

Approved by The University of Texas at Austin Staff Council
and sent forward to the President

by a vote of 34 to 0

on May 19, 2011.

Prepared by The University of Texas at Austin Staff Council
Ad Hoc Committee on Job Security

Erika Frahm, Chair

David Kruse, Vice Chair

Mark Barber, Tony Bumpass, Gloria Holder, Kathryn Kenefick,
Brandi Martinez, Libbie Toler, Robert Walker

Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
In Progress.....	1
Layoffs	2
Proposal One: Require An Exit Evaluation	2
Proposal Two: Special Considerations Status Extension.....	3
Proposal Three: Release Of Annual Data About Use Of Special Considerations Program	3
Performance Evaluations.....	4
Proposal One: Release Average Evaluation Score for Employing Department	4
Proposal Two: Notify Employee of Evaluation Score Entered in Reappointment Document	5
Conclusion.....	5
Appendix A: Job Security Communications Proposal	6
References	8

Executive Summary

The University of Texas at Austin Staff Council ad hoc committee on Job Security has been tasked with examining the issues surrounding key processes related to job security and making recommendations for improvement. Job security is not only about having a job; it's about the ability to be successful in that job and to be able to progress in one's career. For this reason, our focus has centered on two components that affect job security and are of concern to staff on this campus: layoffs and performance evaluations.

We have researched what resources and information are currently available at The University of Texas at Austin and due to that research the Staff Council passed a proposal for changes that went directly to the University of Texas at Austin Human Resource Services (HRS) in Nov 2010 (see Appendix A). Our committee partnered with Human Resource Services on implementing the changes and both groups have been steadily working to accomplish the tasks. The driving principles behind our recommendations is that communication, pro-active involvement, and top level administrative support are all necessary components for job security and job success on this campus. Much of this can be achieved through changes and additions to staff policies and our continued partnership with Human Resource Services. This report outlines what our committee has done so far and our recommendations for the future.

In Progress

In the fall, the Job Security ad hoc committee composed a proposal for recommendations centered on communication strategies in regards to layoffs and performance evaluations (see Appendix A). This proposal was approved by the Staff Council at the November 2010 meeting and submitted to Human Resource Services. Human Resource Services has met with our group to review the website recommendations and has agreed to work on the requests. The current goal, according to Human Resource Services, is to implement the requested web content changes and additions during the summer months.

Human Resource Services is also developing the communications campaign included in our committee's request submitted to them in the November 2010 proposal. Our team has partnered with Human Resource Services to develop content that addresses staff's needs based on feedback we have received from our constituents, such as how to discuss expectations, success, and goals with a supervisor. Resources permitting, the goal is to begin this campaign in the next few months.

Layoffs

We recognize the challenge of budget cuts that directly affect higher education and understand that everyone is affected by staff reductions. A considerate plan can help reduce stress on the staff and the corresponding impact on the University during an already taxing time. In a study done by Deloitte Consulting's Human Capital Group and published by Forbes Magazine, the research indicates that is important to focus on retaining talented employees in order to promote continued and future success. ¹ The data shows that as the economy improves the rate of voluntary job changes increases.

By investing in the staff, the administration can improve the commitment of its staff to the success of the University. The goal of our work is to find feasible ways to treat staff with dignity and show respect for their contributions to the many functions of this campus. This, in turn, will benefit the University.

Proposal One: Require An Exit Evaluation

Currently, employees are not required to receive performance evaluation when they separate from the University of Texas at Austin. A final performance evaluation is a beneficial and essential part of any separated employee's file, especially given that the laid off employees often times carry the same stigma as those who have been fired. An exit evaluation provides important feedback to the employee and can be used as a tool to help with an employee's reemployment within, or outside of, the University.

Therefore, our recommendation is that exit evaluations be required for all employees who are laid off by the University of Texas at Austin. Additionally, we recommend that exit evaluations for laid off employees specifically indicate if separation is without prejudice related to job performance.

¹ Forbes Magazine, "Prepare Now or Lose Your Best Employees Soon" by Jeff Schwartz and Robin Erickson, August 2009

http://www.forbes.com/2009/08/12/talent-employees-retention-leadership-ceonetwork-deloitte_print.html

Proposal Two: Special Considerations Status Extension

The current Special Considerations program exists to assist employees affected by layoffs in finding a new position at The University of Texas at Austin.² This program helps the University retain qualified, experienced talent, thus benefitting the hiring department's efficiency and output by reducing the time and energy spent training a new employee. For departments already dealing with the need to do more with less, experienced talent is a valuable commodity.

