
PRESENT

Jeannine Berge, Brad Briggs, Brian Browning, Emma Burgin, Jessica Cantu, Tom Cervone, Joe Christian, Darrell Easley, Deanna Flinchum, Kevin Frye, John Goddard, Elisha Hodge, Rita Jackson, Janet Jones, Beth Kurtz, Mary Lucal, Amber Mathes, Heath Nokes, Donde Plowman (Guest Speaker), John Rich, Julie Roe, Michael Smith-Porter, Ken Wagner, Kaley Walker, Norma Wilcox

ABSENT

Eric Amos, Kim Hardaway, Theresa Sears, Kevin Thompson

1. WELCOME

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

2. GUEST SPEAKER

a. Donde Plowman, Chancellor of UT Knoxville

Chancellor Donde Plowman greeted the group and expressed her appreciation for the work each of the representatives has done over the last year. She led by discussing COVID-19 and said the Knoxville campus is doing well right now. Four weeks into the semester there have been 79 positive cases, which is slightly up from the 60 cases that the semester started with. She said employee case numbers have stayed low and were low all fall semester. With student case numbers, the rigorous and more frequent testing of everyone living on campus has been beneficial. Anyone living in University housing is required to participate in community pooled saliva testing, and they have a regular day each week they test based on their dorm. The pool is tested and, if COVID-19 is detected, everyone in that pool gets checked. As a result of pooled testing they have found two clusters that they were able to minimize and take action to place the affected students into the isolation dorm or send home. She shared that she's very pleased about the current ability to test as last fall the testing lab was not setup as it is for handling current capacity at the beginning of fall semester. During the fall every student was tested twice, and this semester they have

been tested once a week. Dr. Plowman said that has had a positive impact, especially in light of numbers starting to come down from the surge of cases during the winter.

Dr. Plowman said that constant communication of our values for creativity and compassionate flexibility have helped tremendously, including supervisors' flexibility in allowing staff to telework and flex work. She shared that her team continues to hold meetings via Zoom because of space limitations, but that they are able to interact with each other while following core actions and that has lifted all of their spirits. She shared her experience receiving the vaccine, anticipating being able to visit with her kids who live out of state, and feels like she can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Dr. Plowman discussed the vaccine requirement the Board of Trustees voted on last year, and noted that President Boyd has decided to back off of making it an absolute requirement. She expressed the need to educate the campus community about the COVID-19 vaccines, stating that there were no shortcuts in the trials and they were diverse. She discussed the continuing flu shot requirement for employees and students, and reflected that cases of flu being down may be related to mask usage.

Dr. Plowman then discussed how as a working community we will make decisions to return to work and plan for full capacity for classrooms next fall. She wants to reduce the amount of Zoom classes for the fall and plan for a much more normal looking campus by then. She discussed recent encouraging news about vaccination rates from Dr. Fauci, and how we along with everyone else are learning as we go. She also noted that we may be wearing masks into 2022. She discussed thinking about return to in-office work and acknowledged some jobs can be done via telework. She is hopeful to have 100,000 people in the football stadium this fall watching the football team under the guidance of their new head coach, Josh Huepel. She noted her enthusiasm for Coach Huepel's leadership and changes that have been made in the Athletic Department.

Dr. Plowman then asked the group for feedback from supervisors. Tom Cervone thanked the Chancellor for her leadership and support of the Theatre program, and shared plans for productions to resume in the fall including A Christmas Carol. He said their team is offering Zoom virtual opportunities in the meantime, and that donors and supporters have been very responsive and enthusiastic for productions to resume. Dr. Plowman responded by noting that during crisis leaders have to appear to be stronger than everyone else. She and Mr. Cervone discussed plans for the new Carousel Theatre. Dr. Lucal also shared her thanks for Dr. Plowman's leadership through the pandemic, and said she sees that as a model as we go into the fall and leaders make decisions make plans for return to campus including about remote and hybrid work. Dr. Plowman reflected on takeaways from the academic side from COVID-19, and noted that the capacity of people on teams to lead and

make choices in the best interests of the institution. Emma Burgin shared her department's experiences with creative scheduling and adapting to meet the needs of their students. She shared that all of her department's staff is vaccinated and more than half of their students are as well. Dr. Plowman and Ms. Burgin reflected on the relief of being vaccinated.

