EMPLOYEE RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
Thursday, April 20, 2017
Fortwood Room, University Center

Members attending: Vickie Adkison, Terri Bearbower, Pam Blevins, Sheila Cagle, Merrium Carver, Heather Heinlein, Donnie Hodge, Anne Jay, Anna Lane, Kathy Lindsey, Marion Perkins, Joanna Stephanos, Sharon Thomas, Roberta Thurmond, Jean Walston.

Others in attendance: Laure Pou, Executive Director, Human Resources; Melanie Sadler, Administrative Specialist, Human Resources.

Call to Order: A motion was made and seconded to call the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes: A motion was made and seconded to approve minutes of the March 16th meeting.


Guest: Dr. Joanne Romagni, Vice Chancellor for Research & Dean of the Graduate School

Trained as a lichenologist, Dr. Romagni came to UTC two years ago after serving as Associate Vice President for Research at DePaul University. When asked what challenges she has faced at UTC, she said the culture of the school, which may be in part because UTC is part of a system and she previously served at private institutions. Dr. Romagni said she sees her role to be more of a facilitator and less of an obstacle.

As the first Vice Chancellor for Research, Dr. Romagni oversees matters ranging from scientific to supporting faculty to become creative with limited funding and obtaining external grants. their course of study. She also oversees the Graduate School and Sim Center, teaches classes, and has a small research program for students in Spain.

Bengt Carlson is building a culture among faculty who work with undergraduate students to encourage students to get excited about their field of study. As Associate Dean of the Graduate School, Dr. Ethan Carver, ensures that students are meeting standards. UTC is working to increase the number of graduate students and build a sense of community within them. While the GSA (Graduate Student Association) is very active and visible, Dr. Romagni would like to offer activities that are geared toward the professional side and not just social activities. This year a separate commencement ceremony was held for graduate students.

Guest: Kathy Taylor, Benefits Specialist, Office of Human Resources

The annual sick leave bank enrollment period is April 1st through June 30th. To join, employees must donate 24 hours and have 48 hours in their sick leave balance as of June 30th. Sick leave bank hours may be requested by members for a serious illness or injury after the member has exhausted all of his/her sick and annual leave. Co-workers may donate sick leave hours to an employee if there is a need but the employee receiving hours must be a member of the sick leave
A member asked the percentage of employees taking advantage of the sick leave bank and Ms Taylor said she did not know but could be answered by Ms Biggs, Human Resources.

Family and Medical Leave (FML) entitles eligible employees to take unpaid leave for certain family and medical reasons. Any regular or temporary employee who has been employed for at least 12 months, and has at least 1,250 hours of service during the previous 12-month period is eligible for FML. Employees may take up to 26 weeks of leave during the 12-month period and can also be taken sporadically. Employees with chronic illnesses may sign up each year for FML as long as they submit medical documentation.

For employees on FML and approaching unpaid leave, he/she should contact Ms Biggs or Ms Taylor to discuss continuing benefits with lower insurance premiums. Employees who have exhausted their FML entitlement period must pay the full amount of health insurance premiums.

**Employee Relations Advisory Board Meeting**

Ms Lane attended the ERAB meeting in Knoxville and among the topics of discussion were outsourcing of facilities and no across-the-board increases this year. Increases will be market and/or merit and Ms Lane said this would be an especially hard hit for some nonexempt employees. Dr. DiPietro, who was at the meeting, said he wishes to move forward with equity/market adjustments until a time that there is a 5% pool available to include across-the-board increases.

Ms Lane encouraged members to keep track of what they do on a daily basis so these items would be included in their staff performance & development review (SPDR). While employees cannot control how they are evaluated, they can control the accomplishments they include in their SPDR.

ERAB members also discussed the need for training for staff on ‘how to sell yourself’ and training for supervisors in how to conduct an evaluation. Members also felt that the timing of the announcement regarding the lack of across-the-board increases should have been announced prior to the deadline for SPDRs. Members asked Dr. DiPietro to make supervisory training mandatory throughout the system as performance reviews would affect an employee’s chance of obtaining a raise, and he seemed to take it under advisement, per Ms Lane.

Ms Pou said the SPDR contains a supervisory addendum for positions that have responsibility for supervising others. Last fall, there was talk on the UTC campus of how to provide training for employees and supervisors. System-wide, compensation training was delivered on each campus and institute 4 years ago. Human Resources met with Academic Affairs to collaborate on rolling out training as the concepts are the same for those who manage faculty and staff. Sessions will be offered mid-year on coaching, feedback, and the performance review process and HR hopes to offer sessions regularly. In the past, each campus had discretion of how to handle raises.

Ms Pou said the purpose of the ERC and ESC is that concerns and issues of those they represent are discussed. While the chancellor had shared in a previous ESC meeting that a 3% pool would include an across-the-board increase, the UT Board of Trustees has changed the direction of the increases.

It is unknown if there will be enough money for everyone to receive merit and may look different for each campus and institute. Human Resources has been doing benchmarking data with Sibson consultants and meeting with deans and
administrators about concerns with particular areas for compression and recruitment. Two years ago, the campus moved to a minimum salary of $10.10/hour. Increases this year will prioritize market, compression, and equity and across-the-board increase would only perpetuate those issues. After those issues are resolved, remaining funds would be dedicated to merit. Ms Pou said Dr. Brown is supportive of required management training as the university must remain proactive and offer tools and resources.

Administrative Professionals Luncheon

Ms Lane said 38 are registered for Monday’s Administrative Professionals’ Luncheon. Employees may attend and need not be accompanied by their supervisor.

Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn.

Next Meeting

The ERC will meet April 20th in the Fortwood Room, University Center.

Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Sadler
Administrative Specialist, Human Resources