



University Staff Advisory Council

ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

OVERVIEW

The 2020-21 year was challenging with the ongoing Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, yet productive in that the university was able to offer an in-person, residential learning experience for students while protecting staff jobs. Through hard work and the collaboration of all university employees – staff and faculty were able to keep the university running from both remote and on-campus workplaces. The University Staff Advisory Council (USAC) played a key role in working with university leadership to ensure staff were kept informed throughout the pandemic as to all areas of work and life affected by the pandemic.

USAC assisted in the presidential search process by soliciting nominations for, and appointing a staff member to, the Presidential Search Committee, while also working closely with the Board of Trustees to gather feedback from the community. On March 4, 2021, Kevin Hallock was announced as the next President of the University of Richmond.

USAC also played an important role in communicating with university leadership the opinions of the campus community as to changing the names of Ryland and Freeman Halls due both men's legacies being tied to racism. Along with the University Faculty Senate, USAC listened to the constituents and presented the collective opinion of the university community to the Board of Trustees, asking them to change the names. On April 8, 2021, it was announced that the decision to keep the names was suspended, and the university will establish a broader, more inclusive process to address future renaming decisions. Accordingly, USAC solicited nominations and appointed a staff member to the newly formed Naming Principles Commission.

We are deeply grateful to all staff for their resilience and ability to work together to overcome the challenges presented this year. Further, we are grateful for the University's leadership for responding to all of the difficulties raised by the pandemic, working to avoid income disruption and adding health EAP benefits.

GOALS

The 2020-21 University Staff Advisory Council (USAC) worked to achieve the following three goals:

1. Strengthen communications and outreach efforts to maximize the visibility and accessibility of USAC to all staff members.

- a. Coordinated, organized, and facilitated four (4) staff open forums wherein staff members submitted questions (beforehand and live) to university leadership regarding planning and preparation in response to the pandemic, in addition to the Spiders in the Know event at the end of the year.
- b. Created an all staff listserv and directly sent monthly roundups filling staff in on key information and providing necessary links to COVID-related resources.
- c. Hosted all twelve (12) monthly USAC meetings via Zoom with invitations open to the public to attend in real time, or view via meeting recording on our website.
- d. Solicited nominations and appointed staff representatives to the Presidential Search Committee, Planning & Priorities Committee, and Benefits Committee.

2. Continue to foster a diverse, equitable, and inclusive intellectual community in which staff are recognized for their contributions.

- a. Hosted Dr. Armond Towns and Dr. Atiya Husain to present on development of the Africana Studies Department and Faculty Learning Community.
- b. Featured a monthly “Spider Staff Spotlight” communicated to all staff which highlighted staff in non-leadership positions and their important contributions.
- c. Assisted HR and the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement in ensuring access to and encouraging staff to complete the Campus Climate Survey.
- d. Facilitated – in conjunction with the Faculty Senate and the President’s Office – a discussion among staff and faculty to address the university’s Statement on Free Expression.
- e. Solicited feedback on the renaming decision for Ryland and Freeman Halls, and presented a recommendation to the Board of Trustees – to which a Naming Principles Commission was formed wherein USAC appointed a staff representative.

3. Provide council members with professional and personal development opportunities to improve their leadership and advocacy skills.

- a. Brought in an outside presenter, in light of the pandemic, to address council and staff on neurobiology behind stress and the impact it can have on our brains.
- b. Provided StrengthsFinder assessments for council members to identify their strengths, and received training to understand how these strengths can be used in the workplace to enhance performance.

NOTEWORTHY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Web Submissions

During the 2020-21 term, the Executive Committee worked diligently to communicate every web submission received to the appropriate university leader, and provide resolution in a timely manner. USAC received and provided responses to all 52 web submissions received. Furthermore, over 100 additional web submissions were received and communicated to the necessary leadership groups related to the presidential search process, renaming decision of Ryland and Freeman Halls, and unanswered questions from the Spiders in the Know event.

Since web subs are the primary mode for receiving constituent feedback and concerns, web submissions were discussed as a group in closed sessions so that all council members would have an opportunity to share their perspective and ensure a diverse and inclusive understanding of the matters shared with University leadership.

Staff Open Forums

In coordination with the President's Cabinet, USAC coordinated and facilitated four (4) Staff Open Forums. These unprecedented events were held via Zoom and were requested by both university leadership and the staff community alike. USAC solicited questions beforehand for the COO, Provost, General Counsel, and VP of HR to address, as well as provided an opportunity to staff to ask questions in real-time. The events were well attended and came at a crucial time when the campus community needed to remain informed as the pandemic continued to evolve.

