

academic affairs & research ERC

MEETING MINUTES

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

VIA ZOOM

PRESENT

Danielle Bohn (Guest Speaker), Katie Bookout, Jessica Cantu, Melissa Cox, Matt Cramer (Guest Speaker, Darrell Easley, Jenn Edwards, Jennifer Horner, Gennie Hope-Davian, Amy Gregory, Jennifer Horner, Boone Huffaker, Cathy Jenkins, Renee Johnson, Olivia Kelley, Diane Kelly, Shelly Payne, Mia Pearson-Loomis, Julie Roe, Chrisanne Romeo, Cindy Satterfield, Jen Scagnelli, Robin Sears, Elizabeth Tampas-Dixon, Renee Thomas, Lisa Vandergriff, Teresa Volkodav-Crabtree, Chrissy Wills-Maples, Carrie Zitzman

ABSENT

Mary Lucal, Sonja Spell

1. WELCOME

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

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

Dr. Diane Kelly greeted the group and began the update by noting that Faculty Affairs has been working on student retention, which has been an area of concern. She shared that they were excited to learn they beat [first year retention rates](https://oira.utk.edu/reporting/student-graduation-and-retention/) from last year from fall to spring. Dr. Kelly explained it is a critical period where everyone at the University is needed to make students feel welcome and that they belong, and that we often lose first-year students at transition periods. She said there was concern because of changes that had to be made to the university experience this year, but they found they were able to retain more students from fall to spring of this year versus last. She said the results show the good work everyone is doing to look after students and provide them with a great experience. She noted that although declining university enrollment has been in the news, they are excited to be able to continue to attract and retain students.

Dr. Kelly continued by announcing that [Online Programs](https://volsonline.utk.edu/) hired a new Vice President and Assistant Vice Provost who will be working with Vice Provost R.J. Hinde to unify efforts in online education. She said one of the goals is to continue to provide more online educational opportunities for folks across the state. Online programs allow more people who may be non-traditional to find access to education and learning environments that match their schedules.

Dr. Kelly closed by discussing changes in Faculty Affairs including a new effort to publish a [newsletter](https://provost.utk.edu/communication/) directed at those who handle hiring faculty, promotions, and reviews. The newsletter will be quarterly, cover improvements to processes and workflows, and begins publication next week.

Cathy Jenkins asked about combining UT and vocational school to create a hands-on program across the state. Dr. Kelly responded that UT has partnerships with different institutions across the state. Those relationships are typically more local but she shared that the System has a new One UT vision proposal where people could take courses at any of the system campuses. The intention is to create a physical network of opportunities in different locations.

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

Renee Thomas greeted the group and announced that the Office of Research is in the process of making an offer for the Director of Research Integrity Compliance. She said it is a vital role and that they are looking forward to having someone in the position.

* 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 reminding the group that the new [Online Performance Review (OPR)](https://hr.utk.edu/performance-evaluation/) system is live. He discussed using the OPR system as well as resources for supervisors and employees available at hr.utk.edu.

Dr. Easley closed by discussing ongoing projects in HR including the Job Family Compensation Project. He shared that Learning & Organizational Development is planning for a future campus needs assessment to help understand learning needs and provide related programs and services. He discussed a webinar held this morning around the new diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goal for annual performance reviews for 2021. To view the webinar, visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJAHjZcTDBs>.

1. GUEST SPEAKERS
   1. Here4TN Employee Assistance Program & Services – Matt Cramer

Matt Cramer, Senior Client Service Manager for Optum, greeted the group and began his presentation by reviewing resources that Here4TN provides to University employees. He first shared contact information (855-Here4TN/855-437-3486) and their website ([here4tn.com](https://www.here4tn.com/)). He also highlighted a new live chat feature for employees who are too busy to call. The chat feature is available on the Here4TN website from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET.

Mr. Cramer led by noting that employees who have behavioral health coverage via their medical insurance coverage through the University should have also received a behavioral health ID card from Optum. He said the cards can be used like any other medical identification card when visiting providers. Employees who have lost their card or did not receive one may call 855-Here4TN to request one or log into the Here4TN website and download a PDF copy.

Mr. Cramer then discussed coverage for [substance use disorder (SUD),](https://www.here4tn.com/content/cex-consumer/state-of-tn/en/substance-use-resources.html) which involves excessive and compulsive use of alcohol or drugs. He explained that for employees who are struggling with SUD the state has a benefit that allows access to a preferred substance use disorder facility. He said SUD treatment is clinically proven and has a lower cost for members. To seek treatment assistance, call 855-Here4TN.

Mr. Cramer next discussed the different programs and resources that fall under Here4TN including the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), WorkLife Services, Take Charge at Work, and other digital resources. He stressed that employees have access to a dedicated minimum masters-level clinical team available through Here4TN, and can call 855-Here4TN for any EAP or other resource needs.

