

## EXEMPT STAFF COUNCIL

February 15, 2023

Held via Zoom

Minutes

**Members in Attendance:** Susan Lazenby (Chair), Anitra Barrett (Vice Chair), Alexa McClellan, Jordan Hicks, Mary Lee King, Jason Harville, Sedrick Snowden, Kelly Griffin, Sherry Marlow Ormsby, Michelle Rigler, Elizabeth Johnson, Kat Mortensen, Elizabeth Smith, Sandra Jones

**Others in Attendance:** Laure Pou, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Human Resources; Julie Brown, Director of Employee Relations; Nicole Gaines, Employee Relations Consultant; Logan Rader, HR Administrative Support Specialist

**Call to Order:** Susan Lazenby called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

**Introduction:** Nicole Gaines has joined UTC Human Resources as the newest Employee Relations Consultant on the Employee Relations team. Members of the campus community are encouraged to contact Ms. Gaines regarding any issues relating to performance management, employee concerns and complaints, facilitated discussions, etc.

**Response to Exempt Staff Feedback (Laure Pou):** In the January 2023 ESC meeting, representatives from Human Resources and the Office of Equity & Inclusion shared insight into various employee related matters, including guidelines for telecommuting arrangements and search and hiring procedures, in response to the exempt staff survey that was sent in Fall 2022. Ms. Pou continued the conversation, touching on topics like compensation and benefits, as well as training and development.

- **Benefits:** Feedback was shared in the Fall 2022 survey that indicated the cost of employee benefits presented a significant impact on UTC employees financially, specifically those at the lower end of the income range on campus. Suggestions were presented from the ESC that included a sliding scale based on income or lowering the costs altogether. Ms. Pou shared that our employee benefits, including healthcare benefits, retirement accounts, and employee assistance programs, are set by the State of Tennessee or UT policy, and they are closely aligned with other state employers. For that reason, cost structures related to benefits are handled at the UT System level. The ESC and ERC's conversations can and are encouraged to be relayed to the Employee Relations Advisory Board

(ERAB), wherein chairs and vice chairs of those committees can share feedback, ask questions, and make recommendations at the UT System level. UT System, then, can determine what is possible and share information relating to matters that are of concern to the respective UT campuses.

There are also opportunities for benefits that remain unique to individual campuses apart from state benefits programs. These include items such as recognition programs and compensation thereof, time-off for certain circumstances such as volunteerism, paid parental leave, etc.

Susan Lazenby previously attended the recently held ERAB meeting, which are now being held at request, per UT System. Members are encouraged to bring forth considerations for Ms. Lazenby to relay employee feedback to the board.

- **Compensation:** Other feedback from the exempt staff survey, in addition to the data gathered from the recent employee engagement surveys in 2021 and 2022, highlighted opportunities regarding the analysis of employee compensation. On a recurring basis, compensation analyses are conducted both across the UT System as well as at the campus level. While formal analyses are conducted for faculty and staff on a recurring basis through a third-party vendor, UTC Human Resources, specifically, is continuously reviewing matters of compensation upon request, reorganizations, etc. The rollout of the new Staff Job Family Structure in 2021, for instance, was effectively a large-scale compensation analysis, with the assistance of Segal Consulting, which overhauled the previous pay grade structure and implemented more competitive market ranges.

Following rollout of the new Staff Job Family Structure, increasing UTC's minimum hourly rate for temporary and full-time staff to a more competitive wage was also identified as an institutional priority. While finding the funding presents a challenge, UTC recognizes the importance of balancing internal and external equity concerns, etc. The minimum hourly rate was moved from \$10.10 to \$11.30 in fiscal year 2022, and then to \$13.00 for the current 2023 fiscal year. The Chancellor has committed to moving UTC toward a minimum hourly rate of \$15.00 by FY24, recognizing that increased efforts to address compression must occur in tandem. When the lower market range wages, beginning with MR01, move up, those at the market ranges above them (supervisors, leads, forewomen and foremen, etc.) must be adjusted appropriately to avoid salary inversion and compression.

