

University Operations

Employee Relations Committee
Tuesday, May 5, 2015 1:30-3:00

MEETING MINUTES

Andy Holt Tower, 8th Floor Conference Room

Welcome

Dr. Mike Herbstritt, Executive Director of Compensation, Employee Relations and Recruitment, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He shared that the next meeting will be held in September due to the ERAO trying an academic calendar this year. This decision was made due to historic low attendance and lack of agenda items. If issues arise Human Resources is glad to schedule a meeting to address those issues.

New Business

1. Potential Pay Raises – Jeff Maples, Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration and Dave Irvin, Vice Chancellor for Facilities Services Administration

Mr. Maples shared that the Governor's proposed budget passed the general assembly. This budget included a pay increase of 1.5% for state employees, including higher education. A message from the President's office stated that this raise would be in the form of a cost of living increase. The legislation allows for discretion in how the raise is implemented (merit, cost of living, etc.). The Knoxville campus is looking to supplement this increase to make it more than 1.5%.

Mr. Irvin confirmed that the press release did not give details regarding the pay increase. The 1.5% increase is mandated. Roughly half of this increase will be funded by the state. The University will provide the rest of the increase.

Mr. Maples said that this increase is a priority for Chancellor Cheek. The paper today had information regarding the cap of 3% placed on tuition increases by the state. These tuition increase limits press the budget in regards to pay increases. The priority is to provide a good pool for salary increases. UT is not where it needs to be in pay.

Questions

Ed Roach asked is the pay increases would be across the board and if they are not, how will they be implemented?

Mr. Maples answered that the method has not yet been determined.

Ed Roach followed up by asking if employees will be notified when the decision is made.

Mr. Irvin answered that the Facilities Services ERC representatives will continue to meet in the department over the summer.

Josh Smyser asked who will decide how the pay increases will be distributed.

Mr. Irvin answered that the Chancellor's staff will make the final decision for UT Knoxville.

Tom Anderson asked what if any input might come from the UT System if the Chancellor's staff has the final decision. Will the board have any input?

Mr. Maples answered that the President has ultimate approval for the decision.

Mr. Irvin added that the board will review the decision as part of the budget in June. We will know more at that point.

Rick Gometz asked if these pay increases will apply to the salary schedules discussed in the HR Administration email sent out to employees.

Dr. Herbstritt answered that the salary schedules referenced in the email are updating the UT schedules to reflect the current practice of pay. The minimum of \$9.50 an hour currently in place will now be reflected in the schedules posted. This may have some effect on middle level pay as the increase is applied throughout the salary schedule. This will be released on June 30th and will be effective July 1st. The adjustments with the schedule and raises will be given at one time to lessen confusion.

Rick Gometz stated that the schedules from the link provided in the email do not reflect the pay of some utility or trade employees.

Mr. Irvin responded that the new scale will be University wide and include these employees.

Dr. Herbstritt shared that there will be greater flexibility for departments regarding pay. The current pay schedule was out of date.

Rick Gometz asked if there will be issues for career ladder employees regarding the numbers not matching.

Dr. Herbstritt answered that the pay schedule currently posted has not been updated for seven years. This update should eliminate some of these issues.

2. UT Alert Issues – Holly Harmon (not present)

Q: A constituent has raised concerns regarding the two erroneous UT Alert messages that went out recently. What has caused these messages to be sent and how can this be corrected?

A: From UTPD Deputy Chief, Emily Simerly, "Brian Gard, Director of UT Emergency Management, manages the UT Alert Program for campus and the UT Police Dept. is generally responsible for sending out the alerts since we have 24/7 staff. We also have concerns about the recent issues. The current vendor should be replaced within a few months. Prior to the issues referred to in the below email, the University had already sent an RFQ for a new vendor because of other vendor concerns. Generally the errors referred to were vendor errors; however, there was one error that was a training failure that has been addressed."

Mr. Maples added that Global Earth Link, the current vendor, has had issues and the decision had been made prior to these errors not to renew their contract. An RFP was in process when the errors occurred. These alerts are all time-based. There are pre-prepared messages that are sent in response to issues on campus. Follow up messages can provide clarifications or additional information. The messages sent in error were due to testing by the vendor. This should not have occurred. A new vendor has been selected. The new vendor, RAVE, should be up and running by June. This vendor has positive reviews by similar institutions. They have a much more efficient system. The time for messages being sent should improve from 12 to 5 minutes. The new vendor will be a great improvement from our current system.

Rick Gometz asked how an employee can join or be removed from the alert system.

