

PRESENT

Annette Beets, Alicia Calderon (Campus Partner), Jon Chandler, Natalie Crippen, Jeff Flowers (Guest Speaker), Amy Gregory, Connie Inman, Mary Lucal, Ami McCarter, Sarah McFalls, Kristi Pearson, Chrispher Pierce, Marchelle Robinson (Guest Speaker), Jen Roder, Jen Scagnelli, Denise Sears, Cearra Sears, Melinda Simmons, Suzanne Smalley, Sam Smith, Sidney Snoddy, Elizabeth Tampas-Dixon, Sandy Thomas, Lisa Vandergriff, Lindsi Whitaker, Brooke Wichmann (Campus Partner), Chrissy Wills-Maples, Angela Woofter, and Jill Zambito

ABSENT

Elizabeth Coleman, David Hodges, Gennie-Davian, Jennifer Horner, Renee Johnson, Alexander Merkle, James Murphy, Stephanie Phillips, Lee Ann Ratledge, Saron Sexton, Kathryn Shepas, Patrick Sullivan, Duren Thompson (Campus Partner), and Roy Wood

1. WELCOME

Jon Chandler, Senior Employee Relations Consultant, welcomed everyone to the September meeting, which is the first meeting of the 2023-2024 academic year.

2. GUEST SPEAKERS

- a. [Open Enrollment 2023](#) – Marchelle Robinson, Assistant Director of Benefits & Retirement

Open Enrollment begins on October 1, 2023 and runs through October 13, 2023. Changes can be made in Edison, the State's benefits enrollment management system. To login to Edison, you will first login to IRIS Web (<https://irisweb.tennessee.edu>). On the menu bar across the top of the page, the button to access Edison will be on the far right and say "Edison."

Health insurance premiums will increase by an average of 5% for active employees. Premium increases will vary depending on the health plan, network and the tier you choose. Your premium is automatically deducted from your paycheck each month. BlueCross and Cigna will remain the health insurance carriers. The four provider network options will remain the same: BlueCross Network S, BlueCross Network P,

Cigna LocalPlus, and Cigna Open Access Plus. For the BlueCross Network P and Cigna Open Access Plus networks, the additional cost to your premium will increase by \$10 or \$20 per month depending on the tier in which you're enrolled. There continues to be no additional cost above the premium for the BlueCross Network S or Cigna LocalPlus networks. Starting January 1, 2024, Sharecare will be the new wellness program vendor. While health premiums are increasing, there will be no increases to deductibles, copays, or coinsurance. The state will pay 50% of the dental insurance premiums. If enrolled, this change will automatically occur in Edison.

The state will pay 100% of the premiums for employee long-term disability insurance. Employees using this benefit will receive 63% of their monthly salary, up to \$10K per month, after a 90-day waiting period. All employees not receiving long-term disability claim benefits will be automatically enrolled in this product. If you are already enrolled in long-term disability, you do not have to do anything.

The state will pay 100% of the premiums for employee basic term life/basic accidental death and dismemberment insurance. Designated beneficiaries will receive 1X the employee's base annual salary rounded to the next highest thousand (\$50K minimum except when reduced at age milestones/\$250K maximum). This change will automatically occur in Edison.

Life insurance benefits are changing. Dependent basic term life/basic accidental death and dismemberment insurance coverage is ending. You may be able to enroll your dependents in voluntary term life insurance and/or voluntary AD&D. For more information on life insurance changes, visit: [Life Insurance - State Plan Only \(tn.gov\)](https://www.tn.gov/life-insurance)

You must re-enroll in your medical Flexible Spending Account (FSA) or Limited Purpose Flexible Spending Account (L-FSA) and Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account (DC-FSA) each year and choose how much money you'll put in your account during Annual Enrollment unless you have a special qualifying event. You can enroll by going to <https://www.optumbank.com/Tennessee>.

To make changes to your benefits, you will login into [IRIS Employee Self-Serve](#) and click the Edison button on menu bar on the far right.

- b. Empower/RetireReadyTN – Jeff Flowers, RetireReadyTN, Retirement Plan Advisor
Jeff Flowers and Brian Sodomora are the RetireReadyTN retirement plan advisors for the University of Tennessee campus. Their role is to support employees through the retirement process. The focus of their job is education. They can do presentations to groups or schedule one-on-one retirement readiness reviews to assess what an employee's specific retirement outlook may be. To schedule a one-on-one retirement readiness review, visit: <https://utk.empowermytime.com/#/>. Meetings can happen on campus or virtually and are free to employees. Jeff and Brian can also be contacted

at Jeff.Flowers@Empower.com or Bryan.Sodomora@Empower.com. To be eligible to meet with a RetireReadyTN Retirement Plan Advisor, you must be enrolled in either a Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS) account or have a 401k through the University.

- c. Career Development for Staff – Cearra Sears, Career Development Specialist
The Career Development team is growing. [Cearra Sears recently joined Nancy Burkett](#) to help fulfill the growing demand for career development for staff. They conduct one-on-one coaching, where they can help empower people to navigate their careers and have a safe space to talk about career progress. For more information on all the services they provide, visit: [Career Development | Human Resources \(utk.edu\)](#).

