

ETSU 125- Chapter II

Task Force for Research and Scholarship Visioning Document

Task Force Membership

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Introduction and Vision

In 2013, the Committee for 125 articulated a vision of ETSU as a nationally preeminent center of research and scholarship that serves as the hub for intellectual, social, cultural, and economic growth of our region. It further envisioned an ETSU with thriving linkages to regional businesses and government and non-government organizations that fostered innovation and enhanced student opportunities. The process to realize this vision was subsequently detailed in the 2015 Research Strategic Plan and further reiterated in the final report from the Research and Innovation Working Group (RIWG) in 2019. The Task Force for Research and Scholarship, created as part of the on-going visioning process for ETSU 125 Chapter II, continues to support this broad goal for the university. The recently stated commitment by university administration to appoint a Vice President for Research and Innovation paves the way to revisit strategic planning for future development of all forms of scholarship at ETSU.

We see ETSU evolving toward a broader and more modern approach to research and scholarship. This approach will include use of “scholarship” as the collective term to describe research supported by extramural and/or internal funds, discipline-specific research, and creative activity (written works, works

of art, music, and much more). All forms of scholarship, both funded and unfunded, will be tracked and celebrated at the department, college, and university level.

Scholarship is and will remain essential to East Tennessee State University's mission, vision, and values. Scholarship enhances the quality of faculty teaching, enriches the educational experience of students, and has a major positive influence on the quality of life in our community. On a practical level, scholarship creates job opportunities, establishes lasting partnerships within the university and between the university and the broader community, and eliminates barriers by promoting equity and inclusion. Scholarship contributes to the expansion of knowledge and critical understanding throughout the world, extending the university's impact, reputation, influence, and public image, all of which benefits the university and the region and learners we serve.

Scholarship at ETSU will be characterized by a culture of excellence that is promoted by the campus community. It will include a broad pool of talent with diverse perspectives and insights. High quality, rigorous scholarship will enhance the regional, state, and national academic reputation of the university and support its overall mission. Excellence in scholarship will be part of ETSU's brand identity; it will be a key part of our story.

The culture of excellence in scholarship will enhance ETSU's position as a Carnegie-designated R2 research institution, which is characterized by teacher-scholars dedicated to providing students with a learning experience that includes direct involvement in the scholarly process. New faculty will be recruited with the expectation that they promote this culture of excellence in teaching and scholarship, and they will be provided with the appropriate resources to do so. Faculty hires will also be made with a view toward developing interdisciplinary programs in both teaching and scholarship that cross boundaries within and between colleges. A common standard of rigor will be expected in all doctoral and masters' programs to ensure that graduates will excel in their fields and/or continue their studies at top-ranked national and international institutions.

The ETSU Research Corporation will play a significant role in advancing scholarship at ETSU by facilitating research innovation, aligning university scholarship resources for entrepreneurial ecosystem development, regional development, workforce development, and media and marketing. Through its partnerships with world-class innovators, it will develop programming such as training in synthetic biology to enhance STEM education at K-16. These relationships will provide student opportunities for experiential learning and job placement. Overall, the ETSU Research Corporation will provide a scholarship collaboration hub that will rival similar units at larger research universities.

Recommendations

- Appoint a senior-level administrator (Vice President for Research and Innovation, VPRI) to serve as a champion for university-wide scholarship.
 - A critical initial task for the VPRI will be to appoint and lead a broadly representative faculty group to revise and update the Strategic Plan for Research (2015) and the RIWG report (2019) so that these documents guide the advancement of all scholarship domains.
 - It is imperative that the Office of the VPRI be appropriately resourced with staff and finances to support university-wide scholarly activities in the sciences, arts, and humanities.
- Advance scholarship through incentivized hiring initiatives driven by a capacity to yield external resources and/or enhance the reputation and impact of the university.

- Instill a culture in which faculty hires are not made within departmental islands, but rather are considered across departments and colleges so that strategic, interdisciplinary appointments can be made to foster collaborative partnerships.
- Review the structures, viability, and potential for fiscal sustainment of existing research centers.
- Promote interdisciplinary research programs on topics of regional and national importance.
- Link scholarship to the educational experience.
 - Leverage ETSU's depth of history and intellectual assets by continuing to connect faculty with strengths in teaching or research to work together in developing cutting-edge, transformational pedagogy.
 - Continue to support and expand the Office for Undergraduate Research in the Honors College.
 - Expand the resources of the Center for Teaching Excellence to support the scholarship of teaching and learning, including incorporating the research process into teaching.
- Foster a research environment to support graduate training.
 - Increase the competitiveness of the institution by facilitating a culture where scholarship-focused graduate training programs are valued and cultivated by all faculty.
 - Enhance the competitiveness of the university's graduate programs by benchmarking assistantship and scholarship metrics with national norms for masters and research doctoral education.
- Prioritize university and college-level fund-raising for scholarship.
 - Increase the activities of University Advancement in raising private funds to provide infrastructure support for high priority scholarship.

Timeline for Implementation:

1-3 Years:

- Appoint Vice President for Research and Innovation.
- Appoint Associate Deans charged with fostering growth of scholarly activities in all colleges.
 - Deans work with their leadership teams to set attainable goals for scholarly growth, in terms of extramural funding and, when appropriate, creative output.
 - Departments will have effective workload policies to allow faculty to engage in scholarship.
- Establish a faculty fellowship in the Center for Teaching Excellence to support the scholarship of teaching and learning.
- Establish a faculty work group to collaborate with the ETSU Research Corporation to identify at least three key areas for investment and development:
 - Health-related research with expansion into other areas of expertise (e.g. synthetic biology, data science, and environmental sciences).
 - Major research, scholarship, and creative initiatives in the humanities, including creation of a Center for the Creative Arts.
 - Foster existing partnerships with researchers and industry, establish new partnerships, and increase intellectual property, thereby bolstering patent acquisition.

5 Years:

- Make at least 5 cluster hires in existing or potential growth areas of research and broader scholarship.
- Maintain current funding levels from NIH and increase research expenditures derived from federal agencies other than NIH (National Sciences Foundation, USDA, etc.) to double 2021 levels.
- Ensure all students at ETSU have opportunities to participate in collaborative scholarship activities (e.g. research, creative activity project, internship, etc.) before graduation.
- Establish at least 3 fixed-term endowed chairs of excellence in identified strength or growth areas of scholarship.

10 Years:

- By year 10, the Valleybrook campus will be a fully equipped center to promote innovation in areas such as synthetic biology.
- The primary teaching and research areas on the main ETSU campus will have been renovated to provide state of the art instruction and support for scholarship.