

## **EMPLOYEE RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING**

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Thursday, July 21, 2022

via Zoom

**Members attending:** Melita Rector (Chair), Mark Stotts (Vice Chair), Kim Thomas, Heather Heinlein, Evie Deal, Matt Holzmacher, Sharon Thomas, Ann Laster, LaDonna Spruill, Jean Betters, Diane Perkins, Merrium Carver, Shirley Hatfield, Laneeta Derrick, Scott Sammons, Stuart French

**Others in attendance:** Laure Pou, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Human Resources; Julie Brown, Director of Employee Relations; Logan Rader, HR Administrative Support Specialist; Angela Wharton, Director of Employment Services; Sara Harper, Total Compensation Specialist & Benefits Coordinator; Tina Camba, Director of Total Compensation

**Call to order:** Mark Stotts called the meeting to order.

**Electronic I-9 Implementation** (Angela Wharton): UTC has implemented the electronic processing of I-9s, which determines work eligibility for hired employees with the university from students to regular, full-time employees. I-9 eligibility and EVerification is the cross-matching of information on the employee's I-9 form with data housed within the Department of Homeland Security and Social Security Administration to determine work eligibility in the United States. Angela Wharton shared the process of accessing the Equifax system to process hires' I-9 verification, which can be found on the Human Resources website under the "Employee Tools" header. Human Resources shared communication on the implementation of the electronic I-9 in June 2022, and this can be found under HR News. Included are instructions, video tutorials, and, most importantly, a link to request access to Equifax. The HR Forms website has also been updated to include the electronic I-9 link(s), which has also been applied as a link and QR code to the full hire packet for new employees.

Ms. Wharton and Logan Rader reiterated that the processing of paper forms will be ending at a later date.

**Total Compensation Updates** (Tina Camba and Sara Harper): Human Resources is streamlining processes and procedures over time in various areas, and Total Compensation is one of them. Tina Camba shared a reminder that, to support UTC employees, Total Compensation covers payroll, benefits, retirement, workers' compensation, sick leave bank, classification requests, and position description reviews.

One way HR is attempting to expedite and simplify processes are via Dynamic Forms, including Tuition Fee Waivers, Classification Requests, Family Medical Leave, Sick Leave Bank, etc. These electronic forms are initiated by a specific role and pushed through the approval flow automatically notifying the next signatory/processor.

Gohar Sheikh, Total Compensation Specialist for Human Resources, is the primary point of contact for workers' compensation, sick leave bank enrollment, compensation, and she also assists with benefits inquiries. Sick Leave Bank enrollment has closed as of June 30, 2022.

Sara Harper, previously part of the Employment Services team, is now a Total Compensation Specialist and Benefits Coordinator for Human Resources. Sara is the primary point of contact for benefits, retirement, employee leave (including FMLA, military leave, parental leave, etc.). Ms. Harper shared some new changes that affect benefits for employees. Effective January 1, 2022, 401k matching from the state, which are administered by Empower Retirement, all general state and higher education employees are eligible for a \$2.00 match to every \$1.00 contribution up to \$100.00. So, if an employee contributes \$50.00 to their 401k plan, the university will be contributing an additional \$100.00 toward the employee's retirement savings, with an annual cap of \$1,200.00/year. Updating beneficiary information is now possible via the IRIS Employee Self-Service site for all university employees. Communication will be sent out via email at a later date. The university is asking that all employees check and/or update their beneficiary information. Annual enrollment for benefits will take place October 1-14, and there will be some changes coming from the state. Deductibles in regard to health plan administration will be increasing across the board, but more details will follow when the university receives them from the state. For those enrolled in the Consumer Driven Health Plan (Health Savings Account), the university will now contribute \$500.00 to employees' HAS card. For family plan tiers, the university will contribute \$1,000.00 (doubled from last year). Additional communication will come from Human Resources via email and physical (mail) reminders.

Vice Chair Stotts inquired regarding the pros and cons of selecting a specific retirement plan. Ms. Harper relayed that there are a variety of retirement plans available to UTC employees. The advantage of the 401k is that it is the only plan that has the matching option. There are annual limits for contributions for employees for the 401k, 403b, and 457 plans. If you need additional information regarding the differences between retirement plans, feel free to reach out to Sara ([Sara-J-Harper@utc.edu](mailto:Sara-J-Harper@utc.edu)) or our retirement representative with Empower Retirement, Jeff Flowers ([Jeff.Flowers@empower.com](mailto:Jeff.Flowers@empower.com)). Ms. Harper will be following up with the committee regarding details about the premium increases and other changes to benefits from the state. To change your retirement contributions with Empower, or for more information

regarding retirement, you can visit <https://www.utc.edu/finance-and-administration/human-resources/total-compensation/benefits/retirement>.

**Blue Ribbon Update** (Logan Rader): Mr. Rader shared that the July Blue Ribbon Award Winner has yet to be notified by Chancellor Angle, but they will be announced at the September meeting.

**Salary Increase for FY2023** (Laure Pou): The UT Board of Trustees approved the campus's 3% market merit adjustment, and they have been implemented in IRIS effective July 1, 2022 for all 12-month faculty and staff (August 1, 2022 for all 9-month faculty and flex-year staff). Employees should see the adjustment reflected as of those effective dates. Since it is a merit-based adjustment, exclusions will apply to those under active discipline or has unsatisfactory performance reviews, and those individuals will receive notification if that applies to them. In addition, UTC is also increasing the minimum hourly wage for all regular benefits-eligible employees from \$11.30/hour to \$13.00/hour. This is a step in the direction of establishing a \$15.00 minimum hourly rate in the future campuswide. Those adjustments are going to be implemented in IRIS this July with the same effective dates as the market merit adjustment. The market equity pool is also being utilized to address compression.

Ms. Camba added that there is a 1.5% upward adjustment to the market ranges for positions as well. Employees in their respective market ranges will have more room to obtain an increased salary within their range. The 3% market merit adjustment is not impacted by this.

Matt Holzmacher asked if the 3% market merit salary adjustment would apply to new hires with a start date after June 30. Ms. Pou responded that the adjustment would not impact those new hires or vacant positions. In other words, employees beginning after June 30 would not receive a 3% increase because the adjustment is based on merit. Ann Laster followed up to inquire if employees who began shortly before June 30, 2022 (e.g. March 2022) are eligible to receive the 3% adjustment. Those employees would be eligible to receive the adjustment since they are still in their probationary period.

Ms. Laster also asked how to suggest items to bring forth to the ERC - in this instance, the matter of departmental computer inventory. Mr. Stotts answered that [Marcus-Myers@utc.edu](mailto:Marcus-Myers@utc.edu) is the primary point of contact for UTC's Computer Refresh program for devices that are eligible for replacement. The refresh program applies to full-time employees' primary machine, and any other machine, or any refreshed machine over the amount of \$1,200.00, would come at the expense of the department's budget. UTC will cover \$1,200.00 for any machines eligible for refresh. The primary machine must be at

least 5 years old to be eligible for refresh. Ms. Laster noted that it would be helpful to include a future guest speaker in this area.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022.

### **Adjournment**

A motion was made by Ann Laster to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Jean Betters

Respectfully submitted,  
Logan Rader  
HR Administrative Support Specialist