

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MINUTES

September 15, 2023
Johnson City, Tennessee

The East Tennessee State University Board of Trustees met on Friday, September 15, 2023, at 1:33 p.m. in the East Tennessee Room of the D.P. Culp Student Center. The meeting was also live-streamed and recorded.

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Dr. Linda Latimer called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. She welcomed three new members joining the board: Dr. Steph Frye-Clark, Faculty Trustee; Mr. Aamir Shaikh, Student Trustee; and Mr. Tony Treadway, who was recently appointed to the board by Tennessee Governor Bill Lee.

Chair Latimer addressed the board with opening remarks noting:

- The grand reopening of Lamb Hall following a \$26.1 million renovation
- The largest ever freshmen class in the institution's history, an increase of more than five percent over Fall 2022
- An all-time high in graduate student enrollment
- The addition of 120 new faculty members this fall, including 57 new faculty members with the Quillen College of Medicine.
- The development of new academic programs in fields such as synthetic biology and mechatronics
- Institutional efforts to refresh the general education curriculum
- The growth in community-engaged learning
- The renovation of Gilbreath Hall, with a ribbon-cutting scheduled for October 12
- The demolition, in November, of the current Campus Center Building, to make way for a modern, interdisciplinary Academic Building

Chair Latimer extended thanks to Governor Bill Lee and members of the Tennessee General Assembly, and particularly the Northeast Tennessee delegation, for securing these investments in the campus.

II. Roll Call

Board Secretary Dr. Adam Green led the roll call.

Trustees physically present were:

Trustee Charles Allen
Trustee Janet Ayers
Trustee Steve DeCarlo
Trustee Dr. Steph Frye-Clark
Trustee Dorothy Grisham
Trustee Ron Ramsey
Trustee Melissa Steagall-Jones
Trustee Tony Treadway
Board Chair Dr. Linda Latimer

Dr. Green informed the board chair that a quorum was present.

III. Public Comments

No individuals were signed up to speak to the board during the public comment period.

IV. Approval of Minutes from April 21, 2023, and May 19, 2023

The minutes from the April 21, 2023, and May 19, 2023, meetings of the Board of Trustees were approved as submitted, with Trustee Melissa Steagall-Jones making the motion to approve and Trustee Janet Ayers seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

V. Report from the Academic, Research, and Student Success Committee

Committee Chair Janet Ayers reported that the Academic, Research, and Student Success Committee met this morning to review and discuss several topics. There was one action item, in addition to four information items.

Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Kimberly McCorkle presented a request to approve tenure upon appointment for Dr. Rodney Handy, Chair of the Department of Environmental Health in the College of Public Health. Based on Dr. Handy's outstanding qualifications, the committee voted to approve tenure upon appointment.

Trustee Ayers reported on the other items taken up during the committee's work including:

- Academic actions for the period of January 1 through July 31, 2023
- An update on major initiatives across the Division of Academic Affairs
- Updates on some new initiatives related to faculty support and recognition
- Discussion of current programs to support student success.

- A report on the work of the Tennessee Climate Office, which is housed in the ETSU Department of Geosciences and serves as the official climate office for the state of Tennessee.
- A presentation on the ongoing work of the ETSU Research Corporation.

VI. Report from the Finance and Administration Committee

Committee Chair Steve DeCarlo reported that the Finance and Administration Committee approved a reallocation of excess debt reserve funds to other athletic facility projects and the reallocation of the program service fee earmarked for soccer debt to football debt.

The committee also received a financial update; reviewed contracts and agreements over \$250,000 for the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2023; received an update on current issues across the Division of Business and Finance; and, received an overview of the upcoming Oracle transition.

Trustee DeCarlo reported that Pam Ritter, Vice President for University Advancement and President and Chief Executive Officer of the ETSU Foundation, provided the committee with an update on the Foundation while Mr. Jeremy Ross, Chief Operating Officer, presented a report on capital disclosures, capital maintenance projects, and projects in design.

VII. Report from the Audit Committee

Trustee Steagall-Jones reported that the Audit Committee approved two policies: the Board of Trustees Professional Development Policy and Appearance Before the Board of Trustees Policy.

Another action item was the audit plan for fiscal year 2024, which was approved.

Trustee Steagall-Jones informed the board that Ms. Becky Lewis, Director of Internal Audit, presented an update on five audits that have been completed since the board last met in April, reported on the recommendation log status as of August 31 and reported on audit functions for fiscal year 2023. Ms. Steagall-Jones said this is just a small part of what the Office of Internal Audit does, and she thanked the team for all their work.

