

## Report from Academic Affairs and Shared Governance Working Group

**Charge:** the committee was guided by the charge posted on the [Transparency Website](#). Committee membership and charge can be viewed on the website.

**Approach to Charge:** After general discussion, we divided the committee into two groups: one focused on the more diffuse topic of shared governance and academic affairs; the other focused on the more defined topic of enhancing “curricular opportunities at UT Knoxville relating to agriculture.” The list immediately below contains a summary of the committee’s principal recommendations. Although this list is not ranked in order of importance, the committee felt strongly that the first bullet point is critical to bringing UTIA and UTK faculty into an equal relationship.

### Summary of principal recommendations

- Establish a working group to determine the feasibility of paying UTIA faculty from a single account to replace the current practice of paying faculty members according to fixed allocations determined by each UTIA entity [AgResearch, Extension, Herbert College of Agriculture (HCA)]. The current practice inhibits innovation and entrepreneurial actions by constraining faculty activity within predetermined budgetary allocations.
- Create designated spaces and coordinated opportunities on both campuses and across the state for faculty to mix and discuss means of collaborating on all aspects of the university’s land grant mission, including the delivery of instruction to undergraduates, graduates, and the public.
- Support curricular and teaching initiatives, such as integrating existing HCA courses into Vol Core, developing a One Health intercollegiate undergraduate minor, exploring other minors and programs that will include HCA faculty and students, encouraging team teaching by UTIA and UTK faculty, and drawing on UTIA’s rich expertise in experiential learning to bring together UTK and UTIA students to tackle grand challenges.
- Establish a working group to address the barriers to growth in the number and diversity of graduate students (e.g., low stipends, high tuition and fees, excessive credit hour degree requirements, inadequate numbers of GTAs and GRAs).
- Diversify faculty and staff through best practices in establishing equitable workloads, STRIDE training for all faculty and staff as well as *non-university employees* serving as members of a search committee for university personnel.
- Enhance shared governance at all levels through increased transparency in all practices such as budgeting, return of overhead to PIs, and sharing with faculty summaries of annual evaluation for department heads and deans.

This summary captures the committee’s work in abbreviated form. The committee strongly recommends that readers of this report consult the following, fuller, recommendations.

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## Curriculum Subcommittee Recommendations

1. Showcase courses taught in the Herbert College of Agriculture—and other colleges with substantial agricultural and natural resources content—that apply to present and future intercollegiate or campus-wide curricular initiatives, such as:
    - Volunteer Core (in particular, Global Citizenship, Natural and Social Sciences, Engaged Inquiries);
    - One Health intercollegiate undergraduate minor;
    - Undergraduate data science program.
  2. Support the development of team-taught Volunteer Core courses that bring together UTK and UTIA instructors.
  3. Support the development of co-curricular experiences and experiential learning opportunities (service learning, internships, study abroad programs, etc.) that bring together UTK and UTIA students in an effort to tackle global grand challenges.
  4. Establish informal get-togethers for UTK and UTIA faculty to jump-start collaborations on items 1, 2, and 3 listed above
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## Shared Governance Subcommittee Recommendations

1. Examine opportunities to enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness.
  - Explore changing the allocation of research, teaching, and extension effort common to UTIA faculty appointments with the goal of creating a system where a department head and faculty member set expectations and allocations of effort to meet institutional needs without being constrained by budgetary divisions (i.e., *aim to have UTIA faculty paid from a single account regardless of actual teaching, research, and extension duties.*)
  - Consolidate individual UTIA department budgets, revenues and expenses to streamline business and reporting procedures within each unit (i.e., *aim to avoid having separate budgets and reporting streams for teaching, research and extension.*)\*
  - Remove barriers that hinder entrepreneurial initiatives by departments and colleges (e.g., *develop innovative budget allocations within the context of the new University-wide budget model*).
  - Implement a unified Faculty Reporting strategy that integrates the functional and necessary components currently captured by ELEMENTS and SUPER 2.0.
  - Ensure that department and college bylaws and processes provide expectations for Research/Scholarship, Teaching, and Extension/Service by faculty rank and role; align

