

PRESENT

Sheila Borders (Guest), Mary Beth Burlison, Alicia Calderon (Campus Partner), Jon Chandler, Shelby Christian (Guest), Brian Coldren (Guest Speaker), Shane Colter, Jamie Cyphers, George Drinnon, DeAnna Flinchum, Malachi Frederick (Guest), Allyson Graves, Lauren Hatcher, Bill Jackson, Melissa Jenkins, Bonnie Johnson, Tarah Keeler, Beth Kurtz, Troy Lane (Guest Speaker), Mary Lucal, David Moore, Missy Pankake (Guest), Kim Raia, Tonya Sartin, Sam Smith, Hillary Tune, Matthew Ward, Tanya Washington, Leslie Wereszczak, Brooke Wichmann (Campus Partner-Ombuds Office), Norma Wilcox, and Lisa Yamagata-Lynch

ABSENT

Michele Atkins, Christopher Binkley, John Goddard, Marus Hillard, Nathan McKinney, Amanda Middleton, Blake Reagan and LaShel Stevens

1. WELCOME

Beth Kurtz, ESC Chair, welcomed everyone to the October 2023 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. Security Enhancements on Campus – Troy Lane, Associate Vice Chancellor for Public Safety (Guest Speaker)

Chief Lane shared: The Tennessee Higher Education Commissioner released a document about security standards for schools approximately 2 years ago. There were a few broad guidelines that talked about exterior building security and require that all exterior doors to campus buildings be secured. Campus leadership did a safety study of campus buildings and how best to apply the security standards from the document.

Since the University is a public institution, our doors are open to the public. Due to this, new locks are going to be installed across campus that allow the doors to be automatically unlocked during business hours and automatically locked at a set time each day. The new locks will also allow the Police department to lock certain doors and monitor what doors are open during an emergency on campus. Most of these new locks will have card readers added to the door to be able to be unlocked by

staff members of the campus community who need access to the building and have permissions to open the door. Any doors that do not receive the digital card readers, will become exit only doors.

For more information, visit the public safety page on the UT website: <https://safety.utk.edu/>. For information on central alarms and building access, visit: <https://safety.utk.edu/physical-security/>.

b. [Academic Calendars](#) – Brian Coldren, Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Initiatives and University Registrar

The Academic Calendar Committee reports to the Provost, with a charge to develop and maintain operating guidelines to be considered in planning the University academic calendar. They convene at least once per academic year with additional meetings called as needed. The committee develops recommendations for a 3-5 year plan of academic calendars which include: (1) starting and end dates for instructional periods, (2) mini-term recommendations, (3) breaks and holidays, (4) examination periods, (5) Commencement and Graduate Hooding dates. The Committee engages with additional campus stakeholder representatives in the annual convening and calendar development process. The group then submits recommendations and proposed academic calendar recommendations to the Provost and Chancellor for approval. Upon approval, the University Registrar will distribute and publish the academic calendar(s).

The Committee met multiple times throughout the Fall of 2022. After discussing overarching goals for the academic calendar and considering ways to align the calendar with the strategic vision, the Committee updated the Academic Calendar Guidelines after coming to a consensus, which were used to inform calendar proposals. The Committee then gathered feedback on the calendar proposals from the constituents that they represent, and revised calendar options were formed based on the feedback and operational challenges.

The overarching goals that were established by the calendar committee were the following: (1) Envision an academic calendar that aligns with the strategic vision of the University, providing enhanced access to learners while meeting the pedagogical and instructional needs of academic programs; (2) Balance the consideration of providing multiple entry points for students by utilizing various sessions/modules within the academic calendar, while understanding the crucial need to structure the calendar to enhance the likelihood of successful student learning outcomes; (3) Create a collection of semester, sessions, etc. that are consistent for academic programs in their planning of educational content, so that course offerings can be developed to fit those sessions and be replicated throughout the academic calendar.

