

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

The following websubmissions were reviewed at the December 2019 USAC meeting. As websubmissions are updated or changed they will be updated on this document with the date they are updated.

**Idea/Rationale: Open Enrollment Simplification.** Please simplify the Open Enrollment pages in the following way: default all people who sign up for high deductible plans IN to the UR contribution to the HSA, rather than out. The whole premise of the HDHP is that we'll be saving money as individuals, largely based on the UR contribution to our HSA. It feels like the University is trying to trick me out of money I'm entitled to per our benefits. I didn't even change plans, and had to go back in and request the money again. Mind-boggling.

**Response:** USAC members agreed that navigating the open enrollment pages and steps felt complicated and not user-friendly. USAC would like to work with HR to find ways to make this a less complicated process through design or even clarifying messages along the process.

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**Idea/Rationale: Food resources.** What are the available resources for UR employees who are in need of food or other help for their families? I had a manager come to me with news of an employee in need who didn't have enough food to feed her family for the week until her next paycheck. We cobbled together suggestions from local knowledge and the internet, and got her some food donations from CARITAS, but she was lucky she found the right managers, and we were lucky we got what we did... It made for a very frustrating day, and there were people working on this with no background or training, and no idea where to turn at the university. I know we claim to pay a living wage, but it doesn't always work out, and we (as employees and managers) need to know what resources there are to help. Thanks

**Idea/Rationale: Food pantry, resource guide.** Include resources for staff/adjunct faculty/PT staff. After receiving HR's great suggestion on making an after school backpack for the food bank for the winter celebration, it reminded me how many food insecure people we have on this campus every day. People like students on financial aid, the staff classified as tier 1-3, single moms and dads, people with disabilities, people close to retirement, PT staff, adjunct faculty and more- could experience food, housing or heating insecurity during this time of year. In the spirit of giving, and thanks, creating a resource guide, food pantry or free shop like VCU offers would be a great olive branch and a great offering of solidarity and support for our fellow spiders. We are so lucky at University of Richmond to be surrounded by resources and opportunity, it would be great to share that with the people who work to make us great every day. <https://sustainability.vcu.edu/free-store/https://dos.vcu.edu/services/ram-pantry/>

**Background:** Executive council has begun talking through this with managers who this may impact as well as HR for more information on feasibility and logistics. There are also needs with food insecurity among our students so perhaps this needs to be a broader conversation.

**Response:** USAC recognizes the importance of food insecurity issues and we are troubled that our fellow employees are going through this. USAC members indicated that they knew employees personally impacted by food insecurity. USAC is committed to working with others to come up with real solutions to this problem.

At this point USAC member suggestions include: possible partnerships with grocery stores, possible partnerships with food pantries in our area which are highly local, distribution of expiring items from our retail outlets, institution of an employee emergency fund, increased partnerships with existing food distribution networks (FeedMore, Shalom Farms), setting up a true on campus food pantry, and others. Also, it was suggested to make a more robust resources webpage and provide managerial training for how managers and departments can help those in need.

USAC will keep this discussion going with HR, dining services, and others as we look to find ways to solve this. We have more conversations set to happen in 2020 and USAC certainly encourages staff conversations and input surrounding this. Look for more information on this as we move forward.

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**Idea/Rationale: Other benefits webpage update.** Update "other" benefits. We all know that health/insurance benefits will increase every year, and we pay a lot for them. the "other" benefits go a long way towards keeping me here, vs going to VCU or another school. Including benefits like childcare benefits, student loan repayment benefits, etc would make this place seem a lot more employee focused. For example- take a look at VCU's parents page-- a lot more robust than what we are offering, and even include information regarding divorce and abuse. It would be great to have a comprehensive page like this to refer to. <https://hr.vcu.edu/current-employees/worklife/family-resources/> it seems like UR could negotiate some reduced rates locally for childcare and the like.

**Response:** USAC appreciates this suggestion. Having a robust other benefits and resources page is a good opportunity to spread the word about both critical resources as well as benefits offered by UR. USAC would like to work with HR to enhance its current page. This is somewhat related to the other submissions regarding food insecurity. It was also noted that the EAP provided by Cigna could use some updating.

In the new year HR will look into this page and determine the best additions and changes to make.

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**Idea/Rationale: Inclusivity at lunches and other working groups.** For all the University's efforts in touting inclusivity, it strikes me as counter to Dr. Crutcher's mission we should still be singling out specific groups for meetings/events in Spiderbytes, such as events for "People of Color" or "Queer Lunches" (if those are still happening). I get we all have a need to belong to a group we feel culturally comfortable with, and I know there will always still be exclusion to some degree. Maybe it's the wording in these announcements that get to me, but I think we need to come up with a better way to communicate public invitations to certain groups. I would like to hear Dr. Crutcher's and/or Communication's response to this web submission.

**Response:** USAC continues to work on a response to this web submission.