
PRESENT

Eric Amos, Emma Burgin, Jessica Cantu, Jon Chandler, Darrell Easley, Deanna Flinchum, John Goddard, Elisha Hodge, James Hodge, Rita Jackson, Bonnie Johnson, Janet Jones, Johnny Jones, Beth Kurtz, Victoria Leidy, Mary Lucal, Amber Mathes, Blake Reagan, Theresa Sears, Michael Smith-Porter, Kaley Walker, Matt Ward, Norma Wilcox, Lisa Yamagata-Lynch

ABSENT

Tom Cervone, George Drinnon, Kevin Frye, Marcus Hilliard, Heath Nokes, Kevin Thompson, Ken Wagner

1. WELCOME

Elisha Hodge, Past Chair and IPS MTAS representative, welcomed everyone to the October meeting.

2. UPDATES

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

Dr. Mary Lucal greeted the group and began her update by reflecting on the recent Board of Trustees' meeting. She lauded their decision to move to a [minimum hiring rate of \\$15.00 per hour](#). The new rate will take effect in January 2022 and there will be a compression component.

Dr. Lucal next discussed conversation around the recent federal vaccine mandate and the related [email message from President Boyd](#). She underscored the importance of paying attention to vaccination process dates included in the email as they are quickly approaching. Although the mandate does continue to be evaluated, Dr. Lucal said President Boyd was clear the university is a federal contractor and she did not want anyone to find themselves in a situation where they wish they had paid closer attention to the dates. She asked the group to help constituents who have not

yet been vaccinated and plan to do so to understand the importance of being aware of vaccination dates. More information, including dates, can be found at:

<https://tennessee.edu/coronavirus/vaccines/>.

Dr. Lucal closed her update by discussing the Board's approval of the [Faculty Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program \(VRIP\)](#). She noted the program offers the opportunity to recognize long term faculty and offer the campus opportunities to shift resources due to changing student interest over time. She said faculty who are eligible for participation will be sent more information.

Janet Jones asked when more information about compression issues relating to the new minimum hiring rate will be available. Dr. Lucal responded that work is going into decisions at the moment but she expects more information soon. John Goddard asked if part time employees would receive the new hiring rate. Dr. Lucal confirmed regular part time staff will but students and temporary staff will not.

Mr. Goddard asked to confirm Extension faculty would not be eligible for VRIP. Dr. Lucal responded that HR, Extension, and the Provost's Office worked to identify Extension faculty with an appointment letter for inclusion and one faculty member was included. Dr. Lucal recommended Mr. Goddard contact John Toman, Interim Director of UT Extension, for more information.

Ms. Hodge asked if flu vaccinations would be required this year and, if so, if there was a deadline. Dr. Lucal responded that to date there is no flu vaccine requirement. She recalled advice last fall from Dr. Spencer Gregg, Director of the Student Health Center, in which he encouraged employees to receive their flu vaccination due to comorbidity with COVID. For more information about campus flu vaccinations and vaccine availability at the Student Health Center, visit:

<https://studenthealth.utk.edu/influenza-vaccine/>.

3. COMMISSION REPORTS

a. Commission for Blacks – Elisha Hodge

Elisha Hodge reported the [Commission](#) met on September 29, 2021. A main topic of discussion about whether they will keep their current name.

Ms. Hodge reported the Commission will hold an event tomorrow, Thursday, October 28, called a Seat at the Table. The event is to promote minority and black leadership within the UT System. There will be a panel discussion about professional development and career advancement opportunities throughout the System.

b. Commission for LGBT People – Tom Cervone

No report was given for the [Commission](#).

c. Council for Diversity and Inclusion – Tom Cervone

Ms. Hodge announced that a volunteer is needed to represent ESC on the [Commission](#). She encouraged anyone interested to contact Mr. Cervone.

d. Commission for Disability – Emma Burgin

Emma Burgin reported the [Commission](#) met last week and they are getting to know their new members. The Commission is just under a year old, and recruitment efforts have doubled the size of the group.

She reported that students from [the FUTURE Program](#) recently led an effort to [obtain Freedom Passes from Knoxville Area Transit \(KAT\)](#). One of her students started an online petition for the passes to give students with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are in the vocational certificate access to free bus passes to help them with internships and job seeking. She and the student met with KAT, and they are interested in not only doing a pilot with the FUTURE program but possibly expanding it to all UT students over time.

