
PRESENT

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

ABSENT

Jeannine Berge, Brian Browning, Rita Jackson, Mary Lucal, Kevin Thompson, Kaley Walker

1. WELCOME

Charles Primm, Chair and Office of the Chancellor Representative, welcomed everyone to the September meeting.

2. GUEST SPEAKERS

a. Insurance - Annual Enrollment – Rob Chance, Director of Payroll

Rob Chance greeted the group and announced that [annual enrollment](#) will be from Thursday, October 1, 2020 to Friday, October 16, 2020, ending at 4:30 p.m. CT. He said health insurance premiums will be going up by 2.8% and the Cigna dental pre-paid plan premium will increase by 3%. He said the state put the dental preferred provider organization (DPPO) up for bid this year. The DPPO vendor bid was awarded to Aetna, but Metlife and Cigna protested the bid because of concerns about the promised provider network. As a result, dental options for 2021 are the same as 2020, although premiums may go up for the DPPO.

Mr. Chance said anyone needing to make changes to their insurance can do so through Edison. This year, Payroll/Insurance has added a single sign on (SSO) portal located within IRIS Web that allows for easy Edison access. He said there will be a terms and conditions approval page employees will need to agree to before being logged into Edison. He thinks this will be a major improvement, and more information will be sent via email.

Mr. Chance then announced that the biggest change will be the Flexible Spending Account (FSA) and Health Savings Account (HSA) vendor will be changing from PayFlex to Optum Bank effective January 1, 2021. Flexible benefit enrollment will last the entire month of October, and signup will be online via the Optum Bank website. More information about flexible benefits signup is [available on the Payroll website](#).

Mr. Chance advised the group that because of the vendor change there may be a two-week delay in moving money from PayFlex to Optum accounts. If employees anticipate large expenses in the first few weeks of January they can withdraw that money from their HSA account in late December. He advised employees with FSA accounts to be aware of carryover amounts. An email will be sent towards the end of the year about how the carryover will work.

Mr. Primm asked Mr. Chance to confirm the dates for annual enrollment. Mr. Chance confirmed that enrollment for health, dental, and vision insurance will take place from October 1 through 16 at 4:30 p.m. CT. He encouraged representatives to remember that unless they have a qualifying event enrollment selections cannot be changed. Flexible benefits enrollment will last the entire month of October. Employees who are not currently enrolled for Long Term Disability coverage will receive an email from Lincoln Financial, the LTD vendor.

Julie Roe, Senior Employee Relations Specialist, shared that Insurance would be taking part in the upcoming HR Roadshow on September 30 from 11:30 to 12:30 p.m. ET. She noted that it would be a great opportunity to ask questions of subject matter experts before open enrollment launches, and to think about anything and everything benefits. Janet Jones asked if the Roadshow would be recorded, and Ms. Roe confirmed it would be. The recorded session was made available after the meeting. Ms. Roe also shared that roadshow sessions tailored to specific units or departments are available. For more information contact Michelle Whited in HR.

Mr. Chance closed by asking those with questions to email insurance@tennessee.edu or payroll@tennessee.edu. Mr. Primm thanked Mr. Chance for his presentation.

b. Provost John Zomchick

Provost John Zomchick greeted the group and said it was good to see both familiar and new faces. He shared that one of the things he has missed is getting out around campus, and said he was glad to be able to experience more of that as we move into the fall.

Provost Zomchick began by discussing the Chancellor's update from earlier in the day, noting that COVID-19 positive cases are coming down. He said there are under

200 positive cases now after being near 700 cases about two weeks ago. We may also be seeing a decline in numbers because fewer people are getting tested. He said he has been teaching a First Year Studies class in the evening, and two of his students have tested positive. They were back this week after being out of isolation, and he shared their differing experiences. He said students who are experiencing COVID-19 as being less severe has perhaps kept them from informing the University when they are sick. He also said Dr. Spencer Gregg, Director of Student Health Services, has warned that we need to continue to be vigilant because the disease comes back in unexpected ways.

