The following web submissions were discussed during the December 8, 2020 meeting.

**Idea/Rationale:** Why is there no on-campus mental health presence during COVID? CAPS is working remotely even though the students have returned to campus. This is disturbing and irresponsible.

**Response:** In an email communication with Pete LeViness (Director, CAPS) on November 17, 2020, he shared the following information regarding the web submission:

> While all of our services are being conducted via secure teleconference, we have 2 to 3 CAPS staff in the office each work day (that is the max allowed under the Red phase of physical distancing). While CAPS staff (and probably most students) would prefer face-to-face counseling (which we will do once the university reaches the Green phase), we have also learned the value of video-conferencing and will likely continue to offer this to at least a portion of clients for whom this will be a better fit after the pandemic.

Secure video-conferencing without seeing students in person is how the vast majority of counseling centers across the country are operating currently, and it makes very good sense for the following reasons: (1) Counseling is significantly hindered by the wearing of masks, where facial expressions and related emotional nonverbal behavior cannot be “read.” For as long as masks are necessary, counseling works significantly better via video-conference; (2) The very nature of counseling: long, often emotional conversations, held in small rooms (where 6+ physical distancing is not possible), with limited ventilation create very high risk conditions for spreading COVID. It makes no sense to put students and staff at that kind of repeated risk when other equally effective methods of delivering care are available (i.e., video-conferencing); (3) HR has also given CAPS the guidance that everyone who can work remotely, *should* work remotely.

CAPS had fewer students seeking our services during the first two weeks of class this Fall, but since then, CAPS has been extremely busy, and the numbers have closely tracked those from last Fall, which were our highest ever. So, students are making good use of CAPS services.

This Fall, CAPS began offering, for the first time, about two dozen same-day appointments per week, which both students and staff seem to appreciate. Although these present some logistical challenges, the system is working well and we are able to get students seen with essentially no wait. This also gives staff and students a variety of options for on-going work: schedule appointments as usual, or come back as needed via the same-day appt process, or some combination of the two.

CAPS is also offering more groups and programs this semester than ever before, and many are full of actively engaged students.

Until UR reaches the Green phase, mental health crises responses during the normal work week (8:30am to 4:30pm, Monday through Fridays) are initiated by calling CAPS at 804-289-8119. Mental health crises after hours are handled the same way as always, by calling the URPD emergency phone number at 804-289-8911. Students can request all other types of routine CAPS appointments by sending an email to CAPS@richmond.edu.

For additional information, please visit the CAPS website at: caps.richmond.edu.
Two web submissions were received inquiring about childcare.

Idea/Rationale (1): Will there be another round of COVID relief from the university for second semester? The One-time childcare funding was immensely helpful this fall as the full amount covered one month of childcare for my son. As the name states, I know that it was a one-time occurrence, but thought it wouldn't hurt to ask.

Idea/Rationale (2): Will there be another benefit for childcare after January 1st. More schools are trying to go back to some type of in person school where they will be doing a hybrid version which will require childcare.

Response: The first question was received prior to a meeting with upper leadership, so it was shared with Carl Sorensen, Dave Hale, and Jeff Legro on November 20, 2020. This topic was on their radar and (at the time) was set to be discussed at the next Benefits Committee meeting. They anticipate having an update for the campus community before Winter Break.

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Compliment: I just want to give a shout out to the University Employees who worked during much of the extended Thanksgiving Break to make sure those students still on campus had the support they needed, especially University Dining and Facilities. Thank you for all you do!

Response: Members of USAC seconded this submitter’s gratitude. Thank you to our amazing colleagues!

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Idea/Rationale: 1. Could a staff swap meet web page be set up for staff to exchange baby clothes and other items they no longer use that another staff member might need? This could benefit many of our colleagues who are in the lower pay grades.

2. During the Spiders helping Spiders campaigns each year there are three different choices a donor may contribute to, all benefitting students. The needs of our students are the first priority of course but we are often neglecting the very real needs of our colleagues. Could a fourth donation choice be added that would be funds available to lower income staff members who need occasional help such as with family or medical expenses? Perhaps this fund could be administered by one of the existing fund raising offices or create a new one?

Lower paid staff need a lot of help these days with rising costs of everything. These ideas if decided were worthwhile would be able to help multiple people in different ways.

Response: This web submission was discussed during closed session prompting additional questions and follow up. This response will be updated once the follow up has been completed.