

## **Employee Relations Committee**

Meeting Minutes

October 17, 2024

Held in UC Sequoyah Room & via Microsoft Teams

**Members in Attendance:** Melita Rector; Mark Stotts; Kim Thomas; Ann Laster; LaDonna Spruill; Rachel Griffin; Evie Deal; Stuart French; Marion Perkins; Terri Bearbower; Sharon Thomas; Kim Sapp; Mandy McAllister; Merrium Carver; Jean Betters; Kim Sapp, Shari Kappel

**Others in Attendance:** Nicole Gaines, Director of Employee Relations; Logan Rader, HR Administrative Support

**Call to Order:** The October 2024 ERC meeting was called to order at 8:37 a.m.

**Campus Trainings:** Melita Rector shared reminders for compliance training and DASH trainings. Annual compliance training is due to be completed campuswide by December 1, 2024. DASH training is being made available periodically, as the UT System prepares for the new Enterprise Resource Planning system's go-live date, January 6, 2025. In addition to consistent trainings being held for process leads and subject matter experts, DASH training modules are available and consistently updated in [K@TE](#), the university's online training platform.

**Annual Enrollment:** The last day for state higher education employees to make any changes to their insurance for the calendar year 2025 is Friday, October 18, 2024. UTC employees can log into Edison through IRIS using their UTC ID and password and complete their annual enrollment changes there. If employees are not making changes, no action is required, though it is advisable to view your benefits elections regardless. More information can be found at [UTC Human Resources website](#), including updated information regarding Flexible Spending and Health Savings accounts.

**ERC & Staff Senate/Council:** Melita Rector will draft bylaws and governing documents for the non-exempt permanent standing committee that will be an entity within the new Staff Senate/Council model, with elections planned to be held in April 2025. These documents will be shared with the group upon completion of the first draft(s).

**Nonexempt Employee Development & Career Paths:** Recalling a previous ERC meeting with Chancellor Angle, the topic of professional development and career paths for nonexempt hourly employees was revisited. Concerns were raised regarding a perceived lack of available opportunities for hourly employees to move "upward" in their respective areas, so some resort to

applying to work in other departments and organizational units as promotional opportunities or leaving the university altogether. Melita Rector indicated that this would be revisited as a topic to Human Resources with campus leadership.

**Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) Exempt Threshold Increase:** The FLSA salary threshold for exempt (non-hourly) employees is expected to increase to a minimum annual salary of \$58,656 on January 1, 2025, which is up from its current threshold of \$43,888. This federal regulation governs the eligibility criteria for positions and employees therein to be exempt salaried employees. This change will impact employees campuswide who are currently exempt but may fall below the new salary threshold once and if the new rule takes effect. To comply with the new rule, those impacted employees may either be brought to the new threshold to retain their exempt status or have their status changed to nonexempt and hourly, as determined by an HR evaluation of all relevant factors, budgetary funding and university leadership. Human Resources is currently identifying those exempt positions and departments that would potentially be impacted by the new salary threshold, and they are actively planning on this rule going into effect.

This rule change would have impacts beyond a position's salary, including leave accrual rates, timekeeping procedures, etc. There are ongoing discussions among staff, campus leadership, and UT System Administration to address those concerns, specifically surrounding the differing leave accrual rates between exempt and non-exempt employees.

**Nonexempt Timekeeping Procedures:** Concerns and perceptions were shared among members of the committee that some nonexempt positions on campus have been allegedly defined as ineligible for overtime compensation and compensatory time banked, which are defining characteristics of positions classified as nonexempt, although some nonexempt positions have reported an occasional or recurring need to work more than 40 hours in a week to fulfill the duties within their position description. Some also indicated that overtime entry via IRIS Employee Self-Service is rejected by the system upon entry. Nicole Gaines and Logan Rader have committed to sharing these concerns with Human Resources leadership and Finance & Administration leadership for further investigation. Nonexempt employees are encouraged to report and submit their working and leave times accurately for record, as is required by FLSA regulations and UT Policy, and to contact Human Resources with concerns.

**Employee Engagement & Satisfaction Surveys:** There are several employee engagement and satisfaction surveys that are distributed to UTC employees annually, including those developed by *Great Place to Work* and *McLean & Company*. The goals of these surveys are different and multifaceted, and they aim to provide a snapshot in time of employee engagement and satisfaction among work units, employee groups, total organizational health, and other elements of the workplace. The data are collected and shared in different ways, depending on the nature of the specific data collection purpose, method, and third-party vendor.

**Closing Items:**

- DASH is arriving to campus to replace the university's current ERP, IRIS, on January 6, 2025. Employees are encouraged to engage in DASH training as it is made available over the coming months in K@TE and the Friends of DASH site, especially those who are primary users for administrative matters.
- As a reminder, annually required training is compensable time for all employees. For additional training, according to UT Policy HR0128: "Compensation for time spent in approved professional development activities should be consistent with Fair Labor Standards Act regulations."
- More efforts are needed to provide adequate training to new and existing employees in leadership and supervisory roles, specifically in managing non-exempt direct reports.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 a.m.

Next meeting: Thursday, November 21, 2024