Hurricane Florence

Date submitted: 9/12/18
Question: I'm wondering how the university decides that staff have to report to work when classes are cancelled, all events are cancelled (including faculty meetings), meaning that students and faculty are expected to stay safe and not attempt to travel to campus or remain on campus. I would understand if essential personnel had to stay, but for non-essential staff members, I'm curious why they have to remain on campus when everyone else is being given two days to prepare for and take extra precaution during the hurricane. It's upsetting to think that staff members are required to report to campus during threatening hurricane conditions when students and faculty are expected to take extra precaution.

Date submitted: 9/12/18
Question: Why the distinction between faculty & staff on the Cancellation email on 9/12/18? Staff are expected to report - but not faculty. Is one group more important? This perpetuates the clear distinction between the two. There is a long history of divide and I wonder if it's systemic. "Hey, there might be a storm powerful enough that we need to close the school. Staff, come on in. Take the risk and come to work even though we're closed. Faculty, don't worry on coming in ... we're closed and we don't want you to take the same risk."

This is one of those messages we could've done right. It's not like the wide gap in FMLA benefits or retiree benefits. It's a message and we could have unified the community in the face of pending danger. Why do we miss this every time?

Date submitted: 9/12/18
Question: Why is the University not closing tomorrow due to Hurricane Florence, or at least not requiring staff to report to work? I appreciate the University's effort to bring faculty and staff together and promote inclusion. However, when classes are cancelled and faculty are not required to report to campus, yet staff are, it sends a very different message. The campus wide email specifically states that staff are required follow a normal work schedule Thursday and Friday. However, with classes cancelled, the majority of faculty will not be required on campus. The University stated that this cancellation is due to the unpredictable nature of the storm and allows time to prepare for worsening conditions. This allowance is afforded to students and faculty, but not staff. I would urge administration to examine how this message is perceived about the value of staff in relation to faculty at this university.

Date submitted: 9/12/18
Question: So why is it that "All University staff are expected to report to campus according to a normal work schedule on Thursday, Sept. 13" yet Students AND Faculty don't have to? Is our safety and well-being not as important? Excuse my profanity but I call BS!!!! Staff are treated like second-class citizens next to Faculty & Students. It's time to revolt!!

Date submitted: 9/12/18
Question: Why no consideration of staff regarding university closure? Thank you to all the heroic essential personnel who are always on call in times of inclement weather. We truly appreciate you as you put the regard for the students above taking care of your own families. For this, I am truly grateful.

I have a comment about this messaging below in quotes from the message regarding closure of university classes on 9/13 and 9/14. It is perfectly understandable why staff are to report on Thursday as it is now evident no rain from Hurricane Florence will on this day. My objection to the messaging below is the apparent disregard for staff (not faculty as classes are cancelled) as the majority of staff must drive to campus to get work. Is flash flooding and downed trees not a concern for staff and only a worry for students and faculty? I just think the message was
poorly worded and insensitive to UR staff. Also, I believe the messaging should of included a huge thank you to essential staff who will be required to come to campus in possible dangerous conditions.

"We are urging any students who decide to leave campus for any reason to use an abundance of caution when traveling. Heavy rain can cause flooding on streets and in low-lying areas. Do not try to walk or drive through these areas." Thanks for listening.

Date submitted: 9/12/18
Question: I wanted to raise my concern about UR's cancellation of classes email dated 9/12/18 and how it perpetuates the treatment of staff as 2nd class citizens. While I understand that essential personnel are required to report to work as usual, I don't understand why non-essential personnel such as advisors like myself are required to work when there are no classes or events. The message this sends is that students and faculty will be given enough time to make adequate preparations for the storm, but not staff. Even though the Richmond area won't be affected until Friday, people need time to finish last minute shopping, tasks, etc. and the only window to do that now will be on Thursday after work when everyone else in Richmond is doing the same thing. I know there are other staff members who feel the same way. I hope future emergency preparedness decision making processes will take into account the safety of ALL UR community members equally and not be communicated in a way that once again prioritizes students and faculty over staff.

Date submitted: 9/13/18
Question: Why was the class cancellation made on Wednesday for this non-event storm? By cancelling classes and all events, I lose income as an hourly employee. This is an unnecessary hardship.

Date submitted: 9/13/18
Suggestion: I am writing to express my concerns about the Hurricane Florence email dated 09/13/2018. The subject line of the email might as well have been "The Safety of Some Populations at UR Matters More Than Others" when taken together with the class cancellation message of 09/12. The rationale of the decision to operate on a normal work schedule again prioritizes the safety of students with the resources to travel home for a few days over everyone else in the UR community. The addition of the word "faculty" to groups required to work a normal Friday schedule, the word "staff" to the safety priorities and the thank you sentence at the end seem like gratuitous attempts to be equitable, especially when it doesn't change the fact that staff are the only ones on campus today.

