

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS COUNCIL MEETING

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Thursday, November 19, 2020

via Zoom

Members attending: Cindy Williams, Laneeta Derrick, Megs Hazare, Lindsay Roden, Melita Rector, Sharon Thomas, Juanita Wade, Sarah Wetherill, Jonah Lasley, Pat Kelley, Mark Stotts, Shirley Hatfield, Nancy Rogers, Jean-Marie Lawrence, Sandra Jones, Susan Gutshall

Others in attendance: Laure Pou, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Human Resources; Julie Brown, Manager of Employer Relations, Human Resources; Janice Michaels, HR/OEI Assistant

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

Minutes: The minutes for the October meeting were distributed and approved electronically.

Blue Ribbon Award: Yasmine Key, Student Health Services, was the recipient of the Chancellor's Blue Ribbon Award for August 2020. Marcus Williams, Housing, was the recipient of the Chancellor's Blue Ribbon Award for September 2020.

Guest: Dr. Richard Brown, Executive Vice Chancellor, Administration and Finance

Dr. Brown was available for a Q&A session, with questions coming from the ESC members and their constituents.

1. Administrative units have an opportunity each year to request budget items. Even having made requests, we have not gotten a new position or any new budgetary resources in years. Despite this, we have a mandate to continually increase research award dollars and provide greater monitoring and higher levels of support for awardees. How is the University grappling with adjusting expectations (internally and with the BoT and THEC) for scale-up of research activity when there are no resources available to enhance our very modest research infrastructure?
 - a. Each year the campus goes through an exhaustive budget & planning process that invites the entire campus to present their departmental budget requests to the committee. Pre-COVID, there was a \$2.4 million in new/recurring revenue. Due to COVID the Governor chose not to fund any new allocations. The primary concern was to keep the current workforce working to avoid layoffs & furloughs. The campus had to refund almost \$9 million back to students for housing, parking, dining, etc. Another major expense was for keeping the campus safe with PPE, hand sanitizer, cleaners, straps for social distancing and computers & equipment for staff

working from home. Mr. Sherbesman that a portion of the funding formula from the state that is affected by the state. His hope is to put future dollars back into the research area.

2. Why won't UTC hold out state taxes for Georgia and Alabama employees? We've been told that if they do it, they have to do it for all states. Wouldn't it just be an accounting software issue and just hold it to faculty and staff so it would limit the number of states to Georgia and Alabama?
 - a. The Legislature & Governor's administration have not been willing to move forward with it. Dr. Brown will raise the issue again with them.
3. Has the State announced any mid-fiscal-year adjustments to implement?
 - a. No. THEC has issued some fiscal recommendations stating that allow public universities a small (0-2%) increase in tuition.
4. Will we hold to our UTC 5% Budget Reduction for this fiscal year?
 - a. Each department has been asked to plan for it and to keep the plan, but at this time, we are not calling on them to implement.
5. Will there be a spending freeze again this spring (if things remain the same as they are currently)?
 - a. We didn't really have a "spending freeze", we asked that all department heads be good stewards of how they spend their budgets. Anything over \$10,000 was reviewed by the Budget office. The same protocol will continue to be followed moving forward.
6. Will the VRIP be offered again? (That one is not quite budget but sort of related, so I'm including it.)
 - a. Dr. Brown recommends to the ELT that it be looked at every 3 or 4 years. VRIP's allow the institution to reimagine certain positions and celebrate the work of the employees. It is based on the position of the University at the time.
7. In the event of decreased enrollment, decreased state appropriations or a combination of both and/or other circumstances will UTC:
 - o Furlough, terminate or otherwise not retain staff members, adjunct/lecturer positions or faculty?
 - While these are possible actions for any institution to look at in these circumstances, the good news at UTC is that the reserves are strong, so we are not at that point yet.
 - o Has the University considered implementing voluntary or mandatory pay or hour cuts as a cost saving measure rather than furloughs or layoffs? If

so, will the University consider starting at the highest earning employees first – for example, those making between \$45 and \$294 an hour?

- Yes to all.
- Does the University have a plan that will ensure that our lowest paid colleagues (overwhelmingly POC) are not disproportionately impacted by potential furloughs, layoffs or other cost-saving measures?
 - The University always considers the disparate impact of their actions to ensure that the particular employee groups are not disproportionately impacted.
- To what degree will the University involve us in the forms of financial decision making that may be necessary in the next few years?
 - UPRAC is shared governance oversight committee that will be part of these decisions. They will also host town hall meetings to gather information from all employees.

Other Issues

Due to the number of questions for Dr. Brown and in the interest of everyone's time, it was decided that the election of the new co-chair would be done electronically via email and/or SurveyMonkey.

Melita announced the following reminders:

- It is time to start reflecting on what information you want to include in your annual performance reviews
- The ERAB will meet on November 30. Please let her know if you have any questions or concerns that you would like her to bring up
- Flu shots are due by December 14
- Outside Interest forms are due by December 17

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Thursday, January 21, 2021 at 2:00 p.m.

Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Janice Michaels
HR/OEI Assistant