

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MINUTES

November 17, 2023
Johnson City, Tennessee

The East Tennessee State University Board of Trustees met on Friday, November 17, 2023, at 1:30 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 1:30 p.m.

Chair Latimer reported on a number of events and accomplishments that had taken place since the September meeting of the Board of Trustees. Among them were:

- ETSU's inaugural Founders Week celebration that included a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the newly renovated Gilbreath Hall, a recognition of ETSU Heroes, President Noland's State of the University Address, and the ETSU Elevates competition.
- A recent meeting involving President Noland, Board Chair Latimer, staff and faculty from the ETSU Research Corporation, ETSU Health, the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, and Commissioner Stuart McWhorter from the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development. That meeting included a tour of ETSU's Eastman/Valleybrook facilities and a discussion of ways in which the university might expand its impact in driving economic growth, innovation, and community development for the region, while simultaneously creating high quality jobs, particularly in the bioeconomy.

Chair Latimer indicated that Commissioner McWhorter clearly realized the potential and impact that the Valleybrook campus could provide for the region. Chair Latimer expressed the urgency of preparing the Valleybrook site for full participation in the region's bioeconomy. Chair Latimer asked that, at the February 2024 Board of Trustees meeting, the board be given a report about the issues to be addressed to make Valleybrook fully functional.

Chair Latimer commended the board and members of the campus community for their work in helping to build something truly special at East Tennessee State University.

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 Dorothy Grisham
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 September 15, 2023

The minutes from the September 15, 2023, meeting of the Board of Trustees were approved as submitted, with Trustee Melissa Steagall-Jones making the motion to approve and Trustee Dorothy Grisham 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 heard four information items during its morning meeting, which included reports on Quality Assurance Funding, research funding at ETSU in the field of secondary special education, the EQUIP: Extending Quillen to the Underserved through an Integrated Program at the Quillen College of Medicine, and the ways the institution is strengthening student engagement.

VI. Report from the Finance and Administration Committee

Committee Chair Steve DeCarlo told the board of the committee's work of the day, which included presentations of the annual Tuition Transparency and Accountability Act, the quarterly report of revenues and expenditures, contracts and agreements over \$250,000, and updates on the advisory committee and the Voyager/Oracle transition. The committee also reviewed and approved the October 2023 budget revisions found in the board's consent agenda.

VII. Report from the Audit Committee

Committee Chair Melissa Steagall-Jones reported that the Audit Committee addressed two actions items during its morning meeting: a modification to the FY24 audit plan and the

approval of a policy on the audit of expenses related to the function of the Office of the President.

Committee Chair Steagall-Jones then summarized reports made to the committee regarding audits completed since the last meeting.

Chair Steagall-Jones reported that the Audit Committee then went into executive session.

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 Steagall-Jones. The motion was passed unanimously.

IX. College of Business and Technology Update

The board then heard an update from Dr. Tony Pittarese, Dean of the ETSU College of Business and Technology. Among the highlights were these:

- The college is home to six different academic departments including the home of the ROTC and Military Science program.

The college currently has two areas of strategic focus, which include the creation of new academic programs and efforts to grow our engagement with the external professional community.

- With the recent approval by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, the Bachelor of Science in Mechatronics Engineering will begin in the fall of 2024.
- The college has added a new first-year experience course for business students, similar to the one now offered for most technology students.
- The college is also home to the BlueSky Tennessee Institute, our accelerated Bachelor of Science program in Computing, in collaboration with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee.
- Dr. Pittarese reviewed several examples of how the college is becoming more active in the professional community, including a partnership between the Digital Media program and East Tennessee Children's Hospital in Knoxville.

X. Strategic Agenda Update and KPIs

Vice Provost Hoff began his presentation by referencing the strategic planning framework previously approved by the Board of Trustees. Within that framework, he said, the three biggest drivers are access, success, and impact. In the access framework, only one metric is at

risk and that is the percentage of male enrollment, which stands at 37.7 percent for 2023. Dr. Hoff explained that this situation is not unique to ETSU.

Within the framework of success, Dr. Hoff reported that ETSU is doing very well. Further, post-graduation outcomes (the percent working or continuing education) continue to increase.

In the area of institutional impact, Dr. Hoff indicated that ETSU is making a high impact in patient care and service hours.

In the category of operational environment, Dr. Hoff noted that the slight regression in “great colleges to work for” should improve as the transition to the ERP is completed.

Dr. Hoff concluded with a brief look at next steps. Those include continuing to identify internal metrics that align with KPIs for continuous quality improvement at the unit level. Our focus on execution of strategic initiatives includes the following:

- Strategic Enrollment Management Task Force
- General Education Redesign Task Force
- Academic Structure Task Force
- Financial Aid Optimization Study
- Strategic Resource Alignment Advisory Committee
- Transition to Voyager ERP for Finance and Human Resources

XI. President’s Report

President Noland presented a report covering the close of the calendar year 2023. That report was guided by ETSU’s strategic planning framework.

