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PRESENT

Jessica Cantu, Tom Cervone, Joe Christian, Darrell Easley, Deanna Flinchum, John Goddard, Elisha Hodge, Janet Jones, Beth Kurtz, Mary Lucal, Amber Mathes, Heath Nokes, John Rich, Julie Roe, Theresa Sears, Ken Wagner, Norma Wilcox

ABSENT

Eric Amos, Jeannine Berge, Brian Browning, Emma Burgin, Kevin Frye, Kim Hardaway, Rita Jackson, Michael Smith-Porter, Kevin Thompson, Kaley Walker

1. WELCOME

Elisha Hodge, Chair and IPS MTAS Representative, welcomed everyone to the December meeting.

2. COMMISSION REPORTS

a. Commission for Blacks – Elisha Hodge

Elisha Hodge reported that the [Commission](#) met with Chancellor Plowman on November 18 and said it was a robust conversation with the Chancellor responding to questions during the meeting. Ms. Hodge said the Commission also held a luncheon on December 9.

Ms. Hodge reported the Commission will be moving forward in the new year with some of the topics that had come up during the previous meeting and objectives for the new year.

Ms. Hodge also reported she has had the opportunity sit on the UT Police Department's Advisory Counsel, which met twice in November. She reported Chief Troy Lane provided statistics about what's been happening on campus, and he has put together a draft of some of the things he wants the Advisory committee to work on. She reported they will be reviewing that during their next meeting in February.

b. Commission for LGBT – Tom Cervone

Mr. Cervone reported that the [Commission](#) met on December 7. He shared that they had a change of graduate students working with the group, and that they are still working to organize the lines of communication. He said they identified topics for the year including identifying and addressing issues to improve the campus climate for LGBTQ+ students, faculty, and staff, and build a stronger collaborative relationship with the Chancellor's Office and other campus leadership offices. He shared that Dr. Mitsu Misawa, Chair of the Commission, is organized and aggressive in making sure the group stays on task.

Mr. Cervone reminded the group that the Commission is committed to the protection and advancement of LGBT+ students, faculty, and staff at the University and that they have several committees for Alumni, Equity and Climate, Membership and Awards, and Transgender and Non-Binary Issues. He shared that a recent poll helped the group identify priorities in addition to the two main topics: to develop and maintain campus safety, identify and address issues with students and diverse identities, and identify and address the needs of the community and increase visibility. He said the Commission next meets in February.

c. Commission for Women – Amber Mathes

Amber Mathes reported that the [Commission](#) met with Chancellor Plowman at their November meeting. The Chancellor did a Q&A with the group and they had a good conversation with her. The group is going to start working on initiatives that they spoke with the Chancellor about including paid parental leave. The Commission also met in December and had a HR presentation from Dr. Lucal on gender data.

Ms. Mathes said the Commission is working on their initiatives and identifying things they want to get done, and they next meet in January.

d. Faculty Senate – John Goddard

Mr. Goddard reported the [Faculty Senate](#) met on November 16. Chancellor Plowman attended and she said everyone needs a rest and the upcoming break is needed. The Chancellor shared her Thanksgiving plans with the group. He reported that the Chancellor talked about commencement, with 200 participants at each ceremony and each participant was able to bring five family members. He reported the Chancellor told the group she is concerned about freshmen not being able to socialize and make friends due to isolation.

Mr. Goddard said Provost Zomchick also shared his Thanksgiving plans, and thanked everyone for their efforts. Dr. Cross said he was currently updating the bylaws and

thanked the group. He reported on the Athletics committee and that the \$10 million rainy day fund is depleted after 2020 with no faculty pay cuts so far. Phillip Fulmer, Athletics Director, and several Football coaches took pay cuts but most did not and most SEC coaches earn more than Coach Jeremy Pruitt, who declined a pay raise. He shared an update about basketball and that there is a \$40 million shortfall in UT Athletics. They are operating in a deficit, and the Southeastern Conference may loan UT Athletics money. Mr. Goddard reported that the Chancellor noted UT is one of only 15 schools that academics does not help fund athletics, and she said this year UTK will help Athletics with money from infrastructure savings.

Mr. Goddard reported that the majority of the meeting was devoted to discussion on the temporary grade change and withdrawal policy. Students must provide evidence to an instructor that COVID-19 directly affected them or their immediate family. He shared there was lots of discussion on both sides and that the following motions were approved: having credit or no credit for the fall semester courses, and to extend to the last day withdrawal for spring classes, retroactive withdrawal first day of summer semester for the spring classes as well.

Mr. Goddard reported the Senate would next meet on January 11 if needed.

Dr. Lucal added that some of the group's colleagues in Athletics have taken pay cuts, and she is not sure how many people are aware of that. She emphasized the importance of understanding that some people have not been impacted financially due to the pandemic and some absolutely have. She asked the group to keep their Athletics colleagues in their thoughts and lift them up as they deal with a challenging situation, and expressed her support for those having to make difficult decisions to help out with Athletics' financial situation.

e. Commission for Disability – Emma Burgin

No report was given.

f. Commission for Diversity and Interculturalism – Tom Cervone

Mr. Cervone reported that the first meeting of the new CDI [Commission](#) has taken place, and that he has been assigned to a committee working on public relations and events. He praised Dr. Erin Darby, Chair of the Commission, as someone who gets things done and shared his excitement about being on the Council.

