

KNOXVILLE OPERATIONS ERC

MEETING MINUTES

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

ZOOM:

<https://tennessee.zoom.us/j/98806134615?pwd=akR1aE1YUk1MbDd5ekNKdXNUaVhlZz09>

ERC Password: 468059

PRESENT

Tom Anderson, Jason Baggett, Brian Browning, Shannon Bruce, David Bryant, Jessica Cantu, Jon Chandler, Jeremiah Cook, Ted Coward, Tom Cruise (Guest Speaker), Crissy Douglas, Darrell Easley, Sarah Hoel, Chris Iler, Judy Jones, Jimmy Large, Mary Lucal, Terry Ledford, Regina Olum, Chip Pennoyer, Gavin Ramsey, Julie Roe, Ed Roach, Deborah Robinson, Jeremy Smith, Ruby Strange, Thomas Spoon, Jake Turner, Lisa Turner, Jessica Woofter

ABSENT

Erin Blake, David Blaylock, Charles Burton, Dedra Cotner, Paul Finley, Steven Henry, Debbie Lane, Ethan Long

1. WELCOME

Julie Roe, Employee Relations Manager, welcomed everyone to the November meeting.

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

Brian Browning greeted the group and began by updating the group on the status of the UT System’s [move to the new UT Tower](https://offices.tennessee.edu/) in downtown Knoxville. The move was recently featured on WBIR, and Mr. Browning said move-ins will begin in December with departmental moves extending into March.

Mr. Browning continued by giving updates on campus building project. Renovations on Neyland Stadium are slated to begin November 28. Design work continues on the final phase of the Volunteer Boulevard streetscape project, which extends from UT Drive and Todd Helton Drive westward. The streetscape project is slated to kick off in summer 2022.

Mr. Browning next shared that events are once again taking place on campus and announced we will host our first concert in twenty months next week. The Eric Church concern will have an estimated 16,000 attendees. He said there are several concerts to follow starting in December going through spring and early summer 2022. A discussion about upcoming concerts took place. Lisa Turner asked If masks would be required for concert attendees. Mr. Browning replied it is up to artists’ promoters for each event, so it will vary since concerts are not official UT events. He said requirement information will be released on the initial ticket sale date for future concerts. Ed Roach noted Lynyrd Skynyrd also has an upcoming concert at Thompson-Boling Arena.

Jessica Cantu asked when the Provisions on Demand (POD) Market in the Zeanah Engineering Building might open. Mr. Browning responded that design work and buildout of the POD has been completed, and they are working with the general contractor to schedule an install date. He said the project should be wrapped up by the end of the semester and the POD should be open for the start of the spring semester.

Jessica Woofter asked how stadium renovations would affect departments located in East Stadium Hall. Mr. Browning replied that only Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) currently remains in South and East Stadium Halls. He said most of the work for the renovation phase will be confined to the lower west and upper north sections of the stadium, so the work will not impact EHS. Ed Roach asked if EHS would be moving from the floors they currently occupy in East Stadium Hall. Mr. Browning said he did not think so, and the only move planned is when the department moves out in 2023, if not sooner. Jimmy Large asked if staff were asked to pay ticket donations to make up for renovation costs. Dr. Lucal responded Dr. Mónica Lebrón, Deputy Athletics Director for Championship Resources, recently spoke with the Exempt Staff Council. Dr. Easley recalled that Dr. Lebrón explained the athletics programs are trying to modernize their ticket structure. He empathized with staff who are frustrated about donation costs. Gavin Ramsey asked if single game tickets were still available for free for certain sports. A discussion took place about ticket costs, and Dr. Easley clarified that donations are specifically for season ticket holders. Staff with questions about season ticket prices or donations can contact Mitch White with the Tennessee Fund at Mitch White at [mwhit120@utk.edu](mailto:mwhit120@utk.edu) or 865-227-0370.

* 1. Human Resources Update – Mary Lucal, Associate Vice Chancellor for Human Resources

Dr. Lucal greeted the group and began by giving an update with Tom Anderson on the search for the new Associate Vice Chancellor for Facilities Services. She said she is pleased with the slate of candidates from the search firm partner. Interviews for first round candidates are scheduled for next week with campus visits to be scheduled soon.

Dr. Lucal next discussed the [Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) project](https://dash-erp.tennessee.edu/). She reported Oracle and Workday recently delivered financial and human resource capital demonstrations. Once a vendor is selected implementation is expected to take about two years. She asked those in the group who use IRIS to take part in implementation meetings if invited.

