



University Operations

Employee Relations Committee
Tuesday, April 4, 2016 1:30-3:00

MEETING MINUTES

Andy Holt Tower, 8th floor conference room

Welcome

Dr. Mike Herbstritt, Executive Director of Employee Relations & Recruitment, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Dr. Herbstritt introduced Chancellor Cheek and Vice Chancellor Harig attending to address the group. Dr. Chris Pionke was also introduced as a guest.

New Business

1. Guests – Chancellor Cheek and Linda Harig, Vice Chancellor for Human Resources

Chancellor Cheek began by addressing the current legislative session. There is a proposal in the state senate to remove approximately \$8 million in funding from UT Knoxville and appropriate it to the Institute of Agriculture, Martin, and the Institute for Public Service. Diversity issues on campus require funding. The proposal is not currently in the state house. Diversity and inclusion are still significant concerns on campus. UT must explain what these are and how important they are to campus. Diversity includes socioeconomic diversity. Currently 30% of average family incomes for students are below \$40,000 annually. The Pledge and Promise programs offer scholarships to cover basic costs of education. Pell grants, Hope scholarships, and UT funds also provide assistance. Other initiatives regarding diversity include outreach to Veterans, increasing women in Engineering, and increasing men in nursing programs. A more diverse population on campus is a goal.

State appropriations overall have been good. The Governor treated UT well in the budget. Funding was not allocated for the next Engineering building on the Pasqua and Estabrook footprint. This is vital as the buildings do not reflect the excellence of these programs. Monies were also not appropriated for the creation of a Ph.D. program in data science and engineering. This is vital to technology needs and UT's ability to provide appropriate degree programs.

The semester has been good overall. Three student groups have met with the Chancellor. Good dialogue is taking place and progress is being made through communication. Students are the reason we are all here. Chancellor Cheek shared that he and his wife hosted 15 students for dinner recently. Chancellor Cheek was the first person in his family to attend college. An advisor and his staff made an impact on him during the first weeks of school. The advice and assistance received helped him succeed. This makes a difference. Such interactions with students are key.

Questions:

Lori Ownby asked if the engineering building project would proceed without state appropriations. Chancellor Cheek shared that donations are being lined up. The hope is proceed in the next year. It would be best if this construction could coincide with planned renovations to the stadium due to possible savings.

Tom Anderson shared concerns regarding the possible outsourcing of facilities management. According to comments made by Terry Cowles, Director of Customer Focused Government, the contract could be signed by a provider before UT would have the chance to opt out. Chancellor Cheek shared that cost determinations are underway. The contractor's bid would be assessed. Vice Chancellor Cimino has prepared numbers regarding costs that UTK is confident in. The possible outsourcing has caused significant stress across campus. Past experience with outsourcing these services was not positive at UTK. Many factors must be considered in these deliberations. Great strides have been made on campus in recent years. Robert Dykes commented that the audit was initially to take place prior to the RFQ being shared. It will now happen after. Jeff Maples shared that UT is requesting the original schedule be maintained. Chancellor Cheek added that specificity is key in this process. Actual services and not just basic services must be considered. Events and other work in addition to normal service must be clearly communicated to the state. Ed McDaniel shared that Facilities Services staff appreciate the support shown them by administration, students, and fellow staff. Chancellor Cheek appreciated this comment. Employees have a pride in working at UT. Service is better than in years past. Residence Hall staff become family to many students. Students are concerned about safety and trust if these changes take place.

Sammy Parcell asked about the Top 25 goals and their progress. Chancellor Cheek shared that the gap has narrowed in all but one area (graduate student enrollment). Annual giving continues to rise. Last year \$235 million in private funds were given. The Mossman Building gift from the Mossman estate was significant. \$140 million have been given to date this year. The physical facilities and appearance of campus are improved. The Student Union project and Blueberry Falls are a good example. There are currently approximately \$1 billion in construction underway on campus. There are 4 new residence halls under construction. The journey to the Top 25 is about making UT better for students. The 4 year graduation rate has increased from 28% to 45% in the past 5 years. This affects enrollment and student debt. UT can admit and graduate more students- our business- when the 4 year graduation rate is better.

The UT minimum wage has been increased. There have been raises each of the past 5 years at UTK. A raise is expected this year as well. Most higher education institutions have not done this. Pay is a priority at UTK.

2. UT Parking Regulation Changes – Dr. Chris Pionke, Traffic and Parking Authority Subcommittee Chair

Dr. Pionke thanked the group for the chance to attend and address this issue. The Parking Authority has been reviewing the handicap accessible parking regulations at UT. Dr. Pionke served as the chair of the subcommittee tasked with this project. The current regulations are specific to the user of the permit not to the vehicle. There is the option of registering the vehicle with Parking & Transit for an E or K tag, but handicap accessible parkers do not have to have a parking permit to use these designated spaces. The number of spaces are designated per Americans with Disabilities Act regulations.

Dr. Pionke shared that one of the major problems considered by the committee was verifying that the appropriate persons were using the handicapped accessible tags. These tags are issued by the state and there is no connection between state data and UT data for parking. The actual state handicap accessible permit holder is unknown to UT. Whether that individual is connected to UT (student, staff, faculty, friend, etc.) is also unknown.

Dr. Pionke shared that the first problem leads to the second: abuse. Students and staff have used family members' permits to avoid the cost of a parking permit or to park closer to where they attend classes or work. This takes spaces away from the individuals they were intended for. Dr. Pionke shared the example of Perkins Hall, near where he works. There are 13 handicap accessible spaces near this building. However, there are still issues with individuals with accessibility issues finding spaces to park. Students have been seen parking in these spaces with a tag and then running to class in a way that does not lead one to believe they have an actual need.