Under the existing policy, all program participants are given special consideration status and job placement assistance for 12 months. Due to the continuing high rate of unemployment in Texas³ and the potential staff cuts at the University during the next budget cycle, we are recommending the extension of this program to a period of 18 months following the separation date.

Proposal Three: Release Of Annual Data About Use Of Special Considerations Program

In order to encourage the use of the "special considerations" program, both by affected individuals and by hiring departments, we believe top-level support is crucial. A supportive administration illustrates to staff that their contributions to the University are valued even when budget cuts cause the elimination of staff jobs. Research from The Society for Human Resource Management shows that when employees feel valued by top-level administrators, they are more likely to remain motivated and engaged in their work. In turn, this leads to the high productivity level from employees that is necessary to succeed during an economic downturn⁴.

For this reason, we recommend that all VPs and Deans release data about how many people are hired each year and how many of those individuals were part of the "special considerations" program.

² The University of Texas at Austin Handbook of Operating Procedure, Chapter 9, section 9.48

<http://www.utexas.edu/policies/hopppm/tochop1.html>

³ United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics for January 2001 to March 2011, Texas

http://data.bls.gov/pdq/SurveyOutputServlet?data_tool=latest_numbers&series_id=LASST4800003

⁴ The Society for Human Resource Management, Research Quarterly, Second-Quarter 2010, "Motivation in Today's Workplace: The Link to Performance"

<http://www.shrm.org/Research/Articles/Documents/10-0235%20Research%20Quarterly-Q2-FNL.pdf>

Performance Evaluations

A competent, efficient and professional staff is critical to the continued success of the University. Performance evaluations offer the opportunity for both supervisor and employee to engage in constructive dialogue about the employee's performance⁵. This tool is then used to guide professional development and to help staff understand their role in advancing the University's mission. Performance evaluations are also a critical component in determining merit-based rewards, which is especially critical in a time when raises are limited.⁶ In order to facilitate high quality output and progress in the workplace, performance conversations should be taking place year round and culminating in a yearly performance evaluation. Beginning in the next year, all offices will be required to enter a performance evaluation score for every employee's reappointment.

Proposal One: Release Average Evaluation Score for Employing Department

Performance evaluations are handled differently by departments on this campus and therefore each department's results have different meaning. In order to make the performance evaluation score more valuable, the individual should have a localized point of comparison. Faculty evaluations, called Course Instructor Surveys, began following this model in Fall 2010. According to the Course Instructor Survey Office, this change was motivated by the desire to make a single data point more meaningful. A point of reference, such as the departmental average, does just that.

We recommend requiring the release of the average performance evaluation score for the employing department be given to every employee as part of their performance evaluation results. In recognition of the many viable options that could be used to disseminate this data, our committee suggests a continued partnership with Human Resource Services in order to implement this change in a meaningful and efficient manner.

⁵ The University of Texas at Austin Handbook of Operating Procedure, Chapter 9, section 9.95

<http://www.utexas.edu/policies/hopppm/tochop1.html>

⁶ The University of Texas at Austin Handbook of Operating Procedure, Chapter 9, section 9.24

<http://www.utexas.edu/policies/hopppm/tochop1.html>

Proposal Two: Notify Employee of Evaluation Score Entered in Reappointment Document

Due to the importance of evaluations, it is important that individuals be able to trust that the scores attached to their file are accurate. We realize human error is a possibility when entering any data, therefore, we recommend that the performance evaluation score listed in an employee's electronic reappointment document via the Human Resource Management System (HRMS) be sent out to the employee for verification purposes.

Conclusion

The University of Texas at Austin Job Security ad hoc committee on Job Security focused on one of the University's most important resource: its employees. We believe that the above recommendations will benefit both the University and the staff during these difficult budget times. By implementing our recommendations, the University will help to reduce the anxiety and fear that stems from uncertainty about job security, as well as, maintain good relationships with all employees as we all navigate the challenging economic climate. The Committee believes that these recommendations should be implemented as soon as possible and with the commitment of the University administration.

Appendix A: Job Security Communications Proposal

The Staff Council requests that Human Resource Services provide all staff with more information concerning both the layoff and performance evaluation processes. It is our belief that easy to find and comprehensive information is an effective first step in reducing the anxiety surrounding these topics.

