

University Operations

Employee Relations Committee
Tuesday, February 5, 2013, 1:30-3:00
Andy Holt Tower Conference Room, 4th Floor

MEETING MINUTES

Present Anthony Aparijo, Tom Anderson, Jeff Barnes, Dan Berryman, Marilyn Butler, Robert Bryant, Deborah Cody, Rose Rita Cooper, Robert Dykes, Eddie Golden, Rick Gometz, Karen Hackworth, Mike Herbstritt, Dave Irvin, Mary Lucal, Jeff Maples, Rick McCarter, Ed McDaniel, Jim McCarter, Randy Miller, Julie Monday, Claudine Nagel, Megan Redmon, Ed Roach, Gloria Tipton, Lisa Turner, Thelma Vandergriff, and Cecil Woody

Absent Joe Gardner, Troy Grant, Sharon Jackson, Patrick Smith, and Mike Werley

Welcome

Mike Herbstritt, Human Resources, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Dr. Herbstritt shared this is the first meeting of the 2013-2014 term for the Employee Relations Committee (ERC) and this is the University Operations group. Each person in attendance introduced him/herself and their department. Dave Irvin, Associate Vice Chancellor of Facilities Services, stated the Andy Holt Tower 4th floor conference room is scheduled to undergo renovations within the coming weeks. Future ERC meetings will be relocated. Notification will be sent to the ERC prior to the March meeting.

New Business

1. Trash Pick-up – Megan Redmon

Q: Departments in the Communications Building have the trash emptied once per week. However, it seems as though some departments have trash emptied daily. What is the official rule on trash service for this building and who do employees contact for more information on trash schedules? Employees in the Humanities building have similar questions/issues.

A: Dave Irvin responded that specific building services questions should be addressed to Gordon Nelson, General Superintendent, at 974-2054 or gnelson5@utk.edu. Mr. Irvin said areas that have more services with the public may be cleaned more often, as needed. However, trash pick-up is once a week per area on scheduled days in all buildings. There are general trash receptacles in each area that are emptied every day. Mr. Nelson can identify those receptacles or place a general receptacle in a department upon request.

Mr. Irvin also reported there is a man-power shortage for floor cleaning and Facilities Services is working to fill those job vacancies currently. He added that Facilities Services

would like to ensure that every area of campus is satisfied with the cleaning services. Employees are encouraged to contact Facilities Services at 946-7777 at any time for building concerns and questions. For more information the Facilities Services website is <http://www.pp.utk.edu/>.

2. Uniform Contract Decision – Mike Werley (Absent-Dr. Herbstritt presented the question on Mr. Werley’s behalf.)

Q: Has a decision been made regarding the uniform contract for Facilities Services? Was cleaning service a part of the contract? When will employees be required to wear the new uniforms?

A: Dave Irvin reported these questions will be addressed in more detail at the next Facilities Services internal ERC meeting on February 20, 2013. Mr. Irvin reported the existing contract still has some time before it expires which affects the bid process. The bid process has not yet begun and therefore a new company/contract is not identified at this time.

Ed Roach added that some employees have not received new uniforms in two years. What do employees do if they do not have pants without holes? Mr. Irvin stated that some new employees have yet to receive a uniform. A short-term solution for uniforms is currently under review.

Mr. Roach asked if the cost to replace an ID card is \$30.00 for Facilities Services. Mr. Irvin said there is a reduced rate for Facilities Services and that ID cards will be replaced if damaged on the job. Mr. Irvin is working on the Facilities Services replacement plan for ID cards at this time. Information regarding Facilities Services ID card procedures should be communicated through supervisors, the ERC, via UTK e-mail, and hard copy mail within Facilities Services.

3. Career Ladder Funding – Mike Werley (Absent-Dr. Herbstritt presented the question on Mr. Werley’s behalf.)

Q: Will the career ladder in Facilities Services be funded in 2013?

A: Mr. Irvin shared the career ladder was not funded in 2012 due to other allocations of money. He is currently working on an estimated cost for the career ladder. He will submit the estimate to Chris Cimino, Vice Chancellor of Finance & Administration, for review. Mr. Cimino will address the feasibility of the funding for 2013.