Dr. Lucal then discussed the [Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program for faculty](https://provost.utk.edu/2021/10/proposed-voluntary-retirement-incentives-for-faculty/). She said the deadline for applications is December 15 and there are five information sessions and a panel in the coming week. She said she is receiving questions if a similar program is planned for staff. She responded that there is not a current need to have a staff program as VRIP is intended to address changing student needs and interests and allow the Provost and deans to reallocate resources to meet those new needs.

Dr. Lucal then turned her attention to the Board of Trustees’ recent decision to approve the new minimum hiring rate of $15.00 per hour for staff employees. She shared her appreciation for the Chancellor’s decision to commit resources to bring all staff up to the new rate and address compression around the increase. She explained the change will take effect with the first pay period in January 2022 and noted compression is being calculated. Mr. Ramsey asked if positions’ market ranges would change with the new minimum rate. Dr. Lucal responded the compression shift would not necessarily mean a position’s market range will change but it may mean the employee moves more deeply in the range. A discussion about Facilities Services’ current minimum rates and other campuses took place. Mr. Roach voiced his concern about career ladders related to compression. Mr. Ledford responded that compression would be factored in. He noted it will take three times as much money to address compression as the move to the new $15.00 per hour hiring rate. Mr. Roach said he has received poor constituent feedback about raises, and Dr. Lucal responded she believes the effect of the current compression work will be positive. Mr. Ramsey asked how many employees were currently below $15.00 per hour. Dr. Lucal responded there are roughly 550 staff employees affected between UTK, UTIA and UTSI.

Ed Roach asked about retirement eligibility and if there is a magic number to retire with full benefits. Dr. Lucal responded it depends on the plan each employee is participating in. A discussion about retirement took place, and Dr. Lucal offered that HR would invite Retirement Services to a future meeting to talk about eligibility. A discussion about retirement took place. Dr. Lucal encouraged anyone with questions to arrange for an individual consultation with Retirement Services. Retirement Services also has new [life planning training in K@TE](https://payroll.tennessee.edu/retirement/seminars/) that would benefit anyone interested in learning more about retirement.

Mr. Roach advised he continues to receive feedback from constituents who have applied for positions but have not received an interview. Dr. Lucal asked that the constituents contact HR.

1. GUEST SPEAKER
   1. Veterans Success Center – Tom Cruise, VSC Coordinator

Tom Cruise, VSC Coordinator, greeted the group and began by reintroducing the [Veterans Success Center](https://veterans.utk.edu/) (formerly Veterans Resource Center) to the group. The VSC is primarily focused on support and care of student veterans and military connected students including active duty, guard, reserve, and military dependents. They also focus on student services programming, community outreach, fundraising, and GI Bill certification. Mr. Cruise shared the university recently received a gold standard [Military Friendly School designation](https://www.militaryfriendly.com/the-university-of-tennessee-knoxville/), the highest ranking for the designation, and was also designated a Military Friendly #1 Spouse School. The VSC also has new scholarship donors enabling student grants and scholarships.

Mr. Cruise said the VSC held a new Vet Camp event at the beginning of fall semester. Vet Camp was a student veterans’ specific orientation allowing time for VSC staff to interact with students before they set foot in classrooms. The Camp allowed time to meet one-on-one with new student veterans to talk about the GI Bill and offer opportunities to meet campus partners. He said it was a huge success and they are planning to host a Vet Camp every semester going forward. Mr. Cruise extended an invitation to campus partners who are interested in speaking with attendees or attending the Camp to meet with student veterans to connect with him.

Mr. Cruise then announced the VSC recently [received a $500,000 endowment from the Pilot Company](https://news.utk.edu/2021/10/07/ut-and-pilot-company-partner-on-student-veterans-success/). They dedicated the Center’s lounge as the Pilot Company Veteran Student Lounge and welcomed representatives from Pilot including Mr. and Mrs. James Haslam. The Pilot Company Veterans Success Endowment will allow them to create resources including support services and scholarships to help further academic support and success of student veterans. He noted he started a [new VSC podcast called “Dog Tag Dialogue”](https://soundcloud.com/user-83103040) and he was able to speak with Mr. Haslam about his time in the military and playing football at UT during a recent episode.

Mr. Cruise announced an [upcoming Green Zone training](https://calendar.utk.edu/event/green_zone_training_5816?#.YYAvSJ7MKUk). The trainings cover student veteran related topics including the GI Bill, strengths and challenges for students, and a student veteran panel. The training will be held in the Student Union just before Veterans Day and employees will receive training credit through K@TE.

