UVM treat it like one. The top administration, in consultation and active negotiation with representatives of all categories of stakeholders, must access endowment and other funds that exist to sustain the university in extraordinary circumstances. Financial resources do not exist in a vacuum. They exist to preserve our educational and research missions, to serve our students and to ensure that everyone who participates in the UVM community is compensated decently for their labor.

4. **Restore** all non-tenure-track professors who have been informed that their employment contracts will be reduced to their full teaching loads and full compensation for 2020-2021.

With my colleagues, I am available to answer any questions.

THANK YOU.