
PRESENT

Christopher Binkley, Jessica Cantu, Tom Cervone, Jon Chandler, Shane Colter, Darrell Easley, DeAnna Flinchum, John Goddard, Marcus Hilliard, James Hodge, Rita Jackson, Melissa Jenkins, Bonnie Johnson, Janet Jones, Johnny Jones, Beth Kurtz, Rachel McClelland, Amber Mathes, David Moore, Kim Raia, Blake Reagan, Andrea Stedman, Ken Wagner, Connie Walden, Kaley Walker, Matt Ward, Leslie Wereszczak, Norma Wilcox, Lisa Yamagata-Lynch

ABSENT

Eric Amos, Emma Burgin, George Drinnon, Kevin Frye, Mary Lucal, Heath Nokes, Michael Smith-Porter, Kevin Thompson, Tanya Washington

1. WELCOME

Elisha Hodge, Past Chair and IPS MTAS representative, welcomed everyone to the June meeting. She introduced herself to new members and led the group in a welcome and update conversation.

Dr. Darrell Easley shared that HR recently held an onboarding event for newer employees. The [Ready, Set, Connect event](#) had about eighty attendees and included connection opportunities and a partner fair. He thanked Ms. Hodge for representing ESC at the fair.

Ms. Hodge and Tom Cervone, Chair and Arts & Sciences representative, shared their thanks with the group. Both leave the Council as of the end of the month. ESC will elect a new Chair and Vice Chairs in July.

2. UPDATES

- a. Human Resources Update – Dr. Darrell Easley, Director of Employee Relations & Learning & Organizational Development

Darrell Easley began his update by reflecting on recent Board of Trustee meeting, including the approved 4% salary pool which is the largest in the University's history. The pool totals about \$28.3 million dollars, and Budget & Finance are merit information with increases expected to take place in July. He said the Board also approved a zero percent tuition increase for campuses across the state and approved a measure to allow military affiliated students residency so they will pay the in-state tuition rate. Capital project approval for several campus buildings and Neyland Stadium improvements also were approved. Dr. Easley shared his gratitude to the state government for their support of the University system.

Dr. Easley next announced open positions within UT Knoxville Human Resources. He shared that Jessica Cantu accepted a new role as Employee Relations Consultant, and the Employee Relations Team is looking to fill their Specialist position.

Dr. Easley introduced Connie Walden, Director of Records, who attended to discuss a constituent question. Ms. Walden shared that Records is busy processing large numbers of new hires.

3. COMMISSION REPORTS

a. Commission for Blacks – Elisha Hodge

No report was given for the [Commission](#) as it did not meet this month. The Commission will meet again in the fall.

b. Commission for LGBT People – Tom Cervone

No report was given for the [Commission](#) as it did not meet this month. The Commission will meet again in the fall.

c. Council for Diversity and Inclusion – Tom Cervone

No report was given for the [Commission](#) as it did not meet this month. The Commission will meet again in the fall.

d. Commission for Disability – Emma Burgin

No report was given for the [Commission](#) as it did not meet this month. The Commission will meet again in the fall.

e. Commission for Women – Amber Mathes

No report was given for the [Commission](#) as it did not meet this month. The Commission will meet again in the fall.

f. Faculty Senate – George Drinnon

Nor report was given for the [Faculty Senate](#) as it did not meet this month. Faculty Senate will meet again in the fall.

4. NEW BUSINESS

a. New Representative Introductions

Ms. Hodge welcomed new representatives to the meeting and invited each to introduce themselves to the group.

The new representatives are Andrea Stedman (Arts & Sciences), Rachel McClelland (Law, Communication, Nursing & Architecture), Shane Colter (OIT), Tanya Washington IPS Central Office/Naifeh Center/LEIC/TLC), Melissa Jenkins (Research), Christopher Binkley (UTIA Extension – Central Region), Leslie Wereszczak (UTIA CASNR, IAG & CVM), David Moore (IPS MTAS), and Kimberly Raia (IPS CTAS).

5. CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS

a. Q: Discussion on career development (follow-up from last month)

A: Dr. Easley discussed ongoing efforts to assist with employee retention including plans for UT Knoxville HR to hire a Career Development Coach. This role will work with staff to understand employees' goals, help them identify positions of interest, and assist with creating a resume and in writing cover letters if needed. He said this position will be available to assist both non-exempt and exempt staff.

