

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

November 2, 2023

Hybrid meeting, in person in Waterman Lounge and by Video Conference on Zoom

MINUTES

Call to Order: President Michael Gurdon called the meeting to order at 3pm. There were 41 members in attendance.

1. President Gurdon introduced Dr. Josh Bongard, the Veinott Professor of Computer Science and director of the Morphology, Evolution & Cognition Laboratory on campus. Dr. Bongard's lab creates AI, robots, and computer designed organisms (so called "xenobots"). He received a research award from former president Barack Obama at a ceremony at the White House in 2011, appeared in an episode of Morgan Freeman's science program 'Through the Wormhole', was named as one of MIT Technology Review's Top 35 Under 35, and received the Cozzarelli Prize from the National Academy of Sciences. He has appeared on CNN and his work has been covered by The New York Times, The New Yorker, and the BBC. He is also the author of the book "How the Body Shapes the Way We Think". The title of his talk was "Organisms, robots, and AI. Past, present, and possible futures". He began by noting that robots have proven effective at systematizing

problem like this by trial and error. He next described his laboratory's research on xenobots. These are AI designed new tissues and organisms. In collaboration with scientists at Tufts University, frog skin and heart muscle are combined at the direction of AI to synergize contraction. Videos were shown to illustrate

past year.

- a. The Board met in 10 regular meetings and one special meeting.
 - b. Much of the discussion at Board meeting was the problem of the University's Retirement Advisory Council. As a result of this inactivity retirees were not informed of nor involved in decisions that led to changes in the health plan. The UBAC has been reconstituted and has two RFAO members. This should provide more retiree input into University benefit decisions.
 - c. A related issue of the University's Retirement Advisory Council was the problem of the University's Retirement Advisory Council. As a result of this inactivity retirees were not informed of nor involved in decisions that led to changes in the health plan. The UBAC has been reconstituted and has two RFAO members. This should provide more retiree input into University benefit decisions.
 - d. The Board had discussions with the new Vice Provost regarding member access to computer software. There is now in place a satisfactory mechanism to obtain access.
 - e. It has obtained stipends for members of the Board of Trustees for the first 3 years. The contract can be terminated earlier than 3 years.
- iii. A member noted that any employment by UVM can result in the loss of retiree parking privileges. (Subsequent to the meeting, this circumstance was verified. The faculty union

contract states, on p. 117, "Should a retiree be reemployed by UVM they will be subject to the same parking rates, policies and procedures as active employees.")

- h. Results of elections of representatives to the RFAO Board for 2 year terms.
 - i. Officers
 - 1. Michael Gurdon, President
 - 2. Beth Mintz, Vice President
 - 3. Richard Branda, Secretary Treasurer
 - ii. At Large Executive Board Members
 - 1. Ralph Budd, Alan Gottlieb, Rachel Johnson, Alison Pecheneck, Lee Thompson
- 2. The meeting was adjourned at 4:37pm

Respectfully submitted, Richard Branda