

Exempt Staff Council

Tuesday, July 28, 2020, 2:30-4:00 pm

Via Zoom

MEETING MINUTES

Present

Eric Amos, Brad Briggs, Brian Browning, Emma Burgin, Jessica Cantu, Tom Cervone, Joe Christian, John Goddard, Kim Hardaway, Elisha Hodge, James Hodge, Rita Jackson, Janet Jones, Mary Lucal, Amber Mathes, Heath Nokes, Charles Primm, Julie Roe, Theresa Sears, Michael Smith-Porter, Kevin Thompson, Ken Wagner, Norma Wilcox

Absent

Jeannine Berge, Kevin Frye, Johnny Jones, John Rich, Kaley Walker

Welcome

Charles Primm, Chair & Office of the Chancellor Representative, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced himself to the group. This was the first meeting for the 2020-21 academic year, and Mr. Primm led the group in introducing themselves and welcoming new representatives.

New Business

1. Commission Representation

Commission for LGBT People

Mr. Primm called for volunteers to represent the Council on the Commission for LGBT People. Tom Cervone volunteered to continue serving in this role for the new academic year.

Faculty Senate

Mr. Primm called for volunteers to represent the Council at Faculty Senate meetings. John Goddard volunteered to serve in this role for the new academic year.

Commission for Women

Mr. Primm called for volunteers to represent the Council on the Commission for Women. Amber Mathes volunteered to serve in this role for the new academic year.

Commission for Blacks

Mr. Primm called for volunteers to represent the Council on the Commission for Blacks. Elisha Hodge volunteered to continue serving in this role for the new academic year.

2. Election of a 2nd Vice Chair for 2020-21

Mr. Primm called for volunteers to serve as the 2nd Vice Chair. Julie Roe clarified that if multiple volunteers were interested the position could be voted upon, but if only one volunteer stepped up the position could be filled. Kim Hardaway confirmed that if a vote was needed it would be a simple plurality vote.

After the meeting Tom Cervone volunteered to continue to serve as 2nd Vice Chair for the new academic year.

3. Discussion/Other Business

Constituent Issue/Concern(s):

Q: “What relief is the university granting parents of children who will be in school online from time to time this fall? My children will start at least the first two weeks remotely.”

A: Dr. Lucal acknowledged that this is question is being routinely asked across campus. She said the broader question is what the situation will be like for staff this fall. She clarified that the broader question involves not only children being at home for a variety

of reasons (i.e. child must stay home for self-isolation or for virtual learning) but also for staff who identify as a person who fits into a vulnerable category.

Dr. Lucal noted that the Chancellor and her staff have hosted several town halls over the course of the spring and summer months. She said the guidance that was provided was that campus leadership should be flexible with those who are in a vulnerable category as defined by the CDC. She encouraged everyone to visit the CDC website for more information about vulnerable populations, and said the list of vulnerable categories has grown and evolved since the spring.

She said that, with regard to [return to work](#), if someone is in a vulnerable category then their supervisor should be working with them to see if it is still appropriate for that person to do some level of continued telecommuting. The area of most concern for the fall are those areas that provide direct student services. She went over the plan for students' return to campus and start of classes, and emphasized that the intention is to have people available to assist with the multitude of student needs that will come up. The goal is to find a staffing balance of having enough people in the office to provide essential services but also to be protect the health of faculty and staff. For those who are waiting to find out if they will return to the workplace full time, she said that they should have a conversation with their supervisor if they have not already.

Dr. Lucal emphasized that campus has taken extremely good care of staff members, having been fully paid through the different phases and flexibility has been shown. She would like for staff, in turn, to work with the university this fall so that our areas are properly (adequately?) staffed.

Janet Jones discussed her experience of faculty and staff at the Veterinary Medical Center working together in groups to discuss child care issues. Dr. Lucal affirmed that, because of the setting, the Center is dealing with a specific set of challenges. She acknowledged that we are all building plans as we go, and thanked Ms. Jones for sharing and for the creativity the department is showing.

Julie Roe shared that when dealing with child care or health care issues for staff she encourages employees to talk to their supervisors, and to think creatively about how we can work through this fall together. She mentioned the [Families First Coronavirus Relief Act \(FFCRA\)](#) provides some leave relief for child care. Dr. Lucal clarified that FFCRA is not intended for employees whose children who are virtual learners, but would apply if they have a child of an age who cannot stay home alone or for those who have a child whose daycare is closed due to COVID. Affected employees could be eligible for some partial pay through the federal act through December 31, 2020. Those who would like more information can [contact Michelle Currier in Human Resources](#). She also shared that information about FFCRA is also available in the [Return to Campus Training in Canvas](#).

Dr. Lucal closed by acknowledging that finding a balance of having enough staff in-office to carry out regular operations can be a mindset-changer for supervisors. She said she and Ms. Roe are working with departments across campus to think through this issue, and that one of the things to consider are staff cross working in other areas in their departments to meet coverage needs. She shared that maintaining adequate coverage when people are unavailable will require creative thinking and everyone to work together to meet the needs of our customers, whether students, faculty or staff. She also said managing expectations of how things are done normally compared to this new environment and turnaround time will be important.

Dr. Lucal said she would like for those who will be returning to campus in the near future to particularly become familiar with [wearing face coverings](#), completing the [daily health self-screening](#), [cleaning and disinfecting spaces](#), and [maintaining social distancing](#). She acknowledged that returning to work in this new environment takes some time to get used to. She was hopeful that everyone's spaces have been cleaned and workspaces made ready for people returning to the office. She shared that Mr. Primm's [News and Information department](#) within the Office of Communications and Marketing have done a great job of messaging good habits and expectations, and that part of that is understanding that we have made a commitment to bring everyone back to a safe environment. If anyone has questions or concerns she asked that they contact Ms. Roe.

