UNIVERSITY STAFF ADVISORY COUNCIL
WEB SUBMISSIONS
December 13, 2022

The following web submissions were discussed during the closed session of the November USAC meeting and the USAC Executive team discussed them with Senior Leadership to develop the best responses possible.

Idea/Rationale: Our parental leave policies, (which are different for staff than for faculty) need to be reviewed, and should be changed for various reasons. Many other institutions and companies have recognized the need for a reasonable amount of parental leave, and we are behind the curve.

Here are the changes that should occur to the policies: 1) The policy requiring that staff couples must split the 8 weeks of provided leave should be removed 2) Staff members, particularly those who physically gave birth to a child, should be permitted to use earned sick time for their leave following their paid leave. This should be automatically available instead of having to spend time on the phone with NYL to try and get the necessary approval. 3) Overall, more than 8 weeks of leave should be provided, whether at full or partial pay. 5) Parental leave policies should be reviewed every five years, to ensure that they best serve our staff families.*

Response: Carl Sorenson, Senior Associate VP, Human Resources and Laura Dietrick, Director of Benefits & Compensation, were reached out to. Carl provided the following response:

When we implemented our parental leave policy in 2009, it was a model for liberal arts institutions like ours. Eight weeks of parental leave is still very competitive. We do acknowledge that after 13 years, and after reviewing the practices of some private and governmental entities we need to take a new look at the policy. We plan to discuss possible options to modify the University’s parental leave policies at the next university Benefits Committee meeting the week of December 12.

Idea/Rationale: I just came across this web page https://urwell.richmond.edu/creating-a-culture-of-well-being/exercise-is-medicine.html and note that if employees were actively encouraged (given paid time off each week) that health care costs would decrease and mental health would increase

I suggest concrete measures so that all FT employees have paid access to get active. Have designated time (2.5 hours per week, for example) of paid time (in addition to a 45 min lunch break) would encourage folks to work out, but all managers have to allow and encourage it. 45 min is not enough time to go exercise and not everyone has this flexibility (or managers who would allow it) so it needs to be a university policy across the board not just for the select few. Not everyone (especially those with kids or elder care) can come early or stay late to exercise. It is a struggle for many and UR could do better by pro-actively giving people time to do this - it would improve work/life balance tremendously.


USAC is not vested with binding authority, but serves to provide input and recommendations to the administration regarding staff interests and concerns as they bear upon the life and operation of the institution.
Response: Carl Sorenson, Senior Associate VP, Human Resources, Laura Dietrick, Director of Benefits & Compensation, and Heather Sadowski, Director of Health Promotion have been reached out to. Carl provided the following response:

We encourage managers to allow employees to adjust their schedules, if necessary and when possible to enable employees to attend to wellness goals. The University’s fitness center and well-being center are some of the best facilities in the greater Richmond area and the University provides free access for employees (and their families) to take advantage of all that is offered. This includes a robust and varied line-up of group fitness classes and access to health coaches and personal trainers who can help employees incorporate wellness activities into their daily routines. Our Employee Well-being site has valuable information as well.

Idea/Rationale: During the closed session of out November 8th meeting the question below was raised as a follow up to the following submission:

I am wondering if there has been any talk of a cost-of-living raise.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics says consumer prices rose 9.1% from June 2021 to June 2022. [https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2022/consumer-prices-up-9-1-percent-over-the-year-ended-june-2022-largest-increase-in-40-years.htm](https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2022/consumer-prices-up-9-1-percent-over-the-year-ended-june-2022-largest-increase-in-40-years.htm) and prices have continued to climb since June. The greatest possible annual salary increase is about 3%. I think that would mean that a top-performing employee has seen their purchasing power decrease by about 6% in the last year.

Are there any salary compression studies scheduled to be completed in the near future?

Members noted that compression studies that have already been done for the largest populations of staff on campus (Facilities and Dining Services) that fall into pay grades 1 – 6 and questioned whether or not similar studies will be done across the board for admins or others that fall into the same pay grades.

Response: Carl Sorenson, Senior Associate VP, Human Resources, David Hale, Executive VP & COO, Business Affairs, Jeffrey Legro, Executive VP & Provost, and the USAC Executive Committee discussed this during our last Senior Leadership Meeting. Carl provided the following response:

The University continues to address salary compression issues as they arise. We have been very responsive to market data and make salary adjustments throughout the year when we identify salaries that are not properly aligned.

Compression studies and adjustments are initiated by Human Resources, in consultation with VPs and department heads, in response to market wage pressures. When, as happened in 2021 and 2022, it is difficult to hire new employees at rates that are in line with current employees, we will adjust salaries of current employees to address the resulting compression in a single department. Sometimes, large groups of employees may be impacted by internal decisions, like they were when we increased of the minimum hourly rate. In those situations, we will do a study across multiple grades and positions to determine the appropriate compression adjustments.

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In USAC’s continued effort to advocate for inclusive language and conveying respect to people of all backgrounds, experiences, and identities, we have followed up with Human Resources to provide an update on the following submission received and discussed during our August 9th meeting.

**Idea/Rationale:** Can an audit of HR policies, forms, documents etc. be completed to ensure inclusive language is used? I have found that several websites and policies use binary gender language (his/her or him/her) instead of using a more inclusive singular “they”. Additionally, many forms do not have inclusive options for gender identification beyond binary genders. On a larger scale, perhaps this can be included as guidance from a larger communications/style guidelines approach.

**Original Response:** Carl Sorenson, Senior Associate VP of Human Resources was reached out to and provided the following response:

>This is something we plan to start as part of our overall HR website review this year.

**Follow Up Response:** Carl Sorenson, Senior Associate VP of Human Resources was reached out to and provided the following response:

>We are approximately 80% completed with this project. We have made changes to web pages and will search for items missed in the spring. We are also working on correcting the language in policies and are moving through those one by one. It is our goal to finish this by the end of the fiscal year.

**USAC will follow up with Human Resources before the end of the fiscal year to get a progress report on this effort.**

The following web submission was received before December 6, 2022 and discussed during the closed session of USAC’s meeting on December 13, 2022.

**Idea/Rationale:** SPCS had in the past offered youth enrichment classes such as PSAT, SAT and other types of college prep courses. Why have these courses be made unavailable and when will they resume?

**Response:** Jackson Knox, SPCS Non Credit Program Coordinator, was reached out to and provided the following response:

>Due to low enrollment, staffing changes, and the retirement of our key instructors, we have put our college prep courses on an indefinite hiatus. Plans are in place to hire a new Program Manager to help deal with our growing list of programs. If you know someone who would be a good tutor for our prep programs, let me know as well. We encourage you to send applicants our way. Also, please stress to the submitter that my door is open, they can email me, or call my extension.

>Alternatively, our online partners at Ed2Go just posted their 2023 courses which includes test prep, both instructor-led and self-starting. Links are below.


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https://www.ed2go.com/richmond-pro/online-courses/sat-practice-act-prep/

These non-credit courses are covered for dependent children. Information on the proper forms and where to send them can be found at the bottom of the Tuition Remission Policy.