

**MINUTES**  
**University Operations - Employee Relations Committee**  
**April 5, 2011 @ 1:30 PM – Room 237, University Center**

PRESENT: Tom Anderson, Jill Brown, Jim Buchan (Alternate), Rose Rita Cooper, Rhonda Cowden, Robert Dykes (Alternate), Bonnie Frank, Travis Godfrey, Mike Herbstritt, Larry Holbert, Randy Huelsman (Alternate), Sharon Jackson, Jeff Jones, Jeff Maples, George McGhee, John Seivers, Tim Shields, Ron Tredway, Karen Valero, Mark Wagner, and Fred Wolfenbarger.

ABSENT: Brian Browning, Troy Grant, Christian McDaniel, and Tom Spoon.

**WELCOME**

Mike Herbstritt welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Heath Hildreth, Hildreth Insurance, to speak about long-term disability.

**NEW BUSINESS** (reordered agenda to allow discussion of Long-Term Disability first)

1. Long-term disability open enrollment – Heath Hildreth  
Heath Hildreth reviewed information distributed on the sign-up process and benefits of the new long-term disability program with Prudential. There are now lower rates for employees and the open enrollment period is March 28-May 2. The effective date is May 2, 2011. Mike Herbstritt noted that anyone with additional questions may contact the HR benefits office.
2. Communication Policy for University Operations ERC Meetings – Rhonda Cowden  
It has been extremely difficult and frustrating for the staff in Electrical Services to communicate their needs to the committee/administration due to the current communication policy. Please review. The time that is necessary for items to be reviewed through proper channels to obtain approval to bring to the committee and information back from the committee is ineffective. The staff requests these policies change to allow open agenda at ERC staff meetings along with meetings to be held by the rep in a timely manner. The computer era has added to the restriction of the flow of communication to the staff. Our staff does not operate, own, or access internet information as readily as office staff for example. We request information be exchanged in a user friendly manner for those who do so request. Rhonda also indicated she had met with Terry Ledford about Electric Shop giving questions to Tim before ERC, then goes to Terry, and then comes to ERC. It takes too long and employees do not hear the response. FOLLOW-UP: Jeff Maples responded that Terry agreed to send memos/information received from HR/Chancellor/Vice Chancellors/etc. to shop secretary to post on bulletin board for employees. Jeff will follow-up with Terry and asked for feedback from Rhonda on improvements.
3. Saturday Man Compensation – Rhonda Cowden  
The Electrical Shop requests that when you are scheduled to work on Saturday an option be available to earn overtime for that day. The current policy requires the "Saturday Man" to take a day off during that scheduled work week so that staff member will only be scheduled for a 40-hour work week.

FOLLOW-UP: Jeff Maples noted that UTK's budget was cut \$56 million by state in last 2 years, with no layoffs in Facilities. Jeff said it's an issue of money and trying to keep overtime to a minimum. Mike Herbstritt also talked with Terry Ledford who confirmed there is no money for overtime. Jeff will follow-up on the possibility of establishing a permanent Saturday shift assigned to one person.

4. Power Outage Compensation – Rhonda Cowden

The Electrical Shop requests development of "Hazard Pay" for those staff members working these outages. The hours are long and the working environment is difficult and dangerous.

FOLLOW-UP: See #5 below.

5. Electrical Services Staff Compensation Rate – Rhonda Cowden

The Electrical Shop requests a complete review of all job classifications. It is strongly felt by the staff that the current compensation rate is well below adequate compared with the current job market and cost of living. Comparison of the compensation rate between current UT Vacancy list positions is inadequate. The skill level required to maintain this campus by our staff has been overlooked.

FOLLOW-UP: Jeff Maples responded to questions 3 and 4 together. Jeff noted that compensation questions affect the whole facilities and grounds, so we cannot look at just one shop and not the others. A market study was done 4 or 5 years ago and adjustments were made in compensation at that time. Jeff will follow-up on which jobs should have "hazard pay".

6. Electrical Services Education Programs – Rhonda Cowden

The Electrical Shop Apprenticeship program is no longer offered. There is a training program in place that does not compensate staff member for furthering their education; it does allow for paid training. Will the training program through Lincoln Park Trade and Technology Center no longer be a university scholarship? How can this campus become one of the "TOP 25" if we do not allow education?

FOLLOW-UP: Jeff Maples expressed his support of training and the need for Facilities-wide employee training programs. Part of the requirement for the new director is to have a priority on life-long training. There are some training programs offered now in AC, Electrical and Plumbing Shops. Jeff will follow-up on the status of apprenticeships and training for whole department.

7. Electrical Services Uniform Policy – Rhonda Cowden

The quality of our current uniforms is inadequate. It is embarrassing to present ourselves with the uniforms in disrepair, frayed edges, faded, and ill fitting. Yes, the staff does perform construction work and expects to become soiled; but we do not like to be represented to the campus as second rate employees that it is okay to dress in old worn-out clothing. Would you wear clothes to work with tears, rips or the zipper won't stay up to keep your job? You would if you were in our shoes. The current policy does not allow for exchange of damaged uniforms.

FOLLOW-UP: Jeff Maples discussed this with Terry Ledford and Terry will look into this. Jeff noted that when the contract is renewed, they will take a long look at uniforms and may include outerwear. Terry will meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month.

8. EAP Referral – Rhonda Cowden

Rhonda referred an individual to EAP for financial assistance due to a situational crisis. She contacted HR for the appropriate phone number to call and utilized the new 946-CARE line. The information the employee and Rhonda both received was that the EAP only addressed mental health issues. Where do we refer staff for financial assistance?

