

**UNIVERSITY STAFF ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**WEB SUBMISSIONS**  
November 2019

The following are new submissions since our last USAC meeting. Also included are two items carried over from the October 2019 USAC meeting. **Responses to those questions will be made on this document to reflect that they were taken up during the November 2019 meeting.**

**(Carried from October 2019) Idea/Rationale: Book exchange.** I had an idea that I was hoping USAC would want to get behind. I was recently cleaning out my apartment and found a significant amount of books that I hadn't read/touched/looked at for a while. I haven't joined the kindle/e-reader bandwagon yet and I have a library card, but also still tend to purchase books. I wondered how many others on campus were like me. Anyway, long story short... I was hoping to create a free book exchange day for faculty and staff. My initial idea is to have a few days for drop off and then organize an exchange in December. I was thinking it would be great to open up the exchange to children's books, novels, etc. so maybe staff could find good holiday gifts or just something new (to them) to read. I was then hoping that we could donate our leftover books to a local non-profit(s)? This promotes Morale, fun, sustainability, campus community, community service.

**Background:** Specifically cited USAC involvement was:

1. Some guidance on space- what would be easiest on campus for faculty/staff
2. A good date for the event
3. Help with promotion
4. Finding a place to store donated books before the swap
5. Help day-of, with laying out books, monitoring the space or organizing
6. Help identifying appropriate service organizations to donate the remaining books and organizing transportation or pick-up?

**Response:** USAC recognizes that this is a good idea and endorses it. However, USAC does not have the bandwidth to participate in this activity at this time. We invite you to see the additional information we found the below and we hope that you find this to be helpful. You may also consider connecting with the sustainability office here on campus. Again, thank you for reaching out to us.

Additional information was also provided by a USAC member regarding ongoing book exchange efforts:

- Special Programs: there is an informal book exchange in the Special Programs Bldg; Two SPCS staffers started this book exchange for UR faculty and staff about 18 months ago.
- UROSE (office supply exchange) in Puryear Hall: Every Friday, UROSE opens. There faculty and staff can pick up free books or drop off unwanted books.
- Lastly, all local libraries (Richmond, Chesterfield, Henrico) accept used books to sell. I am told the funds go to Friends of the Library which puts the money back into the local libraries.

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**(Carried from October 2019) Idea/Rationale: Partner with local childcare providers.** I'm writing in hopes of encouraging the University to partner with local childcare providers to offer discounts to university employees. In looking for childcare around town, almost every major provider asks where you work as they provide discounts for a variety of local employers. These employers include VCU, Capital One, and the local county school systems. However, all said they did not offer anything for UR employees. The discounts offered ranged from 5 to 10 percent off tuition rates and some offer priority enrollment, which could be very impactful for parents seeking childcare. This seems like it could be a mutually beneficial arrangement, offering university employees a valuable benefit while providing local providers a steady stream of local families to potentially enroll, much like our arrangement with Joyner Fine Properties. I'm hoping the university will at least investigate these

opportunities to see if there are any potential partnerships that could offer a low-cost, high-impact benefit for employees.

**Response:** USAC reached out to Human Resources for the current status of childcare providers: “We understand that child care is a significant expense for employees. In the past, the University had a contract with Rainbow Station to provide access to the Get Well Place which provides backup care for ill children with common childhood illnesses such as colds, flu, stomach bugs and more as well as emergency care during inclement weather. Only one employee took advantage of the service over several years so we discontinued it. Next year, we will contact some child care centers to learn what is required to partner with them and for them to offer discounts to UR employees. If additional funding from the university is required, it will have to be weighed against other benefit costs for 2021.” . USAC does recognize the importance of childcare to our community and we also recognize the financial burdens that it places on families. USAC will recommend that HR and the benefits committee look into options but also realize that there are no guarantees that can be made. We appreciate the thoughtful suggestions and we look forward to further dialogue about childcare.

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**Idea/Rationale: Childcare opportunities provided on campus.** Survey the faculty and staff for interest in and need for a daycare on campus. The response in the past to the request for a daycare on campus has been that there is no need for one. Does the university have current proof of this? It might be worthwhile to survey faculty and staff to see if there is an interest and/or need in adding one to campus. Might be something to add to the Well Being Center.

**Idea/rationale: Child care provided on campus.** I wanted to add to an additional web submission that was received for October's meeting. If the school cannot find discounted/local childcare. Perhaps we should be the first to create on on-campus. Fostering a community that IS like a family. We have the OSHER school and the additional Undergrad and GRAD programs that could benefit from studying or working with children. With museums on campus, a gigantic library, an amazing gym and dining hall - this place would be fantastic to test out a small, innovative initiative to provide employees with child care and give opportunities to the school and the children to grow and learn from each other. In light of demographics changing for future admissions (more non-traditional students), we may want to offer child care for those adults trying to complete an education and work full-time. This would be fantastic paired with our first-generation college students. If we want to foster diversity, we should lead by example.

**Response:** Continuing on the discussion above regarding childcare USAC does recognize the significant cost of childcare on our employees and families. USAC has talked with HR about logistics and costs of providing an on campus child care center and that answer follows.

“The University has rigorously explored the possibility of providing on-site child care for faculty and staff, most recently in 2008-09. The conclusion of the study, conducted by consultants specializing in on-site child care, was that:

- Building a facility would require a multi-million dollar capital investment that would not be recovered through a day care center charging market rates
- Even charging market rates and requiring year-round enrollment contracts from families, the center would pose additional annual costs to the University’s operating budget.
- Although some employees with families were interested in the possibility of on-site daycare, many of those families did not pay market rates for child care and were less interested in an on-site center that was more expensive than their current option and required year-round enrollment.

