

**January 2025
Web Submissions**

Idea/Question:

I am writing to urge you to consider incorporating multiple language options in the university's ordering machines and applications, as this change would significantly enhance accessibility and inclusivity for our diverse campus population.

Rationale/Reason:

I was using one of your touch-screen menus and noticed that UR workers could not access the menus as there are no language options. With a growing number of international individuals from various linguistic backgrounds, offering multiple languages would not only improve the user experience but also demonstrate the university's commitment to fostering an inclusive environment. Multiple language options could be provided in the following ways:

- **Language Selection Menu:** Before entering the ordering section, provide a language selection option, allowing users to choose their preferred language before they begin ordering.
- **Voice Recognition:** I am aware that individuals may not have the literacy skills to access text. Voice recognition may therefore be a useful option to include. This will also be key for individuals with visual impairments.

By providing these options, we can alleviate barriers that non-English speakers often face, ensuring they can fully engage with campus facilities and services without confusion or frustration.

This initiative would not only promote equitable access to resources but also strengthen the sense of community on campus, reflecting a true commitment to diversity that aligns with our university's values.

Upden is attending January training and can speak to this question.

Idea/Question

Can we have an option for health insurance or receive a stipend for health insurance for part-time workers (who work >1000 hours a year)?

Rationale /Reason

Other big companies/organizations offer health insurance.

I am afraid we are not able to offer this specific option. Employees that work 30+ hours a week are eligible for university benefits and we encourage our part time staff to apply for open full-time positions.

Idea/Question: In the last web submission report, HR said, "A recent benchmarking survey of peers within higher ed and non-higher ed shows that our overall time off benefits are competitive." Would they be willing to speak more about the details of this benchmarking survey? Did they compare both staff positions + professional/administrative

faculty positions? From an HR perspective, UR only has two categories: "staff" and "teaching faculty". We do not have that third category of "professional faculty." Certain positions at UR would be classified as some sort of "professional faculty" at other universities. The leave policies for those positions are often different from "staff." For example, the VCCS gives "professional faculty" 21 days off; VCU and William and Mary give 24 days off. Was this considered in the benchmarking survey? For the record, I'm not advocating we create that third category. I'm just wondering if HR realizes the time off benefits are not competitive for certain positions. (That said, huge thanks for the 2 floating holidays!)

Rationale/Reason I'd like to hear more about the benchmarking survey and how that was done.

As part of our benefits administration efforts, we regularly monitor developments in the benefits market. This involves working with our external benefit consultant and collaborating with peers at other institutions to understand their offerings. In 2023, we partnered with Mercer to conduct a comprehensive benchmarking survey.

The survey compared our benefits package to those offered by both higher education institutions and regional non-higher education organizations. However, it did not analyze benefits by specific job categories. The results were shared with the Benefits Committee, HR team, and senior leadership, who are involved in evaluating and reviewing our benefit offerings.

Overall, the data confirmed that our total benefits package is competitive. While some offerings exceed the market median and others fall slightly below, the overall value remains strong. One positive outcome of this survey was the introduction of two floating holidays.

We do not plan to broadly share the survey results, as interpreting them without a deeper understanding of benefits structures or the context provided by our consultants can be challenging. Instead, we share and work through this deeply analytic work with all members of the Benefits Committee who provide invaluable counsel as the University continuously works to shape its employee benefits package.

Idea/Question: I hope that HR and the upper administration have read the article in the Chronicle regarding supporting staff with life events https://www.chronicle.com/article/sick-and-still-on-the-job?utm_source=lterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=campaign_11967106_nl_Academe-Today_date_20241210

Rationale/Reason So much is left to supervisors at UR and there is a lot of uneven practice due to some supervisors who are more compassionate than others. HR's business

partners may or may not feel like a trusted contact for employees. For example, although it is appreciated that the bereavement leave has been increased, it seems ridiculous that folks who have lost immediate family members have 5 days to grieve, especially if they lose a child, partner or spouse. Five days is woefully inadequate not just to cope with the loss, but also to take care of all the legal and practical aspects of death. Having additional time for folks to take off later should be standard and not left to the whims of managers who may or may not understand or have compassion for someone who is working through a momentous loss. What if someone loses family members in an accident, do they get 5 days for all family members or one per family member - it leaves a lot of room for supervisors to make a judgement call with some being more compassionate than others. There also needs to be a policy where no retribution against the employee can be made (eg., lower annual % increase than others) b/c they took FMLA or bereavement leave. A point this article made that I think is particularly relevant is the following "Colleges need to temper a supervisor's absolute discretion on these matters. Workers may benefit by having additional voices involved beyond the immediate supervisor, and by having the chance to appeal built into the process. When trying to figure out the right support to offer someone facing hardship, it may be appropriate to take a team approach or, if available, bring in the expertise of an ombudsperson or disability-services professional to arrive at a solution."

We have passed this article along to upper administration. If you have a specific issue that you believe does not align with the university policy you should discuss this situation with your manager first. If you need further assistance, you should reach out to your HR Business Partner or HR directly if you would feel more comfortable.