

# University Operations

Employee Relations Committee  
Tuesday, March 3, 2015 1:30-3:00

## **MEETING MINUTES**

Executive Dining Room, University Center

**Present** Tom Anderson, Brian Browning, Robert Bryant, T.J. Cansler, Rose Rita Cooper, Ashlie Czyz, Robert Dykes, Eddie Golden, Rick Gometz, Holly Harmon, Mike Herbstritt, Dave Irvin, Sharon Jackson, Kayla Kirkland, Debbie Lane, Charlene Laughlin, Jeff Maples, Jim McCarter, Rick McCarter, Ed McDaniel, Randy Miller, Lori Ownby, Sammy Parcell, Ed Roach, Debbie Robinson, Dennis Saben, Josh Smyser, Karen Valero, Mike Werley, and Tim Widener.

**Absent** Beverly Johnson, Carmella Ford, Chip Kain, and Mary Lucal.

### **Welcome**

Dr. Herbstritt, Executive Director of Compensation, Employee Relations, and Recruitment, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He thanked Chancellor Cheek for visiting the ERC today.

### **New Business**

#### **1. Guest: Chancellor Jimmy Cheek**

Chancellor Cheek stated his pleasure to be with the ERC today. He introduced his guest, Nick Place, a dean at the University of Florida. He is visiting UTK as part of a leadership program. Dr. DiPietro participated in this program in the past.

The Chancellor discussed how the situation at UTK has changed over his 6 years here. There were significant budget cuts implemented around the time he arrived. It was a tipping point for UT. Things have improved for the university. Strategic objectives for UTK include: improved compensation; new buildings; new revenue sources; and a changing culture in regards to graduation and retention rates and expanding undergraduate enrollment. There have been accomplishments in these areas, but there is still a long way to go. The dedication of the staff, faculty, and students has made this progress possible. Their work will enable improvements to continue. The Governor's proposed budget would bring \$6 million in new funding to UTK. A 1.5-2% merit raise has been proposed. This would be funded by the state except for 45% from UTK. The Science Laboratory building next to Jessie Harris has been funded in the proposal. Chancellor Cheek is pleased with where UT is, but there are further objectives to be achieved.

Questions:

Ed Roach and Tom Anderson asked about the proposed merit raise. The Chancellor responded that the state proposed the raises as merit based. Mike Werley asked if the raises were market based in any way. The Chancellor responded that market factors were considered in the proposed raises.

Tom Anderson inquired about certain proposed changes to insurance for state employees. Chancellor Cheek responded that many of the proposed changes would apply to new employees hired July 1, 2015 or after. He stressed that these are only proposals.

He spoke to the fact that fringe benefits are a draw for applicants. New employees that the Chancellor has spoken with at his quarterly luncheons for new employees have often stated that fringe benefits drew them to UT. The Governor is considering how to pay for these benefits going forward. Tennessee is one of 7 states with a fully funded retirement program. Some states, such as Illinois, are millions or billions of dollars over the available funding.

Ed Roach asked if the UT Chattanooga retirement buyout recently approved would be extended to UT Knoxville. The Chancellor answered that there are no current plans to institute such a policy at Knoxville.

Josh Smyser inquired if there was a proposal to increase employee contribution to insurance for dependents. Dr. Herbstritt and Chancellor Cheek answered that they were not aware of such a proposal. Jeff Maples reminded everyone that the Chancellor was commenting from the Governor's proposed budget. Legislative proposals are a separate issue.

Ed Roach asked if there were any plans to contract out any services at UTK. The Chancellor responded that there is discussion of contracting work at the state level. He stressed that he cannot predict the legislature. He followed up by stating that outsourcing on this campus has been successful in a few select cases but several other conversions have not been successful and thus reverted back to the campus. If campus does excellent work and employees work hard UTK wants to compensate these employees as fairly as possible. Dramatic changes and improvements have occurred on campus as services have been brought in-house.

The Chancellor stressed to the group that students pay the bills. Campus must present its best self to attract students and keep them at UTK. The reason the university exists is to educate young men and women.

