

KNOXVILLE OPERATIONS ERC

MEETING MINUTES

TUESDAY, October 4, 2022 | 1:30 – 3:00 P.M.

PRESENT

Mike Brady, Brian Browning, Shannon Bruce, David Bryant, Nancy Burkett (Guest), Jessica Cantu, Jon Chandler, Darrell Easley, Paul Finley, Chris Gilbert, Dedra Giles, Anneliese Harrison (Guest Speaker), Kasey Kahm, Mary Lucal, Chip Pennoyer, Patrick Richter, Richard Shackelford, Jeni Sharp, Shane Sloan, Cody Smith, Sam Smith, Justin Stafford, Natalie Summers, Randall Thornhill, Jake Turner, Neal Vercler, and William Wainright

ABSENT

Stevin Amonett, Jason Baggett, Cory Beets, Amy Bruner, Alexanderia Gonzales, Douglas Grant, Holly Harmon, Judy Jones, Riley Kneale, Debbie Lane, Jimmy Large, James McCarter, Regina Olum, John Platt, Rhett Priode, Hannah Wallace, and Michelle Wilson

1. WELCOME

Jon Chandler, Senior Employee Relations Consultant, welcomed everyone to the October meeting.

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

Brian Browning greeted everyone and did not have any new updates to share since the last meeting.

* 1. Facilities Services Update – Mike Brady, Associate Vice Chancellor for Facilities Services

Mike Brady greeted the group and began his update by reporting that the classroom upgrades have been completed. Facilities Services is working with the Classroom Committee on identifying projects for 2024, and have projects set for summer 2023. They are working with the various colleges and interested parties to identify projects and improvements for the future. Mr. Brady also shared the College of Nursing building should be completely demolished soon and new construction will begin. A new building design should be in place soon. He noted that it will still be a lengthy wait, but the project is progressing along.

Mr. Brady shared the most recent efforts on the master plan. They are currently working on identifying mid to long-range projects. The priorities are a new Haslam Business building and a Chemistry building. These projects are still a several years out from beginning construction.

Mr. Brady ended by reflecting on the football game against Florida and how well it went, from both a facilities management and athletic standpoint. The facilities team has done a great job keeping ahead of any issues. There have been few calls for repairs during the games, which shows how well the team has done with preventative maintenance.

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

Dr. Mary Lucal greeted the group and communicated that everything is business as usual in Human Resources. There are several positions that HR is trying to fill. One position, Career Development Coach, has just been filled by Nancy Burkett, who started last week. Dr. Lucal described her excitement about having Ms. Burkett join the HR staff since the Knoxville campus has not previously had a career development coach dedicated to staff. Ms. Burkett’s arrival will elevate the University’s ability to develop staff members. Ms. Burkett will join the next meeting to discuss her role and how she can help staff in their development journey. Dr. Lucal requested that members come to the next ERC meeting with ideas of what they would like to see from Ms. Burkett and share what is important to them and their constituents in terms of career development.

Dr. Lucal announced that the Annual Open Enrollment period has begun. Open Enrollment started on October 1, 2022 and will close on October 14, 2022. There have been numerous emails pertaining to Open Enrollment sent by Edison, The State of Tennessee, and the program Alex, a new virtual assistant program that can walk employees through various life scenarios and help them decide which plans are right for their circumstances. She acknowledged there is a flood of information, but she is pleased that the State is making every effort to ensure people are aware of the tools available to them. Dr. Lucal remarked there are some significant changes to the options in benefits and suggested that employees go into Edison to review these upcoming changes and ensure their selections for next year meets their needs.

* 1. Survey Feedback

Mr. Chandler revealed the results from the meeting modality and guest speaker survey. Most people responded that they prefer the Zoom meetings and would like to only meet in person once a semester. Therefore, the ERC will continue to meet over Zoom and an in-person celebration lunch will be scheduled at the end of the academic year. Lastly, survey responses about topics and guest speakers included: (1) ongoing projects in HR (and how the hiring process works), (2) financial planning, (3) housing and parking issues on campus, and (4) how staff can better support students.

1. GUEST SPEAKERS
	1. Temporary Help Pool (THP) now called UT Career Gateway – Anneliese Harrison, Onboarding and Retention Specialist

Anneliese Harrison introduced herself to the group and noted the branding of the program has been changed from the Temporary Help Pool (THP) to the University of Tennessee Career Gateway; this change highlights the potential for career building. The program began in the fall of 1975 and originally consisted of roughly 50 workers. After growing to a pool of roughly 200 workers, the 2020 Covid pandemic drastically cut down the number of candidates in the pool. Since then, the program has now recovered to have 87 workers in the pool and continues to grow. The UT Career Gateway is the University’s own staffing service, with examples including: an unexpected vacancy, an extended leave, or special project. Career Gateway can help connect departments with the best applicants to meet their needs.

Mrs. Harrison then shared the [new website](https://hr.utk.edu/thp/#:~:text=Also%20known%20as%20the%20Temporary%20Help%20Pool%2C%20UT,together.%20Opportunities%20vary%20in%20requirements%2C%20duration%20and%20nature.) and reviewed the four sections: (1) an about section that explains the Career Gateway and the benefits of joining, (2) an open positions page with direct links to apply, (3) a resource page for employees with their timesheets, pay schedule, and direct deposit instructions, and (4) a frequently asked questions section. There are contact details at the bottom of the page for Mrs. Harrison’s direct phone number and the program’s email address. Mrs. Harrison did note that the email address will be changing in the future to match the new Career Gateway branding and the page will be updated when this change happens.

