

MEMORANDUM

To: UTIA-UTK Reunification Team

From: Randy Boyd, Interim President, UT System  
Dr. Donde Plowman, Chancellor, UTK  
Dr. Tim Cross, Senior VC and Senior VP for Agriculture

Date: November 4, 2019

Re: Response to UTIA-UTK Reunification Committee Report

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We have received and reviewed the UTIA-UTK Reunification 2019 Committee Report. Thank you for your timely and diligent work, which provides valuable feedback from stakeholders and several actionable ideas for greater collaboration. We recognize the critical importance of agriculture to our state's economy and citizens and appreciate the considerable time and effort by the committee to collect and provide feedback.

We also are thankful for all of the faculty, staff, students, and stakeholders who participated through the online survey or the Committee's numerous listening sessions, interviews, and meetings. We will heed the clear message from faculty, staff, students, and stakeholders about the importance of input and process in building trust moving forward.

We are moving forward to take advantage of early opportunities to reunify our campuses and support additional collaboration. Here are a few highlights:

1. Address Funding Issues for UTIA.
  - Effective November 1, oversight of the entire instructional budget for the Herbert College of Agriculture will be moved from UTK to UTIA. Senior Vice President/Senior Vice Chancellor (SVC/SVP) Cross will oversee the total UTIA budget, with Herbert College of Agriculture budgetary decisions made by Dean Caula Beyl.
  - Effective November 1, UTK will provide funding for five new graduate teaching assistant lines within the Herbert College of Agriculture to promote parity and support for graduate education at a cost of \$147,340.
2. Prioritize UTIA Future Funding Needs. UTIA's significant funding needs going forward have been prioritized and communicated to government officials.
  - An early result of this advocacy effort is THEC's recent FY 2020-21 state appropriation recommendation of \$6.6 million in recurring funds to address

- comparative salary inequities and to add 32 Extension agents in Tennessee's rural, at-risk, and distressed counties.
- \$1.7 million in safety and security funding has been allocated to UT Extension to ensure the safety of 4-H youth at the state's four, 4-H Centers located in Greeneville, Crossville, Columbia, and Middleton.
3. Resolve Parking and Transit Issues on the Ag Campus. Representatives from UTIA and UTK have been meeting to resolve several parking and transit issues. Outcomes resulting from those meetings already include:
    - UTK Parking and Transit Services has provided special parking permits to approximately 60 residents and interns in the College of Veterinary Medicine. The special parking permits allows these residents and interns to park anywhere on the west side of campus. UTK Parking and Transit Services believes there are sufficient staff spaces to handle the volume.
    - UTK plans to add an express bus route between west and east campus starting spring 2020 semester, making it easier for students who have back-to-back classes on opposite ends of the campus.
    - The next UTK master plan, to begin in 2020, will consider additional pedestrian and vehicular improvements for UTIA, including an additional garage that would benefit west campus.
  4. Create the UT Commission on Agriculture. The [UT Commission on Agriculture](#) was created in August to leverage the UT System's collective strengths to support the state's agriculture industry and its communities; identify ways UT and its partners can collaborate to provide research, education, and outreach to contribute to the future success of the rapidly changing agricultural economy; and serve as advocates for agriculture across the state. Dr. Cross will preside over the meetings of the Commission on Agriculture.
  5. Increase Collaboration and Transparency among UT Leaders. Tim Cross is now a member of Chancellor Plowman's Cabinet, which increases collaboration and transparency among UTIA and UTK leaders. SVC/SVP Cross and Chancellor Plowman also meet monthly one-on-one and as part of the One UT Leadership Council. Dr. Cross also remains a member of the President's leadership team.
  6. Involve UTIA in the UTK Strategic Visioning Process. Chancellor Plowman will ensure that students, faculty, staff, and administrators representing UTIA actively participate in UTK's next strategic visioning process, which will begin by the end of this year.

7. Increase Collaboration between UTIA and the Baker Center. AgResearch, the Herbert College of Agriculture, and the Baker Center for Public Policy have partnered to create a new 12-month faculty appointment to create synergies across campus and build on the Baker Center's focal area in energy and environmental policy.
  