Ed Roach asked if tuition can be increased much without an impact on students and their families. The Chancellor responded that the political environment will limit tuition increases. They will not be as high as in recent years. Enrollment will have to increase to compensate as state funding remains fairly stagnant.

Mike Werley asked if donations have increased recently. The Chancellor answered that approximately \$200 million will be donated this year. This is an increase from last year. UT is catching up with its competitors. Alumni and donors are pleased with where UTK is currently. Construction on campus (current and planned) now total \$1 billion.

Dave Irvin, Associate Vice Chancellor for Facilities Services Administration, asked what impact the TN Promise program might have on UTK. Chancellor Cheek answered that little or no impact is expected on the incoming freshman class. 25% of UTK students come from a family with a combined income of \$40,000 or less. 14% come from families with an income of \$20,000 a year or less. These students may be attracted to this new program. The university provides additional scholarships and grants for these students. The HOPE scholarship is also available. UTK helps to make it possible for as many students as possible to graduate debt free. If students are eligible to come academically finances should not stop them. In response to the TN Promise program which offers 2 years of free community college education to qualified students UT will be recruiting from community colleges. Nashville, Memphis, and Chattanooga will have regional recruiters to serve this purpose. Highly qualified students from community colleges who are working toward a degree are of interest to the University of Tennessee. The Pellissippi Bridge Program (For more information on this program visit <http://bridge.utk.edu/>.) currently allows students who are just shy of the UTK requirements to attend a year at Pellissippi in which they must meet certain criteria to attend UTK. If they succeed they come to UTK as a sophomore. While they attend Pellissippi for a year they can enjoy all the benefits of being a UT student. There are currently between 100 and 150 students in this program. A bus to the Hardin Valley campus is being planned to enable these students to commute easily.

Ed Roach asked if the classes will easily transfer from community college to UTK. The Chancellor responded that the criteria are explained and that 60 hours should be completed toward a degree program.

Mike Werley asked if fee waivers would be affected as state funding and tuition are not increasing sufficiently. The Chancellor responded that he is aware of no such discussions currently underway. He went on to state that groups that are included in the fee waiver program are being reviewed. \$4 million dollars in revenue was lost last year. Partial funding for some groups including state employees such as teachers is being discussed with the state.

## **2. Longevity Pay, Charlene Laughlin**

Q: Is there any update on the possible longevity pay changes?

A: From the Office of the Treasurer, "In his State of the State address on Monday, Governor Haslam proposed changes to several employee benefit programs. These proposals, specifically ones related to the longevity pay program and the announcement of another voluntary buy-out plan, apply only to employees and positions in state government affected by the Tennessee Excellence Accountability and Management Act of 2012.

These proposals do not apply to employees of the University of Tennessee System. We have verified this information with the Department of Finance and Administration's Office of State Budget.

Longevity pay is a component of overall compensation of many UT employees, especially those who have devoted the greater part of their careers to the University. We are pleased that the Governor's proposal allows for University discretion over this benefit."

## **3. KPB Project Update, Charlene Laughlin**

Q: Are there any new details regarding the Kingston Pike Building Project? Is there any beautification plan associated with them? Are there any plans to improve the condition of the back entrance of KPB and the area near the railroad tracks?

A: Jeff Maples, Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration, informed the group that this intersection will be redone as part of the University Commons project. This area will be receiving beautification work by the contractor following the Cumberland Avenue project passing the intersection. The Cumberland project will have a new bid this month. The plan has been altered from two phases to one phase. It will move from west to east on Cumberland Avenue. Side streets and alleyways will be widened and repaved as well. The projected date for completion is summer 2017. Once this project has passed the Kingston Pike Building Entrance the beautification project can commence. This could possibly take place later this calendar year. The entrance may need to be closed for short periods as certain work is taking place. The pothole work that had been done by the back entrance has been undone by the weather. UT has requested new paving from the city but no plans have yet been established. Mr. Maples asked Charlene to notify him if the pothole issue worsened.

