



University Staff Advisory Council

MINUTES

Tuesday, September 9, 2025

[Zoom Link](#)

Attendees: Tammy Alexander, Rob Andrejewski, Pietra Balsamo, Miriam Blackmon, Ashley Blout, Amanda Boyd, Kolby Ferguson, Stephanie Fillman, Meghan Gill, Emily Griffey-Ewes, Aretha Harris, Iria Jones, Ingrid Lasrado, Erin Lowery, Mirinda McCants, Derek Miller, Yahneet Morton, Brian Moyer, Jess Oliver, Jesse Pascarelli, Jennifer Philips, Cynthia Price, Liz Prillaman, Olivia Rosenblum, Wendy Sheppard, Cort Schneider, John Shines, Jenika Simmons, Kirstin Stacia, Julia Trachtenberg, Robin Walinski, Mary Wheaton, Justin Woodson, Carole Yeatts, Mina Zatelli, Karla (no last name).

Jess Oliver called the meeting to order at 1:11 pm.

The meeting began with an introduction to Rob Andrejewski to discuss the new UR Food Orchard and the upcoming Food Fest event. Jess welcomed our newly elected committee members.

Rob Andrejewski, Director of Sustainability, UR Orchard and Food Forest

Rob discussed the upcoming grand opening of UR's new orchard and Food Forest project. He emphasized the importance of integrating sustainability into all university functions and highlighted the environmental and social benefits of the project. The initiative was made possible by a \$25,000 unsolicited gift from 2020 graduate Claire Griffiths. Planning involved collaboration with Daniel Hart, Emily Griffey-Ewes, Haley Herman, and Joseph Day. The project aims to demonstrate sustainable agriculture practices and aligns with the university's commitment to belonging. Joseph Day designed the orchard and worked closely with students to select plants to add to the orchard.

The community orchard and garden include 18 fruit trees, herbs, vegetables, and flowers. The area is open to the public and is intended as a space where people and wildlife can thrive. While some plants are not yet producing fruit, plans are in place to remove and replace those that do not work well together. Rob discussed the presence of monarch butterflies and the need to control invasive species, such as lanternflies. Not far from the orchard is Abby's Garden, which is managed by 55 gardeners and offers various plot sizes for students, staff, and faculty. Abby's Garden has a gate that locks to keep deer and other animals from entering the garden.

The open house event is scheduled for **September 25th at 4:30 PM**, featuring cider, local apples, and live music, with tours and informational tables. The Eco Corridor follows park rules (open at dawn, closed at dusk), and currently, there are no plans to install lighting due to safety concerns raised by URPD and other groups in 2018. The discussion also covered companion planting diagrams developed by Daniel Hart and Joseph Day, and mentioned a potential Phase 2 project involving the development of native orchards and the introduction of pawpaw trees.

Chair's Report (Jess Oliver)

Updates were shared about upcoming speakers and staff events. Jess introduced our 6 new USAC representatives.

Liz Prillaman, Business Affairs - Campus Business Services

Dominique Evans, Business Affairs - Dining

Ashley Blount, Business Affairs – Custodial

Yahneet Morton, General Counsel - Risk Management

Olivia Rosenblum, Student Development

Brian Moyer, Academic Affairs

Speaker Updates: Laura Detrick, Benefits, and Paul Brohan from the Modlin Center will speak at our October meeting. Maribel Street with UR Emergency Management will be at our November meeting, and Heather Sadowski, Director of Health Promotions, will visit us at our March meeting.

Staff Opportunities:

- Climate Justice Faculty & Staff Learning Community. The core objective of this cross-school community is to connect faculty and staff with shared interests and willingness to collaborate on ethics and climate justice, increase campus climate knowledge, promote ecological action, and address emotional resilience issues. Meetings are held on Fridays, from 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm on September 19th, October 17th, and November 21st. September 21st from 12:00 pm – 5:00 pm is UN Peace Day; Sun Day: “*A Day for Peace and the Planet.*” (This event takes place in Cary Town.)
- Outdoor Brownbag Lunch Events: September 5th, October 3rd, November 7th, and December 5th.
 - The September 5th meeting will take place in the Jepson Quad (Stern Plaza) and Alicia Diaz, Dept. of Theater and Dance, will be the discussion facilitator. It will feature Margaret Dorsey (Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology), who will discuss the successful efforts of environmental activists to prevent the first Trump administration from building a border wall through a national park in Texas. Nicole McVeigh (Dept. of Languages, Literature, and Culture will talk about “*Sept. 21: A Day for Peace and the Planet.*”

Treasury Report and Approval of Meeting Minutes (Mina Zatelli)

- John Shines put forth a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the August 10th meeting. Minutes were approved.
- There have been no expenses over the last month. Our budget remains with a balance of \$4,694.53.

Reports from Committees and Liaisons

- There were no updates from the Benefits Committee (meeting at the end of the month), Campus Planning Committee, Planning Involvement Team, Food Service Involvement Team (Amanda Boyd reminded everyone to visit the new 8:15 in Boatwright).
- Faculty Senate, Cort Schneider stated that he will attend the first meeting this Friday, September 12th.

- Planning & Priorities (Miriam Blackmon). Miriam shared that a meeting was held on August 29th, and the discussion centered on the university's operating budget, focusing on the FY 2025 results as well as potential impacts our university could face due to new federal government regulations. The concern is around the endowment tax per student. Currently, it is at 1.5% per student, however, that jumps to 4% if the number of students exceeds 3,000. While we would not feel the impact of this tax until 2031, the university is preparing and planning accordingly, should we fall into the new tax bracket.
- Communications Committee (Mary Wheaton & Erin Lowery) - They will send the new representative a "getting to know you" survey so they can introduce them on our socials/website.
- Events & Engagement Committee (Justin Woodson & Mina Zatelli) - Mina has organized a new staff tour with the Modlin Center, scheduled for Friday, September 19th at 11:00 a.m. Our guide will be Martha Wright, Curator for Academic Initiatives. If you've joined the university within the last six months or haven't had the opportunity to tour the center, please come! We will meet in the lobby of the Modlin Center. *There is plenty of parking in front of the building.
- Elections Committee (Carole Yeatts) – Carole and the committee successfully completed the election process. A great deal of time was invested in the process, and Jess expressed her appreciation for the committee's outstanding work. Kristin Stacia asked that if you see USAC elections signs around campus, please pick them up. We may dispose of the poster but please save the metal holders so they can be reused.

Web Submissions (Mirinda McCants)

- Mirinda addressed a question about student employee compensation guidelines, how existing student positions should be graded according to the new step progression, and how to ensure that student employees are being compensated fairly. Approver roles were also a concern. Additional information to address these concerns can be found [here](#).

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 1:49 pm

Announcements:

USAC Meeting – Tuesday, October 14, at 1:00 p.m., Tyler Haynes Commons Room 305. The featured speakers will be Laura Dietrick, Employee Benefits, and Paul Brohan, Modlin Center of the Arts.