Provost Zomchick then expressed his gratitude to staff, noting that they do not get enough credit for the support that they give to the academic enterprise. He acknowledged fall would be a heavy lift because we have far fewer classrooms than ever before. He said all classrooms have been adapted so that social distancing can be practiced. The Provost shared that the great majority of our faculty were not prepared to enter the online instructional arena. However, much assistance has been given to the faculty by staff and Facilities Services to make in-person, hybrid, and fully online classes possible. He said he was given a tutorial himself to teach a hybrid class, and noted it is a situation where everyone is pitching in.

The Provost then acknowledged that some complaints have come in, including students who are unhappy with having all or most of their classes online and students who feel isolated and overwhelmed. He said he entered the online transition thinking that younger students are digital natives and would be able to adapt easily. He reflected that has not been the case. His experience from his FYS students is that online work is presenting them with challenges like faculty and staff. He noted that front line staff are sometimes faced with students who don't want to comply with health and safety protocols, and acknowledged that puts pressure on the staff. He said he has heard that people are doing all they can to continue to fulfill our mission of educating students, but understands that it is burdensome and people are stressed. He said he recently held a meeting with faculty to talk about how the University is ready to support those who are experiencing stress. He knows that HR is trying to get information out about resources and will be sending a faculty pulse survey soon. He also noted that many UT families have been very adversely affected by COVID-19, and that many of our staff of color have also been very adversely [affected by systemic racism](#).

Provost Zomchick then said he is optimistic looking to the spring. He said one of the things he has done is talk with faculty about not having a single infection related to instructional spaces. He thanked Facilities Services for the deep cleaning and setup of instructional spaces to enable students to social distance, noting that their work has kept students safe even if they test positive and prevented close contacts in the

classroom. He also said he is leading the charge to ask faculty to think very carefully about students asking for less online and more in-person experiences. He shared that they miss the classroom experience, and that staff in Student Success, Enrollment Management, Academic Affairs, and the Center for Global Engagement are working hard to give students the experience they thought they would have when they came to UT. He is hopeful we will learn from the fall and provide more of what the students are asking for in the spring.

The spring 2021 academic calendar was recently changed. The Provost noted that the date changes allow for extra time between students being on campus. He acknowledged everyone has worked hard during fall semester. The extra time between semesters will be an opportunity to take annual leave to recharge and get ready for spring semester. While do not know what spring will bring in terms of the pandemic, he said we are operating under the assumption that health conditions will be much the same as they are now. He noted that we can't assume that the vaccine will be available or, if it is available, will be widely available to everyone. He reinforced that continuing to practice social distancing in workspaces, mask wearing, and other core action will help keep our students on track.

Provost Zomchick closed by reflecting that Mr. Cervone, as Director of the [Clarence Brown Theatre](#), has had to adapt the theatre's response to the current situation. The Provost said one of the things he misses the most is being able to see performances at CBT and the Carousel Theatre. He shared that it gives him something to look forward to. He affirmed we will get through this and look back with pride on the efforts we made during a really difficult situation. He then thanked the representatives for all that they do every day for one another and for our students, and wished everyone to stay healthy and safe.

Mr. Cervone thanked the Provost. He shared some upcoming online events with the group, including a hybrid Zoom reading integrated with archived video of a prior performance. He shared that they are missing the art and culture business quite a bit and thanked the representatives for checking out [their online content](#).

3. COMMISSION REPORTS

a. Commission for LGBT – Tom Cervone

Mr. Cervone reported that the [Commission](#) had its' first meeting on September 7. He enthused that membership is robust at 27 members, down from 31 last year. He shared a breakdown in affiliations by noting the group has five faculty members, seventeen staff, one undergraduate student, and four graduate students. He shared a

further breakdown by sexual orientation, with the group consisting of four lesbian, nine gay, three bisexual, nine straight, one pansexual, and one queer.

The group has four subcommittees: Transgender & Non-Binary Issues, Communications & Alumni, Equity & Climate, and Membership & Awards. He shared that he sits on the Equity & Climate subcommittee, and that the first meeting will take place the day after tomorrow.

Mr. Cervone noted that the tenor of the meeting was very enthusiastic. Dr. Mitsu Misawa, Chair of the Commission, identified two items that the group will work on this year: to identify and address issues to improve the campus climate for LGBT for students, faculty, and staff, and to build a stronger collaborative relationship with the Chancellor's Office and other campus leadership offices.

