

KNOXVILLE OPERATIONS ERC

MEETING MINUTES

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

PRESENT

Stevin Amonett, Malinda Bousfield, Brian Browning, Shannon Bruce, Jessica Cantu, Jon Chandler, Crissy Douglas, Darrell Easley, Jimmy Large, Terry Ledford, Mary Lucal, Debbie Lane, Rani Pemberton, Chip Pennoyer, Gavin Ramsey, Ed Roach, Julie Roe, Jake Turner, Lisa Turner, and Dave Webb

Guests from IPS Leadership Academy: Kenn Cooper, Jason Jones, Amber Mathes, Amber Tipton, Tanya Washington and Amber White

Guest Ombuds: Lisa Yamagata-Lynch and Brooke Wichmann

ABSENT

Jason Baggett, Erin Blake, David Blaylock, Charles Burton, Jeremiah Cook, Dedra Cotner, Paul Finley, Steven Henry, Judy Jones, Ethan Long, Raheem Obaid, Regina Olum, Deborah Robinson, Shawn Snipes, Thomas Spoon and Ruby Strange

1. WELCOME

Jon Chandler, Senior Employee Relations Consultant, welcomed everyone to the March meeting. He noted there were some new representatives and alternates present that volunteered to serve as other members rotated off the committee due to promotions and other opportunities. He welcomed the new members and thanked the outgoing representatives. 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. Finance and Administration Update – Brian Browning, Associate Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration

Brian Browning greeted the group and began his update by discussing [capital projects](https://conezone.utk.edu/) currently underway including several buildings on the Ag campus and also the Pedestrian Mall Extension. The last phase of the Extension should begin construction in the fall. Thompson-Boling Arena’s doors will be replaced including adding access control. Neyland Stadium project construction will add a jumbotron to the north end of the stadium and enhanced seating and hospitality areas on the lower west end. He noted most of the stadium work will be completed by the first of September. Several new facilities are in the very early planning stages including a new Haslam College of Business building and the new College of Nursing building.

Mr. Browning closed his update by announcing testing is underway to roll out [Starship food delivery robots](https://news.utk.edu/2022/03/08/robot-food-delivery-service-officially-launches-on-rocky-top/) on campus. They will initially have about 30 robots and increase to 50 over the next few weeks. More information and announcements about placing food delivery orders will be coming soon. Mary Lucal asked about the delivery charge, and Mr. Browning said the vendor would assess a $2.50 delivery fee. He explained the service could be helpful for students involved with a project who can’t get away or someone who might not want to stand in line. A discussion about the delivery robots took place. Mr. Browning explained they use GPS and artificial intelligence to navigate campus, so they can learn and adapt as part of their autonomy. Orders will be placed via an app, and when orders are retrieved from the robot they say “go Vols.”

Ed Roach asked about plans to build new residence halls. Mr. Browning responded that they are in the very early programming stages with design work to start later in the fall. He anticipated design work to take around a year and a half and construction would take at least another 24 months. Mr. Roach asked about locations, and Mr. Browning identified several potential locations including one next to Magnolia Hall and Dogwood Hall. The addition of two residence halls would provide over 1,200 beds. Mr. Roach asked if freshman are still required to live on campus. Mr. Browning clarified that freshman are still required to live on campus but if their primary residence is within a 50-mile radius they qualify to request a commuter exception. Gavin Ramsey asked if any buildings would be removed. Mr. Browning said that there will likely be a couple with the new Business building, but they are still in the very early stages of discussion.

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

Dr. Lucal greeted the group and began her update by noting that [performance reviews](https://hr.utk.edu/performance-evaluation/) are due March 31. She encouraged everyone to start scheduling meetings or talking with supervisors about meeting to discuss reviews.

Dr. Lucal then announced HR Compensation will be rolling out workshops focusing on setting starting salaries. She shared that as of January departments have more autonomy in setting those, and HR’s role is shifting to providing guidance on what to consider in making those determinations. The workshops will take place later in the spring.

Dr. Lucal next updated Facilities Services representatives on career paths. She announced they will have a series of meetings with units to continue development work. Dave Webb gave an update on the process and noted they will meet with all directors to ensure the right metrics are defined for promotion.

Dr. Lucal then announced HR Recruitment will be hosting a job fair at the Tennessee Institute of Applied Technology (TCAT). They will be recruiting for a variety of areas including Facilities Services areas. She asked if anyone has jobs they would like to recruit for or specific needs to contact [Chelsey Byrd, Recruitment Manager](mailto:cbyrd18@utk.edu). She also announced that the Dean of Students search kicked off yesterday with the goal of filling the role by July 1.

Dr. Lucal closed her update by announcing the ERC would hold an end of academic year luncheon in May.

Mr. Roach said apprentices in Zone Maintenance were told they would receive a raise but have not received one. He asked if they would be eligible for merit in July. Mr. Webb responded that he would be meeting with Terry Ledford, Interim Associate Vice Chancellor for Facilities Services, and HR Compensation about the apprentice raises creating a compression issue. A discussion about apprentice compensation and program classes took place.

Mr. Ramsey asked about onboarding plans of the new Associate Vice Chancellor for Facilities Services. Mr. Ledford responded that the new Associate Vice Chancellor is planning to spend the few weeks with the shops.

1. GUEST SPEAKERS
   1. Office of Ombuds Services – Lisa Yamagata-Lynch and 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.

* 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. Dr. Lucal asked about narrowing the scope to nonprofit agencies. A discussion about organization eligibility including 501(c)3 status and location took place.

1. CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS
   1. Facilities Services Summer T-Shirts

Gavin Ramsey asked if Facilities Services’ employees can be allowed to work in t-shirts again due to heat. Mr. Ledford responded there is no change in policy at this point.

1. OTHER BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
   1. ERAB – New Representative Nomination & Election

Mr. Chandler called for nominations or volunteers to fill the [Employee Relations Advisory Board (ERAB)](mailto:https://hr.tennessee.edu/get-involved/committees-councils/employee-relations-advisory-board/) representative role. The previous representative, Tom Anderson, accepted a new role and is no longer able to serve. Gavin Ramsey volunteered.

* 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](mailto: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](mailto:jlcantu@utk.edu)) with constituent questions.