TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

TFS Employee Advisory Council (EAC) Meeting Minutes
July 09, 2013
TFS HQ, Room 1164, College Station, TX

- The meeting was called to order at 10:02am. The minutes from the meeting held on March 12, 2013 were approved as read by all present. Ideas/concerns sent in by employees include:

Idea/Concern	Solution/Action(s) to be Taken
"The posting of the EAC minutes isn't announced in an agency-wide email. I don't think a lot of people are aware of the work that this committee does. If its work were publicized, the work of the members might be better recognized and more ideas might be contributed. It would be a win-win situation."	An e-mail will be sent out to all TFS personnel announcing the posting of the minutes on the TFS Website.
"It's very difficult to locate TFS Task Books. When staff requests one it's a struggle to find it. It's impossible to get a promotion without a Task Book. This makes advancement within the agency problematic."	Professional Development Coordinator will discuss with key personnel in the divisions to see about consolidating Task Books/EDMs and having them placed in an electronic repository that all personnel can access (Supervisor's Toolbox on website, link in EPSTAR, etc.).
"I would like to see more explanations in the periodic 'Updates to the Administrative Procedures Manual' emails that TFS personnel receive. There are explanations when the update is to rules and policies. However, when it refers to the Employee Pay Plan it doesn't give any details. There isn't any indication of which position was added or removed, or if the pay ranges(s) was lowered or raised."	The Pay Plan is not intended to provide information to this level of detail.
"What exactly determines an employee being classified as an Office Associate vs. a Business Associate? After reviewing the PD's on each, it appears that both are doing the same job. The concern is there is a $1/hr pay difference between the two."	The committee agreed that this is not a concern for the EAC. This should be addressed through the individual who submitted the concern's normal chain-of-command.

EAC Minutes-July 2013

Idea/Concern	Action(s) to be Taken
"What happens to the money left unclaimed/unused in the Flexible Spending Account for Health Care? At a previous job this money was deposited equally into the Flexible Spending Accounts of the participants for the next FY. A&M currently doesn't do this."	The unspent ('extra') money goes back into the administration of the accounts; specifically the Flexible Spending Accounts.
"TFS pay stubs don't show A&M's contribution to employees' retirement. The percentage that A&M contributes is published and can be calculated, but it would be convenient if it were printed on our pay stubs along with the employee's contribution. Other contributions (Medical ins., dental, etc.) are shown. Additionally, the stub doesn't show YTD contributions for all items. If it did it might make us appreciate the contribution more."	See attached e-mails from the A&M System Retirement Coordinator and Employee Benefits Manager.
"In effort to improve agency moral and increase employee retention at no cost to the agency, I suggest the implementation of a 9/80 work schedule, allowing employees to receive every other Friday off, by working 80 hours in 9 days versus the traditional 10 days. Participation could be subject to supervisor approval and could be rotation based to maintain the current level of service at all TFS offices."	Refer to TFS Administrative Procedure 10.29 – Flexible Work Arrangements for detailed information. Administrative Procedures Link
"I would like to see TFS have an institutionalized way for employees to recognize their co-workers. It could be a $25 Dinner for Two for a co-worker who helped you get a job done/went above and beyond his/her job description, etc. It could be in the form of a 'kudo-gram' - a bit lame, but at least it would be nice to get the recognition and thanks."	Monetary awards such as gift certificates are prohibited because they are considered as compensation and would require withholding. However, supervisors and managers are not restricted from recognizing employees with a personal congratulations if s/he so desires.