Mr. Cramer explained that employees have access to five EAP sessions per person, problem, and year at no cost to the employee. Prior authorization is required, and can be obtained by calling 855-Here4TN or submitting an authorization request via here4tn.com. Virtual visits for EAP as well as behavioral health visits can be scheduled through the website at Here4TN.com. [TalkSpace](https://www.here4tn.com/content/dam/cex-consumer/state-of-tn/documents/SOT_Optum_Talkspace_Flyer.pdf), a text and messaging app, is available for both EAP and behavioral health visits, and may be helpful for employees who perform shift work. [Sanvello](https://www.liveandworkwell.com/en/member/library/sanvello.html), a self-help app, helps users engage in activities to improve their mental health at any time via their smartphone. He explained it includes practical on-demand tools to help manage stress and anxiety such as deep breathing exercises and relaxation techniques. Employees can access premium membership at no cost by signing up via the Here4TN website. Mr. Ramsey asked to clarify if Here4TN is for those who need to see a psychiatrist. Mr. Cramer confirmed that Here4TN is an umbrella that includes behavioral health benefits for employees participating in a University medical plan. Mr. Ramsey asked if employees’ dependents are eligible for behavioral health benefits. Mr. Cramer confirmed the employees are benefits eligible then their dependents are eligible for the five free EAP visits per year. For behavioral health services beyond those five visits the employee would need to be enrolled in a University medical plan. Lisa Turner asked if there are specific providers that must be used or if employees can use any provider and pay a copay fee. Mr. Cramer responded that the providers need to be in-network, and to visit here4tn.com to use the search tool to find a provider. Ms. Turner asked about how billing works after the five free EAP visits per year. Mr. Cramer responded that if an employee exceeded the five EAP visits and needs to continue seeing a provider they would then begin using their behavioral health benefits and there would be copays involved.

Mr. Cramer next covered [legal and mediation benefit services](https://www.liveandworkwell.com/en/member/benefits/legalandfinancial/legal-consultation.html), which include free consultation services and a discount for ongoing representation. Employees interested in finding an attorney or mediator should call 855-Here4TN and an agent will assist them with setting up those services. Dr. Lucal asked if mediation services are a new benefit, and Cramer responded that they are not. They agreed it is a very useful and cost-effective resource for constituents. Mr. Cramer said self-help legal forms are also available through the website as well as access to consulting with a money coach and other financial resources. He said that Optum recently held a [financial webinar series](https://www.here4tn.com/content/cex-consumer/state-of-tn/en/financial-webinars.html) on topics such as managing debt, controlling spending, and maintaining excellent credit. The series is available on their website to view at any time.

Mr. Cramer then discussed [WorkLife Services](https://www.liveandworkwell.com/en/member/benefits/wl.html), which is a service designed to assist employees by researching things to like caregiving assistance, community education programs, support services and more. He shared his personal experience with using the service to locate a contractor for a home project.

Mr. Cramer next talked about the [Take Charge at Work program](https://www.here4tn.com/content/cex-consumer/state-of-tn/en/take-charge-at-work-program.html). The program is confidential and designed to help working adults manage symptoms of stress and depression. Those who qualify work with a licensed clinician and the State of Tennessee offers participants who complete the first engagement activity $150.00 through Active Health. For more information and to take the assessment online visit here4tn.com. Mr. Ramsey asked how the incentive is paid out, and Mr. Cramer replied that it is like other Active Health wellness rewards and is paid out via payroll.

Mr. Cramer closed by highlighting [services available to supervisors and managers](https://www.here4tn.com/content/cex-consumer/state-of-tn/en/leaders.html), including catalogs of available training available at no cost on topics such as COVID-19, diversity and inclusion, and supporting mental health concerns in the workplace. Departments interested in scheduling these training can call 855-Here4TN.

Ms. Roe noted that for constituents who want to do their own research online the website has a wealth of resources including reading material and content that can be viewed at any time. Jessica Cantu asked Mr. Cramer to explain to representatives what employees who contact Here4TN can expect. Mr. Cramer explained that the clinician who answers the phone will ask a few questions to do an assessment to ensure that the caller is not in a situation where they might hurt themselves or someone else. He said they will talk about available resources and help connect the caller with a clinician for either in-person or virtual visits. He said clinicians can do appointment searches with callers on the phone to make sure they can find a provider that is available to schedule an appointment. Gennie Hope-Davian asked about Here4TN presentations to departments upon request. Mr. Cramer said departments can reach out to Ms. Roe with scheduling requests.

