

Note on Transition Plans for UTK in 2016-17

Louis J. Gross, Chair, UTK Faculty Senate Budget and Planning Committee

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UTK will be undergoing major changes in campus leadership over the next two years. In addition to the Chancellor transition, at least half of all UTK employees will have a leadership change in the Chancellor's Cabinet position to whom their units report since at least five of the nine Cabinet positions from 2015-16 will have changed by the end of 2016-2017. As one who has experienced a large number of administrative shifts over the past three decades at UTK, and observed the disarray which has arisen and sometimes taken many years to alleviate, I suggest that it is time for the Faculty to be proactive in encouraging a more effective and efficient procedure than has been used in the past on this campus.

Leadership transitions in major organizations (and with a greater than \$1.2B annual budget, UTK is one of the largest financial entities and employers in the State) have been studied extensively and there is a significant literature on methods to carry these out. Indeed, there are many US consulting firms with teams to assist organizations during CEO transitions, and major corporations have guidance from their Boards and internally from their HR units during such transitions. Given the importance to the UTK community of carrying out a change in leadership in a manner that is as minimally disruptive to the ongoing mission of UTK, and to various State constituencies which care deeply about this campus, we would all be best served by emulating suggested guidance in such major leadership transitions.

While there is a literature on transitions for academic leadership, the majority of this has focused on Presidents and associated issues of dealing with Boards of Trustees. I include below a list of references on this, though I am not an expert in this area and have not read all of these. The UTK situation is rather different from a President transition, but the guidance suggested for that situation is instructive. I have been unable to find any situation exactly similar to that at UTK now however, in which a significant fraction of the direct reports to a new leader will have resigned or be managed by interim Vice Chancellors. A new Chancellor will be joining UTK with a significant fraction of their direct reports being individuals for whom no formal search was carried out, or else leaving very soon. An additional complication is the planned timing of Chancellor transition, occurring in the middle of a year, since issues such as planning for the next year's budget will have necessarily been underway for several months and being carried out by either Interim leadership or those who are "lame-duck".

Much of the leadership of the current Faculty Senate have considerably greater historical knowledge of UTK than the current administrative leaders of the campus. It is our responsibility to do what we can to protect the campus from the disarray that previous transitions have brought about, and although the current transition is different in tone from some of the previous ones, it is occurring under great pressure from various constituencies. As just one example, a leading columnist for a major local newspaper has already declared who the next

Chancellor (and Athletic Director) should be, though the individual named does not even meet the basic criteria specified in the Chancellor Job Description.

There is tremendous potential for the upcoming campus leadership position transitions to bring about new insight and initiatives at UTK that will benefit all constituencies. Given this and the above concerns, I suggest that the UTK Faculty Senate consider endorsing the following suggestions and encourage the Senate to collaborate with the current campus leadership and the UT President to enhance the success of the transitions of leadership which will be occurring. Just the fact that a formal process along the lines of those suggested below is in place will ease the efforts of the Chancellor Search Committee since it informs potential applicants that the campus is acting together to assist a new Chancellor both in the immediate process of learning about the campus, and in the process of selecting new Cabinet members. The below references include details on several of these steps. As suggested in several references, the below is not in any sense intended to reduce the authority of the current Chancellor prior to such time as his successor is appointed. Rather, it is to make it clear that “in a transition, the needs of the institution come first” and in the spirit of effective shared governance through which the Faculty have a unique role in all aspects of campus planning.

1. Establish a transition team to coordinate all aspects of the transition between the different campus constituencies. Preferably the transition team manager should be an individual not directly connected to current administrative leadership, so a faculty member would be appropriate for this role, as would an individual who reports directly to the UT President, rather than a current campus administrator.
2. Establish an open, transparent process regarding budgetary planning during the transition period. This is essential given the interim nature of much of campus leadership, and the planned shift in Chancellor mid-cycle, to ensure there is no confusion about what commitments are being considered and who will be making them.
3. Establish a process for information transfer for all Cabinet-level positions as well as for the Chancellor position.
4. Consider hiring an external consultant to provide guidance on appropriate transition procedures, or, if on-campus expertise is available, provide support so this can be obtained.
5. Ensure all aspects of the transitions (for Chancellor and Cabinet positions) are communicated broadly to all constituencies.

References:

Presidential Transitions

https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2011/08/15/essay_on_presidential_transitions

Presidential Transition in Higher Education: Managing Leadership Change

<https://jhupbooks.press.jhu.edu/content/presidential-transition-higher-education>

Presidential Transitions: It's Not Just the Position, It's the Transition (Higher Education (Ace))

<https://www.amazon.com/Presidential-Transitions-Position-Transition-Education/dp/1607095696>

Presidential Transition Teams: Fostering a Collaborative Transition Process
<http://agb.org/trusteeship/2009/julyaugust/presidential-transition-teams-fostering-a-collaborative-transition>

The Ten Commandments of Presidential Transition
<http://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Ten-Commandments-of/46254/>

Unnecessary Roughness: Presidential Transitions in Higher Education
<http://www.stevensstrategy.com/higher-education-policy-practice/unnecessary-roughness-presidential-transitions-higher-education/>