Dr. Burgin closed by reporting the Commission is continuing work on their website, and asked anyone with resources or events the disability community would be interested to share them with her.

e. Commission for Women – Amber Mathes

Amber Mathes reported the [Commission](#) met on October 7. Dr. Shea Kidd Brown, Associate Vice Chancellor and Dean of Students, and Crystal Hardeman-Ikem, Associate Dean and Director of Inclusive Excellence with the Office of Multicultural Student Life, gave presentations. They had committee updates, with many picking up where they left off in the spring. She reported the Communications Committee is looking to utilize Twitter to publicize events and information, and the Professional Development Committee is continuing their work on a central website for campus resources. The Events Committee is planning a professional development event for the spring with plans to hold one event in each fall and two each spring.

Ms. Mathes closed her report by noting they hope to share updates and dates for programs and events currently being planned.

f. Faculty Senate – George Drinnon

No report was given for [Faculty Senate](#).

4. CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS

a. Employee Vaccination Mandate

Q: “Is UT going to mandate vaccines for employees and staff?”

A: Dr. Lucal responded to the question as part of her update.

More information, including a copy of President Boyd’s email, can be found at: <https://tennessee.edu/coronavirus/vaccines/>.

b. Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program for Staff

Q: “Are there plans to extend the proposed retirement incentive for faculty to staff?”

A: Dr. Lucal responded there are currently no plans for a staff retirement incentive program right now. The VRIP is to respond to changing student needs and that need does not exist on the staff front.

A discussion about retirement in light of VRIP, the upcoming Budget Allocation Model (BAM), and the new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) project took place.

Mr. Goddard asked Dr. Lucal to clarify why staff are not being offered a similar incentive. Dr. Lucal explained the program allows Deans with open faculty lines to reassign them to areas with increased student interest. She noted the program allows flexibility for addressing strategic needs. Mr. Goddard asked to confirm there was no difference in faculty being nine or twelve months to be considered eligible to participate, and Dr. Lucal confirmed there are both types of faculty members who are eligible.

c. Exempt Staff Covering for Non-Exempt Staff

Q: “Are there any guidelines preventing exempt staff from being pulled to fill in for non-exempt staff? Specifically, can exempt staff be expected to cover when non-exempt staff members are calling out or schedule a day off?”

A: Dr. Lucal responded that exempt staff can fill in for non-exempt staff members. She cautioned if non-exempt staff are doing exempt level work it should be discussed with HR, particularly if they need to do so for an extended period of time.

d. Employee Proof of Vaccination for Vaccines Not Listed in IRIS

Q: “For employees who received vaccinations approved by the WHO but not on the list found on IRIS (e.g. AstraZeneca) – how can we provide this proof of that vaccination when it is not an option on the form?”

A: Dr. Lucal responded that IRIS is currently developing a new other category for the Employee Self Service verification form to identify vaccinations other than Pfizer, Moderna, and the Johnson & Johnson vaccines.

Dr. Lucal shared email confirmation functionality for completed verification submissions is also being worked on. Blake Reagan asked how to report receiving multiple vaccines, including initially receiving the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and receiving a different vaccine booster shot. Dr. Lucal responded that she wasn't sure if developing the ability to record multiple vaccinations was a priority for the IRIS programmers but reassured Mr. Reagan that any vaccination records that are uploaded will be reviewed. She reiterated vaccination has not yet been stated as being required.

e. Extension Performance Appraisals

Q: “Will there ever be an opportunity for agents to meet with regional staff and speak for themselves in their own performance appraisal? I have worked for UT Extension for 26 years and have never had such an opportunity.”

A: Before the meeting, Jessica Cantu reached out to Doug Bohner, Human Resources Officer for UTIA. Mr. Bohner responded:

“Questions of this nature require a discussion among the Extension statewide leadership team to ensure commitment and consistency in practice. I have shared this question with John Toman and he will present it to the appropriate audience and then follow up with an answer. ... (The) question has been passed along and as soon as a response is received, it will be shared with the ESC.”

Dr. Darrell Easley said the question will be kept on the agenda for a follow up response from Mr. Toman. Mr. Goddard described the current process for Extension performance appraisals in which an employee meets with the county director, and the county director meets with the regional director to rate the employee. He explained employees are not at the table for their own performance appraisal.

f. Exempt Position Issues

Q: “We have a critical exempt position that we are having issues getting filled, and I believe we have 3 reasons:

1. There is a shortage of Linux Admins across the area.

2. The recommended pay does not match what other local organizations can offer (eg ORNL).
3. Our (UT HR) recruiting efforts/options seem to be limited.

While I know the first two reasons are less likely to get resolved in the near future, I believe the third reason could be addressed now.

It's my understanding that we have very little advertisement/recruiting external to Taleo. Why can't HR reach beyond that and use a service such as Zip Recruiter or tech recruiting companies such as TEK Systems for positions that can't be filled by using standard UT HR practices?

