

## **EMPLOYEE RELATIONS COUNCIL MEETING**

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Thursday, March 18, 2021

via Zoom

**Members attending:** Melita Rector, Mark Stotts, Juanita Wade, Sharon Thomas, Megs Hazare, Laneeta Derrick, Leah Herron, Nancy Rogers, Susan Gutshall, Cindy Williams, Terri Bearbower, Shirley Hatfield, Sarah Wetherill

**Others in attendance:** Laure Pou, Assistant Vice Chancellor of Human Resources; Janice Michaels, HR/OEI Assistant

**Call to order:** Ms. Rector called the meeting to order.

**Minutes:** The minutes for the February meeting were distributed and approved electronically.

**Blue Ribbon Award:** Brett Fuchs, Associate Dean of Students, Director of Student Conduct, Director of Student Outreach & Support, and CARE Team Chairperson, was the recipient of the Chancellor's Blue-Ribbon Award for January 2021.

**Guest: Tyler Forrest, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration**

Mr. Forrest shared an update from his area along with a brief Q & A.

**Will there be any raises for faculty and staff, if yes how much?**

Yes, there will be. There is a 4% compensation pool, but it does not mean that there will be a 4% across the board raise. That pool will be used to fund various things including staff equity adjustments, faculty promotions, and a cost of living market adjustment for all eligible employees that meet satisfactory expectations on their performance reviews.

**Will there be a fee increase for students, housing and meal plans starting the fall semester, if yes, how much?**

Yes. At this time the proposal is a 2% increase for students and a 3% increase for housing, meal plans and parking. There was no increase in 2020 so this is a modest increase for this year.

**Are we still replacing IRIS and if so, what is the projected timeline?**

Yes, it will be replaced. The timeline is that the planning phase will be completed by June 30, 2021. A new contract will be awarded by end of April 2022 and the implementation will be entirely complete by end of June 2024.

**Are you enjoying seeing the "operations" side beyond the "financial" side of the university?**

Yes, I am really enjoying the operations side. I have been involved in operations for a long time, but it does feel different to lead it instead of just participating in it.

**Beyond the pandemic, do you have a vision for the future of the campus? Any key takeaways from Dr. Brown's heritage as VC of Finance and Operations that you want to continue?**

Dr. Brown left a substantial legacy on the campus. He was a "people" person. During his tenure he led over \$5-\$6 hundred million dollars in capital investments making the campus look like it does today.

For my own position, I have 4 key strategies that I want to focus on.

1. Health & Safety of the campus
2. Ensuring that the Finance & Administration division is making the biggest impact that we can on the student experience
3. Continued focus on financial health
4. Making sure that the Finance and Administration division provides the absolute best customer service to every other division on the campus

**What are some potential capital projects for campus for the next few years? Any major physical infrastructure projects that may not be as exciting as a new building but will assist in keeping campus functioning for the future?**

Capital is one of the things that constantly changes. Several things we hope to have coming soon are

- Health Science building on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street for the School of Nursing
- Maclellan Gym
- Several smaller projects including roof replacements, elevator upgrades
- Overhaul of Brock Hall

**What kind of information would you like to consistently hear from our group to inform your office as future campus decisions are made?**

Gauging the pulse of the campus and providing honest feedback to our office.

**We've heard about the scholarship challenges and that is a great issue to (it is overextended by around 4 million dollars). How did this come to be and what steps are being taken to correct the situation? Has the amount been going down or is it increasing? Beyond that, what is the biggest financial challenge facing the university in the next three to five years? Will the financial challenges of the UT system impact Chattanooga?**

This information is correct. We are working diligently on a plan to close that deficit. It is from the result of a much higher progression and retention rate than we anticipated leading to higher added costs.

Beyond the scholarship deficit, the biggest thing that we need to focus on over the next few years is the SACS reaccreditation. Another thing we need to focus on is enrollment and keeping it up.

**During the March 3 campus virtual briefing session, you mentioned that two buildings were slated to be demolished in the next six months, 545 Oak Street and Frist Hall. Will the space they occupied be turned into parking or what is planned for those areas?**

There will likely be surface parking in the 545 Oak Street and some kind of grassy area in the Frist Hall area. Eventually in 4 or 5 years, the Frist Hall area, lot 26 and lot 39 will become the newest location for housing that has approximately 900 beds with a 600-700 car parking garage below it.

**After collecting information from the Police Focus Groups, what are the next steps for that committee? What does the UTC Police and University Administration hope to gain from the committee's work? Are there unfilled/vacant positions in the UTC Police Department? Are there plans for funding more police officer lines? Is the UTC Police Officers' compensation packages meeting or exceeding their peers at peer institutions?**

We are down a few officers now but have 5 waiting to be hired and trained. Our hope is to retain the officers we have but to also add some non-sworn officers to the staff. Several years ago, we were able to get our officers to the 95% point of the City of Chattanooga benchmark. HR is currently evaluating to make sure that we are still there. If not, we will get back to that point so that all the time and money that we put into training the officers will remain at UTC.

**Since it is looking like everything is going back to normal in the Fall then will departments be able to hire as needed or is there still going to be a hiring freeze?**

Our hope is to be back to normal operations in the fall. We do not have a hiring freeze, but we do have a hiring requirement that requires division head approval. It is anticipated that the requirement will remain into the Fall semester

### **Paid Parental Leave**

Effective July 1, 2021 a new paid parental leave policy will go into effect for all regular employees at 75% effort or above. Individuals who experience a child's birth or adoption, after July 1, 2021, will be eligible for 6 weeks paid parental leave, regardless of their leave balance. This also applies to 9-month faculty.

### **Employee Experience Survey**

A one question survey was emailed to all UT employees. This will be a quarterly email/check to gather feedback from employees.

### **Other Issues**

Ms. Rector asked that all questions for the April guest, Sara Peters, be submitted by Friday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Juanita Wade volunteered to do a monthly newsletter with information from the ERC meetings to post in break rooms and areas where those employees that do not have access to a computer and/or email can access it.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be Thursday, April 15, 2021 at 2:00 p.m. with Sara Peters as our guest speaker.

### **Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted,

Janice Michaels  
HR/OEI Assistant