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# Facilities Management Employee Council Minutes

Thursday, June 22, 2023

## Attendance:

**Council members:** Christine Alencar, Jon Bruneau, Randy Campbell, Eric Cline, George Dorman, Tabitha Ford, Les Givens, Ashley Grooms, Michael Minor, Chelsea Reynolds, J.R. Richardson and A.J. Young.

**Absent**: Corey Poole and Bonita White.

**Guests:** Jane Centofante, Lori Pedersen and Don Sundgren.

## Agenda:

1. Welcome new council members & recognition of council members leaving
2. Special guest – Don Sundgren, Associate Vice President & Chief Facilities Officer
3. Staff Senate elections
4. Co-chair elections
5. Goals and planning for 2023-2024

## 1. Welcome new council members & recognition of council members leaving

**Christine Alencar**

* Employee Council mission statement: “To foster communication among Facilities Management employees and provide a forum for workplace-related concerns with the intent of improving the working conditions of UVA Facilities Management.”
* Serve as a resource for employees to research solutions to problems or issues.
* During the 2022–2023 year, Council members, Senators and Co-chairs included:
	+ Council Members: A.J. Young, Christine Alencar, Corey Poole, Chelsea Reynolds, Eric Cline, Ashley Grooms, Les Givens, Jon Bruneau, Bonita White, Michael Minor, J.R. Richardson, and Randy Campbell.
	+ Co-chaired by Ashley Grooms and Christine Alencar.
	+ Senate representation from A.J. Young, Les Givens, Randy Campbell, Michael Minor, Christine Alencar, and Jon Bruneau.
* A year in review
	+ Employee Council met with eight directors across Facilities Management.
	+ Topics explored: health benefits and mental health wellness; safety; what diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) means to the UVA community; the new FM Sustainability Plan; traffic safety on Grounds; uniforms; education benefits; and other Staff Senate initiatives.
	+ Participated / volunteered with the Employee Appreciation Lunch with new Employee Council T-shirts.
	+ Continued thanks to Employee Council supporters: Lori Pedersen, Jane Centofante and Elsa Burnette/Sarah McComb.
* New members and members leaving
	+ New members
		- Tabitha Ford, senior custodian with E&G Custodial Services Central Zone, represents E&G Custodial Services and replaces Bonita White’s seat.
		- George Dorman, senior heat plant operator at the Main Heat Plant, represents the Energy & Utilities teams (Chiller Plants, Heat Plants, Power & Light, Utilities, Utilities Management and Metering) and replaces A.J. Young’s seat.
	+ Members leaving
		- A.J. Young will be rolling off the council after serving for many years, Bonita White will also roll off.
		- The Employee Council updated its bylaws in recent years to require council members who have served two consecutive terms to take a minimum of a one-year absence from the council before running again. This allows for new members with fresh ideas and input, also recognizing employees may need a regular break from the time commitment required when serving on the council.

## 2. Special guest – Don Sundgren, Associate Vice President & Chief Facilities Officer

**Don Sundgren**

* When I first started here 17 years ago, one of the groups I interviewed with was the Employee Council at the time.
* The council has gone on somewhat of a roller coaster ride since then – there were thoughts of discontinuing the council at one time, but now I think it’s in a good place.
* Any time we have a diverse group of people come together and talk with one another and work things out with one another, I think that it’s a good thing.
* I read the minutes of the meetings and I think it’s helpful to share what has been discussed and review issues that come up.
* I’m glad to come to meetings any time I’m needed, and I have an open-door policy if anyone would like to meet with me.
* I’ve noted this before but the most important thing we have is our people. It’s been a few years now since the start of the pandemic, but how FM stepped up to continue operations during that time was phenomenal. President Ryan still comments on what a fantastic job FM did.
* We’ve had some challenging incidents recently and it’s a reminder that our people are out there every day doing a great job in all kinds of conditions.
* The opportunity for Employee Council to get together and talk together is a positive thing.
* I hope you make the most out of your time together and provide the most value you can for the FM employees you represent.

**Les Givens**

* I wanted to ask a question about parking and whether the idea about FM/UVA covering the cost of parking for employees has been brought to your attention.
* Another idea that was mentioned by Mark Webb was a suggestion to the have Commerce School students to study/evaluate how FM can fulfill financial obligations to Parking and Transportation without as much of a burden on employees.

**Don Sundgren**

* I have had conversations in the past with the prior head of the Office of Business Services which oversees Parking and Transportation about considering the ability to pay as part of the criteria when charging for parking permits. This could allow those with lower compensation to pay less than those with higher compensation.
* At the time that idea was not pursued, but there is currently a transition in leadership for both the head of the Office of Business Services and Parking and Transportation so this might be a good time to bring the idea up again.
* I also agree it could be a good idea for the Commerce School to do a project, they could consider what other schools are doing.

**J.R. Richardson –**

* There is an existing supplemental credit on paychecks to help offset the cost of certain paycheck deductions such as parking for those making under $42,000 a year.

