



# HR UPDATE

Presented to the UNC Staff Assembly  
by UNC System Human Resources  
March 2022

## **RACIAL EQUITY INITIATIVES**

- **CALEA (Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies) Accreditation Results – RETF Recommendation #6**
  - UNC Charlotte Police Department received CALEA Accreditation for their Emergency Communications Center in November 2021
  - UNC Wilmington Police Department was also awarded CALEA Accreditation in November 2021

## RACIAL EQUITY INITIATIVES

- **UNC System Math Pathways for African American Collegiate Transformation (MPAACT) -- Recommendation # 5**
  - This initiative is designed to improve the performance of African American men in gateway and entry level mathematic courses and to increase knowledge regarding the efficacy of different supportive practices for African American men as undergraduate students.
  - Seeking a grant in amount of \$600,000.
  - This work has strong institutional support across all 17 institutions within the UNC System and aligns with the UNC System-level Strategic Plan, which calls on system institutions to close equity gaps for underrepresented populations.

## PROJECT KITTY HAWK – Reaching More Adult Learners

- The state constitution requires the benefits of public higher education to be extended to all people of North Carolina.
- Accessing higher education and relevant training can be challenging for working adults.
- The state budget passed recently by the General Assembly and signed by Governor Cooper appropriated \$97 million for the launch of the Project Kitty Hawk, a nonprofit ed-tech startup that will partner with UNC System universities to serve adult learners.
- *“It’s time to address our obligation to adult learners and veterans and underserved populations in a more comprehensive manner, to stand again for the idea that there’s more than one path to success – to help every person realize their potential...We must stand alongside the very people who need us the most and enable their dreams to take flight.” (UNC System President Peter Hans)*

## **DIVERSITY TRAINING**

- **Are there any plans or hopes to remove the restriction that diversity training cannot be mandatory on campus? I believe this should be allowable or at least left up to the University's discretion.**
  - There is no restriction on individual campuses for providing optional or mandatory diversity training programs for employees.
  - The only state-wide requirements are that all employees receive training on equal employment opportunity and that all supervisors complete the state's Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Fundamentals (EEO/DF) program.

## EXTENSION OF TUITION WAIVER BENEFIT

- **Many staff cannot take time to use the tuition waiver benefit. Could it be used by a family member of the same household or a dependent child? The benefit would still be three classes, so it wouldn't cost the UNC system more than it already does.**
  - The tuition waiver benefit is set by statute, so the university doesn't have authority to make changes. To extend the program to family members, the General Assembly would have to take action.
  - The tuition waiver program is limited to "appropriations-based" courses; there are certain self-supporting academic programs that are not required to provide waivers (e.g., summer school, certain graduate or certificate programs) but many do even though it may cause a loss of income to these programs.
  - Adding spouses and dependents to the benefit, even if leaving it under a three classes cap, might increase use, which does have an impact on campus student support operations, so work would have to be done to estimate the effect of broadening the benefit.
  - Many campuses have provided some kind of fee waiver program for spouses that allows the spouses of employees to waive the fees associated with enrollment (generally about 1/3 of the tuition cost).
  - Around 3,000 employees use the tuition waiver benefit annually (average 2 courses/year).

## CAREER BANDING RECLASSIFICATIONS

- **We are being told on our campus that we cannot reclassify a position with a person in it, so, people are leaving for promotion opportunities and then their positions are being upgraded. Is this a system restriction or a restriction of Career Banding or is this a campus authority issue?**
  - There is no policy restriction on reclassifying a position with an active employee in it.
  - During COVID, there have been temporary system-wide limitations on some classification and compensation actions, along with some restrictions from the state level while the state budget was being finalized, but these limitations have been lifted.

## **SALARY THRESHOLD**

- **Can you provide any updates on the 20% salary threshold for internal UNC employee candidates?**
  - Currently, the state policy provides that review/approval by the System Office of any SHRA increase for any reason (such as hires/transfers from another state entity, reallocations, career progression adjustment, retention, etc.), that is 20% or greater of the employee's current salary.
  - The UNC System Office has been working with the Office of State Human Resources to modify our authority, which should be finalized within the next few months.
  - We expect to remove the 20% pre-approval threshold for all SHRA promotional actions and replace it with an approval threshold that is based entirely on the proposed new salary and its percentage above the classification market rate.
  - The employee's current salary will have no bearing on the pre-approval threshold and internal and external applicants will be treated identically for this purpose. We expect to implement these new rules in May.
  - The 20% threshold would remain for most non-promotional SHRA actions.

## **SALARY THRESHOLD**

- **Can you provide any updates on the 20% salary threshold for internal UNC employee candidates?**
  - For EHRA employees, System HR has two proposed policy revisions approved by the Committee on University Personnel of the UNC Board of Governors last month. The policies will be presented for approval to the full Board at its April meeting.
  - The proposed revisions increase the level of actions that can be delegated to the Boards of Trustees or to the president for most types of permanent and temporary salary adjustments, substantially reducing the need to seek System Office or BOG approval for these actions.
  - The proposed revisions also permit the University to stop using employee current salary in salary decision-making for internal and instead focus exclusively on the employee's positioning within the new salary range and their professional qualifications. This should improve equal opportunity and treat internal and external candidates more equivalently.
  - The proposed revisions centralize development of EHRA non-faculty salary ranges to the System Office, and the System Office developing a comprehensive faculty salary ranges for all campuses (campuses can also request to set their own faculty ranges).