Dr. Easley then discussed UT Knoxville's [Professional Fellowship Program](#). Division of Student Life employees may participate in the program to gain experience within the Division or in campus partner areas. Dr. Easley said that, pending approval by senior leadership, UT Knoxville HR hopes to run a similar pilot next year. He cited fellowships as a wonderful opportunity to give employees hands-on experience outside of their current role.

Bonnie Johnson noted that the Pride Center was one of the first Student Life units to host a fellowship participant. She shared a success story of a former professional intern with the Center. She said the program provides good work experience and

shared her enthusiasm for the program and the possibility it may be extended beyond Student Life.

b. Q: 401k benefit for FY2023 (follow-up from last month)

A: Dr. Easley reported that a [system-wide announcement about the 401\(k\) matching change was recently sent out](#):

“For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2022, general state and higher education employees will be eligible to receive a \$2 match for every \$1 contributed to the State of Tennessee 401(k) plan each month, up to \$100. That is a maximum match of \$100 per month for contributions of \$50 or more.

If you are already contributing at least \$50 to your 401(k) account each month, you are set to receive the full \$100 match beginning with the first payroll for FY23 (July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023).

If you have not yet enrolled or are not currently contributing at least \$50 each month to the 401(k) account, consider seizing the additional dollar amount. To get the full match for the fiscal year, log into your 401(k) account now at RetireReadyTN.gov to make sure your monthly contributions equal at least \$50 per month.”

c. Q: Currently, UT does not observe Juneteenth as a holiday. Will this be changing in the future? If not, why?

A: Dr. Easley responded that the state passed a bill marking Juneteenth as an observance. System HR has informed the campuses and institutes that it would be treated as an unpaid holiday (similar to Veterans’ Day).

UT Knoxville will continue to support UTK-specific celebration events in recognition of this important holiday.

d. Q: Is there anything that HR can do to get a new employee fully in all of the various UT systems prior to their official start date? Currently, it can take a new employee 1-2 weeks after their start date to move from “pending employee” to being classified as a faculty or staff.

This is extremely problematic and quite honestly, doesn’t look good for the University. The issue is that on their first day, new employees are unable to sign into Office 365 applications such as Word, Outlook, and OneDrive – they can only use

web versions of those products, but not the desktop applications. They also cannot get licensed Zoom accounts. If we're hiring an administrative assistant, that means this employee cannot manage calendars of the people they support, cannot schedule Zoom meetings, and more.

We were advised by HR to enter new employees as "pending", however even if we put them in as pending, according to the University's Microsoft contract, pending employees don't have full access to Office 365 desktop applications. See <https://utk.teamdynamix.com/TDClient/2277/OIT-Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=122713> for the list of those who are not eligible and you'll see the Pending Employees are on that list.

Is there a legal reason we can't start the process of moving them from pending to employee before their first day so that they can get right to work on day one?

A: Dr. Easley responded that Ms. Walden would provide more information about new hires and the access process. Ms. Walden said she investigated the issue several months ago. She explained that in the past the priority for new hires was to get them into IRIS to ensure they were paid. Now, access for many services and benefits are tied to IRIS. She said they have a practice of putting new staff hires into IRIS as pending employees the week prior to their hire date and have encouraged departments hiring faculty to do the same. The pending status means the new employees' NetIDs can be set up in the system prior to their first day. She explained pending employees are assigned a NetID the following business day from entry.

Although new employees in pending status are assigned NetID's, Ms. Walden said her understanding is A3 license access is limited to employees in regular status. She explained employees are not changed from pending to regular status until all necessary employment paperwork including I-9 forms and completed faculty hire forms are completed. Any delay in receiving the necessary paperwork from the employee or department may mean a delay the employee's status changing to regular and having available A3 software access.

Ms. Walden noted that once Records changes an employee to regular it takes two business days for them to appear in the Active Directory, giving the employee A3 license access. They also cannot make employees active prior to their first day of work due to regulations.

Ken Wagner identified the question as coming from his department and shared his experience with several new hires not having A3 access for their first week. He shared his frustration with pending employees not having the same A3 access as regular employees and the delay in getting started is a concern. Ms. Walden

responded that periods of high-volume including August do create entry delays. She and Mr. Wagner discussed what if a pending employee was given A3 access but did not actually start work.

