



The University Staff Advisory Council (USAC) provides 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.

The work of the Council this year centered around two important themes: planning for the future of USAC and engaging the staff community. While much of our time was spent in these areas, there were also some additional highlights throughout the year that are listed at the end of this report.

Planning for the Future of USAC

In 2012-2013, Council members made it a priority to ensure the foundation of USAC is strong including clarifying the role of USAC, updating bylaws, and developing partnerships. As USAC continues to define its role on-campus, sustainability and continuity is of prime importance. With this in mind, Council members assessed its initiatives and structure. One important change in 2012-2013 was the transition of UR Santa to a partnership with the Salvation Army Angel Tree program. It is the Council's hope that this transition allows for staff to get resources needed during the holiday season, and throughout the year, in a confidential and equitable way.

At the April 2013 meeting, all former Chairs and Vice-Chairs were invited to help develop a timeline for USAC, including items that were considered unfinished from their terms. The current Council members reviewed those items and will incorporate those that remain relevant into the 2013-2014 strategic plan.

Establishing and continuing healthy partnerships was also a priority for USAC in 2012-2013. In addition to monthly check-ins with Human Resources (HR), USAC partnered with HR to include information about USAC and the affinity groups in New Staff Orientation and to develop a series of topical sessions about retirement, a concern that was brought forward during the 2012 Open Forum. In November 2012, USAC members voted to create an additional ex-officio position for the Manager, Events and Property Services who has primary responsibility for planning Staff Appreciation Events including Busch Gardens Day, Winter Celebration, SpringFest, the annual Fishing Tournament, and staff games in conjunction with UR athletics. This additional ex-officio position allows for USAC members to support the planning of staff appreciation events and get the word out.

One additional important area of partnership included open communication with the University Faculty Council. The USAC Chair and Vice-Chair established check in meetings with the Chair of the University Faculty Council during the year to share concerns and updates.

Elections

The election for new members of USAC took place between April 29 and May 3. All eligible voting staff member were allowed three total votes across both employment categories (exempt and non-exempt). Eligible staff continued to vote electronically via the approved website (Simply Voting). The Elections committee also ran voter assistance stations in Facilities, Dining Services, and the Pier with mixed results (resulting the analysis detailed below). After voting concluded, 13 new members were added to USAC.

A post-election analysis of campus voting participated showed: Of the 1168 staff loaded into Simply Voting as eligible to vote: 543 Voted (320 Exempt and 223 Non-Exempt) and 625 Didn't Vote (230 Exempt and 395 Non-Exempt), with a number of departments showing extremely low voting rates. Thus, additional recommendations are in place for next year's election committee in order to encourage voting in departments with low participation.

Bylaw Changes

USAC also made a number of bylaw changes that will help to solidify its structure and practices for the future health of the organization. Some of the bylaw changes were made, in response to the new career and compensation structure that Human Resources released in 2012; others were made to strengthen the organization by allowing for greater flexibility in the ways that elections are handled, to add an ex-officio member, as well as added succession planning for officers who resign during their term. These changes were all proposed in November 2012 and were approved by the required two-thirds majority in December 2012. Updated bylaws can be found on USAC's website.

Engaging the Staff Community

Affinity Groups

2012-2013 saw the expansion of USAC Affinity Groups both in structure and in involvement. At the start of the year, there were four affinity groups: Cancer Care and Support, Elder Care, Parenting, and UR Involved. In September of 2012, the LGBTQ affinity group was launched and currently serves faculty as well as staff. Additionally, the Cancer Care and Support affinity group transitioned under the umbrella of the Health and Wellness affinity group.

The campus community response to the Affinity Groups has been overwhelmingly positive. USAC affinity groups have two primary functions: to provide resources, support and healthy coping mechanisms to deal with the struggles related to these topics and situations; and to help employees connect socially across division/departmental lines as well as across ranks and positions through common interests. Many of the discussion/support meetings have faculty attending frequently, and in some groups employees' family members also attend, extending the reach of this University benefit beyond our campus.

In addition to continually increasing attendance numbers, the USAC Staff Involvement Subcommittee which leads the affinity groups, also created shared expectations and norms to provide guidance on how groups can be formed or disbanded based on the needs and interest of the campus community. Those guidelines can be found on USAC's website.

To help in outreach efforts for the groups, an informational card was created that includes the name of each affinity group and each website url. Group leaders use the cards to promote affinity group events and raise awareness of the support and community connections offered in the groups. Two affinity group open houses were offered to help raise awareness of the group's activities and events and representatives from the groups were present at large staff events such as the Busch Gardens Day ticket pickup and HR's Open Enrollment Benefits Fair.

Expenditures for the individual group activities totaled less than \$640. With a total of 34 events, discussion groups and meetings and 238 attendees, the cost for each participant was less than \$2.70. Membership on the dedicated listservs has grown nearly 25% from the prior year. What can't be reflected in these figures are the professional and personal relationships made over the past year because of the Affinity Groups. By providing the opportunity and avenue for these relationships to be made over common interests, the Affinity Groups are facilitating a more connected, cohesive and caring campus community.

