

KNOXVILLE ADMINISTRATION ERC

MEETING MINUTES

THURSDAY, March 3, 2022 | 1:30 – 3:00 P.M.

PRESENT

Brenda Bartram, Katie Bookout, Jessica Cantu, Jon Chandler, Melissa Cox, Darrell Easley, Gennie Hope-Davian, Jennifer Horner, Cathy Jenkins, Kerri Lovegrove, Renee Johnson, Olivia Kelley, Diane Kelly, Ryan Kemnetz, Amber Mathes (Guest Speaker), Shelly Payne, Pam Roach, Julie Roe, Jen Scagnelli, Denise Sears, Melinda Simmons, Kenny Smith (IPS Leadership Academy), Elizabeth Tampas-Dixon, Renee Thomas, Lisa Vandergriff, Teresa Volkodav-Crabtree, Amber White (Guest Speaker), Brooke Wichmann (Guest Speaker), Chrissy Wills-Maples, Lisa Yamagata-Lynch (Guest Speaker)

ABSENT

Andrea Brayton, Melissa Cox, Amy Gregory, Charlene Ingle, Cindy Satterfield, Sonja Spell, Jill Zambito, Carrie Zitzman

1. WELCOME

Jon Chandler, Sr. Employee Relations Consultant, welcomed everyone to the March meeting. He thanked former representatives Boone Huffaker and Leslie Valentine for their service. In addition, he welcomed members of the IPS Leadership Academy and Office of the Ombuds who were joining us for the March meeting.

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

Diane Kelly greeted the group and began her update by sharing the Provost’s Office has put together resources for people on campus who have been [impacted by the conflict in Ukraine](https://provost.utk.edu/resources-to-cope-with-multinational-conflict/). She said Dr. Gretchen Neisler, Vice Provost for International Affairs, has been busy communicating with students and faculty from Ukraine. She reassured the group there are people looking after our campus community members who may be impacted by the conflict.

Dr. Kelly continued her update by announcing a series of free speech events the Provost’s Office planned with the Division of Student Life and the Baker Center. [Listen Learn Lead week](https://news.utk.edu/2022/03/21/listen-learn-lead-week/) will include sessions for faculty, staff, and students and offer a range of activities during the week. The Teaching and Learning Innovation group is also having their annual conference. She said TLI has over 500 people registered to attend, and the conference attracts attendees nationally. She encouraged the group to register if interested.

Dr. Kelly next discussed the [academic restructuring initiative](https://provost.utk.edu/academicstructure_updates/). The initiative allows the University to examine how units are organized. Provost Zomchick will host upcoming office hours to discuss ideas around this topic as well as additional sessions to learn more about the initiative.

Dr. Kelly closed her update by announcing campus is gearing up to welcome the biggest class in history this fall. She said that applications for undergraduate and graduate programs have increased. The increase in students means planning for new buildings is underway including residence hall and classroom spaces.

Lauren Ziegler asked about increased enrollment will mean plans to build classroom space. Dr. Kelly responded that classroom space issues are a result of not using all available class times. She noted faculty particularly want to teach on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. The Registrar’s Office and Enrollment Management are carefully studying the problem and working to increase space use during different times of the day. There is also an interest in increasing online options and a different type of infrastructure to meet Strategic Vision goals as opposed to traditional classrooms. There was a study done on capacity implications for students and growth. The study impacts each of the areas represented in the meeting in thinking about growing support units and planning for building out physical infrastructure to support the University’s needs.

Shelly Payne asked if there has been discussion about adding guest housing, noting that guest housing is nearly impossible to find in the area. Dr. Kelly responded discussion around residential obligations for first-year students and visitors has taken place. She said there is continued interest in finding temporary housing for visitors but acknowledged the current housing shortage in Knoxville is making that complicated.

Cathy Jenkins asked how the Libraries can participate in the academic restructuring initiative work. Dr. Kelly responded that a Libraries professor is on the committee. She discussed how the restructuring might bring about new configurations for both faculty and staff that may lead to transformative research and provide new educational experiences for students to help them gain a range of skills to participate in the workforce.

* 1. Division of Student Life Update – Jill Zambito, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Life

Darrell Easley greeted the group, and shared updates from Dr. Zambito as she was unable to attend.

Attendance and interest in the [Be Well cooking classes](https://bewell.utk.edu/programs/healthy-cooking/) continues to be high. The cooking class for this Friday, March 4th and on Thursday, March 24th have already filled, but there is a waitlist available. Employees can email bewell@utk.edu if they would like to be added to the waitlist.

