

PRESENT

Christopher Binkley, Brian Browning (Guest Speaker), Mary Beth Burlison, Alicia Calderon (Campus Partner), Jon Chandler, Shane Colter, Jamie Cyphers, Darrell Easley, DeAnna Flinchum, John Goddard, Allyson Graves, John Grubbs (Guest), Lauren Hatcher, Marcus Hilliard, Arla Jackson (Guest Speaker), Bill Jackson (Campus Partner), Melissa Jenkins, Bonnie Johnson, Beth Kurtz, Amanda Middleton, David Moore, Michael Ragsdale (Guest Speaker), Blake Reagan, Marchelle Robinson (Guest Speaker), Tonya Sartin, Sam Smith, Eric Spencer (Guest), LaShel Stevens, Hillary Tune, Tim Waldo (Guest), Matt Ward, Leslie Wereszczak, Brook Wichmann (Campus Partner), Norma Wilcox, and Lisa Yamagata-Lynch

ABSENT

Michele Atkins, George Drinnon, Nathan McKinney, Kim Raia, and Tanya Washington

1. WELCOME

Chair Beth Kurtz, ESC Chair, welcomed everyone to the September meeting. Guests were present from the IPS Leadership Academy to observe the meeting. For more information on the IPS Leadership Academy, see the July 2023 minutes.

2. NEW BUSINESS

a. Marchelle Robinson - Open Enrollment

Open Enrollment begins on October 1, 2023 and runs through October 13, 2023. Changes can be made in Edison, the State's benefits enrollment management system. To login to Edison, you will first login to IRIS Web (<https://irisweb.tennessee.edu>). On the menu bar across the top of the page, the button to access Edison will be on the far right and say "Edison."

Health insurance premiums will increase by an average of 5% for active employees. Premium increases will vary depending on the health plan, network and the tier you choose. Your premium is automatically deducted from your paycheck each month. BlueCross and Cigna will remain the health insurance carriers. The four provider network options will remain the same: BlueCross Network S, BlueCross Network P, Cigna LocalPlus, and Cigna Open Access Plus. For the BlueCross Network P and Cigna Open Access Plus networks, the additional cost to your premium will increase by \$10 or \$20 per month depending on the tier in which you're enrolled. There

continues to be no additional cost above the premium for the BlueCross Network S or Cigna LocalPlus networks. Starting January 1, 2024, Sharecare will be the new wellness program vendor. While health premiums are increasing, there will be no increases to deductibles, copays, or coinsurance. The state will pay 50% of the dental insurance premiums. If enrolled, this change will automatically occur in Edison.

The state will pay 100% of the premiums for employee long-term disability insurance. Employees using this benefit will receive 63% of their monthly salary, up to \$10K per month, after a 90-day waiting period. All employees not receiving long-term disability claim benefits will be automatically enrolled in this product. If you are already enrolled in long-term disability, you do not have to do anything.

The state will pay 100% of the premiums for employee basic term life/basic accidental death and dismemberment insurance. Designated beneficiaries will receive 1X the employee's base annual salary rounded to the next highest thousand (\$50K minimum except when reduced at age milestones/\$250K maximum). This change will automatically occur in Edison.

Life insurance benefits are changing. Dependent basic term life/basic accidental death and dismemberment insurance coverage is ending. You may be able to enroll your dependents in voluntary term life insurance and/or voluntary AD&D. For more information on life insurance changes, visit: [Life Insurance - State Plan Only \(tn.gov\)](https://www.tn.gov/life-insurance)

You must re-enroll in your medical Flexible Spending Account (FSA) or Limited Purpose Flexible Spending Account (L-FSA) and Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account (DC-FSA) each year and choose how much money you'll put in your account during Annual Enrollment unless you have a special qualifying event. You can enroll by going to <https://www.optumbank.com/Tennessee>.

To make changes to your benefits, you will login into [IRIS Employee Self-Serve](#) and click the Edison button on menu bar on the far right.

- b. Brian Browning, Associate Vice Chancellor for Operations and Real Estate, and Michael Ragsdale, Director of Parking – Parking
Three things are heightening the issues with parking this year. There are 2,000 more students this year than in August 2022, over 400 new staff and faculty have been hired, and many people have returned to campus since the pandemic (so more people are coming to campus instead of remote work or classes online).

