EMPLOYEE RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
Heritage Room, University Center
Thursday, November 15, 2018

Members attending: Vicki Adkison, Pam Blevins, Deanna Cameron, Sue Carroll, Melissa Cate, Andrea Evans, Jennifer Faires, Samantha Freeman, Debbie Giles, Shirley Hatfield, Heather Heinlein, Anne Jay, Anna Lane, Laura Perryman, Melita Rector, Jared Story, Mark Stotts, Sharon Thomas, Jean Walston, Sarah Wetherill.

Others in attendance: Rosite Delgado, Director, Equity & Inclusion; Melanie Sadler, Administrative Specialist, Human Resources.

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

Minutes: A motion was made and seconded to approve minutes of the October 18th meeting.

Blue Ribbon Award: Wayne Etherton, Arena, is the recipient for August, 2018.

Guest: Abeer Mustafa, Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

Ms Mustafa said her main focus has been on Housing, but her job also includes budget and assessment, since coming to UTC four months ago. Capital projects of $2.1 million on the South campus and $2.5 million on the North campus are ongoing and the university has a total of 3,600 beds. Ms Mustafa said tours can be given of West campus. During the spring semester, the building will house a smart classroom, which can be split in half, where classes will be held Monday through Friday, 8 am to 5 pm. The building also encompasses space for student engagement.

Ideas being implemented include new programming in Housing; expansion of LLC (living learning communities); new residential hall by fall 2019 for Entrepreneurial LLC, hosted by the College of Business; renovations and repurposing of space. Staffing includes hiring of an academic initiative coordinator, business conference staff, marketing staff, coordinators for each building, and six to eight Facilities staff.

Students, population, demographics, and needs of students have changed through the years. Ms Mustafa said there is a ‘wish list’ of items that will be completed during December so students will see a change when they return from the break, such as Mocs Nest. Working with campus partners, architects, Facilities, the goal is to have two - one at Boling and one at Stopheal Apartments completed over the winter break.

A member asked about initiatives at a previous institution Ms. Mustafa served at, that could be implemented at UTC. She said her first job was at Rice (University) where students lived in the same dorm for four years and statistics showed a retention rate of 94-98%. From the second to third year, there was a decrease in students of 36%. Reasons include 55% other, 25% academic, 20% financial.

The Sophomore Experience with have a soft launch for targeted sophomores with a 2.0 or lower GPA that are struggling. With small cohorts, students will learn about resources and how to get back on track. The rewards for the sophomore experience include creating a contract when talking with students.
Ms Mustafa said a discernment dinner, whose idea came from a Notre Dame colleague, was implemented at the four campuses she’s been at and at UTC recently. Six randomly picked students and a faculty member, who is not one of their instructors, shared a table and students found that the image they have of faculty is not what they thought.

Though the event ended at 8 pm, many lingered after dinner and over time, dinners have led to students declaring majors. Students have told Ms. Mustafa that they want to do dinner again but she said new students will be invited first. Every student reached out to faculty and talked to them and faculty encouraged students to come see them. A survey was released Friday with 95% of students completing it and another survey will be done in the spring to track retention to see what happened to those students.

Ms. Mustafa said low-hanging fruit in Housing will be tackled first and high-hanging fruit is a new building. After adding 600 beds to the campus, housing is still full. For any student on any campus, public and private, retention and GPA and graduation rates are higher when students live on campus. Stacy Town Center is occupied with housing offices and Ms Mustafa would like students to enjoy the space. For now, Decosimo and Guerry Buildings are their common space. Meetings are held every Friday for housing facilities personnel with 33 projects lined up and ready to go.

Ms. Mustafa said she has never been on a campus where “Students are First” and that attracted her to UTC. She said it is exciting to see the sign in every department. She said she hasn’t been out much in Chattanooga as she recently passed comps and is finishing her dissertation.

Diversity Advisory Council Discussion

Ms Delgado said Ms Mustafa is a success story in recruitment. UT has a system-wide DAC (Diversity Advisory Council, chaired by Dr. Noma Anderson, who was the keynote speaker at the recent Moc Forward Conference. System DAC is comprised of representatives from each campus. UTC’s DAC is co-chaired by Ms. Delgado and Dr. Valerie Rutledge with representatives from each college to provide feedback and develop initiatives to move the needle on campus for diversity and inclusion.

Overarching goals from system DAC includes goals to target faculty, staff, students and climate. Campus DAC representatives are meeting with constituent group such as the ESC, Faculty Senate, SGA, Graduate Students’ Association to provide an opportunity to review and provide feedback.

Ms Delgado asked members what were their thoughts and ideas in terms of diversity, inclusion, and equity on campus. System-wide DAC subcommittees worked together to discuss what goals could be. A member said many times there is a push for professional development for faculty but unfortunately, staff do not receive the same focus.

