EMPLOYEE RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
March 19, 2015
Fortwood Room, University Center

Members attending: Terri Bearbower, Pam Blevins, Pat Boyer, Sue Carroll, Jennifer Faires, Adam Groves, Valerah Hodges, Anne Jay, John Johnson, Kellie Karaky, Anna Lane, Debbie Mirra, Jack Pitkin, Melita Rector, Julia Romeo, Sue Stephens, Roberta Thurmond, Jean Walston, Bale Whary, Cindy Williams.

Others in attendance: Lori Lynn Baier, representing UT Foundation; Chuck Cantrell, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Marketing & Communication; Terry Denniston, Chief of Staff, Office of the Chancellor; Laura Cagle, Coordinator of Programs & Events, Office of the Chancellor; Dan Webb, Director, Human Resources; Melanie Sadler, Administrative Specialist, Human Resources.

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

Minutes: A motion was made and seconded to approve minutes of the January 15, 2015 meeting.

Guest: Dr. Steve Angle, Chancellor

Elected officials must have confidence in the university if they are going to support UT and higher education and taxpayers and students must see the university as good stewards of funding. A study, that did not include salary issues, completed by Butch Peccolo has projected the university would run out of money in 10 years if tuition increases 3% per year. The deficit for UTC was projected at $25 million.

System-wide campuses were asked to look at rebalancing. A goal of 4.75% reduction called for aligning resources and expenditures to ensure the university is structured to do business in a more efficient and effective manner and also provides the opportunity to structure the university for future growth. Dr. Angle said there were no predetermined decisions but rather maintaining a focus on students and viewing different solutions than we would have otherwise. All vice chancellors, deans, and Academic Affairs have met to discuss their budget.

Some programs have experienced a chronic deficit using one-time funds while some activities will receive some permanent dollars. Program review is underway to view programs that are low performing or there is not a need to offer the program anymore. Ways to be entrepreneurial and use technology differently will be examined. Dr. Angle also spoke of the need for community involvement to view different ways of thinking.
UTC was the top performing university in the state last year according to CCTA metrics and could possibly receive full funding of the formula this year. Five years ago, UTC was near the bottom and the groundwork was laid to address the problem before Dr. Angle arrived. The impact of the Tennessee Promise is not known and if enrollment dips by a few 100 students, Dr. Angle thinks the impact could be minimal. Chattanooga State has already signed up 3,000 freshmen, twice the normal enrollment and may push increased funding for community colleges. Enrollment for UTC was decreased by 80 from the previous year despite an increase in freshmen enrollment.

The UPRAC committee has been involved in the budget process and a budget town hall meeting is scheduled March 20th. Some recommendations will be easy to implement and Dr. Angle hopes to have an ongoing dialogue. The Strategic Plan is nearing finalization and will be presented to Dr. DiPietro before going to the Board of Trustees in June.

Dr. Angle has met with the General Education Committee and Education Academic Standards Committee to discuss online instruction. UTC will remain a brick and mortar institution while offering several online programs, which are among the best in the country. Those programs include an RN to BSN, Criminal Justice, Engineering, and Master of Business Administration. Another discussion involves the formation of a School of Performing Arts, which could help with the budget but more importantly aid in fundraising and leverage resources. Campus wide there are discussions about wellness and he cited the Interior Design department as begin very involved in the discussions. Construction will probably begin summer, 2016 on the old library with $8 million in matching funds from the UC Foundation.

System-wide a budget advisory group, comprised of Dr. Angle and Chancellor Cheek and trustees, is viewing tenure at other universities - is tenure necessary, what should it look like in the future, and how do we hold folks accountable in the post-tenure review.

Seventy-seven employees have expressed an interest in the VRIP (Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program), which came out of discussions with some faculty who expressed interested in retiring. It was decided to offer the program campus-wide and set a soft target of 100. The program most likely will not be offer again.

An open meeting is scheduled next week for a presented by Dr. Richard Brown, CAB (Compensation and Advisory Board) Chair, and survey results from ModernThink. Results will be compared to the 2011 survey, which had identical questions.

