

## UNIVERSITY STAFF ADVISORY COUNCIL WEB SUBMISSIONS

October 11, 2022

The below web submissions were received as part of the Q&A with Senior Leadership on September 13, 2022 and are being treated as web submissions due to the time constraints of the town hall.

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**Idea/Rationale:** Has the university considered offering an onsite childcare center? Local childcare centers have waitlists up to a yearlong and sometimes even beyond that. Finding childcare in the Richmond area is becoming extremely difficult.

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

**The University has explored the possibility of onsite child care at least twice in the past. Both studies revealed that the cost of providing the level of care acceptable to the university and its employees would make the care accessible only to higher paid employees and, that a waiting list would quickly develop given the limited number of spaces we would be able to make available.**

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**Idea/Rationale:** Can you provide background on the HR process, UR Engaged? How is naming new goals each year, even when you have been on campus for 15-30 years, helpful? Could HR provide resources to support long term employees in creating these goals?

**Response:** Carl Sorenson, *Senior Associate VP of Human Resources*, Theran Fisher, *Director of Talent & Organizational Effectiveness*, and Ashelle Brown, *Talent Development Consultant* were reached out to. Carl provided the following response:

**Goals articulate how you will take action on individual, departmental, and institutional priorities. Everybody is working on something and achieving results. Turn that work into a goal statement. They can be about more than your listed job duties. They can be about, stretch assignments, learning about other areas/tasks that you are not directly responsible for or professional development. They are a way to highlight your work and make sure your manager is aware of your efforts. If goals do not seem appropriate due to nature of work or extended time in position without growth, managers and employees can use competencies to identify areas of growth you or your manager would be interested in or benefit from.**

**For additional assistance, job aids and videos on the website for developing goals. Ashelle Brown offers a Performance Management workshop monthly as well. In addition, you may contact Theran or Ashelle directly for assistance**

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**Idea/Rationale:** Last year HR terminated Busch Gardens Day and the personal day off. Employees with less than nine years with the University were given two additional days of vacation in lieu of those days, while those with 9+ years with the University did not receive additional vacation days. Could you provide more information regarding why those days were removed for long-term employees without adding additional vacation days, while giving additional days off to newer employees?

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

**While we looked at all leave policies at the same time we looked at each category (sick, vacation, holiday separately). The university made the decision to increase the amount of vacation for new employees to be consistent among all employee groups. Most current employees have existing vacation balances that can now accumulate to twice the annual accrual. With regard to holidays, the University now guarantees 15 holidays each year. Prior to these changes the holiday schedule varied between 13 and 15 days per year depending on the calendar.**

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The below web submissions were received before October 4, 2022 and were addressed during the closed session of USAC's meeting on October 11, 2022.

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**Idea/Rationale:** UR staff are being asked to do more and more yet vacancies remain, some positions were eliminated and people are being asked to do more and yet our salaries are not keeping pace with inflation. With record numbers of students, higher expectations of staff service to students, and an endowment with a market figure of \$3.3 billion, why is there no cost of living increase for everyone? If people are working extra because of a vacancy or increased workload would it be possible to implement a compensation policy for this extra work they are expected to do until the position is filled - especially if it is a long vacancy? Also, why is there no universal policy of not contacting staff after hours or while on vacation (or if they are out sick) unless there is truly an emergency or crisis? The idea of work/life balance is a fallacy when there is no across the board policy that is adhered to by all units.

**Response:** David Hale, *Executive Vice President and COO* and Carl Sorenson, *Senior Associate VP of Human Resources* were reached out to. Dave provided the following response:

**Thank you for your note as we recognize that UR, along with every major employer in our economy, has struggled with employee departures. There is little question that turnover is challenging for our workplace, but the level of staff turnover has declined since last academic year and UR has been very successful in hiring many new and talented colleagues.**

UR has a long-standing [additional compensation policy](#). Supervisors may request additional compensation for employees who are performing work of a vacant position or taking on additional project related work. Supervisors should contact Tom Schram or Tommy Harvey in Human Resources to discuss these or similar situations that may support additional compensation for an employee.

