**University Staff Council - A Presidential Committee**Submitted by: Justin Wilkes, University Staff Council President

**Report to the Board of Visitors
November 2021**

1. **2021-2022 USC Objectives:**

The USC adopted five goals during the 2020-2021 academic year. During our August meeting, the council elected to carry forward the same objectives into the new academic year and will reevaluate the need for expansion of these goals in the event that new challenges outside of the purview of these objectives present themselves in the coming months. The 2021-2022 USC objectives are to:

* 1. Work with administration to help them better understand the basis for staff concerns and give more perspective.
	2. Work more collaboratively with faculty and the UFC to provide a united front on matters of shared concern.
	3. Continue efforts to increase communication to staff about a variety of matters and information across campus.
	4. Continue to work on trying to create less disparity between the perceived value of staff versus the faculty.
	5. Continue to encourage transparency and urgency in communication from the administration, to the most possible extent, as related to university matters that may impact individuals’ work functions, morale, and the overall state of the UMW community.
1. **Member Spotlights**:

The University Staff Council (USC) is devoted to being an essential voice for university staff through joint efforts and involvement in various capacities across the campus community. Some USC highlights for the months of September-November include:

* 1. USC representative Arin Doerfler was appointed to the UMW Police Community Advisory Panel (CAP)
	2. USC member Brian Ogle will serve on the reactivated President’s Council on Sustainability
	3. USC member Maureen Aylward was promoted to Associate Director of Advancement Services in October
	4. Justina Jones, UMW’s Student Employment Coordinator, is USC’s Excellent Eagle Employee of the Month for November
	5. Alicia Tisdale (i.e., Ass. Director, Financial Aid) has been elected to serve as the staff representative on the VP of Advancement Search Committee
1. **Accomplishments & Happenings:**
	1. The “Stop Hunger Food Drive” co-hosted by UMW Dining, USC, and UMW Athletics collected 10,000 pounds of food! Additionally, 1,500 pounds of food was purchased for the UMW Eagle Resource Closet. Over 8,400 pounds of food went to the Fredericksburg Regional Food Bank.
		1. In partnership with UMW Dining and other University partners, the USC will support the newly launched "Swipe Out Hunger" meal plan drive with 3,600 meals donated to the plan by Sodexo.  The plan is being administered by Chris Porter, Director of Transfer and Off-Campus Student Services.  Students can apply for meals via an online Google form. USC will support this cause by helping spread the word about the program across campus and individually direct students who may benefit from the service to apply.
	2. Beginning in the month of November, the USC will partner with HR to welcome new employees to our campus community with a welcome note, information about the USC and what we do, and with UMW swag that has been donated from various campus partners.
	3. The Activities Committee is currently working on an employee spirit week for the month of December to celebrate the successful completion of the Fall 2021 semester (i.e., December 13th-17th).
		1. Monday—Holiday Hat
		2. Tuesday—Holiday Mask
		3. Wednesday—Holiday shirt or sweater
		4. Thursday—Holiday pants and/or socks
		5. Friday—The entire holiday outfit
			1. We will plan a meeting place and time for interested parties to join for a photo somewhere outdoors on-campus
			2. Each day, departments/individuals will be encouraged to send photos to the USC to be displayed on our social media outlets
2. **Current Matters of Concern**:

The University Staff Council (USC) fields numerous anonymous and direct inquiries from various university staff regarding matters that impact the everyday work life of UMW employees. The USC regularly communicates to the Cabinet all matters brought forth to the Council. The most recent inquiries are:

* 1. Impact of staff shortages in some University departments
		1. Concern of increased duties with no change in compensation
			1. President Paino explained that there is a process to request modification of EWP to be considered for an in-band adjustment to wages
		2. Morale of seemingly overworked employees
			1. Some recommendations brought forth by members of the staff include:
				1. Campus-wide fall and spring break in the future (or more flexibility in campus wide telework when students are not present on campus)

Using leave is not the same as campus being closed (e.g., the hardship of playing catch up when you return)

* + - * 1. Part-time staff having some of their budgeted time be converted into some sick leave
				2. More trust and open-mindedness from supervisors and Cabinet members to approve of telework agreement requests if an employee has already displayed during the last year and a half that they can effectively complete duties remotely (i.e., one to two days a week)

Based on those who have spoken up about this issue, this request seems to come from two places:

Unevenness of approval across the campus employees who have and have not been granted an alternate work schedule/telework agreement

Unclear about who’s making the final decision: supervisor or Cabinet member. It would help to have this articulated in terms of who has the final say.

* 1. Effect on individual departments in relation to the decline in student enrollment (e.g., filling vacancies, restructuring of offices)
		1. Some anonymous entries have written to the council expressing that they have several high-need vacancies in their department that they have not received approval to fill
	2. Wage disparity in relation to the cost of living in Fredericksburg / Northern Virginia region
		1. Many staff have expressed that they do not feel that their salaries align with the cost of living in the area, particularly as related to what similar positions are paid at neighboring universities
		2. Effect on UMW employee wages might there be in relation to increase in Virginia minimum wage
	3. Future of Work at UMW
		1. How results of recent survey conducted by the Future of Work Planning Group will impact:
			1. Opportunities for ongoing telework for staff and faculty
			2. Opportunities for more online/hybrid modalities of instruction and business services at the University
			3. Consistency of supervisor actions campus wide for employees in relation to flexibility in modality of work space and schedules
				1. Employees are asking for transparency as much as possible in as the future of the University is being planned out