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PRESENT

Jessica Cantu, Tom Cervone, Jon Chandler, George Drinnon, DeAnna Flinchum, Kevin Frye, John Goddard, Marcus Hilliard, Elisha Hodge, Rita Jackson, Bonnie Johnson, Janet Jones, Johnny Jones, Mary Lucal, Amber Mathes, Theresa Sears, Nancy Taylor, Ken Wagner, Matt Ward, Norma Wilcox, Lisa Yamagata-Lynch

ABSENT

Eric Amos, Emma Burgin, Darrell Easley, James Hodge, Beth Kurtz, Heath Nokes, Michael Smith-Porter, Kevin Thompson, Kaley Walker

1. WELCOME

Elisha Hodge, Past Chair and IPS MTAS representative, welcomed everyone to the May meeting. She led the group in a check-in discussion.

2. UPDATES

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

Mary Lucal greeted the group and began her update by reflecting on the end of the spring semester. She announced the Compensation team recently welcomed a new analyst.

Dr. Lucal closed her update by discussing performance reviews. Lists of incomplete reviews were recently sent out to Vice Chancellors. She asked the group for assistance in completing reviews on the list to help ensure that employees are eligible for market and merit money. George Drinnon asked about reporting tools available to supervisors to check the status of reviews for people in their units. Jessica Cantu confirmed reporting tools are available within the Online Performance Review (OPR) system for supervisors to view down through the organization reporting structure.

John Goddard asked what the status of IRIS is. Dr. Lucal explained that IRIS will be sunseting in two years, and the [Enterprise Resource Planning \(ERP\) project](#) is underway to transition to the new DASH cloud based system from Oracle. She emphasized the large scope of the project and large scale of work involved in the transition. She noted that Concur would be replaced as part of the transition as well. Blake Reagan confirmed that the Marketplace system would also be replaced.

### 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

Mr. Cervone reported the [Commission](#) recently met. He discussed the recent [Diversity Update video](#) from Tyvi Small, Vice Chancellor for Diversity & Engagement. He said the video encapsulates issues and items that the Commission has been working on this year.

#### d. Commission for Disability – Emma Burgin

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

#### e. Commission for Women – Amber Mathes

Amber Mathes reported the [Commission](#) recently completed interviews and wrap-up reports in preparation for summer break. The Commission will meet again in the fall.

#### f. Faculty Senate – George Drinnon

Mr. Drinnon reported that [Faculty Senate](#) passed a resolution recognizing Jerry Riehl, who recently passed away. He reported there were technical revisions for the faculty senate bylaws and handbook and faculty salary surveys. A [presentation on budgetary information](#) for UTK and the new Budget Allocation Model (BAM) was also given.

Dr. Lucal commented on the loss of Mr. Riehl, a long-time employee with the Office of Information Technology. She shared her gratitude for his service to the campus community.

#### 4. GUEST SPEAKER

- a. The Action Collaborative – Dr. Mary Lucal, Associate Vice Chancellor for Human Resources, and Ashley Blamey, Title IX Coordinator

The Sexual Misconduct Certification protocol (SMC protocol) will be implemented into the hiring process to keep from progressing serial sexual harassers further in the hiring process. This protocol is being put into place as an effort to make systematic change to prevent sexual harassment and keep from receiving a harasser from another institution. This certification process ensures our applicants are not the subject of an active investigation for sexual misconduct or found in violation of a sexual misconduct related policy in the past.

There are two goals for this process. The first is to tell all the applicants what our community expectation are of applicants. This is so the University can signal what kind of community we are building. The second is to have a procedure where we can evaluate a finalist based on their sexual misconduct history.

The protocol will begin with just exempt staff and faculty this fall, with a goal of also introducing it to non-exempt employees later on. Applicants will have four questions they will encounter on their application, which must be answered. They must also electronically sign a release that will allow the University to confirm the veracity of their answers with their current or most recent employer. If an applicant answers yes to any of the questions, a review group will look over all their application materials and the materials received from their current or most recent employer. The advisory board group will make a recommendation to the hiring manager. This group's job is not to make a decision, but rather make a recommendation based on a careful review of the facts, which they will discuss with the hiring manager. UT will not be reinvestigating anyone's case and are going to take at face value what the previous University found. UT is looking at pending cases and adverse findings, not rumors.

For those involved in the Faculty search process, it's important to note that this process takes place at the same time as a request for reappointment. For other applicants, this process will take place alongside the background check. The documents will go to the current or most recent employer to verify the applicant's responses. The SMC protocol should not make the search process longer since it will have a three-day turnaround, which is shorter than the criminal background check takes. Answering yes to any of the sexual misconduct questions in the application

does not automatically disqualify a candidate. The applicants continue in the process and if selected as a finalist, only then are their materials reviewed.

