

## 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, Charles Primm, Theresa Sears, Michael Smith-Porter, Ken Wagner, Norma Wilcox

## ABSENT

Jeannine Berge, Brian Browning, Rita Jackson, Mary Lucal, Heath Nokes, John Rich, Julie Roe, Kevin Thompson, Kaley Walker

### 1. WELCOME

Charles Primm, Outgoing Chair and Office of the Chancellor Representative, welcomed everyone to the October meeting. He noted that the meeting would be shortened to allow those who wished to attend the [UTK Chancellor's Flagship Address](#) to do so.

### 2. GUEST SPEAKERS

- a. Office of Diversity and Engagement – Tyvi Small, Vice Chancellor

Tyvi Small greeted the group, and shared that the [Office of Diversity and Engagement](#) was fully reinstated about thirteen months ago. He shared that early on they thought about how they wanted to impact the campus, noting that their office is not a programming office. He praised the efforts of groups and people on campus who do programs, events, and activities, and said their approach was to instead think about diversity, equity, and inclusion from a structural and systemic perspective and do things that go to the heart of who we are as an academic institution.

Mr. Small said one of the first things they did was to consider their [mission, vision, and values statements](#) and how they want to impact campus. He shared that the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion is ultimately everyone's business, and that we

all share responsibility for achieving climate efforts where we work. He noted that office leaders are the chief climate officers, and that role absolutely creates and sustains climate and culture for the department. He said he wanted the campus to understand that shared responsibility.

Mr. Small then discussed the [framework of inclusive excellence](#), which include Access & Compliance, Assessment & Accountability, Education & Training, and Engagement & Outreach. He noted efforts including the creation of [Diversity Action Plans](#) and climate studies, and the work of Dr. Javiette Samuel, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Diversity & Engagement, in education, engagement, and outreach. He said they are figuring out how they can impact our communities, both rural and center city, and all efforts are supported by the idea of mattering and belonging. He noted they work closely with the Division of Student Life on related initiatives such as [Vol is a Verb](#). He said the framework creates the work they do.

Mr. Small then discussed strategic priorities including climate and culture, faculty and staff recruitment and retention, student recruitment and retention, education, and communication. He shared their recent [Annual Report](#) with the group, and noted that Diversity Action Plans are critical in that every academic and academic unit was charged to create one. He said the plans were submitted in September. His office used feedback data as a rubric to grade the plans, and sent them back to unit administration. At the moment they have provided questions about the plans for consideration and are working to educate those who aren't steeped in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion work. He said that the final plans would be submitted around November 20, and that they will hold Deans and Vice Chancellors accountable.

Mr. Small shared that Provost Zomchick's work is critical for several reasons. First, leadership will be held accountable for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion metrics. The accountability will permeate down to departmental leaders and program leaders. He hopes that having the Diversity Action Plans will set a foundation for expectation around Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. He said there is also a committee which will strategize to refocus plans, talk about progress, and ask what they can help with to create living and breathing documents. He said that Janelle Coleman, Executive Director for Diversity and Engagement, has created a strategic process to monitor, support, and enhance Diversity Action Plans. He shared they are excited about that work, which is new to campus, and said it will be something that helps to move the needle.

Mr. Small then said they are also working to create a campus climate survey, which will be administered in February 2021. He noted the importance of getting a gauge of the campus climate as most of their feedback is anecdotal. He shared they are holding listening sessions with folks across campus to get information. They will use

feedback sessions to make sure the questions that are asked and the data gathered is what campus needs around how faculty of color, students of color, women, and other identities on campus are feeling and better understand their perspective and experiences. He said that they will analyze the results and provide them thematically so they can see where our shortcomings may be and target addressing those issues. He shared he is excited about the campus climate survey and what it will mean for how they approach their work.

Mr. Small lastly discussed the academic diversity initiative, which is an opportunity to fund faculty and staff who do work in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. He said they have put funding into every academic college, and each has either a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion officer or committee who will look at efforts from an administrative standpoint. He shared that it will shift the work from their office and place it within units and offices. He said they have a [faculty and administrative fellows program](#) which hires faculty and staff. They are paid a small stipend to work on special projects from the Office. He shared they are excited because it is not just their staff but people across the campus, both in administrative and faculty roles, helping to do the work. He discussed the Research Development Academy, diversity scholarships, and Building Names Committee, highlighting that they recently received a report from the Committee evaluating building names and thinking about building names in the future that honor and celebrate women and people of color. He shared they are also working with the Provost's Office and the College of Arts and Sciences to create our land acknowledgement to acknowledge the people who were stewards of the land before the University came to be an institution.