She said HR could check with OIT about the terms of the Microsoft A3 license, and that OIT currently cannot differentiate between certain classifications of employees who aren't allowed to have access. Shane Colter noted that Kevin Frye, past ESC representative for OIT, is a good point of contact about Microsoft licensing, regulations, and software audits.

After the meeting OIT met to discuss A3 licensing. Starting Thursday, July 20, pending employees associated with UTK, UTIA and IPS will have A3 access activated two business days after being entered as a pending employee in IRIS.

Employees starting work on a Monday should be entered as pending in IRIS no later than the preceding Thursday for all licenses to be in place for the employee's first day. Existing pending employees will have active A3 licenses as of July 20.

- e. Q: We've had an employee pose the following question to their supervisor and I'm hoping ESC can help with some feedback. I may have another question coming next week once their supervisor can give some specific examples.

The first has to do with the newer category in the annual OPR:

Inclusion, Diversity & Engagement - the extent to which the employee treats others with fairness, dignity, and respect, fosters inclusion, values individual and group differences, makes efforts to enhance inclusion, diversity, and engagement, and contributes to departmental and organizational unit diversity strategic goals.

They are wanting some guidance on how one actually excels in this category to be considered for scores higher than a typical 3. I think it is a fair question since it has a bit of ambiguity in how it is to be executed. I do recall there seemed to be a list of examples for UT employees to consider with some of them being more robust than others. Here is a random example for you:

Goal 1. Attend five virtual trainings on inclusion, diversity, and engagement.

This is a pretty flat goal but meets a bit of the standard in the category. Can it be considered going above and beyond if they actually attend six trainings (2 in person and 4 virtual) and begin attending the quarterly meeting of an established group?

Can that lead the supervisor to consider the person for a possible 4? Is it that simple? This category has a very different feel than “Service and Relationships.”

A: Dr. Easley responded that, like all OPR categories, the assessment of performance should link back to the Position Description, the employee and department’s individual goals, and the extent to which the person meets, doesn’t meet, or excels in that category when measured against all of that.

In addition, System HR has provided some general guidance on how to think about performance and scoring within a given category. Departments can take that a step further to develop goals and clarify what it means to be a 3, 4, or even 5 in that unit.

He explained Inclusion, Diversity & Equity category, like all categories, can have core expectations set by the department (X number of training hours, particular initiatives with defined outcomes, items that link to the departmental diversity action plan). As with all categories, there is not set checklist of things to complete. It varies.

The UT Knoxville HR website has a [Staff Performance Reviews page](#) with a wealth of performance review information. There is also a Staff Performance Daily Series that includes a workshop on the DEI category. Sessions will be scheduled soon for fall/spring 2022-2023 with more information and dates to come.

UT Knoxville staff may contact HR Employee Relations at (865) 974-6642 and select the option for Employee Relations to speak with a consultant about performance and scoring in any of the categories. For UTIA, IPS, and UTSA employees, contact your unit’s HR team to discuss scoring and performance.

Andrea Stedman shared a recent discussion she had with her director about performance review scoring. She asked if training will be offered about scoring. Dr. Easley shared his experience with performance conversations and partnering with employees to help understand each category and goal setting. Janet Jones noted that she felt expectations about performance can differ depending on the role, and that it’s difficult for people working in frontline positions to take classes when their job is demanding. Dr. Easley responded that he understood that would be frustrating. Ken Wagner noted that Dr. Lucal had mentioned contacting System HR to ask them to provide guidance to make it easier for everyone. Dr. Easley responded that he would follow up with Dr. Lucal. Leslie Wereszczak shared that she received pushback from her direct reports around the IDE category. She shared she did not have much guidance on how to score the category and she and other employees who scored high in the previous question received a lower score. She echoed the call for more guidance on scoring. Shane Colter shared information about [Project Implicit](#), an

assessment resource site recently featured in an OIT newsletter. He said it has well-developed cognitive tools to seek out biases.