Committee Appointments

USAC was approached by leaders on campus to help appoint members of the community to serve as staff representatives on several important committees:

- **Presidential Search Committee:** Gil Villanueva, *Associate Vice President and Dean of Admission*
- **Naming Principles Commission:** Kim Edwards, *Director of Technology Services, Law Library*
- **Planning & Priorities Committee:** Linda Fairtile, *Head, Parsons Music Library*
- **Benefits Committee:** Vincent Savage, *Director of Residential Dining* and Jennifer O'Donnell, *Manager of Biological Laboratories*

Collaboration with University Faculty Senate

USAC worked closely with the University Faculty Senate (UFS) during the 2020-21 term. A joint event was held in the Fall 2020, run by USAC's faculty senate liaison, Allison Olivia Johnson, to bring both groups together via Zoom to connect and discuss impacts from the pandemic to the university and potential solutions. Further, in coordination with the President's Office, USAC and UFS held a campus-wide discussion on the university's Statement on Free Expression. Finally, USAC remained in communication with UFS as the school navigated the important issues of electing a new president and addressing the community's response to the renaming decision for Ryland and Freeman Halls.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

USAC played an important role in much of the development in DEI during the 2020-21 term. Along with facilitating an event on free expression and encouraging staff to complete a campus climate survey (which far exceeded its participation goal), USAC engaged with the Board of Trustees and the President's Office to communicate the collective opinion of staff as it related to the renaming decision for Ryland and Freeman Halls. As a result of these campus-wide conversations, the renaming decision was suspended to align with the desire of the community, and a Naming Principles Commission was established, to which USAC was asked to appoint a staff representative.

MEETINGS

Due to the pandemic, all meetings were conducted via Zoom. The format of meetings consisted of an open session wherein university leadership (with a focus on members of the President's cabinet) addressed staff and presented on pertinent issues. Council discussion of web submissions was then discussed during closed session. Each meeting included time for guest speakers, Department Updates and Announcements, Budget Review, Committee and Liaison Updates, Gallery Comments and Closed Session.

Guest Speakers included:

- Brittany Schaal, *Emergency Management* provided updates to the university's COVID-19 response. (August 11, 2020)
- Steve Bisese, *Vice President, Student Development*; Patrick Benner, *Director, Residence Life & Housing*; and Chief David McCoy, *Associate Vice President for Public Safety, Chief of Police* provided updates to the university's COVID-19 response. (September 8, 2020)
- Dr. Armond Towns, *Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and Communication Studies* and Dr. Atiya Husain, *Assistant Professor of Sociology* provided updates to the development of the Africana Studies Department and Faculty Learning Community. (October 13, 2020)
- Tracy Cassalia, *Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Students* and Kris Henderson, *Director of Compliance & Title IX Coordinator* provided updates and solicited feedback on University's Title IX policies in the wake of changes from the Department of Education. (October 13, 2020)
- Michele Haertel and Sue Clifford, *Spencer Stuart Executive Search Firm* engaged council members and staff and solicited feedback to assist with crafting position statement for the Presidential Search Committee. (November 10, 2020)
- John Hardt, *VP and Director of Athletics*; Ann Lloyd Breeden, *Vice President and Secretary, Board of Trustees*; Terry Heilman Sylvester, *Director of Parent Philanthropy, Advancement*; and Gil Villanueva, *Associate Vice President and Dean of Admission* provided updates and answered questions as staff representatives on the presidential search process. (January 12, 2021)

- Carl Sorensen, *Senior Associate VP, Human Resources* and Amy Howard, *Senior Administrative Officer, Equity and Community* spoke to the group regarding the campus climate survey initiative. (January 12, 2021)
- Elizabeth Buchholz, *Organizational Learning Manager, UFMS* spoke to the group about neurobiology and how best to manage stress. (February 9, 2021)
- Jasmonn Coleman, *Associate Athletics Director for Development* presented on the role of the Planning & Priorities Committee on campus. (March 9, 2021)
- Lori Schuyler, *Vice President for Planning and Policy*; Laura Dietrick, *Director, Benefits & Compensation*; and Carl Sorensen, *Senior Associate VP, Human Resources* presented on upcoming changes to the university's policies and practices.

USAC COMMITTEES

Due to the pandemic, USAC's Volunteer and Engagement Committee was limited in the work that could be done on campus to assist staff. However, the Communications Committee started both a Facebook and Instagram account and provided important pandemic-related updates to staff via these platforms. Finally, the Elections Committee worked hard to successfully run a university-wide USAC election to fill outgoing council member seats, as well as run an election for the Academic Affairs staff representative seat on the Planning & Priorities Committee.