The Committee established guidelines around the following primary areas: (1) Instruction Days, (2) Exam Periods, (3) Commencement/Degree Conferral Dates, (4) Break Periods/Gaps Between Semesters and Sessions.

A single calendar recommendation was sent from the Provost to the Chancellor and Cabinet for approval in Fall 2023. Calendars for 2024-2025, 2025-2026, and 2026-2027 were approved and published in the Fall of 2023.

The Full Semester will be Fall and Spring, with 70 instructional days each. Embedded sessions will be Fall 1st & 2nd Session, Spring 1st & 2nd Sessions, and Summer, with 34-35 instructional days each. Mini-terms were set as Winter Mini-term, May Mini-term, and Summer 3rd Session, with 10 instructional days each. The Summer Sessions will be Summer 1st & 2nd Sessions, with 26 instructional days each. Fall now has 7 days of break (not counting the Study Day) built in the semester: (1) Labor Day, (2-3) Fall Break, (4) Election Day – which is a new break day being introduced into the calendar, (5-7) Thanksgiving Recess. Spring continues to have 7 days of break (not counting Study Day) built into the semester: (1-5) Spring Break, (6-7) Spring Recess. Based on feedback from multiple constituents, there is a goal to attempt to always have both Fall and Spring Breaks align with Knox County Schools.

c. Human Resources Update – Mary Lucal, Associate Vice Chancellor of Human Resources

Educational support sessions will begin in late November for 2023 Annual Performance Reviews, which will be opened in January 2024. There are several sessions on different topics surrounding performance reviews, for managers and employees. Sign up for sessions in K@TE.

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.

Dr. Lucal will be leaving the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in December to serve as the Chief Human Resources Officer and Vice President for Human Resources at George Mason University. The Exempt Staff Council thanked Dr. Lucal for her service and leadership at the University and wished her well. Tarah Keeler, Executive Director of Compensation & Recruitment and Deputy Chief Human Resources Officer will serve as Interim Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief Human Resources Officer upon Dr. Lucal's departure. Ms. Keeler has already begun shadowing Dr. Lucal to try and make the transition as seamless as possible.

d. Committee Updates

- i. There were no updates for the Employee Relations Advisory Board, Faculty Senate, University Leadership Council, and the Shared Governance Committee.
- ii. Police Advisory Council

The Police Advisory Council took a tour of the University Police Station. Ms. Kurtz asked if the group would be interested in taking a tour of the UTPD and requested those interested to email her.

iii. Council for Diversity and Inclusion

The group broke out into subcommittees, and everyone is still forming their plans for the year. The grand challenge for the Council for Diversity & Inclusion is creating space for more communities on campus.

3. CONSTITUENT ISSUES

- a. **(Q):** GA and GTA pay was recently increased to a minimum of \$25,868 for 12-month 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): Dr. Lucal answered HR is aware of the issue and has been working with the Provost's Office on it. The shared agreement is if there are staff positions which may be similar in work and scope to those graduate positions, HR will partner with the college to do an assessment to see if there is an actual issue. The Compensation department can assist in doing that analysis.

- b. **(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): Dr. Lucal answered anything on that topic will be guided by our system partners, since the performance review is a system level tool. If there are going to be any changes, it will come through them. As of the end of October, there has been no communication that anything is changing. Our existing tool does not conflict with the latest ruling.

- c. **(Q):** What are HR's thoughts regarding career ladders and pay raises for achieving milestones such as degrees, certifications, etc.? A related issue is that there seems to be a lot of variability across campus on whether departments give pay raises for earning degrees, certifications, etc. What is the possibility of standardization across the university rather than practices being department specific.

(A): Ms. Keeler answered that with the Budget Allocation Method (BAM), departments are free to ask for budget money to support compensation needs. There is not a campus wide standard. The HR Compensation Office can work with colleges and administrative units on increases specific to employees taking on new duties or getting additional education and certifications on an individual basis. The Compensation team can also work with any units that are interested in creating a career path or a career ladder. A reclassification of certain roles is another way to address movement within one's current position.