In regards to layoffs, our preference would be for HRS to add a “Layoffs” topic to the opening page of UT HRS’s “Current Staff” tab of their web site. However, with respect to the sensitive nature of this subject, if HRS does not feel it’s appropriate to add the tab in this location then we suggest that this information either be categorized as a subsection of the current “Separating from the University” link or housed on the opening page for current staff, but renamed per HRS’s discretion. Included in this new “Layoffs” section we would like to see the following information:

1. A clear explanation of the steps a department must follow in order for a layoff to be approved by UT’s HR, including what factors are considered in determining who is laid off.
2. A clear explanation of how a layoff is reflected in the employee’s official record and the encouragement of exit evaluations.
3. A list of resources available to a laid off employee including, but not limited to, EAP information, the Special Consideration program, and work time allowance for job search.
4. Information on the 60 day minimum notification policy, clearly enumerating the job-related benefits that remain in place during those 60 days (i.e. email service, insurance, paycheck, etc.).
5. Information on Special Consideration Status.
 - Current Definition: A Human Resource Services program that helps employees who are being separated from employment due to reorganization, workforce reduction, or lack of funding locate available campus positions for which they are qualified.
 - Recommended Definition: A Human Resource Services program that helps employees who are being separated from employment “without prejudice” due to reorganization, workforce reduction, or lack of funding locate available campus positions for which they are qualified.
6. Details about what happens to all types of accrued leave (sick, vacation, floating holidays, etc.).
7. Details about how the layoff affects a person’s retirement plan.

Due to the fact that layoffs are already occurring and may continue for some time, we ask that this portion of our request be given top priority.

In regards to the Performance Evaluation process, we request that HRS add a “Performance Evaluation” topic to the opening page of UT HRS’s “Current Staff” tab of their web site. Included in this new section we would like to see the following information:

1. A simplified explanation of the official university policy regarding performance evaluations as it currently exists in Sec. 9.95 Performance Evaluation Policy for Classified Personnel and Non-Faculty Professional Staff of the Handbook of Operating Procedure.
2. Details about what is put in an employee’s official record, how to request a copy of what is put in your record, and how to contest any discrepancies.

3. An explanation of what performance appraisals must include in order to be approved by HRS and links to all approved appraisal forms.
4. Information about any current rating systems (are they standard or are there options, etc.).
5. Statement that annual performance evaluations are mandatory and may be associated with an individual's merit raise.
6. Clarification of the procedural guidelines as established in Sec. 9.95 of the Handbook of Operating Procedure.
7. Talking point guidelines for the employee to facilitate productive communication with a manager. Ideas include, but would not have to be limited to, how to discuss and set expectations, how to find out what "success" equates to, how to check in with a manager throughout the year, and how to plan for future success.
8. Information about how to improve and how to create a performance/development plan. This should include links to the resources available through CareerSmart.

After these changes have been made to the HRS website, we request that HRS disseminate the changes and new additions to all staff, resources permitting, in multiple ways to reach the most people effectively (i.e. all staff email, On Campus and Daily Texan articles, HRS Spotlight, etc.). We recognize that some of this information may change over time, so we would like those updates to be substituted for the requests listed above. We also ask that this information be made available on paper, in English and Spanish if possible.

The Staff Council also requests, resources permitting, that HRS develop a long-term, regularly occurring pro-active communication series related to performance management (i.e. "Performance Conversation Series"). HRS could do staggered emails (and archive the info on their website) to both managers and staff throughout the year about performance management topics. Starting at the beginning of a fiscal year, both managers and non-managers would receive information about how to set expectations and how to discuss the way success will be measured. Mid-year, everyone would get information about how to discuss individual progress with your manager/those you are managing and how to make meaningful adjustments as needed. Lastly, everyone would be sent best practice guidelines about how to handle the formal evaluation process and how to use those results to plan for the future. Again, we ask that this information be available in paper form and, if possible, some type of face-to-face presentation such as a forum.

References

This list references all documents referenced within the text as well as text read by committee members in preparation for the creation of this report.

Forbes Magazine, “Prepare Now or Lose Your Best Employees Soon” by Jeff Schwartz and Robin Erickson, August 2009

http://www.forbes.com/2009/08/12/talent-employees-retention-leadership-ceonetwork-deloitte_print.html

The University of Texas at Austin Handbook of Operating Procedure, Chapter 9, section 9.48

<http://www.utexas.edu/policies/hoppm/tochop1.html>

United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics for January 2001 to March 2011, Texas

http://data.bls.gov/pdq/SurveyOutputServlet?data_tool=latest_numbers&series_id=LASST48000003

The Society for Human Resource Management, Research Quarterly, Second-Quarter 2010, “Motivation in Today’s Workplace: The Link to Performance”

<http://www.shrm.org/Research/Articles/Documents/10-0235%20Research%20Quarterly-Q2-FNL.pdf>

The University of Texas at Austin Handbook of Operating Procedure, Chapter 9, sections 9.24, 9.48, and 9.95

<http://www.utexas.edu/policies/hoppm/tochop1.html>

Partnership for Public Service, “The Best Places to Work in the Federal Government”

<http://bestplacetowork.org/BPTW/rankings/>