EMPLOYEE RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
April 17, 2014
Fortwood Room, University Center

Members attending: Donna Adams, Teri Bearbower, Pam Blevins, Pat Boyer, Sue Carroll, Jennifer Faires, Valerah Hodges, John Johnson, June Knowles, Anna Lane, Debbie Mirra, Frankie Roeser, Roberta Thurmond, Baley Whary, Cindy Williams.

Others in attendance: Dan Webb, Director, Human Resources; Melanie Sadler, Administrative Specialist.

Call to Order: Ms Hodges called the meeting to order.

Minutes: A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the March 20 meeting.

Guest: Dr. Deborah Arfken, Director, University Planning

Eighteen months of planning resulted in the development of the 2008-2013 Strategic Plan, which encompassed 4 major partnerships, 28 goals, and over 100 metrics. The plan may be viewed online at http://www.utc.edu/strategic-plan/strategic-planning.php

During the past 6 years, UTC has seen a 17% increase in enrollment from 9,958 to 11,674 and a 37% increase in the number of degrees awarded. Freshmen retention from fall to spring and freshmen to sophomore year increased by 6.5% to 69%. The Disability Resource Center, which serves students with learning needs, saw an increase from 383 students to 1,209.

Think Achieve, a quality enhancement program, was enacted and focuses on critical thinking during Orientation, in the classroom, and through service activities. The number of online courses increased 685% from 27 in the base year to 212 courses offered now. Online courses are offered as part of a degree or an entire degree may be taken online. At least 25% of undergraduates are taking some online or hybrid course and the number of students who graduate solely from an online program is not large but growing. Graduate programs that may be taken online include Nursing, Physical Therapy, Education, and Engineering Management.

Approximately $18 million in cost avoidance is attributed to reduced energy and water consumption from the base year to last fall. With over 2,000 trees and woody shrubs from 60 species, UTC received designation as a state-certified arboretum. A climate action plan has been developed to move the university towards carbon neutrality by the year 2050.
Renovations to the campus included Bretske, Guerry, Metro, Grote, and the ADPi house that now houses ROTC. New construction projects include Chamberlain Pavilion, library and auditorium, and Aquatic and Recreation Center.

The Master Plan, a blueprint for what UTC will look like in 10-15 years, will determine where new housing will be built as the campus continues to expand. Initial plans are before the state planning commission this month with a goal to open additional housing in Fall, 2017.

While good progress was made in retention, Dr. Arfken said the university is not where it wants to be but there wasn’t anything they didn’t tackle. Talks are ongoing with a company to assist the university in branding, but despite the lack of branding the university has had significant success. UTC was named as a Best Value in 2013 by U.S. News and World Report and received 2 Carnegie classifications as a community engaged institution. Robert Fisher, SGA President, was recently awarded the prestigious Truman Award.

Dr. Arfken said the Strategic Plan is not about being successful but about attaining significance. The plan should align to the budget and as the process continues, Chancellor Angle wants UTC to be known for student success and a quality education, and community outreach and partnerships. An inventory partnership was completed this past fall and cited over 600 partnerships with a $30 million impact on the community.

**Guest: Kathy Taylor, Benefits Specialist**

UTC and the UT system have a 30% participation rate in the Sick Leave Bank. Staff and 12-month faculty may join by completing an enrollment form and returning to Human Resources by June 30, requiring a donation of 24 hours from a balance of 48 hours on June 30. Enrollment becomes effective July 1. A recently produced video about SLB membership may be found on the HR website.

The Sick Leave Bank provides emergency sick leave due to personal illness or injury and to those who have exhausted their personal, sick, comp, and annual leave. A request is made for sick leave hours with medical documentation from the employee’s physician, which is then reviewed by the Bank’s Trustees who have signed confidentiality agreements.

Human Resources cannot solicit donations from employees but if the member broaches the subject upon termination or retirement, then a discussion may take place; however, there must be a need to donate hours.

