Employee Relations Council Meeting

Minutes

April 10, 2006

I. Phil Bright, Office of Human Resources, welcomed the Council members to the meeting and opened with introductions of those present.

Jeff Ziegler – University Center
Cathy Brown – University Center
Karen Hussey – Administration Building
Sherry Shanklin – Administration Building
Tony Maisano – HVAC
Judy Jones – Humanities, Sociology, Student Health, & Housing Receptionist
Sheryl Breeden – Gooch, School of Business, & McCombs Center
Noel Arant – Building Services
Lana Ferrell – EPS, Fine Arts & Brehm Hall
Mickey Chappell – Housing Custodial
Karen Elmore – Library
Jeannie Singleton – Custodial Services
Magdalene Hampton – Clement Hall
Dr. Nick Dunagan – Chancellor
Phil Bright – Human Resources

II. Christmas Breakfast 2006 Chair and Co-Chair (Phil Bright)

Phil Bright of the Human Resource office offered a thank you to all involved with the Christmas Breakfast for 2005. He also asked for volunteers for the 2006 breakfast. Peter Gibson and Davis Rash were volunteered to be chair and co-chair. They have both been contacted and graciously accepted the task.

III. Report from the December 2005 meeting of the Employee Relations Board. (Karen Hussey)

Karen Hussey presented a report from the UT Employee Relations Advisory Board Meeting held December 6, 2005, in Memphis at the UT Health Science campus. Seven items were on the agenda.

1. President Petersen is encouraging the inclusion of staff on committees and the input of as many stakeholders as feasible in discussions in order to assure adequate input.

2. Temporary upgrades in job levels and responsibilities are being reviewed.

3. Discussion of family insurance premiums was brought before the board. Some felt that our present premiums arrangement was unfair due to the varying numbers represented in families. There will not be a change made in the set-up of premiums.
4. A Chattanooga representative brought up funding of retirement receptions. The proposal was that the University pays up to $300.00 toward a retirement reception for employees with at least fifteen years of service. Sylvia Davis mentioned that a policy is already in place to pay $700.00 toward retirement receptions for employees with twenty years or more of service. Gifts may not be purchased with these funds.

5. Compensation for staff upon the completion of a UT degree was the next topic. Apparently, the UT Chattanooga campus gives a one time raise of $600.00 for a Bachelor’s; $800.00 for a Master’s; and $1000.00 for a Ph.D. The request was to extended this to all UT system employees. This will not happen. It was brought out that UT employees receive a generous fee waiver, and the degree might not have a work correlation with the position held at the university. Sylvia Davis mentioned that other sources of recognition could be given. Karen Hussey mentioned several types of ways we at UT Martin recognize employees and their accomplishments.

6. The performance review process was mentioned. This process is presently behind us. We were reminded that this has been changed from a fiscal year to a calendar year cycle.

7. The Employee Satisfaction Survey was the final point on the agenda. The results are now being calculated. All employees are encouraged to participate. Karen was unsure of the overall participation; however, she said many voiced concerns as to receiving too many e-mails or not receiving the survey at all.

The next meeting of the advisory board will be held in Knoxville in June. Karen mentioned that copies of the minutes were available upon request.

Tony Maisano mentioned that he had not received notification of the Employee Satisfaction Survey recently. Phil Bright said that this was circulated in September of 2005 via e-mail and other means. The results of this survey should be made known very shortly. The percentage of participation system wide was low; however, Martin’s level was around 40 percent.

Phil referred back to topic number five referencing the completion of a degree. There is no formal recognition of a bachelor’s degree. UT Martin does award a one time increase in salary of up to $1,000.00 for a master’s degree. This must be worked between the employee and supervisor in advance. There is also usually an advance agreement in place for those working toward their Doctoral degree.
Karen Elmore mentioned that possibly there could be some sort of recognition at the coffees held during the year for those who received their degrees during the year. Dr. Dunagan mentioned the need to be assured of accuracy with the acknowledgments. This is certainly something to look toward.

IV. 2006-07 Employee Relations council representative to the Athletics Board (Phil Bright)

Mr. Bright mentioned that we needed a representative to the Athletics Board for the 2006-07 year. Shelia Burlison had been the past representative. At this time he asked for volunteers. Discussion was held as to what the responsibilities would be on this board. Cathy Brown consented to serve for the 2006-07 year.

V. 2006-07 Employee Relations Council representative to the Equity and Diversity Advisory Council (Phil Bright)

Mr. Bright mentioned we also had a representative on the Equity and Diversity Advisory Council who is presently Judy Jones. She graciously consented to serve one more year.

VI. UT Martin Employee Relations Council reapportionment proposal (Phil Bright)

The next item on the agenda was the reapportionment proposal of the Employee Relations Council. Mr. Bright passed out copies of the proposed changes that would take effect with the fall 2006 election. These changes would increase our total number to 23. During discussion it was mentioned that HVAC was inadvertently omitted. A revised proposal that includes HVAC is with this set of minutes. Please review this proposal and come to the summer meeting prepared to pass this proposal, modify this proposal, or present a different proposal. We need to approve a reapportionment plan at the summer meeting that will take effect with October 2006 elections.
VII. From the Fall 2005 ERC Meeting – should the request to add Veteran’s Day to the list of paid days off go forward to the Employee Relations Advisory Board (Tony Maisano)

Tony Maisano suggested a vote on the issue of bringing this item before the advisory board. Dr. Dunagan suggested that before voting we decide which day we would be willing to give up. The state legislature mandates the number of holidays allowed and the university is presently taking the maximum number. After much discussion among the group it was decided to withdraw the issue all together as no one was willing to suggest or eliminate an already established day. Karen Hussey mentioned that everyone received a personal day and that it could be used on Veteran’s Day.

