
PRESENT

Jeannine Berge, Brenda Bartram (for Brad Briggs), Emma Burgin, Jessica Cantu, Tom Cervone, Joe Christian, Darrell Easley, DeAnna Flinchum, John Goddard, Kim Hardaway, Candy Hawkins, Elisha Hodge, James Hodge, Beth Kurtz, Amber Mathes, Heath Nokes, John Rich, Julie Roe, Michael Smith-Porter, Ken Wagner, Kaley Walker, Norma Wilcox

ABSENT

Eric Amos, Kevin Frye, Rita Jackson, Janet Jones, Mary Lucal, Theresa Sears, Kevin Thompson

1. WELCOME

Elisha Hodge, Chair and IPS MTAS Representative, welcomed everyone to the March meeting. She welcomed Candy Hawkins, and announced she been appointed to represent the VC - Finance & Administration area for the remainder of Brian Browning's term. Mr. Browning recently took a new position.

2. UPDATES

- a. Human Resources Update – Dr. Darrell Easley, Director of Learning & Organizational Development & Employee Relations

Dr. Easley greeted the group and began by noting that [Online Performance Reviews](#) (OPR) are due by the end of the month for most UTK regular employees. For non-UTK employees or departments still using paper forms the deadline is the same (March 31, 2021).

Dr. Easley then announced that Knoxville-area [Sick Leave Bank](#) open enrollment will begin April 1. He shared that an [informational webinar](#) would be held as a kickoff event and encouraged those on the call who were not a SLB member to consider watching the event to become familiar with the bank and benefits.

3. COMMISSION REPORTS

a. Commission for Blacks – Elisha Hodge

Elisha Hodge reported that the [Commission](#) met on February 24 and next meets tomorrow, March 24. She said they primarily talked about Austin-East High School and the A-E community and how the Commission can [support them through recent tragic student deaths](#). She said the Commission is looking to support A-E students with a new requirement to have see-through backpacks. They are also looking at potentially doing some mentorship and face to face professional connections to help students through the difficult times they are going through.

Ms. Hodge reported the remainder of the meeting was spent with Committee updates and talking about awards, updates, and community engagement conversations. She said there is a research initiative underway related to black staff and faculty who have left employment with UT and the reasons for their departures.

Ms. Hodge reported that the Commission sent out an email earlier today about an upcoming [Rocky Topics event](#) they are supporting on March 25 related to Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) individuals and the community.

b. Commission for LGBT People – Tom Cervone

Mr. Cervone reported that the [Commission](#) met on March 1 and Dr. Lisa Yamagata-Lynch, Ombudsperson, visited with the group. He said he would like to invite Dr. Yamagata-Lynch back to ESC to guest speak at a future meeting.

Mr. Cervone reported that Dr. Mitsu Misawa, Chair, has been working to collaborate with other Commissions including through a faculty & staff reading group. He is coordinating several upcoming workshops, including one on April 6 about academic bullying and April 18 about trauma-based pedagogy. Mr. Cervone reminded the group that the [Transgender Day of Visibility](#) will take place on March 31, and there will be virtual opportunities to participate in.

Mr. Cervone reported that several subcommittees met to discuss updates including the Transgender and Non-Binary Issues Committee, which is working on legislation from the Tennessee State Legislature. He shared his hope that legislators and Governor Lee will re-imagine or rethink the legislation and that if it passes the Commission will have a conversation around how to deal with that.

Mr. Cervone reported on the recent decision to [commemorate Rita Sanders Grier and Dr. Thetis Robinson by renaming Orange and White Residence Halls in their honor](#).

He also shared his enthusiasm for the [Dr. Marva Rudolph scholarship](#) and that there was nearly \$47,000 in scholarship money awarded to recipients.

c. Commission for Diversity and Inclusion – Tom Cervone

Mr. Cervone reported that the [Commission](#) next meets tomorrow, March 24.

d. Commission for Disability – Emma Burgin

Ms. Burgin reflected on Ms. Hodge’s Commission report that a [FUTURE](#) student has been very personally affected by happenings at Austin-East High School. She and Ms. Hodge discussed supporting for students who have similar connections.

Ms. Burgin reported that the [Commission](#) met on February 15 and announced that they have a [new website](#). She said they are looking to list resources on the website for individuals who are trying to find support for their disability and asked the group for their feedback.

