

UNIVERSITY STAFF ADVISORY COUNCIL WEB SUBMISSIONS

November 8, 2022

The following web submissions were received before November 1, 2022 and were addressed during the closed session of our meeting on November 8, 2022.

Idea/Rationale: Has HR re-evaluated flex-place work arrangements or will this be permanent at the University?

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

The University's flexible work arrangement policy has been in place since 2014. We reviewed the policy and updated the application process in 2021 as a response to the pandemic. We modified the policy slightly again this past summer providing tools to help managers make consistent decisions about flexible work requests. The [University Policy on Flexible Work Arrangements](#) provides all staff with a consistent process for requesting and reviewing alternative work schedules. These guidelines will support supervisors and employees in establishing these arrangements. You can find more information here [Flexible Work Arrangement - Human Resources - University of Richmond](#).

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:

***Following discussion during the closed session of the November USAC meeting, the USAC Executive team discussed this submission with Senior Leadership to develop the best response possible. This submission, along with the response will be included in the next round of USAC submissions in December.**

Idea/Rationale: 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> 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.

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

I will start with my 9/27/22 reply I provided to a previously submitted web-submission:

"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."

Beyond the 9/27/22 response, it is also important to recognize that keeping pace with CPI during periods of high inflation periods is a significant challenge for every employer. In higher education, some colleges may resort to higher tuition to help cover these costs. For the current academic year (2022-23), the University increased tuition by 3.0% and we anticipate additional measured tuition increases next year and beyond.

Net tuition revenue (that is, what we collect in tuition after subtracting financial aid) is a major source of annual resources for the University's operating budget. The 3.0% tuition increase does not compare favorably to the aforementioned 5.5% merit pool increase; the minimum wage increase; and salary compression adjustments, which are all part of the current year University Operating Budget. Fortunately, the endowment's support for the operating budget has been an important source of funds helping support the salary increases UR has implemented in the last decade, and the significant raises over the last two years.

Although we do consider a variety of market indicators (including cost of living measures), the University does not directly tie salary increases to changes in inflation. In fact, since the financial crisis in 2008, the average annual size of the salary increase for UR employees has been higher than inflation through the most recent fiscal year ending June 30, 2022. Of course, we recognize the current pressures experienced by our staff, faculty and students brought on by recent rates of inflation.

We deeply value the contributions of all staff and faculty, and we are fully cognizant of the need to be attentive to the merit salary pool when budgeting for 2023-24.

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 (esp 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.
<https://energym.io/blogs/news/why-should-companies-allow-employees-to-exercise-during-working-hours> and <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alankohll/2019/01/09/why-we-pay-our-employees-to-exercise-at-work/?sh=6bb2908028d2>

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.

***USAC, Senior Leadership, and those who were reached out to are still developing the best possible response. This submission, along with the response will be included in the next round of USAC submissions in December.**