



# University Staff Advisory Council

## MINUTES

Tuesday, August 12, 2025

[Zoom Link](#)

Attendees: Miriam Blackmon, Monica Booker, Matt Dewald, Aretha Harris, Mirinda McCants, Sara Morrow, Jess Oliver, Cort Schneider, Wendy Sheppard, Kirstin Stacia, Mary Wheaton, Justin Woodson, Carole Yeatts, Mina Zatelli. Guests: Karen Baker, Jackson Knox, and Jamelle Wilson.

### **Jess Oliver called the meeting to order at 1:07 PM.**

The meeting began with a conversation about Boatwright's new [8:15](#) café preview that took place for USAC members on August 12, 2025. 8:15 will have a soft opening is August 18<sup>th</sup> through August 22<sup>nd</sup> from 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM. The grand opening is August 25<sup>th</sup> through 28<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 AM – 11:00 PM, and August 29<sup>th</sup> from 7:30 AM – 2:00 PM.

### **Chair's Report (Jess Oliver):**

Updates were shared about the upcoming benefits fair, open seats on the USAC committee, and upcoming speakers.

- Holly Blevins has stepped down from her position at USAC, creating an open seat.
- The Employee Benefits Fair is on October 28<sup>th</sup>, from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM in the Alice Hayes room, and on November 7<sup>th</sup>, from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM in the lobby of the Well-being Center. USAC will have tables set up on both days.
- At our September meeting, Rob Andrejewski will talk about the new Orchard and Food Forest along the Eco-corridor. The grand opening is September 25<sup>th</sup>. Paul Buchanon will join us at our October meeting to discuss the Modlin Center for the Arts. Maribel Street will see us at our November meeting to discuss safety, and in March, Heather Sadowski will meet us to chat about health promotions.

### **Tuition Remission - SPCS Recruitment Team – Karen Baker & Jackson Knox**

Visit the registration portal: [urspcs.info/trcourses](https://urspcs.info/trcourses) or [spcs.richmond.edu/academics](https://spcs.richmond.edu/academics).

- Degree programs: Bachelor's Degree completion, post-bachelor's certificates, and graduate programs, each with various courses of study.
- Tuition Remission Programs (Human Resources) offer a variety of courses of study. Click [here](#) to see if you are eligible. An employee can take up to five courses a year, which renews every year. This benefit is also extended to your dependents (23 and under). Most courses are online and asynchronous, making it easy to access and complete. Most of the courses are available for 18 months and range from customer service, interior design, brewing education, landscape design, gardening, emergency preparedness, project management, leadership and management, professional

communication, SAT prep courses, and more. There are 30 courses that are just for UR employees and not the outside public. UR also offers long-term degree programs, post-bachelor's certificates, and graduate programs.

### **Treasury Report and Approval of Meeting Minutes (Mina Zatelli)**

- Miriam Blackmon put forth a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the July 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. Minutes were approved.
- \$1,180.47 was spent by the previous secretary that carries over into this year's budget for USAC swag items (silicone magnetic twist ties, UR phone stands, shipping costs). Remaining budget is \$4,694.53.

### **Reports from Committees and Liaisons**

- There were no updates from the Plan Involvement Team, Food Service Involvement Team, & Campus Plan.
- Faculty Senate (Cort Schnieder) – next meeting is October 24<sup>th</sup>. Faculty Hub is working on events for faculty and staff.
- Benefits Committee (Jess Oliver) – The committee is preparing for the Benefits Fair and will meet in September.
- Planning & Priorities (Miriam Blackmon) A meeting is scheduled for September 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Communications Committee (Mary Wheaton & Erin Lowery) – Continue to push send and post communications about upcoming USAC nominations and elections.
- Events & Engagement Committee (Mina Zatelli & Justin Woodson) – Mina continues to work with the library about having a tour for new staff.
- Elections (Carole Yeatts) – USAC nominations update. So far, 38 nominations have been received. Wendy Sheppard is making sure those staff are eligible and asking them if they would like to accept the nomination for one of the 7 vacancies. Wendy will then build the ballot and have it ready for next Thursday, when the election cycle begins.

### **Web Submissions (Mirinda McCants)**

- Mirinda circled back to a previous web submission concerning signage around the lake regarding the need to have dogs on a leash to protect wildlife. Allison Moyer and the Landscape team are working on signage. More information will come out in the next few months.
- Mirinda also addressed the Health App, which can be accessed on the computer, not just the phone app, when loading receipts. The phone was added as a two-factor authentication.
- There was a question about a possible hiring freeze, which Geraldine Sullivan addressed. There is no hiring freeze; however, the university is evaluating position requests carefully due to the current environment and legislative actions pertaining to higher education. Web submission details can be found on the USAC website.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 PM.

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Announcements:

Our next USAC Meeting is on Tuesday, September 9<sup>th</sup>, at 1:00 pm in person in the Multi-Faith Room at the Wilton Center or on Zoom. Rob Andrejewski, with the Office of Sustainability, will speak about the UR Orchard and Food Forest



## University Staff Advisory Council

### **Goals 2024-2025**

1. Strengthen and foster a cohesive and inclusive staff community on campus
  - a. Establish a USAC events committee to promote a sense of community across campus staff. Launch new initiatives to bring together staff from across departments, including informal breakfast/lunch gatherings and organized campus tour for staff led by staff.
  - b. Offer hybrid USAC meetings for general staff but encourage USAC members to attend in person.
2. Enhance visibility of USAC to be seen as a conduit of information, voice for all staff, and leader in community efforts
  - a. Increase accessibility of web submission feature on USAC website and increase awareness to staff of available web sub option to ask questions and raise concerns.
  - b. Strengthen visibility and role of USAC for staff advocacy, retention, transparency, compensation, and appreciation.
  - c. Raise profile of USAC board and committee members collectively and individually so all staff feel heard and represented. Invite all staff to join USAC committees.
  - d. Continue connections with Faculty Senate and find more ways for faculty and staff to interact.
3. Solidify processes and institutional knowledge within USAC
  - a. Define committee structure within USAC and create goals and expectations.
  - b. Review current USAC Board structure and compare with current campus employment to ensure fair and accurate representation.
  - c. Pull together procedures guides for future board members.

- d. Connect with past USAC board members and invite their input and participation in USAC activities and initiatives.
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- 4. Continue USAC awareness through existing systems and processes
    - a. Continue USAC role in the onboarding process by sending USAC profile and swag to new staff members.
    - b. Continue regular and timely communication with staff via all-campus communications and presence at major campus events. Continue to make sure information is shared with staff in a variety of modes including printed flyers and signage for those who do not regularly access email.
    - c. Continue to invite University representatives to present at monthly meetings and quarterly breakfast including senior management, compliance, campus safety, HR, DEIB, and student development.