Ms. Burgin reported that the Commission has a committee focused on developing a Center for Disability Studies. The Center would be a physical location for people who are part of the disability community to receive support. She shared her enthusiasm for the project.

Ms. Burgin reported that Haben Girma would be speaking later that day at [Disability & Innovation: The Universal Benefits of Inclusive Design](#). Ms. Girma is the first blind deaf graduate of Harvard Law School and has received many awards for her disability advocacy work.

e. Commission for Women – Amber Mathes

Amber Mathes reported that the [Commission](#) met on March 4 and the group created amendments to the By-Laws. She said the Professional Development and Mentoring Committee is working on creating a central website location for all professional development opportunities on campus.

Ms. Mathes reported the Commission will also be hosting an upcoming event, [Lighting Your Path](#), about cultivating career advancement opportunities on March 30. Gretchen Neisler, Vice Provost for the Center for Global Engagement, will be the keynote speaker.

f. Faculty Senate – John Goddard

Mr. Goddard reported that the [Faculty Senate](#) met on [March 1](#). He discussed that the undergraduate committee proposed adding new grades for Fall 2020 to Spring 2021. The new grades will not be included in the calculation of students' cumulative grade point averages until the course has been repeated.

Mr. Goddard reported that Chancellor Plowman spoke about the Lady Vols kneeling during the national anthem. She expressed respect for their freedom of speech and noted it was peaceful. Chancellor Plowman also discussed COVID-19 vaccination eligibility changes.

Mr. Goddard reported Provost Zomchick reported that lecturers will receive a mid-year salary adjustment in July and that there is a 4% raise pool. He said that workload is not considered for salary increase and that decisions are left to each department. Provost Zomchick noted that the plan is to return to full student capacity this fall and will operate according to CDC guidance including masking and social distancing.

Mr. Goddard reported that Senator Monica Black shared she feels disgruntled students and parents are reporting lecturers to Human Resources. He said Vice Provost Amber Williams and Provost Zomchick said complaints are referred to department heads and the intention is not to undermine faculty. Senator David Patterson discussed a survey that shows that teaching virtually is tougher and requires more hours than in-person learning. He also discussed students' social media posts that were highlighted in the New York Times.

Mr. Goddard reported that the Faculty Senate passed a motion to reduce or eliminate Graduate Student Fees. He said they had several other items on the agenda which were tabled until the next meeting.

4. CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS

a. Benefit for Parental Leave

Q: "Not where to start with this one but was curious about the new benefit for maternity leave. I'm sure UT did a cost analysis of what this could cost and I wonder if you can get that info as well? I'd be most interested to see how many employees could possibly benefit from this. I assume some kind of age formula was designed so UT could have a sense of the potential cost."

A: Dr. Easley responded that he checked with Dr. Mary Lucal prior to the meeting. Dr. Lucal was unaware of any study but offered to forward the question to the System level if the constituent would like to do so. Dr. Easley discussed the parental leave policy that was approved by the Board of Trustees. Kim Hardaway asked how the benefit would be implemented. Dr. Easley responded that campuses and institutes are working through what implementation will look like and more information will be coming.

b. UTIA - Buyout

Q: "Is there any buy out planned anytime soon?"

A: Dr. Easley said that Doug Bohner, Human Resources Officer for UTIA, responded that he was not aware of any type of buyout or discussion at this time at the System level or within UTIA. A discussion took place about what a buyout would entail. Mr. Goddard reported the question came from one of his constituents and that Governor Lee appointed a committee to look into a buyout program for State employees, which would not include higher education employees.

c. COVID-19 Vaccinations for Employees

Q: "Is UT going to provide Covid vaccinations for employees any time soon?"

A: Dr. Easley responded that the University is currently hosting weekly [Employee and Student vaccination clinics at the Student Health Center on the UTK campus](#). These clinics are open to all Knoxville-area UT employees including UTIA, UT Extension, System, IPS, and UTFI who meet current eligibility requirements. UT employees who are outside of the Knoxville-area are encouraged to visit vaccinefinder.org to locate vaccination opportunities near them.

5. REMINDERS

- a. Please email Jessica Cantu (jlcantu@utk.edu) any constituent questions.