Mr. Small concluded by announcing new initiatives such as the new Chancellor's [Commission on Disabilities](#). He discussed the Intergroup Dialogue and Conflict Resolution Program, which allows faculty, staff, and students to have dialogue around the work and better understand others' perspectives. Other initiatives include the [Faculty and Student Advisory Boards](#), [Inclusive Leadership Academy \(UTILA\)](#) and [UConnect](#), and [Intercultural Development Inventory training \(IDI\)](#). He said they are also working on other policy type initiatives, including adding a diversity and inclusion metric on performance reviews and getting rid of the salary question on applications, which affects women and people of color who have been historically underpaid.

Mr. Primm thanked Mr. Small for his presentation, and suggested the addition of a Staff Advisory Board in the future. He also asked about if there have been discussions of taking Diversity Action Plans from the UTK campus to other campuses or the system level. Mr. Small said that he thinks UTK has the most infrastructure around Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. He noted he is serving on the search committee for the Vice Chancellor for Diversity at UTC, UTM recently [named an](#)

[interim Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer](#), and [Delphia Houze was recently selected as the System Executive Director of Equity and Diversity](#). He said they recently also had the [Board of Trustees affirm their support UT's diversity statement](#), and that all campuses are building infrastructure to support the process.

Tom Cervone noted that the Clarence Brown Theatre would be producing an virtual [anti-racism play festival](#), featuring two one-act plays by African-American playwright Idris Goodwin.

Eric Amos asked how the Office has assessed their handling of the past year. Mr. Small said he thinks they did the best they could with the information they had at the time given that it was unknown how COVID would affect us. He shared that there were challenges with helping leaders understand the need to be flexible with employees in teleworking and caring for families. He said one of the things they learned was they may need to do more work with middle management including directors and associate directors who were dogmatic about work while dealing with COVID-19. He reflected that they could not understand that it was ok for employees to telework. He said that they were transparent, open, and honest with the process. He said he felt they did a good job of providing opportunities for people to dialogue around and communicating leading with our values. He discussed the efforts of the University Leadership Council to talk about how they can lead in managing diversity, in looking at things from a systemic structural perspective and think about barriers that prohibit moving forward particularly as it relates to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. He shared that some work needs to be done, but overall he believes they managed as best as they could given the global pandemic and racial and social injustice.

Mr. Small closed by thanked the group and asked them to invite him back to talk about supporting the voices of staff, giving them agency to ultimately to help make change.

### 3. COMMISSION REPORTS

#### a. Commission for Blacks – Elisha Hodge

Elisha Hodge reported that at the [Commission's](#) September meeting the group followed up on some of the goals and initiatives that they would be moving forward with this year.

Ms. Hodge said it was a recap of some of the other work that they had done last year and the ways in which they would be moving forward with that.

b. Commission for LGBT – Tom Cervone

Mr. Cervone reported that Chancellor Plowman visited with the [Commission](#) during the October 5 meeting. He said she fielded a number of questions from commission members but her focus was on [UTK's low score on the Campus Pride Index](#), which is how friendly and accepting the campus is. He shared that the score is not something they are proud of, and that campus does not feel welcoming to folks with membership in the Commission, and acknowledged they need to work on that. He said they are working to focus on work to improve the campus and community climate for all diverse communities. He shared the Equity and Climate subcommittee is working diligently to change the climate, and they are working on a climate survey like the one Mr. Small discussed. He said with Mr. Small's office growing and having Chancellor Plowman on board this seems to be a time where they can focus on helping our part of the world.

Mr. Cervone then reported the Membership and Awards subcommittee is working to create more visibility around the Commission and those folks who work on behalf of it, as well as utilizing some of the funds that are available to do so. He shared the Transgender and Non-Binary Issues subcommittee is working with the Commission and Pride Center on promoting the Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20. Mr. Cervone enthused that Dr. Mitsu Misawa, Chair, is a terrific leader for the Commission in allowing voices in the room and organizing those voices to create action plans around that.

Mr. Cervone closed by noting they have received a survey asking around five major issues, and are selecting several to work on to try to affect change. He said he would report back on those at next month's meeting, and concluded the report by reaffirming his enthusiasm for their work.

c. Commission for Women – Amber Mathes

Amber Mathes reported that the [Commission](#) would meet next week. She noted they are working on Rocky Topics and events to take place after the 2020 elections. More information will be sent in the next week. She said they will also be launching the Chancellor's Awards application process very soon, and information will be sent out soon.

d. Faculty Senate – John Goddard

Mr. Goddard reported that during the last [Faculty Senate](#) meeting Dr. Cross could not attend, and Chancellor Plowman asked everyone to tune in to her Flagship Address scheduled at 3:00 p.m. ET today. He said she discussed COVID



transmissions, and noted that participation rates are up to 75% cooperation now with positive testing is running about 2%. The Chancellor is pleased that numbers are staying down but she is concerned about the upcoming winter. She said that so far UT has not had an external agency directing them as to who goes to class and who does not, and currently it is up to the University to regulate itself. She said that at some other schools the legislature is dictating that decision.