Mr. Cruise then discussed plans for [celebrating Veterans Day on campus](https://news.utk.edu/2021/11/05/campus-community-invited-to-celebrate-veterans-day/). Events include Coffee with a Cop with UTPD veteran officers, a first-generation student swag event, and an ROTC ceremony dedicating a new [Armed Forces Memorial on Pedestrian Walkway](https://news.utk.edu/2021/11/11/armed-forces-memorial-to-honor-fallen-students-faculty-and-staff/). The Veterans Appreciation Dinner will take place on Veterans Day.

Mr. Cruise closed by inviting the group to stop by and visit the Center, located on the ground floor of Hodges Library.

Ms. Roe encouraged the group to keep Green Zone training in mind as a useful opportunity for the new IDE performance review question.

1. CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS
   1. Faculty VRIP Program – Tom Anderson

Q: With the recent announcement of the retirement incentive for faculty I have had a number of folks contact me asking why this isn’t offered for staff. I imagine the reasoning and explanation hasn’t changed much since last time, but could you ask the question and get a response for us to share with our constituents please?

A: Dr. Lucal responded to the question during the HR update. For more information about the Voluntary Retirement Incentive Plan, visit: <https://hr.utk.edu/2022-utk-faculty-vrip/>

* 1. Workers Compensation Protocols – Jeremiah Cook

Q: “Does UT, the state, or CorVel make the workers compensation protocols? Can UT or the state do something to make it simpler or less time consuming to get medical care?”

A: Mr. Cook related that the constituent was stung by bees at work and needed to seek medical attention. He said in contacting CorVel and following their direction it was about four hours after the initial injury before he could be seen. The constituent asked if there was a way to review the Workers Compensation process to receive quicker care.

Before the meeting, Jessica Cantu reached out to Pam Jeffreys, Director of Risk Management, and Stephanie Strickland, System Workers’ Compensation Coordinator.

Ms. Jeffreys responded that the State of Tennessee Treasury Division of Claims and Risk Management manages the Workers Compensation program based on state and federal laws and the CorVel 24/7 process is designed and implemented by the state. Employees may contact the Division of Claims and Risk Management at 615-741-2734.

Ms. Jeffreys indicated she would relay concerns from Mr. Cook’s constituent to the Executive Safety Committee. She also noted that the facility the constituent was sent to is set up for drug tests and physical therapy, but workers compensation injuries take precedence over all other visits. She also noted that hospitals and clinics are currently overloaded due to COVID.

Chris Iler shared his experience with receiving care for a Workers Compensation related injury and said it took about three and a half hours to receive care. A discussion about Workers Compensation took place. Dr. Lucal and Ms. Roe agreed that Ms. Jeffreys would be invited to an upcoming meeting to talk with the group about workers compensation and answer questions about the CorVel process.

* 1. Compression Concern – Tom Anderson, Gavin Ramsey & Jimmy Large

Q: “When will the compensation issue be addressed?”

A: Dr. Lucal and Mr. Ledford responded to the question during the HR update.

* 1. McLean Survey Results – Tom Anderson

Q: “Will the results of the recent 3rd party survey be released, and if so, when?”

A: Dr. Lucal responded her understanding from System HR was the survey results would be available in the spring. After the meeting Dr. Lucal reached out to Dr. Brian Dickens, Chief Human Resources Officer, who responded:

“There were no distribution issues for any other campus except UTC because of a recurring email issue. There were no other issues with the survey that I am aware of. While I don’t recall what was shared during the ERAB call, Tom may have taken my comments out of context or misunderstood them to include other campuses.”

Mr. Anderson responded he had heard from other campus employees that they had not received the survey. He also noted that during the most recent Employee Relations Advisory Board (ERAB) meeting System HR noted distribution issues with the survey vendor, McLean, but said they were satisfied with the survey.

* 1. Federal Vaccine Mandate – Gavin Ramsey

Q: “I can't find the answer to this anywhere, so I'll ask here. Is there any update on the federal vaccine mandate and how 's going to affect us if we cannot comply? Will we have to furlough?”

