

# AAUP Summer Institute 2020: Organizing During COVID

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# University of Vermont (UVM)

President: Suresh Garimella (base pay \$430k, total +\$600k)

Endowment: \$467.7 million

Undergraduate: 10,700

Graduate: 1,627

1,692 full and part-time faculty



## United Academics

<https://www.unitedacademics.org/>

- Affiliated AAUP-AFT since 2001

- 2 represented units: Fulltime (0.75-1.0 FTE) and Part-time (<0.75 FTE)

- 800 Members

# The Issues

- 72 Lecturers** in UVM CAS and Rubenstein School cut to 0.75 workload/pay
- PT Faculty cut** automatically pending staffing review
- 400 Staff cuts**
- Staff asked to elect for **furloughs**, but then **pay cuts** were imposed after-the-fact.
- Workload creep** across all colleges and affecting NTT and TT.
- Ignoring and **undermining shared governance** and CBA in COVID-19 planning processes
- Most 2020-2021 **sabbaticals** automatically deferred/cancelled
- Cuts to stipends** for program directors, including CRES, GSWS, Jewish Studies, and more.
- Closure of the Campus Childcare Center** which is also a learning space for CESS.
- More draconian cuts and changes proposed in bargaining [Ground rules prevent discussion]



**“This 25% cut in my salary** means that as I sit around the dinner table with my family after working at one full-time job, I will be worried about how to find an additional job during a pandemic. I will be **worried about having enough money to buy food. I will be worried about paying for housing.** I will be worried about paying for heat, electricity, and water. I will be worried about my children not having enough time with me.

“I wonder what your dinner table will be like next year? .... If you and other administrators were to take a 25% cut in your salaries, would it affect you as much as a 25% cut to my salary? The numbers tell me clearly it would not.”

Rachael Montesano, Romance Languages Senior Lecturer, “Letter to President Garimella”

## United Academics Labor Actions:

- Currently negotiating new CBA** [Bargaining started pre-COVID]

- ULP filed regarding “UVM Strong” Process** -> *Impact Bargaining* process beginning this week.

- **3 related grievances filed:**

1. CAS and Rubenstein Lecturers subject to the 25% workload and pay cut
2. Forced 2020-2021 sabbatical deferrals
3. Senior lecturer promotion complain [pending]

## **UVM United Against the Cuts Actions**

- Car Rally
- Automated letters using Resist.bot and AFT Actionnetwork.org
- Legislative lobbying effort re: COVID relief funds
- Alternative budget proposals
- Letter from distinguished faculty (Award winners and endowed chairs)
- Solidarity Press conf. on #BLM, students, alumnae, and staff

