

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MINUTES

February 17, 2023
Johnson City, Tennessee

The East Tennessee State University Board of Trustees met on Friday, February 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. Dr. Latimer then reviewed a number of recent accomplishments that have taken place at the university:

- Since the Board of Trustees last met, ETSU marketing students have been named among the top 10 finalists in the 2023 American Marketing Association (AMA) Collegiate Case Competition.
- Tennessee’s Secretary of State, Tre Hargett, visited the campus to recognize our students for leading the best social media campaign to promote voter registration in the state.
- Dr. Pamela Mims, from ETSU’s Clemmer College, joined forces with BioMADE to support a national initiative promoting career pathways in biotechnology.
- And ETSU was named the best college for animation in Tennessee and seventh nationally by *Animation Career Review*.

Looking ahead, Chair Latimer highlighted:

- The annual Festival of Ideas, February 27 through March 1, with the theme “Curiosity, Community, and Connection.” The festival welcomes Sarah Stewart Holland and Beth Silvers, co-hosts of the “Pantsuit Politics” podcast, and best-selling author and *New York Times* columnist David Brooks. The festival schedule also includes a campus-community conversation focusing on the art of civil discourse, featuring faculty experts from ETSU.
- The Broadway series at the Martin Center for the Arts, with performances of *CATS*, *Chicago*, and *Riverdance* upcoming. The series launched in January with a two-night run of *Annie*, which drew a huge crowd.

- Chair Latimer encouraged board members to follow along with all of our activities online by visiting the ETSU website, viewing our social media channels, or joining our email list.

II. Roll Call

Board Secretary Dr. Adam Green led the roll call.

Trustees present were:

Trustee Charles Allen
Trustee Allen Archer
Trustee Steve DeCarlo
Trustee Dr. Virginia Foley
Trustee Dorothy Grisham
Trustee Dr. Lisa Piercey
Trustee Ron Ramsey
Trustee Melissa Steagall-Jones
Board Chair Dr. Linda Latimer
Absent: Trustee Janet Ayers

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

III. Public Comments

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

IV. Approval of the Minutes from November 18, 2022

The minutes from the November 18, 2022, meeting of the Board of Trustees were approved as submitted with Trustee Steagall-Jones making the motion to approve and Trustee Grisham seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

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

In the absence of Trustee Ayers, Trustee Dr. Virginia Foley provided an overview of the items presented earlier that day to the Academic, Research, and Student Success Committee:

- Provost Dr. Kimberly McCorkle described for the committee various academic program modifications, minor changes in admissions requirements, and revisions to curricula.

- Dr. David Linville, Associate Vice President for Clinical Affairs, presented to the committee an executive summary of the 2021-22 Annual Institutional Review of Graduate Medical Education. The report included specific information about performance indicators, action plans, and monitoring procedures from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. Dr. Linville reported that all such programs at ETSU are fully accredited.
- Dr. Susan McCracken, Vice Provost for Community Engagement and Director of the Quality Enhancement Plan, provided for the committee an overview of the QEP. ETSU has chosen Community-Engaged Learning as the central focus of the QEP, with the theme “Go Beyond.”
- Dr. Michelle Byrd, Dean of Students; Sarah Bedingfield, Associate Director of the Counseling Center; and Vanessa Smith, Practice Administrator for the University Health Clinic, updated the committee on efforts to improve student health and well-being, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic. They described increasing demands for services and new strategies to address those demands, emphasizing the collaboration that is taking place across the campus.
- Dr. Nick Hagemeyer, Vice Provost for Research, and Dr. Robert Pack, Executive Vice Provost, summarized recent developments in research for the committee. Among the highlights of their report:
 - For fiscal year 2022, research and development funds secured through grants and private investments are projected to exceed \$23.3 million, compared to \$18.5 million for the prior fiscal year.
 - ETSU now ranks among the top 300 R2 research universities in the country, for the first time since 2003.
 - Dr. Pack updated the committee on synthetic biology at ETSU, indicating that several goals of the Synthetic Biology Task Force have been met, including the creation of a faculty fellowship in synthetic biology.

VI. Report from the Finance and Administration Committee

Committee Chair Steve DeCarlo summarized for the board the results of that morning’s meeting of the Finance and Administration Committee:

- The committee approved a change in tuition for the Quillen College of Medicine’s accelerated track program that students complete in three years with students paying 1.15 times the traditional student tuition rate in their M2 and M3 years.