The committee then approved Internal Audit employee profiles for all four employees in the office and received a report on the office's operating expenses.

The committee received the Quality Assurance and Improvement Program report, which is required by the Institute of Internal Auditing Standards every five years. The report indicated that ETSU's office generally conforms with IIA's standards and code of ethics, which Trustee Steagall-Jones described as the best possible result.

VIII. Consent Agenda

With no requests for any items to be pulled from the consent agenda for discussion and consideration by the full board, the Board of Trustees approved the consent agenda with a motion from Trustee Grisham, seconded by Trustee Ayers. The motion was passed unanimously.

IX. Action Item: Approval of Standing Committee Membership

President Noland outlined recommendations from staff, at the direction of the chair, related to the exploration of individuals to comprise the Academic, Finance, and Audit committees of the board. Dr. Noland noted that, per structure with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, no more than five board members should serve on any standing committee, thereby ensuring that no one committee dominates the activities of the board. Given the number of new members coming onto the board, Dr. Noland said that an effort has been made to make sure there is continuity across the committees. Recommendations relate both to committee composition and chairs. Dr. Noland added that, as contained within the bylaws of the board, there is a provision that relates to the terms of the committee and the appointment of chairs for up to one year beyond a two-year term. Dr. Noland and staff recommended that the board amend that section of the bylaws and to take action on committee composition and chairs as presented by staff.

Trustee DeCarlo made a motion to accept Dr. Noland's recommendations on the bylaws and approval of the committee membership, and Trustee Grisham seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

X. Athletics Update

A. Action Item: Approval of New Women's Athletic Team

Dr. Richard Sander, Director of Intercollegiate Athletics, told the board that based on a review by staff occurred in 2022-23, his department is recommending that the university add a program in women's Acrobatics and Tumbling. He indicated that it is an emerging NCAA sport. Teams have up to 28 competitors on game-day rosters and compete in six events: compulsory, acro, pyramid, toss, tumbling, and team. Plans are in place to submit legislation in 2024 to the NCAA for the sport to become an NCAA championship sport. Dr. Sander added that of the 56 participating schools, 19 are in Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, and West Virginia. ETSU's plan is to conduct an open search for a head coach in the spring of 2024, with recruiting to begin that summer. The intention is to start with a limited competition schedule in the spring of 2026, with the spring of 2027 being our inaugural championship season.

Trustee Steagall-Jones made a motion that the new program in Acrobatics and Tumbling be approved, and Trustee Grisham seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

B. Action Item: Naming of the Football Field

Dr. Sander requested that the board approve the proposal to name ETSU's football field at the William B. Greene, Jr. Stadium the "Bank of Tennessee Field." Dr. Sander said the naming would recognize the invaluable contributions made by the Bank of Tennessee in supporting ETSU's athletic programs and the "Be Great" program, which aims at fostering comprehensive development for student-athletes.

Trustee Treadway made a motion to approve the naming, and Trustee Allen seconded the motion. It passed unanimously, with Chairman Latimer abstaining.

Note: Items A. and B. above were inadvertently reversed by Dr. Sander during the meeting. The sequence reported in the minutes is consistent with the published agenda.

XI. Enrollment Update

Dr. Joe Sherlin, Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment, provided an update on fall 2023 enrollment trends and statewide comparisons. Among the major points:

- Fall 2023 enrollment increased by 136 students, or approximately one percent. Of particular note is an increase of 23 students in the out-of-state category and an increase of 76 international students. There has been an encouraging increase in Hispanic/Latinx students over the past three years. The male-female gap, however, is still wide, with 62 percent of our students in the fall of 2023 reporting as female and 38 percent as male.
- The percentage growth of ETSU's first-year class since 2020 has outpaced institutional peers. The class has grown by 30 percent over the past four cycles. Our closest state peer is at 21 percent. First-time freshman enrollment of out-of-state students is up by 36 percent. First-time freshman enrollment in Tennessee is up 28 percent. Significant enrollment growth has occurred in the Knoxville area at 79 percent, the Chattanooga area at 75 percent, and in Middle Tennessee at 47 percent.
- ETSU was one of four institutions in the U.S. recognized as a Top College Communicator in student recruitment.
- One of the biggest challenges ahead is housing capacity, which was at 97 percent in the fall of 2022 and is at 100 percent this fall. Strategies to address the challenge include adding capacity in current residential facilities, conversion of administrative space, off-campus partnerships, and new construction.

