

PRESENT

Christopher Binkley, Nancy Burkett (guest), Mary Beth Burlison, George Drinnon, DeAnna Flinchum, John Goddard, John Grubbs (proxy for David Moore), Gina Hale, James Hodge, Rita Jackson, Melissa Jenkins, Bonnie Johnson, Johnny Jones, Beth Kurtz, Mary Lucal, Rachel McClelland, Shelia McNeil (proxy for Shane Colter), Sam Smith, Matt Ward, Tanya Washington, and Norma Wilcox

ABSENT

Emma Burgin, Jon Chandler, Shane Colter, Darrell Easley, Marcus Hilliard, David Moore, Kim Raia, Blake Reagan, Kevin Thompson, Kenneth Wagner, Leslie Wereszczak, and Liza Yamagata-Lynch

1. WELCOME

John Goddard, Chair of the Exempt Staff Council, welcomed everyone to the October meeting and introduced Dr. Mary Lucal, Associate Vice Chancellor for UT Knoxville Human Resources, for a Human Resources Update.

Dr. Lucal shared a few HR updates with the Council. Annual UT Compliance training has been sent out to all employees through K@TE and should be complete as soon as possible. The annual compliance training is due December 31, 2022. Dr. Lucal stated that the annual training was helpful in identifying some potential phishing emails that she has gotten in the past few weeks. She also thanked those who have already completed the annual compliance training.

Communication is coming soon with information around online performance reviews for staff. There will be several options for learning opportunities, such as in-person, virtual, or K@TE trainings. HR will provide ample sessions for supervisors and employees to refresh their previous training or interact with the performance review materials if they are new to UT.

Dr. Lucal reflected on the benefits enrollment period that happened at the beginning of the month. The system office was very busy during this time and deserves a pat on the back for doing a great job and making it through enrollment.

Dr. Lucal ended her update by introducing HR's newest hire, Nancy Burkett, the new career development coach for UT staff on campus. This is a new position in HR and Nancy comes to the University with many years of experience providing career development coaching. She would like to hear from the ESC about what services and topics are most in need. You can reach her at nburket2@utk.edu. The [career development webpage](#) is a good resource and is also the place where you can schedule an appointment with Ms. Burkett.

2. NEW BUSINESS

a. Committee Updates

i. Police Advisory Council

The Police Advisory Council spent time talking about the [Clery Act](#) webpage and some of the recent [security and fire safety reports](#). They also looked at the [crime log](#) for the past sixty days.

ii. Employee Relations Advisory Board (ERAB)

There was no update for ERAB.

iii. Council for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI)

There was no update for CDI. Beth Kurtz was unable to attend the meeting and will share meeting minutes with the group when she receives them.

iv. University Leadership Council (ULC)

There was no update for ULC. Ms. Kurtz was unable to attend the meeting and will share meeting minutes with the group when she receives them.

v. Faculty Senate

The Faculty Senate spent the majority of the meeting with a discussion on procedure. There was a debate about the courses that were submitted for the Baker Center and the civics program that has been implemented there. This topic was tabled.

b. Survey Feedback on Guest Speakers and Future Topics of Interest

The results from the meeting modality and guest speaker survey were that most representatives prefer to meet over Zoom only. Some topics of interest included: Serve UTK, the new UTK CRM, the University's future, current challenges and

opportunities, HR and exempt-themed topics, University benefits breakdown, Diversity and Inclusion policies, and legislative items that impact employees and students. Possible guest speakers that were mentioned were: Luke Lybrand, Randy Boyd, David Miller, and Donde Plowman. Other comments that were notable on the survey were training on the role of the representative including disciplinary action and a desire to discuss the purpose of the group.

Mr. Goddard mentioned past training for the ESC. Dr. Lucal added that this could be an opportunity for reflection on the bylaws. HR could do a training on the role of the representative in a disciplinary action setting, but the ESC would need to put together a meeting to discuss the group's charge if there was interest in going over the bylaws.

c. Update on Hybrid Work Pilots (from February 2022 Minutes)

Dr. Lucal gave an update on the hybrid work pilots that HR was doing with its staff. The pilots were successful. Employee Relations, Recruitment, and Compensation all tested hybrid work arrangements. HR has completed the pilot phase, making some minor adjustments along the way. We are now in active hybrid arrangements in those three teams and it is working very well.

3. CONSTITUENT ISSUES

- a. **(Q):** Where is the best place to lodge complaints about changes being made to insurance next year? I'm going to have to change doctors due to the vision coverage changing to EyeMed from Davis. It's frustrating to have to do that when you are a patient of a provider you really like.

