



University Staff Advisory Council

June 30, 2016

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

This has been a tremendous year of transition for the University. New and dynamic leadership has arrived on campus and our community is currently engaged in articulating a new vision and tone for life at the University. Staff members remain eager for the challenges of change to come, and many are excited about collaborating around campus.

We anticipate continued need for feedback on the strategic plan process as working groups create drafts for a vision that will inform and will impact everything we do. Additionally, there are opportunities to ask important questions about how the institution can continue to live into its values by engaging in dialogue on professional development and asking questions about how we can meaningfully acknowledge and celebrate staff contributions.

Fifteen years since its founding, the University Staff Advisory Council continues to grow and evolve as a organization devoted to providing intentional educational opportunities for staff to become better-informed and better-connected citizens of campus. Additionally, this council continued focus on how staff can contribute in meaningful and positive ways to decision-making and planning processes.

I'd like to encourage the Council to dream big about how we can collectively continue to make the University of Richmond not only an employer of choice, but an employer of which we are proud ambassadors. USAC can help generate engagement in the community beyond serving as a channel for staff voices to the administration.

To continue our success as an organization, we must be intentional and deliberate in outreach. Now is a time for building and strengthening relationships around the institution. Our goal should be to inspire staff to become more engaged and invested in our community, and to be ambassadors for positive change.

Sincerely,

Paul Brockwell Jr.

Chair, University Staff Advisory Council (2015-16)



University Staff Advisory Council

2015-16 ANNUAL REPORT

Published June 30, 2016

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Successfully developed and implemented a new representative model that ensures diverse representation from major campus divisions and units
- Conducted an assessment and evaluation of affinity group programming that led to recommendations for positioning these groups to thrive and succeed
- Participated in the inauguration of President Ronald A. Crutcher as the University of Richmond's 10th President
- Endorsed and encouraged the formation of a fringe benefits advisory committee
- Engaged in two retreats with President Crutcher to learn and provide feedback on the strategic planning process
- Transitioned the employee perks and discounts page to Human Resources
- Provided input on the redesign of the new Human Resources website
- Offered advice and feedback to the Provost and the Vice President for Business and Finance on the new Spiders in the Know program
- Migrated Council files to Box as an early adopter of the departmental account
- Partnered with Facilities to create and have a UR float in the Dominion Christmas Parade down Broad Street

COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH

This has been a great year for improving communications and outreach, which will always be a goal of the Council given its mission. We also were honored to represent staff at the inauguration of Dr. Crutcher with a speech given by Paul Brockwell, chair.

Strengthening Relationships & Learning Opportunities

The Council hosted guests at many monthly meetings as an opportunity to receive updates on staff issues like health insurance and the annual budget. Additionally, we invited newly appointed leadership to visit the Council as they get to know campus and to provide an opportunity for members to learn more about them, their campus units, and goals over the next few years.

Community Presentations:

- Audrey Coulbourn, Human Resources (Supervisor Essentials Training Program)

- Dave Hale, Vice President for Business and Finance (Insurance Benefits and FY 2017 Budget Report)
- Molly Field, Chaplaincy (One Book One Richmond Program)
- Carolyn Martin, President's Office (Inauguration Details)
- Lisa Miles, Common Ground (MLK Day Opportunities for Staff)
- Cynthia Price, Communications (UCI World Cycling Championships)
- Maura Smith, Compliance Director (Compliance Training Schedules)

Welcoming New Leadership:

- Dr. Ronald A. Crutcher, University President
- Stephanie Dupaul, Vice President for Enrollment Management
- Jamelle Wilson, Dean, School of Professional and Continuing Studies
- Martha Merritt, Dean of International Education
- John Barry, Vice President for Communications

The Council also worked to strengthen ties to the new Faculty Senate. Our leadership regularly met with Jan French, the Faculty Senate President. And our co-chairs attended the inaugural meeting to support their growth as a body.

Introducing the USAC Round-up

The Council charged its communications committee, and namely the recording secretary, with providing a draft of monthly messages for members to forward to their constituent groups. Offices also provided each member with the email lists to enable regular contact assigned units.