Brian Browning, Director of Administrative & Support Services for Finance and Administration, shared that at this time the employee should contact Finance and Administration due to the system being between vendors at this time. Brian Gard (bgard1@utk.edu) is the contact for this process at this time.

Mr. Irvin emphasized that employees being removed from the alerts will miss important information regarding essential personnel and other vital campus information.

3. Insurance Payment Method – Josh Smyser

Q: Is it possible for an employee to claim their annual leave as payment for their insurance? A constituent has requested if this is an option as a payment method.

A: Dr. Herbstritt answered that there is no mechanism for cashing annual leave outside of the retirement or termination processes. There is no existing mechanism for this process through Payroll.

4. Updated Human Resources Policies – Mike Herbstritt

The Court Leave Policy has been changed so that employees on jury duty can keep the pay they receive. This change was made due to the processing costs of the checks from employees paying what remained of their jury duty pay after parking costs.

(http://policy.tennessee.edu/hr_policy/hr0315/)

The Family Medical Leave Policy has been updated to reflect new legislation regarding military leave. The change that will impact a majority of employees on FML is the use of leave. Accrued leave must now be claimed alongside FML. The leave will be claimed in the following order: compensatory time, sick leave, annual leave, and personal day. Days accrued by the employee while on FML will be put toward the employee's absences as well. Workers compensation is the only exception to this as the employee is being paid by workers compensation. The employee may choose to retain up to 5 days or 40 hours of sick leave (whichever is less) for use after the FML is exhausted. If the employee desires to request time from the Sick Leave Bank they must exhaust their leave according to state policy. The retained leave would have to be used to receive time from the bank. These changes are effective 5/1/2015. Employees with an FML start date prior to 5/1 will remain under the previous policy. Any FML beginning 5/1 or later will fall under the new policy. (for policy: http://policy.tennessee.edu/hr_policy/hr0338/; for forms: <http://hr.utk.edu/employee-relations/family-medical-leave-act/>)

Dr. Lucal, Interim Assistant Vice Chancellor of Human Resources, encouraged representatives to share this information with their constituents as this change will impact a great number of employees. For planning purposes regarding FML employees will need to know these changes.

Dr. Herbstritt emphasized that employees will not have the option to be unpaid while they have accrued sick leave beyond the retained 5 days or 40 hours (whichever is less) if they have opted to retain this leave.

Tom Anderson asked if the sick leave is retained automatically or if the employee must opt to retain the sick leave.

Dr. Herbstritt answered that the employee must request to retain the time. The FML request form is being updated to allow the employee to indicate whether or not they desire to retain sick leave.

Tom Anderson asked if there are any plans to update the Sick Leave Bank policy to allow for retention of the sick leave.

Dr. Lucal responded that Human Resources worked to keep the sick leave retention as part of the new policy. The Sick Leave Bank policy is governed by state policy which states that all leave must be exhausted before SLB time can be used by the employee.

Dr. Herbstritt stated that we can ask the General Counsel's office to review the Sick Leave Bank policy, but he did not see much chance of any change.

Tom Anderson stressed the importance of employees having time upon their return to work due to other health concerns that might arise and care of family members who are ill. The need would be lessened if short term disability were available.

Dr. Herbstritt answered that the state is in the preliminary stages of considering a short-term disability program. He emphasized that this is preliminary and there are no definite decisions at this time. The Sick Leave accruals can be seen as a form of short-term disability.

5. Finance and Administration Update

Mr. Maples shared that the legislature has approved capital maintenance funds for UTK and capital project funds for the Science Lab Building. Ground should be broken by August or September. The bid will be out soon. Mr. Maples thank Facilities Services for their hard work transitioning from the University Center to the Student Union Building. Phase 1 will open June 1st. Career Services will move in within the week. Disability Services will move into Career Services ground floor offices in Dunford Hall. Beginning the 19th of May fixtures for the Student Union Building VolShop will arrive. They will be arriving in 26 tractor trailers. This gives a good idea regarding the scope of the job setting up the Student Union Phase 1. June 1st will see two floors of VolShop and two floors of Dining Services. Dining Services will offer Salad Creations, Qdoba, Chic-fil-A, KFC, a larger Starbucks, and Subway. The University Center will be turned over to the contractor June 1st for demolition. Thanks to everyone across campus contributing to this transition process. Mr. Maples encouraged anyone with issues to contact him over the summer.

Mr. Irvin encouraged everyone to visit Phase 1 when it opens June 1st. This \$180 million project will not disappoint. There are other projects preparing around campus. The Torchbearer plaza in Circle Park \$1.5-1.8 million renovation will take place over the summer. The area will include a new product a combination of artificial turf and actual grass designed by UT Research. This project will be completed by August. There will also be a landscaping project at Second Creek and Middle Drive. This \$2.5 million landscaping project will begin immediately after graduation. Middle Drive will be closed to traffic over part of the summer. Blueberry Falls will open up as part of Phase 1 of the Student Union Building. Plants are being installed this week.