FOLLOW-UP: Mike Herbstritt asked Mary Lucal for clarification on EAP benefits. Mary reported that all regular UT employees are eligible for financial, legal and mental health services through Magellan

Health, our EAP provider. The financial services include budgeting and planning assistance. Mike will also make sure that those answering 946-CARE have a firm understanding of this.

9. Picnic Tables Requested - Rose Rita Cooper

They have asked if we could get picnic tables so we can sit outside for lunch, covered if possible.

FOLLOW-UP: Jeff Maples is happy to provide a picnic table and asked for the specific location desired from Rose and then he will try to accommodate the request.

10. List of constituents for reps requested – Tom Anderson

I thought I remember it being said that we could get a list of the employees we represent. Since all my people are a bit scattered I really need to get a list to make sure I don't leave anyone out.

FOLLOW-UP: Mike Herbstritt distributed a list of constituents to each rep.

## OLD BUSINESS

1. Bicycles around campus being locked to handicapped ramps – (Kathy Herd)

Jeff Maples reviewed the procedure and noted that if there is a pattern of misuse in specific locations, the location may be monitored and additional bike racks possibly added, as needed. Tom Anderson (new rep replacing Kathy Herd) will check with Kathy for further details on location of incidents.

FOLLOW-UP: Tom Anderson reported that no specific area for adding a "No Bicycle Parking" sign was identified by Kathy. Others agreed that the SERF (Science-Engineering) Building has a big problem.

2. Police need a go-to contact person for basic information – Billy Floyd suggested a direct contact person was needed to provide information such as address, birthdate, and social security number needed to get an order of protection and/or warrant for incidents that occur at the university. Mike Herbstritt noted there are procedures in place for this type of incident and asked Travis Godfrey (new rep replacing Billy Floyd) to check with Billy to clarify his suggestion.

FOLLOW-UP: Mike Herbstritt reported that the contact is the UT Police Department or call 946-CARE.

3. Employee Restrooms – George McGhee inquired about requirements on the availability of employee restrooms. He stated there is not a restroom on the hill (steam plant).

FOLLOW-UP: Jeff Maples spoke with Terry who will give security access to those who routinely need it on the hill. He added to gain access to restrooms, swipe card on gate/door.

4. Personal Cell Phones – Rose Rita Cooper asked if UT has a policy on personal cell phone usage by employees.

FOLLOW-UP: Mike Herbstritt reports that there are no existing policies that address personal cell phone usage on campus. Generally, employees need to keep personal calls to a minimum and each area/unit sets their own rules for this practice. Human Resources will review a possible personal communications policy.

5. Time Clocks – Based on a discussion on Facilities Services time clocks, Jeff Maples will review information to determine if clocks are not working properly, if a chronic few employees are not following procedures, or if it involves call-in's and/or swipes.

FOLLOW-UP: Jeff Maples reports time clocks were delaying the payroll process. Mike Herbstritt met with Terry Ledford and reviewed proper clock-in procedures to help resolve the issue. Jeff will follow-up with Terry to see how many staff were docked last pay period. Also, Kevin will track time clocks daily for all shops.

6. Compensatory Time/Overtime Pay – Travis Godfrey expressed concern on the scheduling of the grounds crew on weekend shifts (Saturday and Sunday) in place of working on Thursday and Friday. He suggested employees would like the option to work overtime one or two shifts on the weekend in addition to their 5-days Monday-Friday.  
FOLLOW-UP: Jeff Maples will follow-up on the shift assignments suggestion but noted with budget cuts that last two years, it is unlikely any overtime pay would be available.

## COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Facilities Study – Jeff Maples noted that the final report was submitted today and he plans to distribute a summary of the facilities report next week.
2. Parking Services Director – Jill Brown asked when the announcement will be made. Jeff Maples responded that a New Director should be finalized this week.
3. Four-day work week – Jeff Maples will review possibility of some units having four-day work week due to increased cost of gas. Some units are doing it and if at all possible, Jeff will see where else it can work for employees on bi-weekly payroll.
4. Short-staffed in Carpenter Shop – Randy Huelsman expressed the need for staff in the paint finish area where one staff is off on workers' compensation. Mike Herbstritt responded that he was aware of the situation and expected it be resolved by next week.
5. Timeline for hiring of Associate Vice Chancellor/Director of Facilities Services – Mark Wagner asked for information about the search and timeline. Jeff Maples responded that the Chancellor is committed to upgrading the position and the process involves a review of resumes in June, interviews in July, and a decision hopefully by August.
6. Update on Employee Raises – Jeff Maples reviewed Governor Haslam's recent State of the State Address and his discussion of the budget. There is expected to be a 2% cut in UT's budget which will be covered by an increase in tuition and a 1.6% salary increase is expected to be 60% state-funded. President DiPietro and Chancellor Cheek are committed to a salary increase, but need to get the money and then decide how to implement it – for example, how much across the board and/or how much merit?
7. Increase in minimum pay rate – Ron Tredway reiterated the commitment of UT administration and their true, sincere desire to help employees. The Compensation Advisory Board's first recommendation is to increase the minimum pay rate to \$8.50/hour.
8. Items for next agenda – Please forward at any time during the month to: Bonnie Frank, 825 Andy Holt Tower, or email: [bfrank1@tennessee.edu](mailto:bfrank1@tennessee.edu), or call 974-8170 (voice mail is available).

*With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.*

## DISTRIBUTIONS

1. Minutes of University Operations ERC meeting on March 1, 2011
2. EAP handout on "Bringing out the Best in Others" webinar March 2011
3. EAP Flyer on "2011 EAP Awareness – A Spring to Remember" on April 6, 2011

### NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday, May 3, 2011 @ 1:30 PM

Room 237, University Center