Our goals with this initiative were to bring more consistency and regularity to the messaging in communications from USAC to staff and to alleviate the burden of individual members compiling similar updates after each meeting. We received a positive response from the system, and plans are now in place to continue the system in alignment with the new divisional representative model.

Revamping New Employee Orientation Materials

This year, the Council overhauled the materials we have available for distribution to new employees during orientation. Our goals were two-fold:

1. Create a visually compelling piece that drives staff to website
2. Print enough stock for HR to use over four years' worth of onboarding and also maintain a small supply for USAC outreach

We have received very positive feedback on the result which now appears in employee packets at orientation. Kirsten McKinney, the incoming chair, is to be thanked for her work on designing the piece. The Council leadership liaised with our partners in the administration (Lori Schuyler and Dave Hale) to ensure the mission and vision copy best reflected our shared goals as an organization.

Improving the USAC Website

Efforts to improve the website resulted in the elevation of several elements to the top navigation. Breaking up the About USAC section now makes it possible for users to more quickly access information about committees and the bylaws.

These improvements were possible due to a partnership with Human Resources. Carl Sorensen shared with the Council that his department wanted to replicate and sustain what began as the USAC employee perks and discounts page. They have launched a page inspired by our past efforts to document perks available to employees and expressed their gratitude for the Council's initiatives and good ideas.

The new pages — now located at hr.richmond.edu — will be maintained by a staff member in Human Resources and also provide a mechanism for vendors to either update or pitch new discounts to the institution.

Open Forum

The Council used its September meeting to hold two sessions of an open forum in d-hall. While the insights were helpful in guiding our discussions over the year, we also would encourage the new council to look for times and ways to maximize involvement from the staff community outside of USAC. A similar event is being planned for July that incentivizes participation with a coupon for free gelato in exchange for providing feedback on a theme and handful of questions.

Social Media Strategy

The Council has an opportunity to build followership on social media. Our communications chair drafted an outline of a social media strategy that lays the foundation for greater engagement by identifying content relevant to staff concerns. In the future, it would be a good goal to look at how to grow followership from the 211 likes on our Facebook page to a more sizeable percentage of the 1,200-plus staff community at the University of Richmond. The Parenting Affinity Group also began using Facebook as a way to communicate with members.

COMMITTEE WORK

This year, the leadership very intentionally tried to reinvigorate the committee work of the Council, allowing more members to be meaningfully engaged in the work and decisions of the body. Our standing committees had several meetings throughout the year, and our elections committee was particularly active. Additionally, the two ad hoc committees created by the Council (see below) also engaged in meetings and work over the year.

In May, the Council voted to amend its bylaws to create a new committee and chair position to manage the many volunteer invitations received by the Council for new employee orientation and various fairs. We also want this group to think proactively about the Council's goals in engaging at various events and on how to seek outreach efforts in the community where we can position USAC positively.

REPRESENTATIVE MODEL CHANGES

Finding a solution to our representation issues was a top priority during the 2015–16 year. The chair appointed an ad hoc committee, led by Paul Brockwell and Tim Meacham, to design and implement a plan for a divisionally based representative model. The committee met throughout the fall to explore various options and recommended a hybrid model that combines elements of proportionate representation with standard representation. (See Appendix B.)

In addition to establishing designated seats for each major division or department, the new representative model empowers units to directly elect their fellow division colleagues whom they wish to send to USAC. The Council moved away from Exempt and Non-Exempt classifications given the increasingly complex regulatory environment caused by new Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) rules, the priority of ensuring major units were represented, and variation in exempt and non-exempt jobs and numbers across divisions.

In January 2016, the Council voted 22–2 to approve bylaw amendments recommended by the committee that paved the way to implement the new model over two years.

We learned an important lesson about outreach and ensuring an opportunity for staff to provide input on potential changes before they are enacted. Communications issues prevented many from learning sooner about the changes the Council enacted. In response to concerns expressed, the Council hosted two open forums on the new model to provide information about that changes to how elections will work.

