

Minutes of the Human Resources and University Relations Committee  
University of Kentucky Board of Trustees  
Friday, February 23, 2024

The Human Resources and University Relations (HRUR) Committee of the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees met on Friday, February 23, 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 9:00 a.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, Holly Swanson and Rachel Webb.

C. Approval of Minutes

Chair Black reported that the minutes of the June 15, 2023, HRUR Committee meeting had been distributed and called for a motion to approve. Trustee Melanson moved approval of the minutes and Trustee Ballard seconded the motion. Hearing no discussion, Chair Black called for a vote and the motion passed without dissent.

D. UK@Work Survey Results

Chair Black introduced Vice President for Human Resources and Chief Human Resources Officer Melissa Frederick.

Ms. Frederick began by discussing the survey tool the University uses. She explained that for ten years Willis Towers Watson has collected feedback on the survey that is run every two years. Employees are given two weeks to provide feedback and the 2023 survey took place from September 11 through September 23. Employees answered 62 questions that fall under 16 different categories, along with two open-ended questions to allow text comments. Fifty percent of faculty and 62% of staff responded to the 2023 survey.

She explained that the results in the 16 categories are overwhelmingly very positive. Close attention is paid to sustainable engagement, retention and stress, balance and workload. An additional question that has been added in recent years is, whether employees have another job outside their job at UK, and noted that 13% of UK's employees answered they worked outside of UK, which is an increase since 2021.

Ms. Frederick stated, "There are many reasons why people may take on additional employment, and not all of those are due to their basic needs, we definitely want to make sure

we understand how to best support our employees and peel back the layers on the responses to this question, but as we go forward, we may think differently on how to ask that.”

Next, Vice President Frederick reported on the strengths and opportunities portion of the survey. The results showed the strengths of the performance evaluation and how validating it is for leaders to spend time setting goals and talking to their employees one-on-one. Other strengths included supervision, pay and benefits, and belonging and inclusion. The opportunities included operating effectively, communication, well-being, career development and action planning.

She focused on sustainable engagement and the three levels examined.

- Engaged – Has a rational, emotional and behavioral attachment to the institution.
- Enabled – Works in an environment that supports productivity and performance.
- Energized – Individual physical, interpersonal and emotional well-being at work.

She explained, “When you look at our results from last year, we have an improvement in many areas such as belonging and inclusion, empowerment and stress, balance and workload which are huge areas to make strides in.”

Vice President Frederick shared the report on the question set for sustainable engagement which resulted in 82% favorable overall. These questions were answered by both faculty and staff and included:

- My department colleagues usually get along together.
- I believe strongly in the goals and the mission of the University.
- I am proud to be associated with UK.
- My work gives me a sense of personal accomplishment.
- I would recommend UK as a good place to work.
- My department gives me the equipment/resources I need to do my work effectively.
- My department is able to meet our work challenges effectively.
- I am able to sustain the level of energy I need throughout the workday.

Vice President Frederick provided the scores from the 2015 survey and compared them to the results of the 2023 survey. “You can see that in almost all categories, the exceptions being sustainable engagement and stress, balance and workload, that we have improved, and for those other items we have held our own.”

She acknowledged the opportunities highlighted in the survey results. Some results had declined since the last survey in 2021. “You can see that over 60% of our employees do have worries about their financial state. We also have opportunities to work on related to timely decisions, keeping employees informed, employee retention and accountability.”

Vice President Frederick shared the most improved results since 2021.

- Addressing issues of intolerance and bigotry
- Addressing stress levels at work
- Supervisors and teamwork
- Flexible work schedules
- Employees feeling respected.

She called attention to the flexible work schedules and work location policies that were completed in the summer. “It would appear that much of this work was helpful in moving that score.”

Ms. Frederick shared the nine questions with the greatest improvement since 2015. “You can see that we have made significant efforts over the years in physical working conditions, trust, working relationships, confidence in leadership, open dialogue and ability to connect with leaders.”

