

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
ACADEMIC, RESEARCH, AND STUDENT SUCCESS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

February 16, 2024  
Johnson City, Tennessee

The East Tennessee State University Board of Trustees' Academic, Research, and Student Success Committee met on Friday, February 16, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. in the East Tennessee Room of the D.P. Culp Student Center.

**I. Call to Order**

Trustee Charles Allen, substituting for Committee Chair Janet Ayers, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**II. Roll Call**

Board Secretary Dr. Adam Green conducted the roll call. The following committee members were physically present:

Trustee Charles Allen  
Trustee Dr. Steph Frye-Clark  
Trustee Dr. Linda Latimer  
Trustee Tony Treadway

Other Board of Trustees members in attendance were Dorothy Grisham, Steve DeCarlo, Aamir Shaikh, and Melissa Steagall-Jones.

**III. Approval of the Committee Minutes from November 17, 2023**

The minutes from the November 17, 2023, meeting of the Academic, Research, and Student Success Committee were approved as submitted with Trustee Treadway making the motion and Trustee Latimer seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**ACTION ITEMS**

**IV. Approval of General Education Redesign Proposal**

Provost Dr. Kimberly McCorkle began the presentation by reviewing the plan that ETSU has followed to update the general education curriculum. The final report of the task force was submitted to the President and Provost on January 11, 2024, and since then it has been undergoing review by campus stakeholder groups. It has been approved by Academic Council and University Council. The General Education Redesign Task Force was guided by three key principles: (1) do what is best for student learning; (2) provide students with greater flexibility and choice, and (3) maintain appropriate academic rigor in the general education program to meet student needs for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Dr. McGee described the current state of general education at ETSU and the need for change to move away from a distribution or “checklist” approach. She indicated that the general education revision has primarily been a faculty-driven, transparent process.

Dr. Harker then introduced the committee to the Compass: Core Curriculum, which is competency based and designed to inspire students and enable them to fulfill their potential. High-impact teaching practices are being integrated into the curriculum. He explained that these are active, evidence-based learning strategies. A course has been added on critical thinking, and the new curriculum includes a Focus option, to address unifying themes from a variety of disciplinary perspectives.

Dr. Harker described the overall outline of the new curriculum, including five main categories: Strengthening Foundations, Understanding Natural and Social Worlds, Exploring Connections, Cultivating Artistic Awareness, and Growing as an Individual and Global Citizen. Dr. Harker then summarized positive reactions to the changes across campus. The new curriculum is scheduled to go into effect in the fall of 2024, under the direction of an implementation team, which has been meeting regularly. The phase-in will be ongoing.

Dr. Noland told the committee that this is the first update to the core curriculum in more than a decade, and he acknowledged the leadership of Provost McCorkle, Dr. McGee, and Dr. Harker in making it a reality. Trustee Allen added his thanks on behalf of the committee.

Trustee Frye-Clark made a motion to approve the general education redesign proposal, and Trustee Latimer seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

## **V. Approval of Academic Calendars for 2026-2027, 2027-2028, and 2028-2029**

Provost McCorkle reported that every three years, the Office of the Registrar develops an academic calendar, and the Board of Trustees has the authority to review and approve each year’s calendar. She explained that the academic calendar is developed to comply with federal regulations and that the proposed new calendar aligns with the majority of other locally-governed institutions in the state and with Tennessee Board of Regents institutions, which is important in facilitating student transfer. Provost McCorkle also noted that the new calendar includes a study day, as requested by students. It will occur the Friday before final

examinations during the fall and spring semesters. An additional term was incorporated to accommodate the schedule for the online MBA program, which has six starts per year.

Trustee Frye-Clark made a motion to approve these calendars as presented, and Trustee Treadway seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

## **INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **VI. Academic Notification for Period of August 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023**

Provost McCorkle reported on several curricular items that are moving through the academic approval process. The first part of her report included academic actions that require approval by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. Highlights within that category are two new certificate programs: One Health and Climate Studies and a Reading Specialist graduate certificate. In the second section of the report were ETSU approval items not required to go before THEC. Three new minors were added: Filmmaking, Sports Media, and Ecology and Natural Resources.

### **VII. Annual Institutional Review for Graduate Medical Education**

Dr. David Linville, Associate Vice President for Clinical Affairs for the Quillen College of Medicine, highlighted items included in an executive summary of the college's 2022-23 Annual Institutional Review of Graduate Medical Education programs, as required by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. Dr. Linville noted that in the report, there is only one citation within one program, from 2022, and that it should be resolved within the next three to four weeks. Through the college's relationship with Ballad Health and the Veterans Administration Medical Center at Mountain Home, Dr. Linville said we have been able to systematically increase residents' salaries over the past three years.

### **VIII. Update on Strategic Initiatives Related to Synthetic Biology**

David Golden, Chief Executive Officer of the ETSU Research Corporation, reviewed the organization's mission as it relates to innovation and prosperity and discussed synthetic biology in the context of diversifying the regional economy with forward-looking industries. The factors of success of innovation for an organization, he said, are strategy, leadership, and culture. Mr. Golden then reviewed the foundation's three-prong strategy: work to help develop a pipeline of students coming to ETSU; work that is happening on campus, the subject of Dr. Aruna Kilaru's presentation; and work that is occurring off-campus, particularly at Valleybrook. Mr. Golden then introduced Dr. Kilaru, Professor of Biology and Faculty Fellow for Interdisciplinary Innovation in the Biosciences.

Dr. Kilaru began by defining synthetic biology as a field of science that involves redesigning organisms for useful purposes by engineering them to have new abilities. She said the future

bioeconomy will be worth between \$30-40 trillion globally in the next decade and that the market is projected to be worth \$55.9 billion by 2030. The job market is projected to grow by five percent from 2022 to 2032, for a rate of 10,600 new jobs a year.

Dr. Kilaru summarized ETSU's efforts up to this point:

- The 2019 BioBuilder Workshop
- Two new courses in functional genomics and synthetic biology and bioengineering
- A synthetic biology minor, with a major being developed.

Dr. Kilaru then described various internal and external partnerships that are now in place.

Eric Jorgenson, Vice President for Biomanufacturing Development for the ETSU Research Corporation explained that his focus is bioindustrial manufacturing and out of that comes a whole variety of different products and commercial applications, from plastics and polymers to concretes and alternative proteins. Labs are needed, however, and those labs must be accessible to entrepreneurs and startups. With the existence of the Valleybrook facility, Northeast Tennessee, he asserted, can be a leader in this field. Mr. Jorgenson told the board that the potential for Valleybrook is "absolutely staggering." It has 29 labs, more than 35 workshops, and numerous offices, making for a research and development complex that is ideally suited to the goals of the Research Corporation. Work has been underway to clear out labs and fix equipment infrastructure.

Chair Latimer commended Mr. Jorgenson and the staff for the progress that has taken place at Valleybrook.

President Noland expressed gratitude to Provost McCorkle for her role in advancing the Valleybrook project so far so quickly and for putting synthetic biology at the forefront of academic program development at ETSU.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **IX. Committee Discussion**

There were no additional committee discussions.

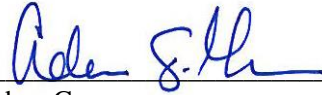
### **X. Other Business**

There was no additional business to come before the committee.

### **XI. Adjournment**

Trustee Allen adjourned the committee meeting at 10:23 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Adam Green", is written over a horizontal line.

Adam Green  
Secretary of the Board of Trustees

Approved by the Board of Trustees at its May 24, 2024 meeting.