To date, the response has been positive from employees who appreciate the ability to vote specifically for colleagues they know rather than a lengthy (60+ person) at-large ballot across two employment categories. The co-chairs of the committee would like to thank the members of the working group and also share the insight that no plan can ever be perfect, but this is a huge leap in the right direction and one that future Councils can continually evaluate and improve as it sees fit.

2016 ELECTIONS REPORT

The first phase of implementing a new representative model occurred this spring with elections for eight vacancies in four divisions. The elections committee, led by Parliamentarian Sonia Phung, consisted of Paul Brockwell, Stephanie Charles, Ingrid Lasrado, Tim Meacham, and John Zinn.

We received 105 nominations for the eight open seats. Of those, 96 were eligible to run for USAC and nine were ineligible for this cycle. This table shows the number of candidates per divisional seat in addition to voter turnout percentages by division. The elections committee was pleased with this first round and targeted Facilities in particular for outreach and exploring ways to reduce barriers to voting. Several members volunteered to take iPads to the physical plant or the annual picnic and found that many staff either keep their 16-digit password at home or don't remember it.

Table 1: 2016 Election Results and Summary

DIVISION	ELECTED MEMBER	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES	TURNOUT PERCENTAGES
Advancement/Communications	Amy Gallagher	4	95% initially, 78 in runoff
Boatwright Memorial Library	Cassandra Taylor-Anderson	4	97%
Dining/Retail	Joseph Woodford	7	52%
University Facilities	Paul Lozo	6	33%
Information Services	Julie Neville	5	70%
Public Safety	Brittany Schaal	1	60%
School Staffs Unified Ballot (A&S, Business School, Jepson, Law, and SPCS)	Beth Ann Howard (Any) Tara Stewart (MBA/Law/SPCS)	2 6	69%

Updating and Clarifying Procedures

The committee also worked to refine the Elections Procedures document that governs officer elections and the elections for Planning and Priorities.

A simple majority was adopted as the governing principle for both elections. Additionally, the committee proactively articulated additional amendments to the procedure document that articulate how to handle a number of possible contingencies as the new model is phased in, including vacancies where no prior ballot exists and the staggering of terms in divisions where all current member terms expire in 2017.

Executive Officer Elections

In April, the Council elected its chair, vice chair, and recording secretary for 2016–17. The procedures adopted last year by the Council proved to be effective tools for managing the process, including the timeline for nominations and flexibility to conduct voting during the spring.

The vice chair position was the only contested election and the results were:

- Kirsten McKinney (ADV/Communications), Chair
- Matt Barany (Athletics), Vice Chair
- Sonia Phung (Academic Affairs, Recording Secretary)

Planning Ahead For a Busy Spring 2017

The second year of phasing in the new representative model will require early outreach on the anticipated vacancies with all affected divisions.

We also will elect at-large seats for Business and Finance and Academic Affairs, which require strong attention to detail. The committee should begin its work early to ensure successful elections.

AFFINITY GROUP ACTIVITY

In 2011, the Council created affinity groups to fill social and support gaps on campus with the purpose of fostering a more cohesive and connected community. This year, while we evaluated the program, each affinity group aimed to host at least 1–2 events per semester. The following groups exist based on current interests of faculty and staff:

Caregiving: The Caregiving Affinity Group (formerly known as Elder Care) holds monthly informal brown-bag lunch discussions and intermittent speaker events. The group chair provides resource materials and has developed a healthy list of resources relating to elder care and caregiving for those of any age. Speakers ranged from attorneys from a local law firm who explained the intricacies of estate planning and wills to a representative from Senior Connections who spoke about home and community-based services for seniors, caregivers and persons with disabilities. This year's group was co-chaired by Debbie Hardy, Susan Taylor, and Iria Jones.

LGBTQ: The LGBTQ Affinity Group offers a safe place for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer faculty and staff to connect with one another to discuss common experiences, find affirming social environments, and create a network of support. The group provides guest speakers, resources, community, and social avenues for UR LGBTQ faculty and staff members. This year's group was co-chaired by Karen Berry, Kevin Corn, and Ebony Kirkland. Events included Gayme nights and a summer picnic in Bryan Park.

