

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

MINUTES

April 23, 2021  
Johnson City, Tennessee

The East Tennessee State University Board of Trustees' Academic, Research and Student Success Committee met at 9:15 a.m. on Friday, April 23, 2021, in the ETSU Alumni Association office located in the Model Mill, 602 Sevier Street, Johnson City. Due to the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, attendance was limited to Trustees, presenters, and support staff. The meeting was livestreamed for public viewing.

**I. Call to Order**

Dr. Linda Latimer, chair of the Academic, Research and Student Success Committee, called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m.

**II. Roll Call**

Board Secretary Adam Green led the roll call. Committee members present were:

Janet Ayers  
Virginia Foley  
Scott Niswonger  
Melissa Steagall-Jones  
Chair Linda Latimer

Dr. Green stated there was a quorum; however, in accordance with Tennessee Code § 8-44-108 Section (c)(3), he needed to present a series of questions to the committee members, and that due to some trustees participating remotely, all votes must be taken by roll call. In response to these questions, Trustee Ayers indicated that she could hear clearly and that no one was present in the room with her; likewise, all trustees present in person indicated they were able to hear Trustee Ayers. Dr. Green also noted for the record that Trustees Dorothy Grisham and Ron Ramsey were also participating in the meeting.

**III. Approval of Minutes of the Academic, Research and Student Success Committee February 19, 2021**

The minutes for the February 19, 2021, Academic, Research and Student Success Committee meeting were reviewed. Trustee Foley made a motion for approval, and Trustee Steagall-Jones seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

**IV. Approval of New Academic Program Proposal for the Establishment of a Master of Science in Orthotics and Prosthetics**

Dr. Wilsie Bishop, Senior Vice President for Academics and Interim Provost, presented the New Academic Program Proposal for the Establishment of a Master of Science in Orthotics and Prosthetics, which is the final step in a series of Board of Trustees review protocols necessary for its establishment; this proposal was previously reviewed by the Board in September 2019, and if approved, it will be presented to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission for final approval in May. It is slated for implementation in Summer 2022.

Dr. Don Samples, Dean of the College of Clinical and Rehabilitative Health Sciences, gave a brief summary of the proposal as outlined in the meeting materials. He noted that the Curriculum Committee has worked with consultants since the Board's last review, and a few minor adjustments have been made. The budget projections have remained constant. This two-year, interprofessional program will become the only Master of Science in Orthotics and Prosthetics program in Tennessee and within 300 miles of ETSU; only 13 programs currently exist in the nation.

Trustee Steagall-Jones made a motion that the committee recommend adoption of the proposal by the Board of Trustees. The motion was seconded by Trustee Foley and passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

**V. Approval of New Academic Program Proposal for the Establishment of a Master of Fine Arts in Digital Media**

Dr. Bishop presented the New Academic Program Proposal for the Establishment of a Master of Fine Arts in Digital Media, which is the final step in a series of Board of Trustees review protocols necessary for its establishment; this proposal was previously reviewed by the Board in April 2019, and if approved, it will be presented to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission for final approval in May. It is slated for implementation in Fall 2021.

Dr. Dennis Depew, dean of the College of Business and Technology, gave a brief summary of the proposal as outlined in the meeting materials. He said this would be a capstone for the relatively new Digital Media program and would provide current students a graduate experience that does not yet exist. He noted that the program is currently on-ground with virtual components and should eventually become an online program of which students from across the nation will want to take advantage.

Trustee Steagall-Jones made a motion that the committee recommend adoption of the proposal by the Board of Trustees. The motion was seconded by Trustee Ayers and passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

## **VI. Promotion and Tenure of Faculty Members**

Dr. Bishop presented the recommendation for tenure of 23 faculty members and 40 faculty promotions (*see full listing in meeting materials*), which she said is the culmination of a year-long process involving application and extensive review at the departmental, college and university levels. Some of the individuals are seeking both tenure and promotion, and five exceptions – four for promotion and tenure and one for promotion – are sought for extraordinary circumstances. She noted that all of those listed show both value to the university and the potential for continued growth and contributions in their respective fields.

Trustee Foley made a motion to recommend adoption of the proposal by the Board of Trustees. The motion was seconded by Trustee Steagall-Jones and passed unanimously in a roll-call vote.