In the strategic planning categories of access and success, President Noland noted that ETSU and institutions all across the state are now seeing a rebound from COVID and a return of students to classrooms, from Mountain City to Memphis.

President Noland reported that ETSU’s enrollment is up by about 105 students compared to last fall. He reminded the board that ETSU now enrolls its largest number of graduate students in the university’s history and that this fall’s freshman enrollment surpassed all previous years. Dr. Noland thanked Dr. Heather Levesque and her staff for the work that they do every day to tell the story of the institution.

President Noland emphasized that ETSU is part of a P-20 effort with a major goal of addressing gaps in the student pipeline. He said that our partners in secondary education are doing an admirable job of moving students through grades 9-12. The gaps involve moving students on to higher education and then through our classrooms. Dr. Noland stressed that a demographic cliff does not exist in Tennessee but what does exist is a college-going cliff. He indicated that if

these college-going rates can be returned to what they were pre-COVID, we will experience sustained enrollment year after year. Our challenge in Tennessee, he added, is to turn population growth into enrollment growth.

President Noland reported that applications to ETSU have increased year over year and interest among potential students is strong. For example, he pointed to the previous Saturday, when ETSU hosted the largest open house in its history with more than 1,500 attending. In speaking of enrollment initiatives, Dr. Noland highlighted a recently launched public awareness campaign, “Four the Future,” involving all the state universities in Tennessee except one. He thanked ETSU’s Jess Vodden, who has led the effort in partnership with the University of Tennessee.

Following up on a previous Board of Trustees request to look at equity gaps from a performance perspective across groups of students at ETSU, President Noland presented a table outlining retention rates, which he described as our moonshot. He reiterated that the board’s target for our graduation rate is 60percent and that staff is working diligently to position the campus to meet this objective.

President Noland then shared information on how ETSU compares to peers in terms of faculty salaries and staff salaries. He told the board that we have work to do to close gaps. He then thanked the board for its approval of the amended budget, an action that signified a 4.5percent across-the-board salary enhancement—the largest in the modern history of the university.

President Noland then turned his attention to the area of capital investments by the state. He reported that, through the action taken by THEC November 16, Brown Hall renovation is now the number three capital project in the state of Tennessee, and this would finish out the building. Recommendations were also made by THEC regarding capital maintenance. If ETSU’s request is fully funded, that would equate to about \$17 million in maintenance and security money.

President Noland then discussed the topic of community stewardship, especially as it relates to the P-20 initiative, since the board had asked earlier for the university to look deeper into the labor shed of the region. The data show that we are in a regional economy, but that economy, however, has gaps in its labor supply.

Dr. Noland also spotlighted several other strategic initiatives. The General Education Redesign Task Force is almost ready to complete its recommendations. Those will come before the board in the spring. The work of the Academic Structure Task Force is near completion, and that work will come before the board in the spring as well, and the work of the Strategic Resource Alignment Advisory Committee is progressing.

Looking ahead to 2024, Dr. Noland shared with the board ETSU’s legislative agenda in preparation for the upcoming session of the Tennessee General Assembly:

- Full funding of the THEC appropriations recommendation
- Support for the recommendation that THEC is making around Gatton College of Pharmacy and Quillen College of Medicine
- Support for the Brown Hall Phase II project and deferred maintenance projects
- The need to monitor potential changes to the function and purpose of THEC

Dr. Noland encouraged board members to attend the Alumni Association’s annual awards banquet, the annual holiday concert, and other close-of-the-semester activities, including graduation December 16. He then shared some pictures that reflect the scope of activity around campus, and he concluded by expressing thanks to those who assisted with presentations and board meeting arrangements and to all the members of the leadership team for their ongoing and dedicated work.

XII. Action Item: Approval of President’s Contract

Chair Latimer reported that Trustee Steve DeCarlo and ETSU’s Chief Legal Counsel, Dr. Mark Fulks, have been working with Dr. Noland on the terms for a new five-year contract. Trustee DeCarlo and Dr. Fulks then provided the board with an overview of the process and the proposed contract terms.

Board members expressed deep gratitude to President Noland for his leadership, passion, and vision for ETSU and the region.

Trustee Janet Ayers made a motion to approve the new five-year contract for President Noland effective January 1, 2024. Trustee Dorothy Grisham seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

President Noland thanked the board and the leadership team for the opportunity to lead ETSU for the past 12 years, calling it “the honor of a lifetime.”

XIII. Other Business

There was no other business to come before the board.

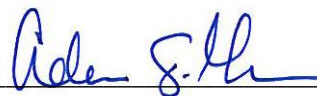
XIV. Executive Session

There was no need for an executive session of the board.

XV. Adjournment

Chair Latimer adjourned the meeting at 2:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Adam Green
Secretary of the Board of Trustees

Approved by the Board of Trustees at its February 16, 2024 meeting.