The Gateway program also specializes in individual requisition. Managers can submit a request form for applicants instead of using a blanket pool of candidates, such as needing a graphic designer with a niche. Mrs. Harrison composes a specific requisition and posts it in Taleo to find the correct candidate for your specific assignment. The request form is at the bottom of the Career Gateway page. If more text is needed than the form allows, a Word document can be sent to Mrs. Harrison in addition to the form. There is a 10% fee based on the gross salary of the vacant position for using the Career Gateway program. However, this is a smaller fee compared to extern staffing agencies. Mrs. Harrison expressed that this is a great way to get people into open positions, and hopefully, into a permanent position. This can also be helpful for transfers to other assignments in the future.

Dr. Lucal agreed that it is a great way to get people into a higher education career. The program acts as an introduction to the University and should help attract more people to work here.

1. CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS
	1. **(Q):** How can UT succeed in making annual pay raises and keep in tune with inflation? Is there a plan in the works to make this happen?

**(A):** Dr. Lucal acknowledged that everyone is concerned about inflation. She explained that, to her knowledge, any annual pay raise will be handled next year as it is typically handled, beginning with the Governor’s budget proposal.

Kasey Kham stated that she believes that the constituent who asked this question was concerned about the University keeping up with the current economy. Dr. Lucal informed the group that the University moved to a market-based pay system in part so that the staff market ranges relate to current market conditions. The market ranges are reviewed annually to determine if a change should be made. She also noted that, as a campus, on average most job families are paying around the 50th percentile of the market range assigned to the job family role. She noted that some departments are taking various initiatives to try and offset inflation through flexible work. Mr. Brady added that Facilities Services has implemented a four-day workweek for some trades, as it cuts down the employee’s commute by 20%. They have also worked to cut employees’ costs for uniforms and are looking into cell phone stipends.

Mr. Brady suggested that writing your Senators and Congressmen as private citizens here in Tennessee could help to get action taken by the state to offset inflation issues. He detailed that, since he was a Virginia state resident last year, he received a check in the mail from Virginia as all Virginia taxpayers got an additional return for the previous year’s taxes designed as their state’s efforts to combat inflation effects.

* 1. **(Q):**  Why isn’t the benefits annual enrollment period 4 weeks for UT employees, similar to the time period for state government employees?

**(A):** Mr. Chandler reached out to Robert Chance, Executive Director of Payroll, and he replied that UT’s benefits period is the same timeframe as state government employees. Local government and local education are more complex and have a longer time period, as do retirees. Dr. Local confirmed that UT previously had an entire month for Open Enrollment, but the period was shorted to two weeks a couple of years ago. Mr. Chandler shared that he used to manage benefits enrollment outside of higher education and that, in his experience, 25% of people enrolled on the first day of enrollment, while 75% of people waited until the last day to enroll.

* 1. **(Q):**  Why is VolTech Payroll Deduction a minimum $500 purchase? Mr. Chandler spoke with Randy Davis in Vol Tech and asked, “Is the $500 minimum a UT System Policy or is this a VolTech established policy/procedure? Would VolTech ever change or consider lowering the minimum threshold for payroll deduction?”

**(A):** Mr. Davis explained that it is a VolShop policy, and they have internally discussed this issue and have made the decision not to lower the limit. They only have three items that would qualify for payroll deduction that are under the $500 minimum. If the employee were to add a service warranty or the proper protection for a technology device, and include tax, they will have reached the threshold for 2 of the 3 items. Mr. Davis explained that they have to be financially responsible with the program as a benefit. They have recently discussed and decided to keep the program interest and fee free, but the subject is evaluated periodically. They feel that the minimum adds stability and protection needed to operate the benefit program in a responsible manner.

1. OTHER BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
	1. Open Enrollment Happening Now: October 1 - 14, 2022

Open Enrollment is now open and will last until October 14, 2022. Alex is a helpful program that can help employees make more informed decisions regarding their healthcare options. Employees can access Edison through their IRIS portal via a tab at the top right corner.

* 1. Campus Chest Campaign Happening Now: October 4, 2022 - November 4, 2022

The Campus Chest Campaign began on October 4, 2022 and will run through November 4. 2022. This is an employee giving program that promotes the support of health and social service nonprofit agencies to help our community, provide assistance to those in need, and show what the Volunteer spirit really means! To donate, visit <https://campuschest.utk.edu/make-a-pledge/>, and log in with your Net ID and password. Donation options include payroll deduction, annual billing, and cash or check. Employees can pledge to (1) United Way or any of its member agencies, (2) Community Shares or any of its member agencies, (3) Creating Healthier Communities or any of its member agencies, or (4) Independent Agencies listed in the brochure or pledge portal. If you have any questions or need assistance, e-mail campuschest@utk.edu.

* 1. Veterans Food Drive Happening Now: September 30, 2022 – October 28, 2022

The Veterans Food Drive with Second Harvest has started. You can drop off canned food items from September 30, 2022 to October 28, 2022 at the Human Resources office located at 105 Student Services Building. You may also drop off items at the Veterans Resource Center (G020 Hodges Library), the Army ROTC (108 Hoskins Library), or the Air Force ROTC (110C Hoskins Library). You can contact the HR office at 865-974-5516 for more information.

1. REMINDERS:

Please email Jon Chandler (jchand41@utk.edu) or Sam Smith (SamSmith5@utk.edu) any constituent questions.