

OPERATIONS ERC

Meeting AGENDA

TUESDAY, MARCH 2, 2021 | 1:30 – 3:00 P.M.

VIA ZOOM

PRESENT

Stevin Amonett, Jason Baggett, Brian Browning, Jessica Cantu, Jeremiah Cook, Ted Coward, Harold Bivens, Darrell Easley, Steven Henry, Sarah Hoel, William Iler, Jimmy Large, Terry Ledford, Mary Lucal, Phyllis Moore (Guest Speaker), Gavin Ramsey, Ed Roach, Julie Roe, Thomas Spoon, Jake Turner, Lisa Turner, Dave Webb, Michelle Whited, Jessica Woofter

ABSENT

Tom Anderson, David Blalock, Joseph Bray, Charles Burton, Paul Finley, Judy Jones, Debbie Lane, Ethan Long, Raheem Obaid, Regina Olum, Chip Pennoyer, Debra Robinson, Cris Strange

1. WELCOME

Julie Roe, Senior Employee Relations Specialist, welcomed the group to the March meeting.

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

Dr. Mary Lucal began her update by reflecting on Governor Lee’s State of the State address in February and encouraging remarks about proposal of a merit pool in the upcoming budget. She noted that the budget would need to be passed by state legislature.

Dr. Lucal continued by announcing that the annual performance review deadline is March 31. She encouraged employees who have not yet spoken with their supervisor about their review to do so, especially given the possibility of merit/market pool dollars. Dr. Lucal also reviewed the new diversity category, which will be part of 2021 performance reviews. Employees and supervisor should be looking to put goals in place to work towards for 2021 reviews.

Dr. Lucal next shared that she and others on the call are receiving questions about plans for the fall. She said it is not too early for departments and units to begin to have conversations around staffing for fall. Strategic planning efforts are also underway, and she shared that the Chancellor’s website is a good place to look for more information.

Dr. Lucal closed by sharing news about the new parental leave policy that was approved at a recent Board of Trustees’ meeting. She expressed her enthusiasm for the proposal’s passing and said implementation details will be worked out prior to the policy taking effect on July 1. The policy grants six weeks paid leave for birth or adoption.

Ed Roach asked about employees who had adjustments to bring them up to minimums under the new market-based pay system. Dr. Lucal responded that around a hundred employees were brought up to the minimums of their position’s market range. Mr. Roach responded that employees in his area that have been employed for twenty or more years are currently making the same amount as new hires. Dr. Lucal discussed compression and how market and merit dollars can be prioritized by departments to address compression issues. A discussion about compression issues and use of the potential 4% merit/market pool in the Governor’s budget to address those issues took place.

Julie Roe announced that [Sick Leave Bank](https://hr.utk.edu/sick-leave-bank/) open enrollment will kick off on April 31. Enrollment will run through June 30, and an informational session is planned for anyone thinking about joining the bank or interested in learning more.

* 1. Finance and Administration Update – Brian Browning, Acting Associate Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration

Brian Browning greeted the group and discussed the proposed budget. He expressed gratitude that the Governor’s office was willing to help higher education. The proposed budget represents a 7.1% increase in the overall budget for UT Knoxville and totals over $200 million. The budget includes funding for the College of Nursing building addition and as well as funding for the acquisition of Martin Methodist University.

Mr. Browning then discussed [construction projects](https://conezone.utk.edu/) currently underway across campus. The West Campus Dining Facility project is on schedule, which includes substantial completion by the end of May and opening in August. He said the facility has 1,200 seats in the main dining area and expressed optimism that they will be able to take advantage of all seats during fall semester. He shared other details about the facility, including a Chick-Fil-a featuring a full menu, a large POD Market, and a bakery. He next noted that the new Engineering facility, situated southeast of the Stadium, is also set to open in time for fall semester. Phase I of the Pedestrian Mall Extension in front of Fred Brown Hall was finished at the end of 2020. Phase II will begin after the completion of spring semester and will continue through the end of 2021.

Mr. Browning closed by reflecting on announced plans for a normal fall 2021 semester. He shared his optimism for a mostly in-person fall semester and affirmed Finance & Administration is gearing up to make that happen.

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.

1. OTHER BUSINESS
	1. Campus COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics for Staff – Lisa Turner

**Q:** “I would like more information about the COVID-19 vaccination events held on campus. Are these available to staff? If so, how are they being communicated to employees?”

A: Campus clinics for both the public and for employees and students are currently being held on campus but are separately scheduled. Employees interested in news about staff-specific events held at the Student Health Center are encouraged to read Tennessee Today and visit the UTK campus COVID-19 website and select Vaccine, or visit <https://www.utk.edu/coronavirus/vaccine/> .

Terry Ledford reviewed vaccination events at the Student Health Center and current guidelines. A discussion about volunteer opportunities for vaccination events took place.

Employees must be currently eligible under Knox County phase guidelines to sign up for an appointment. There are three clinics scheduled this week including one today, and one tomorrow. Employees should use their NetID and password to register for an appointment at <https://tiny.utk.edu/vaccine_appointment>. Employees may determine their eligibility by using the state’s vaccine eligibility tool: <https://covid19.tn.gov/covid-19-vaccines/eligibility/>

* 1. Fall Return to Work & Telework – Jessica Woofter

**Q:** “We have heard President Boyd say that this fall we will return to in person classes. For those employees working "remotely" from home, if certain positions do not interact with students at all and basically provides support for a department will any of those jobs remain working from home, will everyone be required to come back to campus, or will it be up to that said department to make the determination?”

**A:** Julie Roe responded that it will be up to departments to think through their unit’s needs, and encouraged anyone interested in telework to start that conversation with their supervisor.

1. ANNOUNCEMENTS
	1. ERAB: Next meeting 4/15 (Reminder to Send Questions to Tom Anderson)

Representatives with questions for the Employee Relations Advisory Board (ERAB) are encouraged to send those to Tom Anderson. The ERAB next meets on April 15.

* 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. L&OD Upcoming Programs

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

• March 2, 9, 23 & 30 from 3:30p-4:30p: Telecommuting with Children

• March 8 from 11:30a-12:30p: Lunch and Learn: A Presentation on Supercharging Your LinkedIn Presence with Michael Smith-Porter

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

* 1. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion HR/EAP 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 “Understand and Embrace Diversity” on March 9, “Fostering Inclusion in the Workplace” on March 24, and “Unconscious Bias” on April 14.

Sign up for these sessions through K@TE.

* 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.

More information: tiny.utk.edu/BigOrangePantry

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