They can also offer sessions based on departmental needs. Campus wide events are being planned, with the first one set for September 12, 2023 at 12-1 p.m. in the Student Union, room 360. This event is called “[Career Compass: Navigating Careers Here at UT,](#)” which will include a panel of UT staff to speak about their experiences with career development. You can register for the [event now in K@TE](#).

3. UPDATES

- a. Office of the Provost Update – Jen Roder, Communications Manager for Provost & Senior Vice Chancellor
Retention rates and enrollment this year have hit record rates. Graduate school enrollment is up 10%. The Graduate Student minimum stipend was increased to align more with the cost of living. The Vice Provost for Student Success, Dr. Amber Williams, is piloting a new program this year called [Vol EDGE](#), which will provide more enrichment, educational opportunities, and graduate research to prepare students for career readiness.
- b. Division of Student Life Update – Jill Zambito, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Life
Around 8,300 students moved into residence halls this past August. Be Well will be partnering with Human Resources on a Financial Wellness series that will begin later in September. More information on sessions can be found at [2023 Financial Wellness Series | Human Resources \(utk.edu\)](#). The first session will be on the topic of “Money and Mental Health” scheduled for September 22, 2023. A lunch and learn session will be happening on September 21, 2023 about reengaging wellness and how it is rooted in the 8 dimensions of wellness. The Move More Challenge is a 30 day challenge which began on September 13th and runs through October 20, 2023. For more information visit, <https://bewell.utk.edu/initiatives/move-more-challenge/>.
- c. Human Resources Update – Mary Lucal, Associate Vice Chancellor for Human Resources

Annual Compliance training has been emailed to everyone to complete in [K@TE](#). This is due by December 31, 2023. It is recommended that you finish the training before the winter holiday break, as there will be no technology help due to closures after December 22, 2023, if you have any issues/technology problems.

The Employee Engagement Survey will be emailed staff across the entire system on September 20, 2023. We appreciate participation as the results of that survey are reviewed by the Cabinet, and acted upon.

Support for the upcoming 2024 Annual Performance Reviews will kick off soon. A series of educational sessions to support supervisors and staff will be coming soon and can be found in [K@TE](#) now. A Financial Wellness Series will also be coming to help support staff with financial literacy. More information can be found at [2023 Financial Wellness Series | Human Resources \(utk.edu\)](#).

d. [Fee Waiver Taxation](#)

Fee waivers for the Graduate fee waiver [graduate only, not applicable for undergraduate], the first \$5,250 (in a calendar year) is [tax free](#). After that amount, the IRS deems it as a fringe benefit to the employee, and thus, becomes taxable to that employee. To alleviate a little bit of the taxes, Payroll does not put 100% of the taxes on employees at one time. Taxes are divided over equal increments for each semester [Spring-February, March, & April; Mini-term is divided over one month; Summer-June & July; Fall-September, October, & November].

If the graduate coursework is job related, a tax-exempt form can be submitted. However, if the employee is audited, it is the responsibility of the employee to prove that it is 100% job related and not taxable. This form must be submitted each semester, and Payroll does not double check if the employee is eligible to be tax exempt. The due dates for the [form](#) are:

- a. Spring semester - February 15
- b. Mini-term - May 15
- c. Summer - June 15 (first) July 15 (second)
- d. Fall semester - September 15

4. CONSTITUENT QUESTIONS

- a. **(Q):** I just switched over from Spectrum to AT&T for my service. When speaking to AT&T, they said I would get a 25% discount since I'm a UT employee only to find out that only applies to Faculty and not Staff. I wondered if you could ask why that is the case and why staff do not get that discount to at the next ERC meeting? Apparently, staff do not get a discount at all with AT&T.
(A): HR called the Kingston Pike AT&T store and verified that all employees should be getting a discount with AT&T (staff and faculty). However, there are two different

discounts depending on your status at the University. Faculty get a 25% discount on their services, while staff get \$10 off per line and activation fees are waived.

- b. **(Q):** The College of Social Work offices will be moving to the Stokley Management Building due to Henson Hall being demolished. We will lose many accessible parking spaces in the S12 lot right behind our building. Several faculty and staff have voiced concern about the lack of accessible parking when we move to the new space. What are the plans to accommodate this?

(A): HR has reached out to Brian Browning, Associate Vice Chancellor for Operations, Division of Finance & Administration, and Mr. Browning responded that he will connect with Mike Ragsdale, Director of Parking and Transit Services, about the issue and will follow up.

5. OTHER BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. Retirement Support

Dr. Lucal surveyed the group to see what retirement support the campus might be interested in or feel campus might be lacking in. The group shared that they think having someone on campus to answer retirement questions would be helpful as it is hard to get into the UT Tower. The group felt that there was a lack in knowledge/information surrounding the retirement process.

6. REMINDERS:

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