

EXEMPT STAFF COUNCIL

June 15th, 2022

Held via Zoom

Minutes

Members in Attendance: Anitra Barrett (Vice Chair), Alexa McClellan, Christine Estoye, Elizabeth Johnson, Stephanie Parrish, Jordan Hicks, Kat Mortensen, Kelly Griffin, Kristin Nalley, Mary Lee King, Michelle Rigler, Rebecca Littleton, Lance Keatley, Sedrick Snowden, Terry Sanford

Others in Attendance: Robert Ratchford, Chief of UTC Police; Laure Pou, Assistant Vice Chancellor of Human Resources; Julie Brown, Director of Employee Relations; Logan Rader, HR Administrative Support Specialist

Call to Order: Anitra Barrett called the meeting to order.

Introduction to New Term: Members of the council introduced themselves to welcome the new 2022-2024 term.

Campus Security and Safety Measures (Chief Ratchford): Chief Ratchford shared some current initiatives surrounding campus safety. If a critical incident were to occur on UTC's campus (e.g. active shooter incident), the first step for UTC PD is to recommend to the Chancellor's Office an immediate lockdown of the university. A "lockdown scenario" at a university is when the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is immediately and fully activated. This EOC is charged with disseminating information in real time as emergencies like this unfold. As a safety measure, most buildings are outfitted with an electronic access and locking system. UTC PD retains the ability to conduct a sweeping lock of all those facilities in the event of a critical incident. The EOC will also include in their communications protocols to avoid campus if possible, and to stay in place if you are already on site. This also includes working with Auxiliary Services to halt all public transportation and divert active buses to safe areas.

UTC offers training incentives to inform the campus community of best practices in the event of a critical incident. In addition, UTC PD and Emergency Services is more than willing to conduct safety protocol trainings for respective departments, areas, and facilities. These protocols can include shelter-in-place, locking doors, utilizing panic buttons, etc.

UTC Alert is the mechanism through which emergency communications are disseminated to all members of campus. These critical messages can address anything from severe weather to active shooter scenarios, and updates are shared via UTC Alert as information comes in. These messages are also displayed on various screens, including work stations, across campus in the event of a critical incident.

In the event of an active shooter, UTC encourages the practice of “Avoid, Deny, Defend.” The first concern in such an event is to Avoid, or evacuate the area if it is safe. Chief Ratchford expressed that “fight, flight, and freeze” are all standard and normal reactions to a critical incident. If employees are not in a situation where avoidance is feasible, the next step is to “Deny” entry of the potential assailant. This includes actions such as locking and barricading doors, silencing cell phones, and remaining quiet and hidden. If it is safe to do so, contact the police immediately. There are red emergency phones located all around campus and in facilities. These are direct lines to UTC PD. If a critical incident is beyond avoiding and denying, “Defend” yourself at all costs, assessing your environment and surroundings. Chief Ratchford restated that UTC PD and Emergency Services are more than willing to assess or conduct trainings for various departments. Contact them if your department is interested.

As of 2016, there is a campus concealed carry policy for faculty and staff. By law, faculty and staff can carry a concealed weapon if they choose to do so and provided they navigate the proper channels. If faculty/staff have a staff identification card, a valid driver’s license, and a valid handgun permit, they can apply and be properly vetted by UTC Police. This designation is strictly confidential, and you can visit <https://www.utc.edu/finance-and-administration/emergency-services/police> for more information. There is online training available through K@TE for faculty and staff to be aware of procedures surrounding a critical incident such as an active shooter.

For more information, members of campus can view the UTC Annual Security Report on the Emergency Services website: <https://www.utc.edu/finance-and-administration/emergency-services/police/clery-act>

Housekeeping (Anitra Barrett):

- The chairs requested that, going forward, members of the ESC have their cameras on as long as the council meets virtually to engage members and discussion more formally.