Be Well will be partnering with Nourish Knoxville for the Nourish Wellness program where employees can receive up to $25 ($5 each visit) in “produce bucks” to use on fresh produce during the Wednesday farmer’s market and the Thursday New Harvest market in the Spring. Details are still being finalized, but employees will receive information about this in the [Be Well March newsletter](https://bewell.utk.edu/subscribe/).

Be Well will also be partnering with the [UT Grow Lab](https://growlab.utk.edu/) to offer plots for campus gardening to a small number of employees (due to the number of plots available). Details for this are also still being finalized, but this will be announced in the Be Well March newsletter.

Cathy Jenkins asked to clarify the Nourish Knoxville credit. Jessica Cantu confirmed employees receive $5 per visit up to $25.

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

Dr. Easley began his update by reminding the group that the deadline for performance reviews is March 31. HR Employee Relations is offering Virtual Office Hours for supervisors and employees with Online Performance Review (OPR) questions. More information will be shared in the meeting announcements.

Dr. Easley then discussed upcoming HR team events. HR Compensation will be rolling out a series of workshops including a session on what to consider when setting a starting salary. Look for more information coming soon. HR Recruitment will be hosting a job fair at the Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT). They will recruit for a range of positions. Constituent areas who are interested in recruiting for specific positions or needs can contact Chelsey Byrd, Recruitment Manager.

Dr. Easley then closed by discussing onboarding and retention, noting the importance of research done on getting new employees connected.

Ms. Jenkins asked how starting salaries are determined, and if they could be made mandatory for inclusion in job postings to improve transparency and equity and diversity. Dr. Easley responded that departments have autonomy to post salaries, and suggested talking with Kirsten Schroeder, Compensation Manager,

1. GUEST SPEAKER & OMBUDS Q&A
	1. Office of Ombuds Services – Lisa Yamagata-Lynch & Brooke Wichmann

Lisa Yamagata-Lynch and Brooke Wichmann greeted the group and introduced themselves as the [Office of Ombuds Services](https://ombuds.utk.edu/). Their office their office is not part of any other unit on campus and follows International Ombuds Association code of ethics and standards of practice including independence, impartiality, confidentiality, and informality.

Dr. Yamagata-Lynch explained impartiality means their office does not advocate for visitors or the University but does advocate fairness, bringing a neutral or impartial lens into conversations and problem solving. Confidentiality means that conversations with their office stay with the office except for situations of imminent harm to a visitor, someone else, or University property. Visitors can give permission to break confidentiality, including asking for more information about policies, procedures, and other matters that may require talking with other campus offices like HR. Dr. Yamagata-Lynch explained she and Ms. Wichmann are not mandatory reporters, but can assist visitors in understanding reporting processes. Informality means that they do not keep records, and nothing will happen unless a visitor asks them to do something with the information they share.

Dr. Yamagata-Lynch explained that the main mission of the Office of Ombuds Services is to provide a safe space for visitors to share their stories and questions to help them think through problems, hear their own voice, and make empowered decisions about issues at UT. The Office also provides feedback to leaders on systemic trends and issues, including annual reports published to their website. She shared visitor information and services provided from their [most recent annual report](https://ombuds.utk.edu/annual-reports/).

Dr. Wichmann then noted that a misconception is that visitors should only come to their Office when experiencing a major crisis or large problem. She clarified that visitors can benefit from their [services](https://ombuds.utk.edu/ombuds-services/) including one on one virtual or in person consultations, role playing, and preparing for difficult conversations, or simply having a neutral space to discuss all kinds of issues. They can also facilitate conversations between individuals or groups. Dr. Yamagata-Lynch also noted they offer coaching and education and outreach services including crucial conversations training.

Dr. Yamagata-Lynch then closed by sharing some visitor scenarios, including people coming to see them about workplace communication challenges with peers or supervisors, visitors experiencing difficulties in life needing help identifying resources, or situations where academic and work boundaries are blurred.

Ms. Jenkins shared a positive experience with the Ombuds. Dr. Yamagata-Lynch thanked Ms. Jenkins and encouraged the group to contact the Ombuds office for assistance.

* 1. Volunteer Time Off Policy – TSAC (Tickle Staff Advisory Council) Chairs

Amber White greeted the group and discussed the [Tickle College of Engineering Staff Advisory Board](https://tickle.utk.edu/tsac/)’s ongoing efforts to implement a volunteer time off policy to the group. The group was provided with a draft copy of the proposed policy prior to the meeting. Ms. White explained the objective of the proposed policy is to give employees eight hours of paid leave per year to participate in volunteer activities. She discussed the policy, including eligibility requirements and eligible organizations.

