



University Staff Advisory Council

AGENDA

February 13, 2024
THC 305

<https://urichmond.zoom.us/j/81918253581?pwd=OWM2dHk0M3MweDkyNnJaUXVIYUhbDz09>

Meeting ID: 819 1825 3581

Passcode: 425819

Attendees: Derek Miller, Bill Galaspie, Cassie Price, Ellen Sayles, Meghan Wall, Kirstin Stacia, John Shines, Sam Robertson, Wendy Sheppard, Carole Yeatts, Ashley Kuemmerle, Frances Dickerson, Melissa Joyce-Rosen, Geraldine Sullivan, Carolyn Smart, Leigh Ann Martin, Alex McWhorter, Jennifer Phillips, Mary Finley-Brook, Rachel Weinberg-Rue, Emily Phaup, Monica Booker, Mina Zatelli, Christina Mills, Maribel Street, Jamie Lynn Haskins, Kaylin Tingle, Kristin Mance, Liza Carpenter, Melody Wilson, Nick Lydick

1. Call to order by Derek Miller at 1:03 p.m.

Presentation from the Office of International Education – Ellen Sayles, Associate Dean and Director of Education Abroad: Global engagement is baked into UR's DNA. IEO supports international students and scholars. Total international student population is 395—including exchange students, degree-seeking students, a few seeking graduate degrees. Krittika Onsanit and Diana Trinh support these students in a variety of ways; they recently partnered with Career Services on a career event for international students. Also offer cultural events, such as Chinese New Year celebration. 384 students studied abroad last semester, and another 104 this semester. Many more go in fall than in spring. Five OIE staff do study-abroad advising. Spectrum of study-abroad opportunities: semester abroad, Encompass, and others. Seventy percent of our students have an abroad experience. About five years ago, we looked at students who were least likely to go abroad: males, Latinx and African-Americans, science majors, athletes, first-gen. Encompass designed to help some of these students go abroad; program usually lasts one to three weeks and is led by faculty. Usually offer two to five Encompass programs each year. Students who participate in Encompass are more likely to participate in other study abroad programs later. Other study-abroad opportunities are offered through the Chaplaincy, SSIR, Athletics, Weinstein fund, and UR Summer Guarantee; many include financial assistance to students who are interning or researching abroad. OIE runs nine of its own summer study-abroad programs in eight countries. UR recently rated No. 1 for baccalaureate students who study abroad. OIE has 70 partners; this high number of partners helps enable students from all majors to go abroad. OIE also offers international programming, such as our International Education Week. This past year, IEW focused on Indigenous cultures and sustainability. Next year, IEW will focus on Costa Rica, to include programming and special meals in the Dining Hall. OIE offers a passport fair as an opportunity for faculty, staff, and students to get or renew a

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passport. OIE covers the cost for students to get a passport. Sometimes Dept. of State comes to the passport fair. OIE has had so much demand from students for Weinstein grants that we have to award most of those grants to students rather than faculty and staff. UR will look at crafting every-other-year group familiarization trips for faculty and staff in a country that is of interest to UR. OIE is looking at new horizons in global engagement; we are focusing specifically on developing more cross-campus collaborations. [Addendum: Ellen Sayles: About 12-13% of international students sign up for hosts. We have more hosts than students since including Osher members as hosts.