- The council voted in favor to continue holding ESC monthly meetings via Zoom. A motion to remain virtual was made by Alexa McClellan, seconded by Mary Lee King. There were no dissenting opinions.
- The council voted in favor of moving the monthly meeting time from 10:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. A motion to adjust the meeting time was made by Mary Lee King, seconded by Michelle Rigler. There were no dissenting opinions.
- The chairs brought forth a suggestion to implement Microsoft Teams for the council. This will allow a more collaborative platform of communication to be utilized. It will save chat histories, track attendance, and serve as an open platform for regular communication and collaboration. A motion to adopt Microsoft Teams was made by Michelle Rigler, seconded by Elizabeth Johnson. There were no dissenting opinions.
- To encourage communication among representatives and their respective employee groups, Anitra opened the floor to discuss the possibility of establishing email (or other) communication strategies for members to share information with their constituents on a regular basis. Jordan Hicks and Alexa McClellan volunteered to brainstorm ideas for effectively sharing information brought forth to the ESC among representative groups.

Role of Human Resources for the ESC (Laure Pou): UTC HR serves as support for both the Exempt Staff Council and the Employee Relations Committee. Laure Pou, Julie Brown, and Logan Rader join each month's meetings to answer any questions, offer clarification on policy, bring forth issues from the UT System and university level for feedback, etc. If members or their constituents have any questions or concerns regarding matters on campus, HR representatives are in the meetings to share information from the administration to the council and vice versa.

2024 Holiday Calendar (Laure Pou): The UT System sets the UT-wide holiday calendar a year in advance. Laure shared the proposed calendar for 2024 to obtain feedback from members of the ESC to be returned to the UT System. The proposed Holiday and Administrative Closing Schedule was shared as follows:

- **Monday, January 1st (New Year's Day)**
- **Monday, January 15th (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)**
- **Friday, March 29th (Spring Holiday)**
- **Monday, May 27th (Memorial Day)**
- **Tuesday, July 4th (Independence Day)**
- **Monday, September 2nd (Labor Day)**
- **Thursday & Friday, November 28th-29th (Thanksgiving)**
- **Monday-Friday, December 23rd-27th (Winter Holiday)**

The UT holiday schedule mirrors the state-wide holiday calendar since UTC is a state entity. Alexa McClellan asked if there had been any consideration regarding the implementation of a Juneteenth (June 19th) holiday. Laure relayed that the UT System has recently been discussing that possibility. As of right now, Juneteenth will continue to be a day of observance rather than a holiday/administrative closure. Employees may request leave to observe this day. The holidays and administrative closures on the calendar that was shared are designated as formal university closure days, and regular employees are compensated without using their leave. Non-exempt employees that work on those days will be compensated for both the holiday/administrative closure and the hours they worked. Juneteenth is designated similarly as holidays such as Presidents' Day, Columbus Day, etc. Regarding the approval thereof, leave requests for these days of observances are subject to approval by their supervisor. Human Resources does encourage supervisors to exercise utmost flexibility and accommodation in assessing these leave requests from employees.

Lance Keatley pointed out that the July 4th date on the proposed calendar should be a Thursday rather than a Tuesday. Laure will share this correction with UT System.

All questions, concerns, feedback, and corrections regarding the 2024 Holiday & Administrative Closing Calendar will to be shared with the UT System.

Staff Engagement Update (Laure Pou): UTC is moving into the “action strategies” phase of the ongoing plan to boost staff engagement across campus. Laure and the Engagement Task Force are scheduling to meet with each member of the Executive Leadership Team to gauge strategies for each of their divisional areas based on data from both surveys conducted in Winter 2021 & Spring 2022. The task force is putting forth proposals based on each area’s needs and achievements thus far. A larger steering committee will soon be formed with more representatives from each division to discuss the proposed strategies for a cohesive university-wide approach.

Blue Ribbon Award (Laure Pou)

- Congratulations to Latisha “Tish” Hubbard, Associate Director for Student Outreach and Support and Case Manager, on receiving the June 2022 Blue Ribbon Award.

Adjournment: Anitra Barrett adjourned the meeting.