

EXEMPT STAFF COUNCIL

April 19, 2023

Held via Zoom

Minutes

Members in Attendance: Susan Lazenby (Chair), Anitra Barrett (Vice Chair), Alexa McClellan, Sandra Jones, Kat Mortensen, Mary Lee King, Elizabeth Johnson, Terry Sanford, Lance Keatley, Emma Fullington, Sherry Marlow Ormsby, Kelly Griffin, Elizabeth Smith, Christine Estoye, Michelle Rigler, Jordan Hicks

Others in Attendance: Melita Rector, Accounting Specialist for Budget & Finance (ERC Chair); Mark Stotts, Telecommunications Technician for IT (ERC Vice Chair); Julie Brown, Director of Employee Relations; Logan Rader, HR Administrative Support Specialist

Call to Order: Susan Lazenby called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

Employee Relations Committee (Melita Rector & Mark Stotts): Chair Melita Rector and Vice Chair Mark Stotts of the Employee Relations Committee (ERC) shared general information typically discussed in ERC meetings as well as some potential opportunities for collaboration between the ERC and ESC as they relate to their respective constituencies. Melita Rector currently serves as an Accounting Specialist in the Office of Budget & Finance, and Mark Stotts works as a Telecommunications Technician for the Office of Information Technology.

Top-of-Mind Concerns for the ERC:

- The minimum hourly rate is projected to be approved at \$15.00 per hour beginning July 1, 2023, which has been a key point of discussion among the ERC and hourly employees across campus.
- The chairs of the ERC, based on previous discussions with the full committee, are working to establish computer workstations in the Administrative Building on Palmetto St. for staff that do not regularly use or may not have access to online capabilities. The ultimate goal of this expanded digital access for non-exempt staff will make it easier to access personnel matters, such as direct deposit enrollment and insurance enrollment, as well as training and professional development opportunities held throughout each year. Managers and supervisors are encouraged to accommodate staff in pursuing these opportunities.

- The COVID-19 pandemic revealed much about the traditional workplace, and some work simply cannot be done remotely. This includes critical and infrastructural areas such as custodial staff, groundskeepers, library personnel, and many student affairs professionals, among others. This inspired the chairs of the ERC to work with the Division of Finance & Administration to develop recognition initiatives geared toward these employees.
- The safety of all employees at UTC remains a top priority for the ERC. The committee has recently invited senior leaders with Safety & Risk Management and Emergency Services to share general updates to campus security as well as answer questions that staff members may have regarding campus practices in the event of an active emergency. All members of the UTC community are encouraged to engage Safety & Risk Management and UTC Police in conducting training and space assessments that are specific to respective areas on campus. Further, managers should coordinate with their administrative staff to create a contingency plan in the event of an active emergency or threat. Some employees, like those mentioned above, do not have traditional work areas, so this is especially crucial for their safety.

Questions for ERC Chairs

- **How can members of the ESC support the ERC and non-exempt staff in these initiatives and ideas?** Members of the ESC and exempt staff on campus are encouraged to engage their administrative professionals to coordinate with their areas in determining best practices in being prepared for an emergency. Managers can serve to drive their teams, especially non-exempt staff members, to plan for a better and safer environment. This can include an emergency plan for offices, internally generated crisis forms, inviting security professionals at UTC to assess a space or facility, etc. Members suggested that this topic is a particularly important one that affects all areas and employees at UTC, and collaborative efforts between exempt and non-exempt staff groups show high potential for success in addressing the overall safety of employees on campus.

Non-exempt staff, especially those that remained on campus during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, can benefit from increased and targeted recognition efforts for their work at UTC. Employees are encouraged to be mindful of those around them as well as anyone with which they interact on a daily or semiregular basis. Efforts are being made with the Finance & Administration division to implement more employee recognition throughout the year.

Employees at UTC could potentially benefit from conducting collaborative meetings (ESC & ERC) to discuss overall employee wellness, concerns, and opportunities that influence and affect all employees. It was suggested that a

semi- or biannual meeting between the ERC & ESC can aim at developing solutions to the above-mentioned elements of working at UTC, which can include both formal meetings and informal gatherings.

- **How does the ERC identify key issues and opportunities on which to focus?** Topics of focus come from both the organic nature of the group's meetings, as well as members and constituents reaching out directly to the chairs to express interest or concern about a certain topic affecting life at UTC (e.g. budget process, training & development, employee retention & engagement, etc.). These formal and informal communication channels also inform the group's choices of monthly guest speakers, who specialize in the specific area of interest. The collaboration between the ERC & ESC is a potential key avenue through which various elements on campus can be addressed in a meaningful way.

Blue Ribbon Award (Julie Brown): Ruby Jordan, Senior Custodian with Facilities, Planning & Management is the recipient of the February 2023 Blue Ribbon Award. Steve Jackson, also a Senior Custodian in the same department, is the recipient of the March 2023 Blue Ribbon Award. The council congratulates Ms. Jordan and Mr. Jackson on this award and thanks them for their exemplary, impactful work at UTC.

As a reminder, employees may visit the [Blue Ribbon Award page](#) on the Human Resources website to view past winners, and UTC community members are encouraged to continue [nominating](#) employees for this honor. Whether the nominee receives the official award or not, employees are encouraged to notify them that their work is recognized and appreciated.

Other Matters (Members)

- Kelly Wright, Manager of the UTC Bookstore, is departing the university after 20 years of excellent service. Employees are encouraged to reach out to Ms. Wright to congratulate and thank her for her valuable efforts and presence on campus.
- Following the March 2023 ESC meeting, Sherry Marlow Ormsby collected information analyzing best practices across the U.S. regarding the efficacy of staff representation groups at higher education institutions. This will serve future discussions among members of the ESC on how to further develop more effective ways to establish meaningful representation of staff at UTC.
- Brent Goldberg, Vice Chancellor of Finance & Administration, will be speaking to the ESC in May 2023 to share the overall budget for UTC and how enrollment impacts the university's financial footing year-to-year. Members are encouraged to collect and share potential questions for VC Goldberg ahead of the May meeting.

- The Annual UTC Budget Town Hall will be held on May 8th, 2:00-3:30 p.m. in the University Center Auditorium to discuss the overall budget for fiscal year 2024. All employees are highly encouraged to attend this open forum if possible.
- With the onset of the busy Final Exam season for students, the Disability Resource Center is accepting volunteers to assist in proctoring exams for students. Please reach out to Michelle-Rigler@utc.edu if you are interested and able to assist with this effort.

Adjournment: Susan Lazenby adjourned the meeting at 10:43 a.m.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 17, 2023