Employee Relations Council Meeting Minutes
April 2, 2008

I. Phil Bright, Office of Human Resources, welcomed the Council members and special guest to the meeting. Those representatives of the ERC present were:

Linda Woodrough Library
Jennifer Reese Administration Building
Deborah Adcock Administration Building
Teresa Bodkin Administration Building
Rita Mitchell Administration Building
Glenda Cagle Gooch Hall & ECCE
Karen Sliger Gooch Hall & ECCE
Mickey Chappell Housing
Elizabeth Reddick Housing
Teresa Martin Custodial Services
Velda Rogers Custodial Services
Darrell Simmons Public Safety
Charlene LoVette Public Safety
April Boals University Center
Johnny Henderson Physical Plant
Judy Jones Humanities
Coy Hazelwood IT Services
Vicki Stout IT Services
Tenna Bynum McCombs Center, Business Admin., REED & Sociology
Lana Ferrell EPS, Fine Arts, Brehm Hall, & UTM Farm
Vernon Parker Grounds, Transportation Services & Warehouse
Sherry Shanklin Human Resources
Phil Bright Human Resources
Al Hooten Finance and Administration
Dr. Thomas Rakes Chancellor’s Office

II. Phil Bright asked for a volunteer to serve on the Employee Relations Advisory Board. Deborah Adcock volunteered to serve a two-year term to this board.

III. The Christmas Breakfast was next on the agenda. Mr. Bright thanked all those who worked on the Christmas Breakfast for 2007. He also clarified those who attend this function as being all regular non-exempt employees, the Chancellor, and his staff. Tenna Bynum and Glenda Cagle volunteered to serve as chair and co-chair for 2008.

IV. A request for placed by Mr. Bright for a volunteer to serve as the 2008-09 Employee Relations Council representative to the Athletics Board. Mickey Chappell volunteered to serve; replacing Stacy West, the 2007-08 representative.

V. Mr. Bright asked for one last volunteer to serve as the 2008-09 Employee Relations Council representative to the Equity and Diversity Advisory Board. Jackie Trice served as the 2007-08 representative. Karen Sliger was volunteered and accepted the opportunity to serve in this capacity for the 2008-09 year.

VI. The agenda then moved to Mr. Al Hooten. Mr. Hooten discussed the recent UT Martin “lockdown” situation and other similar situations that might occur for security purposes. Mr. Hooten gave a brief scenario of the chain of events on the day of the local bank robbery at Regions bank. The Martin city police notified UT Martin public safety immediately and asked that they be on the lookout for a vehicle and the armed suspect. Chief Robbins immediately notified Mr. Hooten. Officer Garcia located the vehicle on one of our parking lots. Chief Robbins again notified Mr. Hooten that the vehicle had been located on campus. Campus police were disbursed across campus; buildings were advised to lock interior doors. The decision was made to leave main entrance doors unlocked to allow students to seek protection. Text messages and e-mails were sent out. Even though the system had been checked in the past, there were problems with the text messages due to the large volume hitting the provider systems at the same time. The loud speaker system that is presently located at Fine Arts will be moved to Humanities. This can be used in the event of a need. There is no possible means to contact every individual on campus.
The entire nation is much more sensitive to situations like this due to events that have happened on college campuses across the country in the last few years. We found communication to be a problem. We gained national attention immediately. The phone systems were inundated in University Relations and Public Safety. Mr. Hooten stated that he discovered that we must allow students and guests to come and go at their own risk. We cannot force them to stay in a secure area. This was a situation that allowed the campus to learn areas we must improve in our safety plan. We made it through the situation without anyone being harmed.

Lana Ferrell asked a question in regard to letting people into classroom or offices. Mr. Hooten commented that if you know the person, of course allow entrance. If you do not, please use your own judgment. Jennifer Reese expressed concern about someone entering the main entrances after the building had been deemed secure. Mr. Hooten commented that he would hope that individual offices were secure and the main concern is to make sure that the persons out on campus could gain security by entering a building. Another concern voiced was that some of our custodians did not have radios and could not be notified. Mr. Hooten also mentioned that Physical Plant employees were still out working on campus and not notified.

VII. Mr. Bright announced the next item on the agenda as changes and updates to Family Medical Leave. Sherry Shanklin was asked to review these changes. Mrs. Shanklin began by giving some background on FMLA and its purpose. Handouts were referenced for a couple of the changes (attached). Two changes are in relation to the immediate family of military personnel. Leave may be available to immediate family members of those called to active duty under some circumstances. Also, leave can be granted to an immediate family member of injured military personnel for up to twenty-six weeks.

Other items mentioned at a recent training program Sherry attended:

- Any time an employee calls in to work with an illness or injury they should be told that their situation could or might qualify as time off under FMLA. Every supervisor should be aware of this and inform the employee at that time. Any contact with the work place should warrant notification.
- The employer is obligated to give notice within two business days of finding out an employee needs leave if the employer is going to put the person on Family or Medical Leave.
- Areas to watch:
  * Any illness or injury for three “Calendar” days and two or more visits to a health care provider or one visit with treatment.
  * Definitions of chronic health condition/serious illness.
  * Intermittent leave time.
- An employee does not need to specifically request leave as FML in order to be placed on Family or Medical Leave.
- The employer may request medical certification to be received within fifteen days or whatever is reasonable. It is the employee’s responsibility to furnish the information.
- FMLA runs concurrently with other leaves. (Workers’ Comp., Sick Leave, Annual Leave)
- BE CONSISTENT AND DOCUMENT.