- The Gatton College of Pharmacy is requesting no increases in tuition and will rely on continued savings from retirement incentives and college reserves to balance its budget.
- The committee approved a rate increase request from the Department of Housing and Residence Life from 5.28 to 5.63 percent for the next fiscal year to support inflationary costs of utilities, custodial, and personnel services.
- The committee approved a 3.13 percent increase in the Silver meal plan, with similar increases in other plans. ETSU's payments to the food service vendor, Sodexo, are increasing by almost 8.5 percent.

VII. Report from the Audit Committee

Committee Chair Melissa Steagall-Jones presented the Audit Committee's report, noting the following:

- Revisions to the FY 2022-23 audit plan included two investigations and the Associate Director of Internal Audit's selection as a peer review team member for Tennessee Tech University.
- Audits performed from November 2022 through January 2023 included one executive-level audit and two investigations.
- The committee heard an overview of ETSU's 2022 Annual Security and Fire Safety Report.

VIII. Consent Agenda

With no requests for any items to be removed from the consent agenda, the Board of Trustees approved the consent agenda with a motion from Trustee Steagall-Jones, seconded by Trustee Ramsey. The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Prestigious Awards Office Update

Dr. Christopher Keller, Dean of the Honors College and Senior International Officer, presented to the board an update on the development of an Office of Prestigious Awards at ETSU. Major points of his presentation were:

- The theme guiding these efforts is "Create a Remarkable Story."
- Prestigious Awards, or Nationally Competitive Scholarships, are awards funded by sources outside ETSU, including foundations, government agencies, and

companies. Awards criteria vary but generally include academic performance, service, research, and foreign language skills, as well as unique elements important to the sponsoring organization.

- Examples of Prestigious Awards are: the Rhodes Scholarship, Goldwater Scholarship, Critical Language Scholarship, National Institutes of Health-Oxford-Cambridge Scholars Program, Harry S. Truman Scholarship, Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship, and Princeton in Africa.
- Dr. Keller profiled two ETSU students who have performed well in competing for Prestigious Awards. Jessica Potter, a Social Work major, is a Critical Language Scholarship semifinalist, and Piper Floyd, a Computing major, is a Goldwater awardee.

President Noland commended Dr. Keller and his staff for making these kinds of opportunities available to ETSU students.

X. ETSU Athletics Update

Dr. Richard Sander, Director of Intercollegiate Athletics at ETSU, appeared before the Board of Trustees to discuss the recent National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Convention, the status of the Southern Conference, the ETSU Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, and the landscape of college athletics. Among the key points in Dr. Sander's presentation:

- Issues from the previous month's NCAA Convention in San Antonio, Texas, including the work of the organization's Transformation Committee were noted. Dr. Sander quoted Julie Cromer, co-chair of the committee, who said, "We think the big tent, a large, diverse Division-I is part of that magic, and it's worth working through the issues we see today to keep it intact. However, in order to make the big tent work in a modern context, we need to develop a set of common expectations rooted in the needs of today's Division-I student-athletes, and you will see the framework for those membership standards in this report."
- The NCAA's focus on working with the U.S. Congress to regulate college sports, as evidenced by the formation of the Board of Governors Subcommittee on Congressional Engagement.
- The Southern Conference is embarking on a major branding initiative with The Brand Leader, a company founded in 1999 and based in Greenville, South Carolina. Its clients include William & Mary, PowerBar, Dunlop, and Clemson University.

- The retirement of the Southern Conference Commissioner, scheduled for the end of May, and the formation of a search committee to fill the post.
- Expansion of the Southern Conference, which both Dr. Sander and Dr. Noland favor.
- A continued focus on our identity at ETSU, a continuing commitment to creating a great experience for our student-athletes, and the importance of preparing our student-athletes to become productive and happy contributors to society after ETSU.
- The need to continue to “get the right people on the bus” within the athletic department at ETSU. As an example, Dr. Sander pointed to the recent successful season in women’s basketball and the academic support personnel in the department.
- ETSU recently placed 251 student-athletes on the Southern Conference Honor Roll.
- Staff professional development, evaluation, improvement in budgeting, and improvement in approval processes are all on the department’s agenda.
- Dr. Sander discussed the challenges of the transfer portal, Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) issues, and conference realignments that are taking place across the country.
- He concluded by stressing the need for sustainability within the department through a strategic plan that covers facilities, funding, community engagement, priorities, Title IX, and allocation of resources.

XI. ETSU Strategic Agenda Update

The board then heard from Dr. Michael Hoff, University Chief Planning Officer. Dr. Hoff shared the following information:

- He concluded by stressing the need for sustainability within the department through a strategic plan that covers facilities, funding, community engagement, priorities, Title IX, and allocation of resources.
- The university continues to focus on the strategic framework approved by the Board of Trustees.