She explained the importance of the surveys and participation in the surveys and shared investments that have been made over the years:

- Salary increases
- Starting wages
- Parental leave
- Extended benefits
- Greater access to UK HealthCare

Ms. Frederick described the planned next steps, “We want to continue sharing college and department results because so much of this information will be gathered by leaders across the organization to understand what their employees were thinking when they answered the questions so that they can evaluate changes they can be making at the unit level.” Additionally, she reported that messages will be included in the Supervisor Solutions newsletter highlighting results and instructions to review results with the team. Messages will also be included in the Thrive newsletter to look for results from individual area’s leadership, how employees can support engagement efforts, and what to expect from local action planning.

Trustee Black thanked Vice President Frederick and opened the floor for questions.

Trustee Swanson asked if the issues in career development mostly impact people who are at mid-career and why there is a difference between faculty and staff having the resources they need to perform their jobs. Ms. Frederick explained that the local action plan was developed to help with questions like this and that the results from that would hopefully provide a clearer answer after looking at specific colleges and business units.

Trustee Melanson asked if we would look back at the past ten years of data to see if we can determine which actions may have triggered improvements/declines in survey results. Ms. Frederick explained that they are looking at results and acknowledging what actions have resulted in positive results and continue to work on new ideas to keep improving.

## E. Work Group 4 update

Trustee Black welcomed Vice President for Institutional Diversity Katrice Albert to join Ms. Frederick to discuss the Work Group 4 update, More Employee Recruitment and Retention.

Vice President Frederick summarized the current status of their three key deliverables.

- Complete implementation of the Recruit, Retain and Hire Initiative
- Build a process for review of employee benefits design
- Assist with efforts to expand UK Invests to all UK employees.

Ms. Frederick explained that 21 of the 33 projects within the Recruit, Retain and Hire Initiative have been completed. “These include multiple hires from a single job posting, more support for hiring managers who are in the thick of hiring in terms of giving them information on the hiring process, providing guidance on how to do it well and revamping the University’s annual salary increase process.”

Vice President Frederick discussed the annual increase program and the flexibility that allows leaders within the different colleges and business units to direct annual increases to the areas that need it most urgently.

She reported that UK’s turnover has decreased from 12.9% to 11.2%. This was compared against the College and University Personnel Association (CUPA) data, “While our peers are also experiencing declines in their turnover, our turnover is a full percentage point, 1.08%, while our peers have decreased about a third of UK’s experience or about .37%.”

Ms. Frederick announced that UK had been again named one of America’s best large employers and a Great College to Work For. “These are repeat awards for us, but they are a demonstration of our success as an employer.”

She explained, “We are at the point of implementing an approach to pay equity which should provide our hiring managers with additional flexibility in extending and determining competitive salary offers.” She stressed the importance of ensuring alignment with our brand and the employee and candidate experience. Ms. Frederick shared the partnership with UK Marketing and their focus on efforts to continue to build UK’s strong reputation.

Vice President Frederick discussed the employee benefits design project. She explained that during February, time was spent on the feedback portion of the project. Leadership interviews and focus group sessions took place using a contemporary approach of using technology to gather input from employees. The information obtained was completely confidential.

She explained that they are interested in comparing the University to others in the market. Fidelity was given information by the University and will be providing that information to the University after receiving a benefit scorecard that evaluates the benefits through an inclusivity

lens. Once the feedback sessions conclude, there will be a benefits choice modeling and employees will help to prioritize what is important to them and provide input into the design.

Vice President Frederick provided feedback on themes being seen in the sessions. “Based on those discussions our leaders have confirmed that flexibility is something they hear is needed from their employees. It is driven by our growing workforce, five generations in the workplace and a very competitive job market.” Additionally, they shared concerns about whether employees are aware of the benefits package. Ms. Frederick explained that the virtual focus groups were extended to over 20,000 faculty and staff and so far, 2,304 faculty and staff have participated.

She discussed the positive impacts UK Invests has had on the students. Seeing and learning from these impacts, the team is energized to continue defining what that program may look like for employees in the future.

Vice President Frederick concluded her presentation by introducing a key strategic hire with UK HealthCare, Associate Vice President for Human Resources Frederick Martin. “He brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in organizational change management and HR transformation.”

Chair Black opened the floor for questions. No further questions were asked.

Chair Black thanked the presenters. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:34 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Paige Noland