

University Council

March 9, 2026

1. Call to Order

Dr. Kimberly D. McCorkle called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and highlighted a “mission moment.” She focused on the recent Festival of Ideas, which featured well-attended presentations by Vijay Gupta and John Green, and thanked the planning committee for their work in organizing the event. In particular, she recognized Joy Fulkerson for creating the “Café Curiosity” student event, which showcased student essays, drew strong engagement, and will likely continue in the future.

2. Roll Call

Ms. Melissa Nipper led the roll call. Members present were: Ms. Bridget Baird, Dr. Ginni Blackhart, Dr. Bill Block, Dr. Cheri Clavier, Dr. Dena Evans, Dr. Joel Faidley, Mr. David Finney, Ms. Christy Graham, Dr. Adam Green, Dr. Nick Hagemeyer, Dr. Keith Johnson, Dr. Karen King, Ms. Shelby Koerten, Ms. Tricia Korade, Ms. Kay Lennon-McGrew, Dr. Sam Mayhew, Provost Dr. Kimberly D. McCorkle, Mr. Cody Morelock, President Dr. Brian Noland, Dr. Rob Pack, Dr. Tony Pittarese, Mr. Howard Reddy, Dr. Joe Sherlin, Dr. Alan Stevens, and Dr. Sarah Thomason.

3. Standing Items

3.1 Approve Minutes of the February 9, 2026, meeting.

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the February 9, 2026, meeting. The motion was seconded; the minutes were approved.

3.2 Review Agenda

3.3 Call for Voluntary Reports of UC-Essential Action Items from Governance Organizations

Faculty Senate: Dr. Alan Stevens reported that the Faculty Senate closed out the Faculty Senate survey last week, with 407 survey completions and 20-plus partial survey completions. They are working with the Applied Research Lab and will report results soon. They recently attended the Tennessee University Faculty Senate's meeting of Faculty Senate presidents.

Staff Senate: Mr. Cody Morelock reported that the Staff Senate is preparing for the Staff Celebration in May. As part of that preparation, they continue to solicit nominations for Distinguished Staff and Career Staff awards. He encouraged the council to submit nominations through March 22.

Executive Council of Chairs: Dr. Sarah Thomason reported that the Executive Council of Chairs continues to develop chair training for the academic year and is working with the Provost's Office on policies. Currently, they are working on the Periodic Review of Chairs.

SGA: Ms. Shelby Koerten reported that 78 students have applied to run in the upcoming SGA elections. She reviewed current pieces of legislation under discussion, focusing on legislation advocating for flexibility in student choice for meal swipe exchanges on campus, thoroughness in syllabi safety procedures, and additional support for club sport organizations. She previewed upcoming events, including the first State of the Student Body address and Civility Week.

Athletics: Ms. Kay Lennon-McGrew shared athletics updates, noting recent successes, including an eighth straight win for the women's tennis team, a split for softball, and a road win for baseball at JMU. She highlighted a historic achievement as both the women's and men's basketball teams secured Southern Conference (SoCon) regular-season championships in the same season. The women's team reached the semi-final, while the men will play tonight in the championship game. She encouraged the council to attend and support the Bucs.

ITS: Dr. Karen King reported that ITS recently completed an internal audit on change management with no findings, reflecting strong processes and documentation. She also noted a 47% increase in campus Wi-Fi access points since the start of COVID, with continued improvements underway, particularly in academic buildings. Additional updates included new employee and cybersecurity workshops in development, ongoing Windows 10 upgrades, and continued collaboration on Voyager system improvements.

4. Action Items

4.1 Old Business

There was no old business to come before the council.

4.2 New Business

There was no new business to come before the council.

5. Information Items/Presentations

5.1 Update on Federal Financial Aid Changes

Dr. Joe Sherlin, Senior Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment, and Ms. Catherine Morgan, Director of Student Financial Aid, provided an overview of upcoming federal financial aid changes tied to recent legislation, noting that while the rules are not yet final, institutions are actively preparing for implementation expected in July. Key updates include revised Pell Grant

eligibility based on a new Student Aid Index cap, the elimination of Grad PLUS loans for new borrowers (with limited “legacy” provisions), new borrowing caps for graduate and Parent PLUS loans, and the reduction of repayment plan options to just standard and income-based plans. They emphasized that these changes may create financial gaps for students and families, particularly at the graduate level, and could increase reliance on private lending.

Additional changes include a new accountability earnings test for academic programs, potential institutional authority to set program-level loan limits, and complex loan proration rules tied to enrollment intensity, all of which will require further clarification and careful communication. They noted that most undergraduate students may see limited impact due to relatively low borrowing rates, but certain programs and student populations could be more significantly affected. The financial aid team is developing communication strategies, resources, and potential preferred lender guidance, while continuing to monitor federal updates and preparing to repackage aid as final regulations are confirmed.

5.2 Update on Ellucian Student Project

Dr. Sherlin provided an update on the ETSU/Ellucian Student Project, emphasizing that the Banner system upgrade is a campus-wide initiative aligned with institutional strategic goals to enhance student success, decision-making, and service delivery. The project aims to create a more integrated, student-centered information system with improved data access, reporting capabilities, and user experience, including the development of a centralized student portal and more efficient, automated processes. He noted that these improvements are intended to better connect student experiences across campus and enable more proactive, informed support for students.

The project will be supported by a structured leadership and communication framework. The implementation timeline spans approximately 18 months, with a planned go-live in fall 2027, and includes phases for configuration, training, and testing in partnership with Ellucian consultants. Ongoing communication with campus stakeholders will be prioritized, and additional input from faculty and students will be incorporated as the project progresses. He emphasized that this effort represents a long-term transformation that will continue evolving beyond initial implementation to support institutional goals. A project kick-off will be held with Ellucian consultants on March 24-25.

6. President’s Report

President Noland provided a legislative and budget update, noting that the state legislative session is progressing steadily, with key higher education bills, including a tenure-related bill, expected to move through the Senate Education Committee. He also reported that the state budget remains lean, with continued advocacy for institutional priorities such as capital projects

and funding for the College of Pharmacy. The Governor's supplemental budget will come out on March 23.

At the campus level, planning continues under a constant budget and enrollment, with any new revenue prioritized for faculty and staff salaries. Proposed tuition and fee increases will be presented as a range for board consideration, with efforts to minimize additional program-specific fees.

Dr. Noland noted that leadership coverage would be in place during his absence as he travels abroad with family. He closed by honoring the legacy of Dr. Paul Stanton, ETSU President Emeritus, highlighting his transformative leadership in expanding health sciences, advancing campus facilities, and establishing key programs, such as the Honors College and Roan Scholars. He emphasized his people-centered leadership style and lasting influence on the university's culture. He encouraged the council to attend his celebration of life on April 10, and concluded by saying, "The soul of this institution for a long time was defined by the soul of a man – a man named Dr. Paul Stanton – and we're all better because of his leadership."

Finally, he encouraged the council to come support the Men's Basketball Team, the band, and Cheer and Dance teams at the championship game in Asheville this evening.

7. Announcements

There were no additional announcements.

8. Adjournment

Provost McCorkle adjourned the meeting at 9:30 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 13, 2026, at 8:30 a.m.