

academic affairs & research ERC

MEETING MINUTES

wednesday, MARCH 10, 2021 | 1:30 – 3:00 P.M.

VIA ZOOM

PRESENT

Katie Bookout, Jessica Cantu, Melissa Cox, Darrell Easley, Jenn Edwards, Jennifer Horner, Gennie Hope-Davian, Amy Gregory, Jennifer Horner, Boone Huffaker, Cathy Jenkins, Renee Johnson, Olivia Kelley, Diane Kelly, Phyllis Moore (Guest Speaker), Shelly Payne, Julie Roe, Chrisanne Romeo, Jen Scagnelli, Renee Thomas, Sandy Thomas, Lisa Vandergriff, Chrissy Wills-Maples, Carrie Zitzman

ABSENT

Mary Lucal, Mia Pearson-Loomis, Cindy Satterfield, Sonja Spell, Elizabeth Tampas-Dixon, Teresa Volkodav-Crabtree

1. WELCOME

Julie Roe, Sr. Employee Relations Consultant, welcomed the group to the March meeting.

1. UPDATES
   1. Office of the Provost Update – Diane Kelly, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs

Dr. Diane Kelly greeted the group and began her update by announcing the introduction of a winter mini term for the 2021-22 academic year. The new term will be like summer mini term and will be introduced in January. She explained it will not have any impact on the start or end dates for the fall semester or holidays. It will push spring semester’s start and end dates a little later, and shorten some periods of time between semesters. The mini term will allow students to have an opportunity to earn additional credits, complete do-overs, and stay on track for graduation. Dr. Kelly said there is evidence that shows that for some subjects students perform better when they have a focused period to concentrate instead of dividing their time and energies amongst four or five different topics. She said mini sessions are great for experimental and experiential classes including study abroad possibilities. Ms. Roe shared her positive experience with a mini term class.

Dr. Kelly closed by noting the new strategic vision plan is close to being finalized. The draft is [available to view online](https://chancellor.utk.edu/vision/) and will be presented to the Board of Trustees this summer.

* 1. Office of Research & Engagement Update – Renee Thomas, Interim Budget Director for Research Finance & Administration

Renee Thomas greeted the group and announced that Bruce LaMattina has taken a position as the Director of Federal and Industry Partnerships with the UT Space Institute (UTSI) effective March 1.

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

Dr. Darrell Easley greeted the group and began his update by discussing Governor Lee’s proposed budget. He said that the budget is the largest in state history and will include a raise pool including part that will retroact to January. Details are still being decided and the budget still needs to be passed by the state legislature.

Dr. Easley closed by sharing a quick reminder related to Chancellor Plowman’s recent email about Zoom bombing and security. He noted that future ERC meetings would require attendees to use single sign on to log into Zoom in the future.

1. GUEST SPEAKERS
   1. [UT Retirees Council](https://alumni.utk.edu/s/1341/2/20/interior.aspx?sid=1341&gid=2&pgid=14697) – Phyllis Moore, Director of Alumni Programs

Phyllis Moore, Director of Alumni Programs, greeted the group. The UT Retirees Council was previously known as the UT Retirees Association, which transitioned to Alumni Affairs in fall 2015. The Retirees Council joined the ranks of six other [Office of Alumni Affairs Councils](https://alumni.utk.edu/s/1341/2/20/interior.aspx?sid=1341&gid=2&pgid=14406), including the Pride of the Southland Marching Band, Latino, Army ROTC, Air Force ROTC, LGBTQA+, Black, and Young Alumni Councils. She shared that the task force that was key in transferring the former Retirees Association from Human Resources to Alumni Affairs intended to enhance opportunities for retirees to continue their association with the University and colleagues. The Retirees Council also continues to award scholarships, and 26 students have benefitted to date.

Ms. Moore then noted that membership in the Retirees Council is automatic upon retirement for all UTK employees. She noted that there are more than 4,300 participants with over 2,300 within a 75 miles of campus. She touched on membership communications like the Retirees Newsletter and events, including their annual holiday reception and volunteer opportunities at UTMC and the McClung Museum. The group also took trips pre-pandemic including a memorable one to Lynchburg, TN.

Dr. Lucal asked Ms. Moore for feedback from retirees. Ms. Moore replied that she has primarily heard that retirees, especially faculty retirees, want to stay involved and have an opportunity to return to campus. Faculty retirees especially want to continue to have their research benefit their department and University.

Jessica Cantu asked Ms. Moore about how representatives can assist co-workers who are in the process of retiring. Ms. Moore emphasized the importance of new retirees updating their email address, and asked that representatives steer soon-to-be retirees to her so she can connect with them. Retiring employees can contact the Retirees Council by emailing [phyllismoore@tennessee.edu](mailto:phyllismoore@tennessee.edu).