Job Shadowing and Mentoring

USAC investigated the feasibility of forming a Job Shadowing and Mentoring Program during the 2012-2013 academic year. In addition to consulting numerous articles and research, interviews were conducted with program administrators at the University of Dayton and Purdue University to determine best practices for forming a program at Richmond. It was determined that narrowing the scope of the program to specific job type (administrative and clerical staff) and substituting the "Shadowing" portion with "Networking" would provide a greater chance of success with the possibility of replicating the program to apply to other job types at a later time. The program has been endorsed in a draft form by USAC, Human Resources and the Chief of Staff with some minor modifications. Ultimately, the program should advance the skills and knowledge of mentees, create a higher level of job satisfaction for mentees as well as mentors, and make the work of the administrative and support staff more meaningful and fulfilling. Consequently, talented staff would be less likely to leave the University for opportunities elsewhere resulting in a more highly skilled, better informed, and more productive administrative staff.

Final plans to launch the Mentoring & Networking program for administrative and clerical staff will be completed over the summer, and the first cohort will begin a semester-long pilot in September 2013.

Website Revisions

In order to live into USAC's role as a hub of resources, Council members felt that the USAC website needed to be revised. We spent significant time this year restructuring the website and adding additional resources.

- In response to the need for a more centralized way to communicate some of the discounts and benefits for UR employees, USAC created several new webpages to better communicate information about staff resources. The "Did You Know?" webpage

lists all known benefits both on and off-campus for food, education, health and wellness, and discounts at local businesses.

- USAC also answered the need to assist staff interested in engaging in the greater Richmond community by creating a webpage that has information about service opportunities available through the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement. Also available in the staff resources gateway are promo buttons to guide staff interested in learning more about benefits, health and wellness, and GRTC bus passes.
- A holiday resource webpage was also created to make staff members more aware of the community resources available during the months of November and December. The resources listed included the Salvation Army Angel Tree, Dominion Energy Share program, Community Thanksgiving, United Way Holiday resources, and the Holiday Service of Hope offered by the Office of the Chaplaincy.

Web Submissions

As part of the Council’s role as a liaison to University Administration, Council members receive, review, and respond to web submissions from University staff members. USAC received a total of thirty-nine web submissions in the 2012-13 academic year that it researched and responded to concerns (and one compliment) directly from staff members as well as through anonymous submissions.

Year-by-year comparison of web submissions:

2012-13	2011-12	2010-11	2009-10
39	20	39	43

In terms of web submission trends, the majority of web submissions were anonymously submitted, and of the thirty-nine web submissions, 70% of submissions were questions or issues that needed to be answered by Human Resources. Web submissions by theme or category:

Human Resources related submissions

Policies and practices	13
Benefits	4
Compensation	4
Rewards and Recognition program	3
Great Colleges survey results	3
Retiree benefits	1

USAC related submissions

Affinity Groups	3
USAC website	3
USAC programming	2

Other submissions

Weather (university closing or not closing during inclement weather)	3
Facilities concern (housekeeping)	1

Additional Highlights

While planning for the sustainability and future of USAC and engaging the staff community took significant Council time, there were some other highlights in 2012-2013. Below is a list of some of these highlights:

- We were contacted by staff at Wofford College for best practices in staff councils.
- USAC representatives presented at a Business and Finance meeting in October
- Jason Sawyer, community organizer, Neighborhood Resource Center, conducted a leadership development training for USAC members in August 2012.
- 67 staff members attended the Open Forum in June 2013, compared with 27 in 2012.
- A USAC informational brochure was created and is given to all new staff during new employee orientation
- USAC had a presence at all of the benefits fairs held during open enrollment, Busch Gardens ticket pick up, and department meetings for University Facilities and Campus Dining in order to connect more staff members to USAC affinity groups and staff appreciation events.
- The council also utilized social media to reach staff members and increased the number of people who “like” the USAC Facebook page to 127.
- Council members were invited to serve and served on the following University committees:
 - Assistant Director, Recreation and Wellness Search
 - Planning & Priorities Committee
 - Scholars at Risk
 - Service Awards
 - SpringFest
 - VP for Business and Finance Search Committee

Looking Ahead

As this USAC term comes to a close, we recognize that there are some lingering concerns for UR staff members. These concerns include:

- The implementation of a **Flexible Workplace** policy
- A comprehensive **Rewards and Recognition** policy, including creating a culture of appreciation among colleagues

- Granting **Tuition Remission** for continued education of UR staff at other institutions, particularly when the degree is not offered at UR
- Increased **transparency** as HR policies are updated, including dates on the HR website when updates are made.
- Implementing robust **Supervisor Training**
- Regular **communication from HR** to staff

These items, as well as feedback from the Open Forum, will be passed on to the new leadership of USAC to keep on the forefront as they liaise with University administration.