8. Increase Opportunities to Share Communications Information. UTK and UTIA communications staff will work to increase existing content collaborations, including adding UTIA faculty and staff to Tennessee Today distribution, adding UTIA faculty to the UTK Experts Guide, including UTIA communications staff in media pitch planning, and collaborating on upcoming efforts around communicating research and the land-grant mission.
  
9. Increase Collaboration on Research and Research Administration and Compliance.  
In addition to the existing collaborations between UTK and UTIA:
  - UTIA faculty are now able to access funding for engaged scholarship and access research development funding, services, and activities offered by the UTK Office of Research to support and grow research, scholarship, and creative activities.
  - UTK and UTIA have begun collaborating on several research initiatives, including: a collaborative interdisciplinary group related to the microbiome; partnering on the One Health initiative; partnering and helping to support the interdisciplinary Tennessee Conservation and Biodiversity Center; and developing two NSF National Research Traineeships proposals that involve UTIA.
  - The UTIA and UTK Offices of Sponsored Programs have been meeting to discuss: (i) how each of their areas operate and to try to align their business practices as much as possible due to the impact on data; (ii) alignment of practices in export control in regards to information communicated to individuals when traveling internationally; and (iii) how UTK can utilize the more robust training that UTIA currently offers for individuals involved with export control projects.
  - UTK's National Institute for STEM Evaluation and Research/Evaluation, part of UTK's Evaluation Office for Learning and Visioning Excellence, has been working with UTIA to provide professional development to AgResearch investigators. Specific training will be for National Institute of Food and Agriculture capacity grant projects about writing effective reports that highlight outputs and outcomes, and what project directors can do throughout the year to better prepare for annual reports.
  - The UTK Office of Undergraduate Research has been proactively working with UTIA faculty on external proposals, especially proposals to USDA, NSF, and NIH focused on undergraduate research. The UTK Office of Undergraduate Research also has been consulting with UTIA faculty on their education plans for NSF CAREER proposals.

- The UTK Institutional Review Board has created a role specifically for UTIA's Sponsored Programs in its iMedRIS research compliance software to ensure they have timely access to status information for sponsored studies.
- Several UTIA, UTK, and UT System Administration employees have been working to obtain a direct feed of Cayuse data for UTIA and UTK, which will make it easier for UTIA to access data.

10. Re-establish the UT Creamery. The UT Creamery is being re-established as a partnership of the UTIA Food Science Department and the UTK Department of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management, located in the UTK Visitor Center. State Building Commission approval has been obtained for renovations of the space to develop a retail sales center, and planning work is commencing. The project will provide experiential learning opportunities for students in both departments.

To sustain the positive momentum, SVC/SVP Cross and Chancellor Plowman will establish working groups composed of faculty, staff, students, and administrators, focused on five broad areas –Student Services; Research; Academic Affairs and Shared Governance; Communications and Marketing; and Finance and Administrative Processes – to consider and prioritize the opportunities and ideas identified in the Report, generate other opportunities and ideas to enhance collaboration between UTK and UTIA, and solve problems that may arise as reunification efforts move forward. Upon completion of these workgroups Chancellor Plowman and SVC/SVP Cross will create a document reflecting our shared understanding of collaborative structures and processes, going forward.

Chancellor Plowman and SVC/SVP Cross also plan to develop a regular communication tool to share progress and updates on a monthly basis with faculty, staff, students, and stakeholders associated with reunification. They will also make periodic visits across the state, particularly with external stakeholders, to communicate progress and receive feedback about reunification.

Implementing this change should be an ongoing and dynamic process that emphasizes shared governance and transparency, and we are committed to enhancing the combined strengths of UTIA and UTK through these actions. New ideas will certainly emerge over time, and we encourage open dialogue to identify additional opportunities, remove existing barriers, and address emerging challenges.

Thank you again for the significant time you have invested since June to help UT move forward in a positive, productive, and unified manner.