

Minutes of the Human Resources and University Relations Committee
University of Kentucky Board of Trustees
Thursday, June 13, 2024

The Human Resources and University Relations (HRUR) Committee of the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees met on Thursday, June 13, 2024, in the Gatton Student Center, Harris Ballroom.

A. Call to Order

Cathy Black, chair of the Human Resources and University Relations Committee, called the meeting to order at 12:16 p.m. and asked Paige Noland to report the attendance.

B. Roll Call

The following members of the Human Resources and University Relations Committee were in attendance: Cathy Black, Hubie Ballard, Brenda Gosney, Lizzie Hornung, David Melanson, Paula Pope, Hollie Swanson and Rachel Webb.

C. Approval of Minutes

Chair Black reported that the minutes of the April 25, 2024, HRUR Committee meeting had been distributed and called for a motion to approve. Trustee Ballard moved approval of the minutes and Trustee Melanson seconded the motion. Hearing no discussion, Chair Black called for a vote and the motion passed without dissent.

D. Project Accelerate: Work Group 4

Chair Black introduced Vice President for Human Resources and Chief Human Resources Officer Melissa Frederick and Vice President for Institutional Diversity Katrice Albert.

Dr. Albert explained that while the current meeting may represent the final formal update on the accelerate project, the work will continue, with a focus on responding to the evolving needs of University employees. She emphasized the group's dedication to improving recruitment and retention through ongoing efforts to better understand the needs of faculty and staff.

Dr. Albert reviewed the progress made since the last meeting, where Vice President Frederick and colleagues from Fidelity had provided insights into the benefits optimization process, including data gathering and listening tours. She highlighted the importance of continued investment in people, which she described as the University's greatest asset.

Dr. Albert provided an overview of the three phases of the benefits optimization project:

- Phase 1: Data gathering and listening tour (Completed)
- Phase 2: Choice modeling and benefits scorecard (Partially completed)
- Phase 3: Strategic roadmap for future benefits and next steps (Ongoing)

Dr. Albert noted that Phase 1 had been completed successfully, with extensive employee feedback gathered through focus groups and market scans. Phase 2, which involves analyzing the feedback and exploring benefits options, is still in progress. She stated that Phase 3 will focus on finalizing a roadmap for future benefits offerings, with a special emphasis on being culturally responsive to the needs of the University's diverse workforce.

Dr. Albert yielded the floor to Vice President Frederick.

Ms. Frederick provided further details on Phase 2, focusing on the future of the benefits exercise, which was designed to better understand employee preferences for benefits offerings. She described the exercise as an essential part of UK's efforts to attract and retain top talent. She reported that 2,593 employees participated in this survey, with a diverse representation across demographics. The data collection was extended by a week to ensure more participation from faculty, which exceeded the targeted sample size.

Ms. Frederick shared some of the key findings from the survey, including a list of 11 potential new benefits identified by employees, such as expanded parental leave, emergency savings accounts and flexible time-off options. She noted that the most highly valued benefits among employees included compensation, retirement savings, paid time off, and health insurance, with compensation being particularly significant for retaining employees.

Ms. Frederick provided insights into employees' perceptions of UK's benefit investment, noting that the average estimated cost of benefits was close to \$23,888 per employee, with actual costs standing at \$22,173.

Ms. Frederick updated the committee on the progress of the UK Invests program, which was initially launched for students but is now being expanded to staff. The program is designed to provide employees with additional benefits and financial support. The first phase of the program will focus on full-time faculty and staff in the lowest income quartile, with invitations extended to the first 500 to enroll. She emphasized that transparent communication with employees about the program's benefits and potential tax implications is essential for its success.

Ms. Frederick reported on the progress of the "Recruit, Hire, Retain" initiatives, which include 33 key projects aimed at improving the employee experience. Of the 33 initiatives, 28 have been completed, with the remaining three well underway. Notably, these include:

- A new employment branding campaign to promote UK as an employer of choice.
- The introduction of new pay equity practices to create greater flexibility in salary offers while maintaining fair pay standards.
- The development of career pathing guidance to support employee growth and professional development.

Ms. Frederick emphasized that career pathing requires individual accountability, as it is not a one-size-fits-all approach but rather a personalized journey for each employee.

Chair Black opened the floor for questions.

Trustee Swanson asked for clarification on the pay equity work, particularly on how it applies to both faculty and staff. She inquired about whether institutional pay equity benchmarks for faculty differ from those for staff, especially considering regional employers for staff roles. Ms. Frederick responded that the pay equity work in this phase focused primarily on staff roles and ensuring competitive salary offers. She confirmed that further discussions about faculty compensation could be explored in future updates.

Chair Black thanked the presenters. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Paige Noland