Response: I need to begin by saying what I wish were obvious to all — UR’s staff is valued, genuinely appreciated and everyone in leadership positions at the University cares very deeply about the safety and welfare of our staff.

Please know that during our deliberations about this week’s announcements we spent considerable time thinking-through and worrying about the impact of our decision on staff members.

When faced with these situations, the decision to cancel classes, close the university, and if necessary, evacuate the campus is not made without considering all within our campus community — Students, Staff, and Faculty.

This being said, we are a residential campus. We have the enormous responsibility of ensuring the safety of our students. So yes, our decisions in situations such as this, often must center first on how we most effectively care for our students. As such, we decided to provide our students the option to leave campus through the duration of the weekend.

As you know, we designate essential personnel when conditions, among other circumstances, make us concerned about the safety of travel to campus by our employees. At the time of our decision on Wednesday morning, we were reasonably confident (though not without worry given the unpredictability of Hurricanes) that conditions on Thursday would permit normal business operations, but we had concern about Friday through Sunday. With so many students on campus, we need the presence of all of our professionals and we did not want to leave such a responsibility only to our essential personnel, unless necessary.
It is important to remember that, while the contributions of all faculty and staff are important to the success of the University, faculty and staff have different roles and expectations. Since the University is open for everything but classes and events, all faculty and staff are expected to work Thursday and Friday. Many faculty will, in fact, be working on campus Thursday and Friday, but given the nature of their work, faculty are not assigned standardized work times.

In no way was our decision or message based on the notion that staff are less important than others on campus. I regret, however, that Wednesday’s announcement may have led some to feel that sentiment.

Circumstances such as this challenge all of us within the UR community and I appreciate the patience of all of our staff, faculty and students as we worked through a complicated week. Our concern remains for our friends, families, and colleagues who are in the path of the hurricane. (Dave Hale)

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**Miscellaneous**

**Date submitted: 9/17/18**

**Question:** Why when a staff member works on a holiday does their holiday worked hours not go towards overtime when if they didn't work the 8 hours those hours would be counted toward the 40 hours needed before receiving overtime? It is hard to get staff to work on a holiday for there is no real incentive. It is very hard to get staff to volunteer for holidays when they do not receive any other benefit then matching pay for hours worked.

**Response:** Sent to HR and waiting for response.

**Date submitted: 9/18/18**

**Question:** Why doesn’t UR have a modern swimming pool? We were sheltered by the pool during the storm. The pool is embarrassing considering the other university facilities. It also looks like the UR team is successful.

**Response:** While the pool facility itself is older than some other Recreation and Athletic Facilities, we have done a number of updates in order to ensure the pool function is up to par with today’s aquatic facilities and trends. Below are some of the updates that have been done over the past five years to ensure that we are making the best of an older facility.

- Perimeter Overflow System - the rusty intake grates have been replaced with brass which won’t rust.
- Main Drains – the covers to the main drains have been replaced brass and PVC with anti-suction devices.
- Deck Finish – the deck was re-tiled.
- Diving Equipment – the diving board stands were refinished and the boards were replaced.
- Starting Blocks – the starting blocks were replaced and moved to the deep end of the pool.
- Timing Equipment – the scoreboard was replaced.
- Piping – the majority of piping has been replaced with PVC.
- Pumps/Motors/Gauges – the recirculation pump was replaced along with a new hair and lint strainer
- Filtration System – all three filters have been replaced with Hi-Rate Sand Filters.
- Valves – all valves in the pool mechanical room have been replaced.
- Chemical Treatment System – the chlorine feeder was replaced and is augmented with a UV light system. Also, the controller was replaced.
- Interior Coatings – the finish on the block walls was redone.
- HVAC System – a new HVAC system is being installed during Winter 18-19.
- Lighting – the lights were replaced with an indirect pendent system.
- Acoustical Provisions – the acoustical ceiling was replaced.
- Spectator Seating – the spectator seating was replaced with an automated retractable system.
- Underwater Viewing Window – the underwater viewing window has been sealed so that it no longer leaks. (Marti Tomlin)
**Date submitted: 9/20/18**  
**Question:** Did the faculty have to take the Title 9/sexual harassment training that was required of the staff? I was told faculty were only recommended to take the training, not required.