Parenting: The Parenting Affinity Group was created for all parents with a focus on issues relating to parents with children of any age (as well as parents-to-be). As the needs of parents are varied, the group incorporates speakers based on the group's specific interests. The year's monthly brown bag meetings enjoyed several speakers including a representative from the VA Credit Union who spoke about saving for college to a speaker from one of URPD's finest who talked about Internet safety. The group's most popular event this year was a basketball pizza party held at Robins Stadium. Lastly, the group created a USAC Parenting Affinity Group Facebook page. The group's co-chairs included Cindy Sharp, Dwayne Smith, and Gina Flanagan.

UR Involved: UR Involved exists to connect faculty and staff who are interested in attending social, recreational, and educational events. Activities this year included the Christmas Parade as well as holding a James River Clean-Up day, a museum tour and a Summer in the Cellar event. This group was co-chaired by Kate Sirc and Wright Harrison.

Though not an Affinity Group, **the Women & Leadership Reading Group** was created this year to provide a forum for faculty and staff to share interests and encourage discussion about recent scholarship and popular writings about women and leadership, with a special focus on higher education. This group is also open to faculty and staff of all gender identifications and is led by faculty member Crystal Hoyt and University Museum's Elizabeth Schlatter.

AFFINITY GROUP EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT

This year, the Council also formed an ad hoc committee to evaluate and assess affinity group programming. The groups, formed in 2011, have not been universally performing well by most measures of success.

The ad hoc committee, chaired by Matt Barany, operated between September 2015 and April 2016. On April 12, 2016, Matt presented the group's final report to the Council with recommendations for affinity group programming operations (See Appendix C). On May 9, an open forum was held for all staff to learn more about the recommendations and potential future of affinity group programs.

At the May 10 Council meeting, members of USAC voted to authorize leadership to engage in conversations with campus partners about the potential future of the groups. Our preferred outcome would be to see the groups rebranded, re-launched, and structurally supported through the employee wellness partnership between HR and Recreation and Wellness.

Resolution on the future of affinity groups remains unclear at the time of this writing, but the assessment will provide a powerful tool for charting the next chapter.

WEB SUBMISSIONS ABOUT THE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

This year, the Council re-named its web sub committee to more clearly reflect the subject matter of web submissions to USAC. The Workplace Environment Committee, ably led by Andi Minor, was instrumental in ensuring that concerns were responded to in a timely, thorough, and accurate manner. The Council received 44 total web submissions this academic year, and the officers also worked to address concerns that came to us through word of mouth or email. In the fall, Andi Minor implemented a new method of managing the work of the committee by delegating research and responses to committee members.

Questions regarding employee appreciation, professional development, and pets on campus continue to crop up each year. Other questions had no definitive answer or solution. For this reason, the committee designated some submissions as "unresolved" since we anticipate a continued dialogue about these issues in the future.

Going forward, the Council plans to overhaul the web submission form to create greater clarity on the purposes for which it is often used. We'd like to create a form that encourages positive ideas and gratitude in addition to one that asks questions or expresses concerns. The revamp of the web form will be a priority for the next Council's leadership. Ultimately, the Council wants employees to self educate where possible and to exercise self-agency in working with Human Resources to respond to questions and resolve issues or complaints. In most matters submitted to Council, our HR team is not only the best equipped, but also the only party capable of answering specific questions about policy or resolving employee grievances. We'd like to minimize how much USAC is often the intermediary in this dialogue because it is neither ideal nor efficient.

TOPICS TO ADDRESS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COMING YEAR

In the next year, the Council will continue to grow into the new representative model with another year of elections that resets the composition of the Council.

A top priority will be determining the future disposition of the affinity group programming. Additionally, the Council has a real opportunity to redefine its focus and vision as a body. The work already begun on discussing changes to our web submission form presages a bright year ahead.

Continuing themes for staff include institutional and divisional rewards and recognition programs, professional development, and shared governance. On all of these, the Council is well-positioned to positively engage with our administrative partners in charting a long-term course for improvement. To be sure, our effectiveness as an organization will depend on our ability to build and strengthen relationships, correctly identify the questions or problem we seek to solve, and positively engage with our partners in the administration of the University.

