

## **EMPLOYEE RELATIONS COUNCIL MEETING**

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Thursday, February 20, 2020

Fortwood Room, University Center

**Members attending:** Melita Rector, Megs Hazare, Shirley Hatfield, Jonah Lasley, Leah Herron, Sharon Thomas, Kate Gill, Sarah Wetherill, Pat Kelley, Sherrell Jordan, Laneeta Derrick, Cindy Williams, Terri Bearbower, Mark Stotts, Cathy Eppinger, Brandon Pratt, Kellie Karaky

**Others in attendance:** Janice Michaels, HR/OEI Assistant, Human Resources

**Call to order:** Ms. Rector called the meeting to order.

**Minutes:** There were no minutes from the ERC Retreat in January 2020 to distribute or approve.

**Blue Ribbon Award:** Scott Newby, Facilities, was the recipient of the Chancellor's Blue Ribbon Award for January 2020.

**Guest: Jacobi Swafford, Total Compensation Senior Specialist, Office of Human Resources**

The Retirement Services Office is holding their annual Chattanooga Life Planning Seminar on Tuesday, March 17 and Wednesday, March 18. Registration will be through K@TE so credit for the sessions can be tracked.

Planning for retirement can be intimidating and confusing, especially if you do not fully understand your retirement options. Whether you are just beginning, ready to retire, or somewhere in the middle, help is available.

- Retirement 101: Retirement plans and process for the various plans available here at the University of Tennessee, including pre-retirement planning and post-retirement payouts. The retirement plan session will include a personalized benefit booklet (TCRS, JCRS, ORP, CSRS, FERS), and retirement checklists.
- Retiree Health Insurance: Are you eligible to continue your current health insurance in retirement? What are the rules and how much will it cost? The session also includes a question and answer period.
- Social Security: Social Security benefits, rules, and regulations. Question and Answer session with a representative from the Social Security Administration.
- Medicare: Medicare benefits, rules, and regulations. Question and Answer session with a representative from the Social Security Administration.
- Deferred Compensation & Financial Planning: Question and Answer session with a representative from Empower Retirement / ORP vendors.

Deadline to register is: February 16, 2020. If you missed the deadline, you can reach out to the System HR and they will reopen the registration for you with a FINAL deadline of February 21.

You will get a separate email after registration asking for your retirement date and the beneficiary's date of birth.

Ms. Swafford also announced that we will have an insurance premium free holiday in May 2020.

**Guests: Chris Smith, Chief Health Affairs Officer, UC Foundation, and Professor & Director, School of Nursing; Tricia Henderson, Interim Director, Center for Student Wellbeing and Assistant Director, AOD & Mental Health Education, Office of the Dean of Students**

According to the American College Health Association, suicide is the second most common cause of death among college students. Common stress producers, which could lead to suicidal thoughts and attempts, include financial issues, competitiveness and acceptance.

As a result, the Tennessee General Assembly passed a law requiring all state institutions of higher education to establish a suicide prevention plan for students, faculty and staff.

### **Prevention**

The University of Tennessee provides an Employee Assistance Program through the State of Tennessee. Employees who feel stressed, depressed, anxious, or have other concerns are encouraged to use the EAP hotline as early as possible. **You should not wait until you are having suicidal thoughts – get help as soon as possible.** The EAP number is 1-855-Here4TN, or 855-437-3486.

### **Intervention**

Many troubled individuals display behaviors that may deliberately or inadvertently signal their suicidal intent. If you, a UT colleague or a UT student exhibit any warning signs, seek help by calling the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-8255)**. Certain risk factors may increase the likelihood that someone in trouble will consider or attempt suicide. To learn more about the warning signs and risk factors, please visit the [UT Suicide Prevention website](#).

### **Postvention**

The **University's Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which can be reached at 855-Here4TN (855-437-3486)**, can offer ongoing support for someone who has either attempted suicide or who is affected by a suicide attempt of a loved one.

Additionally, eligible employees who need time away from work to seek mental health treatment may do so by requesting leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act or other University leave policies.

While services in the Center for Student Wellbeing, University Health Services and the Counseling Center are primarily for students (since they are student fee funded), they will not turn away faculty and staff.

For additional information, please see visit the following links:

- Employee Assistance Program <https://hr.tennessee.edu/benefits/employee-assistance-program/>
- Student Outreach and Support (SOS) and the form to Refer a Student of Concern: <https://www.utc.edu/student-outreach/index.php>

The floor was opened for ERC members for suggestions/questions. Healthy food options and better exercise options for faculty/staff were the top concerns for members.

### **ERC Information Communication**

Ms. Rector welcomed all the new members to the ERC. She stressed the importance of communicating information to the groups that the members represent.

**Next Meeting**

The ERC Retreat will be March 19 at 2:00 in the UC Fortwood Room

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned

Respectfully submitted,

Janice Michaels  
HR/OEI Assistant