## **VII. Academic Calendars for 2023-2024, 2024-2025, and 2025-2026**

Dr. Bishop presented the university's Academic Calendars for the years 2023-2024, 2024-2025, and 2025-2026 (*see meeting materials*). She pointed out that these calendars are developed in advance by the Registrar's Office in accordance with federal regulations. They conform to holidays and breaks that are scheduled by the university as well as federal financial aid requirements; contain 15-week fall and spring semesters and a 13-week summer term; and, include final examinations and commencement days for fall and spring semesters.

Trustee Steagall-Jones made a motion to recommend adoption of the Academic Calendars by the Board of Trustees. This motion was seconded by Trustee Ayers and passed unanimously in a roll-call vote.

## **VIII. ETSU 2019 Graduates Post-graduation Outcomes and 2021 Outlook**

Dr. Mike Hoff, Vice Provost for Decision Support and University Chief Planning Officer, gave an informational presentation on 2019 Graduates Post-graduation Outcomes and 2021 Outlook (*see presentation in meeting materials*). He said University Career Services conducted a survey starting in October 2019 using the new Handshake app and obtained information gathered by the colleges on their graduates. He also noted that higher education partner services will search the internet and other publicly available data sources for information on graduates. He said that while it is often difficult to get responses to surveys, ETSU's response rate was good.

Dr. Hoff said that the response showed that the majority of graduates are employed and many are continuing their education. Salaries graduates can expect in an area such as Johnson City are in the \$30,000-\$39,000 range, although some average between \$80,000-\$89,000 range for medical and pharmacy graduates. Many continue their education at ETSU, and a good number stay in the East Tennessee region. ETSU and Ballad Health are the top employers of the class of 2019, along with self-employment; ETSU and its

Gatton College of Pharmacy are joined by Lincoln Memorial University as the top schools for continuing education. Seventy percent of employed post-graduates are working in Tennessee.

Dr. Hoff said that post-graduation data collection for the class of 2020 is beginning this spring and is to be reported to the Board this fall, along with THEC data on employment of graduates throughout Tennessee higher education. In addition, a follow-up survey of the 2019 graduates will be conducted in three years to determine their progress and job growth.

Discussion ensued regarding widely varying salaries of people with differing levels of education (trade school vs. four-year degree), regional cost of living differences, the need to recruit business that pay more than \$18 per hour, regional businesses' need for employees highly trained in technology, and the need to train students for emerging careers in the post-COVID period. Chair Latimer said the 125 Chapter II effort should provide opportunities to address these types of issues with regional companies. Trustee Ayers requested a database of careers students could pursue that would provide a great living wage no matter where graduates choose to live. There was also discussion on inviting Career Services staff, alumni and regional professionals to classes to share what students in different majors could do to set themselves apart.

President Noland noted that Dr. Joseph Chappell, Director of Institutional Research, is working with Dr. Rich Rhoda in the Clemmer College on a grant the university was awarded to train on the Coolridge Initiative, which is a set of statewide employment data. ETSU will be able to train other institutions in the use of this data and be able to represent the data in a timely fashion. He said this would allow administrators to make a more robust presentation around all fields of employment income at the November meeting. This information will also be shared with the Committee for 125. Trustee Niswonger asked if the university provided incoming freshmen with a wage scale indicating projected salaries in different careers, and Dr. Hoff indicated this is something he hopes to be able to do with the Coolridge data. This system should also assist the university in providing data on graduates in majors like political science, literature, languages, sociology, anthropology and others whose placements are not as easy to track as those in education, medicine or pharmacy.

## **IX. Undergraduate Enrollment Approach and Strategy Discussion**

Drs. Joe Sherlin and Sam Mayhew, Vice President and Associate Vice President, respectively, for Student Life and Enrollment, along with Heather Levesque, Director of Undergraduate Admissions, gave a presentation on undergraduate enrollment processes and strategies (*see PowerPoint presentation included in meeting materials*).