He concluded that everyone who is participating is very enthusiastic and committed to this work, and that he will keep the group apprised as they move forward.

b. Commission for Women – Amber Mathes

Amber Mathes reported that the [Commission](#) had their first meeting on September 3. The meeting was a welcome and introductory meeting for all new and returning members. She shared that the group is working on forming committees and scheduling events, including something for the upcoming election.

Ms. Mathes said Chancellor Plowman is set to speak with the group in November. She concluded by noting they will be glad to hear from her.

c. Faculty Senate – John Goddard

Mr. Goddard noted he was travelling during the meeting and summarized that the tenor of the [Faculty Senate](#) meeting was positive considering enrollment is up.

Prior to the meeting, Mr. Goddard reported that Shawn Spurgeon, Chair of the Faculty Senate, announced that Tennessee State University now has a representative on the Faculty Senate. He also announced Extension of Tenure Application was approved for special circumstances like global pandemic or flood.

Mr. Goddard also reported that Chancellor Plowman announced during the meeting that total enrollment is up 4%, with freshman enrollment up 5% and transfer enrollment up 8%. She discussed Massey Hall's designation as COVID-19 positive housing and saliva testing being done. The Chancellor is teaching a face to face

freshman class this semester, and has moved from working at home to being back in the office.

Chancellor Plowman also discussed the upcoming football game with 25,000 attendees being allowed including 2,500 students. The Band will not be on the field but will instead sit in the stands since attendance will be smaller than normal. Only essential personnel will be allowed onto the field, and masks will be required for entry. All food sold will be packaged as “to-go” and tailgates should only include family members. The changes needed to accommodate COVID-19 equate to \$40 million lost in revenue.

Mr. Goddard further reported that Chancellor Cross also spoke during the meeting, and he said UTIA had a small number of on-campus and off-campus positive tests. Chancellor Cross announced UTIA is hiring a Diversity Director, and they are starting up some outdoor events in barns and/or field days. Army Arsenal will be transferring 900 acres of their 23,000 acres in Milan to UT. He noted this property is where UT hosts [Milan No-Till Field Day](#), and that they have leased the farmland for the last 40 years. Chancellor Cross closed by announcing that Donnie Smith, former CEO of Tyson Foods, was visiting campus to look at ways to help food services with COVID-19 era challenges.

Mr. Goddard said Provost John Zomchick also spoke during the meeting, and discussed changes to the spring 2021 calendar including omitting spring break. Provost Zomchick shared that students have complained that more work is required in on-line classes than in in-person classes, and said that they will need to fix this issue. He said he wants more in-person classes for the spring. The Provost closed by announcing only one faculty member has tested positive for COVID-19, and that he believes classrooms are safe.

Robert Hinde, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, concluded the meeting by sharing information about the [online Faculty Fellows program](#). He said there are 31 faculty fellows who can assist instructors with converting to online or hybrid classes and exams.

d. Commission for Blacks – Elisha Hodge

Elisha Hodge reported that the [Commission](#) met on August 26. The meeting was an introduction for members and a kickoff for the academic year.

She said the group talked about expectations and goals for the year, and there were presentations from different individuals on campus. She shared that the most

interesting of those was a UTPD officer who talked about demonstrations on campus and interactions with the police department in general.

Ms. Hodge concluded by noting that the next meeting is on September 30.

4. UPDATES

a. Human Resources Update – Julie Roe, Sr. Employee Relations Consultant

Ms. Roe began by announcing that the ongoing System-wide Job Family Compensation Project is wrapping up, with the goal for completion being end of the calendar year. Related documents can be [found on the system HR website](#) and a [system wide email](#) was distributed late last week. Phase one of the project involved updating position descriptions through Position Description Questionnaires (PDQ). Phase two involved reviewing, updating, and developing new job families. The project involves a statewide market assessment to develop a competitive pay structure.

UTK HR is currently working with Colleges and units to ensure their positions were assigned to the correct job families, with official implementation to be announced in the near future. Ms. Roe said the structure will provide consistency across the system, inform hiring, and improve our market competitiveness. She emphasized that the project is not intended to have an impact on individual salaries but is to get the University up to speed and prepare us for being more competitive in the market moving forward. Project information and job families can be found on the System HR website. Employees with questions may contact Julie Hunt in the System Compensation office, or [contact Tarah Keeler](#), Director of Compensation for UTK HR.

