

PRESENT

Eric Amos, Jeannine Berge, Brad Briggs, Jessica Cantu, Tom Cervone, Jon Chandler, Joe Christian, Darrell Easley, Wes Fernandez (IPS Leadership Academy Attendee), DeAnna Flinchum, John Goddard, Liz Gossett (IPS Leadership Academy Attendee), Kim Hardaway, Candy Hawkins, Elisha Hodge, James Hodge, Janet Jones, Johnny Jones, Beth Kurtz, Mary Lucal, Amber Mathes, Heath Nokes, Danny Norman (IPS Leadership Academy Attendee), John Rich, Julie Roe, Theresa Sears, Michael Smith-Porter, Ken Wagner, Tanya Washington (IPS Leadership Academy Attendee), Norma Wilcox

ABSENT

Emma Burgin, Kevin Frye, Kevin Thompson, Kaley Walker

1. WELCOME

Elisha Hodge, Chair and IPS MTAS Representative, welcomed everyone to the June meeting. She thanked outgoing members for their time, dedication, and service to the Exempt Staff Council, and welcomed new and incumbent representatives.

2. UPDATES

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

Dr. Mary Lucal greeted the group and began her update by sharing her gratitude for a fortunate year in terms of merit and market money between the Governor’s budget and Chancellor Plowman’s recent decision to [increase the campus minimum wage](#) to \$13.00 per hour. She expressed the importance of keeping employees who provided extraordinary efforts over the last year and a half at the center of our vision as some are the lowest paid on campus. She reflected that many peer institutions are not in a similar situation and expressed her appreciation for the good news.

Dr. Lucal continued by discussing the current state of hiring. She described aftereffects of last year's hiring freeze and noted that it is currently a very busy hiring season. She asked for patience with recruiting time and as HR continues to work through telecommuting agreements. She said she believes there will be another push for flexible or complete telecommuting agreements at the beginning of August, particularly in academic areas.

Dr. Lucal next updated the group on the new [paid parental leave policy](#), which goes into effect July 1. She said employees who need to make use of this new type of paid leave should contact HR Compensation. She shared her excitement for the new policy's implementation as it will support parents and families at the university.

Ms. Hodge asked if information about the [new policy](#) will be sent to employees via email. Dr. Lucal responded that as it is a System policy she is hopeful that something will be sent out soon.

3. COMMISSION REPORTS

a. Commission for Blacks – Elisha Hodge

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

b. Commission for LGBT People – Tom Cervone

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

c. Council for Diversity and Inclusion – Tom Cervone

Mr. Cervone reported that the [Commission](#) is reviewing membership applications. Julie Roe, Chair-Elect for the Commission, noted that the Membership subcommittee has narrowed the number applications to put forward for a vote.

d. Commission for Disability – Emma Burgin

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

e. Commission for Women – Amber Mathes

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

- f. Faculty Senate – John Goddard

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

4. CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS

- a. UTIA & UTK Merger

Q: “I’m Looking for document from UT that listed college rankings before merger (UTIA & Rest of Campus UTK).

The primary reason given to merge was a higher ranking of the surviving entity, UTK.

UTK and UTIA ranked separately was not satisfactory, so the Trustees solution was to merger and hope for a better ranking and more grant money etc.

Evidently they thought merging would be better than investing more into the two existing colleges.

It will soon be two years. How much has UTK’s ranking improved and more importantly, show me what we gained that we could not have gotten with two colleges?? What benefits did UTIA get that could have only been gotten with the merger? Not total gains, but gains that would not have happened without a merger?”

A: Ms. Hodge said that she conferred with Dr. Lucal, who suggested that Senior Vice President and Senior Vice Chancellor Tim Cross be contacted. Ms. Hodge said Dr. Cross is in the process of putting together responses to the questions to share at a future meeting.

- b. Veterinary Medical Center Employee Discounts

Q: “I’ve had a question concerning employee discounts. Currently, an employee can receive a discount from dining and VolShop. I’m curious if the Vet Medical could offer this and if not, why? Trust me, I’ve spent a lot there and I think it would be a great benefit to our campus community.”

A: Dr. Darrell Easley shared that the Veterinary Medical Center offers a discounted service for faculty, staff, and students called [Community Practice](#). Janet Jones confirmed after the meeting that actively employed faculty and staff and enrolled students are eligible for a discount for Community Practice services. Employees

should identify themselves as faculty or staff when calling and ask to schedule Community Practice services.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

a. Follow-up: Bylaws Amendment (Ombuds Amendment)

Ms. Hodge reviewed a proposal from the May meeting to amend the ESC bylaws to allow for the Ombudsperson to serve as a non-voting member. She shared she did not receive any comments opposed to the addition and discussed the proposed language change to the bylaws. She asked the group for their feedback. A discussion followed and Kim Hardaway moved to add the Ombudsperson as an ex-officio position to the bylaws. A discussion about voting took place. A vote was taken and the group voted to add the Ombudsperson as an ex-officio member.

The updated bylaws language will be amended to read:

“Ex-officio members of the ESC will be the Immediate Past Chair, Vice Chancellor of the Office of Equity and Diversity, Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer, University Ombudsperson and Director of the Office of Ombuds Services, and the Vice President for the Institute of Agriculture, or their designee.”

b. Future Meetings

Ms. Hodge opened the floor for discussion whether to move back to in-person meetings, keep meetings via Zoom, or hybrid.

Ms. Hardaway shared that hybrid meetings offer flexibility for comfort and busy schedules. Rita Jackson and Ms. Hodge discussed considerations for members who work outside of the Knoxville area. Dr. Lucal suggested the group could plan specific meetings as in-person, which would let those not located in Knoxville plan ahead if they wanted to come in or plan other business to be in town for at the same time. Ms. Hodge explained that, prior to the pandemic, the Council met at the IPS building at 1610 University Avenue. A discussion about attendance preferences and considerations took place. Ms. Hodge said she would send out the schedule of meetings through next summer for the group and look to designate one meeting as in-person. She also said she would check on meeting space accommodation.

c. Follow-up: Mileage Reimbursement

Mr. Goddard asked if a previous question about mileage had been presented to the Employee Relations Advisory Board (ERAB). Ms. Hodge replied that the ERAB has

not met yet but the presentation information will be made available to the group for consideration.

6. REMINDERS

- a. Please email constituent questions to Elisha Hodge (elisha.hodge@tennessee.edu) or Jessica Cantu (jlcantu@utk.edu).