Ed Roach asked if senior buildings are still a part of the career ladder. Mr. Irvin shared that due to the reorganization of Facilities Services, senior buildings do not necessarily exist since many of the employees are divided into zones. Some buildings of course may need more expertise, and those instances will be addressed as they arise.

4. Inclement Weather Policy for Various Shifts – Robert Dykes, Randy Miller, & Thelma Vandergriff

Q: What is the inclement weather policy at UT and how does it affect different shifts? Why were 2nd and 3rd shift employees not paid for the unscheduled administrative closing?

A: Jeff Maples, Senior Associate Vice Chancellor of Finance & Administration, shared the closure of the university takes a lot of decision making. The number one priority is safety. In the case of inclement weather, UT is in communication with the national weather service and the Tennessee Department of Transportation. In regards to Friday, January 25, 2013 weather conditions were improving but not as quickly as expected. Mr. Maples stated the weather conditions were more favorable by the afternoon of the closure on January 25. The university recognizes that better communication efforts are necessary in order to better inform 2nd and 3rd shift employees of the expectations for reporting to work during inclement weather.

Mike Herbstritt added the inclement weather policy outlines which areas are considered essential services. Facilities Services should clarify which areas are essential under what circumstances and communicate that to employees. Mr. Irvin added the topic of essential services will be discussed, documented, and given to the Facilities Services internal ERC for review.

Tom Anderson added that different shifts were treated differently in this specific instance due to the communication error. Mr. Anderson asked if affected employees could receive pay for the unscheduled closing in the particular instance on January 25, 2013? Mr. Anderson agreed that moving forward, increased and clear communication efforts would resolve the issue. However, shift-employees that did not report to work on January 25 would appreciate consideration being given to compensation for the unscheduled closing to ensure equal treatment of all employees.

Dr. Herbstritt stated Chris Cimino is the person who would address a request regarding the unscheduled closing compensation for the recent closures. Discussions will be held with Mr. Cimino to review the issues raised at today's meeting. More information will be communicated to the ERC as it becomes available.

5. Campus Bus Service Switch – Thelma Vandergriff

Q: Why make the switch from Knoxville Area Transit (KAT) to First Transit for the campus transportation system? Is this why semester bus passes will not be available to faculty and staff?

A: Jeff Maples said the university is required by law to bid the bus service out at the end of KAT's 10-year contract with the university. Two bids were submitted: KAT and First Transit. Mr. Maples said KAT has done a great job. However, First Transit is a private company that specializes in campus transportation systems. First Transit is already providing services to various other universities. Mr. Maples shared that since KAT no longer provides services to UT the former services have been altered and those decisions

are solely up to KAT. UT has requested that KAT continue to provide a bus pass service to students, faculty, and staff. KAT has taken this into consideration and will vote on the issue in February.

6. Andy Holt Tower Recycle Bin – Thelma Vandergriff

Q: Where has the cardboard recycle bin located at P1 loading dock of Andy Holt Tower been re-located to?

A: Dave Irvin said he will look into this issue and follow-up with an answer in the final minutes.

*After the meeting Mr. Irvin confirmed the recycling bin was moved to the Communications building loading dock as there was more activity coming from that portion of the building.

7. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)Benefits – Thelma Vandergriff

Q: Do EAP benefits only apply to new patients or can someone already in therapy use those free visits?

A: Mary Lucal, Human Resources, shared that EAP has three primary uses: mental health counseling at 5 free sessions, per condition, per year; 1 free legal referral; and drug counseling. Dr. Lucal said employees would need to contact EAP to schedule the sessions and discuss local options. The services are also available to the spouse and/or children of university employees. Dr. Lucal will verify if this is available for those already in treatment and follow-up in the final minutes. Contact information for EAP is <http://www.here4tn.com/> and 1.855.437.3486 (1.855.Here4TN).

*After the meeting Dr. Lucal confirmed if someone is seeing a mental health counselor, then they can only use EAP again if the new issue is significantly different from the reason they are receiving mental health counseling. An example would be the person who was receiving mental health counseling for depression, but also wanted to have marriage counseling; the EAP could be used for the latter, but not for the former reason.