In conclusion, this new protocol will make the University better able to know who we are bringing to campus, and it will not add time to the search and hiring process.

## 5. CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS

### a. Mileage Reimbursement Rate

**Q:** “With gas prices being as high as they are, has any thought been given to increasing the current milage reimbursement rate?”

**A:** Dr. Lucal stated that this discussion had taken place last year and was brought to the Employee Relations Advisory Board (ERAB). The next step for this discussion would be to go back to the ERAB with the additional data of prices from the past year. One of the issues that the ERAB may want to measure is if gas will stay at an inflationary rate for a long period. It was suggested to ask for the reimbursement rate to be increased since we’re in an extraordinarily and flat inflationary moment, and then reassessed in six months to see if gas prices go back down.

Nancy Taylor noted that it was her understanding that you cannot pay more in reimbursement than what the federal guideline is. Theresa Sears agreed that federal policy says that you cannot recoup or charge against the federal project higher than what their rights and per diems are. This could be an issue when raising it to the ERAB, as the last time UT raised their reimbursement rate, it was raised to match the federal rate.

### b. Extension Winter School

**Q:** “What about having winter school again? Especially for new hires. Agents used to get MS in 6-7 years. They got free tuition and time off work. Seems like maybe 6 weeks of condensed classes. Most folks don’t like or can’t do the online courses.”

**A:** Before the meeting Jessica Cantu reached out to Doug Bohner, UTIA Human Resource Officer, and John Toman, Interim Director of Extension HR. Dr. Toman referred the question to Dean Ashley Stokes, who shared information on the new UTK mini term sessions that may be helpful for Extension employees. The academic calendar can be found on the [Registrar’s website](#).

Dean Stokes noted that the mini term benefits are good across all campuses and, although online classes may not be for everyone, they have come a long way in quality and the number available.

c. Extending Spouse and Dependents Fee Discount to Graduate Courses

Q: “With a lot of students graduating these days from high school with several of their college credits and so many programs requiring/recommending the master’s program, could we look at adding to employee benefits the staff discount for graduate courses if the students haven’t reached 26 yet? For context, CFS students do student teaching during their 5th year and take additional courses during the summer to get their masters. Employees can take graduate courses, but do not get the discount for their dependents. What would need to happen for that to be added? As a side note, there are no scholarships, Hope programs, or federal aid for graduates either. They are only offered GA’s, GTA’s, or GRA’s, something they cannot participate in while student teaching (which is unpaid).”

A: Dr. Lucal responded that the fee discount benefit policy would need to be modified to accommodate any expansion to include graduate tuition. She suggested that the group could bring the proposal to the ERAB, and ERAB could agree to look into what needs to take place to expand the discount benefit.

Ken Wagner noted that under the current system, an employee’s department is responsible for the fee discount amount. He said he wondered if departments would be able to sustain an increase in expanded benefits under the new Budget Allocation Model. Dr. Lucal responded that poses a second question of if the cost of the expanded benefits could be centrally funded and if the university can afford the additional increase. She shared her support for the idea, noting that it speaks to changing times. She said it will depend on if the ERAB feels expanding the benefit is valuable and if the university can afford it.

Lisa Yamagata-Lynch reflected that she has heard interest in how we can make the university a more attractive place as an employer. Mr. Goddard asked to clarify the 26-year age cap, and Dr. Lucal responded that it relates to federal and some state standards about dependent ages and insurance coverage.

d. Taking Leave for an Interview

Q: Can clarification be provided on the policy of allowing employees to go for interviews without having to take leave. When applying for other on campus jobs, is there a limit? There are people who apply for lots of positions and are gone for hours across several days. The supervisors have been told that they cannot do anything about it, nor can they require them to take leave.

A: Dr. Lucal stated that is the correct interpretation of the policy. If there are some issues with the quality of work or operations are suffering because the employee is off interviewing every day in a week, then a conversation needs to happen with the employee and talk about what is a reasonable amount of time for them to be gone. If the employee is missing a significant amount of time, a manager can verify with Human Resources that the employee is taking part in an interview as an internal applicant. However, there is no limit stated in the policy, but that doesn't mean it should disrupt the operation of the department. There should be a middle ground.

## 6. OTHER BUSINESS

### a. General Announcements

There were no general announcements.

### b. Election Results - DeAnna Flinchum

The election ended last night, so several new people will be joining the council soon. There was a mid-term ad hoc election for Nursing and Architecture, and they will have two years left to serve, instead of the typical three years.

## 7. REMINDERS

### a. Next meeting: June 28, 2022.

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