- expectations with Annual Performance and Planning Reviews and Promotion and Tenure considerations.
- Explore creating an identical set of peer and aspirational institutions for re-unified UTIA-UTK. UTIA and UTK currently have different sets of Board-approved peers and aspirational institutions.
2. Create new opportunities for collaboration and foster equitable treatment of faculty on both campuses in order to fulfill the land grant mission of the university.
    - Create an environment that is conducive to enhancing faculty, staff, and student collaborative opportunities (*e.g., provide gathering spaces across campus for informal meetings*).
    - Foster opportunities for collaboration between both campuses and Extension county agents and specialists across the state.
    - Address the disparity in offerings of food and student services common to geographically peripheral areas of campus (*e.g., UTIA and Science Hill*).
    - Review inclusion of Extension Specialists holding master's degrees in non-tenure-track faculty roles and establish a path for promotion for these Specialists.
    - Promote student success by providing opportunities for Extension faculty to be instructors of record for academic courses.
    - Ensure FCUP-type program (computer refresh) is available to all faculty with teaching assignments.
  3. Increase and diversify graduate enrollment through financial and other support to advance the University's reputation.
    - Continue efforts to elevate base stipends for graduate students to be equivalent with peer and aspirational schools and to ensure gender equity within units.
    - Reduce graduate student fees and tuition rates.
    - Re-evaluate required credit hours in 500 (Thesis) and 600 (Doctoral Dissertation) courses for Master's and Doctoral degrees, respectively.
    - Explore opportunities to increase University-sponsored Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs) (*e.g., develop additional UT-funded competitive GRA fellowships, provide match opportunities for extramurally funded GRAs*).
  4. Recruit and retain highly qualified, diverse faculty and staff in order to diversify and strengthen the voice of faculty and staff in shared governance.
    - Advocate for a change in state law to reinstate a voting faculty trustee to the UT Board of Trustees to provide a faculty voice on all matters.
    - Provide training for deans and department heads to ensure that faculty workloads and expectations are fairly negotiated between department heads and faculty.
    - Require STRIDE (implicit bias) and/or other diversity and inclusion training for deans and department heads.
    - Require STRIDE training for all faculty and staff.

- Require STRIDE training for *non-university employees* serving as members of a search committee for university personnel.

5. Ensure transparency to enhance shared governance at multiple levels.

- Advocate for transparency regarding extramural grant overhead return to PIs (*e.g., Who are the decision makers? What are the returns by unit? How is the administrative portion of overhead returns utilized/invested?*).
- Encourage deans and department heads to give annual transparent budget reports to faculty.
- Enforce the UTK/UTIA Faculty Handbook policy that departmental faculty are provided with a summary of the annual evaluation of the department head (or unit leader) as well as agreed upon initiatives for the coming year as discussed with their dean(s) or appropriate unit supervisor.
- Adopt a system for sharing evaluations of deans with faculty (*i.e., follow the UTC system, which utilizes a system that is UserID and password protected*).
- Request annual administrative response to the Annual Gender Salary Equity Report compiled by the Commission for Women for all Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty.
- Provide an annual report to faculty on graduate tuition funds collected and expended for fee waivers/stipends for GTAs and GRAs.

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\*These two points relate to the split faculty appointments common to UTIA faculty. We provide a bit more detail here to articulate key points that we hope are captured in the above concise statements. UTIA faculty appointments are usually divided as Research/Teaching or Research/Extension; there are very few Teaching/Extension appointments. It is also possible to have exclusively Extension, Teaching or Research Appointments. **An example of a complication associated with the current inflexibility in these allotments is described below.**

At the time of hire at UTIA, a faculty appointment is defined primarily by a split between (for example) Teaching and Research. The new hire may be assigned to teach one course/academic year and given a split appointment of 10% teaching (Herbert College of Agriculture) and 90% research (AgResearch). This split can cause a series of problems, especially when the person actually teaches more or less than their teaching allocation demands or performs less research than their research allocation demands. Each administrator (HCA and AgResearch) wants their “share” of the new hire’s time. The current system does not strictly allow for flexibility and responsiveness to new initiatives and so may inhibit entrepreneurial initiatives. Although in recent years, the Senior Vice Chancellor/ Senior VP has permitted a dollar-neutral, 10% adjustment of appointment for all faculty members within a department, the current allocation system still inhibits limits the allocation of effort by department heads and faculty.

The committee recommends “one job, one account”: that is, the faculty member receives a salary that is not constrained by split appointments. In this system, the faculty member and the department head would decide annually on the appropriate allocation of effort, as the UTIA/UTK Faculty Handbook recommends. This unitary appointment allows flexibility and responsiveness to changing needs of the Department, College and University and would be the same as faculty appointments at UTK.