The following staff members were elected to serve on USAC for the 2021-2024 term:

Bill Galaspie: Information Services Divisional Seat, 2021-24

Cassie Price: Academic Affairs School Staff Seat, 2021-24 (SPC, Jepson or A&S)

Carolyn Smart: Academic Affairs School Staff Seat, 2021-24 (SPC, Jepson or A&S)

Brianne Meagher: Academic Affairs School At Large Seat, 2021-24

Abby Roberts: Athletics Divisional Seat, 2021-24

Frances Dickerson: Business Affairs At Large, 2021-24

Mike LaRue: Dining Services Departmental Seat, 2021-24

Patricia Coleman: Facilities Departmental Seat, 2021-24

Rachel Weinberg-Rue: Enrollment Management Divisional Seat, 2021-24

Jamie Lynn Haskins: Student Development Seat, 2021-24

Cindy Smith: Communications Divisional Seat, 2021-24

BUDGET

Date	Description	Amount	Balance
07/01/2020	Initial budget	\$5,875.00	\$5,875.00
11/10/2020	New member name tags	(\$95.00)	\$5,780.00
02/17/2021	Honoraria – professional development	(\$150.00)	\$5630.00
03/04/2021	Professional development – StrengthsQuest licenses	(\$419.79)	\$5210.21
03/25/2021	SimplyVoting.com for elections	(\$334.00)	\$4876.21
05/27/2021	Amazon gift cards for 2020-2021 USAC members	(\$550.00)	\$4326.21
06/02/2021	Service plaques for 2019-2021 members	(\$180.62)	\$4145.59
06/08/2021	USAC promotional signs and posters	(\$608.00)	\$3537.59
Various	USAC signs and posters for bulletin boards	(\$14.40)	\$3523.19

LOOKING AHEAD

We encourage USAC to continue discussing web subs with all members of council to ensure a diverse and inclusive perspective is shared with University leadership.

USAC's relationship with the Faculty Senate is essential in the effort to advance staff equity. Through the work with the Faculty Senate this past year, it is evident that there are faculty allies working to elevate staff concerns. USAC members are encouraged to reach out for support where faculty alliances are needed.

Timely and effective communication to all staff constituents – including those with limited access to computers during work hours – should remain a priority. Additionally, ensuring staff know USAC is a resource for them remains critical to the council's mission to represent all staff interests.

The Manager of Events and Property Services is listed as an ex officio member of USAC according to the Bylaws however the person who previously held this seat retired from the University. It is recommended that the incoming group remove this member from the Bylaws.

MEMBERSHIP

2020-21 Executive Officers

Chair: Mark Stanton

Compliance Coordinator, Athletics

Athletics Divisional Seat, 2019–21

Vice-chair: Jessica Washington

Assistant Director for Student Engagement and Bonner Scholars Program

Academic Affairs – at Large Seat, 2019-21

Secretary/ Treasurer: Jennifer O’Donnell

Manager of Biological Laboratories

Academic Affairs – Art & Sciences Seat, 2019-21

Parliamentarian: Mitch Alters

Assistant Swim Coach, Athletics

Athletics Divisional Seat, 2020-23

Communications Chair: Michele Bedsaul

Administrative Coordinator, Jepson School of Leadership Studies

Academic Affairs School Staff Seat, 2019-21

Volunteer & Engagement Chair: Priscilla Greene

Admission Counselor, Undergraduate Admissions

Enrollment Management Divisional Seat, 2019-21

Academic Affairs

Katy Olney

Administrative Manager, Law School

Academic Affairs School Staff Seat, 2020-23

Taylor McNeilly

Reference and Processing Archivist, Boatwright Library

Academic Affairs Boatwright Seat, 2020-23

Kourtney Ennis

Marketing and Communications Manager, Robins School of Business

Academic Affairs School Staff Seat, 2020-23

Business Affairs

Ashelle Brown

Learning & Development Specialist, Human Resources

Business Affairs At-Large Seat, 2019-22

Allison Olivia Johnson

Financial Analyst, Office of Planning & Budgets

Business Affairs At-Large Seat, 2019-21

Richard Thomas

Floater Manager, University Dining Services

Dining Services Departmental Seat, 2019-21

Jeff Smith

Concessions and Relief Manager, Concessions

Dining Services Departmental Seat, 2020-23

Paul Sandman

Integrated Pest Management Specialist, University Facilities

Facilities Departmental Seat, 2019–21

Frank McMurrugh

Mechanical Supervisor, University Facilities

Facilities Departmental Seat, 2020-23

Craig Buchbinder

Officer, University Police

Public Safety Departmental Seat, 2020-23

Communications

Joe Minick

Director of Multimedia, University Communications
Communications Divisional Seat, 2019-21

Information Services

Beth Simms

IS Project Manager, Information Services
Information Services Divisional Seat, 2019-21

Fred Hagemeister

Research Analyst, Information Services
Information Services Divisional Seat, 2020-23

Advancement

Susan Sokolsky

Administrative Coordinator, Alumni & Career Services
Advancement Divisional Seat, 2020-23

Student Development and Chaplaincy

Josh Jeffreys

Jewish Chaplain & Director, Religious Life, Chaplain's Office

Student Development/Chaplaincy Divisional Seat, 2019-21

Kaylin Tingle

Sexual Misconduct Prevention Educator, CARE

Student Development Seat, 2020-2

Ex-Officio

Melody Wilson

Assistant to VP, Information Services
Immediate Past Chair, 2018-20

Carl Sorensen

Senior Associate Vice President, Human Resources