2. Kirstin Stacia: SPCS offers some study-abroad programs as well. Ellen Sayles: Jepson and Law School partner on a summer program at Cambridge and Robins has an MBA abroad program. Derek Miller: One Card Office does passport photos.
3. Budget Report: Balance is \$3,097.87.
4. Committee Reports: Kirstin Stacia: Volunteer Committee: The Spider Dash 5 K needs volunteers for the Feb. 24 race. Need folks to man the race course. Will publish link for volunteers with meeting minutes. Great volunteer t-shirts! [Addendum: All volunteer slots filled as of Feb. 23.] John Shines: Plant and Facilities: Sam Robertson is the new executive director of facilities operations. Projects coming up: new carpets in Robins Center, adding speed table in front of Refectory, looking into new employee uniform vendors, moving to new work-management system to align with WorkDay, possibly developing QR scan codes to help people decide what is compostable and recyclable. Sam Robertson: Trying to figure out if there are structural problems with the bridge across the lake. Carole Yeatts, faculty liaison: Faculty met on Friday to approve revisions to their handbook. This Friday, Stephanie DePaul and Shannon Sinclair will give a presentation to faculty on Black student enrollment and retention. How has the Supreme Court decision on affirmative action affected our numbers? Ashley Kuemmerle, Planning and Priorities: Met weekly for last month. Upcoming campaign to raise resources for faculty, tenure and scholarship, access and affordability. This campaign not focused on buildings necessarily. Also discussed enrollment for undergraduates, SPCS, and Law School. Also looked at how our faculty and staff salaries and retention compare to peer institutions. Derek Miller: May 16 is Spiders in the Know. Dave Hale has asked what the staff would like to hear during that meeting. Send Derek an email with your thoughts! Kirstin Stacia: Would like to know how the Supreme Court decision on affirmative action and the looming enrollment cliff is affecting our enrollment.
5. Start planting the seeds for new USAC member recruitment. Need to recruit reps to serve on USAC for the 2024-27 term.
6. Web submissions: **USAC Web Submissions** - Received 1-18-24
Idea/Question #1: On 1/4/24, we received "a note from Geraldine" suggesting we focus prioritize wellbeing. This is an appropriate message and one I believe in! On Sunday 1/7/24 @ 7:30 am, I received a Leave Report Reminder email. Can we stop the non-urgent weekend emails? Our actions counter our best intentions.
Rationale/Reason: Trying to preserve work/life balance.
Response: We appreciate your feedback and continue to evaluate and adjust the timing of system-generated messages where possible. The particular message referenced is

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scheduled to go out on the 7th of each month to employees who have not approved their time and on the 10th to supervisors. The system is not able to recognize whether those days are workdays or weekends. We continue our commitment to supporting and promoting employee wellbeing and will make efforts to adjust practices when possible.

Idea/question #2 : What is the University policy on closing for 30-60 minutes during lunch so staff can take a lunch break?

Rationale/reason: More businesses are closing for brief periods so that staff can take lunch. UR staff in offices with few staff as well as offices that rely on student workers to work the main reception often have to skip lunch and work without breaks due to lack of coverage during lunch hours. Student workers call in sick or they are not always available to cover typical lunch periods. It would be helpful for the University to have an official policy on this so that there is consistency across units for staff being allowed and able to take lunch breaks and that staff do not have to wait until very late in the day to eat or eat while working so that the office can remain open during that period. Inconsistency is unhealthy and leads to resentment as some offices may be allowed to close briefly while others cannot. There should be a consistent policy all managers follow or a university break period for all employees (e.g., noon - 12:30).

Response: Our policy on work hours and meal breaks is purposely flexible to allow departments to consider the best alternatives that suit their operations. Our campus serves a varied set of constituents, including current and prospective students, current and prospective employees, community visitors, etc. Because of the great variation in our operations and the services we each provide, we are not considering a lunchtime shutdown. Our policy does speak to employee's entitlement to a meal break. If operations are limiting the opportunity for a proper meal break, we encourage employees to speak to their manager or their HR Business Partner, who can help facilitate discussions and explore solutions. See policy: <https://hr.richmond.edu/current-employees/schedule.html>

Idea/question #3 : Why is intermittent FMLA required to help elderly parents every so often? The process is burdensome for employees esp when caring for two parents out of town and having to work with NY Group Life takes hours of paperwork and calls.

Rationale/reason: What is the difference b/c taking care of elderly parents, children and spouses on an as-needed basis and why is intermittent FMLA required for one category and not the others (e.g., child and spouse)? I have spent hours on the web page and on the phone (wasted precious time) with NY Life and doctors to care for parents every 5-6 weeks. It is burdensome and stressful for the employees when they are already stressed esp. if they are "sandwich" employees. Managers and supervisors should be giving the same instructions to all employees - not treating some different from others.

