**EMPLOYEE RELATIONS COUNCIL MEETING**  
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga  
**Thursday, July 18, 2019**  
Fortwood Room, University Center

**Members attending:** Anne Jay, Melita Rector, Shirley Hatfield, Debbie Giles, Anna Lane, Sharon Thomas, Vickie Adkinson, Jennifer Faires

**Others in attendance:** Todd Dockery, Director of Compensation & Benefits, Human Resources; Julie Brown, Manager of Employee Relations, Human Resources; Janice Michaels, HR/OEI Assistant, Human Resources

**Call to order:** Ms. Lane called the meeting to order.

**Minutes:** The minutes for the June 2019 meeting were submitted and approved electronically with no changes needed.

**Blue Ribbon Award:** Melissa Laseter & Shirl Gholston, Student Support Services, were the co-recipient of the Chancellor’s Blue Ribbon Award for May 2019. Terri Bearbower, Research & Special Programs, was the recipient of the Chancellor’s Blue Ribbon Award for June 2019.

**Guest Speaker: Dr. Yancy Freeman, Vice Chancellor, Division of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs**

Dr. Freeman has been with UTC for 25 years. In January 2019, he was tasked with merging the Divisions of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs into one division. In line with the mission of UTC and the UT System, Student Success became his mission for the newly merged division.

He has set 5 goals for the division
- Increase enrollment from 11,688 to 13,800 – 15,000 students.
- Increase First Year Retention from 74% to 80%
- Increase Persistence – Help students reach 30, 60 & 90 hours
- Increase Graduation numbers from 43% to 50% - 60%
- Closing Achievement Gaps – Helping underrepresented & 1st generation students

**UT Promise** – New grant program where any student straight out of high school with less than $50,000/year income can attend any UT School maintenance free

**Counting Courses** – Federal regulation that states financial aid will not pay for any courses that are not degree applicable

**Student Program & Services Fee** – students no longer have access to nor control what programs are on the campus. Policy now states that money can no longer be given directly to student organizations for programs without the approval of the VC of Student Affairs.

**Guest: Laura Cagle, Director of University Events, Office of the Chancellor**

Annual Faculty & Staff Appreciation (Moc Games) will be on Monday, September 9th from 11:30 to 1:30 in the ARC. This will again be part of Founder’s Week which is September 9-13. Anna Lane will serve as the ERC rep on the Planning Committee.

Committee members gave feedback on the Summer Pop-Up parties. They agreed that the publicity and emails leading up to the event were entertaining and engaging. Having the
events during the summer was a good idea since most staff have down time and it was nice to have a break. It was also suggested that they have one during the morning hours rather than afternoon for those employees that leave earlier.

**Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program (VRIP)**

Mr. Dockery shared that the UT Board of Trustees voted recently to approve a 2020 UTC Voluntary Retirement Incentive Plan (VRIP). The 2020 UTC VRIP will be open to employees who meet the following eligibility criteria as of June 30, 2020:

1. Eligible for either Service Retirement or Early Retirement under the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (T CRS) or the Joint Contributory Retirement System (JCRS-A) with at least 20 years of service

   OR

2. A participant in the Optional Retirement Program (ORP) with at least 20 years of service.

The incentive includes a lump sum payment based on 50 percent of the employee’s annualized salary (not including any administrative or other stipend amounts) in effect on June 30, 2020. The payout will be taxed at 22%.

Additional communications will come over the next few months to provide information on the VRIP process, and dates and times for informational sessions that will be provided on campus. Additionally, employees who may be eligible for the 2020 UTC Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program will receive a separate individual email from Human Resources to approximately 180 employees in August with more specific details and an application form. The expected deadline for submitting a completed application for participation in the 2020 UTC Voluntary Retirement Incentive Plan is October 15, 2019.

Supervisors will be informed by December 31st about the employees that will be taking advantage of VRIP.

**2% Market-Competitive Cost-of-Living Increase**

The UT Board of Trustees met on June 21 and approved a 2.0% compensation funding pool for the new fiscal year beginning July 1. The 2.0% funding pool will provide market-based cost-of-living increases to the base salary for all eligible faculty and staff members with satisfactory performance.

A minimum $800.00 increase will be provided for any employees with a base annual salary of less than $40,000.00. Those with a base annual salary at or above $40,000.00 will receive a 2.0% increase to their base annual salary.

The 2.0% increases will be entered in IRIS in August. Each increase will be back-dated to July 1, 2019 for 12-month faculty and non-flex-year staff. Flex-year staff and 9-month faculty will have an increase effective date of August 1, 2019.

**Agenda Items Submitted for ERAB Meeting**

Anna Lane submitted the following agenda items to be presented at the ERAB meeting on July 30th:

- Several non-exempt staff have asked why professional staff receive 16 hours of annual leave per month at the start of their employment while non-exempt staff receive 8 hours of annual leave per month and it takes 20 years of service to reach the 16 hours per
month. Usually when this is discussed the answer is “professional staff have to work until the job is done even if it is more than 40 hours/week and they can’t receive overtime”. While that is certainly true, there are many cases of professional staff that never have to work more than 40 hours/week but still receive the benefit of the higher annual leave allocation. Can a more detailed answer be provided and how the incremental accrual rate for non-exempt staff was determined?

- Annual review can be a stressful time for many particularly when it comes to the 1-5 scoring of the key elements of one’s job duties. Reports from many non-exempt staff indicate there is not a uniform process for evaluating staff. Many supervisors refuse to score anyone more than a “3” for any given element. Some supervisors score all their staff “5s” across the board. And while the evaluation review is not intended to be a “got cha moment” many staff report the individual meeting with their supervisor has been the first time a problem has been mentioned and it is stated in the evaluation as an issue. Given the recent trend of merit funds being available to reward deserving staff and the fact the overall scores of one’s evaluation can determine if one makes the cut for consideration of merit raises, what plans, if any, are there to implement mandatory training for any director, department head, dean, etc. responsible for evaluating staff and can an attempt be made to implement a process so all supervisors are scoring their staff uniformly?

- Parking is always a hot button issue on any college campus. At UTC faculty and staff pay $231 annually for a general lot and $369 annually for a reserved spot. Students the same rates for general and reserved as staff. Assuming a student graduates in five years they have paid $1,155 or $1,845 for parking. Every year you have new students starting the cycle over again. However, for UTC employees they continue to pay for parking every year of their employment. A 10 year employee will have paid $2,310 or $3,690 over the 10 years of their employment, a 15 year employee $3,465 or $5,535 and a 20 year employee $4,620 or $7,380 and that assumes no increases to the parking rates. While it would be unrealistic (though it would be most welcome) to request free parking for faculty and staff, could there be tiered pricing where 1-5 years of service full price, 5-10 years of service a percent reduction, 10-15 years of service a greater percent reduction and so on? This would be a way to reward long term staff and add a bit more to their paycheck each month. For many of our non-exempt staff every dollar counts.

Next Meeting

The ERC will meet September 19th in the UC Fortwood Room

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned

Respectfully submitted,

Janice Michaels
HR/OEI Assistant