Questions and comments were taken. One question concerned the fact that people believe that we have sick leave and they are not required to request FML. Family and Medical Leave can be paid or unpaid leave. Under the FMLA a person returns to the job they were in before the leave began or a similar job and the leave period can be for up to twelve weeks in a twelve-month period. A person’s sick leave may run out before that time. It also enables a person to keep their medical coverage in place by paying the employee portion while on FMLA.

Family Medical Leave may be used on an intermittent basis. Mr. Bright mentioned that if you have a family member with an illness that requires them to have numerous appointments, this would be a situation that might fall under FMLA. An employee has twelve weeks in a twelve month period or 480 hours per twelve months. This leave can be taken on a per hour/minute basis.

Teresa Bodkin asked the question, that if a person calls in to their office, is it that office’s responsibility to tell them that their situation may fall under FMLA. Mr. Bright answered yes, under certain circumstances.
We are trying to move in that direction. This is something that our campus needs to work toward being consistent about.

Glenda Cagle asked for clarification on the notifying of employees and asked if there were something available to read to explain FMLA. Mrs. Shanklin told her that she could not ask too many questions because we must be careful not to violate HIPPA regulations. Mr. Bright told the group that some information is out on the recent changes and we are striving to learn more. Notifying your employer/ supervisor when you unexpectedly will not be at work is University policy.

Daryl Simmons mentioned a family situation of his as an example. He requested FMLA in the past. Mrs. Shanklin agreed that this was an excellent example, but that most of the time Human Resources does not know that an employee could be on Family and Medical Leave until long after they have been out or may have returned to work. This is a point of concern and one example of where better communication is needed.

A question was asked as to what the employee needs to be told after they have been initially informed. The supervisor needs to at that point contact Human Resources. This would put a follow-up in place and move the responsibility to Human Resources. Mr. Bright commented that many things are changing and being brought to our attention. This has confirmed the need for training for supervisors and then to branch out to employees. All of this will be addressed as we seek assistance with this training need.

Family and Medical Leave can be recorded in IRIS, and this will assist in reporting and tracking. Mr. Bright mentioned that any questions or situations should be directed to Human Resources. Additional changes are being discussed to FMLA. There is nothing definite on their implementation.

VIII. Mr. Bright moved to the next item on the agenda; cleanliness and situations associated with smokeless tobacco and snuff.

It has been brought to the attention of Human Resources that this is a problem on our campus campus. Residue from spitting out smokeless tobacco and snuff is appearing in several locations. This is an unhealthy habit and the residue leaves a nasty reminder.

There is Tennessee State Law and UT Policy in place that addresses no smoking in State (University) buildings. The Law, also, addresses no smoking within twenty-five feet of the main entrances of buildings. This does not address the use of smokeless tobacco. It was encouraged that people have their own personal devises for disposal of the residue. Your ideas on this topic are welcome.

There was some concern raised by Lana Ferrell in regard to the signs placed at the main entrances of buildings. The EPS building has two main entrances and the smoke devices are missing from this building. Mr. Bright asked that if anyone had any ideas of how to encourage people to dispose of their waste in a better way to please contact the HR office.

IX. Performance Reviews were next on the agenda.

Mr. Bright gave the details as to deadlines. Mid-April supervisors will be contacted for those employees without a Performance review. A list is being kept of the reviews that have been turned into HR.

Debbie Adcock asked if this was the practice from years past. Mr. Bright commented this had been added this year. This year’s follow up will be handled differently. A question was asked how it would be handled if a supervisor does not perform a review. This year those supervisors will be contacted by their appropriate vice chancellor. Daryl Simmons asked if all supervisors are training in how to administer a review. Mr. Bright answered that by "some are and some aren't". Training sessions are already in the making for next year to assist those with issues.

April Boals asked what an employee should do if they have not been approached by their supervisor in regard to a Performance Review. Mr. Bright responded by saying that no one knows how that employee executes their job better than the supervisor.

Mr. Simmons asked about the frequency of training for supervisors. He also mentioned that not all people make good supervisors. Attempts are in place to bring on-going supervisor training opportunities to
campus to meet those needs. The opportunities will be in place. We just aren’t sure who will take advantage of the opportunity.

X. The floor was then turned over to Dr. Tom Rakes for his comments.

Dr. Rakes commented that the materials are here and in place; however, we are always striving to get the message out that these items need our attention. It is really hard to go above your supervisor and asked to be counseled. He also commented that as people see needs across campus to please let someone know. It might take some time to handle the situation but that doesn’t mean that it doesn’t have someone’s attention and that someone is not working on it. He knows that the process may be slow. He is delighted with what gets accomplished on this campus.

Dr. Rakes also commented that he knows that we will be called upon more and more in regard to things like the Family & Medical Leave Act. These are things that we must deal with that are without details and specific instructions.

Time and time again Dr. Peterson has commented how smoothly things run and how things are accomplished on our campus. Dr. Rakes said that he is sure from the employee’s perspective that does not always seem to be the case. He knows that people take pride in the campus and that is shown in every aspect of how the campus looks and the good job we do with customer service.

Lana Ferrell commented about the accomplishment of the recycling efforts across campus. Dr. Rakes said that our students have gotten involved and that we should be hearing more from the American Democracy Project. This is a way for us to help take care of ourselves and our community. Part of the tradition on our campus is that we have always taken care of ourselves. We may not be able to do as much as we would like, but everyone can do something.

The meeting was adjourned.