## **Old Business**

## **Announcements & Other Comments**

- ❖ Picnic on the Plaza – Ashlie Czyz, Interim Director of Employee Relations and Recruitment. This event is the new Chancellor’s thank you event to replace the Fall Festival. The Benefits Fair that was held in the fall is replacing the vendors that were present at the former Fall Festival. Picnic on the Plaza is co-chaired by Dr. Mary Lucal and Ashlie Czyz. It is scheduled for Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup>. There will be a barbecue lunch, games, and campus celebrities. The event will take place from 11 in the Humanities Plaza between Hodges Library and the Humanities Building. There will be fewer door prizes as there will be small swag items for everyone who attends. RecSports will be providing activities for the group. Thompson-Boling Arena will be the rain location. More information will be coming in TN Today.
- ❖ ERAO/OED Joint Training. The joint training regarding the role of the representative in disciplinary action and the reporting of discrimination requested at the ERAO Orientation will take place March 25<sup>th</sup>. The event will be held in the University Center Ballroom from 1:30 to 4:30. Please RSVP to Jonathan Ramsey if you plan to attend so that there are materials prepared for all attendees.
- ❖ Sick Leave Bank Open Enrollment – Dr. Herbstritt. Open Enrollment for the SLB will be April 1 through June 30, 2015. There are currently almost 1,500 employees in the SLB. To enroll an employee must have been with UT for at least one year. They must have at least 48 hours of sick leave and contribute 24 hours (3, 8-hour days) to join. For the enrollment form and further information regarding the SLB please visit the Employee Relations website (<http://hr.utk.edu/employee-relations/sick-leave-bank/>). Applications can be sent to suite 230 of the Conference Center Building. If there are further questions please contact Jonathan Ramsey (974-8299; [jramse17@utk.edu](mailto:jramse17@utk.edu)). Also, for sick leave donations the minimum number of hours that can be donated has changed from 80 to 40 hours. The donating employee still must have at least 160 hours of sick leave to donate. An employee must be a member of the SLB to receive donated time and must be approved for time from the SLB trustees.
- ❖ HealthBeat Fair - Karen Valero. UT’s College of Nursing is joining forces again with the UT Medical Center and the Student Health Center for HealthBeat 2015, a free health fair for students, faculty, staff, and retirees. HealthBeat 2015 will be held from 7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 7, in the Carolyn P. Brown Memorial University Center Ballroom. A variety of screenings and tests will be provided, and exhibition booths will be set up with representatives from various service organizations and UT departments. Doctors and pharmacists also will be available to answer general medical and medication questions. Insurance is not required for any of the screenings or tests. Small fees will apply only to those screenings that require lab work. All forms of payment, including credit cards, cash, and checks, are accepted. Checks can be made payable to UTMC. Results will be mailed to the participant within ten business days. The exact details are being finalized now. For a listing of the services available at the 2014 fair visit: <http://tntoday.utk.edu/2014/04/01/free-health-fair-ut-community-april-2/>. Once the 2015 details are finalized the information will be sent to everyone
- ❖ ParTNership Health Assessment – Dr. Herbstritt. The online health assessment for the ParTNership Promise is due March 15<sup>th</sup>. The biometric screening will only be required for the employees who receive a health coach. Due to this fact there will not be a screening event on campus as there has been in past years. If there are health coach issues please remember to document the coach’s name, date of the call, and time of the call. This will allow for a review of the phone call. Contact Rob Chance, Director of Payroll, ([rchance@utk.edu](mailto:rchance@utk.edu); 974-5251) with specific issues that are not being resolved. He can communicate the issues to the state insurance board. The guidelines must be followed for an employee to remain in the ParTNership program.

## **Distributions**

- ❖ Meeting Agendas
- ❖ HealthBeat Fair Handouts

### **Next Meeting**

Tuesday, April 7, 2015, from 1:30-3:00

Andy Holt Tower, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room

Submit agenda items to Jonathan Ramsey at [jramse17@utk.edu](mailto:jramse17@utk.edu) or 974-8299.