Supervisors should limit contacting employees with work-related requests outside of their typical hours of work and/or if folks are on vacation or out of work due to illness. Non-exempt staff must be paid for all hours worked, even if those hours are outside the normal work schedule. If employees are asked to work when on vacation (which should only be requested in exceptional circumstances), those hours worked are not counted as vacation time. Employees who are out sick, should not be asked to work until they are well.

We also recognize that inflation is a major challenge in the global economy and for our staff, faculty and students. The University has been aggressive with increases to the permanent salary pool for employees with a 3.5% across-the-board increase effective March 1, 2021, and a 5.5% increase to the merit salary pool effective July 1, 2022. As a result, the compound average increase to the employee salary pool over the past 18 months totals 9.2%. Moreover, during that time we have increased the minimum wage paid to University staff from \$12.00 per hour to \$15.00 per hour and we have additionally addressed salary compression issues because of the minimum wage increase or other specific staff salary pressures that have emerged.

The writer also references the University's endowment, which is extraordinary and makes so many things possible for all of us as we work to pursue our educational mission. The endowment, however, is not available for discretionary spending. Gifts to the endowment are made by donors to benefit the University's mission in perpetuity. UR and all charitable organizations with endowments are obligated (both ethically and by law) to manage the endowment so that the purchasing power of the endowment pool is preserved and/or enhanced now and in the future. The annual payout from the endowment is a major source of the University budget, accounting for almost 40% of overall spending. The biggest expense in the budget is employee compensation (63% of overall annual expenditures).

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**Idea/Rationale:** There is no university policy prohibiting harassment that is not based on an individual's protected class. There is also no policy in the policy library that mentions or protects against bullying - at all. The university also fails to define hostile workplace. I am requesting that a policy be created to address these three things. Specifically, I think it's necessary that a bullying and harassment policy, in which a hostile workplace is defined, be written without the caveat of the abuse being based on the victim's status as belonging to a protected class.

Employee protections against bullying, harassment, and hostile workplaces should not be restricted only to those allegations which are based on protected statuses. It's possible for a man to be bullied by another man not on the basis of one belonging to a protected class, and the university should provide protections for the victim and a standard of conduct for the perpetrator.

**Response:** Kristine Henderson, *Director of Compliance and Title IX Coordinator* and Carl Sorenson, *Senior Associate VP of Human Resources* were reached out to. Carl provided the following response:

The University has a policy entitled ["Preventing and Responding to Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Involving Faculty and Staff."](#) In that policy, which is in the policy library, we define discrimination and harassment which, while not labeled as a definition of hostile work environment, does describe the conduct that would create a hostile work environment.

Our policies follow the legal outline for prohibited conduct and therefore define discrimination and harassment based on protected status.

However, this does not mean that inappropriate behavior is not addressed. Human Resources does address all inappropriate behavior, including bullying, whether it violates a specific policy or not. We encourage anyone who believes that they have been subject to harassment, discrimination or bullying to contact Human Resources or the Compliance Office.

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**Idea/Rationale:** As the University starts on its planning process around the President's Guiding Lights, I am wondering in what ways USAC will be part of those process.

As we go through the planning process, I know units on campus are thinking about ways of participating. USAC provides another route for staff priorities to be heard that comes outside of the unit structure but can speak to staffs' perspectives and needs.

**Response:** Dara Gocheski, *Chief of Staff for the President*, was reached out to so that we could craft a collaborative response with the President's Office. It is as follows:

USAC and the President's Office have multiple staff engagement events coming up. On Tuesday, October 25<sup>th</sup> from 12:00PM – 1:00 PM USAC will co-host, along with the help of a search firm, a staff open forum in conjunction with the Universities Provost Search Committee. This will be a great

opportunity to share thoughts and ideas related to the search for our new Provost, but also ideas that could be applicable to strategic planning.