- f. Q: I found myself shaking my head at a job description for an IT security job on campus this week. This job likely wouldn't require a degree at all outside the university, but even at the university, you'd typically see it listed as "bachelor's degree (unspecified major) or X years of related job experience." This one not only required a degree AND experience, it required a degree in one of 3 areas:

And all I could think was, "Well, here's the university shooting itself in the foot and decreasing the size of its applicant pool, but at least I'm not on that hiring committee." That's just for context, and I don't think this position above is necessarily impacted by what I'm pointing to next.

Then I came across this page at WBIR, the local NBC affiliate, listing all of the new TN laws going into effect July 1, with this screenshot listing HB 1916.

This appears to be the bill is published into law:

<https://publications.tnsosfiles.com/acts/112/pub/pc0823.pdf>

I wonder, though, if there will be any official communication or effort on the part of the University, HR, or hiring managers to stop requiring bachelor's degree – particularly for jobs outside of teaching and research? I've long felt it was silly that we tend to require <any BA or BS> for someone to do work that is in no way requires a degree.

A: Dr. Easley responded that the UT Knoxville HR Compensation team and the Office of Equity & Diversity have had many, many conversations with hiring managers about this, even more this past 12 months. Many supervisors have chosen to lower the degree requirement, and others have had to really think through the reasons they state a degree being necessary.

He said that, in short, HR completely agrees that by rethinking minimum qualifications, around things like degrees, we broaden our candidate pools. They continue to partner with hiring managers to have these conversations.

Dr. Easley noted that Dr. Lucal has sent an inquiry to the System HR office to request additional information about HB 1916. She will report back at the July meeting.

- g. Q: Will the increase described in the release from the IRS below apply to travel reimbursement for UT employees on official business?
<https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/finance/images/doa-images/f&a-policies/12-29-2021%20FA%20Policy%20SIGNED.pdf>

A: Prior to the meeting, Jessica Cantu reached out to Tisha Marshall, Director of Accounts Payable with the Treasurer's Office. She responded that UT does follow the IRS mileage rate and the new IRS rate does not take effect until July 1. The current mileage rate is 58.5 cents per mile.

Marshall said she forwarded the information linked in the constituent question to the state for their review as the state follows the IRS and UT follows the state for increases. The Treasurer's Office is awaiting a response from the state and will send an update or once more information is available.

After the meeting a system-wide email was sent confirming that, as of July 1, 2022, the State mileage reimbursement rate would increase for employees using a personally owned automobile for business travel.

Additionally, the email noted that mileage reimbursement for employees receiving a vehicle allowance, courtesy car, or assigned a university car would increase to \$0.22 per mile. The email noted the change is reflected in Concur and no additional action is needed for travelers.

For information about submitting mileage claims, visit the [Travel FAQ website](#).

6. OTHER BUSINESS

- a. Sick Leave Bank – Open Enrollment Ends June 30

Jon Chandler announced that HR is accepting applications for new enrollees in the Knoxville—Area and Institute of Agriculture Sick Leave Banks (SLB) through next Thursday, June 30.

To be eligible, you must be employed as a regular employee accruing sick leave, with a sick leave balance of at least 48 hours or 6 days (pro-rated for regular, part-time employees) by June 30.

Applicants will be notified in July if they were successfully enrolled into their area's Bank.

b. UTK HR Backpack Drive

UT Knoxville HR is collaborating with campus partners and the Knoxville Area Urban League (KAUL) to help with the annual Shoes for School event taking place on Saturday, August 6, 2022 at Caswell Park.

Shoes for School provides school supplies, backpacks, and new athletic shoes to Knoxville area school children. Each year approximately 5,000+ students are served during the large distribution event. 2022 marks the fifth year that Human Resources has collected backpacks to distribute to children during the event.

Donations are needed. UTK HR is collecting new and gently used backpacks as well as monetary donations to purchase backpacks in bulk. Please bring donations to 105 Student Services no later than Wednesday, August 3rd.

More information: <https://hr.utk.edu/2022/06/16/please-help-our-backpack-drive/>

c. Open Discussion

Ms. Hodge opened the floor to outgoing representatives for parting thoughts.

Ms. Jones shared her thanks to the group and for interacting and learning from others. Ms. Hodge shared her gratitude to the group, to Ms. Cantu for her assistance, and Mr. Cervone for co-chairing the group.

7. REMINDERS

a. Next meeting: July 26, 2022

b. Please email constituent questions to Jessica Cantu (jlcantu@utk.edu).