

UNIVERSITY STAFF ADVISORY COUNCIL
WEB SUBMISSIONS
March 2020

Due to time constraints, the first four websubs were carried over from the **February 2020** meeting, following those are new submissions since our last USAC meeting. For **March 2020**, every effort has been made to complete the following websubs in a timely fashion but some efforts have been delayed with UR's response to COVID-19.

Idea/Rationale: Identify and correct inequities in merit increases, advancement and promotions. Lateral and upward mobility is not happening in significant ways at UR due to implicit bias. Research has shown consistently that white men and women tend to promote folks who look like them. An analysis needs to be done of the number and percentages of women vs. men who have been promoted in the last 5-10 years, and the number and percentages of people of color who have been promoted in past 5-10 years. Implicit bias training is needed for all faculty, staff, and students at UR. There are additional concerns with how some position descriptions and titles change significantly and then individuals are just promoted into these positions without allowing other internal employees to apply for the newly created job. These situations reflect disparate and discriminatory practices that should be reviewed in order to avoid implicit bias in hiring practices.

Response: Thank you for this contribution. USAC members feel that in order to proceed in a way that will lead to thoughtful discussions about this then we need to be informed, at a baseline, where different positions stand. For this to occur a comprehensive study of jobs across the university would be needed. USAC will continue to have these conversations with leadership and we encourage such a baseline study to take place.

Back in September in response to another web submission HR has stated "These are good questions. We pay close attention to the salaries we offer new employees in order to avoid discrimination of any kind. Offers are based on the market value of a position and the experience of the candidates.

Such a study will require a significant time investment from the HR team. We are currently working on several important projects including; completing the Position Framework project; moving forward on many of the president's Making Excellence Inclusive initiatives; revamping the supervisor training programs; and modifying the annual performance review process for staff.

Conducting a study to ensure we are staying true to our commitment to equitable pay practices is something the University should do at some point, but it is not possible for it to become a priority over the next year or two."
(Carl Sorensen, Sr. Associate Vice President Human Resources).

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Idea/Rationale: Staff recognition by senior administration. More often than not, senior-level administration does not acknowledge the extraordinary work of staff. They share in detail about our faculty and students but staff seems to be a secondary or tertiary thought. The Provost Perspectives Letter is an example where accolades could have been bestowed on staff persons yet the letter focused on faculty contributions. Another example is the President naming all the faculty persons who had significant accomplishments in his letter of 11/18/19, but did not mention Director Leslie Stevenson's name at all yet cited that career services was ranked second in the nation. Staff could also be featured in website videos with the President rather than primarily faculty.

Response: USAC members noted there are several means through which staff are recognized including in-person, written, and print communications. USAC also discussed that under President Crutcher, highlighting staff accomplishments has accelerated and we applaud those efforts. Additionally, HR solicits and publishes "Kudos" in their newsletter (<https://hr.richmond.edu/contact/newsletter.html>) and encourages the use of badges through UR TalentWeb, both of which empower staff to recognize each other.

USAC would also like to offer the use of web submissions as way to recognize staff. Web submissions are discussed by council and entered into public record. These submissions can be submitted at <https://usac.richmond.edu/contact/submissions/index.html>. We look forward to your thoughtful recognitions.

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Idea/Rationale: Benefits and equity between staff and faculty. One way to address equity between faculty and staff would be to given general faculty rank to professional staff persons. Most of the universities in the Commonwealth have this ranking and staff do not have to teach, as is the case at UR. New staff should receive one month of vacation on day one of their employment. They should not have to work for years before accruing four weeks of vacation. VCU, UVA, Hampden Sydney, and many other schools award staff with four weeks of vacation at the beginning of their employment. Staff should not have to wait a year before the University contributes to their TIAA-CREF retirement funds. Matching should begin immediately.

Response: Although USAC members were not clear on faculty/staff statuses from around the state, through some research and discussion it was noted that retirement benefits are rarely vested with matching immediately by many employers. Most employees are subject to a probationary period. USAC did however discuss the idea of frontloading sick leave, not vacation, for staff as that is more of a critical value if a staff member becomes sick within their first year of employment and needs to be out. USAC will continue to research and consider the ideas in this websub in the coming months.