3. UPDATES

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

Dr. Lucal greeted the group and began her update by noting that we are in the new Job Family Compensation Project model, and are exploring its possibilities and surprises. She said that there is post-implementation work being done around things like career paths.

Dr. Lucal next shared that one of the busiest areas in HR currently are Online Performance Reviews. She said that HR has gotten good support and feedback as people transition from paper to using the new online tool, and in planning for the new Diversity & Inclusion category coming next year. She highlighted a [recent webinar](#) that she and Katrice Morgan, Interim Associate Vice Chancellor and Director of the Office of Equity & Diversity, held on exploring diversity, equity, and inclusion in staff performance reviews. She said the webinar was mostly answering questions around the new diversity category and addressing other questions around performance reviews.

Dr. Lucal next talked about return to fall, and affirmed that she does not think it is too early for divisions to start discussing plans as a group. She said HR is in a very busy hiring season where recruiters need to be able to tell candidates if the job can be done remotely, as that changes candidate possibilities dramatically. She encouraged areas represented to have those discussions and start planning transitions now.

Dr. Lucal closed by announcing that in Governor Lee's State of the State address he proposed a 4% salary pool, 2% of which is proposed to be retroactive to January 1, 2021 and 2% to be effective July 1. She noted that the state is funding 55% of the 4% pool, and the campuses and units would have to come up with the money to fund the remainder. She said she was very pleased considering it has been a hard year. Brian Browning said it is the single largest proposed budget in UT history, which represented a 7.1% increase for the Knoxville campus and includes \$50 million in deferred maintenance.

Ms. Hodge asked Dr. Lucal for an update about the parental leave policy. Dr. Lucal noted that the policy has been talked about several times over the last year and a half. She has heard it is nearing completion but, until it is complete, she will not make any comments as she hasn't seen the final approved version. She has heard it would become effective July 1 and will include six weeks paid parental leave including birth and adoption. Ms. Hodge noted that the policy is on the agenda for an upcoming Board of Trustees Finance and Administration committee meeting set for February 25. Dr. Lucal shared that she understands that during the period of time from approval to July 1 the HR community will be sorting out details about implementing the policy.

Dr. Lucal followed up to note she may be doing a staff pulse survey around transitioning back to campus, and asked the group for their feedback or concerns. She reflected on issues like children transitioning back to in-person learning, helping pets adapt to being home alone, and continuing to wear masks. She said she anticipates remote work will be at the top of the survey list, especially since she received nine pages of positive feedback around it last fall. She also shared that thinking through re-welcoming newer employees to campus is also a priority, especially since some employees may have been with the University for almost a year and haven't met many of their colleagues in-person. She asked the group to share feedback and ideas with her as we hope to make the transition to summer and fall go well for people. A discussion took place around anticipated questions from the survey.

4. COMMISSION REPORTS

a. Commission for Blacks – Elisha Hodge

Elisha Hodge reported that the [Commission](#) met on January 27, and will meet again on February 24. She shared news of a new program geared toward men of color called the UT Success Academy. The program will be open to men who are matriculating onto campus and who meet certain criteria, GPA average, and participation requirements. She said there is a scholarship component to participation in the program, and the goal is to not only get men of color on campus but also to stay on campus. Ms. Hodge said they also had an UTPD officer come to speak to the group on UT community relations and the things that UTPD is doing within the department to bring more of a community policing feel to the department. She said the officer asked for recommendations about how UTPD could be more engaged with the community, and recommendations were given regarding that request.

Ms. Hodge also shared that when Chancellor Plowman visited during their November meeting she asked for there to be some research around why black faculty do not

stay at UT. She shared there is an effort underway for members of the Commission who have qualitative research experience to help look through some of the data that exists on that issue.

b. Commission for LGBT – Tom Cervone

Mr. Cervone reported that the [Commission](#) continues to work towards their goals of creating a safer and more inclusive campus climate for LGBTQ+ people, to develop and sustain campus safety for that same group, build a strong collaborative relationship with the Chancellor's Office to ensure they have a voice with the Chancellor and other campus leadership, and to continue to identify and address issues to improve campus climate for LGBTQ+ students. He said they are beginning to drill deeper into terminology around intersecting and diverse identities, as well as addressing needs for both graduate and undergraduate students in the community. They are also working to identify and address the needs for faculty and staff within the community, and increasing the visibility of the Commission on campus.