- Significant progress regarding development of Key Performance Indicators and data access is allowing for strategic action deeper into the organization.
- A major focus for this spring is operationalizing the Strategic Agenda through the implementation of improvements recommended by Huron Consulting last year.
- A new software platform has been implemented that allows a deeper dive into how ETSU students are progressing.
- Dr. Hoff provided an overview of recent dashboard development and results related to Key Performance Indicators. The university is on track in the categories of Enrollment, Freshman Applications, First-Year Average ACT, Enrollment-Percent Non-White, Out-of-State Enrollment, and Percent Male Enrollment. In Enrollment, the university's figure of 13,740 (toward a goal of 15,500) shows a year-over-year increase of 1.31 percent. The category of Freshman Applications shows a 12.27 percent increase year-over-year.
- Dr. Hoff presented a series of graphs depicting headcount by level; headcount by gender; headcount by class; and headcount by race/ethnicity. Another set of graphs depicts degrees conferred in each of those categories.
- The external environment continues to be competitive, but ETSU's market position is strong. As reasons, Dr. Hoff cited the university's enhancing of its academic portfolio and rankings, increasing recognition for research, the focus on community engagement that is the centerpiece of the Quality Enhancement Plan, and our participation in the Moon Shot for Equity, a public-private partnership dedicated to ensuring that more students complete college degrees—especially those most often left behind: low-income students, first-generation students, and students of color.
- ETSU is on track with 49 of our metrics.
- The percentage of our graduates who are employed or continuing their education is high.
- ETSU exceeds retention and graduation rates for what would be expected for a regional university.
- In response to a question from Trustee DeCarlo about which Key Performance Indicator is most troubling, Dr. Hoff indicated that, to him, it would be faculty and staff salaries. In response to a follow-up question by Trustee DeCarlo, Dr. Hoff said that a focus just on graduation rates as a metric of success is not ideal

and that he would much rather be able to measure how much students were able to advance their lives with a course or courses.

XII. President's Report

President Noland's report to the board consisted of four major subject areas: enrollment; student success; a budget overview and legislative update; and select legislative and campus initiatives for spring 2023.

Enrollment overview and update

- ETSU's enrollment head count, after the fall 2022 census, increased by 239 students over the previous fall.
- Positive enrollment trends are continuing for the spring semester of 2023. Compared to last spring, enrollment is up by 110 students.
- Dr. Noland indicated that the number of applications for the fall 2023 class is also encouraging. Applications received are up 2.61 percent, while applications accepted are up 9.56 percent.
- Among ETSU's strategies to drive applications and yield are free application weeks, intent to enroll campaigns, admitted student events in various regions, and one-to-one outreach.
- Dr. Noland stressed the importance of students receiving personal calls from campus leaders and admissions counselors. He added that he has always been a believer in the power of the handwritten note and encouraged campus leaders, students, and admissions counselors to engage in this kind of personal communication often. He believes the "touch" ETSU is providing to prospective students resembles that of a private institution with a much smaller enrollment base.
- In reviewing reasons given for attending ETSU, Dr. Noland emphasized the fact that our students are much more price-sensitive than their peers.

Student success

- Dr. Noland reported to the board that ETSU's graduation rate is the highest in the history of the university. For the most recent six-year cohort—students who began as first-time, full-time freshmen in 2016 and graduated by 2022—the rate is 55 percent.

- Challenges facing ETSU are graduation rates for under-represented, low-income, and male students. They trail state averages and point to the importance of strategies such as the Moon Shot for Equity initiative.
- Figures show that students at ETSU who receive Pell grants have a 48 percent chance of graduating, whereas non-Pell students have a 70 percent chance of graduating.
- Further, there is a 13.5 percent disparity between graduation rates of male students (52 percent) and female students (65.5 percent).

Budget overview and update

- ETSU experienced revenue enhancements from enrollment growth and increased state appropriations over the past year. Several factors contribute to the institution's current revenue picture, including the fact that enrollment exceeded projections, providing \$3.8 million in additional revenue.
- The state-funded salary pool for 2023-24 will provide \$4,406,500 for faculty and staff salary enhancements. The remaining \$3,605,900 will be generated through tuition, internal efficiencies, and cost savings.
- Expenses by classification clearly show that ETSU spends the bulk of its dollars on people.
- A decade ago, university reserves stood at \$9.8 million. Now they exceed \$20 million. Total reserves make up 9.4 percent of the budget. E&G reserves have increased 104 percent since 2013.

