The following web submissions were discussed during the May 11, 2021 meeting.

Idea/Rationale: Our turnover rate of staff leaving U. of R. positions to take other jobs reveals that the annual benchmarking for salary adjustments in Landscape, Plumbing, Carpentry and Electrical may not accurately address competitive salary/benefit packages from contractors and VCU and other local competitors. Previous benchmarking has compared our salary structures to those of employers where the level of skill and expertise required is below what is required here at U. of R. For example, at U. of R. our electricians are responsible for maintaining the entire on-campus power grid, where at VCU, Dominion Power handles all that. This requires our electricians to have a significantly higher level of skill and ability, and this is only one example of many. Our staff are the ones who know these important details. Could we please have staff representatives from these shops included in the annual salary benchmarking review process rather than only administrative level persons? Thank you!

Response: This web submission was communicated with HR, who provided the following response via email from Carl Sorensen on May 10:  

The University has an excellent total compensation package, including benefits, that we review periodically against local organizations and similar higher education institutions. Differing skill levels are factored into all decisions when placing positions in our compensation structure. We have heard concerns about the grading of some of these skilled trade positions and are working with the Campus Operations leadership team to determine if changes are necessary.

Idea/Rationale: If the University continues to increase the minimum wage for only the lower pay grades and not across the board, how will employees be fairly compensated for their tenure, educational qualifications, and more complex job responsibilities? I think it is wonderful that the University is raising the minimum wage but I also believe salaries should be considered across the board. I think it is important to ensure that all employees are compensated appropriately. Raising the minimum wage may not have a great impact on the employees in higher pay grades but when you look at the difference between a pay grade 3 and pay grade 4 there is not a significant increase in the pay as the minimum salary continues to increase for only the lower pay grades. A lot of lower pay grades prefer or require a college degree and this should also be taken into consideration.

Response: This web submission was communicated with HR, who provided the following response via email from Carl Sorensen on May 10:  

We review staff compensation levels annually to make sure the grades of each position are set appropriately and that individual salaries are competitive with benchmarks. If salary or grade adjustments are required to maintain competitiveness, they are made at the same time as annual increases. In addition, we adjust the grade ranges each year to reflect changes in the overall market.
Idea/Rationale: This websub is two big THANK YOU’s and a request at the end. Thank you HR for the very helpful 2021 Salary and Minimum Wage Increase FAQs on the HR website, especially the FAQ: The hourly rate increase means that someone who has worked here for less than one year could earn the same as someone who has been here much longer. What will be done to address this? The University has set aside funds to address salary compression created by the increase to the University’s minimum wage rate, but the specific allocations have not been determined yet. The allocations will be determined by July 1. Thank you senior administration! We are so grateful to be employed here where staff members are valued and recognized for their outstanding efforts toward the University’s mission, and where senior administrative leaders have made excellent financial decisions throughout the pandemic to make these salary adjustments possible! Could you please explain the details on how these compression issues are to be addressed? How do you decide who gets salary compression relief and who does not? Thank you!

Response: This web submission was communicated with HR, who provided the following response via email from Carl Sorensen on May 10:

- **Question:** Will allocations to address salary compression be determined by July 1?
  - **Answer:** Yes

- **Question:** How are compression issues addressed?
  - **Answer:** We evaluated all positions in grade 1-4 and adjusted the rates of some positions to address salary compression.

- **Question:** How do you decide who gets salary compression relief and who does not?
  - **Answer:** We used a consistent methodology based on an individual’s current location in the grade range to determine if (and how much) of an adjustment was made.

Idea/Rationale: I think our bus contracts through the University should have language that mandates that coach buses faculty, staff and students use must have seat belts. My understanding is that buses that are reserved for athletic team travel fall under the University contracts and most of the time we get buses that have no seat belts other than the driver. I am extremely worried that there will be an accident and without seat belts, the passengers will be injured.

Response: This web submission was shared with Office of Procurement and Strategic Sourcing. Wendy Burchard, Strategic Sourcing Manager provided the below response on April 30:

> I contacted all of the charter bus companies that we currently have contracts with and this is what I found out.

> There is no federal or state mandate requiring seat belts on charter buses. In 2017 most bus manufacturers started putting them, however, the incident rate is so low that some companies are still getting new buses without. They also mentioned that even if you have seatbelts on the bus, it is up to the rider, whether or not they put it on.

> This being said all of the companies that we have contracts both buses with and without seat belts. When you book a charter, you can request a bus with seat belts, however, the cost may be
higher. The only one that I talked to that has seat belts in all their buses, was James River Transportation.

The next time we put this service out to bid, in consultation with the project team, I will consider this as a requirement.

If the person who sent in this request would like to discuss this further, please feel free to have them contact me.

This response has since been shared with the submitter.

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Idea/Rationale: I hope that the naming process will have some secret ballot voting component to it, or another way to make sure the whole campus community has a chance to provide input, even individuals who are uncomfortable voicing their opinions openly. Not all staff (including myself) are comfortable voicing their opinion on this divisive issue for many potential reasons. Their colleagues could have expressed great disdain for those holding the opposite view, their views are the opposite of their school/department's stated position (either by making a statement or remaining silent), or they are apprehensive about being publicly branded as one of the many hurtful labels that have been thrown around recently in debates about racial justice, in addition to other reasons I have overlooked. I do not believe these sorts of pressures are unique to staff, and are likely at play for both faculty and students. If you rely solely on what people say publicly, you might not get an accurate picture of how the community really views this issue.

Response: The group appreciates this individual expressing their concern. For more information related to the Naming Principles Commission, please see the commission’s webpage here.

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Idea/Rationale: Wondering why in 2022 it shows we receive 13 holidays? In 2021 we had 15.

Response: This web submission was communicated to HR and will be addressed at the June meeting.