EXEMPT STAFF COUNCIL MEETING
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
April 16, 2014
Fortwood Room, University Center

Representatives and Alternates present: Debbie Bell, Cindy Carroll, Jean Dake, Amy Davis, Bruce Hilbert, Deborah Hyde, Tonia Martin, Virginia Moore, Stephanie Orr, Julie Russ, Barbara Webb.

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

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

Approval of Minutes: A motion was made and seconded to approve minutes of the March 19th meeting.

Guest: Dr. Linda Frost, Dean of Honors College

Robert Fisher, SGA president, has been selected as a Truman Scholar and will receive up to $30,000 to attend any graduate school he chooses. He is the 4th recipient in UTC’s history. Sixty students were selected nationwide from 900 applications and 200 finalists. The Truman Scholar ranks among other prestigious awards that include the Rhodes, Marshall, and Goldwater.

Truman Scholars are nominated by their home institutions that are limited to 2 nominations each. The application process includes 13 separate essays, letters of recommendation, and interviews. Dr. Frost said the university has encouraged other students to apply for national awards and is hosting a luncheon for all students who were nominated by the university. Fifteen students recently presented at the Southern Regional Honors Conference.

Many town hall meetings have been held and the Honors planning committee has formed a vision statement. Architectural plans will be available for viewing as plans call to renovate Guerry Center to become the Honors College.

Students will be recruited for the Brock Scholars program to grow slowly to 300-400 students over time in order to keep scholarships competitive. A strong core 4-year program will be at the center to attract and retain students. Brock Scholars have a 95% retention rate at UTC and a 93% six-year graduation rate with students who have a second or third major. Many of these students come to UTC have taken dual enrollment or AP classes.

Current Brock Scholars students take classes to fulfill GenEd requirements but by fall, 2015 this should change. Approval is needed by should give flexibility to those enrolling with AP credits. Dr. Frost said she has spoken with Provost Ainsworth about the budget in terms of releasing faculty to be included in the semester for courses
they teach.

An office for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity will be established, under the auspices of the Honors College. A director will be hired who has credentials to teach but is not necessarily interested in tenure. The office would serve as a liaison to all departments that conduct undergraduate research and creative activity. A national undergraduate research journal could be published and Dr. Frost said undergraduate research is a powerful retention tool. She has spoken with Dr. Belanger who started 2 similar programs elsewhere.

A shorter track for students to have an Honors experience is being developed. A 12-hour experience would include 2 course sequence ‘bridge labs’ where students work in a group with a community partner to solve a real-world problem. The Benwood Foundation is excited about this partnership and students would be recruited to gain professional experience with networking experience.

Dr. Frost said she hopes Honors will grow to 1,200 students with 600-800 over the next 6 years. After the fall semester, 100 students did not return because they didn’t connect or didn’t know what they wanted to major in. Housing is working with Honors to establish living learning communities.

Brock Scholars offer an international trip every year and Dean Dooley would like to include an international piece with the College of Business. Recruiting international students is a challenge and the university will need to develop a model for international recruiting.

In closing, Dr. Frost said an Honors College is good for students, staff, faculty, donors, and the community.

**Guest: Kathy Taylor, Benefits Specialist**

Staff and 12-month faculty may join the Sick Leave Bank (SLB) 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 and Ms Taylor will notify those by late July or early August that he/she is now a member of the SLB.

The SLB 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. Ms Taylor reminded members that Long Term Disability has a 4-month waiting period.

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
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. For ORP participants, sick leave can be 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.

Former employee Suzie Weber was filmed for the UT website discussing her use of the SLB. This year, Ann Mayer was filmed for an SLB video that can be found on HR’s website. Members suggested that Ms Taylor send emails to employees who are not members of the SLB to encourage enrollment. Ms Carroll will include an article in the next newsletter. The benefits statement does not include a notation when an employee is a member of the SLB. Ms Dake will send a request to system to add this.

**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.

**Employee Relations Advisory Board meeting**

Employees taking classes at UT schools are assessed a differential fee if enrolled in Nursing, Business, or Engineering. Maintenance fees are the only fees that are waived. Members said they felt a discount on
all fees (for dependents) would help address retention and graduation rates.

Ms Dake said a question was asked at the ERAB meeting concerning departments willing to pay the differential fees for their employee. The response was that such a request would need to go before the Board of Trustees.

**Compensation Training**

Compensation Module 3 will be presented April 28 at 2:00 in the Signal Mountain Room for ERC and ESC members.

**Faculty/Staff Field Games**

Ms Martin said she and others who volunteered to explore faculty/staff field games following the picnic would meet with the Chancellor’s office. The Disability Resource Center is involved in the discussions to assist with accessibility issues. The ARC will sponsor a family night at the pool.

**ESC Elections and Retreat**

Ballots will be counted and phone calls placed next week to those elected to the ESC. The retreat for outgoing and incoming members will be held May 14 at 11:00 in the Chickamauga Room.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Sadler
Administrative Specialist, Human Resources