Mr. Cervone reported the group had a robust conversation around those issues and the group is engaged in identifying two to three recommended actionable items based on their conversations. He shared they are on the timeline between now and early fall. The group identified four actionable items; LGBTQ+ housing, additional training for faculty and staff, examination of the campus pride index, and how to create a task force so that they can respond appropriately, accordingly, and accurately with regard to the conversation around intersectionality.

c. Commission for Women – Amber Mathes

Amber Mathes reported that the [Commission](#) met on February 4 and Provost Zomchick spoke at the meeting. She shared that he was excited that enrollment numbers were up since last spring considering the pandemic, and that he is looking into staff retention and leadership programs. Tyvi Small, Vice Chancellor for Diversity & Engagement, gave a presentation on various diversity action plans.

d. Faculty Senate – John Goddard

Mr. Goddard reported that at the last [Faculty Senate](#) meeting Provost Zomchick reported on enrollment being up and discussed the late grade modification change request. He said they approved about two thirds of the students that applied for the change this year. He reported that Dr. Cross gave a report on the Institute of Agriculture, noting they have hired Craig Pickett, former Coordinator for Student Life and Diversity, as UTIA's Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. He also shared Ag campus building projects including a new building built on Third Creek. Dr. Cross is

welcoming naming suggestions as they would like to name the building after a former student or a notable graduate who is a person of color or Native American.

Mr. Goddard reported the parental leave policy was discussed as well as the acquisition of Martin Methodist. He said they addressed concerns by faculty of Chinese heritage about comments Senator Marsha Blackburn recently made. He said they also discussed gun bill in the state legislature and a move to reduce or waive graduate student fees.

e. Commission for Disabilities – Emma Burgin

Ms. Burgin reported that the [Commission](#) met on February 15. They are still setting goals after the Chairperson's meeting with Chancellor Plowman focusing on raising awareness of disability on campus. She reported streamlined, standardized training for faculty and staff on campus is high on the priority list, and an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility report was started under Chancellor Davenport but was delayed.

Ms. Burgin reported that there will be a big effort this semester of getting the accessibility report ready to present, and to come up with action items about accessibility on campus as a starting point. She said that the Commission wants to focus on livability as opposed to the limited definition of accessibility from the ADA.

Ms. Burgin announced that Haben Girma, the first deafblind graduate of Harvard Law School, will be presenting on [Disability & Innovation: The Universal Benefits of Inclusive Design](#) on March 23. She said Ms. Girma has been recognized by previous past Presidents and national and international organizations for her advocacy work for individuals with disabilities.

f. Commission for Diversity and Inclusion – Tom Cervone

Mr. Cervone reported that he was unable to attend the last [Commission](#) meeting, but Shelly Payne, one of his colleagues who represents the ERC groups for the Commission, shared her notes for a report.

Mr. Cervone reported the group has agreed on a new name, changing from Commission for Diversity and Interculturalism to Council for Diversity and Inclusion. He said that there was conversation and discussion around replacing current CDI responsibilities with new goals in the CDI bylaws. The goals are:

- Support the Division for Diversity & Engagement and its' initiatives
- Facilitate collaboration and communications across campus

- Financially support diversity initiatives and events on campus
- Support affinity groups, co-sponsoring events with affinity groups, providing opportunities for collaboration that do not have an official organization on campus
- Provide a platform for commissions to share information with the Chancellor and the DDE.

5. CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS

a. Donate Sick Leave Time

Q: “If another employee wants to donate their time (not the bank time, but their own sick leave or even vacation leave) to the employee on leave how can that be accomplished? If it’s not possible, I’d like to understand the steps to request a change in the policy/law.”