Magdalene Hampton also asked about another issue from past meetings concerning the evaluation of supervisors by employees. Tony Maisano mentioned the factor of favoritism does exist in some locations. Dr. Dunagan mentioned that this does take place on an ad hoc basis and that it would possibly be a hit or miss situation. He did agree that it could be a good addition.

Cathy Brown asked if Karen Hussey would inquire at the next system wide meeting if this practice or policy is in place on any other campus. Karen Elmore also mentioned that in many situations it would be on a limited basis due to the fact that many departments consisted of just two people. Discussion led around the fact of confidentiality and the number of people in departments. Karen Hussey asked for help in wording the request. Dr. Dunagan responded, that we would like to know if any other campus has a plan in place where employees evaluate their supervisors.

VIII. A request that the Employee Relations Council encourage UT Martin staff to contact state legislators about more State Funding for UT Martin salaries, without increasing tuition (Tony Maisano)

Mr. Bright commented that two hand outs were made available to us in regards to compensation at UT Martin and system wide. At this time the floor was given to Tony Maisano. Tony commented that he would like for all our employees to be leaders in contacting our legislature in regards to funding toward raises. Knoxville presently has a calculated living wage of $10.71 per hour. The UT Knoxville faculty senate has a resolution passed requesting UT to move to this as a minimum salary in the Knoxville area. Tony indicated that he would like to see UT increase all employees to at least this level.

Magdalene Hampton mentioned that we have many employees whose salary is so low that they qualify for federal assistance in the form of food stamps. This is a shameful situation that needs to be corrected.
More discussion was over the living wage issue in regards to contactors operating university facilities and situations in other locations. However, information was not available for a living wage in our rural area. Food stamps are based on a standard wage nation wide. Dr. Dunagan mentioned that he thought it would be a good idea to contact our representatives. State agencies receive the funding of proposed salary increases, however, higher education must develop the funds to cover this increase. This means that the burden is then placed on the students in the form of increased tuition.

Discussion also covered the fact that it had been a few years since real merit raises existed. The reality in today’s time is that an across the board raise would probably be more likely in the near future. In the recent past the percentages raises have been widening the gap between higher paid employees lower paid employees.

A comment was made about people and businesses in general “Exploitation and greed have pushed everything higher and there is a need for balance.”

Karen Hussey mentioned that we can not forget the wonderful benefits that are in place for all employees. Mickey Chappell asked what the proposed amount would be in 2006. Dr. Dunagan replied that at the present time a 2% across the board pay increase has been proposed. He also mentioned that this was just Governor Bredesen’s proposal. The legislature could adjust that in any direction. In the past they have added a small percentage to his suggestion.

IX. Chancellor Dunagan comments

Dr. Dunagan made comments about the Employee Satisfaction Survey based on the rough draft that he had seen. UT Martin showed a high rating in comparison to other campuses across the system.

It appears to be another good enrollment year. The first SOAR of the year is completely booked. At the present time there are no residence hall rooms available for next year.

McCord Hall will be coming down this fall and the new residence hall will be available by the fall of ’08. HVAC renovations are up coming for the Business Building and Humanities Classrooms. Additions are coming for the court yard area of Brehm Hall and the Fine Arts Building. It will become a challenge as to who occupies Clement Hall next. Landscaping projects are in place between the library and the university center also.
UT Martin is looked upon as one of the fastest growing Universities in Tennessee last fall. This is great news due to the fact that it will mean the need to add faculty, custodians, and other support staff. This is a much better problem to face than cutbacks.

Dr. Dunagan then opened the meeting up for questions. Tony Maisano asked if Martin Place was purchased by the university. Martin Place was not purchased by the university or state; however, we have several students occupying apartments. Magdalene Hampton asked if they were governed by the university. They are not. The university is notified if there is a problem. Campus police will patrol on occasion. However, this really falls under the city's jurisdiction. The city and campus police have a good working relationship with this area and many others.

The question was asked as to the progress in Humanities. The faculty should move back before the start of summer school. The classroom section is scheduled next and this will hopefully take place in the fall or the next spring.

Magdalene Hampton asked about the parking situation. Due to construction needs some temporary parking will have to put into place near Mt Pelia road. Phase three would call for taking down of Ellington Hall and putting something back up in that area. Based on the current demand for campus housing, another new housing facility in a to be determined location will be built, before removing Ellington Hall. The time frame for this construction would not be until possibly 2008. Placement could be across Mt Pelia road near the proposed Student Recreation Facility. At the present time there are projects totaling 54 million dollars in process across the campus.

Comments continued on parking and space issues and how fortunate we are at UT Martin in relation to other campuses across the nation.

The meeting adjourned.