Response: Family Medical Leave (FML) provides eligible employees with job-protected leave for qualifying family and medical reasons and requires continuation of their group health benefits under the same conditions as if they had not taken leave. The University must comply with all Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) requirements which includes informing employees of their FMLA rights and responsibilities. Employees have the right

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to take FMLA leave all at once, or, when medically necessary, in separate blocks of time or by reducing the time they work each day or week. The intermittent leave process with New York Life (NYL) is the same for an employee's own illness or that of their spouse, child or parent. Intermittent leave under FMLA requires recertification every 6 months for a longer-term condition, or sooner if medical circumstances have changed. Once HR is notified by the employee or manager of a potential need for FMLA we advise the employee to contact New York Life to apply for FML. (we can include this link if helpful <https://hr.richmond.edu/managers/leave/fmla-std.html#if-an-employee-has-plenty-of-sick-leave-do-they-still-have-to-apply-for-fmla>). When managers contact HR about leave options for an employee, they are provided with the same information as above as well as the information on the Human Resources page. HR is happy to assist the employee below if they are having issues with recertification. Please reach out and we will work with NYL to help resolve any issues.

Idea/Question #4: Why charge for a 5K at UR for university staff & students?

Rationale/Reason: If UR is promoting wellness, why are we charging for folks to walk and run across campus for a free breakfast and t-shirts? Shouldn't the event be accessible to all without paying? There are already portable toilets by the baseball field and buildings with toilets, for example, and other costs should be minimal as the event is on campus.

Response: Thank you for your submission. The University promotes well-being for students, staff and faculty in many ways. The Spider Dash 5K is just one way we do that. For this particular event, we must cover our cost for meals, timing, bibs, t shirts, bags, signage and awards. The University will be paying for some of the costs which are not covered in the registration fee. We have tried very hard to keep the cost to a minimum.

Idea/Question #5: Inadequate Leave for New Employees with Covid

Rationale/Reason: One of my direct reports, hired in 2022, has come down with Covid. As they are a newer employee who has not had much time to build up a buffer of sick time, the now-rescinded Covid leave that we were originally allotted would have been a tremendous asset at this time. I would like to recommend that in the face of our current Covid spike, this time be reapplied to their leave balance. At the very least, this would be appropriate for those employees (such as the one in question) who did not use this available leave before it expired, but I would further recommend that it become a fixture of our leave package until such time that Covid is no longer causing widespread illness, hospitalizations, and long-term health concerns. For longtime employees such as myself, this is much less of an issue, but for those who just joined us, who we should want to best support as a new part of our community, they have very few options but to eat through the entirety of their sick leave while battling this still-persistent virus. Studies have shown that increased activity during Covid-related illness leads to worse outcomes as concerns long Covid. It is in everyone's best interest that individuals are able to recuperate without concern that any future health emergencies will require them to go without pay. This should not be the environment we, as a University community, wish to foster.

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Response: The federal emergency declaration policy expired in May of 2023. At that time, the University carefully evaluated our approach going forward and made the decision to scale back protocols, reporting, and special benefits, including the additional 5 COVID days that had been granted to employees. The great majority of employees continue to have sufficient time to cover illness as well as set time aside for vacation. For new employees, it can always be a bit challenging – covid or otherwise – if events arise which necessitate absences. In the event of anything more serious, they will have the availability of Short-Term Disability. When we look at our sick time allowances compared to other employers, we feel comfortable that we are providing comparable benefits. At this time, there are no plans to reinstate COVID days.

Derek will share with HR concerns about employees who may not have the financial resources to participate in the Spider 5K. Maybe these employees can volunteer before or after the race in exchange for a fee waiver. Meghan Wall: I am concerned about people who are immune-compromised. Could UR strive to do a little better, rather than just meeting the standard bar? Kirstin Stacia: Could we compromise? Instead of five COVID days, maybe three? Given that UR salaries are a little lower, could UR be more generous on COVID leave? Mary Finley-Brook: Maybe USAC and Faculty Senate could come up with a shared position on this topic.

7. Derek Miller: March meeting will be Zoom only. First half of meeting will be with the firm that is doing campus planning. Hope lots of people will join us for this meeting. Also will review videos of people interested in serving on USAC Exec Team next year.