Resolution 21-01, Regarding Combined Impacts of the Suspension on HR Actions and the University’s Acute Budgetary Challenges on Compensation Equity and Career Progression

RESOLUTION OF THE EMPLOYEE FORUM
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

February 3, 2021

WHEREAS, it is the stated mission of the Employee Forum to seek out and address constructively issues affecting Staff, Faculty and Students of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and

WHEREAS, these concerns include the welfare of staff employees who, since early 2020, continue to exert extraordinary efforts to implement University initiatives during the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic; and

WHEREAS, University EHRA Non-Faculty and SHRA employees remain essential partners in the pursuit of outcomes associated with the University’s strategic plan, Carolina Next: Innovations for Public Good, as endorsed by the UNC Chapel Hill Board of Trustees on January 30, 2020; and

(I)
WHEREAS, Objective 1.1—under Carolina Next strategic initiative 1, "Build Our Community Together"—calls for efforts to "invest in policies, systems, and infrastructure that promote belonging, community and transparency throughout the University community;" and

WHEREAS, Objective 8.1—under Carolina Next strategic initiative 8, "Optimize Operations"—calls for efforts to "design, implement, execute, assess, and continuously improve the administrative operations that support the University’s mission of teaching, research and public service;" and

WHEREAS, the UNC System Racial Equity Task Force draft recommendations1, released on November 10, 2020, regarding "representation and retention at all levels of the University," includes the potential strategy to "review equitable pay, promotion, and tenure practices, assess strength and growth opportunities, and develop actionable plans for improvement" at each of the constituent institutions of the UNC System; and

WHEREAS, the Employee Forum report, Effects of COVID-19 on the Employees of UNC-Chapel Hill and Recommendations for Senior Leaders2, released in October 2020, reported that 12 percent of survey respondents explicitly stated they were working more or harder than was typical prior to the emergence of the pandemic; and

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WHEREAS, the *Effects of COVID-19* report documented evidence-based recommendations for the University, including: ‘Provide Additional Compensation’ (p. 5) and ‘Protect Vulnerable Staff’ (p. 6); and

WHEREAS, existing structures for compensating UNC employees for their exhaustive (and, frankly, exhausting) contributions to sustain University operations during the prior year’s dual public health and economic crises are insufficient to remedy the situation; and

WHEREAS, a strain on UNC employees of such magnitude deters progress toward the achievement of objectives from *Carolina Next*, particularly “Build Our Community Together” and “Optimize Operations;” and

WHEREAS, EHRA employees may receive supplemental pay, as overloads and salary supplements, in accordance with the University’s *Policy on Supplemental Pay for EHRA Employees*; and

WHEREAS, these supplemental pay procedures are intended to "address temporary increases in responsibility or significant and substantial duties performed under unusual circumstances outside of normal work hours;" and

WHEREAS, SHRA employees are not eligible for similar forms of compensation within the University’s authority when their responsibilities or duties increase due to temporary or unusual circumstances, including increased work volume; and

WHEREAS, authority for pre-approving temporary salary adjustments for SHRA employees resides with the UNC System Office (1) “when the cumulative amount of all currently active temporary salary adjustments in the current fiscal year exceeds 20% of the most recent June 30th base salary” and (2) when the temporary adjustment “exceeds 12 months in duration...regardless of the amount of that adjustment” in close consultation with the North Carolina Office of State Human Resources;

WHEREAS, "Retroactive [SHRA] salary increases are not allowed, unless mandated by a legislative action;" however, "except when correcting an administrative error or other exceptional circumstances [emphasis ours], out-of-cycle [EHRA] salary increases are authorized only on a current and not a retroactive basis;" and

WHEREAS, UNC employees, in order to be compensated for their increased work volume since early 2020, have two disparate processes to which they may appeal based on their appointment type: (1) to UNC, where an interpretation of ‘other exceptional circumstances’ could grant relief on a retroactive basis for EHRA employees; and (2) to the System Office, NC OSHR, and, ultimately, the North Carolina General Assembly, where legislative mandates are the sole mechanism for temporarily increasing

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4 https://hr.unc.edu/employees/class-comp/policies/supplemental/
5 https://hr.unc.edu/employees/class-comp/policies/salary-increase/
6 https://hr.unc.edu/employees/class-comp/career-banding/
7 https://hr.unc.edu/employees/class-comp/policies/salary-increase/
compensation for SHRA employees who have performed additional work while supporting the University during the pandemic;

WHEREAS, no UNC employee should have to acquiesce the workplace protections associated with an SHRA appointment in order to receive the benefit of compensation processes akin to those governing EHRA employees; and

WHEREAS, expanding compensation tools for SHRA employees is one part of career growth and development\(^8\), and,

(II)
WHEREAS, Objective 3.2—under Carolina Next strategic initiative 3, "Enable Career Development"—calls to "provide University staff with systematic professional development options, enabling them to grow career opportunities;" and

WHEREAS, strategic opportunities under Objective 3.2 include "recruitment and retention," and "professional development opportunities to facilitate career advancement for staff"\(^9\), and

WHEREAS, the current career banding system for SHRA employees was designed as a compensation and classification system,\(^10\) and not a system to specifically nurture career advancement within the University; and

WHEREAS, the current career banding compensation system for SHRA employees lacks additional temporary compensation mechanisms available for EHRA Non-Faculty employees (as detailed above); and

WHEREAS, the current career banding compensation system for SHRA employees creates perverse and inequitable compensation outcomes for internal job candidates seeking new positions at the University compared to those of offered to selected candidates coming from outside of the University; and

WHEREAS, the objectives for Carolina Next under strategic initiative 3, "Enable Career Development," are disjoint from issues of compensation and classification, career advancement within the University, and succession planning within campus units, which diminishes the potential this strategic initiative has to advance necessary and equitable structural changes which benefit both the University and the committed, high-performing employees who work here..

\(^8\) [https://carolinanext.unc.edu/career-development/](https://carolinanext.unc.edu/career-development/) Environmental Scan section
\(^9\) [https://carolinanext.unc.edu/career-development/](https://carolinanext.unc.edu/career-development/)
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Employee Forum urges the Chancellor and his Cabinet to:

- Advocate for the UNC System Office (and, in turn, the NC Office of State Human Resources and the North Carolina General Assembly) to expand the financial tools available to UNC and/or the UNC System to retroactively compensate SHRA employees on a temporary basis for additional work duties undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic, including (1) expanding the definition of additional duties to include increases in the volume of work performed, and (2) offering mechanisms for supplemental and overload salary adjustments on par with those available to ERHA employees.
- Undertake a campus review of 'other exceptional circumstances' language regarding EHRA Non-Faculty salary adjustments in order to expand the applicability of the salary adjustment policy to include increases in the volume of work performed.
- Advocate for the UNC System Office to resume their exploration of alternative compensation systems, including those used by state agencies to address long standing compensation and career development issues, which we recognize may be a 3- to 5-year process.
- Empower Team Captains and Strategic Objective Leads for the "Enable Career Development" strategic initiative of Carolina Next to incorporate additional objectives regarding career progression within the University, critical reviews of current and alternative employee compensation systems insofar as those systems constrain the hiring and retention of UNC Employees.

Signed on behalf of the Delegates of the Employee Forum

Shayna Hill, Chair