It seems unlikely that the financial challenges of moving forward with an on-site child care center have changed since this last review. However, as we mentioned in our response to the earlier submission about child care

discounts, we are eager to help support employees who are seeking quality and affordable child care and, next year, will begin investigating the possibility of partnering with off-site child care providers.” *Carl Sorensen, Sr. Associate Vice President Human Resources*

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**Idea/Rationale: Volunteerism paid time off.** Employee paid time off to volunteer in the community. The University actively encourages students to volunteer, but gives no time for staff to do so during the week without them taking their vacation time. Many volunteer opportunities occur during the work day so the University should provide an hour or so a week (paid time) for staff to volunteer.

**Response:** USAC is continuing to look into this idea on several different fronts including within our own working group including an examination of what our peer institutions are doing. We hope to have more information on this topic soon as we continue our work on this.

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**Idea/Rationale: Uber tipping.** Consider adding an automatic 10-15% tip to the UBER account for URD/campus rides. Asking students/staff (who will now regularly use UBER to travel between URD and campus) to add customary tips to their personal accounts could cause a financial hardship for them and/or discourage them from tipping drivers (putting UR's reputation in a negative light).

**Background:** Since this is an experimental/test program the requestor was encouraged to contact transportation: “Questions, Concerns or Comments. As this is a pilot program, we need your feedback. Please send your feedback and any other questions to [transportation@richmond.edu](mailto:transportation@richmond.edu). Please add the word Uber in the Subject line.” Feedback further indicated that if a rider was to tip the Uber system would charge the full amount to the rider and not to UR.

**Response:** USAC has reached out to transportation for an update on the Uber partnership and how tipping works. Thank you for bringing this to our attention.

The response from transportation is as follows: “This will be part of discussion when we review the program in December. Right now we do not allow tipping on the University of Richmond’s Uber account. If we continue with the program in spring, I will contact [USAC] with the decision on tipping.”

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**Questions: December 23, 2019 off.** USAC received several comments and questions about December 23, 2019 being listed on line as a holiday at first, then later on it did not appear that way according the web based HR calendar. The inquiries received are:

- I was just made aware December 23 is not an official holiday this year. I have a print out of 2019 holidays from the HR website showing December 23 as a holiday. When and Why did this change? Isn't it more energy efficient for us to close on the 23rd rather than start the University up for just one day that week?
- Earlier today, HR sent out the URHR newsletter with dates for upcoming holidays. It lists the Winter Break Holiday as December 24-December 31. (I recognize that January 1 is considered a 2020 holiday.) I had previously, based on information on the HR website, put Winter Break on my calendar starting on December 23 (Monday). I remember thinking at the time that I was grateful the University thought to include that day as part of Winter Break so that we did not have to come to work for 1 day that week. This seemed like an efficient plan for resources across campus. I shared that information with my colleagues who also updated their calendars. I, like many others, have already planned my use of vacation days and personal days for the year. I have made family and travel plans accordingly. Now that the

website says December 24, I cannot go back and verify where I saw that information. Was this a change? And if so, why was this change made?

- When did Monday, December 23 get changed from a holiday to a work day? Please reconsider this decision, in addition to the resources wasted keeping the university open for that weekend and Monday, there would be so much goodwill among staff to have the weekend available for holiday travel and family time. Thank you.
- When did the holiday schedule for Christmas break change? Originally it said break started Monday Dec, 23, 2019 to Monday Dec 31. Now it has changed.
- At some point 12/23/19 was listed on the HR website as one of the days the University would be closed for Winter Break. Suddenly that has changed, without any communication about the change or why. If a colleague in another department had not pointed it out, me and those in my department would not have come in. Now we are scrambling to figure out who can take vacation and who has to cover the offices. Why isn't December 23, 2019 a part of Winter Break and why haven't we seen any direct communication about the change?

**Background:** Since this is a time-sensitive item USAC executive council reached out to Human Resources in advance of the November meeting. HR has issued the response below.

**Response:** “It has come to my attention that the start date of this year's winter break was incorrectly published on the Human Resources website as Monday, December 23. Because we are aware that some people have already made plans around the incorrect schedule, we are modifying the dates of this year's winter break. The break will begin on Monday, December 23, and conclude on Wednesday, January 1, 2020. Regular working hours will resume on Thursday, January 2, 2020.

This is a one-time exception to the University's holiday policy and does not suggest any change to the University's future schedule and benefit, which typically provides 14 holidays and one personal day per calendar year for a total of 15 days.

I apologize for the error in communicating this year's winter break schedule and hope you will enjoy the extra holiday time with your family and friends on December 23.

Sincerely,  
Carl Sorensen”

**Further, USAC sincerely thanks those who submitted comments and HR for working on this.**

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**Idea/Rationale: Partial benefits to part-time employees.** After a set amount of time, say 3 years, would U of R consider giving all part time employees partial benefits, specifically access to Weinstein Center for Recreation and Wellness, and summer camp for dependents. This would give part time employees incentive to stay at the University, as some of these positions are difficult to fill and do not offer any of the benefits that full-time employees are given.

**Response:** USAC will work with HR to explore the logistics of this. It was noted in the meeting that it is important to keep in mind that all benefits come with a cost and often times that would mean deferring or canceling one benefit in favor of another.

Additional information on this from HR: “Actually, the University does offer full time benefits to some employees who work less than a standard schedule of 2,015 or 2,080 hours in a year. The University considers any employee who works at least 1,511 hours in a year to be eligible for all benefits. This is the equivalent of 30 hours per week over 12 months. While we consider this “full time” with regard to benefit eligibility, this is

actually part time compared to a standard full time 37.75 hour work week. With the continued increase in our benefits expense (particularly health insurance), we are not considering providing full time benefits for employees who work less than 1.511 hours in a year.”