An employee can receive donated sick leave hours from co-workers.
upon approval by the Trustees but only employees who are members of the bank can receive donated hours. The minimum number of donated hours from any one employee is 80.

Ms Taylor reminded members that unused sick leave upon retirement is converted to service time for TCRS participants. ORP participants may have their sick leave converted to service time to take advantage of lower health insurance premiums, which is divided into 3 tiers: 15-19 years; 20-29 years; 30+ years.

New providers have been added to the list of approved providers for Worker's Compensation, which can be found at http://www.utc.edu/human-resources/workers-compensation.php

**Guest: Kendra Biggs, HR Generalist**

Family Medical Leave (FML) guarantees that, when an employee must be absent from their job for any of various conditions covered by the FMLA (Family and Medical Leave Act), the employee can return to their same position (or, under certain circumstances, another position but at same pay and benefits). Additionally, the FMLA insures that the employee’s health insurance premium does not go up during the period of covered FML. FML provides up to 12 weeks or 480 hours of leave during a 12-month period due to an adoption, childbirth, illness or injury. It also covers absences required to care for a sick or injured dependent family member. Leave may be taken intermittently or as a reduced work schedule. FML runs concurrently with paid or unpaid leave. Federal law also allows up to 26 weeks to care for a seriously injured service member.

To be eligible for FML, an employee must have worked for 12 months and completed 1,250 work hours over the 12 month period preceding the start of the FML. Departments should contact Human Resources if they have an employee expected to be out more than 10 work days. If on unpaid leave, the employee would be responsible to arrange with HR to pay for his/her portion of insurance.

**Guest: Chuck Cantrell**

The governor’s budget does not include pay increases for state employees but Mr. Cantrell said the university is looking at doing something at the campus level. It will be lean year but priorities will be funded, instead of budget cuts, as allocations shift.

A traditional style housing unit will be built on the site of the tennis courts, which will be relocated to Engel Stadium. Two commencement ceremonies will be held in May and there are some changes to the academic calendar.
The governor’s proposal of free tuition, to state residents who attend a 2-year college, was passed in Nashville today. Mr. Cantrell said he did not think it would affect students on Hope need or Hope merit scholarships. The cost difference between attending a 2-year college versus UTC is about 3 times.

Fee waivers provide a reduction in maintenance fees for employees or dependents attending a UT system school. However, TN Board of Regents Schools offers a discount on all fees. UTC now assesses differential tuition to students enrolled in Nursing, Engineering, or Business courses.

Mr. Cantrell said he believes the intent of the policy, written before course fees were passed, was to cover all fees. He said he would support this idea to the Executive Team. Ms Hodges said a request was made at the last ERAB meeting requesting a true discount in fees. Maintenance fees alone cost $2,600/semester and $3,377 to includes all fees.

**Guests: Miles Ledford and Marc Holcomb**

Mr. Holcomb, Admissions, previously worked at Kennesaw State where they hosted “Owl (campus mascot) Olympics” each spring with field games. In an effort to extend the camaraderie of the campus picnic, scheduled for August 8, he and Mr. Ledford have pitched the idea of faculty/staff field games.

An ESC subcommittee, representative from Human Resources and Disability Resource Center will meet with Ms Denniston and Ms Forrest to discuss. ERC members interested in volunteering should contact Mr. Ledford or Mr. Holcomb.

Members said they were concerned with hosting games in August but the idea is to get started with the picnic. The committee is viewing holding games outside and in the gym.

Mr. Ledford told members that summer hours are expanding and will be open 6 am to 8 pm. Faculty and staff may select a Turns membership for $10.

**Other Issues**

Mr. Webb said Compensation Module 3 would be presented to ERC and ESC members on April 28 at 2:00 in the Signal Mountain Room, University Center.

**Adjournment**

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn.

**Next Meeting**
The ERC will meet May 15 at 2:00.

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Sadler
Administrative Specialist, Human Resources