- College going at home is another challenge. The number of Washington County residents in ETSU's freshman classes from the fall of 2020 through the fall of 2023 remained flat, while the number of Sullivan County residents was down by eight percent. However, two counties are bucking that trend: Greene with a 22.5 percent increase over that period and Unicoi with a 51.9 percent increase. Dr. Sherlin noted the work of the Niswonger Foundation and the Ayers Foundation in contributing to this positive trend. He indicated that ETSU is mirroring the student success playbook that those two organizations have put in place: identifying students needing support ASAP and building relationships; increasing help for students with non-academic needs; increasing use of proven student success resources; reducing institutional barriers to success; and, offering academic experiences designed for optimal learning.

XII. Voyager ERP Update

This report to the board was presented by Dr. Karen King, Chief Information Officer; Ms. Lori Erickson, Assistant Vice President for Human Resources; and Ms. Christy Graham, Chief Financial Officer.

Dr. King summarized the benefits of the upcoming Voyager/Oracle conversion: reduced operating costs, improvement in resource management, increased process efficiencies, and expanded technology integration. The new system will allow a point of single data entry and mobile access and will provide Cloud quarterly updates. Automated workflow will reduce repetitive tasks. Dr. King added that Oracle has a very strong security component. She stressed the value of the integration of the human resources and finance functions that the new system will provide. The system has the capability of doing predictive analytics on resource allocations, budgeting, and workforce planning. Real-time data reports will be easy to access. Dr. King thanked Governor Bill Lee and the members of the Tennessee General Assembly for providing the \$20 million to fund this project over a 10-year period. She reminded the board that ETSU is the first institution in the state to convert to the new system.

Ms. Erickson emphasized the improvements the system will make in recruitment and onboarding of new employees. In addition, the cost of hiring and turnover will be transparent. Targeted marketing of positions and recruitment for hard-to-fill positions can take place. Yearly compensation statements will capture the total value of working at ETSU. Aligning with best practices in industry, the university will be converting all employees to a bi-weekly compensation schedule. Ms. Erickson said that will result in money getting into the pockets of adjunct faculty members and graduate students much more quickly.

Ms. Graham reviewed the improvements in business processes that the system will make available:

- Bank reconciliation: Automated matching and clearing of transactions
- Expense reporting: The mobile app will allow employees to upload receipts by picture

- Workflow: Paper forms will now flow through the system. The journal entry process will be streamlined.
- Real-time access for business managers: End users will have the same view as Finance. New Key Performance Indicators will be available for business managers.
- EPM Budget Module: Will allow business managers to see detailed personnel budget information.
- Inventory: Real-time access to supply inventory quantities and an automated purchase order process to restock inventory

XIII. Strategic Agenda Update and KPIs

Dr. Michael Hoff, Vice Provost for Planning and Decision Support, presented a summary of First Destination Survey results. A First Destination Survey, he told the board, is used to capture information regarding how new college graduates fare in their careers within six months of graduation. The surveys are conducted after each graduation period, and often reports are aggregated for annual classes to provide overall results.

ETSU's 2018-19 First Destination Survey revealed that 86.8 percent of those responding were either working or continuing their education. Their average annual salary was \$48,833. The majority of those graduates remained in the region.

ETSU's 2021-22 First Destination Survey revealed that 89.7 percent of those responding were either working or continuing their education. Their average annual salary was \$53,777. They, too, are concentrated in the region.

Dr. Hoff summarized these results:

- There was a 3.3 percent increase in graduates working/continuing education.
- There was a 10 percent increase in average salary.
- We continue to see a large percentage of graduates stay in the region to pursue life after college.

These First Destination Surveys will continue, and ETSU's Institutional Research staff will remain engaged with state agencies to ensure that we are involved in the next iteration of data analysis that uses wage records to provide even more detail.

XIV. President's Report

President Noland emphasized that all the new initiatives presented to the board align with the historic mission of the university: to improve the quality of life for people in our region.

Dr. Noland proved a review of the strategic planning framework that has guided the work of the institution during the period in which we have been governed by a Board of Trustees. Those strategic items are as follows:

- Access and Success
- Community and Belonging
- Excellence in Teaching
- Research and Innovation
- Community Stewardship
- Employee Empowerment
- Operational Sustainability

All the information presented to the board today aligns with these strategic goals. Dr. Noland pointed to the Oracle transition, for example, as having a direct relationship to our operational sustainability.

