



University Staff Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, January 14, 2025
Tyler Hanes Commons, Room 305

In attendance: Holly Blevins, Cort Schneider, Monica Smith, Robin Walinski, Jennifer Lo Prete, Ashley Kuemmerle, Meghan Harris, Stephanie Fillman, Joy Heinzman, Kayla Solbak, Kristin Mance, Catherine Poston, Heidi Thompson, aharris9, Jennifer Phillips, Meghan Gill, Lisa Matthews-Ailsworth, Angela Waters, Mirinda McCants, Melody Wilson, Mary Wheaton, Kolby Ferguson, Ashley Blount, Miriam Blackmon, Amanda Boyd, Pietra Balsamo, Justin Woodson, Julia Trachtenberg, Erin Lowery, Sunni Brown, Wendy Sheppard, Carole Yeatts, Darrell Tyler, Elizabeth Donaldson, John Shines

1. Call to Order 1:03

- Welcome new member, Pietra Balsamo – works in Catering and as a cook. Pietra is originally from Italy. She will be put on a committee soon.
- Next meeting: Weinstein Classroom 202 – enter through second floor
- Spider Dash – Feb. 22nd – volunteers needed for the USAC Cheer Team

2. Featured Speaker:

- Upen Malani, Executive Director, Dining Services – Upen has been here five months tomorrow – he has worked the university life for 35 years. At UR he has a phenomenal team. Upen gave stats for the number of staff and students, the facilities, some award-winning efforts, the number of students served; also discussed sustainability initiatives on campus and with vendors, Using LeanPath to track food waste and measure environmental impact, during the fall 2024 semester 61,940 pounds of pre-consumer food waste was composted; request for multilingual ordering through Grubhub – it is not available, but do have 14 languages on the Nutrislice app for the menus – asks colleagues to check out Nutrislice to add languages – can see the menu in a native language and then make a choice in Grubhub. On the webpage, the Nutrislice information is available. A chat question was received for calorie content for weekly lunch specials that are no longer on Nutrislice. Upen can look into it and work with the team to manage that because it is dependent on portion sizes.
 - Commencement Dining changes: Two reserved seatings in HDC 9-10:30 a.m. and 11-12:30 p.m. brunch and Tyler's and Passport Café will be open
 - The 8:15 renovation should be completed and will open in fall 2025.
 - There are many opportunities for dining feedback – URHeard, Text N-Tell and Direct Message on social media.

Questions:

- Mary Wheaton asked about signage and allergens – animal by-products, pork or beef products – items listed as vegetarian, but do contain animal by-products – is there a chance that content can be more specifically listed;

- Response - Upen is happy to work with the Dieticians to improve the signage and disclosures.
- The community loves the UR Dining services and UR loves to serve the community; students come first, and then staff and faculty.
- Students from other schools have a difficult time reconciling the quality they have v. what we provide at UR. The advantage of managing the dining services in-house and not outsourced is that the dining quality can be controlled and improvements can be made in-house. Creativity can be brought to UR.
- Darrell Tyler asked about social media posts and whether or not there would be opportunities to use the demonstration kitchen for students and whether they could expand on the staff opportunities. He suggested staff team-building activities in the demonstration kitchen.
- Amanda Boyd reminded us that there are some demonstrations offered as part of the Wellness Camps.
- Darrell Tyler asked what is coming down the pike or what keeps Upen up at night – Response: GrubHub was just sold – so vendors and companies that are out of our control are a concern – Upen stayed on top of it because they are dependent on outside vendors/agencies.
- 3000 meals/day are made by Dining Services – Darrell Tyler asked about an increase of excise taxes proposed by the new Administration and whether or not it affects what is provided.
- Response – Upen said that UR has very good management on campus to outsource and manage resources and vendors to leverage what is needed.
- Ashley Blount asked about whether or not UR is considering a different provider other than Grubhub.
- Response - not at this time. 95% of orders are through Grubhub, so it's working.

Upen wrapped up – Carole pointed out that at so many other universities the dining services are outsourced and not controlled in-house. “We are all Spiders!”

3. 1:40 Reports from Committees and Liaisons

- Mary Wheaton – communications – not a lot to report – will post a rep spotlight of new member Pietra Balsamo
- Justin Woodson – Volunteer and Events committee report – Spider Dash is Feb. 22nd – there are volunteer opportunities, Cheer Team will be organized; it's a great event that brings everyone together on campus; there will be social media posts about this.
- Ashley Blount – Spider Bites – Jan. 31st – breakfast – limited to 10 people; including discussion questions; where to do you get your water from;
- Kirstin Stacia – Secretary/Treasury report – original budget of \$5875; have spent \$690 with \$5195 remaining.

- Darrell made a motion to approve last month's meeting minutes. It was seconded by Mary Wheaton – last month's meeting minutes are approved.
- Pointed out that WBB reached out to USAC to ask for more support – USAC is planning to offer a WBB event for staff that would include tickets, terrace, and food or snacks for 100-125 staff members.

4. Web Submissions:

- Question about language options – this was discussed during Upen's presentation. No further discussion at this time.
- PT workers benefits stipend for those who work less than 1000 hours, 30+ hours are given the benefits options. In consideration of the majority, cannot offer benefits to PT staff at this time, HR encourages PT staff to apply to FT positions.
- Third Faculty staff designation – Does HR know that the benefits are not competitive – Benefits comm meets regularly, look at response – did not want to share the survey results because taken out of context it could raise more questions.
- Statement about work-life balance – asked if HR had seen this publication; it expressed several issues about leave or HR processes that are left to a staff member's supervisor; Exec Comm encourages communication with supervisor or HR Business Partner and HR directly.

Open Session Meeting Adjourned at 2:02

Announcements:

Next USAC meeting - Tuesday, February 11 at 1pm in Weinstein Center for Recreation, Classroom 202. Featured speaker will be Melissa Falk, Associate Vice President and Dean of Admission.

Spring USAC breakfast – Tuesday, February 18 at 8:30-10:00 am in the Wilton Center, Multifaith Room. Featured speaker will be Monica Smith, Vice President for Inclusion and Belonging.

Spider Dash on Saturday, February 22. Volunteers needed for packet pickup in the Well-Being Center on February 21 from 12:00 – 6:00 pm, and day of the race starting at 7:00 am.

USAC Meeting – Tuesday, March 11 at 1 pm in Special Programs Bldg., Classroom 156.

USAC Meeting – Tuesday, April 8 at 1 pm in Special Programs Building, Classroom 156. Featured speaker will be Amy Howard, Associate Provost for Strategic Initiatives & Community Engagement, on the Burying Ground project.



University Staff Advisory Council

Goals 2024-25

- 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.
- 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.