The state funds salary increases at $.45 cents on the dollar for university employees and the university is looking at what could be built into the budget. Several states have discontinued tuition benefits for employees, among them California, but Tennessee continues to offer this well deserved benefit. Dr. Angle said he has not
received any word from President DiPietro about changes to tuition benefits and longevity pay.

Housing contracts are down somewhat and the university pulls in students from Hamilton County and the next largest groups of students from Memphis. Approximately 92% of students are Hope scholarship eligible. Metrics for transfer students has been up although slightly down for freshmen. Dr. Angle said we have an incredible opportunity to shape the society of the future through not only knowledge and content but values. In an effort to celebrate the individuality of the campus, Dr. Angle said he asked President DiPietro for the Power C on business cards instead of an orange logo. He urged members to use the ERC and Ms Hodges to bring issues to his attention to address.

Guest: Chuck Cantrell, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Marketing & Communication

New letterhead logo will include a new affiliation statement, eliminating “metropolitan”. Members were asked to select a design and statement from among several samples that were narrowed from 18 to 4 by the Executive Team. Mr. Cantrell is seeking input from various constituent groups and a decision could be made by April 1st. Envelopes and business cards designs will match.

Guest: Laura Cagle, Coordinator of Programs & Events, Office of the Chancellor

Clean & Green, a River City Co. program for the past 5 years, assigns teams to projects in the downtown area and surrounding neighborhoods, which range from graffiti removal, painting, and trash removal. This year’s event is April 25 and UTC will have a designated registration table with check in at 8:00. Staff and faculty are welcome to bring family and friends to join and offices may participate as a team. A special UTC t-shirt will be given to participants who may select a neighborhood or RiverCity could assign one. Work should conclude by 11:00 or noon. Contact Laura Cagle at extension 4203 or email Laura-Cagle@utc.edu. Ms Denniston asked ERC members to make contacts to encourage participation in the event.

VRIP

Mr. Webb said employees eligible for the VRIP (Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program) should have received an email notification earlier in the month. Information sessions have been presented for the past few weeks. While the VRIP is expected to produce vacancies that might be some movement for staff, the university does not want to eliminate people but positions may be eliminated.

Employee Relations Advisory Board meeting

Ms Hodges attended the ERAB meeting. Among the items discussed were health coaching - what cost savings benefits are being realized,
complaints that coaches did not make scheduled calls; request for 37.5 hour work week - would require a pay reduction; proposed insurance changes - would not be enacted until 2016. A member asked if health coaching could be done during work hours and Mr. Webb said it is possible if the office setup allows it, as it does not violate any policy. Official minutes will be forwarded to members when Ms Hodges receives them.

Other Issues

Some members had concerns that UPRAC has recommended eliminating some administrative support positions, adding to the workload of remaining staff members. Another concern was that positions vacated by staff who are retiring could not be filled until the end of the 6-months. (VRIP agreement provides for 6-month salary upon retirement.) Mr. Webb said there may be some one-time funds to hire another person or rehire the retiree.

There was discussion that Ms Hodges share a statement of concern with the chancellor. A motion was made and seconded to elect a 4-person committee plus Ms Hodges to draft a proposal for review by ERC members to make comments and approve. Committee members include Ms Lane, Ms Thurmond, Ms Boyer, and Ms Jay. Members should email their concerns to Ms Hodges by Monday. Another member stated that we are a service organization that takes care of our students and our customers.

A request was made to hold meetings on the 3rd Thursday of the month and not deviate from the schedule.

A member announced that she had heard the state has made a proclamation to include Veterans’ Day as a holiday and higher education institutions are to observe it by closing. Mr. Webb said he had not received any such notice.

Ms Hodges said Administrative Professionals’ Day would be marked with a luncheon, as in years past, on April 22 from 11:30 – 1:30 pm. An email will be sent announcing the event. A member shared a concern that several nonexempt employees in her area were not allowed to attend the Administrative Professionals’ event last May because there position is not secretarial. Ms Hodges will ask Ms Pou for a listing of nonexempt staff classified as administrative support.

Next Meeting

The ERC will meet April 16, 2015.

Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,
Melanie Sadler
Administrative Specialist