- d. **(Q):** Why does UT not provide accommodations for language barriers? How can UT provide information to the public, when the department does not have the funds to hire a translator? Can we at minimum have a service provided for counties to get materials translated so our county residents can read our material?

(A): Bill Jackson, UTIA Human Resources Director, responded he will bring the issue to Dean Ashley Stokes to see if anything can be done from a budget standpoint. Missy Pankake mentioned that the Institute for Public Service Tennessee Language Center does translation services; however, they do have a cost associated with them. Ms. Pankake also replied that the [County Technical Advisory Service](#) has worked with them to help fund some of the counties to get translations for documents. Leslie Wereszczak added that this has been an issue for the College of Veterinary Medicine as well. They have gathered a list of employees who speak multiple languages and volunteered to help with translation in an emergency situation. Dr. Lucal suggested that this could be an agenda item to submit to the Employee Relations Advisory Board for when they next meet.

- e. **(Q):** Open enrollment ended October 13, 2023. On Saturday, October 14, I received a letter from Covenant saying that due to the inability of Cigna and Covenant to reach agreement on contracts, that effective sometime in March 2024, Covenant will no longer accept Cigna. The letter was dated October 10 and delivered by USPS. Will affected people be able to switch to BCBS so that we don't have to give up the doctors we have used for years? The timing on this did not allow employees to take corrective action or make informed decisions.

(A): Partners for Health sent out an email on October 24, 2023 to all employees stating the following about the issue:

“Some State Group Insurance Program members recently received a letter about ongoing negotiations between Covenant Health System and Cigna. At this time, Covenant Health System facilities and their affiliated providers remain in Cigna's LocalPlus and OAP networks. If Cigna and Covenant cannot reach an agreement, Covenant hospitals and their affiliated medical groups will leave the Cigna LocalPlus and OAP networks effective March 1, 2024.

Some State Group Insurance Program members may also have been informed that BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee and Maury Regional Health System are currently in negotiations. At this time, Maury Regional facilities and their affiliated providers remain in the BCBS Network S and Network P. If they cannot reach an agreement, Maury Regional Health System hospitals and affiliated providers will leave BCBS Network S and BCBS Network P effective Feb. 1, 2024.

Benefits Administration has also learned BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee has received notice to renegotiate their current contract with Ballad Health. If they cannot reach an agreement, Ballad Health facilities and their affiliated providers will leave the BCBS Network S and Network P effective Jan. 1, 2024.

Central State Government, State Offline Agency and Higher Education employees:

Employees are given a one-time opportunity to revise their medical plan benefit elections after the close of the Annual Enrollment period. The deadline is Dec. 1, 2023, at 4:30 p.m., Central time. See Section 2.07 (E) of the Medical Plan Documents on the Partners for Health publications page at

<https://www.tn.gov/partnersforhealth/publications/publications.html>.

State and higher education employees wishing to change their medical plan elections due to contract negotiations must do the following:

- Submit an updated [Enrollment Change Application](#) before the deadline of Dec. 1 at 4:30 p.m. CT.
- Check the “Annual Enrollment Revision” box in upper right corner of the Enrollment Change Application and complete Parts 1, 2, 3 and 8.
- Submit the Enrollment Change Application by email to benefits.administration@tn.gov, by fax to 615-741-8196, or upload it in Zendesk.
- Use “AE Revision” as the subject of the email if choosing this method to submit.
- No formal written appeal is required.

For more information visit the [Carrier Network Updates webpage](#) and find answers to frequently asked questions about these network announcements [here](#).”

4. OTHER BUSINESS

- a. Annual Compliance Training is now available to complete in [K@TE](#). This is due December 31, 2023.

5. REMINDERS

- a. Next meeting: November 28, 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.