Idea/Concern	Solution/Action(s) to be Taken
"I've had multiple employees ask us to review and update the dress code to include nice capris on weekdays, as well as nice sleeveless blouses and dresses. They'd also like it to be updated to reflect all TFS employees (when not in uniform) and not just for HQ folks."	A sub-committee of the EAC has been established to review the current TFS dress code, as well as other uniform related issues. The sub-committee is due to report back at the next EAC meeting.
"I've had a couple folks bring up some concerns about our "lactation station" for new moms – essentially a vacant, lockable office where new moms can go to pump during the day. A temporary set up has been located in one of the rooms in the vacant suite across the hall from the director's office. But it's becoming decidedly less private as different groups get assigned rooms and keys to the suite."	A vacant office in the suite across the hall from the Director's Office suite has been utilized for a lactation station when the need has arisen. The room has a lockable door to ensure the privacy of the person utilizing it. The suite has been used for storage and the conference room is used, but this should not impact the privacy of the room used for a lactation station. If an employee using the room has concerns about privacy, she needs to contact someone in Employee Development.

- Next Meeting Date: TBD
- Meeting adjourned at 11:59am.

Bunch, Kelly

From:	Meyer, Sheri L. <S-Meyer@tamus.edu>
Sent:	Friday, July 12, 2013 10:31 AM
To:	Bunch, Kelly
Cc:	Gerescher, Ellen
Subject:	RE: TFS EAC Question from Employee

Kelly,

Previously, the employer contribution to TRS was included on the pay statements for employees who contributed to TRS. However, a few years ago we decided to take a look at this number the A&M System was providing due to system issues. It was decided to remove the contributions from the statements because it is not a true reflection of the TRS member's account.

The A&M System is required to contribute the legislated state rate to TRS for each employee who is a member of TRS. However, this amount does not go into the member's TRS account. It goes to the TRS fund. The employee is paid a monthly benefit upon retirement based on a formula. If the employee chooses to distribute the TRS account, instead of taking monthly payments, the employee will only receive his/her contributions plus interest. The employee will not receive the state contributions. What the A&M System pays into TRS is not directly related to the TRS member and is not relevant to the benefit the TRS member will receive. Therefore, we removed it from the pay statements. Conversely, ORP participants do have the amount the A&M System contributes on their pay statements because it is relevant in a defined contribution account where the contributions are retained after vesting.

There is an "*" on the pay statement explaining the reasoning behind not including this amount for TRS. It states "The A&M System contributes to TRS based on a percentage of your salary, set by the Texas Legislature. The amount sent to TRS is not used in determining your TRS benefit at retirement."

Let me know if you have any further questions.

Thank you,

Sheri Meyer | Retirement Coordinator
Benefits Administration
s-meyer@tamus.edu

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THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
RETIREMENT PROGRAMS

From: Gerescher, Ellen
Sent: Thursday, July 11, 2013 3:42 PM
To: Meyer, Sheri L.
Subject: FW: TFS EAC Question from Employee

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From:	Gerescher, Ellen <EGerescher@tamus.edu>
Sent:	Friday, July 12, 2013 1:46 PM
To:	Bunch, Kelly
Cc:	Dixon, Bill (Contact)
Subject:	RE: TFS EAC Question from Employee

In addition to the information provided by Sheri Meyer, our Retirement Plans coordinator, I would add that the Yearly Amounts (not necessarily year-to date) amounts can be found on the Total Compensation Statements provided every November. In addition, in HRConnect under the Payroll Data tab, you can see the calendar year-to-date totals for Federal income tax withholding, Social Security and Medicare deductions.

(Kelly – I noticed Sheri did not copy Bill on her email; would you forward him a copy?)

Thanks and let me know if you have any questions.
Ellen

> **From:** Bunch, Kelly [mailto:kbunch@tfs.tamu.edu]
> **Sent:** Thursday, July 11, 2013 11:34 AM
> **To:** Gerescher, Ellen
> **Cc:** Dixon, William B.
> **Subject:** TFS EAC Question from Employee
>
> Ellen,
>
> Please see attached. This is the other question that I was referring to.
>
> Thanks for your help.
>
> *Kelly N. Bunch*
> Professional Development Coordinator
> Texas A&M Forest Service
> 200 Technology Way, Suite 1120, College Station, TX 77845
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> Cell: (979)204-3541