APPENDIX A: STAFF ON UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES AND INITIATIVES

President's Positioning Study Steering Committee

The president appointed several staff members to serve on the positioning study steering committee.

Frank Allen
Associate Director, Employer Relations

Shawn Morrison
Director, Annual Giving

Phillip Gravely
Director, Web and Editorial Strategy

Cynthia Price
Director, Media and Public Relations

Jan Hatchette
Senior Director, Marketing Strategy

Tom Roberts
Assistant Vice President, Recreation & Wellness

Amy Howard
Executive Director, Center for Civic Engagement

Gil Villanueva
Associate Vice President and Dean of Admission

Aaron McClung
Director of Development

Strategic Plan Steering Committee

President Crutcher appointed two staff members to serve on the [steering council](#) for the strategic plan from a slate of nominations from USAC:

- Ashleigh Brock, Office of Alumni and Career Services
- Adrienne Piazza, Bonner Center for Civic Engagement

Additionally, 20 staff members were appointed to serve on the working groups convened as part of the strategic planning process on the following themes:

Academic Excellence

- Andy Gurka
- Lindsey Love

- Mark Detterick (AVP)
- Lisa Miles
- Robb Moore
- Cynthia Price

Intellectual Community

- Quiona Beason
- Ashleigh Brock
- Adrienne Piazza
- LaRee Sugg
- Gil Villanueva (AVP)
- Carol Wittig

Thriving and Inclusive

- Tina Cade (AVP)
- Bettie Clarke
- Audrey Coulbourn
- Nate Crozier
- Butch Massenburg
- Krittika Onsanit
- Denise Dwight Smith (AVP)

Access and Affordability

- Cindy Deffenbaugh (AVP)

Planning and Priorities Committee

Two staff members are elected by the Council for a three-year term. Our current staff representatives are:

- Roger Mancastroppa, Academic Skills Center (2015–18)
- Molly Field, Office of the Chaplaincy (2016–19)

This year, the Council elected Molly Field. The Council will hold a selection process for the anticipated vacancy in May 2018 as Roger's term on Planning & Priorities concludes.

Search Committees

Staff representatives were involved in a number of search committees for senior leadership at the University:

- Dean of Westhampton College
- Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences
- Vice President for Information Services

APPENDIX B: REPRESENTATIVE STUDY COMMITTEE CHARGE & REPORT

The committee will design and coordinate implementation of a new selection model that ensures diverse representation from among UR's staff divisions (Academic Affairs, Advancement, Athletics, Business & Finance, Chaplaincy, Communications, Enrollment Management, Information Services, and Student Development). In execution of that charge, this committee will develop, propose, and implement a division-based model that ensures reliable, diverse representation from each division's staff.

By the nature of its work, the group will be charged to meet with appropriate campus stakeholders who are critical to successfully implementing the staff advisory council's vision of sustainably and consistently including a wide array of staff voices at Council meetings.

The committee will focus on the representative model during Fall 2015, and in phase two consider and research recommendations for term lengths of council members and executive board leaders that would ensure continuity of operations and allow for the goals and vision of the Council to be carried out long-term.

Specifically, this group will:

1. Design and implement a division-based elections model for University Staff Advisory Council representatives;
2. Study and develop recommendations concerning term lengths for Council members and executive leadership;
3. Draft needed proposals to update the Bylaws of the University Staff Advisory Council;
4. Provide a framework and timeline for implementation of the new system pending Council approval (and Trustee approval if needed);
5. Work closely with the USAC Parliamentarian and the Elections Committee to develop a seamless implementation of changes.

The first meeting of the representative study committee will meet September 9, 2015. The committee will operate between September 2015 and August 2016. By November 1, 2015, the committee will report a list of actionable recommendations to the University Staff Advisory Council regarding elections.