This abuse is difficult to address. If campus community members report such abuse Parking & Transit have to follow up with the state to confirm if the pass is being used by the appropriate individual. Then they must verify that that individual is a UT citizen.

The subcommittee was tasked with improving the availability and the consistency of availability parking for appropriate individuals. A system was required to reduce or eliminate fraud and abuse. Fraudulent UT and state hangtags and permits are a constant issue. These false permits range from professional looking to obviously false.

Dr. Pionke shared that real data was needed. There are 485 handicap accessible spaces in student and staff lots across campus. Adjustments are made based on need. However, it is difficult with the current system for UT to make these decisions as there is not clear data.

The subcommittee compared UT's parking practices to that of 20 or 30 other universities. The group looked at whether practices were similar or different within these peer institutions and whether they were similar or different from UT. UT had the most liberal practices of any institution reviewed. It also had the most difficult policies to enforce.

The subcommittee looked at either a dual registration process or separate accessible permit as options. The dual registration option was chosen by the subcommittee. One main reason this was selected was the fact that once there was a cost associated for all permits part of the incentive for abuse was taken away. Dr. Pionke shared that this decision was made with the knowledge that he would now incur the cost of parking. He estimated that he has saved thousands of dollars over his years of service due to the fact he has not had to pay to this point. The decision was made with the knowledge of this cost being added to employees in mind.

Lori Ownby shared that a window cling will be used for the accessible permit for UT. This will allow for the state permit to be displayed. Dr. Pionke added that multiple cars can be tied to the permit when the employee registers. UT citizens must now apply for this pass and have the state permit in their name. Employees with these passes will be able to park in any accessible spaces or unreserved spaces across campus.

Dr. Pionke shared that with these new regulations abuse will be curbed. The Parking employees will be able to confirm the registration of parkers in accessible spaces as they monitor lots. The database of accessible permit holders will allow UT to make adjustments to the number and placement of these spaces across campus based on real data.

Questions:

Sammy Parcell asked what the effective date is for this new permit. Dr. Pionke answered that this will be effective August 1st in conjunction with the annual permit renewal process.

Dr. Pionke thanked Jeff Maples and the Parking & Transit Authority for their support in this process. Mr. Maples shared that this was long overdue at UTK. Students and staff have admitted to abusing accessible parking in his years here at UT. This issue sorely needed to be addressed.

Karen Valero asked if any employees would be grandfathered in with no cost for parking. Dr. Pionke shared that all employees with this permit will be paying, himself included. Debbie Lane asked who employees with concerns should contact. Dr. Pionke shared that he and the subcommittee members would be happy to address concerns. They can be shared through Jonathan Ramsey or Jeff Maples if they are brought through the ERC.

3. Identity Theft – Debbie Lane

Q: A week or two ago a constituent heard from a couple OIT employees who said they'd had fraudulent tax returns filed under their social security numbers. The constituent then had it happen to them as well, and they heard that many other OIT employees were also affected. They were wondering if UT knows of a particular data breach to which this was connected and/or if they're going to communicate any general information or suggestions to affected employees.

A: Rob Chance, Director of Payroll, shared that there is no known data breach at this time. When a state breach occurred last year all employees were notified. The breach affected Med American plan enrollees only. There have been approximately 50 employees at UT affected. No social security numbers were involved.

Data breaches are a common problem with the IRS. No personal information has been taken from UT. There is a form employees can complete if they are concerned about fraudulent claims. Online filing allows fraudulent claims to be made without the individual being aware. Mr. Maples shared that he has heard of several people who file their taxes late encountering this issue.

4. Finance and Administration Update

Ed McDaniel asked about the possibility of raises this year. Mr. Maples shared that the amount has not been set as yet. The funding proposed by the Governor would barely meet the needs for raises. Tuition and enrollment will determine the final number. Merit raises are the preference currently.

Old Business

Announcements & Other Comments

- ❖ Human Resources Open House – HR is inviting campus to come and tour the new location at 105 Student Services Building at an open house event this month. April 12th from 2:00 to 4:00pm the campus community can visit the new location and see where HR is now housed.
- ❖ Picnic on the Plaza – Make sure you save the date for this Chancellor’s thank you event. The Picnic will take place at the Humanities Plaza on Friday, April 22nd from 11:00am to 2:00pm. There will be a picnic lunch, music, and games at this year’s event. In case of rain the event will be moved to Thompson-Boling Arena. We hope to see you there!
- ❖ Sick Leave Bank Open Enrollment – April 1st through June 30th is the annual open enrollment period for the Sick Leave Bank. Regular employees in a leave-accruing position can apply to the bank. The employee must have a sick leave balance of at least 48 hours as of June 30. A 24 hours donation is given by the employee to join the bank. Employees can contact Jonathan Ramsey at 974-8299 or jramse17@utk.edu with questions. The application for open enrollment is located at <http://hr.utk.edu/employee-relations/sick-leave-bank/>. Look for more information in TN Today.
- ❖ ParTNers for Health Deadlines – Biometric health screenings must be completed by July 15th. Screenings can be completed either at the employee’s health provider or through on-campus screening events (more information at <https://my.onsitehd.com/restricted/signup/tn> or call 888-741-3390). Employees who do not comply with these deadlines will be transferred from the Partnership PPO to the Standard PPO.

Distributions

- ❖ Meeting Agenda
- ❖ Accessibility Parking Handout
- ❖ POP flyer

Next Meeting

Tuesday, May 3rd, 2016, from 1:30 to 3:00pm
8th floor conference room, Andy Holt Tower

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