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Idea/Rationale: Can the University offer or mandate cultural competency training for faculty and staff in a manner similar to the training on digital security and sexual harassment? With the recent racial incidents on campus, there is a huge learning opportunity for staff and faculty to gain empathy and understand for those different from themselves. With the plethora of on-line courses this could help us to better understand our own biases (ie, white privilege) and make this a more welcoming and inclusive place to work while making us more supportive of minority students. Numerous courses are included in Lydia.com and Linked-In learning so this seems like a no-brainer that is affordable and easy to implement.

Response: The University does offer cultural competency training courses through LinkedIn Learning see <https://www.linkedin.com/learning-login/>. Log in using your UR single sign on, which is the same used for email. USAC encourages all staff to take advantage of these free learning opportunities especially those that are tied to our university inclusiveness initiatives. Please spread the word about this to others in the university community.

Additionally, “Our Talent and Organizational Effectiveness Team of Theran Fisher and Ashelle Brown had scheduled some in-person classes in April but have had to transition these to online. Look for these soon.”
(*Carl Sorensen, Sr. Associate Vice President Human Resources*).

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Idea: USAC Minutes Posting. Today is February 11. The minutes from the January 11 meeting have not been posted to the USAC website and I would like to know the reason. When information is not posted in a timely manner it can lead to a credibility perception. Right now, my perception is that the group is not taking its responsibility to inform very seriously.

Response: Thank you for contacting USAC. First, we are regretful that it has taken so long for USAC minutes to be posted. This is a mistake and it needs correction.

The urgency of posting meeting minutes in a timely way was discussed at the February 11 meeting. We have fallen short on these postings and it is not acceptable. We strive to, going forward, post meeting minutes in a more timely fashion.

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Idea: Forum for faculty and staff. During the open forum on Jan. 30, moderators reminded faculty and staff that this event was for students and that another event would be held to hear how faculty/staff were impacted and to address their concerns. There has not been any follow up (that we know of) and several staff would like to know what's in the works, and would also like to advocate for this to be an event for faculty and staff, not one group or the other.

Response: Thank you for bringing this up. USAC is committed to a thriving and inclusive community and one that is indeed inclusive of staff. With that in mind, USAC is working on a forum that we will facilitate and host tentatively in spring/summer 2020 depending on the evolution of UR's COVID-19 response and a return to "normal operations". We appreciate any input the staff community has that will make this event a success.

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Idea: Use of student health center for faculty, staff. Would it be beneficial to allow employees to also use the student health center for non-emergency health appointments? With the cost of health care so high, I think employees are reluctant to go to the doctor about what they see as "non-emergencies." I think it would be beneficial if employees could use the health center (still giving students priority) for simple, diagnostic-type appointments. This could cut down on employee time away from work, while also encouraging employees to see a doctor thus preventing the spread of germs across campus.

Idea: A recent web submission (not mine) suggested that the university should consider assuring that employee compensation raises keep pace with high medical costs. In light of the university's emails about the corona virus, I found USAC's response to be unsatisfying. Perhaps those who feel they are adequately paid and adequately insured feel satisfied with this response, but the University of Richmond deliberately hires many employees into a status that allows the university to withhold health insurance benefits. If we have an environment where there are employees who are unable to afford medical care, then you have an environment where infected employees can continue to come to work undiagnosed and the corona virus and other illnesses can spread and thrive, putting all of us at risk. If the university will not consider providing health insurance to all of its employees, and it will not consider assuring that employee compensation raises keep pace with high medical costs, will it at least seriously consider expanding the Student Health Center to include basic services for all university employees, including testing for COVID-19 and other viruses and bacterial infections?

Response: Thank you for your thoughtful submission; this is an idea that has been brought up over the years. Unfortunately, because of privacy and capacity concerns, employees (faculty and staff) are not able to access the medical services through the student health center. (*Carl Sorensen, Sr. Associate Vice President Human Resources*).

We do invite you to take advantage of some other services such as Cigna Virtual Care at, <https://hr.richmond.edu/benefits/insurance/medical-plans/virtual-care.html>. Details of the program follow: "With Cigna Virtual Care, get the care you need, including prescriptions, for a wide range of minor medical conditions for adults and children. Connect with a board-certified doctor when, where, and how it works best for you -- via video or phone -- without having to leave home or work. Cigna Virtual Care also provides behavioral and mental health appointments for adults age 18+ for many conditions, including stress, anxiety, depression and addiction. Schedule an online appointment through MDLIVE or AMWell on the "Find Care & Costs" page on myCigna.com. You can also call 800.274.7603 (non-Medicare customers) or 800.866.6534 (Medicare customers) to make an appointment." *This appeared in a Spiderbyte on March 11, 2020.*