

**EXEMPT STAFF COUNCIL**  
**October 19, 2022**  
**Held via Zoom**  
**Minutes**

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

**Others in Attendance:** Julie Brown, Director of Employee Relations; Logan Rader, HR Administrative Support Specialist

**Call to Order:** The October 2022 ESC meeting was called to order by Susan Lazenby.

**Meeting Minutes:** Ms. Lazenby shared the September 2022 meeting minutes with the council, which were subsequently approved by the members, with a motion from Elizabeth Smith.

**ESC Survey:** Susan Lazenby & Anitra Barrett presented to the group the responses to the survey that was previously sent to representative groups for members to first identify the top items on which they want to focus, and then rank them to prioritize one issue at a time. The purpose of this survey and discussion is to collect feedback from exempt staff members on campus, collectively discuss them, and initiate a plan of action or explanation of the questions, concerns, and issues brought forth to the ESC. This could include inviting relevant guest speakers to shed more light on a given topic, communicating these topics to UTC administration and at the UT System level, etc. Let it be known that the categories in which these responses are placed are arbitrary and not yet formalized. Further discussion on this will take place in the November meeting.

**Responses to Question 1 - What ideas or suggestions do you have for the campus at large, your division or individuals?:** The categories for this question's responses included concerns/suggestions regarding compensation and benefits, engagement, the hiring process, mental health, parking costs, and work-from-home/flexible schedules. These categories correspond to representative groups which the ESC members represent.

**Compensation & Benefits:** The suggestion relating to compensation and benefits was to introduce a sliding scale based on paygrade, affecting how much individuals pay for health insurance & benefits. Relevant parties include Groups 1 & 9.

**Engagement:** Suggestions and concerns regarding engagement included better collaboration across campus, providing more opportunities to connect with students and prepare them for life after college, more collaboration between parallel positions (e.g., administrative group), and increasing the number of events for staff to connect. Relevant parties include all groups.

**Hiring:** A comment shared regarding UTC's hiring practices expressed that they are counterproductive, rigorous, and time-consuming, which leads to qualified and diverse candidates accepting other positions during this time. Relevant parties include Group 9.

**Mental Health:** Some suggestions were made involving the mental health of the campus. One commented that UTC should increase efforts, training, and resources toward the mental well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Relevant parties include Group 9 & 12.

**Parking Costs:** In the survey feedback, employees expressed that UTC personnel should receive free parking to offset the financial impact for employees, particularly adjunct faculty and staff. Relevant parties include Group 9.

**Training:** Employees indicated that it would be beneficial for the university to continue offering a variety of training and development opportunities for employees. One particular area of concern involves event management and booking for campus gatherings and events (EMS software). Relevant parties include Groups 9 & 10.

**Work-from-Home/Flexible Schedules:** Several employees expressed via survey feedback that UTC should allow for employees to have the option to work from home or on a flexible work schedule, outside the traditional 9:00 – 5:00 weekday. These were presented in various forms such as continuing to offer employees the options to work-from-home or create a flexible schedule that was previously offered in July to employees, choosing a 4-day work week at 10 hours per day, etc. Relevant groups include Groups 9 & 1.

**Additional Feedback:** Some employees' suggestions were miscellaneous and did not fit neatly into a category. These include an expansion of a university operator phone line to minimize wrong transfers and make campus communication more efficient (Group 10); bolstering transparency surrounding enrollment and recruitment of students, as well as more clarity regarding employee compensation (Groups 11 & 12); and the creation of a central receiving and inventory management department to enhance space management (Group 9).

**Responses to Question 2, What concerns or questions do you have for the campus at large, your division or individuals?:** The categories for this question's responses included concerns/questions regarding enrollment services, mental health, advisement & academic experience, human resources, compensation, infrastructure, etc.

**Enrollment Services:** Employees expressed curiosity regarding a few elements of enrollment and recruitment, particularly as it relates to future expansion projects to grow attendance, as well as tuition costs at UTC compared with other UT System campuses. Relevant parties include Groups 3 & 4.

**Mental Health:** The mental health of students in particular is a point of concern for exempt staff members, particularly student athletes and their balancing school with athletic and other obligations. Relevant parties include Groups 8 & 12.

**Advisement & Academic Experience:** Included in suggestions and concerns surrounding the overall student experience are the quality of advisors at UTC, the variety and amount of required and elective courses offered, and a shortage of housing facilities and/or ability to choose where they reside on campus. Relevant parties include Groups 1, 3, & 12.

**Human Resources:** Several questions, concerns, and suggestions relate to organizational management functions at UTC. These include a desired focus on employee & campus engagement, work-from-home and flexible scheduling, and concerns surrounding employee compensation. One comment in particular suggested that it was difficult to reach employees during the period in which flexible scheduling took place in July 2022. Employees expressed that compensation at UTC is perceived to be subpar in several aspects (lower levels of pay; lack of a clear career ladder for staff; turnover; competitive pay; and retention of talent). Relevant parties include Groups 9 & 1.

**Infrastructure:** These questions and/or concerns relate to both tangible and intangible infrastructure at UTC, including auxiliary services, information technology, parking, etc. It was expressed that inventory could be better centralized to minimize potential financial loss; information distribution systems can always be improved to connect with the campus in a meaningful way; and parking could potentially be improved by extending parking permit availability to August 1<sup>st</sup> for faculty that are hired for the academic year on that same day. Relevant parties include most if not all groups on campus.

**Responses to Question 3, What could the ESC do for the campus at large, your division or individuals?:** The categories for this question's responses span large swaths of campus, advocating for members of the ESC to always continue striving to better the university for students and employees. These range from compensation, work

schedules, town halls and open forums, cultivation of a staff community on campus, and work to improve campus processes and procedures for the campus at large.

**Response Evaluation:** The ESC is separated into groups by their functional areas on campus, so that they can help identify other members of campus to help address comments, questions, and concerns. The goal is to make sure that people feel heard and know that we are doing what we can. There was some discussion among members identifying this role the ESC maintains. Susan Lazenby suggested that the council evaluate and choose items to start working on in November. After some discussion, members decided that Christine Estoye, Elizabeth Smith, and Kat Mortensen are going to work on batching the concerns together to better evaluate them during the November meeting. A guest speaker will be attending next month's meeting to discuss parking questions and concerns.

**Blue Ribbon Award:** Julie Brown presented the Blue Ribbon Award winners for August and September to the group. Joseph McCauley, Academic Advisor in the HUB, is the August Blue Ribbon Award winner. Sandra Cordell, Project and Program Coordinator in the College of Business, is the September Blue Ribbon Award winner. Congratulations and thank you to both Joseph and Sandra for their incredible work and reception of this award.

#### **Other Matters:**

**FMLA Coordination:** Elizabeth Smith asked the Human Resources representatives to whom employees should reach out regarding Family Medical Leave. Sara Harper, Total Compensation Specialist and Benefits Coordinator, is the point of contact on campus for FMLA and other benefits inquiries.

**Representing ESC:** Susan Lazenby informed the group that she will be attending the statewide meeting with other campuses' ESC leaders. Additionally, in December, Ms. Lazenby will be attending another the Safety and Security meeting for the campus as a representative for the ESC. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns for either that you would like her to represent, let her know. She will report back after both meetings about what was discussed.

**Adjournment:** Susan Lazenby motions to adjourn the meeting, with a second from Elizabeth Smith.