**Response:** The training is in a pilot program this year with the faculty. The Director of Compliance and General Counsel will be reporting back to the Faculty Senate with the results of the pilot. Additionally, all new employees (faculty and staff) are required to take the in-person Title IX training within 60 days of hire. (Tracy Cassalia)

**Date submitted: 10/1/18**  
**Suggestion:** Would the University of Richmond consider offering a benefit of Student Loan forgiveness instead of free tuition to staff/dependents - i.e let staff choose between having free classes on campus OR assistance with student loan repayment. I don't want to take more classes, i just want to have less debt. Pay at UR is often less than standards elsewhere, but the benefits here make up for it. For single employees just starting out -- its impossible to think about taking more classes when you can barely pay your bills to begin with.

While the Tuition Remission benefits are amazing, student loans are a major issue for many people. I have considered skipping my employee match to pay them off. what about an employee match for loan payments or paying off interest or what not. Companies like Gradify offer this as an add on benefit to employees ... see this article [https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/26/your-money/student-loan-repayment-benefit.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/26/your-money/student-loan-repayment-benefit.html)

**Response:** Sent to HR and waiting for response.

**Date submitted: 10/5/18**  
**Suggestion:** I am curious whether HR has ever explored offering expanded leave benefits to UR staff? VCU provides 28 days to an employee in their first year that can be used for vacation or sick leave. W&M provides 24 days’ vacation to a new employee and 10 days for sick leave. Both also provide additional paid parental leave (3+ months for the mother and additional leave for the spouse) and offer options for paid caregiving leave. While I appreciate UR's benefits, they are more restrictive in being able to use your leave as needed.

**Response:** Sent to HR and waiting for response.

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**SpiderBytes**  
**Date submitted: 9/12/18**  
I would like to suggest bringing back Spiderbytes in email. I have missed important dates and colleagues also have expressed missing events. Students are reporting missing parking notices when lots close. Unless this costs money or time I cannot understand why we discontinued this? Please bring this back ASAP!

**Date submitted: 9/14/18**  
**Suggestion:** The fact that students are not reading spiderbytes in the new web format means that more staff time is being spent to notify students of events and deadlines. For example, we have now had to "table" in the commons as well as print out handbills to get information about upcoming deadlines. Contrary to UR Better, this is now causing more staff time, more money, and more resources (e.g., paper).

**Date submitted: 9/20/18**  
**Suggestion:** Bring Back Spiderbytes. I suggest that you bring back spiderbytes. This is the only easy way for students see what was happening on campus. Even if every single student didn't read them every day, they were still necessary. Please bring them back.

**Date submitted: 9/21/18**  
**Question:** Previous replies to concerns about the change to Spiderbytes. What is the average time on page the faculty/staff and students spiderbytes page? A website can be viewed a lot and receive a lot of traffic, but it does not matter if people are not sitting on the page and ready thru (and clicking thru). Events are being missed,
applications are not being filled out. Students, staff and faculty are missing out on opportunities because they are forgetting to check Spiderbytes, while an email in the past could have been deleted, it served as a prompt. There needs to be a way to subscribe at the very least. The best thing to do would be to bring back Spiderbytes and let people opt out of them. Website clicks are only good for communications and no other departments are reporting positive reactions to this removal. It is an embarrassment across campus that this equitable tool of campus-wide communications was obliterated in order to drive traffic to a website.

Date submitted: 9/26/18

Suggestion: We used to receive a lot more updates and interesting items from USAC. Now that Spiderbytes have not been that great, it would be great if someone in USAC could highlight various staff things on the USAC facebook page. Since the change, i feel much more disconnected to our campus, and less and less in the know. In fact- it feels isolating. I understand there’s a new webpage- but i feel like they made staying in the loop pretty inconvenient, and it appears that there are less interesting things on the page -- which tells me that the faith in spiderbytes has been lost. perhaps USAC could pick this torch up for Staff?

Response: In an email, dated 10/3/18, from University Communications, here is an update on the faculty/staff webpage analytics.

The faculty/staff webpage launched in October 2017 and continues to show strong and consistent growth, going from 3,500 pageviews in October/November 2017 to 9,500 pageviews in June/July 2018 to 21,356 pageviews in August/September 2018.

A month-to-month comparison shows the page continues to see massive increases in traffic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>July 2018 to August 2018</th>
<th>August 2018 to September 2018</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Pageviews: Up 91%</td>
<td>• Pageviews: Up 32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unique pageviews: Up 104%</td>
<td>• Unique pageviews: Up 38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Time on page: Up 10% (7:27)</td>
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|                          | • Entrance: Up 37% (This reflects the number of people who are entering the University’s web via this page — most likely because they’ve bookmarked it, made it their homepage, or typed in the URL manually.)

The page is currently the 2nd most visited page on richmond.edu when looking at internal traffic.

As we continue our awareness campaign, we expect usage figures to continue to increase. The awareness campaign will include an article/ad in the January issue of Spider Insider and a partnership with IS to make the webpage the landing page on University-assigned computers for faculty and staff prior to distribution.