1. OTHER BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
   1. Return to Office Planning

Ms. Roe discussed departmental plans for returning to campus full time. She explained that some offices have stayed open, some have staff who have already returned, and some have yet to return and cited recent announcements and around return to campus. HR has created communications including guidance, resources, and supports relating to supervisor guidance and campus safety best practices continue to be released. She noted that departmental remote work decisions will be made at the departmental level closer to fall.

Amy Gregory shared a concern relating to students not wearing masks on campus. Cathy Jenkins asked for advice for staff who are having difficulty in getting clarification about departmental plans for remote work. Ms. Roe responded that supervisors should be the first point of contact for questions about plans. She said that as we are in wait-and-see mode it may be a while before more information is available.

* 1. Winter Mini Term Addition

The Academic Calendar was approved to include Winter Mini Term in January 2022 prior to spring semester starting. This term will last 14 days, beginning January 3 and ending January 21. An academic working group and an operational working group will continue in their efforts to create a successful Winter Mini Term student experience. Additionally, spring break will fall between first and second sessions and aligns with Knox Co. Schools.

* 1. ERAB

The ERAB next meets on April 15, and questions are due by March 15. As a reminder, if you have questions for that group please send those to your ERAB representative, Cathy Jenkins, as soon as possible.

* 1. Online Performance Reviews Reminder – Due March 31

As a reminder, annual performance reviews through the Online Performance Review System (OPR) should be completed by March 31. The OPR HR page features a helpful FAQ for supervisors and employees, and a step-by-step guide is available in the Help section of the OPR website.

For more information visit: <https://hr.utk.edu/performance-evaluation/>

* 1. Sick Leave Bank Open Enrollment

Sick Leave Bank open enrollment begins April 1! We will be accepting applications for new enrollees for the Knoxville-area and Institute of Agriculture Sick Leave Banks through June 30. To be eligible, you must be employed as a regular UT employee, accruing sick leave, with a sick leave balance of at least 48 hours or 6 days (pro-rated for regular, part-time employees). Employees who meet those requirements who wish to join the Bank must complete an enrollment application and agree to donate 24 hours of sick leave to the bank. The 24-hour donation is non-refundable. Applications may be submitted to [SickLeaveBank@utk.edu](mailto:SickLeaveBank@utk.edu), and electronic signatures and scans are accepted. Current bank members do not need to reapply.

For more information and to download an enrollment application, visit <https://hr.utk.edu/sick-leave-bank/>.

* 1. Campus Vaccination Events for Eligible Employees

The University is now hosting UT employee and student COVID-19 vaccination events at the Student Health Center. These vaccination appointments are only open to UT students, faculty, and staff. You must be in the current age or risk-based phase for Knox County. A NetID and password are required to schedule an appointment online.

Public COVID-19 vaccine clinics are open to the public including UT students, faculty, staff, and retirees.

For more information including age and phase eligibility information and to view available events please visit: <https://www.utk.edu/coronavirus/vaccine/>.

* 1. Diversity Professional Development Fund for Staff

The Diversity Professional Development Fund for Staff (DPDFS) was created to support the participation of staff in diversity-related programs and conferences. Eligible staff can apply to receive funding to attend diversity conferences, seminars, and other programs. Applications are due on March 15, and all applications are due one month before the program to be attended.

For more information visit: <https://hr.utk.edu/diversity-fund-for-staff/>

* 1. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion HR/EAP Program Series

Join UTK HR Employee Relations and Optum EAP for a new, four part Zoom series focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace.

The series includes “Fostering Inclusion in the Workplace” on March 24, and “Unconscious Bias” on April 14.

Sign up for these sessions through K@TE.

* 1. L&OD: Upcoming Programs

For more information or to register for any of these sessions, visit K@TE:

• March 23 & 30 from 3:30p-4:30p: Telecommuting with Children

• March 24 from 9a-11a and 2p-4p: Professional Development – Building Your Brand: Leading from Where You Are

* 1. Commission for Women: Career Advancement Workshops Event

Join the Commission for Women on Tuesday, March 30 for “Lighting Your Path: Workshops on Cultivating Career Advancement Opportunities.” This afternoon event will be held via Zoom and features a keynote address from Gretchen Neisler, Vice Provost for the Center for Global Engagement. Guests are invited to participate in up to three 20-minute workshops of their choosing.

For more information and registration visit: <http://bit.ly/CFW_Lighting>

* 1. Commission for Disability: Universal Benefits of Inclusive Design Event

Join the Commission for Disability, Student Disability Services, and the Division for Student Life on Tuesday, March 23 for “Disability & Innovation: The Universal Benefits of Inclusive Design” hosted by Haben Girma. Haben Girma is the first Deafblind person to graduate from Harvard Law School, and is a human rights lawyer advancing disability justice. Join us for an engaging presentation on Haben’s journey as a disability rights advocate and how we can make UTK more inclusive.

For more information and registration visit: <https://tiny.utk.edu/Girma>.

1. REMINDERS:
   1. Please email Jessica Cantu ([jlcantu@utk.edu](mailto:jlcantu@utk.edu)) any constituent questions.