Ms. Roe then announced an upcoming change for performance reviews to a new electronic system. She said the change will specifically be for performance reviews for UTK staff, and that given the changes COVID-19 has necessitated the change is timely and a long time coming. She shared that HR is working to get the new virtual performance reviews implemented before the next annual review cycle. More information will be coming on how it will work, what it will look like, and other details. She encouraged representatives that are supervisors to begin thinking about performance reviews and begin conversations around those to get ready for the new process.

Ms. Roe then talked with the group about [upcoming flu vaccination events](#) on the UTK campus. She affirmed the system-wide flu vaccination requirement for faculty and staff, and explained that the vaccine events are intended to be part of a positive public health initiative. The next event will take place on Thursday, October 1 at

TRECS' basketball courts, with additional events scheduled for Thompson-Boling Arena on October 20 and the Student Union on November 20. Ms. Roe said individual departments are also hosting in-office vaccine events, and local providers like CVS and Publix are also offering shots.

Ms. Roe reported that HR is receiving questions about the requirement itself, such as how to attest to receiving a vaccine shot or what the exemption process will be like. She explained that the soon to be released attestation process would be simple and quick to use. Those with medical or religious exemptions will use the same verification process.

The verification form was later [made available via IRIS Web](#).

Ms. Roe closed by announcing that Learning & Organizational Development is hosting upcoming training opportunities such as [STRIDE for Staff](#) and handling difficult conversations in an upcoming Lunch and Learn. She explained that STRIDE for Staff introduces participants to inclusive processes, and encouraged representatives to check it out thinking forward past the current hiring freeze.

Mr. Goddard asked about the Job Family Compensation Project. Ms. Roe suggested he contact Julie Hunt in the System HR office. Mr. Goddard said he'd emailed several people and had not had a response yet.

5. CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS

a. COVID-19 Vaccine Question

Q: I would like to know why we are being required to take a brand new vaccine for COVID-19. This seems a little premature to me. I don't understand how they can mandate that I take the flu vaccine or COVID-19 vaccine.

A: Ms. Roe noted that the UT Board of Trustees voted to give the President the authority to make decisions about vaccines. She explained the intention is to create a positive public health initiative and safe and healthy environment for everyone.

She asked for representatives to stay tuned for more information around a COVID-19 vaccine but, as for the flu shot, she confirmed [it is required](#). She discussed the exemption process for medical and religious exemptions.

Kim Hardaway shared that she too has concerns about a COVID-19 vaccine, and wants to make sure it is safe for everyone to take and exemptions are honored. She reflected on the spirit of the role of staff members in ensuring our campus community stays as safe as possible.

b. Spring Holiday and Spring 2021 Calendar Changes

Q: With the change to the academic calendar for Spring 2021 and Spring Holiday (Good Friday) now becoming an instructional day, will that also become a Deferred Holiday for staff?

A: Ms. Roe said that, as far as HR is aware, there are no changes. It is still intended to be a scheduled holiday, not floating. She said if that changes and more information is available that will be shared with the group.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

a. UTPD K9 Virtual Ride-Along

Mr. Goddard shared with the group he thought it would be interesting to have a UTPD officer guest speak and share a virtual ride-along with the group at a future meeting.

b. Campus Chest Kickoff

Ms. Hardaway announced to the group that the annual [Campus Chest campaign](#) has kicked off. She said it runs through November 6 and will include virtual participation.

7. REMINDERS

a. Please email Jessica Cantu (jlcantu@utk.edu) any constituent questions.

b. Next meeting: Wednesday, October 27, 2020 from 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. ET via Zoom

i. Guest Speaker: Tyvi Small, Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Engagement for UTK

ii. Please note the time change to 2:00 p.m. ET. Chancellor Plowman will be giving her [second annual Flagship Address](#) at 3:00 p.m. ET. The time was changed to allow members to virtually attend.

8. DISTRIBUTIONS

a. [Partners For Health Annual Enrollment Mailer](#) (PDF)

b. [Partners For Health Annual Enrollment Employee Webinars](#) (PDF)

c. [L&OD Newsletter \(October\)](#)