MEMBERSHIP

Paul Brockwell, co-chair, current USAC chair, Communications
Tim Meacham, co-chair, former USAC parliamentarian, UR Police
Patrick Benner, current USAC member, Richmond College
Andy Gurka, former USAC vice chair, Living-Learning and Roadmap Programs
Lisa Miles, former USAC parliamentarian, Common Ground
Nancy Propst, USAC secretary, School of Arts & Sciences
Susie Reid, former USAC chair, Facilities
Cindy Stearns, current USAC member, Dining Services

Ex officio members:

Sonia Phung, USAC parliamentarian
Leigh McCullar, Human Resources, VP of Business and Finance designee

REPORT OF THE REPRESENTATIVE STUDY GROUP

During the past two years, the University Staff Advisory Council has engaged in a conversation on how we can ensure our election model results in a broad range of voices from university staff. We saw how an at-large election often meant we were missing valuable voices from colleagues around campus, particularly from Dining and Facilities.

In August 2015, the Council charged an ad hoc committee to research and propose a new model that would transition the Council from at-large elections across two employment categories (exempt and non-exempt) to a representative model structured around the University's existing divisions, with members directly elected to serve by their divisional colleagues. To further ensure a broad range of voices, this model provides for designated seats allotted for significant units of campus divisions.

We hope this shift will further the cause of equity in staff representation to the administration, and we hope to live more fully into our charge as a result. With this report, you'll find the recommendation of the committee to the Council and the approved bylaws changes that were required to begin implementation.

The Council considered this matter at its regular monthly meeting on January 12, 2016. Please email either co-chair directly with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Paul Brockwell Jr., chair, University Staff Advisory Council

Co-Chair, Representative Study Group

Tim Meacham, former parliamentarian, University Staff Advisory Council

Co-Chair, Representative Study Group

ADOPTED DIVISIONAL REPRESENTATION MODEL

This model ensures broad representation from major units within the University staff. While it reduces the size of the Council from 26 to 21 members, the quality and breadth of the staff who will be present outweighs any loss from fewer total staff seats. Where possible, this model roughly follows a 1:50 ratio of representatives to staff.

The committee recommends that each unit directly elect representatives on a divisional ballot, rather than voting at-large on all staff representatives, thus creating seven elections as outlined below.

The University Staff Advisory Council's elections committee will be vested with the administrative burden of efficiently conducting nomination and election processes.

ADOPTED USAC REPRESENTATION DISTRIBUTION

Academic Affairs (will include president's office staff)

- 3 from school staffs, with one seat for graduate or professional staff
- 1 from at-large divisional offices
- 1 from Boatwright Memorial Library staff

Advancement & Communications

- 2 from divisional staff

Athletics

- 2 from divisional staff

Business Affairs

- 2 from at-large divisional staff
- 2 from Dining
- 2 from Facilities
- 1 from Public Safety

Enrollment Management

- 1 from divisional staff

Information Services

- 2 from divisional staff

Student Development & Chaplaincy

- 2 from divisional staff

APPENDIX C: AFFINITY GROUPS EVALUATION COMMITTEE CHARGE & REPORT

The committee will evaluate our University's affinity groups in order to align them strategically to faculty and staff needs and position them to thrive. This committee is charged with a thorough review of affinity group programs, operations, and budgets. They will work to develop a strategic plan for affinity groups that will ensure long-term success and regular evaluation of faculty and staff needs.

By the nature of its work, the group will be charged to meet with current affinity group co-chairs, research peer institution efforts, and engage with current staff and faculty where areas of interest exist.

Specifically, this group will:

1. Evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to existing four affinity groups;
2. Assess staff and faculty needs around affinity group programming through surveys and other appropriate instruments;
3. Meet with potential faculty-staff interest groups (i.e. Sustainability, Connecting Women of Color, Women and Leadership Reading Group)
4. Assess the current communications tools and potential communications tools available to build connections among staff and faculty around areas of common interest;
5. Explore options for the creation of affinity group(s) or strategic partnerships around staff and faculty interests;
6. Determine whether the current funding needs are met through USAC budgets or whether a different mechanism is appropriate;
7. Evaluate and recommend the optimal structure and support of affinity groups;
8. Develop a strategic plan for the long-term success and expansion of affinity group programming at the University.