Some changes have been made for this year to help the parking challenges. Parking has rented some vacant lots and moved some commuter student spaces farther away from the center of campus. Some lots have been converted from one type of permit to another. The Parking office monitors permit sales daily and adjusts

accordingly. Staff lots 7 and 30 are at full capacity and new permits cannot be issued for them currently. Commuter passes have also sold out and the only commuter passes being sold currently are for the economy commuter lots on the perimeter of campus. Lot 23 has recently reopened due to some permit returns.

The campus master plan has 2 parking garages planned for the distant future. Short-term solutions are under review, with some feasibility studies being conducted across the river at the Research Park. Space has run out on campus, so areas are under review for student parking and a shuttle service.

The beginning of the Fall semester always stretches the parking on campus to the max. The first two weeks of the semester, all the students, staff, and faculty descend on campus until their schedules get more routine and adjusted. The economy commuter lots never got above 40% capacity. Parking is trying to improve communications and marketing to make sure students are aware that those lots are available. While the perception can be that parking farther away is less convenient, the T bus system runs continuously by all of the economy lots, with a 5-6 minute ride to the center of campus. The Finance and Administration office is also working with the Registrar's office to look at requiring core class sections to be moved to after 3pm to alleviate the need or desire for everyone to be on campus between 10am - 2pm.

c. Arla Jackson - [VolCard Office](#)

There are several reasons that the VolCard office has decided to transition to a digital mobile credential. The biggest and most important reason is security. The idea is that people will not give their phones to other people to use, like they might with a card. There was also a problem with people losing their VolCard and not reporting it for long periods of time. The VolCard office also began having an issue finding the equipment needed to create the physical card. If you are currently having issues with the digital VolCard, you can visit the VolCard office and the staff can help run through some possible solutions.

There are some approved reasons to have a physical card. If you believe you need a physical VolCard, contact the VolCard office and they will work with you to see if you are eligible for a physical card. It is not possible to have both a physical card and digital mobile credential.

d. Human Resources Update - Darrell Easley, Director of Employee Relations & Learning and Organizational Development

A lot of Human Resources staff members are involved in the new DASH system. HR is looking forward to its implementation.

Annual Compliance training has been emailed to everyone to complete in [K@TE](#). This is due by December 31, 2023. It is recommended that you finish the training before

the winter holiday break, as there will be no technology help due to closures after December 22, 2023, if you have any issues/technology problems.

The McLean Employee Engagement Survey was emailed staff across the entire system on September 20, 2023. We appreciate participation as the results of that survey are reviewed by the Cabinet, and acted upon.

Many training, learning, and career development sessions are being conducted by several departments in HR. Look for opportunities in [K@TE](#) for upcoming sessions held by our departments, as there are many great sessions scheduled for this Fall.

e. Committee Updates

i. The Employee Relations Advisory Board, Faculty Senate, Police Advisory Council, and University Leadership Council have not met for this Fall semester yet.

ii. Council for Diversity and Inclusion
The Council introduced new members and talked about their grand challenge ideas.

iii. Shared Governance Committee
This is a new committee that started this Fall semester. It is made up of the Chair and one other person of the Faculty Senate, the Graduate Student Senate, the Student Government Association, The Exempt Staff Council, and the Employee Relations Committees. It is not a voting group, but its goal is to get everyone together to help network, compare issues in common, work together to get answers, and share information.

f. Update from meeting with Chancellor Plowman and Vice Chancellor Tyvi Small
Beth Kurtz and Shane Colter, Council Chair and Chair Elect, were invited to a meeting with Chancellor Plowman and Vice Chancellor Tyvi Small, along with representatives from the Knoxville Administration Employee Relations Committee and the Knoxville Operations Employee Relations Committee. This meeting was to discuss the new name for the Division of Diversity and Engagement, soon-to-be Division of Access and Engagement. Chancellor Plowman and VC Small have talked with the Chancellor's Commissions and Council and will be meeting with the Employee Relations Advisory Board (ERAB) soon to get the word out and answer any questions.

3. CONSTITUENT ISSUES

a. **(Q):** When I was transferred back to the *[office name removed for identification purposes]* the Parking Office would not allow me to change my parking pass to lot 30 because they said it was oversold. They told me (and the other new person in the same office) that we would only be given lot 12 or lot 7 passes, as all other lots were already oversold. I just feel that this is too

far to have to walk to my place of work for how much I pay a month for a parking pass. It also makes me concerned for anyone who may have mobility issues but does not have a handicap placard to have to walk that far twice a day.