Ms Delgado asked if there is an opportunity for career advancement and a member said only if the university gets behind advancement of staff. There might be an opportunity with new job families and job descriptions to implement this. Many times, staff will try to advance but are told the department doesn’t have the money or additional duties fall under “other duties as assigned”. For years, many have wondered how do employees advance from one pay grade to another and in many cases job descriptions provided by Knoxville (system website) contain a one or two-word difference. This would be the perfect opportunity to show we
believe in advancement and will work towards a timeline and plan for staff to receive career advancement.

Ms Delgado asked members what needs to be done in terms of training to help employees do their job better and stay in their current job. A member said when IRIS was implemented, there were learning labs and “super users” identified. It would be great if the university would hire someone whose full time job is to provide a learning lab for administrators and supervisors to learn IRIS. IRIS is a valuable tool but you don’t know what you don’t know. It is disheartening when seeing announcements of IRIS classes held in Knoxville.

Ms Sadler told members that Virginia Moore teaches a 2-hour session of IRIS Overview for new hires that is heavy on budgets and ledgers. A member said Ms Moore is willing to teach individuals or administrative support in colleges.

Other members said MS Office training would be beneficial and another member said there isn’t enough time and interruptions prohibit virtual training through K@TE. Proof of attendance is now required when requesting credit for training hours and Ms Sadler said an email confirming registration or attendance would suffice as proof.

Another member said they would like to have STAR Achievement, Level III, presented on campus so the cohort that completed Level I and Level II could finish. STAR was developed by Joan Burge who began her career as an administrative assistant and worked her way up the corporate ladder to become CEO. Conferences are offered in San Francisco yearly at $5,000 but there is also an online version at $2,000. Professional development leave should be the same for staff as faculty.

A member commented that a fund for staff for professional development would be nice in case the department doesn’t have the budget for this. Ms Sadler said the Career Development Fund was established for nonexempt staff. Typically, this fund has been used to partially reimburse staff who pass the CAP exam. A member said her department provided monies last summer for her to attend a conference. Another said they would like to see university funding each year for training.

Ms Delgado said setting expectations on both side shows that an employee would take advantage of training opportunities and your supervisor supports this. She said her department has funding for diversity and inclusion that faculty can tap into through Academic Affairs and the goal is for staff training to come from her office. She wants the campus to know the process for requesting training funds for staff, both nonexempt and exempt.

Ms Delgado asked if there were any gaps as a campus that we can fill. A member said training in how to diffuse or interact expanding beyond the student population. Ms Delgado said Green Zone and Safe Zone training are available for faculty and staff. Another said the problem is the people who need the training never come to training.

Ms Delgado said training must include inclusive excellence topics, adding that the Moc Forward conference should not be one-off but the goal is to provide training on a regular basis. When members were asked of other types of training that should be provided, a response was given that employees could select their Moc Forward classes, adding that some classes should be mandatory. Ms Delgado said it is difficult to make training mandatory due to the consequences. Title
IX training had a 90% response rate. The idea is to have a training culture at
the university and opportunities for everyone to advance and improve.

Training is offered at UT Knoxville called STRIDE anti-bias training. UTC will
have pilot training at our campus. This training is to help employees recognize
conscious and unconscious biases and how they factor into the recruitment
process.

Ms Delgado said Dr. Deardorff would be rolling out a series of talks that will
provide an opportunity with diversity of ideas. Another important piece is
intention and impact. Someone may not set out to offend another but that doesn’t
mean an impact wasn’t felt.

Network and Learn

The next Network and Learn is November 29th @ 2:30 in the Chickamauga Room.
Nicholle Harrison and Sara Harper, Human Resources, are working to revamp
Network and Learn with a theme for 2019. A survey will be coming out soon to
give suggestions and ideas, what keeps you from attending, and what would it
take to get you to attend. Ms Rector urged members to take the survey that will
aid in getting training that folks need and want.

Holiday Open House

The holiday open house will be November 27th. In the past, separate parties were
held for governing groups, such as the ERC, ESC, Faculty Senate, and Council of
Academic Department Heads. As attendance has dwindled, there will be one party
this year and feedback will be solicited afterwards. Ms Lane said there will be
something special to recognize the governing groups.

Smoking Cessation Policy

Ms Sadler told members that the university has adopted a smoke-free campus as
of January 1, 2019. Dr. Karissa Peyer, who co-chairs the smoke-free campaign
with Carol Oglesby, will be the guest speaker at the next ERC meeting. Members
wanted to know how the policy would be enforced and Ms Sadler said Ms Pou would
be able to discuss at the meeting.

Position Changes for ERC Members

Ms Lane congratulated Sharon Thomas, who has assumed a new position in the
Chancellor’s office, and Melita Rector, who has moved to a position in Budget
and Finance. Ms Delgado said we need to make sure we communicate all internal
positions.

Next Meeting

The ERC will meet not meet in December. The next meeting is January 17, 2019.

Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Melanie Sadler
Administrative Specialist, Human Resources