Expanding upon the goal of access and success, Dr. Noland stressed that we are an access institution, but there are challenges in the state that impact access-oriented institutions. Although college-going rates in Tennessee have begun an upturn, they remain below pre-COVID levels.

Dr. Noland referenced Gallup's annual survey asking what Americans think of higher education. According to Gallup's most recent survey, only 17 percent of Americans have a great deal of confidence in higher education. But Dr. Noland pointed out that Americans are losing confidence in all major entities, according to this poll. Stressing the importance of how survey questions are asked, Dr. Noland then shared the results of a survey by SCORE, released in the spring of this year, asking Tennesseans what they thought of higher education. The outcome is different. When asked if they had a favorable or unfavorable impression, 74 percent of Tennesseans had a favorable opinion of higher education and 37 percent a very favorable opinion. Further, when asked by SCORE about their aspirations for their sons and daughters, 80 percent wanted them to go to a university.

When making decisions about where to go to school, affordability and career planning are top of mind. Therefore, Dr. Noland reported, ETSU is taking a broad view of our scholarship offerings and will bring to the board in the spring a potential repackaging of our aid programs that puts more emphasis on affordability.

Dr. Noland shared some ways in which the recent enrollment growth has led to a change in energy across campus, beginning with a video of move-in day this semester. He pointed to several examples of increased student engagement:

- During halftime of the football game with Carson-Newman, we conveyed to the marching band, via the big board, that our majorettes and flag corps will have the

opportunity to represent ETSU at Radio City Music Hall as it kicks off its Christmas special, at the same time the band is in New York for the 2024 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Dr. Noland added that our band will be the first band from Tennessee in more than 50 years to march in the Macy's parade.

- Another example of student engagement is the fact that this semester, we saw the largest number of students ever to participate in Preview: 1,850.
- Participation in key student activities has increased by 60 percent since 2018.
- Service Plunge participation has jumped from 450 in 2019 to 850 this fall.
- ETSU students give back. Student groups have donated more than \$1,080,150 over the past five years to local non-profits.

Dr. Noland reminded the board of the massive amount of work now underway on the campus. He indicated that there is more reform underway across the campus in terms of operations, programming, and services than at any point in the past 40 years.

Dr. Noland then highlighted the three recent Distinguished Faculty Award winners as examples of excellence in teaching, research, and service. That excellence was recognized by SACS during their visit to campus in the spring. We will go before SACS for full reaffirmation of accreditation in December. The team had no findings, no concerns, and no recommendations.

Dr. Noland stressed that ETSU is recognized as one of the best employers in the state, and we want to continue to invest in our people. Last year we provided a four percent salary enhancement. At the next board meeting, the salary recommendation for the current academic year will be brought before Trustees. Dr. Noland said he expects that it will meet or exceed what was provided last year, with employees at the low end of the salary scale receiving special emphasis.

As a follow-up to the board's request for additional data on educational attainment levels and earnings potential, Dr. Noland provided a brief look at the type of information that will be built out for several external organizations whose responsibilities include recruitment of business and industry. These data include the percentage of adults 18 to 64 years old with a high school diploma only, the percentage of adults ages 25 to 64 with a bachelor's degree or higher, the percent of 18-29-year-olds without college degrees not enrolled in education, as well as data on labor force participation, wage earnings, the percentage of adults receiving welfare or disability payments, and the percentage of the population living in poverty. Dr. Noland said these data prove we are in a target-rich environment, and they drive home the importance of our mission.

Dr. Noland discussed the creation of Founders Week at ETSU and thanked Dr. Adam Green, Chief of Staff and Board Secretary, for the idea that made it possible.

Dr. Noland concluded his remarks with a tribute to Dr. Bert C. Bach, who served for many years as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at ETSU. Dr. Bach also served as ETSU's Interim President in 1991-92. Dr. Bach passed away on August 14 of this year.

XV. Other Business

There was no other business to come before the board.

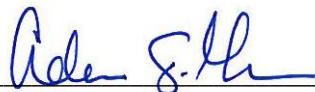
XVI. Executive Session

There was no need for an executive session.

XVII. Adjournment

Trustee Ramsey made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:19 p.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 November 17, 2023 meeting.