Mr. Maples encouraged everyone to thank students for their contribution through their student facilities fee to these campus beautification projects.

Questions

Rick Gometz asked about the progress on the Strong Hall project.

Mr. Irvin responded that the contractor claims that the project is on schedule. There will be an executive meeting next week to request further schedule information. That building is scheduled to be opened December 2016. That deadline is firm and this has been communicated to the contractor. The building at 13th and Cumberland has a scheduled date of completion in 2 and a half years. It should be open to classes in August of 2017.

Ed Roach asked about the status of the Andy Holt demolition.

Mr. Irvin responded that Andy Holt will be demolished this summer.

Ed Roach asked if the custodial crews will fall under Facilities Services once the new dorms open.

Mr. Irvin answered that Housing will retain custodial staff but not maintenance. Maintenance will fall under Facilities Services. Eventually the plan is for all custodial staff to fall under Facilities Services. Chris Cimino, Vice Chancellor of Finance and Administration, and Vince Carilli, Vice Chancellor of Student Life, have agreed that all custodial staff for housing will eventually report to Facilities Services.

Robert Dykes asked about the progress on the Facilities Services Building.

Mr. Irvin answered that there have been no further changes to the schedule. The building should be ready late April or early May of next year.

Ed Roach asked if the parking issues have been resolved for the new building.

Jeff Maples responded that the plan is to leave the property for parking. The owner had a high price estimate for the property.

Lori Ownby asked why the portion of Strong Hall was left standing.

Mr. Irvin answered that other aspects of Strong will be incorporated beyond the standing portion. It was not possible to bring the building up to code by renovation. Stone arches, fireplaces, and other architectural aspects have been saved for the new building.

Old Business

- ❖ Mike Werley – Road Conditions

Thank you to whoever fixed the potholes in front of Haslam.

Mr. Maples stated that the city planned to wait until classes ended to fix the potholes. After the semester is over the city will test the area to see what is causing the pothole issue. The city will be giving the road to UT eventually.

Ed McDaniel asked if there are plans to have an in-house road crew at UTK or if road work will always be contracted.

Mr. Irvin answered that road repair capabilities are being looked into as an in-house service. Major paving jobs would still be contracted. Estimates have been made for this project.

Announcements & Other Comments

- ❖ Sick Leave Bank Open Enrollment Period is April 1-June 30. Regular employees with at least one year of service and a minimum of 48 hours of sick leave (as of June 30, 2015) are eligible to join. 24 hours of sick leave (nonrefundable) will be assessed as a requirement of membership in the bank. For further information visit the Employee Relations site (<http://hr.utk.edu/employee-relations/sick-leave-bank/>). Employees currently members of the bank do not need to act at all.
- ❖ The First Tennessee PayCard is a new direct deposit option for UT employees. The PayCard is a debit card and you can have your pay automatically deposited and ready to use the morning of payday. The PayCard can be used for cash withdrawals from ATM's and purchases from merchants who accept Visa® branded debit cards. Other features included:
 - No Credit Check or checking account required*
 - Can be used anywhere Visa® debit cards are accepted - including ATMs and online**
 - No load fees or monthly service charges
 - Free online access to view balance information, transaction history, and statements***
 - Funds are FDIC insured and much safer than carrying large amounts of cash

*some eligibility requirements may apply.

**First Tennessee charges \$2.00 for use of a non-First Tennessee ATM.

**ATM owner/operator may also charge fees.

***Internet access is required in order to review account history and information.

For more information, please call the UWA Payroll Office at (865) 974-5251.

- ❖ Comment: Ed McDaniel shared that the Picnic on the Plaza was a nice event for UT Knoxville employees. Dr. Lucal thanked all the Facilities employees for their hard work on

the event. Also, Aramark did an excellent job on the event. Please thank everyone involved. Dr. Lucal asked if there were thoughts regarding the location event? Mike Werley said his main concern was that the music could not be heard as it was not amplified. Dr. Lucal stated that the decision not to amplify was due to the fact that it was a study day on campus. Ed McDaniel stated that Aramark did a much better job with food lines and presentation for this event.

Distributions

❖ None

Next Meeting

Tuesday, September 1, 2015, from 1:30-3:00

Andy Holt Tower, 8th Floor Conference Room

Submit agenda items to Jonathan Ramsey at jramse17@utk.edu or 974-8299.