EXEMPT STAFF COUNCIL MEETING
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
April 15, 2015
Fortwood Room, University Center

Representatives and Alternates present: Nicole Brown, Cindy Carroll, Jean Dake, Lisa Darger, Amy Davis, Christine Estoye, Bruce Hilbert, Deborah Hyde, Jeff Rector, Julie Russ, Chris Sherbesman, Carling Wilson.

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

Call to order: Mr. Rector called the meeting to order.

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

Guest: Dr. Steve Angle, Chancellor

The state’s budget is improving which means the funding formula will be funded this year and the governor hopes to offer a 2% pay increase. Tuition will not be raised beyond the inflation index of 2.5% and Dr. DiPietro has called for a 6% reallocation over the next 2 years. When UPRAC delivered their recommendation to the chancellor, he met with department heads and vice chancellors to discuss the recommendations. The chancellor said it was better for the university to identify reallocations versus an outside firm’s proposals.

The UTC campus has obtained approval from the UT Board of Directors for a Voluntary Retirement Incentive Plan (VRIP). Two-thirds of those who have expressed interest in the plan are staff members. Vacancies created by the VRIP will provide the campus with opportunities to reallocate faculty and staff positions to meet strategic objectives. It is anticipated these vacancies will create career advancement opportunities in many areas across campus.

A member asked Dr. Angle for his plan and vision for Facilities and Operations moving forward. He replied that almost every vacancy created by retirements in that operation will need to be replaced. The Chancellor also expressed concern about the depth in Human Resources.

The Chancellor mentioned that there has been some controversy surrounding the formation of a School of Performing Arts or School of Fine Arts from the merger of Music, Theatre and Speech, and possibly Art and Southeast Center. Administrative merger of these departments into a larger umbrella entity would offer some cost savings, but could also enhance opportunities to partner with the community thereby increasing income and endowments potential.

Other mergers include Criminal Justice with Sociology, Languages with Philosophy & Religion, and Physics with Chemistry. Economics will move
to the College of Business and STEM will move to the College of Health, Education, and Professional Studies. Dr. Angle believes that more students will be drawn to the STEM program by moving it to CHEPS.

Before deciding whether the university should continue to offer Nuclear Engineering as a general engineering degree, Dr. Angle said he would meet next week with TVA representatives including the top nuclear engineer. The nuclear industry is experiencing a decrease in jobs and eliminating the program would affect one permanent tenure-track faculty and one lecturer.

A rather significant cost will be required to move WUTC’s equipment as Cadek Hall has been placed on the maintenance list. Even though WUTC’s fundraising has increased during the last 2 drives, expenses have also increased and the current model is unsustainable. A taskforce, chaired by Dr. Bryan Rowland, is reviewing several options including a possible merger with WTCl and having a faculty member run the station. Recommendations from the taskforce are expected in December.

The College of Business has its own career services but the Provost and Dr. Delaney are discussing how this would relate to a Career Center for the university and Michigan State could serve as a model. Among departments that require internships include Nursing, Education, Social Work, and Communication.

Berry Dunn will update the last Information Technology review and make recommendations. Dr. Angle said monies are needed for computer renewals for faculty and staff as well as for infrastructure.

The university is now managing its own Alumni chapters. Annual Fund calls from UTC students has increased the number of donors and dollars. Fundraising is ahead of last year at this time, not just in pledges but in cash. A new president of the UT Foundation has been appointed and fundraising will expand. The chancellor announced that an eight-figure gift to the university is expected soon.

The summer session model is broken and classes are not being offered because departments lack the budget to do so. He said the university needs to view incentivizing summer pay. Attention also needs to be directed toward pay for adjunct and entry-level staff.

As the university gets ready to complete its next greenhouse gas inventory, the chancellor was asked for suggestions in moving sustainability efforts forward. He replied that sustainability is about changing human behavior, being good stewards of resources, and developing research and scholar opportunities for faculty and students. Although the new library is not LEED certified, energy savings at the new library as compared to the old one have been tangible and Dr. Angle hopes this will be better communicated to the campus.
When the budget is finalized, Dr. Angle said he would like to emphasize short-term that the university, coupled with Chattanooga’s natural resources and cutting edge technology, provides many opportunities. He cited UTC’s recognition as having one of the best teacher education programs in the country, which uses modeling, simulation, and data analytics.

A member asked how the university could get Chattanooga to view it as a community of students, staff, and faculty. Dr. Angle said programs that give back, such as Clean & Green and volunteering in the schools, allows the university to be seen as part of the community and have real impact on the community. He spoke of the SGA’s involvement with Howard High School in establishing their own SGA and Laurie Melnik’s work with the Howard-Brainerd debate that will take place this weekend.

Chancellor Angle said he welcomes an invitation to speak to the ESC again and attend regularly in the coming year. Issues may be put forth to him directly or through Ms Martin or Mr. Rector. Some additional “Coffee with the Chancellor” will be held this summer and next fall the chancellor will be joined by the Executive Team.

**Voluntary Retirement Incentive Plan (VRIP)**

Eligible employees received notice of the Voluntary Retirement Incentive Plan (VRIP) and 105 have returned their application, indicating interest but no binding commitment. Agreements were issued and must be returned by May 29th; the employee must also sign up for retirement. The employee’s signature must be notarized and the agreement will be forwarded to Butch Peccolo for his signature. A few folks who applied were not eligible due to part-time status or they didn’t meet retirement eligibility (retirement service credit).

Retirees can be rehired following a 60-day waiting period; for rehired retirees, TCRS restricts salary to 63% of the previous year’s salary and 960 work hours. (The 60 day waiting period is routinely waived if the department indicates a need for the rehiring of a retired employee. HR can facilitate obtaining such a waiver.)

**Other Issues**

Mr. Rector will ask Ms Martin if there has been any word of a picnic next month. Ms Sadler stated that Ms Hodges, ERC Chair, was not aware of a picnic when the ERC met last week.

Mr. Rector thanked volunteers for their assistance at the Administrative Professionals Luncheon.

A member expressed concern about the transparency involved in a short hiring process in Athletics recently. Mr. Webb recommended inviting Athletic Director David Blackburn to speak about the hiring process.
A request was made to invite the chancellor to attend an ESC meeting on a quarterly basis and rotate a member of the Executive Team at other meetings, not just to report from their area but the university as a whole. A member suggested that ESC members provide a brief report or bullet items from their area as the Executive Team does not regularly receive feedback from mid-level managers. Reports from members as a whole could be limited to 30 minutes. Mr. Rector will speak with Ms Martin about this idea.

Members were encouraged to complete the survey on community matters. Ms Darger said leaving a desktop computer turned on with blue screen costs 2 cents/day and could potentially cost the university $58,000/year.

Next Meeting

Dr. Bryan Rowland will be the guest speaker at the May 20th meeting.

Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Sadler
Administrative Specialist, Human Resources