The committee will operate between September 2015 and April 2016. By April 12, 2016, the committee will submit its final report to the Council with its strategic plan and recommendations for affinity group programming operations.

MEMBERSHIP

Matt Barany, chair, current USAC member

Audrey Coulbourn, Human Resources

Cynthia McMillian, current USAC member, Rec & Wellness

Adrienne Piazza, former USAC chair, Center for Civic Engagement

Ex officio members: Gina Flanagan, USAC affinity groups chair

AFFINITY GROUPS EVALUATION REPORT

This ad hoc committee was charged with evaluating the University's affinity groups. The committee used meetings, interviews, and research to evaluate the affinity groups' programs, operations, and budgets.

Staff, faculty, university retirees, and university dependents are eligible to participate in the affinity groups. Affinity groups strive to fill support and social gaps on campus with the purpose of fostering a more cohesive and connected community among University employees. Each affinity group is led by a current USAC member, as well as a non-USAC staff member from across campus. The four affinity groups are UR Involved, Parenting, Caregiving, and LGBTQ.

The University of Richmond affinity groups were designed much like employee resource groups (ERGs). An ERG is a dynamic group of passionate employees. Their engagement and collaboration is intended to improve their experience but also help increase the value of the organization. Most organizations use ERGs to stimulate employee engagement and develop talent. Consequentially, ERGs improve workplace environment and organizational reputations. ERGs are used to attract, develop, and retain top talent while encouraging the employee to perform their best.

The University of Richmond affinity groups provide pertinent and meaningful programming for participants. Co-chairs work extensively to create a welcoming setting and to offer genuine support. Unfortunately, low participant attendance is common. Leadership transitions, busy schedules, and competitive campus programming contributes to low event attendance. How can we model affinity groups in the image of employee resource groups?

One Critical Question: Does the University care to sponsor employee groups?

Five Potential Outcomes

1. Disband: Cease the existence of the affinity groups at Richmond.
2. Status quo: Make limited changes to the operating structure of the groups.
3. Lead coordinator: Designate a figurehead to coordinate the programming.
4. Assign new hosts: Redistribute each group into established "homes" on campus.
5. URWell Employee: Take advantage of the synergy between Human Resources and Recreation & Wellness.

Three Necessary Growth Steps

1. Articulate and align each mission towards the President's evolving vision.
2. Rebrand, relaunch, and recruit.
3. Create Coordinator position.

Five Potential Outcomes

1. Disband – Poor attendance could mean low employee interest. The small USAC budget is returned to the university; likewise, the university receives labor hours from those organizing events.
2. Status quo – USAC continues to manage the USAC budget and organizing events. New chairs will be assigned each year to keep programming consistent.
3. Lead coordinator – Designate an employee to serve as a permanent figurehead for all programming and communication. This coordinator removes the inconsistent messaging from different chairs and smoothes USAC related leadership changes. These duties can be an added to a current university position.
4. Assign new hosts – Assign all elements of each affinity group to appropriate offices on campus. For example, Common Ground would lead and operate the LGBTQ affinity group.
5. UR Well Employee – Assign all elements of all affinity groups to the UR Well Employee program and staff.

Three Growth Steps

1. Draft new mission statements for each affinity group reflective of President Crutcher’s working vision.
2. Rebrand and relaunch affinity groups. Use this relaunch as an opportunity to promote missions and recruit new participants.
3. Assign a coordinator position. This centralized person will be the recognizable face and name of affinity groups, and this person will store historical knowledge of the groups.

Recommendation:

We recommend to continue the affinity groups at Richmond under the successful and identifiable URWell Employee (URWE) program. This partnership between Human Resources and Rec & Wellness seeks to “build an environment that supports the health and well-being of faculty and staff.” The eight pillars (emotional, environmental, financial, occupational, intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual) of the Well Employee program are clear and powerful. URWE has a physical home on campus as well as a strong and recognizable channel of communication. Wide participation in URWE will help to create a healthier work force and add value to the university. Transition of affinity groups to this location would be seamless and without interruption. We would recommend the university to correctly staff this program to best attend to the employee’s wellness needs.