## PAYROLL CYCLE

- **Most UNC institutions have one payroll per month. I have been told that for the change to a twice-monthly pay system to be cost-effective, all the schools in the system would have to change their format at the same time. This is based on the checks for all the institutions being generated by the same subcontractor. Has this change been considered in the past, and what would the likelihood of it ever occurring?**
  - Nine campuses use the shared services payroll center at System Office, the remainder run their own payroll systems. There are a number of issues that impact paycheck frequency, most of which relate to budgetary impacts and accounting.
  - The decision to change payroll cycles is a campus-based decision and would need to be discussed with individual campus leadership. The CHROs and CFOs at the campus would be the best points of contact.

## **NEW LIFE INSURANCE PROGRAM**

- **For the UNC System Life Insurance, we have been told that we will no longer have an option of using NC Flex moving forward (after December). Is that true, or is that being managed from campus to campus? It seems wild that the only way to ensure continuation coverage is by double-paying for months.**
  - The UNC campus life plans and the NC Flex plans are being consolidated into a single supplemental life offering that provides lower premiums and more benefits. We are presently in a transition period.
  - A special enrollment period was provided over the past few weeks for employees to enroll in the program and for existing participants to modify their coverage.
  - Those with existing coverage under the NC Flex program cannot cancel their current coverage until the next enrollment period this fall or until they have a qualifying life event before then.

## **RETENTION AND TURNOVER**

- **Provided the high turnover rate of all UNC System staff, will there be data collected to review internal changes (department to department) and systematic changes (changing between UNC System schools)?**
  - System HR has worked with institutional HR offices over the past several years to refine our turnover data collection. We will be presenting an update on turnover to the Board of Governors this spring and will share that information with the Staff Assembly.
  - Turnover details by campus department, school, or division level would need to be requested from campus HR offices. Reviewing department to department transfers also would be accomplished at the campus-level and would need to be obtained from the campus HR Office.
  - Starting this year, the System Office will be tracking turnover between UNC System campuses, to State Government more broadly, and leaving the UNC System.

## **EHRA INCREASES/PERFORMANCE RATINGS**

- **Can we formalize the evaluation process for EHRA employees to ensure that salary/merit increases are distributed equitably and that there is some accountability of supervision discretion?**
  - Institutions have some discretion in designing their EHRA performance appraisal processes, though most have adopted a program similar to the SHRA appraisal process. Since the process itself is managed at the campus-level, this question would need to be addressed to the applicable campus HR Office.
  - This year, there was an across the board legislative salary increase of 2.5% for all EHRA employees (same as for SHRA employees). In addition, campuses had discretion to provide merit increases through the Annual Raise Process (ARP); however, no funds are provided to institutions for this purpose, so the ability to provide ARP increases may vary by school or division.
  - ARP increases can be provided for a variety of reasons, not just for performance. They may also address equity and retention needs of departments.

## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SIGNATURES

- **For SHRA evaluations, can there be a statement indicating that the signature is an acknowledgment of receipt and agreement? What value or benefit does completing a self-appraisal have for employees?**
  - The standard SHRA appraisal document includes an acknowledgement that the employee has received the appraisal and that their signature does not necessarily mean agreement with statements made in the appraisal or in the ratings assigned. Electronic signatures for online PM systems should have a similar acknowledgement.
  - Self-appraisal are not a required process, though some campuses have made it a standard practice or have made it an optional practice for employees. The main benefits of the self-appraisal are that:
    1. The supervisor can get a better sense of how the employee believes they are functioning in the position, so if there is a difference of opinion, that can be addressed through the process;
    2. Relatedly, this may be a way for employees to share where they are struggling or where additional training/support may be needed so that the supervisor can review development or workflow options; and
    3. The employee may remember additional details from the performance cycle that the supervisor might not recall, which may help provide a more complete picture of the year's performance in the appraisal.

## **STAFF TENURE / EMPLOYMENT PROTECTIONS**

- **Are there any possible provisions for staff tenure or employment protections through the UNC system?**
  - SHRA employees have due process protections provided by statute through the progressive disciplinary and grievance processes. This is called “career status” and is provided to employees once they have completed 12 continuous months of service as a permanent employee in a permanent position. “Career Status” also provides coverage under the reduction-in-force policy for severance pay and re-employment priority.
  - SHRA probationary and time-limited employees do not have career status and are not covered by the disciplinary process and have limited coverage under the grievance process.
  - EHRA non-faculty employment is “at-will” and does not have a statutory basis similar to the SHRA career status. EHRA non-faculty employees receive a notice period (up to three months based on years of service) prior to any discontinuation (or an equivalent pay in lieu of a notice period) and have grievance coverage to address discrimination and other employment issues.

QUESTIONS?

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