

University Operations

Employee Relations Committee
Tuesday, August 6, 2013, 1:30-3:00
Hodges Library, 6th Floor Conference Room

MEETING MINUTES

Present Anthony Aparijo, Tom Anderson, Dan Berryman, Brian Browning, Marilyn Butler, Robert Dykes, Rick Gometz, Karen Hackworth, Mike Herbstritt, Mary Lucal, Jeff Maples, Rick McCarter, Ed McDaniel, Randy Miller, Julie Monday, Ed Roach, Patrick Smith, Gloria Tipton, Lisa Turner, Thelma Vandergriff and Cecil Woody

Absent Robert Bryant, Rose Rita Cooper, Joe Gardner, Eddie Golden, Troy Grant, Dave Irvin, Sharon Jackson, Megan Redmon and Mike Werley

Welcome

Mike Herbstritt, Human Resources, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Dr. Herbstritt shared that Dave Irvin, associate vice chancellor of Facilities Services, could not attend the meeting. However, Mr. Irvin sent responses to some of the questions that were received in advance of the meeting. Those responses are included in the minutes and shared by Dr. Herbstritt on Mr. Irvin's behalf.

New Business

1. Merit Raise Update – Robert Dykes & Ed Roach

Q: Are there any updates on the merit raises, and is there a formula that will be used to distribute them?

A: Dr. Herbstritt said the merit raise recommendations from departments are to be submitted in August 2013. The merit notifications should be given to employees within the next two weeks (before the next bi-weekly pay period occurs) and is usually done by letter. There is no guarantee that an employee will get a merit raise. Merit pay is based upon performance. Merit, market, and equity pay could come from this money pool. Departments may designate how to use the money. Tom Anderson asked how employees in disciplinary action could get a raise. Dr. Herbstritt said that departments could decide to award a raise despite the employee's being in disciplinary action.

In addition, Dr. Herbstritt shared the following response from Dave Irvin: As discussed at our departmental ERC meeting, now that the criteria have been finalized in Facilities Services, we will publish and distribute all of the criteria used in each area for merit raises.

2. UT Hospital Discounts – Robert Dykes

Q: Are there any updates on the UT Hospital discounts offered? The last update was just about the emergency room fee waiver.

A: Below is information from the Treasurer's Office regarding hospital benefits:

Payroll Office Subject: UT Medical Center Discount

From: CFO Butch Peccolo

Re: UT Medical Center Discount

Prior to January 1, 2011, University Health Systems (through the UT Medical Center in Knoxville) provided a benefit to UT employees in the form of a full waiver after insurance of residual hospital charges if the employees, their spouses and eligible dependents were participants in the state of Tennessee medical insurance program. As a result of recent changes in the state of Tennessee medical insurance plans, University Health Systems has notified the University of changes to this benefit.

Effective January 1, 2011, only UT employees and non-Medicare eligible retirees, spouses and their dependents insured under the state of Tennessee health insurance program -- Partnership PPO will continue to receive this full write-off of the residual hospital charges.

All other employees and non-Medicare eligible retirees and their dependents who chose the standard PPO plan or who do not participate in the state of Tennessee plans will have a limited 25 percent discount waiver of residual hospital charges. For more information, call the Payroll Office at (865) 974-5251.

3. UT Employee Discounts Update – Robert Dykes

Q: Are there any updates on general discounts offered to UT employees?

A: Discounts information for employees can be found online at <http://humanresources.tennessee.edu/employeerelations/discounts/>. For specific questions regarding discounts, call Employee Relations at 974-6452.

In addition, the discounts program is currently under review, and the website is slated to be updated this fall to include more user-friendly features and more discounts. More information will be communicated as it becomes available.

4. Uniforms Update for Facilities Services – Ed Roach

Q: Is there an update for new uniforms?

A: Dr. Herbstritt shared the following response from Dave Irvin: As discussed at our Facilities Services ERC meeting, we are working with the low bidder, trying to reconcile their submittals with the requirements of the bid and the parameters the Employee Uniform Committee discussed with this company and others. Their submittal would have Facilities Services employees in 6-7 different colors- something that is unacceptable. They are still working to get us an option that provides 1-2 colors as they said they could do when they were presenting what they could provide. We still need to see something that is acceptable.

5. Update on University Commons Project (Wal-Mart & Publix) – Marilyn Butler

Q: Are there any updates on the University Commons project specifically relating to traffic flow?

A: Jeff Maples, senior associate vice chancellor of Finance & Administration, said there have been numerous meetings with the site developers and the city of Knoxville. These meetings were to convey concerns specifically relating to traffic congestion near that area as well as the Ag campus. Two things will happen: first, there will be traffic plans in place for the Wal-Mart and Publix project. Second, the Cumberland Avenue reconstruction project will begin on the west end before the opening of the University Commons. These preliminary changes should help the traffic flow once the University Commons is open.