A: Dr. Lucal reframed the question to explain what happens beyond passive recruitment. She said Taleo, the HR applicant tracking system, is scraped by several external job websites including Indeed.com, Linked In, and Inside Higher Ed. She explained those job sites make money from scraping position listings and allows visitors to see them without having to directly visit the UT website. Chelsey Byrd, HR Recruitment Manager, recently joined HR from private industry and can assist with promoting jobs to increase advertising to candidates. HR also offers Hot Jobs, which showcase hard to fill jobs, and HR staff can also promote hard to fill jobs on LinkedIn to drive traffic towards creating a diverse candidate pool.

Dr. Lucal encouraged anyone with questions to contact their recruiter, or ask if Ms. Byrd can assist them with ideas to advertise hard to fill jobs.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

a. Staff Performance Review Series

Dr. Easley introduced Jose Lee-Perez, Assistant Director of First Year Programs. Mr. Lee-Perez was selected as a HR Staff Diversity Fellow, and is collaborating with HR to present an upcoming series around performance reviews and the new inclusion, diversity, and engagement (IDE) category.

Mr. Lee-Perez greeted the group and shared that the performance review series will build on the engagement piece of reviews over several different sessions. He explained one of the biggest components he is involved in is IDE. They recently hosted a pilot session, and the series sessions will begin in December and run into the spring semester. They will feature how to bring IDE into the performance review process. He shared his enthusiasm for the series and encouraged the group to come to one of the future sessions.

Dr. Lucal thanked Mr. Lee-Perez for his work in partnership with HR. Dr. Easley asked for the group to be on the lookout for the sessions.

For more information and registration, visit:

https://calendar.utk.edu/department/human_resources.

b. Public Service Loan Forgiveness Change

On Oct. 6, 2021, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) announced a change to Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program rules for a limited time. Employees who have Federal Direct Loans and have made 120 payments after 2007 may be eligible for the remaining loan balance to be forgiven. Through 10/31/2022 borrowers may receive credit for past student loan payments made that would not otherwise qualify for PSLF. That means if you've previously been denied PSLF, you may be eligible under the temporary waiver.

As UT is a qualifying employer for public service loan forgiveness this is a great opportunity for any employee who may benefit from receiving additional credit towards loan forgiveness.

More information: <https://studentaid.gov/announcements-events/pslf-limited-waiver>

A discussion about qualifying payments took place.

c. Trunk or Treat Event in Circle Park

The National Residence Hall Honorary will host a trunk or treat event for Knoxville-area faculty, staff, student, and community members' children this Thursday, October 28, from 6-8 pm in Circle Park. There will be plenty of activities for children and parents/guardians and University Housing encourages all to attend.

d. UTK Veterans Holiday Food Drive (through November 15)

UTK HR, Second Harvest, and the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association are teaming up to help provide food assistance to struggling veterans and their families throughout East Tennessee during the upcoming holiday season. HR will be collecting canned food items (meals-in-a-can) and other non-perishable food items (no glass containers, please) through Monday, November 15. Please bring donations to the UTK HR Office in 105 Student Services Building, Veterans Success Center in Hodges Library, or Army or Air Force ROTC offices in Hoskins Library.

If you know of a veteran, member of the Guard or Reserves, an active-duty service member, or a family member in need of food assistance, please contact HR Veterans Representative Casey Bain at cbain4@utk.edu.

Sharable flyer: <https://hr.utk.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/56/2021/10/UTK-Veteran-Mobile-Food-Pantry-Holiday-Food-Drive.pdf>

e. Consideration of a Draft Resolution

Ms. Hodge reminded the group that at the September meeting one of the agenda items was a request for ESC to develop a resolution to specifically thank the Emergency Operations Committee (EOC) but also all staff and employees for all of the diligence shown during COVID. She said she and Mr. Cervone have created a draft that will be shared with the group after the meeting. She asked the group to review and share comments back with her so a final version can be discussed and presented at the next meeting in November when Chancellor Plowman will be on the call.

Dr. Lucal asked about how the resolution would be shared. Ms. Hodge noted other Commissions and Faculty Senate post approved resolutions to their websites. She said, if passed, the resolution could be similarly posted to the ESC website.

6. REMINDERS

a. Next meeting: Tuesday, November 23, 2:30 p.m. ET

Ms. Hodge reminded the group that Chancellor Plowman will join the group. She asked questions for the Chancellor be sent to her as soon as possible for consideration, and encouraged everyone to attend if possible.

The group was reminded [to update their Zoom clients](#) prior to the November meeting.

b. Please email constituent questions to Elisha Hodge (elisha.hodge@tennessee.edu) or Jessica Cantu (jlcantu@utk.edu).