



University Staff Advisory Council

2011-2012 Annual Report

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The University Staff Advisory Council (USAC) was formed in 2000 to serve as a forum for issues, concerns, interests, enhancements, and information that may apply to the staff of the University of Richmond. The council shares information, discusses issues and ideas, and serves as a liaison between the staff and the administration.

This Annual Report summarizes the major accomplishments during the 2011-2012 year.

USAC Affinity Groups

The 2011-2012 session of USAC began with an evaluation of the results of the May open forum. Based on those results, USAC formed the Staff Involvement Sub Committee to serve as a vehicle to connect staff from across campus. We asked for feedback from staff members on a range of issues related to their experience at Richmond. Based on this feedback, USAC sought to create four different affinity groups in the following areas: Elder Care, New Parents, Young Professionals and Intramural Sports and Recreation. USAC held two open sessions in December and invited members of the University community to discuss these areas. The final groups formed were:

- **Elder Care:** a group for staff members who are experiencing changes to older and elderly parents or loved ones. Members share experiences, and meet monthly in this challenging area. Highlights from 2011-2012 include: Mary Ann Johnson from the Alzheimer's Association, Richmond Chapter discussed how to care for and communicate with aging parents; Rodney Johnson, professor of law emeritus, discussed power of attorney, living wills, and other legal matters; and Sharon Fortune from EAP discussed "Changing Relationships".
- **Parenting:** this group focuses on issues relating to parents with children of any age (as well as parents-to-be). Topics vary by meeting. On the second Tuesday of each month, there is a guest speaker. On the fourth Tuesday of each month, there is an informal, open-floor discussion. Highlights include: Amie Elmore from Commonwealth Parenting discussed work/life balance; Sharon Fortune from EAP discussed "Becoming a Family: new Beginnings"; and Nate Crozier, Director of Admissions, discussed navigating the college process.
- **UR Involved:** a group for the young and young at heart staff member, and for the new staff or faculty member. This group helps connect new staff across campus and plans social and recreational events. Highlights include the Corporate 4 Miler race in Innsbrook, a Richmond Kicker's game, and a lunchtime information session, sponsored by SPCS and HR, to discuss tuition remission benefits and options that are available to staff through SPCS.

Each of these groups has an active listserve which allows members to share information, offer support, and/or to pass along information. Many staff members who have attended these groups have expressed gratitude for connecting with other staff members facing similar life events and for helping balance both work and life concerns.

A newly formed group for Cancer Care and Support began in June 2012. Other affinity groups may follow.

Election Changes

The Election Committee worked diligently to revise the bylaws governing the manner in which members are elected to Council. Previously, council members were elected from three categories: Administrative/Managerial, Clerical, and Service/Maintenance. These job categories existed at the time the Council was formed in 2000 but are not the current job categories. Members discussed and

updated our bylaws to replace these categories with Exempt and Non Exempt classifications. Council representation will still be determined on a 1 to 50 ratio. This translates into 10 Exempt Staff members and 12 Non Exempt Staff members.

Staff members could nominate as many people as they wished to run for Council. 182 nominations were received, representing 125 individual people. (Some staff members were nominated more than once.). In order to assist in the voting process, staff members who accepted their nomination were required to submit a statement which would be posted, along with their photograph. A total of 47 accepted their nominations and stood for election.

Other significant changes USAC made were for whom one may vote and how many votes a voter may cast. Previously, staff could vote for one person only in their category. USAC changed its bylaws to allow staff to vote for up to three staff members in either category.

The USAC Election process also went completely online this year. We contracted with a software vender called Simply Voting. This new software provided greater functionality and flexibility than our previous election software. Since the new process would be completely online, USAC staffed voting sites in both Facilities and Dining Services to assist staff members with accessing the site and voting. This year, a total of 637 staff voted (an increase of almost 16% over last year).

Communications Chair

A major finding of the Great Colleges to Work For survey was that communications is an area of opportunity for Richmond. To address this opportunity, USAC created the position of Communications Chair. This new position would be appointed by the elected members of the Executive Board (Chair, Vice Chair and Recording Secretary). The Communications Chair, along with the Parliamentarian (which is also appointed), would serve on the Executive Board.

The Communications Chair's duties include maintaining USAC's web site and social media presence, identifying talking points for members after meetings, and coordinating outreach and public relations for major USAC events. This position will allow USAC to more proactively communicate with staff and provide updates to staff about USAC related events.

Connecting with Other Richmond Community Members

This past year, USAC welcomed several guests to our monthly meetings. Some of these guests presented information, some requested feedback, and some did both. We welcomed the following people:

- Valerie Wallen, Director of Talent and Organizational Effectiveness, for a Richmond Values discussion
- Megan Zanella-Litke, Sustainability Coordinator, for a discussion about Sustainability at Richmond
- Garrison Weaver, UR student and Co-Chair of the UR Thankful event
- Shannon Sinclair, General Council, about our Code of Conduct
- Laura Dietrick, Director, Compensation and Benefits, update to UR retirement plans and update on the Career and Compensation Review
- Hossein Sadid, VP for Business and Finance, discussion about Budget and Master Plan

In addition, USAC reached out in Sept 2011 to thank the various offices who worked throughout the weekend that Hurricane Irene struck the Richmond Metro Area. USAC created cards and banners on which students, staff and faculty wrote words of appreciation, gratitude, and thanks. These were hand

delivered, along with a plate of cookies and sweets, to those offices in appreciation of their dedication and their hard work during the hurricane event.

USAC also partnered with the student led UR Thankful Event for a food drive to benefit the Central VA Food Bank. USAC members monitored bins which were placed in buildings across campus in support of this effort.

USAC's bylaws require at least one open meeting per year. This year, we held two open forums and held an online forum where we asked staff three questions:

1. My understanding of USAC's role at the University of Richmond is:
2. USAC's priorities for 2012-2013 should be:
3. I like working at Richmond because:

This feedback will help guide USAC in the 2012-2013 year.

Web Submissions

USAC received a total of 20 web submissions this year. Topics ranged from salary to benefits to staff improvements. USAC reviews web submissions, discusses in both the Web Submissions committee and full Council, and refers to other departments as needed. While not all web submissions submitted result in change, these submissions do allow staff to raise issues of concern for consideration by the full Council.

Summary

This continues to be a very exciting time to be a staff member at Richmond. The Richmond Promise continues to guide us, the Master Plan has been approved, and undergraduate applications exceeded 10,000 this year. Richmond undertook a major review and overhaul of staff compensation and continues to develop career architecture. USAC also continues to change and to respond to areas of opportunity identified by the Great Colleges to Work For and by staff feedback.

It has been my privilege and pleasure to serve as USAC's chair for the past year, and I look forward to assuming my role as an ex officio member in 2012-2013. USAC continues in its mission to represent staff and to provide a forum for staff concern. I would also like to extend my deep appreciation and thanks to every member with whom I have served. They have contributed greatly to the life of the Richmond community. And, I welcome the new members to the Council. The great work continues!

Respectfully,



J. David Curtis
Chair, University Staff Advisory Council 2011-2012
Assistant Director, Financial Aid