# UVM United Car Rally





# UVM United Car Rally

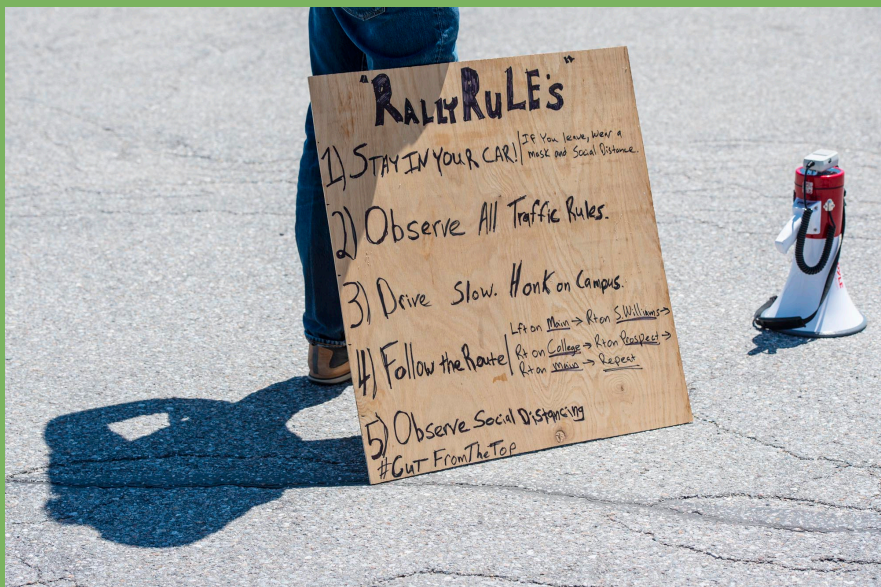


# UVM United Car Rally





# Planning a Car Rally



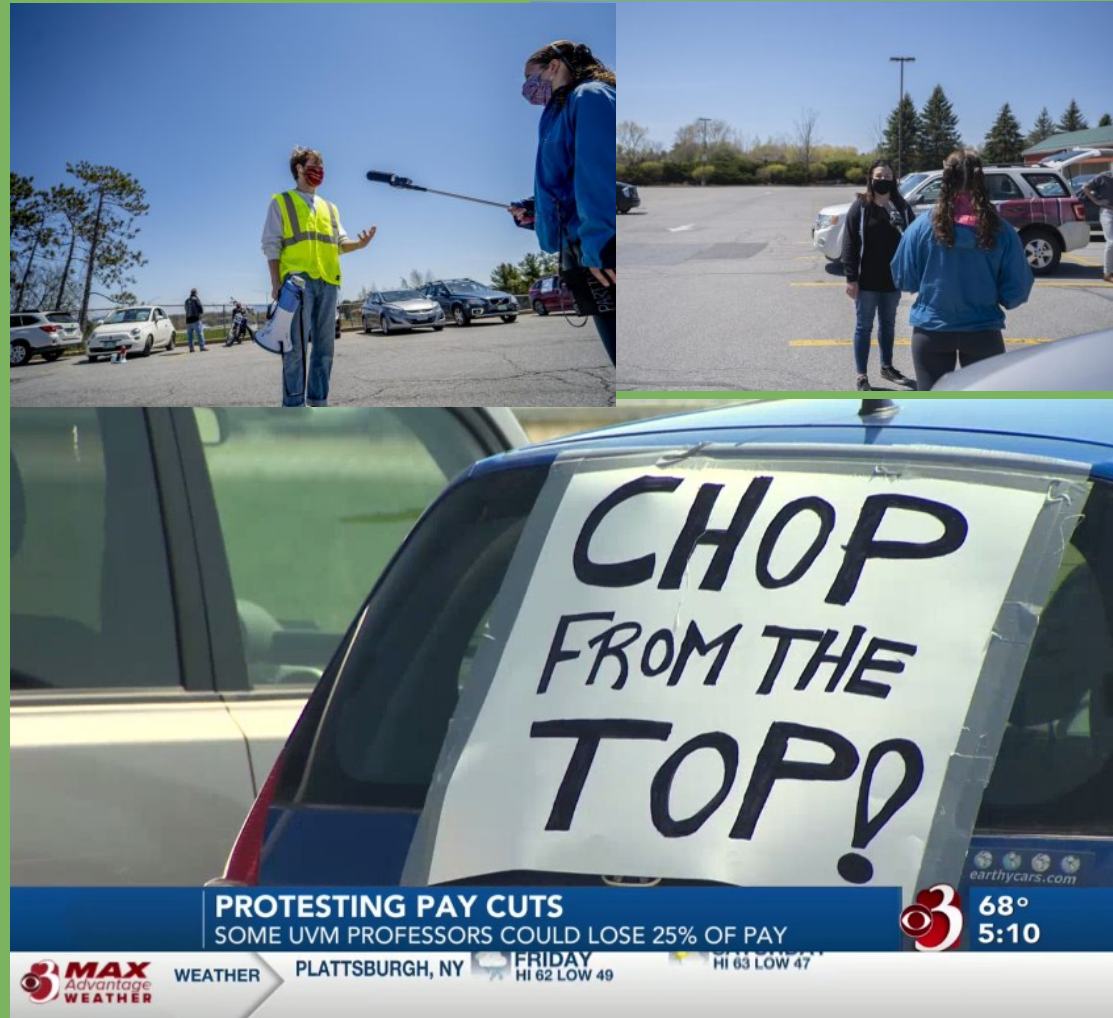
- Press release and promotion
- Include staff, students, alums, community members, and other union or activist groups
- Designate roles: Stewards for traffic and media.
- Share plans in advance and at event
- Wear masks and bring sanitizer to ensure safety
- Maintain distancing
- Plan for lead car(s)
- Communicate time window of the event

## Car Rally Media

- Local and Regional TV and Radio coverage
- Print Coverage
- Social Media

### Key Lessons:

- COVID = Event-hungry reporters
- Clear messaging helped media amplification



## **Legislative Outreach**

- Under COVID UVM received \$25 million additional funds from the State of Vt.
- Met with state senators, state house reps, gubernatorial candidates, and the Working Families caucus (Dem/Prog).

## **Outcomes:**

- Testimony along with VSC faculty before Sen. Education Committee.
- Lt. Gov. & Gubernatorial Candidate David Zuckerman (Prog.) presented an alternative budget to UVM Pres. Garimella.
- Progressive and Democratic coalition members issued various supportive statements.





How do you create inter-rank solidarity?

*COVID-19 is a distinct opportunity:*

- Shared working condition issues across rank
- Intellectual property issues
- Assaults on faculty governance and curricular integrity
- Puts focus on budgeting processes and institutional priorities.

## Continuing Action and Issues

In late June, we held a solidarity press conference led by a student moderator, featuring students, alumnæ, and staff, linking Black Lives Matter actions to deep institutional practices and labor issues.

**Why is this crucial?** -> COVID has revealed inequities and focused attention on the fact that *budgets are moral documents*.

*‘Worry about the university.* This is the injunction today in the United States, one with a long history. Call for its restoration like Harold Bloom or Stanley Fish or Gerald Graff. Call for its reform like Derek Bok or Bill Readings or Cary Nelson. Call out to it as it calls to you. But for the subversive intellectual, all of this goes on upstairs, in polite company, among the rational men. After all, the subversive intellectual came under false pretenses, with bad documents, out of love. Her labor is as necessary as it is unwelcome. **The university needs what she bears but cannot bear what she brings.**”

-Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (2013).