A: Dr. Lucal responded that, due to both System policy HR0383 – Sick Leave Transfer Between University Employees and state law (T.C.A. § 8-50-802), there is no mechanism for transferring sick leave between employees unless the receiving employee is a member of the Sick Leave Bank and has been approved for time by Bank trustees. The purpose of the Sick Leave Bank (SLB) is pay replacement, but the Bank approval process provides a mechanism for donations of time to ensure that applicants have been good stewards of their accrued leave time and ensure they have a serious medical condition. The SLB approval process has built in checks and balances to ensure the recipient has been medically certified and reviewed to protect all parties.

At the February 2020 meeting a similar constituent question was posed to the group, including the possibility of the Council supporting or presenting a proposed change in policy to the ERAB (system group). At that time, Dr. Lucal noted there is a budget implication around the question of opening the option of employee to employee sick leave transfer as additional process support including oversight as well as administrative support would be needed to process transfer requests. She discussed short term disability insurance might be a fit for those who do not have enough hours to join the bank. As that time, Leah Buffington was gathering names of representatives interested in working on the issue as part of considering approaching the ERAB with a proposed policy change.

Dr. Lucal asked the group if they wanted to form a working group and start putting together a proposal to address the issue to the ERAB. She asked that the group consider including a request for appropriate support to make sure a new person-to-person sick leave transfer mechanism can be supported as it would rely on extra

staffing to help manage transfers of time between employees. A discussion about taking the information back to the constituent and evaluating the possibility of a working group took place.

Dr. Lucal also suggested that short term disability insurance could be a way to help some employees who are in a scenario where they don't have enough sick leave and haven't been able to build up enough time to become a member of the Sick Leave Bank.

As a reminder, representatives are asked to please encourage constituents to consider joining the Sick Leave Bank each year as promoting enrollment is always timely. Sick Leave Bank annual open enrollment period is April through June. To be eligible for membership, employees must be a regular UT employee accruing sick leave, with a sick leave balance of at least 48 hours or six days (which is prorated for regular part-time employees) as of June 30.

For more information about the Knoxville-area Sick Leave Bank visit: <https://hr.utk.edu/sick-leave-bank/> or contact sickleavebank@utk.edu.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

a. Diversity Professional Development Fund for Staff

The Diversity Professional Development Fund for Staff (DPDFS) was created to support the participation of staff in diversity-related programs and conferences. Eligible staff who apply to receive funding to attend diversity conferences, seminars, and other programs. Applications are due on March 15, and all applications are due one month before the program to be attended.

For more information visit: <https://hr.utk.edu/diversity-fund-for-staff/>

b. Green Zone Training (2/24)

The Veterans Resource Center invites the campus community to join them for Green Zone Training on February 24. Learn more about our student and employee-veterans and some of their unique experiences they bring to the campus, and how they strengthen the diversity within our shared community.

More Information: <https://hr.utk.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/56/2021/02/Green-Zone-Flyer.pdf>

c. L&OD: Upcoming Events

For more information or to register for any of these sessions, visit K@TE,

1. Click “UT Faculty and Staff”
 2. Login with your NetID and Password
 3. On the K@TE homepage, select the “Learning” tab
 4. Select “Event Calendar”
 5. Click on the session title to register for the session.
 6. Click “Request”
- March 2, 9, 23 & 30 from 3:30p-4:30p: Telecommuting with Children
 - March 8 from 11:30a-12:30p: Lunch and Learn: A Presentation on Supercharging Your LinkedIn Presence with Michael Smith-Porter
 - March 24 from 9a-11a and 2p-4p: Professional Development – Building Your Brand: Leading from Where You Are
- d. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion HR/EAP Program Series

Join UTK HR Employee Relations and Optum EAP for a new, four part Zoom series focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace.

The series kicks off on February 24 with “Preventing Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment for Managers.” Other sessions are “Understand and Embrace Diversity” on March 9, “Fostering Inclusion in the Workplace” on March 24, and “Unconscious Bias” on April 14.

Sign up for these sessions through K@TE.

e. Big Orange Pantry

The Big Orange Pantry provides emergency food assistance for students, faculty, and staff attending or employed by the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The Big Orange Pantry is located on the ground floor of Greve Hall. Students, faculty, and staff seeking food assistance will be able to choose for themselves what products they would like to receive.

More information: tiny.utk.edu/BigOrangePantry

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7. REMINDERS

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