### 3. UPDATES

a. Human Resources Update – Dr. Mary Lucal, Associate Vice Chancellor of Human Resources

Dr. Lucal led by thanking the group for their work in 2020, and reflected on how COVID-19 impacted the University and higher education in general. She expressed her appreciation for leadership, the group, and constituents.

Dr. Lucal then announced that an Administrative Leadership Retreat, the counterpart to the Academic Leadership Retreat hosted by the Office of the Provost, has been announced. The academic retreat normally takes place in August each year and covers events of importance to department heads and other senior academic leaders. Dr. Lucal and Tyvi Small, Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion, along with a small planning team have put together the first administrative leadership retreat for non-academic leadership in Knoxville. She shared that as a group they will discuss efforts that can be made around systemic racism and ways to combat that in faculty, staff, and student areas, and that they hope to hold the event annually.

Dr. Lucal next gave an update on the [Job Family Compensation Project](#), and said she was hopeful many of the attendees were able to attend the webinar she and Tarah Keeler, Director of Compensation, hosted recently. She reflected that as a combined group of ERC and ESC participants posed very thoughtful questions for the webinar, and shared her hope that the representatives feels ready to support their constituents once implementation takes place on January 1. She said the project is going to make the University a better institution as staff make more progress towards market pay. For more information including an employee FAQ and leader toolkit with talking points please visit the [System Compensation Project website](#).

Dr. Lucal closed by introducing Dr. Darrell Easley, Director of Learning & Organizational Development and Employee Relations. She shared Dr. Easley comes with a particularly strong learning & organizational development background and has been a sitting Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) at another SEC school.

#### 4. CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS

##### a. 360 Evaluations

**Q:** “Is the University still engaging employees through 360 supervisor and leadership evaluations? We were asked to respond to them routinely at one time but have not been sent one in a long time.”

**A:** Dr. Lucal responded that she only knows of one division that used to do them regularly and that was some time ago. She shared that a true 360 evaluation is a complex evaluation system, and that all staff evaluation tools should be used carefully, strategically, and on an agreed upon schedule.

If a department wants to institute 360 degree evaluations as a regular part of their performance review she welcomed those interested to contact Dr. Easley.

b. FML Policy Language

**Q:** “UT’s Family and Medical Leave Policy (HR0338) contains the following sentence in section 9(b) on page 6: “If both spouses e [sic] are employees of the university, their combined total of available leave is four (4) months.” This language does not seem to comport with State law. What is the legal authority for that portion of the policy?”

**A:** Before the meeting Julie Roe referred the question to the Office of the General Counsel for review as well as Ms. Keeler & Michelle Currier from UTK HR Compensation. They responded that under the state statute married employees are not required to split the four month entitlement. Ms. Roe said the System was already working to implement this policy update to amend it. For any FML related questions contact [familymedicalleave@utk.edu](mailto:familymedicalleave@utk.edu).

Dr. Lucal followed up to also bring up the possibility of paid parental leave for state employees, which requires the state legislature’s approval. She shared an update that the legislature decided not to take it up but she believes the University has reconvened a committee to have a conversation around paid leave.

c. Voting Leave Policy

**Q:** “Given the delays to vote this year, can we get some consideration for changing the policy for voting leave?”

**A:** Dr. Lucal noted that, for most employees who work a typical 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. schedule, polls are open three hours before or after their shift or even on Saturdays during early voting. She explained the voting leave policy is to ensure employees are able to vote, but that the policy was written during a time when there were no extended voting hours or early voting options.

Dr. Lucal shared she received very few requests to use voting leave during the recent election, and that by and large employees are able to find times to vote and do not need to exercise the policy. If someone was able to provide a legitimate reason that they were unable to take advantage of extended poll hours or early voting then that policy would absolutely be exercised. John Rich followed up by sharing that the voting leave policy was in place before he came to the University in 1978, and at that time in most cases the polls were open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Dr. Lucal thanked Mr. Rich for his insight into the history of the policy.

d. Retiring Employee Sick Leave Donation

**Q:** “May an employee who is not participating in TCRS, donate all their unused sick leave to the sick bank when they retire?”

**A:** Dr. Lucal responded that retiring employees who would like to donate sick leave should contact HR Employee Relations at [SickLeaveBank@utk.edu](mailto:SickLeaveBank@utk.edu). The Sick Leave Bank does not allow for a lump sum general contribution due to bank bylaws and state legislation, but person to person transfer is allowed if the receiving employee is a member of the Sick Leave Bank and has been approved to receive time by bank trustees.