*Information provided after the meeting by UVA Human Resources clarified that the* [*Supplemental Benefit Credit program*](https://hr.virginia.edu/benefits/benefit-savings-accounts/supplemental-benefit-credit) *referred to is a UVA Human Resources program and not directly associated with Parking and Transportation. The Supplemental Benefit Credit is for employees making $42,000 or less and the amount of $550 is awarded to offset benefit charges. Only University Staff employees are eligible.*

**Michael Minor**

* How much you can pay also determines where you can park. For some of my team members, they have to park very far away from where they work.

**Don Sundgren**

* Parking is a big issue for FM and also for nurses as well. UVA Health is putting a lot of pressure on the University to address the parking issue.
* We will be building a new parking garage at Fontaine Research Park and a new one across from John Paul Jones Arena.
* I’m not sure those will fully address the issue and it’s something the University is continuing to look at and work on.

## 3. Staff Senate elections

* Council members voted for the following council members to fill the four open seats on the Staff Senate: Chelsea Reynolds and George Dorman (new terms) and Les Givens and Michael Minor (re-elected). Council is following up with Staff Senate to confirm exact term dates.
* Jon Bruneau and Randy Campbell will continue to serve in their existing terms.
* Nominations and voting tally:
	+ Les Givens: 12 votes.
	+ Chelsea Reynolds: 9 votes.
	+ Michael Minor: 8 votes.
	+ George Dorman: 7 votes.
	+ J.R. Richardson: 6 votes.
	+ Ashley Grooms: 6 votes.

## 4. Co-chairs elections

* Christine Alencar and Ashley Grooms were re-elected as co-chairs of the Employee Council, no other nominations received.

## 5. Goals and planning for 2023–2024

**A.J. Young**

* I wanted to bring up the recent Staff Senate Health Benefits survey – I’m wondering if council members completed the survey and had conversations with their constituents to encourage participation. I’ve been told that FM had low participation.
* There are bids going out to possibly consider a new health plan so one of the goals of the survey was to help inform those decisions.

*Council members discussed various ways the survey was shared with FM employees, including via email on a few different occasions and during a toolbox talk with the Landscape team. Some feedback mentioned that the questions were difficult to answer and required knowledge of current benefit choices and spending on healthcare and individuals may not have had that information in order to answer the survey questions.*

**Christine Alencar**

* Council will take a break in the summer and the next meeting will be participating in [One Small Step](https://onesmallstep.virginia.edu/) in late August. This is a program hosted by the UVA Karsh Institute of Democracy, intended to support conversations between individuals from different backgrounds. It’s more about supporting curiosity rather than persuasion.
* The council’s next regularly scheduled meeting will be in September.
* Some future guests to consider include continuing the rotation through hosting all of FM’s Directors and once again hosting FM DEI Specialist Emily Douglas.

**Jon Bruneau**

* I suggest a UVA HR Ombudsman to discuss health benefits.

**Les Givens**

* I would recommend Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer John Kosky.
* I’d like to ask him about the three-day bereavement policy. I don’t believe it is enough time, especially if someone experiences major trauma. I have had multiple employees who have reached out to me because they have dealt with a homicide or suicide situation and don’t feel it’s enough time to be ready to return to work.
* When I reached out to FEAP, they recommended that an employee in this situation consider applying for short term disability.

**Christine Alencar**

* If we wanted to bring this up as an issue at FM specifically, it would be good to have any data or statistics that indicate that FM is more affected by these types of traumatic deaths than other groups. There are statistics about the high rate of suicide in the construction industry. I suggest we reach out to UVA HR to see if they have any data about whether FM is using the bereavement leave more often than other groups.
* I suggest that our Staff Senators bring up the issue of a bereavement leave extension to the Staff Senate in the fall.

**Randy Campbell**

* Supervisors may be able to use administrative leave with pay for extenuating circumstances.

*Information provided after the meeting by UVA Human Resources stated the following: When dealing with loss, we all grieve differently and the three days recently provided to employees demonstrates the University's commitment to the health and wellbeing of our employees. Staff additionally have access to benefits such as short-term disability/FMLA or usage of University Staff leave in addition to the days provided by the University. We can share the feedback with the leave administrators.*

**Michael Minor**

* On separate topic, I am receiving some questions from employees about why certain employees are able to take extended time off if traveling to another country, while typically extended leave is not allowed. It is not clear to me how it’s determined whether one is allowed to do that or not allowed to do it.

**J.R. Richardson**

* In Landscape, this has come up before and I believe there was some HR involvement if over 2-3 weeks of leave was requested.

**Randy Campbell**

* I believe each team addresses this differently, in our group we follow the guideline that a supervisor can approve up to 1 week of leave; a manager is required to approve up to 2 weeks of leave and a director has to approve leave time that is longer than that.

*Information provided after the meeting by UVA Human Resources stated the following: Reasons for travel differ. HR is happy to consult with supervisors/managers on these requests, but these requests must be in writing from the employee and the final decision lies with the department's business need.*

***The Facilities Management Employee Council’s next regularly meeting is Thursday, Sept. 14, 2023, from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. in the Leake Building, upper-level conference room.***