



P.O.Box 1745, Burlington, VT 05402
802-338-6052 • union@unitedstaff.us
www.unitedstaff.us

September 16, 2011

To all UVM staff members who are not yet in a union:

Do you love working at UVM but feel the working conditions could be better? Do you worry that your benefits will be cut or changed without prior notice or discussion? Do you wonder how you can make your needs known, and your voice heard, when the administration makes decisions that affect you?

We have great news! United Staff is an independent labor organization at UVM which is not affiliated with any national union. We - your co-workers and colleagues - have been busy building a staff union which will work for **our** best interests. It is time, now more than ever, for the unrepresented staff to have a strong, united voice.

OUR VISION United Staff has a unique vision of cooperation, accountability, and respect. We will negotiate with the UVM administration in a spirit of collaboration, with the strength of many voices, so that we may all agree to contract terms that fairly recognize the essential contributions made by staff. At the same time, we understand that resources are finite, and we will help the administration find smarter and more equitable ways of distributing those resources. We will keep our efforts local and focused on what we, as UVM staff, need.

OUR PROGRESS We've made substantial progress already, working together as a united group of concerned staff members. We've forged strong relationships within the UVM community, and we continue to build support from outside individuals and organizations as well. We have competent, experienced and knowledgeable people within our ranks already working hard on our behalf. We are registered with the Vermont Secretary of State's Office as a labor organization. We are working with a top labor law firm in the state. Our CPA has our files in order. We have established a bank account and an on-line fundraising mechanism. We are moving forward!

NON-AFFILIATION As we talk with people, one question we're hearing is, "Why go independent? Why not join a powerful existing union?" Well, we considered affiliating with several national unions, but in the end, we realized we have all of the skills, energy, and wisdom we need to do this by ourselves, and to do it well. Affiliation is not a requirement for a union. We feel that forming an independent union matches well with the Vermont ideals of self-reliance and self-sufficiency – and we get the added benefit of doing things our way, without having to bend to a national union's agenda or pay their higher dues. Our talented, experienced members have great ideas and strong opinions, and we are fully capable of negotiating for our own interests. Choosing independence is a bold, creative choice, and we are proud of it!

DUES The other common question we hear is, "What about dues?" Unions typically send half or more of their collected dues away to support state and national administrative expenses, such as union executive salaries and lobbying efforts. However, United Staff, as an independent union, only needs to collect enough to cover our own necessary expenses, resulting in much lower dues. Like good Vermonters, United Staff will have a frugal yet effective budget. We'll be keeping our dues local. With your input, we'll devise a fair, salary-based sliding scale to determine each person's contribution.

WHAT NEXT? So, how do we make United Staff a union? We need at least 30% of the unrepresented staff at UVM to sign authorization cards, expressing interest in joining United Staff. Once enough cards are collected, United Staff will send them to the Vermont Labor Relations Board (VLRB). The VLRB confirms that the cards are legitimate, that the positions represented are eligible for our union, and that at least 30% of us have signed. Then they schedule an election. On Election Day, we all vote. When 50% + 1 of those who vote choose United Staff, we win our union!

PRIVACY We want to assure you that, during and after this process, the UVM administration - and your supervisor - will never know who has signed a card and who hasn't. Your right to privacy and confidentiality is very important to you and to us. We will send the cards directly to the VLRB, and the VLRB does not share this information with anybody else. For more information about what happens to the cards, click on the link at the right, on this webpage:
http://vlrb.vermont.gov/bargaining_units_and_elections/

We are now signing authorization cards to make this union a reality. This is where we can use your help! If you would like to sign a card, we'll find a time and place that works for you. Or, if you would like more information about United Staff, or if you have any questions you'd like to ask before making up your mind, we'd be happy to arrange an opportunity for a conversation. In any case, we would really like to hear from YOU.

Email union@unitedstaff.us

Phone 802.338.6052

Send a note by mail to PO Box 1745, Burlington VT 05402

We also have more information on our website, www.unitedstaff.us

Thank you, from the United Staff Organizing Committee:

A collection of handwritten signatures in blue ink, arranged in three columns. The signatures are:
Column 1: Kathleen Snow, Christina Knapp, Gordon, Sean Goodish, Ann Roberts, Mary J. Gauri, Kathy B. Caron.
Column 2: Marilyn D'Arcy, Elizabeth Buckley, Vincent Belletier, Pam Curran, Marcie Newland, Nelson L. Sean.
Column 3: Laurie M. Sean, Terrence Y., Carl Caldwell - Edmunds, Sally M. Walker, Jane Hendley.

The National Labor Relations Act (US Code Title 29, Sections 7 & 8) gives you these rights and protections:

You have the right to attend meetings to discuss unionizing.

You have the right to wear union buttons, stickers and clothing.

You have the right to organize other employees to support the union.

You have the right to circulate and sign petitions, and sign membership cards.

You have the right to distribute, read and discuss union literature (in non-work areas during breaks and lunchtime).

It is **illegal** for your boss to:

- * Fire or threaten to fire, lay off, discipline, harass, or transfer employees who support the union.
- * Favor employees who don't support the union over those who do.
- * Take away benefits or privileges to discourage union activity.
- * Promise employees a pay increase, promotion or special favor if they oppose the union.
- * Ask your opinion of the union.