

EXEMPT STAFF COUNCIL

October 18, 2023

Held via Zoom

Minutes

Members in Attendance: Susan Lazenby (Chair), Anitra Barrett (Vice Chair) Mary Lee King, Elizabeth Smith, Terry Sanford, Alexa McClellan, Sandra Jones, Jordan Hicks, Elizabeth Johnson, Sherry Marlow Ormsby, Lance Keatley, Kat Mortensen

Others in Attendance: Dr. Yasmine Key, Director of University Health Services; Joel Wells, University Registrar; Julie Brown, Director of Employee Relations; Kaitlyn Parsley, IT/HR Intern; Logan Rader, HR Administrative Support Specialist

Call to Order: Susan Lazenby called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

University Health Services Updates (Yasmine Key): [University Health Services](#) (UHS) works to support student and campus wellness for faculty, staff, and students. This includes services such as physical and mental healthcare through clinic visits, physical therapy, lab work and diagnostic testing, and many others typically associated at walk-in clinics in the surrounding area. UHS is located in Maclellan Gym, and they hold traditional business hours of 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

Active UTC students can generally use UHS at no out-of-pocket cost, as this is typically covered by a portion of the Health Fee in their tuition costs. Employees can also utilize services with an access fee of \$25.00, with additional costs if necessary for things like physical exams, immunizations, labs, or other testing (e.g., strep tests, etc.), and these potential charges are posted onsite. The access fee exists to balance costs between students and employees on campus. If visitors are unable to pay at the time of the visit, post-appointment payment is an option, depending on the type of additional charges applied.

In a non-emergency situation, visitors are encouraged to call the clinic at (423) 425-2266 to schedule an appointment, visit the UHS website to determine appropriate alternatives, and know the pharmacies nearby. There are multiple pharmacies in the areas surrounding campus, including one just off campus on McCallie Avenue. In the event of an emergency, call 9-1-1 and identify the nearest emergency rooms to your location.

Flu Season (Yasmine Key): With the onset of flu season, it is important that members of the UTC community know the latest updates regarding [upper respiratory viruses](#)

including flu, RSV, and COVID-19. Spread through droplets and aerosols emitted via talking, coughing, and sneezing, these viruses infect individuals primarily through their nose, eyes, or mouth. This includes touching contaminated surfaces and subsequently touching your face without sanitizing or washing your hands thoroughly.

If symptoms occur and community members feel sick, UHS recommends 1) wearing a mask and covering coughs and sneezes; 2) managing symptoms with over-the-counter medications and rest; 3) seeking medical attention through UHS or another medical/support provider.

For COVID-19, the current isolation recommendations are as follows:

- No Symptoms:
 - o Day 0 is the day of the first test
 - o Day 1 is the first full day following the first test
 - o If symptoms develop within 10 days of testing, the clock restarts at Day 0
- Symptoms Occur:
 - o Day 0 of isolation is the day of symptom onset, regardless the date tested positive
 - o Day 1 is the first full day after symptom onset
- Ending Isolation:
 - o 5-11 days after onset of symptoms, depending on severity
 - o Practice diligent hygiene by avoiding high-risk individuals and wear a high-quality mask when indoors and around others, preferably until Day 11 or after two negative rapid antigen tests 48 hours apart.

UHS is still equipped to conduct [COVID-19 tests](#) for UTC community members. There are no current recommendations for quarantining at home, but individuals are encouraged to remain diligent and follow isolation guidelines if symptoms occur or they test positive. Information regarding COVID-19 vaccinations can be found both at the UHS website as well as the [CDC website](#).

Q&A (Yasmine Key): A question was asked regarding the access fee for employees to utilize services provided by UHS and whether it is a one-time charge or a per-visit cost. The access fee for employees is currently structured as \$25.00 per visit.

UTC's current policy on employees' attendance when they are out sick with COVID-19, is that employees follow the guidelines recommended by their healthcare provider on returning to work, in coordination with their supervisor. UTC aligns with the guidance from the CDC, but employees are not required to stay home or wear a mask for an allotted period.

With COVID-19 currently at lower levels than during the height of the pandemic, there are instances where students report being worried about missing classes due to illness, while faculty members express skepticism toward these excuses or explanations

involving illness, including COVID-19. The Office for Student Outreach and Support (SOS) has been receiving increased amounts of absence request forms related to this, and the current guidelines prescribe that students present supporting documentation from a healthcare provider so that SOS can distribute the absence request to relevant faculty members and staff. One challenge they've experienced is that SOS is not receiving sufficient documentation to support these absences in some instances. The Case Assessment, Review, and Evaluation Team (CARE) has recommended that members of faculty remain responsive to these requests and direct students to the centralized absence request process rather than reverting to their courses' attendance policy or not offering alternatives. These concerns are being evaluated and addressed at the various levels previously discussed.