Legislative and campus initiatives

- At the top of the legislative agenda for the 2023 session of the Tennessee General Assembly is the need to clarify and perhaps re-evaluate the role, nature, and function of the state's higher education policy infrastructure.
- Other components of ETSU's legislative agenda this year include predictability for capital projects and funding for the Brown Hall Phase II project and deferred maintenance projects; social justice and equity discussions; advocating for state operating support for the Gatton College of Pharmacy; remedying technical and policy issues related to Graduate Medical Education funding for the Quillen College of Medicine; and ETSU Board of Trustees confirmation hearings.

- Dr. Noland took time at this point in his presentation to thank all the university employees who were on campus Christmas Eve and Christmas Day dealing with damage caused by the extremely cold temperatures and resulting power outages.
- Dr. Noland then summarized several initiatives underway for the 2023 spring semester, including campus construction projects, implementation of recommendations from multiple external reviews to support our fiscal stewardship missions (such as the Huron consultancy and budget model revisions); Oracle implementation; general education redesign; the upcoming reaffirmation visit by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges; and the Quality Enhancement Plan.
- Dr. Noland updated the board on conversion to the Oracle Enterprise Resource Planning system, which replaces the Banner system that is now over 20 years old. Plans are to go live with the transition in the finance areas in September and in human resources areas in December. Dr. Noland pointed out that ETSU is the leading institution statewide in undergoing this conversion. He told the board that ETSU has a tradition of “going first,” pointing to the time when the university stepped up 20 years ago to be the first in the state to go electronic in its SACS reporting and reaffirmation processes.
- The reworking of general education at ETSU is progressing, through the efforts of the General Education Redesign Task Force. The goal is to go live with the redesign in the fall of 2024.
- Dr. Noland reviewed the timetable for reaffirmation of ETSU’s accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. An on-site reaffirmation review will take place in April, with reaffirmation anticipated in December.
- Moving forward, Dr. Noland emphasized the importance of celebrating our success at the individual and institutional levels; continuing the Committee for 125 Chapter II implementation process and engaging internal and external constituencies in the process of dreaming bigger dreams for our region and beyond; recognizing that ETSU has the opportunity to unify the region in pursuit of common goals and objectives; and stressing the importance of ETSU as a driver of innovation and growth across the region.
- Dr. Noland shared the results of a public opinion survey by the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) and some key takeaways from that survey:

- When asked what the primary issues facing Tennessee are, respondents placed K-12 public education as second, behind the economy, jobs, and cost of living.
- More than 70 percent of Tennessee voters do not believe high school graduates are properly prepared for a job.
- Over 77 percent of respondents view higher education in Tennessee in a positive way.
- While nearly three-quarters of 18-24-year-old Tennesseans believe that getting an education beyond high school is “worth it,” there is a strong sense that the value of an education beyond high school has decreased and there is significant concern over cost.
- The study found that the post-pandemic labor market continues to favor college-educated workers and that college graduates can expect to earn \$1.5 million more over the course of their careers than an individual with only a high school diploma.
- The study suggests that concerns over affordability, debt, and the need for a strong return on investment are critical considerations that must be addressed in order for more students and families to invest in postsecondary education.
- For 18-24-year-olds who have not made up their minds or do not plan on postsecondary education, improved personal finances were the most cited factor that would make them more likely to attend.
- Dr. Noland shared with the board a collection of statewide data, categorized by development districts, that show rates of higher education attainment, sources of income, unemployment rates, college-going rates, and other demographics. He indicated that the numbers show a huge percentage of people in ETSU’s immediate region sitting out of the work force. The area leads the state in the percentage of the population paid by transfer payments and ranks lowest in median personal income. He added that we live in an area where the college-going rate has dropped 26 percent since 2017. Enrollment growth in postsecondary education, he told the board, is the life blood for this region. The P20 initiative will strive to address these trends. It will be policy- and data-focused, under the leadership of ETSU’s Dr. Jeff Moorehouse. He is focusing his efforts this spring on identifying the needs of the region as part of his listening sessions with P20 and business leaders.

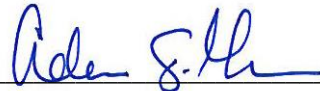
XIII. Other Business

The board welcomed members of ETSU's Mock Trial Team. Although the team is less than a year old, it brought home two awards from the American Mock Trial Association's regional tournament in Dayton, Ohio. Team member Makenna Harrell won the Outstanding Witness Award, and the group captured the Spirit of American Mock Trial Association Award. The board expressed its congratulations to the team for its successes.

XIV. Executive Session—Adjournment

Since there was no need for the board to convene in executive session, Chair Latimer asked Trustee Ramsey for a motion to adjourn. The meeting was then adjourned at 3:12 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 April 21, 2023 meeting.