8. Hourly Raises vs. Retention Raises – Thelma Vandergriff

Q: Why are proposed raises for hourly staff so insignificant when retention raises for administrators (President, Chancellor, Etc) appear to be so generous?

A: Dan Berryman, Human Resources, addressed the retention raises as fairly new at UT. Mr. Berryman said retention raises are more common for senior executives in private practice. In addition, this is becoming a more and more common practice in higher education as well.

9. Across-the-board Raise Percentages – Thelma Vandergriff

Q: Will additional consideration be given to increase across the board percentages?

A: Jeff Maples said this all stems from a good performance-based evaluation system. High performers should receive pay-for-performance. Some changes have been made to the evaluation system and more changes will likely occur. The goal is to reward top performers. Senior management is being held accountable for timely and accurate completion of performance reviews. For example, Facilities Services is providing custom training for supervisors to improve supervision practices across the board.

Tom Anderson added that in response to the raise issue – if an employee has a good performance review but received a written warning he/she would not be eligible for an across-the-board raise.

Dave Irvin confirmed that is true. However, a process is in place to establish a performance improvement plan for employees in that situation. Mr. Irvin reported that 8 employees from Facilities Services did not initially receive the last across-the-board raise, were placed on an improvement plan, improved, and ultimately received the raise.

10. Equal Dollar Raises – Thelma Vandergriff

Q: Are there specific reasons why administration opposes equal dollar raises?

A: Dr. Herbstritt and Mr. Maples responded that the university – at least the Knoxville-area – has used a hybrid approach for the last two years. Under this approach, employees up to a stated minimum salary receive a guaranteed amount regardless of their base salary. Employees over that amount receive a percentage increase based on their salary. The salary guidelines for fiscal year 2013-2014 have not yet been released, but once they are this group will be notified.

11. Appeal Process for Merit Based Pay – Thelma Vandergriff

Q: Do we have an appeal process in place if employees do not agree with the merit system for raises?

A: Dr. Herbstritt confirmed there is an appeal process in place. Employees should sign performance reviews to acknowledge he/she saw the review. However, it doesn't mean the employee agrees with the review. A rebuttal can be submitted to accompany the performance review in an employee's personnel file. Employees may also contact Human Resources and/or the next level of administration to discuss the appeal, his/her concerns, and next steps.

Anthony Aparijo asked how an employee could appeal and avoid retaliation or ill will from the department/supervisor. Dr. Herbstritt said departments are encouraged to have supervisors complete performance reviews and have the next level of administration also review it before presenting it to the employee. All this should be done to ensure no abnormalities with the performance review. Also, retaliation should not be the result of an appeal or inquiry to Human Resources. For specific questions contact Human Resources at 946-8847.

Old Business

- ❖ None

Announcements & Other Comments

- ❖ Ed McDaniel shared that employees have complained about the boots available to Facilities Services employees. Mr. Irvin said the boot allowance will be explored during the uniform bid process. More information will be communicated as it becomes available.
- ❖ Anthony Aparijo asked if UT employees are considered federal or state. Dr. Herbstritt said there are a limited number of federal employees that work for the Institute of Agriculture. A vast majority of the employees are considered to be state employees. However, being a state or higher education employee depends on the situation. For example, the retirement plan is a state plan but not everything at UT falls under the umbrella of the state. For specific questions, contact Human Resources at 946-8847.
- ❖ Jeff Maples thanked the group for their participation on this committee and welcomed any and all questions. Mr. Maples said the issues raised and feedback from this group, and others like it, are appreciated.
- ❖ ERC Training Session: The Role of the Representative/Alternate
Friday, March 22, 2013 from 1:30-3:30
University Center, Shiloh Room

Distributions

- a) January 2013 Employee Assistance Newsletter
- b) Meeting Schedule for 2013-2014 Term
- c) Constituent Lists

Next Meeting

Tuesday, March 5, 2013 from 1:30-3:00

Location: To Be Determined

Submit Agenda Items to Julie Monday at jmonday@utk.edu or 974-6452.