(A): Before the meeting, Robert Chance, Director of Payroll, provided a response: "We participate in the state of Tennessee insurance plans along with more than 300,000 other Tennesseans. The state and higher education plans, including vision, are governed by an 11 person insurance committee. This committee has delegated the responsibility of selecting vendors to evaluation teams comprised of experts in that area. Based on the responses of vendors to the state RFP and based on the corresponding costs, the evaluation team recommended EyeMed as the vision vendor and the insurance committee voted to accept their recondition."

The best place share feedback is to Rob Chance. He is UT's closest contact and oversees the insurance team.

- b. **(Q):** I have a question about the fee waivers for dependents. My daughter attends a flagship school. Reading through the policy, I thought that the Flagship school scholarship would offset my discount since the scholarship pays full tuition and fees-meaning that I wouldn't get to use the discount for my daughter. Staff from One-stop told me I was incorrect and that the discount would be allowed to be "stacked" on

top of the flagship scholarship so the amount could go towards room and board if she lived on campus. The policy doesn't read this way to me when I read it or doesn't specifically address this situation. I'd like UT to clarify this issue.

(A): Human Resources has reached out and are awaiting a response.

There was discussion over what a [Flagship school](#) was. Gina Hill commented her daughter was able to stack her scholarships with the tuition discount. All of the scholarships were entered into her account, and then the tuition discount was used. George Drinnon communicated the best approach to this issue is to talk to One Stop because they serve as the front counter for the Bursar, Financial Aid, and Admissions. If the One Stop counselor doesn't know the answer to the question, they can refer to the specific office that can help them.

- c. **(Q):** Please ask HR to clarify the new UT volunteer service policy. After supervisors approve the time off, can an employee submit their proof of attendance directly to HR if concerned about potential workplace discrimination based upon the volunteer organization revealing sensitive identity aspects such as religion or sexual orientation?

(A): The procedure for volunteer activity, HR0446-K: Volunteer Activity Procedure, states: "The volunteer hours described in this policy can only be utilized at organizations that do not unlawfully discriminate based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, physical or mental disability, genetic information, veteran status, or parental status."

Dr. Lucal specified that if a supervisor requests proof of attendance, it should be submitted to them and not HR, as HR does not hold the role of the approver. [The Jones Center and ServeUTK](#) would be a good guest speaker for a future ESC meeting because UT is asking that volunteer hours be logged in the ServeUTK portal, which the Jones Center runs, so that the University can have an overall report of how the volunteer leave is being utilized.

Dr. Lucal suggested the employee contact HR directly as it would be helpful to understand what leads them to ask this question. She emphasized that we should not have staff or faculty concerned that there is going to be retaliation based on where they are doing their volunteer service if matches up with our nondiscrimination policy. There was discussion on the Volunteer Service Policy.

- d. **(Q):** What is UT's current guidance regarding religious aspects of work-related holiday parties, for example, is prayer allowed or discouraged? And does it matter

whether employees pay for their own meal or attend outside their paid work schedule if led by senior leadership?

(A): HR reached out to Katrice Morgan, Associate Vice Chancellor and Executive Director for the Office of Equity and Diversity, and she provided the following response: “Neither the University of Tennessee system nor the Knoxville campus have policies related to holiday parties. According to the EEOC, prayer in the workplace is legal provided that employees who wish to be excused may be. Additionally, the employer must not retaliate against them for their choices.”

Bonnie Johnson asked for clarification on the response. Dr. Lucal stated the response seems to read that if there is going to be a prayer at a work function, that is legal. However, if someone does not want to participate, the employee should be able to excuse themselves without retaliation; this doesn’t mean that the person must leave the room to excuse themselves from participating. A discussion then took place regarding prayer in a workplace setting. It was suggested to invite Katrice Morgan to a future meeting to further discuss this topic.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

- a. Questions for Upcoming Employee Relations Advisory Board (ERAB Meeting) - Due by November 7th

If there are any questions that you would like to be discussed at the upcoming ERAB meeting, please submit those to Shane Colter (colters@utk.edu) by November 7th.

- b. General Announcements

Reminder: For a full listing of the minutes archive, visit: [Minutes Archive | Exempt Staff Council \(utk.edu\)](#).

A short on-demand video about the ESC and the role of the representative can be found on the [ERAO Webpage](#).

5. REMINDERS

- a. Next meeting: November 22, 2022 from 2:30 – 3:00 p.m. eastern via zoom.
- b. Please email constituent questions to Sam Smith (samsmith5@utk.edu) or John Goddard (jgoddard1@utk.edu).