On November 8<sup>th</sup>, during the USAC meeting, President Hallock will be present to solicit ideas from staff on the five guiding lights of Academic Excellence, Belonging, Access and Affordability, Well Being, and Experiential Learning and Community Engagement.

USAC appointed staff members also have a presence on the Planning & Priorities Committee (P&P) and President Hallock actively engages in strategic planning with P&P.

As well, the USAC goals for 2022-2023 are applicable to the President Hallock's Five Guiding Lights:

- 1) Strengthen community within USAC to promote a cohesive sense of connection, support and identity.
- 2) Raise campus awareness of USAC and its goals through further integration into preexisting university systems and structures and transparent communication.
- 3) Build a strong relationship with faculty through a renewed relationship with the Faculty Senate and other members of the UR faculty.
- 4) Provide accessible information and opportunities for engagement in campus DEIB initiatives to all members of UR staff.

These goals apply to key pieces of Academic Excellence, Belonging, Access and Affordability, Well Being, and Experiential Learning and Community Engagement. The staff that USAC represents and the community our work strives to support and connect are foundational to the multiple and varied environments on campus where our students and continued learners achieve excellence. At heart of what we do lives the ideas of Belonging, Well Being, and Community Engagement. By continually working to bridge the gap between staff and faculty into one University of Richmond, providing opportunities and information that keep our campus engaged, and listening to staff voices at every level we can further the mission and values of USAC and the University, while making ourselves more transparent and familiar.

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The following (2) web submissions are in relation to staff representation on decision making committees.

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**Idea/Rationale:** Why was there no call for volunteers for the search committee hiring the new Provost? Why did this end up with no staff representation below the Director level? Staff are constantly overlooked for this type of work, despite the fact that we are the largest portion of the university's employees. While the Provost is typically concerned primarily with faculty matters, those of us who were here in 2020 will recall how decisions on faculty matters directly affect staff, for example the push for in-person classes meant staff in "public-facing positions" had to be back to work sooner than many others here or in secondary education across the nation. Because faculty and staff work is intrinsically connected in these and other ways, staff should have a voice on this search committee. But instead, upper administration has once again completely ignored staff voices, not even asking for volunteers even though they would have just picked higher level staff from that list, as they have done in the past. Can the President, who said in his September 1 email that he would be forming this search committee, please explain why there is so little staff representation on the committee and none below the Director level?

**Idea/Rationale:** Why is there no staff representation below the Director level on the Name Removal Review Advisory Committee? The complete lack of involvement with staff at any level below director is a bad look. Staff are on campus year round and the vast majority of us work below the level that has representation on this committee. This comes off as upper administration disregarding staff voices. If we are supposed to believe that we are valued as a part of the community and not just as the anonymous labor that keeps the place running, we need a voice in important business such as this committee.

**Response:** Dara Gocheski, *President's Chief of Staff* and Meghan Wall, *Assistant to the President* were reached out to. Dara provided the following response:

**We recognize that neither of the committees referenced have members of staff below the Director level, but there is staff representation on both committees and there are opportunities for staff to provide input to both committees.**

- As indicated by President Hallock's Sept. 29 message, staff will have the opportunity to contribute input on the provost search at the Oct. 25 open forum (co-hosted with the USAC); through the [provostsearch@richmond.edu](mailto:provostsearch@richmond.edu) email address; and/or by completing the [survey](#) (which can be filled out anonymously).
- As indicated by President Hallock's Sept. 8 message, any member of the University community can submit a name removal review request for consideration [here](#).

Since he started at UR last year, President Hallock has met with various members of the campus community, including many staff. He will continue to seek out opportunities to connect with staff and solicit their ideas on how UR can continue to make progress. As indicated by President Hallock's Aug. 30 message, any member of the University community is welcome to [share ideas](#) via the Planning webpage (which can be done anonymously). And as always, any member of the University community is welcome to [contact President Hallock](#) with questions, concerns, and/or ideas (which can be done anonymously).