

**Exempt Staff Council**  
April 17, 2024  
UTC Library, Southern Writers' Room  
Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Description:** Provost Jerold Hale held an informational session and open forum with the Exempt Staff Council regarding university updates from Academic Affairs and ongoing efforts to combat concerns and challenges that current students and employees face.

**Academic Affairs Updates (Provost Hale):** In light of the university's efforts toward generating the Strategy 2030 strategic plan and ongoing Total Organizational Health initiatives, Provost Hale & Academic Affairs partners, including members of UTC faculty & staff, are grappling with several challenges facing students of UTC. These include, but are not limited to, the impact of COVID-19's impact on students' academic performance, expectations, and schedule preferences; dearth of services for non-traditional and/or adult students; complex tuition rate structures for different student populations (e.g., county, in-state, border state, out-of-state, etc.); heightened competition between state universities & locally governed institutions; housing & infrastructure constraints coupled with growing calls to boost admission rates systemwide; navigating administrative challenges in compliance with THEC approval processes for programs & capital projects; and undergraduate & graduate recruitment advertising

**Blue Ribbon Award Program Revisions (Laure Pou):** Since Fall 2023, the Chancellor's Office and partners have been reviewing current award programs offered for UTC faculty & staff, and this includes the Blue Ribbon Award. Assistant Vice Chancellor & Human Resources Officer Laure Pou shared a draft proposal to revamp the Blue Ribbon Award program.

In its current form, UTC community members (faculty, staff, student, or community member) may nominate a member of UTC staff for the award on a monthly basis. Each month's winner is presented with individual recognition, a commemorative plaque, a gift bag, and a \$100 bonus from the Chancellor's Office, while also being invited to a celebratory luncheon and provided a half-day of paid leave. Proposed changes include increasing the monetary bonus to \$1,000 per winner and an additional \$100 toward items at the UTC Bookstore; recognition at university sporting events and offering tickets for winners & friends/family; increasing the amount of paid leave provided to include a full day (eight hours); and altering the frequency of awards to include two winners every two months.

Upon initial review, members of the council have been asked to provide feedback after sharing these proposed changes with their respective areas.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 10:57 a.m.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 15, 2024