Mr. Goddard then reported Provost John Zomchick discussed COVID, and said he feels classrooms are a safe place. He said he is not sure what will happen this winter and while they are not forcing instructors to go back to the classroom those that can are very strongly encouraged to do so. He replied that faculty need to be clear about students attending class, and students are told they need to show up. The Provost affirmed he does support attendance policies.

Mr. Goddard reported on the [Tennessee University Faculty Senates \(TUFS\)](#). They meet ten times a year and their focus will be pushing for expanded broadband access to rural and underserved areas.

Mr. Goddard concluded by discussing [proposed changes to the UTK-UTIA faculty handbook](#) as well as a [resolution](#) calling for the Board of Trustees to bring more than one candidate any time there is a presidential search. He noted they were clearly upset about the way Randy Boyd became President, and are encouraging the Board of Trustees to revisit that. The resolution passed.

e. Commission for Disability – Emma Burgin

Emma Burgin shared with the group she is on the Commission that Mr. Small mentioned. She offered to represent the group on the commission and provide reports to the group. Mr. Primm asked if she could give a report.

Ms. Burgin reported the Commission met today. It was their second meeting, and they nominated and chose their chairs, worked on setting up their agenda and subcommittees. She asked the group to reach out with ideas around focusing on a culture of accessibility and not just compliance around the University.

She affirmed they are interested in building a sense of community for individuals with disabilities instead of making them feel marginalized and only addressing problems when they come up instead of being proactive.

#### 4. NEW BUSINESS

a. Time Off for Early Voting – Kevin Frye

**Q:** I want to add an item to the agenda to see if we can get the policy changed for voting? Currently, you can only take time to vote on election day. With COVID, things are different. It took me almost two hours to early vote with social distancing, masks, etc., so I can't imagine what election day is going to be like. Here is the policy:

<https://policy.tennessee.edu/wp-content/uploads/policytech/system-wide/hr/HR0395-Time-Off-To-Vote.pdf>

Can this be changed to anytime voting is available and not just election day?

**A:** Jessica Cantu provided information from Ms. Roe and Tarah Keeler, Director of Compensation:

“The Voting Policy, HR0395 Time Off to Vote, can be found online at <https://policy.tennessee.edu/policytech-policies/> under Human Resources.

Per policy, if the polls are open 3 hours before or after the shift then voting leave does not apply. Since the polls are currently open on Saturdays and many locations have extended hours until 8 pm, for employees working a typical 8-5 schedule, voting leave would not be applicable (this includes early voting).

The intent of voting leave is to encourage employees to vote by providing time off to vote if the only time polls are open is during their shift. Voting leave is not intended to serve as additional paid time to vote. If you have a specific question about voting leave contact Human Resources at [hr@utk.edu](mailto:hr@utk.edu).”

## 5. CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS

### a. Calendar-Year Maximum Increase

**Q:** Given the pandemic, can UT temporarily increase the calendar-year maximum on annual leave (336 hours) to help avoid mass staff outages in Nov & Dec, especially given the uncertainty of the spring semester and employees' inability to safely travel on vacation over the past 6 months?

**A:** Mr. Primm replied that he shared the question with HR prior to the meeting, and the response was the question has been explored by campus and system HR offices. He shared there is no support for the change, however, employees are encouraged to request and take annual leave these next weeks as they can since students are gone after Thanksgiving. He said hopefully this will be a great time for many employees to use some of that leave.

b. IRIS Training Online

**Q:** One thing I find where we're lacking with being out due to COVID is employee training. It would be helpful if IRIS and other training that is normally held face-to-face could be held online. We've been out of the office now for over six months and the IRIS team has not converted its' training to online. There is a lot of good training that's needed now and not next year when we could possibly do face-to-face training. It seems they could do a Zoom session and record it for training.

**A:** Mr. Primm shared that he was able to reach Dr. Lucal with this question, and she shared there is Professional Development and Leadership Development training available online. She encouraged the constituent to join the [Learning & Organizational Development Listserv](#) where opportunities are regularly shared for development. He said HR would look into the IRIS training question and report back at the next ESC meeting.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

a. Chancellor's Visit – Reschedule from November

Chancellor Plowman is currently scheduled to guest speak at the November 24 meeting. Mr. Primm suggested that the visit be rescheduled due to the Thanksgiving holiday to help with turnout.

After the meeting the Chancellor's visit was rescheduled to February 2021.

b. Outgoing Remarks from Mr. Primm

Mr. Primm announced that this would be his last ESC meeting as a member and Chair due to taking a different position with the University. He said it has been his honor and privilege to work with the group, and thanked everyone.

7. REMINDERS

a. Please email Jessica Cantu ([jlcantu@utk.edu](mailto:jlcantu@utk.edu)) any constituent questions.

8. DISTRIBUTIONS

a. Office of Diversity and Engagement Presentation (PDF)