

## PRESENT

Jessica Cantu, Tom Cervone, Jon Chandler, Shane Colter, George Drinnon, DeAnna Flinchum, John Goddard, Gina Hale, Marcus Hilliard, James Hodge, Rita Jackson, Melissa Jenkins, Bonnie Johnson, Mary Lucal, David Moore, Kim Raia, Andrea Stedman, Ken Wagner, Matt Ward, Leslie Wereszczak, Lisa Yamagata-Lynch

## ABSENT

Chris Binkley, Emma Burgin, Darrell Easley, Johnny Jones, Beth Kurtz, Rachel McClelland, Blake Reagan, Michael Smith-Porter, Kevin Thompson, Tanya Washington, Norma Wilcox

## 1. WELCOME

Dr. Mary Lucal, Associate Vice Chancellor for UT Knoxville Human Resources, welcomed everyone to the July meeting. She introduced herself to new members and announced the main agenda item was for the group to elect new leadership including a Chair.

She thanked Tom Cervone, Ex-Officio Chair, for joining the meeting, and discussed the background of the Exempt Staff Council. UT Knoxville and other Knoxville area campuses and institutes operate and are responsible for coordinating non-exempt employee groups, or Employee Relations groups. Exempt Staff Council differs from the non-exempt groups in that they are self-organized and operationally supported by UT Knoxville HR. She called for the group to organize around filling officer positions so the group can lead themselves.

Mr. Cervone greeted the group and reflected on his time serving with ESC over the years. He discussed his recent experience co-chairing with Elisha Hodge and highlighted the value of the Council and being in service to constituents. Shane Colter shared his experience serving as Chair about 10 years ago and reflected that the Council crosses boundaries across the Knoxville area.

Dr. Lucal called for nominations for officers, including Chair, First Vice Chair, and Second Vice Chair. A description of the positions can be found in the group's [bylaws page on the ESC website](#). A discussion about nominations took place. DeAnna Flinchum noted a quorum would need to be present to vote during the meeting. A count was taken, and a quorum was found to be present.

Dr. Lucal opened the floor for nominations. No nominations were put forth, and the group discussed conducting the nomination process online before the August meeting. A decision was made to conduct nominations online and provide nominees with an opportunity to confirm their nomination. Mr. Cervone offered to provide support and encouragement to the group and ESC's new officers.

## 2. CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS

- a. Follow-up 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 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?"

Previous 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.

Updated A: 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 (i.e., two business days) 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.

Ken Wagner thanked those involved in the decision to extend A3 licenses to pending employees since it will provide a smoother transition for new employees. Mr. Colter shared that Joel Reeves, Associate Vice Chancellor for OIT, brought together a group to meet on the decision to extend license access. He thanked Connie Walden, Director of HR Records, for her involvement in the licensing conversation.

- b. Follow-up 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." '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 is in no way requires a degree."

Previous 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.

Updated A: Dr. Lucal reported that, after the June meeting, she brought the issue to System HR. They confirmed HB 1916 does not apply to the University. Dr. Lucal explained the state sometimes does consider higher education employees to be state employees but, in this case, they do not.

### 3. OTHER BUSINESS

#### a. Engineering Ad Hoc Election Update

Ms. Flinchum reported on the results of the recent ad hoc election for the Tickle College of Engineering (TCE). Gina Hale with TCE HR was elected to complete Amber Mathes' term. She welcomed Ms. Hale to the Council.

#### b. Other Business

Andrea Stedman asked the group if certain types or categories of issues could be brought up in the Council. Dr. Lucal explained the agenda item process. She encouraged the group to avoid sending last minute questions, if possible, as researching and receiving answers can take time. Mr. Goddard discussed notable past constituent questions the group has had success in resolving, including a mileage reimbursement increase in 2021.

Mr. Colter asked about time limits on using the new UT Knoxville [Volunteer Policy](#). Dr. Lucal responded that employees have through the end of the calendar year, not fiscal, to use volunteer time hours.

Ms. Stedman asked about establishing committees for professional areas. Dr. Lucal responded they could although HR would not run them or participate unless invited to a specific meeting. She shared professional development group examples including one for executive assistants and event planning professionals. A discussion of professional area connections took place.

Matt Ward brought up a followup constituent question from April about expanding the [student fee discount benefit](#) to employees with eligible dependents and spouses enrolled in graduate classes. He noted he understands the decision to expand benefits beyond undergraduate tuition rests with the System. He shared his constituent told him the University of Alabama allows discounts for undergraduate and graduate classes after six continuous months of employment. Dr. Lucal responded that once the Council has leadership in place the group can consider if the issue is something they would like to advance to the [Employee Relations Advisory Board \(ERAB\)](#), which President Boyd chairs. She said advancing policy changes is a

big lift, but the group can choose to bring issues forward that are important to them. Dr. Lisa Yamagata-Lynch reflected that the April question related to dual enrollment programs, and that the student fee discount benefit is not as hefty as it used to be. Dr. Lucal encouraged Mr. Ward to have his constituent put together a one-page proposal for consideration.

Ms. Stedman discussed allowing remote flexibility for staff whose roles do not require them to work on campus. Dr. Lucal responded that every college and administrative unit has flexibility, but decisions rest with unit leadership. She suggested having constituents explore flexibility with their leadership. HR can provide [tools to leaders](#) to help examine positions to make decisions about flexible work. Ms. Stedman said she has heard about differing outcomes in decision making and said she is seeking consistency. Dr. Lucal responded it is not a centralized decision-making process and noted she knows of at least one SEC (Southeastern Conference) school that requires remote work requests be sent to the state to be approved. She explained that, at UT Knoxville, it was decided that those decisions would not be made centrally and instead better rest at the local level.

Leslie Wereszczak discussed constituent feedback from employees who are unable to work remotely. She said they felt the ability to do so is a perk and unfair. She noted the Veterinary Hospital staff have been present throughout the pandemic, and that she has noticed significantly longer wait times in interacting with main campus employees working remotely. She expressed a desire for everyone to be treated fairly. Dr. Lucal empathized and noted the Council is a good place to share perspectives across different units.

Bonnie Johnson agreed with Ms. Wereszczak, remarking that everyone's roles look different. She urged the Council to consider taking up equity issues including flexible benefits and look to ways to prevent turnover, especially among entry level professionals with advanced degrees and diverse backgrounds. She noted the problem of decentralized remote work decisions when made by middle managers who do not see value in remote work or that it is a benefit. She said the lack of consistency is creating an issue of bleeding talent. Further discussion about additional remote work experiences took place.

Ms. Stedman asked about raising minimum pay for exempt employees and reducing the work week to 37.5 hours. She noted other higher education institutions in the state have reduced their work weeks and improving pay might lead to lower turnover. Dr. Lucal noted that UT Knoxville raised the campus' minimum wage to \$15 earlier in the year with associated compression of \$6 million. She emphasized the importance of calculating compression for any pay minimum pay increases.

Ms. Wereszczak said the University's current biweekly pay period scheduling limits the Veterinary Hospital's staffing flexibility. Dr. Lucal noted payroll is managed by UT System Administration, and suggested she contact Laura Sloan, Director of System Compensation. David Moore offered advice about 207(k) FLSA (Fair Labor Standards Act) [exemptions for public safety professionals](#).

4. REMINDERS

- a. Next meeting: August 23, 2022
  
- b. Please email constituent questions to Jessica Cantu ([jlcantu@utk.edu](mailto:jlcantu@utk.edu)).