6. Fence Repair at the Kingston Pike Building (KPB) – Marilyn Butler

Q: The fence on the northeast side of the KPB along the railroad track (across from the front parking area) has a wide section of fence that has been knocked down (it looks like a car may have run into it). If/when is it going to be fixed? Moreover, does UT or the railroad track company own that fence?

Employees are concerned that cars are more vulnerable to theft or vandalism since someone walking along the tracks can more easily access the parking lot and then flee through there.

A: Jeff Maples will investigate this issue and report back at a future meeting.

7. Facilities Services Feedback – Lisa Turner

Q: Is there a place on the UT website that allows an opportunity to give feedback for the cleaning crews? This seems to be a frequent topic and a place to submit feedback might prove beneficial.

A: Dr. Herbstritt shared the following response from Dave Irvin: Our new software, Archibus, will allow more options for this type of customer feedback. However there is currently not a location for that on the Facilities Services website, but it is a good idea. While we explore what might be workable options, the best method of letting us know about issues, whether cleaning or other Facilities issues, is to call the Facilities Services One Call number at 946-7777.

Marilyn Butler added she has called the 946-7777 number on numerous occasions and has received excellent and timely service responses.

8. Facilities Services & Business with Grainger – Tom Anderson

Q: Why did we stop doing business with Grainger for supplies? We'd like clarification and explanation about how the decision was made and if there's any room for discussion on the matter.

A: Dr. Herbstritt shared the following response from Dave Irvin: We have not stopped doing business with Grainger. We are examining how we do business with them and how much. We will reduce the volume we do with them. Grainger is SIGNIFICANTLY more expensive than other suppliers. Their discount only applies to a limited number of items, most of which are not the items we order. The Purchasing department did a study and found many items that were cheaper retail at Home Depot or Lowe's than UTK is paying at

Grainger and just as available. On others, we can bid those items and receive lower prices. Grainger has a place but not always as the go-to, be all, end all, first answer supplier. Purchasing is working with us on a number of options that will save us 40-60% over what Grainger is currently costing us.

9. Performance Improvement Plans: Mandatory or Optional? – Tom Anderson

Q: The performance improvement plans for those who receive poor performance evaluations have been described as a definite next step for those affected employees in Facilities Services. However, the form indicates it is optional. Can it be clarified whether this very important factor in improving performance is mandatory or optional for managers, especially since raises are based on performance?

A: Dr. Herbstritt said that Human Resources strongly encourages departments to do performance improvement plans when necessary, but it is not required. However, many departments have established that the performance improvement plans are mandatory for employees below a certain review score.

Dan Berryman shared there has been some confusion on the definition of poor performance. A system-wide initiative is underway to look at the performance review process, performance improvement plans, and the terminology used in documents overall. These findings will be presented to the Chancellors for review and possible implementation before the next performance review cycle. For more information and/or to view the current forms, visit <http://hr.utk.edu/performance-evaluation/>.

In addition, Dr. Herbstritt shared the following response from Dave Irvin: Performance improvement plans may be optional in other departments. They are not optional in Facilities Services.

10. Sick Leave and Annual Leave – Tom Anderson

Q: What's the policy on sick leave versus annual leave? If an employee is out sick and has depleted all of his/her sick leave, can he/she use annual leave? Can a department establish an internal policy which states employees cannot use annual leave as sick leave?

A: Dr. Herbstritt shared that policy states annual leave must be requested in advance and approved. Sick leave cannot always be predicted. Departments may establish internal guidelines for leave use.

Old Business

11. Security Changing Lights – Lisa Turner

At the June 4 meeting, Lisa Turner reported there is a problem with changing ballast lights near the warehouse on Stephenson Drive. *What is the status update?*

Lisa Turner will follow-up and update the ERC at the next meeting as to whether the lights have been changed.

12. Products on Demand (POD) in the Kingston Pike Building – Marilyn Butler

At a previous meeting, there were discussions about a possible snack shop (POD) or vending machines to be installed in the Kingston Pike Building. *What is the status update?*

Jeff Maples said this project is still underway. The tentative opening of this POD is January 2014.

Announcements & Other Comments

- ❖ Mark your calendars for the annual UT Fall Festival for faculty and staff!
What: UT Fall Festival- Healthy You. Healthy UT.
When: Friday, October 18, 2013, from 11:30-3:00
Where: RecSports Plaza and Practice Field
- ❖ Anthony Aparijo asked about the biology annex closure and what that means. Mr. Maples shared there are eight streets within the campus that belong to the city. These streets will be transferred to the university in phases. Protocol requires that notification (signs) be posted in advance of the transfer. The city uses the term "closure" to signify closure of ownership. The actual street will not be closed. It is merely transferring to the university.

Distributions

None

Next Meeting

Tuesday, September 3, 2013 from 1:30-3:00
Hodges Library, 6th Floor Conference Room

Submit agenda items to Julie Monday at jmonday@utk.edu or 974-6452.