Dr. Sherlin noted the process of developing a new logo and brand several years ago, which students love, brought focus and clarity, and he said he and his team have been undergoing a similar process over the past 18 months. They have studied the college choice factors among students who choose to come to ETSU and those who do not, and have worked to align ETSU's competitive advantages with priorities for students and families in a way that is consistent with the university's mission. He said the strategic areas of focus are the four pillars of academic quality, affordability and access, location, and experience. They are working to tell the story of ETSU focusing on these pillars and the experiences of students both in and out of the classroom. Among the points he made were:

- Although ETSU has highly ranked programs throughout its colleges, it is more than rankings for the students as they enjoy meaningful experiences leading to meaningful careers. Experience is the leading driver in the college choice process.
- ETSU has worked to keep its tuition and fees affordable so students and families can make their choice based on fit and not price; combined with housing, meals and robust financial support, ETSU has the most affordable price point in the state.
- ETSU is capitalizing on its location in Johnson City and its surrounding mountains with myriad opportunities for engagement and outdoor activity, as well as its excellent Public Safety Department, and its ability to bring the diverse opportunities of a major university in an environment that feels like a small college.

Dr. Mayhew discussed the personal approach used by the university in building relationships with students, saying that "home" is how many students describe ETSU. He said university officials studied the approaches taken by small colleges in relationship-building. He discussed the full-team effort required by everyone at the university in recruitment efforts. He talked about the partnership between University Relations and Undergraduate Admissions in marketing the university using student voices in newspaper advertisements, in ETSU's "Campus Tour" segment on Amazon Prime, and in the university website and publications. Every admitted student this past year received a handwritten letter from a current student, and phone calls were made to students by ETSU staff or faculty members. University officials realized last summer that high school students lacked important connections in that they did not get to go to proms or awards nights as is tradition, and the officials looked for ways to connect with students and families in the midst of the pandemic in ways that followed health and safety guidelines. They went into restaurants and coffee shops to meet with students and families to let them know about ETSU's academic programs, financial aid and scholarships, and more.

Ms. Levesque discussed building relationships throughout the region. She said that ETSU officials also looked at the importance of developing personal relationships with regional leaders who help with the student transition to college simultaneously with building relationships with students and families. These include leaders at regional high schools,

community colleges and college access programs who provide pivotal support for students as they consider going to college. The officials spent time with these leaders to learn more about the work they were doing and what they were hearing from students, as well as how ETSU could support the leaders. ETSU then focused on the areas of international and transfer recruitment as well as dual enrollment recruitment.

Ms. Levesque described how, prior to the pandemic, Drs. Sherlin and Mayhew and she personally visited the leadership of the top 20 high schools from which ETSU recruits. While making those connections, they also noted some of the innovative things being done at those schools and began thinking of ways ETSU could play a role in those initiatives. They also met virtually with high school principals throughout the pandemic. In addition, the ETSU officials formed a Counselor Advisory Board comprised of high school counselors who meet regularly to provide support and advice pertaining to ETSU's policies, practices and decisions at the enrollment management level.

Ms. Levesque noted that ETSU continues to connect and build relationships with the Ayers and Niswonger Foundations, as well as with the Public Education Foundation in Chattanooga. These relationships help ETSU understand college access and what students need. Another opportunity Levesque described led 63 ETSU faculty members from different colleges to lead virtual classes pertaining to their disciplines for high schools throughout the region, as well as high schools as far away as Florida and Ohio; she said ETSU will continue this effort.

Ms. Levesque also touched on the enhanced marketing efforts in partnership with University Relations. She pointed to the creation of a poster with interesting and important facts about ETSU and informative rack cards about ETSU's colleges that were included in packets mailed to high school counselors throughout Tennessee and to 3,000 counselors in five border states.

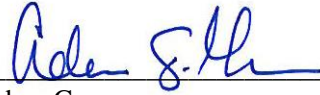
In discussion, Board members pointed out ways to enhance these efforts, including encouraging high school counselors to drop into classes to encourage students to come talk to them, bringing counselors to ETSU's campus so they can personally see all ETSU has to offer. President Noland added that more than 6,000 handwritten notes were sent from ETSU students to prospective students, and said that if ETSU officials can get in a room with a prospective student, he liked the university's chances at recruiting that student. He added that ETSU will maintain its small-school approach.

In response to a question from Trustee Niswonger, Dr. Sherlin said the university is cautiously optimistic about fall enrollment numbers.

## **X. Adjournment**

The committee meeting was adjourned by Chair Latimer.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Adam Green  
Secretary of the Board of Trustees

Approved by the Board of Trustees at its September 17, 2021 meeting.