Jessica Cantu encouraged representatives to help retiring constituents who express interest in donating sick leave to contact Employee Relations when they finalize their retirement plans to help them maximize the window of time for opportunities to help bank recipients. Dr. Lucal reflected on the value of being a Sick Leave Bank member in that it is like an insurance policy, and encouraged the group to remind constituents to come to them to talk about the importance of joining the Sick Leave Bank or ensuring they’re already a bank participant. For questions about the Sick Leave Bank visit <https://hr.utk.edu/sick-leave-bank/> or contact [SickLeaveBank@utk.edu](mailto:SickLeaveBank@utk.edu).

e. IRIS Training

**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. Rich replied that he has talked with his colleagues on the IRIS Training Group, who also support the [IRIS Helpdesk](#). He shared that they have had a lot to do over the past year in supporting people working from home and have not had much time to do as much training as they would like to do.

Mr. Rich said they are looking at trainings including Zoom classes for 2021. The Training Group hosts IRIS Helpdesk Office Hours, which can be found via K@TE. Office Hours are held around once a month and start out with participants presenting on a topic including Concur, P-Cards, travel cards, and Employee Self Service. The sessions then are opened up for anything that participants want to talk about. He said it would be an ideal place to talk with content experts from the Helpdesk and teams from IRIS’ HR, payroll, and finance teams.

Mr. Rich also shared that Jonathan Ruth, Team Leader, has announced a new documentation and training system called Enable Now, which will replace the previous training documentation. The system is set to go live on January 11, and will be a platform for training and documentation. Mr. Rich said Mr. Ruth is looking forward to doing some Zoom training and they have been rewriting some documentation and training materials so it can be covered in recorded segments. He shared some ways the training may be offered including topic specific three to five minute “bite sized bits.”

Mr. Goddard shared the question came one of his constituents, and it stemmed from some administrative support employees who are finding they need more to do while teleworking. Dr. Lucal asked if those administrative staff could donate hours to other efforts like COVID-19 work, or contribute to other parts of the University that might have a need. Mr. Goddard explained that the staff are county paid Extension employees. Dr. Lucal shared [LinkedIn Learning](#) as a training resource the employees could look into, as well as content from [Learning & Organizational Development](#). Mr. Rich said he would also talk with Mr. Ruth about adding IRIS content related to administrative support staff.

f. Employee Self Check & Telework

**Q:** “What guidance has been provided by HR in the following scenario: an employee fails any portion of the self-check in in the morning before reporting to work, the employee feels well enough to work, and the employees job lends itself to the employee working remotely.”

**A:** Dr. Lucal replied that if an employee is not cleared by the self-check app to come to campus but feels well enough to telework they should complete a [Self Isolation Form](#). They should also communicate with their supervisor about teleworking during their quarantine or isolation period. For questions contact HR Employee Relations at 865-974-8299.

Dr. Lucal followed up on the question by asking the group for a pulse check on how their constituents are doing. Heath Nokes shared that his constituents are looking forward to the vaccine as a bright spot towards getting back to normal. Dr. Lucal shared that she is happy to say that the University has no confirmed cases of transmission that have happened in our workplace. She shared that considering as large of an enterprise as UT is she thinks employees have been very careful and cautious to follow the core actions and guidelines including doing the self-check, wearing masks, socially distancing, and adapting work spaces. She praised these efforts by employees and departments. Mr. Nokes shared his experience with quarantining. Janet Jones shared that they have been maintaining CDC recommendations about self-isolation and quarantine at the Vet School, but

acknowledged not everyone can work from home. She said it has been hard for those who work on the hospital floor to not be paid or need to use their own paid leave. She also shared an experience with a staffing shortage when a student tested positive and all of the students that person came in contact with had to self-isolate. She reported that Veterinary hospital staff are COVID-weary right now and ready for a break. Tom Cervone shared that as [Theatre](#) is not producing any plays they are doing everything they can to keep their creative juices flowing, including offering virtual content on their website. Carol Mayo Jenkins, a notable American theatre grand dame and who is also a faculty member, is doing a reading of Truman Capote's "A Christmas Memory," which was filmed at the Mabry-Hazen House. He praised Ms. Mayo Jenkins' work and recommended the group check out the reading. Mr. Cervone also noted that they are trying to keep their people busy, mostly with maintenance items that haven't been attended to in a long time and done in a socially distanced way. He shared a faculty member's recent experience with a show in Cincinnati that was cancelled at the last minute as well as recent budget meetings to plan for the 2021-22 season. He said they, too, are ready for the vaccine and to reopen the theatre doors.

Dr. Lucal noted in pulse surveys sent to staff she received nine pages of comments from employees who loved remote work but also reports that psychological health went down since the spring. She thanked the group for helping her understand where people are mentally. She also acknowledged that while a break is necessary some staff will not be able to get one like staff at the College of Veterinary Medicine's Hospital and Facilities Services, and acknowledged the need to attend to those people who never left campus.

## 5. OTHER BUSINESS

### a. Wreaths Across America

Dr. Easley announced Wreaths Across America, an upcoming event to lay wreaths at military cemeteries in the Knoxville area. Wreath laying will take place on Saturday, December 19, 2020. Volunteers were encouraged to sign up to lay wreaths at one of the three East Tennessee military cemeteries or to locate a military cemetery in their area by visiting <https://www.wreathscrossamerica.org/>.

## 6. REMINDERS

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