(A): Brian Browning, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration, answered that, unfortunately, some employees will need to be given a parking pass for a lot that is further from their office right now, as closer lots might be at full capacity. New permits for those lots cannot be issued unless someone returns a permit. For the mobility issues, someone who has a handicap placard can park in any handicap spot on campus, regardless of what parking lot they were assigned. [T-Link](#) can also be used for someone who doesn't have the handicap placard. The office of Equity and Diversity can also help with potential accommodations.

- b. **(Q):** Yesterday, we had a candidate on campus for a job interview. Prior to the interview, we got a temporary parking pass for the candidate, which covered the two parking lots closest to us. They circled the parking lots for 30 minutes but were never able to find a parking spot. The interview was scheduled to begin at the same time as their workday would normally start, so they were undoubtedly thinking that parking will be a huge headache every day, should they come to work here. I hate to think that parking could play a factor in a candidate's decision to accept a job offer. There may be "sufficient" student parking, but from my observation, students will often park in staff lots if they don't find space in the student lots or if they haven't purchased a permit.

(A): Mr. Browning stated that if an employee (or guest) cannot find parking in their assigned lot, they can visit the parking information booth at Circle Park, who can give a courtesy (day) permit for another area that has spaces open.

- c. **(Q):** The hiring process is such a long process that oftentimes quality candidates are lost in the wait. By the time a prospective hire applies to interview/possible job offer, some candidates have already received other offers and are no longer available. Is there anything being done to speed up the process?

(A): HR reached out to Anthony Lanagan, Lead Recruitment Business Partner, who responded with the following: "The easy answer is to share with this colleague to connect them to their assigned Recruitment Business Partner (RBP). Their RBP can then illustrate to this person how our office has worked with other departments to decrease time to hire and share our best practices and resources." If you do not know who your RBP is for your area, you can call 865-974-6642 and select option 2 to speak with the Recruitment team.

- d. (Q): Can ESC advocate to bring back the state retirement Health insurance benefits? Those hired after July 1, 2015 are not eligible for this valuable benefit.

(A): Ms. Robinson answered that it is State law for Tennessee to pay for the state retirement health insurance benefit, and they decided to cut it off on July 1, 2015 due to it being seen as a liability. If they were to change this, they would have to change the Tennessee law which will cause tax increases, premium increases, and department increases.

- e. (Q): Several years ago employees were given an opportunity to complete a 360 evaluation on their supervisors and/or unit leaders. At that time, I understood this would be a recurring process every few years. Is this planned again?

(A): This could be a department specific process. Check with your supervisor to see if this is planned for the upcoming 2023 Annual Review, which will be available in January 2024.

- f. (Q): GA and GTA pay was recently increased to a minimum of \$25,868 for 12 months positions. In some cases, GTAs, who are capped at 20 hours a week, now make a higher hourly rate than those who directly supervise them (even if their supervisors were capped at 40 hours a week, which isn't the case). Are there any steps being taken to address this discrepancy?

(A): This question has been tabled for next meeting, as there was not enough time in the meeting to get to this question.

- g. (Q): With the affirmative action rulings that have come up recently, will this impact our annual reviews when it comes to the portion that deals with diversity?

(A): This question has been tabled for next meeting, as there was not enough time in the meeting to get to this question.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

- a. [Open Enrollment](#) begins October 1, 2023, and runs through [October 13, 2023](#).
- b. Annual Compliance Training is now available to complete in K@TE. This is due December 31, 2023.
- c. [Fee Waiver Taxation](#)

Fee waivers for the Graduate fee waiver [graduate only, not applicable for undergraduate], the first \$5,250 (in a calendar year) is [tax free](#). After that amount, the IRS deems it as a fringe benefit to the employee, and thus, becomes taxable to that employee. To alleviate a little bit of the taxes, Payroll does not put 100% of the

taxes on employees at one time. Taxes are divided over equal increments for each semester [Spring-February, March, & April; Mini-term is divided over one month; Summer-June & July; Fall-September, October, & November].

If the graduate coursework is job related, a tax-exempt form can be submitted. However, if the employee is audited, it is the responsibility of the employee to prove that it is 100% job related and not taxable. This form must be submitted each semester, and Payroll does not double check if the employee is eligible to be tax exempt. The due dates for the [form](#) are:

- a. Spring semester - February 15
- b. Mini-term - May 15
- c. Summer - June 15 (first) July 15 (second)
- d. Fall semester - September 15

5. REMINDERS

- a. Next meeting: October 24, 2023 at 2:30 pm EST via Zoom.
- b. Please email Beth Kurtz (ekurtz2@utk.edu) or Sam (samsmith5@utk.edu) with constituent issue(s) or questions by noon the Friday before the next meeting.