Dr. Lucal then acknowledged that areas like the Veterinary Medical Center and Facilities Services never closed. For those areas that did she wants for them to ensure that their spaces are ready for staff to return. Ms. Jones shared that they experienced that students not recognizing the need to continue to social distance off-campus to be a concern. Dr. Lucal said that, given numbers for our area, to not be surprised or alarmed if people in your areas go into self-isolation. She asked the group to be ready to work through this new type of environment.

Ken Wagner shared his experience getting things ready in Henson Hall. He said for those who work in academic buildings like Henson to be aware classrooms and common areas may not yet be cleaned. He said his understanding is that Facilities Services is working through them before the start of classes. Dr. Lucal remarked that she's less concerned about common areas and more about suites and areas behind doors that will need spaces marked off, furniture decreased, and six foot indicators and stanchions put into place. Mr. Wagner said he and his department's Director of Budget and Operations marked off where signage will go and social distancing spaces. They did not do all of their faculty member's offices but he said many of their faculty will be teaching remotely this fall. He noted that some of the signage has to be ordered and some has been made available to print.

Mr. Primm shared the [UTK Coronavirus website](#), and affirmed that Dr. Lucal has been instrumental in the information gathered on it. He said his office posted the site and keeps it updated as information changes.

Ms. Jones shared a new constituent question shared with her today that she was advised of some new departmental employees whose paperwork not being processed quickly enough for payroll deadlines for direct deposit. Dr. Lucal shared that to the best of her knowledge she has not heard about this problem. Ms. Jones shared that Jennifer Daniels in the College of Veterinary Medicine and Connie Walden in UTK Human Resources are looking into the problem.

Meeting Planning and Discussion:

Mr. Primm moved that, given the current situation, it makes sense to continue to hold ESC meetings via Zoom through the end of the 2020 calendar year. The group re-evaluate the feasibility of returning to in-person meetings in January 2021.

Mr. Primm explained to new members how guest speakers are scheduled to visit with the group. The only currently confirmed speaker for this fall is Chancellor Plowman, who will be speaking at the November meeting. Her visit was rescheduled from the spring, and Mr. Primm voiced that the group is looking forward to hearing from her. He asked that those with suggestions for future guest speakers to contact him.

John Goddard asked to confirm that minutes from this meeting would be distributed. Mr. Primm affirmed they would be.

Michael Smith-Porter asked for advice as a new representative how he should share that information with his constituents. Julie Roe shared that constituent lists allow representatives to have contact information. Mr. Primm suggested sharing minutes by entering constituent email addresses as BCC. He also suggested emailing constituents about a week prior to the next meeting to ask for constituent concerns and to relay those questions to the Chair to add to the Agenda. The Chair will in turn relay the questions to Human Resources, who will research the question and provide an answer during the meeting.

Mr. Primm also noted that representatives can be asked to represent constituents during disciplinary hearings. Dr. Lucal described the training provided for being in a disciplinary setting, and she and Ms. Roe went over how that training has taken place in past years. Mr. Primm said he would like to schedule a training for a future meeting to help new representatives better understand that role.

Announcements & Other Comments

- Sick Leave Bank Open Enrollment

- Ms. Roe shared that [Sick Leave Bank open enrollment](#) is currently underway. She noted that it was extended back by several months due to COVID, and the new deadline is August 31, 2020. The two local banks are the Knoxville-Area/UTSI and UTIA. She encouraged everyone who is not a current member of the bank who is interested to look for messaging that should have already arrived via email, visit hr.utk.edu or contact SickLeaveBank@utk.edu.
- Virtual Training Opportunities
 - [Learning & Organizational Development](#) are offering several Zoom learning opportunities, and also recently kicked off new sessions of UConnect for non-exempt staff and UTILA (UT Inclusive Learning Academy) for exempt staff. Their ongoing [learning opportunities](#) include Mindset Mondays, Tuesdays Telecommuting with Children session, and on Wednesdays alternate Leadership sessions and Professional Development sessions. Those interested can [sign up for the L&OD Listserv](#).
- Financial Wellness Series
 - Ms. Roe shared that the last event in the Financial Wellness Series will be “How to Manage Your Finances” will be held via Zoom on September 17, 2020, from 11:30 p.m. to 12:30 p.m. Those interested in attending may RSVP by emailing UTKHR@utk.edu. As a reminder, anyone attending four or more of the financial series classes will have their name entered for a drawing to be held at the September 2020 session.
- OPTUM Programs
 - Ms. Roe shared that OPTUM, our [Employee Assistance Program provider](#), will be offering virtual training for groups of employees on a variety of topics including healthy eating and living in uncertain times. A flyer with more information can be found in the distributions section of the minutes.
- CBT Update
 - Tom Cervone shared with the group that the [Clarence Brown Theatre](#) will be going dark for the fall, but that they have online offerings to share. Students and faculty are offering virtual [Theatre Thursdays](#) and [CBT Stories](#). He acknowledged it is a difficult time for arts and culture because of public gathering limitations, but as long as they are unable to produce live theatre they will continue these virtual offerings through the fall and may also include some Zoom readings.

Distributions

- [OPTUM – Upcoming Sessions](#)

Next Meeting:
 Tuesday, August 28, 2020 via Zoom

Please send agenda items to Jessica Cantu at jlcantu@utk.edu