After presenting the policy, Ms. White asked the group for feedback. Ami McCarter expressed interest and noted that many people in her department volunteer and she felt it was a great experience benefiting their teams and the University. Ms. Jenkins asked about extending the amount of time to eight hours per semester. Lauren Ziegler offered feedback about volunteering with local groups or organizations that do not have 501(c)3 status. Kerri Lovegrove recommended looking to the [Jones Center for Leadership and Service](https://leadserve.utk.edu/) for criteria.

1. CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS
	1. Staff Parking Issues Near RecSports – Ami McCarter

**Q:** “We continue to have parking issues near TRECS. Staff who park in Lot 20 are having difficulty finding parking spaces during the day as students are parking in our staff spaces. Staff assigned to other lots are also using our spaces to visit the gym as staff spaces in the adjacent SC lot are full. I called Parking Services last week to ask for enforcement help as there were no empty staff spaces at all, but no one came.”

**A:** Before the meeting, Jessica Cantu reached out to Mark Hairr, Director of Parking Services. He responded: “Without specific details on the particular instance cited in the complaint, I can’t speak to that issue directly. However, our enforcement staff patrols and enforces these staff spaces regularly including several times a day due to high demand and usage of parking in this area. Nevertheless, we will forward this along to our Enforcement Manager and Officers as a reminder about the need to emphasize frequent enforcement of these staff spaces.”

Ms. McCarter later provided specifics about calls to Parking Services, which were relayed to Mr. Hairr. He shared his thanks for the feedback. A discussion took place about student vehicles being ticketed earlier in the day. Ms. McCarter shared that she calls Parking Services often about issues, and that the center section of the lower TRECS lot is open to all staff and commuter permits. The upper SC lot is open to commuter and non-commuter permits and has a designated staff Lot 20 section.

Melinda Simmons noted difficulty in finding parking spaces in staff Lot 30 and with exiting the parking lot when special event parking staff are set up. Lisa Vandergriff also noted issues with special event parking not leaving enough room to exit lots. Ms. Jenkins suggested lots could be equipped with barriers to prevent non-permit holders from entering.

* 1. Follow-Up: Parking Lot Stairs Addition – Ami McCarter

**Q:** “Last fall a constituent asked if stairs could be built to connect the SC lot and Band Pavilion. Are there any updates? The only resolution was to enter the Volunteer First Impressions Contest, but information on that site hasn’t been updated since 2020. Is that something that can be revisited?”

**A:** Before the meeting, Jessica Cantu reached out to Terry Ledford, Interim Associate Vice Chancellor for Facilities Services. We are awaiting response and will follow up at the April meeting.

1. OTHER BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
	1. STRIDE for Staff Workshop: Pilot Session Volunteers

Learning and Organizational Development has an exciting opportunity for commission and council members to play a role in shaping the future of the STRIDE for Staff workshop. We are seeking volunteers to attend one of two Zoom pilot sessions and provide feedback that will serve to enhance the new STRIDE workshop launching in fall 2022. Each session is capped at a maximum of 50 participants. Session information and sign-ups are included below.

If you have any questions please contact Abby Sherman, Staff Diversity Fellow at asherm10@utk.edu.

Zoom links will be provided one week prior to the sessions:

Tuesday April 12, 2022 9:00a-10:30a EST

Wednesday April 13, 2022 2:00p-3:30p EST

Sign up: <https://tiny.utk.edu/STRIDEPilot>

* 1. HR Virtual Office Hours – Online Performance Reviews

HR Employee Relations is hosting Virtual Office Hours via Zoom for Staff Performance Reviews and Online Performance Reviews (OPR).

Through March 30, join us on Wednesdays from 8:30 to 9:30 am and 3:30 to 4:30 pm or Fridays from 12:30 to 1:30 pm (all times Eastern).

Bring your performance review-related questions to an ER team member for a personalized Q&A. No appointments are required, and virtual walk-ins are welcome. Please note there will be a waiting room so visitors may talk with ER team members individually.

Virtual Office Hours Zoom links and information about upcoming annual review learning sessions: <https://calendar.utk.edu/department/human_resources>

Learn more about staff performance reviews and OPR: <https://hr.utk.edu/performance-evaluation/>

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