



EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY



September 23, 2020

Fall 2020 Brings Record Retention

It is my great honor to report to the ETSU community that we have achieved the highest retention rate in this institution's history. Our **fall-to-fall retention rate of 78 percent** reflects the percentage of first-time, full-time freshmen who enrolled at ETSU in fall 2019 and returned for the current fall semester. I shared this news with the Board of Trustees during the quarterly meeting last Friday. This is an outstanding achievement and reflects the many student success initiatives put into place in recent years. It is also a testimony to our dedicated faculty and staff and their commitment to students persisting to graduation.

I also reported to the Trustees that we had maintained our graduation rate of 50 percent, which also is the highest in ETSU history. Our most current graduation rate reflects students who entered ETSU in 2014 and had graduated by 2020. I am deeply proud of the work you do each day to support our students.



New Out-of-State Tuition

The ETSU Board of Trustees has approved a new Out-of-State Tuition Strategy that will make ETSU a more affordable and accessible destination for new incoming undergraduate students who reside in states outside of Tennessee beginning fall 2021. You can read more about the new out-of-state tuition options [here](#). As you will see, a tuition rate of \$10,500 has been approved for incoming undergraduate students from Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Kentucky, and those beyond those five states will pay just under \$13,500 in tuition.

Please share this opportunity with family members or friends who are considering beginning the journey toward a college degree. Our admissions team is also available at admissions@etsu.edu to answer any questions about this exciting new strategy.

Incident at Slocumb Galleries

Earlier this month, individuals posing as reporters visited Slocumb Galleries and confronted the exhibit curator and a staff member with racially-based comments that created an unpleasant environment. Our campus is a place where people are treated with dignity and respect, and the actions of the individuals who misrepresented their credentials with intentions to disrupt and condemn the purpose of the exhibit are not aligned with the values of East Tennessee State University. The exhibit, "Black Diaspora: From Africa to Appalachia to Afrilachia -- Reclaiming Experience, Memory and Place," affords our community valuable opportunities to experience and recognize rich cultural contributions. Our University Mission and Values state that "ETSU honors and preserves the rich heritage of Southern Appalachia..." and "ETSU affirms the contributions of diverse people, cultures and thought..." therefore, it is our responsibility to promote inclusivity, address stereotypes and engage in critical conversations about our history and its impact. We deeply respect the curators, artists and event participants who comprise the "Black Diaspora" exhibit and the University is offering its full support to members of our ETSU community and artists who handled an extremely difficult situation with civility and grace.

ETSU will continue to encourage and feature creative works from Black artists and underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. I encourage students, faculty and staff to engage in educational programming offered by Slocumb Galleries, Tipton Galleries and the Reece Museum. It is important that we view "Black Diaspora" and upcoming exhibitions so that we might take a deeper look at ourselves, our society and how we can impact the future.

"Black Diaspora: From Africa to Appalachia to Afrilachia -- Reclaiming Experience, Memory and Place," is on display at Tipton Gallery, 126 Spring Street, through October 16. Viewing hours are Thursdays and Fridays from 5-7 p.m., the first Friday of the month from 6-8 p.m., and by appointment by emailing contrera@etsu.edu or calling 423-483-3179. ETSU alumna and Grammy-nominated artist Amythyst Kiah will perform at Tipton Gallery on Oct. 2 in conjunction with Johnson City's First Friday celebration. Click [here](#) for more information.

In addition, works by ETSU students are on display at Slocumb Galleries in Ball Hall through this Friday in the "B.F.A. Group Exhibition 2020." This exhibit will be followed by "Shelf Life" by Nick Peña and "Nostalgia" by Vanessa Gonzalez, presented as part of Hispanic Heritage Month in partnership with ETSU's Language and Culture Resource Center and Mary V. Jordan Multicultural Center, with funding from the Student Government Association's Student Activities Allocation Committee. Regular hours at Slocumb Galleries, 232 Sherrod Drive, are weekdays from 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Equity and Inclusion Strategic Action Plan

During our Board of Trustees meeting last Friday, Dr. Keith Johnson presented the Office of Equity and Inclusion's Strategic Action Plan for 2020-2022. This document outlines a number of goals for the upcoming months that Equity and Inclusion will pursue while working closely with partners across the ETSU campus. I invite you to review the [Strategic Action Plan](#) that Dr. Johnson and his team have put together. In addition, I want to congratulate Dr. Johnson and the planning committee for their work in coordinating the outstanding Equity and Inclusion Conference that concludes today.

State of the University Address Set for October 9

The month in which we celebrate the founding of East Tennessee State University also affords an opportunity for me to provide an update to our students, faculty and staff regarding enrollment, budgets, various campus initiatives and the overall higher education landscape. I invite you to join me for the Virtual State of the University Address on Friday, Oct. 9, at 10 a.m. Members of the ETSU community can watch live at www.etsu.edu/sotu. I look forward to sharing the many stories that reflect our progress during the past year.

University Closure October 5-6

Earlier today you received a communication from the Office of the President announcing that ETSU will be closed October 5-6. During that time, classes will not meet and offices will be closed. These administrative days are being provided as a way to express our appreciation to the ETSU community for all they have done to sustain and support the university during this pandemic, particularly during the recent weeks as the campus prepared for the start of the fall 2020 semester.

I encourage you to consult the [memo](#) for specific information for students, faculty and staff who have clinical duties that require them to work those days. The Quillen College of Medicine and Gatton College of Pharmacy will continue with their current academic schedule as planned.

Reminder about Voting Registration Deadline

As a reminder, the last day to register to vote in Tennessee is Monday, October 5. Our ETSU Votes team has done an outstanding job in communicating opportunities about voter registration to the campus community. For more information, contact ETSU Votes at etsuvotes@etsu.edu or visit www.etsu.edu/votes.

The following information is being provided by ETSU Votes:

Voting is one of the most important ways to participate in our democracy and we want students to know that their voice and their vote matters in elections and beyond. Here's some important information on how to register and vote in the Tuesday, November 3 election:

- 1) Register to vote and check your voter registration status.
 - In Tennessee, visit <https://govotetn.com/voting.html>
 - Out-of-state students, visit: <https://vote.gov/> for links to your state's voter registration sites
- 2) As a student you have a choice of where to vote. You may use either:
 - Your ETSU address [1276 Gilbreath Drive, Johnson City, TN 37614 AND your Campus Post Office Box Number] or
 - Your "permanent address." Be sure to register where you want to vote and vote where you are registered.
- 3) Consider voting early in-person at the appropriate polling location for where you are registered.
 - In Tennessee, in-person early voting begins on Wednesday, October 14.
- 4) Request an absentee ballot before the deadline from the local registrar where you are registered. Once you have received your ballot, be sure to return your ballot by mail.
 - In Tennessee, the deadline to request an absentee ballot is Tuesday, October 27.
 - Note that the COVID-19 pandemic is not a valid reason to be eligible to request an absentee ballot for the November election.
- 5) If you are displaced due to the COVID pandemic or for any other reason, you may:
 - Update your voter registration if it is before the registration deadline (October 5 in Tennessee, October 9 in North Carolina, and October 13 in Virginia) to reflect your change in living address and then vote in person at the appropriate polling location.
 - You may also vote early or request an absentee ballot for the address at which you were registered prior to displacement.