Jessica Cantu asked Mr. Cramer to clarify the difference between TalkSpace and Sanvello as resources for employees who may be on shift work and need assistance outside of normal hours. Mr. Cramer confirmed Sanvello is a self-help app, so those using it are not connecting with a provider but can use it for meditation and exercises at any time. TalkSpace does connect employees with a provider and requires EAP authorization. Once an employee gets authorization they receive the five sessions per year and can text their provider through the app. One week of unlimited texting with a provider would be one EAP session, and providers respond five days a week.

Amy Gregory asked about the Optum behavioral health card. Mr. Cramer clarified if an employee did not receive their card they can go to here4tn.com to download a PDF copy or call 855-Here4TN to request a new copy be mailed. Employees will only receive an Optum behavioral health ID card if they are also enrolled in one of the University’s health insurance plans.

More information about EAP can be found at: <https://hr.utk.edu/employee-assistance-program/>.

* 1. Be Well – Danielle Bohn

Danielle Bohn, Health and Wellness Coordinator, introduced herself to the group and discussed how [Be Well](https://bewell.utk.edu/), the UTK employee wellness program, provides preventative wellness education and outreach to employees and departments across campus. Ms. Bohn shared that Be Well works to benefit employees’ and the campus community’s wellbeing and helps employees prioritize their overall wellbeing beyond just the physical dimension.

Ms. Bohn then shared the vision of a campus that supports positive lifestyle choices, and talked about the [eight dimensions of wellness model that the program is based upon](https://bewell.utk.edu/dimensions-of-wellness/): emotional, spiritual, intellectual, physical, environmental, financial, occupational, and social. She noted that they want to help people understand that different dimensions of wellness exist within their lives, that sometimes there will be fluctuations in how they are doing in those different area, and that the model is not necessarily designed for 100% achievement in all eight areas. She shared examples with the group of campus resources that support each dimension of wellness, including those related to COVID-19. Ms. Bohn said that they are currently seeing employees needing more assistance in the social, financial, and emotional aspects of wellness due to the pandemic. She shared that her focus for this year is to prioritize those areas as best as they can given the virtual and hybrid environments.

Ms. Bohn mentioned that [EverlyWell COVID-19 test kits](https://studenthealth.utk.edu/everlywell-covid-19-home-collection-kit-overview/) are available at no cost to staff. Asymptomatic employees may pick up a kit from the Student Health Center during regular business hours. The employee can either complete it on campus or at home, ship it via UPS, and EverlyWell will email them their results. Employees experiencing symptoms should contact their health provider instead.

Ms. Bohn noted that due to the pandemic Be Well transitioned their work online, and said it has been rewarding to see it grow in this new direction. She said participation numbers have skyrocketed and it has been a great increase in accessibility for those who are unable to attend in-person events on campus but can attend virtually. Be Well’s partnership with the Culinary Institute continues with virtual [healthy cooking series](https://bewell.utk.edu/programs/healthy-cooking/) classes, and she noted they have found that allowing people to engage in the class in their kitchens and with family members has been great to watch. She works with the UT Culinary Institute to provide food kits to the first 30 people who sign up. Similarly, Be Well has also been hosting virtual [healthy gardening classes](https://bewell.utk.edu/programs/healthy-gardening-classes/), with the first class of the semester kicking off this Saturday. She said that UT Gardens sets up kits for those classes, allowing employees to tune in to the virtual class and follow along at home.

Ms. Bohn said that they will be kicking off the [Grow With Be Well](https://bewell.utk.edu/programs/employee-campus-garden/) employee gardening program in May. Be Well and the [Grow Lab](https://growlab.utk.edu/) campus garden partner to offer plots and produce plants to employees, who then tend to the gardening with their teams. She said it was a great way to safely connect with others as well as harvest and take produce home. Registration starts in March and the program will kick off this May. She also mentioned [employee fitness classes](https://bewell.utk.edu/programs/employee-fitness-classes/), including an upcoming virtual Zumba class. She said the classes are held about once a month and employees can [try any RecSports Zoom fitness classes](https://recsports.utk.edu/virtual-group-fitness-classes/).

Ms. Bohn then discussed the [Healthy Lifestyle program](https://bewell.utk.edu/programs/healthy-lifestyle-program/). Healthy Lifestyles is a six-week lunch and learn program adapted from the CDC’s Diabetes Prevention Program, and offers incentives for participants. The next session kicks off on March 10, and participants can engage in physical activity during the Zoom sessions. The program covers basics around physical activity and nutrition and building a healthy lifestyle at work and at home. It also covers stress management and how to keep healthy lifestyle momentum going. Participants receive a $10 Publix gift card for attending the first session and a $20 Amazon gift card for completing the entire program.