A large majority of funding for the last two fiscal years has gone toward increasing the minimum hourly rate, addressing compression, and identifying other opportunities to remain competitive at market rates among areas of need. Utilization of the recurring staff market/equity funding pool has been critical in addressing the needs mentioned above over the last three-year period or longer.

In utilizing the market equity pool, there is no central authority for the distribution of these funds, but it is a campuswide initiative administered through the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). Human Resources provides updated compensation data on an annual basis to each ELT member, which includes Vice Chancellors for each division. As a collaborative effort, division leaders and business managers are provided with compensation data to identify funding needs and opportunities across their respective areas. This allows units to more effectively prioritize while using all available factors to inform their decisions and funding pool requests. These collaborations serve to identify current as well as potential situations, based on desired outcomes within a division. Since there are high levels of advocacy from the ELT to request funding for employees in their division, it is not uncommon for requests to exceed available funding. However, assessing and utilizing internal funds respective to each area still remains an option, on top of market/equity pool dollars, to make progress toward future goals and maximize impact. Once decisions have been finalized and approved at the ELT level, Human Resources initiates any adjustments and notifies employees of changes.

Within market ranges are quartiles (Q1 through Q4). These subdivisions are used to set salaries appropriately based on numerous factors, one of which is previous experience and proven success in a specific role. The concept is that less experienced individual who is newer to the work provided from their position is able to move through the quartiles within their range. This also relies on adequate funding to address all university priorities in the area of compensation, the first of which includes raising the minimum hourly rate as well as moving the campus forward within the quartile ranges.

Concerns were shared regarding inequities across different areas with similar job titles but differing years of experience, institutional knowledge, and levels of compensation. UTC's job structure includes working titles, such as Director, Assistant Director, Coordinator, etc., which are established by individual units and assist in navigating the organizational structure for practical means. Use of a working title does not necessarily translate to the specific job classification and job family structure. This produces variation in compensation due to differing job families, which are based on the specific descriptions of positions and duties, while still retaining similar working titles.

Concerns were also shared regarding a perceived inability or lack of clarity surrounding vertical growth in some positions on campus. This is intended to be a meaningful aspect of the next phase of work on the new job family structure across UTC's campus. Some areas of campus have a clearly observable career ladder (e.g., UTC PD) based on the services and needs provided within those departments. Other areas are less clearly defined based on their services and needs. Identifying areas of potential growth for individual positions is the ongoing

work of managers, and employees are encouraged to communicate desires for growth to their managers, particularly during the annual performance review season. Apart from a change or an increase in responsibilities, the new market range structure identifies opportunities to factor in experience and longevity, while still accounting for employee performance.

The intention of insight into compensation practices is to identify opportunities for growth for employees and departments while understanding the budget processes from which they are all made possible. February is typically when campuses receive initial information from the Governor's budget, which informs these compensation opportunities in the upcoming fiscal year. Based on this information, the Chancellor and ELT are able to balance needs and demands on campus. The proposed budget is then shared with the campus at a town hall that typically takes place in April each year. Budget planning typically occurs in the Fall of each year, allowing review and decision-making in each respective division planning for the next fiscal year. If employees are not comfortable with engaging in these discussions with their managers, it is recommended they reach out to Human Resources for preliminary insight and transparency. Ideally, all levels of campus should be involved in the year-long budget process, which is crucial in identifying opportunities for compensation adjustments.

**360-Degree Performance Evaluations:** Some areas of campus (e.g., Academic Affairs) have implemented 360-degree performance reviews, wherein employees are able to evaluate their supervisor's performance, and these results are discussed within their internal process. Human Resources does provide [supplemental tools](#) if departments want to utilize them for supervisory performance evaluations.

**Adjournment:** Susan Lazenby adjourned the meeting at 11:01 a.m.

**Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 22, 2023**