Regarding the COVID-19 vaccine, a question was asked regarding individuals who have recently been infected with COVID-19 or possibly exposed to the virus and the recommended three-month waiting period to receive the vaccine. If you have traveled recently but have not tested positively for COVID-19, Dr. Key recommends proceeding with obtaining the vaccine if you wish to do so, rather than waiting the recommended three months after contracting the virus. If you have recently contracted COVID-19, it is recommended that you wait the three-month period before obtaining the vaccine.

Proposed Revisions to the Academic Calendar (Joel Wells): UTC is currently exploring potential changes to the academic calendar, and a planning committee has been established that is comprised of members representing areas across campus. The group has distributed a survey that yielded results that closely align with beginning assumptions – that the academic calendar's impact is widespread, it affects Total Organizational Health initiatives, and no single calendar will be welcomed positively by everyone. Common themes and takeaways from survey responses include, but are not limited to:

- Strong support for 12-week summer term
- Strong support for starting Spring semesters after MLK Day
- Many areas of campus have unclear or conflicting priorities
- Split levels of support for aligning fall break with Hamilton County Schools
- No Saturday exams or January term

Beginning in January, if the Spring semester is delayed until after MLK Day, UTC would have 17 total weeks in Spring and Fall semesters (including exams), and Summer terms of 13 weeks. However, this would require faculty members to process grades during Winter Break, which is not ideal. Options to mitigate this and accommodate such a delay include reducing Spring and Fall semesters by one week or reducing Summer semesters by two weeks. In either case, students' time in class sessions would slightly increase across the board.

This delay would also reveal opportunities to reimagine other aspects of life at UTC. Students who are transferring to UTC at the beginning of Spring semesters would have more time between Winter Break and the first day of classes to move in, register for classes, etc. Further, administration of Admissions processes would have more time to process transcripts and other admissions requirements. The unique constraints present in various programs (e.g., Nursing) are being evaluated during this process as well.

The committee is currently in Phase 1 of assessing the impact of these proposed changes. Committee members are currently meeting with constituent groups across campus to collect feedback regarding the proposed changes, and this feedback will be used to refine the current models in Phase 2. These refined models will then be submitted in Phase 3 to the Executive Leadership Team for review by the end of Fall 2023. If recommendations are adopted, the currently existing Spring structure would be applied to Spring 2025, but it would begin one week later (January 16th). Further, the new calendar would be fully applied in Summer or Fall 2025.

Q&A (Joel Wells): A comment was shared in support of pushing the beginning of Spring semesters to a later date because it also would positively impact transfer students' housing and meal plans. The university has criteria for Freshmen and Sophomores living on campus that include their existing academic credits as they relate to their eligibility for a meal plan, and an extended period allowing for the processing of admissions requirements would make that process smoother before the Spring semester begins. Additionally, seeing that schools within the UT System have proceeded with the delayed starting date in January means that it is feasible to be replicated at UTC.

Resident Assistants in Housing & Residence Life could also benefit from a delayed January start date, allowing them more time away from campus or at home during Winter Break. The same applies for UTC-oriented trips and excursions (e.g., study abroad programs).

A consideration was brought forward regarding payroll entries for adjunct faculty members. The first Spring semester paycheck for adjunct faculty is distributed at the end of January with a start date of January 1. This turnaround for adjunct faculty to receive pay is often constrained by a tight timeline, and a later January start date, coupled with recent enrollment figures, presents a unique challenge for administrative staff and budget managers. In some cases, this could result in delayed payments, double entries, etc.

The council is going to collect feedback from their groups and communicate it to the calendar planning committee at a later date.

Revisions to Chancellor's Blue Ribbon Award: Chancellor Angle will be joining the November 2023 ESC meeting to discuss university matters and provide updates, one of which includes proposed revisions to the Chancellor's monthly Blue Ribbon Award. Feedback will be collected from council members during this meeting to be included in future decisions.

Future Discussions with Human Resources: The chairs of the ESC and ERC will be meeting with representatives from UTC Human Resources to discuss the timeline during Annual Enrollment for State and Higher Education employees in Tennessee. This will be followed by identifying opportunities and challenges at the state level to adjust the Annual Enrollment period in future years.

Approval of Minutes: A motion to approve the minutes from the September 2023 meeting was made by Mary Lee King, seconded by Alexa McClellan.

Adjournment: The October 2023 ESC meeting was adjourned at 11:04 a.m.

Next meeting: Wednesday, November 15th, 2023 in the UTC Library, Southern Writers
Room 440