Ms. Bohn then talked about the [Wellness Warriors award](https://bewell.utk.edu/wellness-warriors/). The award highlights a person on campus each month in the Be Well newsletter. She asked the group that if someone they know in their department or on campus is doing a great job of taking care of themselves in any of the eight dimensions of wellness to nominate them as a Wellness Warrior. [Wellness Champions](https://bewell.utk.edu/wellness-champion-program/) are employees who serve as a role model of wellness in their department and promote healthy department certification programs. It helps create change within the department and has an emphasis on wellness to ensure employees’ needs are being met in the workplace. She said that they help identify needs specific to their department, and they consult with Be Well to plan activities. She also said the employee wellness committee helps her brainstorm ways to connect with people on campus. Those interested in becoming involved as a Wellness Champion or participating in the wellness committee can email her at [bewell@utk.edu](mailto:bewell@utk.edu).

Ms. Bohn closed by touching on a new sleep campaign for campus. She said survey data shows 43% of campus employees sleep less than seven hours per night, and the current recommendations for average adults is to get seven to nine hours of sleep per night. She noted sleep is highly connected to emotional well-being, and lack of sleep impacts cognitive functioning and may result in metabolic changes. She shared that research shows finding a routine and sticking with it helps the body go to sleep and wake faster because of a constituent schedule. She shared that slow transitions to increase sleep by fifteen to twenty-minute increments is helpful as is turning off electronic devices before bed, adjusting thermostats at night to around 65 degrees, limiting naps to 20 minutes, and making the room as dark as possible.

Ms. Jenkins asked about the Student Health Center Pharmacy service and whether pharmacy services are available to staff when students are not on campus. Ms. Bohn replied that she believes it is as the building is open normal hours.

Visit [bewell.utk.edu](https://bewell.utk.edu/) to sign up for the Be Well monthly newsletter or follow Be Well on Facebook and Twitter to learn more about upcoming events and healthy living tips.

1. CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS
   1. First Year Studies – Olivia Kelley

Q: Would the First Year Studies program ever consider reviewing their guidelines and required qualifications for instructors to potentially allow non-exempt staff or those without a Master’s degree to be able to teach a course?”

A: Ms. Roe replied that they are working to figure out who the best subject matter expert is for revisiting guidelines.

* 1. Joe Johnson Dr. Lighting Concerns – Olivia Kelley

Q: “Joe Johnson Dr. bisects the two halves of the Ag Campus, and it isn’t very well lit. There are two cross walks on Joe Johnson Dr., and I worry that pedestrians crossing the road aren’t visible enough and it isn’t very well lit if you’re walking on the sidewalk. Pendergrass has reduced hours because of COVID, but when it gets dark early it feels unsafe. Could the need for better lighting be communicated to whoever owns the road?”

A: Before the meeting Jessica Cantu reached out to Brian Browning, Acting Associate Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration, about the question. He responded, “Joe Johnson Drive is actually a State-owned road, but managed by the City of Knoxville. I will reach out to them and request they review the street lighting in the area after crossing the bridge.”

1. OTHER BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
   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 who 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. Commission for Blacks Event: In the Mix (2/16)

Join the [Commission for Blacks](https://cfb.utk.edu/) and the Multicultural Mentoring Program on February 16 to virtually connect and network during a mixer with UTK black students, faculty, and staff.

* 1. Non-Exempt Staff Sounding Board (2/24)

The Non-Exempt Staff Sounding Board invites all non-exempt staff to join them for a virtual coffee hour on February 24. The Board is sponsored by UT HR and was created to gather resources together to help inspire and encourage non-exempt staff in their goals.

More information: <https://calendar.utk.edu/event/non-exempt_sounding_board_virtual_coffee#.YCKmhGhKiHs>

* 1. Green Zone Training (2/24)

The Veterans Resource Center invites the campus community to join them for Green Zone Training on February 24. Learn more about our student and employee-veterans and some of their unique experiences they bring to the campus, and how they strengthen the diversity within our shared community.

More Information: <https://hr.utk.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/56/2021/02/Green-Zone-Flyer.pdf>

* 1. L&OD: Upcoming Events

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

* February 11, 2p-3:30p - STRIDE for Staff
* February 17, 9a-11a and 2p-4p - Professional Development – Emotional Intelligence: Receiving Feedback with Head & Heart
  1. Big Orange Pantry

The Big Orange Pantry provides emergency food assistance for students, faculty, and staff attending or employed by the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The Big Orange Pantry is located on the ground floor of Greve Hall. Students, faculty, and staff seeking food assistance will be able to choose for themselves what products they would like to receive.

Ms. Thomas asked if the Pantry accepts donations. To organize a food drive email: [bigorangepantry@utk.edu](mailto:bigorangepantry@utk.edu). To make a financial donation visit: <https://volstarter.utk.edu/s/1341/utk/volstarter/interior.aspx?sid=1341&gid=2&pgid=15669>.

More information: tiny.utk.edu/BigOrangePantry

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