A: Dr. Lucal responded that, at this time, there much discussion but no firm answer. She noted there are many interpretations about definitions and moving parts at the state level, but the current guidance we are operating under is that President Boyd highly recommends vaccination. She noted the Student Health Center offers COVID vaccinations including booster shots, and anyone who wants to receive vaccination can schedule an appointment with them. HR is also available to assist employees with questions about [documenting vaccinations in IRIS Employee Self-Service (ESS)](https://tennessee.edu/coronavirus/vaccines/verification-iris/). Dr. Lucal reassured the group that leadership is not interested in losing staff, especially considering the work we have all done over the last year and a half. She encouraged the group to share information with their constituents, noting that President Boyd strongly recommends everyone be vaccinated and upload either vaccination information or exemption information.

Mr. Ramsey asked what employees who have lost their vaccine card should do to obtain a replacement. Dr. Lucal responded they should contact their health provider or local health department. She encouraged Facilities Services employees to make use of their computer lab for uploads. Mr. Ledford responded he would make arrangements for assistance.

Robert Baggett asked for information about exemptions. Dr. Lucal responded medical and religious exemption forms are available on the System HR website and they should be uploaded for review as soon as possible.

A discussion took place about the mandate, COVID booster eligibility, and types of workers who are eligible to receive booster vaccinations. For more information about vaccinations including boosters, visit the Student Health Center’s website at: <https://studenthealth.utk.edu/covid-19-vaccine-clinics/>.

Lisa Turner asked if flu vaccination was also mandated. Dr. Lucal responded it is not, but she reminded the group about the potential of getting both COVID and the flu at the same time.

* 1. Insurance Assistance

Mr. Cook asked assisting a coworker who has been out of work for some time with paying for their insurance. Dr. Lucal suggested he contact Dr. Darrell Easley to investigate the question as it would depend on the employee’s individual circumstances.

1. OTHER BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
   1. Campus Vaccine Clinics

Vaccine shots are now available for students, faculty, and staff at the Student Health Center. Flu shots are available at the SHC Pharmacy with no appointment is needed. Walk-ins are welcome Monday – Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Visit <https://studenthealth.utk.edu/influenza-vaccine/> for more information.

Flu shots are also available at several campus events. Visit <https://calendar.utk.edu/search/events?search=fluvaccine> to view locations and dates and register for an event near you.

COVID vaccinations and booster doses are also available on campus. Vaccinations and boosters are by appointment at the Student Health Center and include the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines.

* More information including booster eligibility guidelines: <https://studenthealth.utk.edu/covid-19-vaccine-clinics/>
* Appointment signups: <https://www.utk.edu/coronavirus/vaccine/>.
  1. Campus Chest

Sarah Hoel gave an update on the Campus Chest campaign. She shared the campaign is currently at 50% of the goal with about $263,000 raised so far. She said Finance & Administration division is currently at about 57% of the unit’s goal with about $22,000.00 raised so far. She shared her appreciation to F&A employees who have participated in supporting local non-profit organizations.

Dr. Lucal asked to clarify if ongoing donations to UTK departments would count towards the goal. Ms. Hoel confirmed they do not count unlike Big Orange Give which is internally focused. She explained the Campus Chest campaign is geared towards supporting non-profit organizations outside of the University, although a few campus groups were grandfathered in such as WUOT. She said those internal donations are shared with UT Foundation.

The campaign runs through this Friday, November 5. Employees can participate by visiting the pledge page: <https://campuschest.utk.edu/>. For questions or assistance call 974-3061 or email [campuschest@utk.edu](mailto:campuschest@utk.edu).

* 1. UTK Veterans Holiday Food Drive

UTK HR, Second Harvest, and the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association are teaming up to help provide food assistance to struggling veterans and their families throughout East Tennessee during the upcoming holiday season. HR will be collecting canned food items (meals-in-a-can) and other non-perishable food items (no glass containers, please) through Monday, November 15. Please bring donations to the UTK HR Office in 105 Student Services Building, Veterans Success Center in Hodges Library, or Army or Air Force ROTC offices in Hoskins Library.

If you know of a veteran, member of the Guard or Reserves, an active-duty service member, or a family member in need of food assistance, please contact HR Veterans Representative Casey Bain at [cbain4@utk.edu](mailto:cbain4@utk.edu).

Sharable flyer: <https://hr.utk.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/56/2021/10/UTK-Veteran-Mobile-Food-Pantry-Holiday-Food-Drive.pdf>

* 1. Meeting Modality Survey and Luncheon

Ms. Roe announced that a survey about meeting modality preferences would be sent to the group after the meeting.

Mr. Roach asked about plans for the ERC’s annual luncheon. Ms. Roe responded that the luncheon was moved last year to an end of academic year celebration. Due to the pandemic, we were unable to host the luncheon. She said no decision has been made at this time and it would be an early spring decision.

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