

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MINUTES

February 19, 2021
Johnson City, Tennessee

The quarterly meeting of the East Tennessee State University Board of Trustees was held at 1 p.m. on Friday, February 19 at the Martin Center for the Arts and via teleconference. The meeting was livestreamed to allow individuals to attend remotely.

I. Call to Order

Chair Scott Niswonger called the meeting to order at 1 p.m.

In his opening remarks, Chair Niswonger spoke about the new Martin Center for the Arts that is already serving as classrooms for many students and plans are underway for what types of events may be hosted in the future. Dr. Noland announced the ETSU Arts Initiative in February 2013 to support arts programming at ETSU and acquire matching funds for the new arts center. Chair Niswonger thanked all those who supported this dream, as it is now a reality.

Several initiatives were outlined that have transpired since the beginning of 2021:

- Launch of ETSU Research Corporation
- Former FBI agent Jeffery Blanton joined ETSU as the Assistant Vice President for Administration and Director of Emergency Management
- U.S. News and World Report ranked the College of Nursing for its online programs
- American Association of State Climatologists officially recognized ETSU as the official home for the Tennessee Climate Office.

Chair Niswonger applauded the ETSU faculty, staff, students and ETSU Health's efforts to provide and participate in COVID-19 testing offerings and providing continual leadership in the region's response to the pandemic. Students from the Gatton College of Pharmacy and the College of Nursing have been active in helping to distribute COVID-19 vaccines.

II. Roll Call

Secretary Green called the roll.

The following Trustees were present:

Janet Ayers
Steve DeCarlo
Virginia Foley
Dorothy Grisham

Linda Latimer
Scott Niswonger
Austin Ramsey
Ron Ramsey
Melissa Steagall-Jones
Kelly Wolfe

Secretary Green said a physical quorum was present with Trustees Ayers and Grisham participating in the meeting via Zoom. In accordance with Tennessee Code § 8-44-108 section (c) (3), Secretary Green asked Trustees two questions for the record – If each Trustee participating remotely could clearly hear and participate in the meeting while ensuring those in the room could hear them, and second, if any other persons were present in the room of those participating remotely. Trustees Ayers and Grisham indicated that they could clearly hear and participate, and that no other persons were present with them. Secretary Green also noted that because Trustees were participating in the meeting remotely, all votes would be taken by roll call.

III. Public Comments

Because the meeting was conducted virtually for the public, Chairman Niswonger said public comments could not be received in the traditional manner. Therefore, those who would like to submit comments for the Board to receive were encouraged to email trustees@etsu.edu.

IV. Approval of Minutes from November 13, 2020

Trustee Ron Ramsey made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Trustee Wolfe and were unanimously approved by roll call vote.

V. Report from the Audit Committee

Chair Steagall-Jones reported that Ms. Becky Lewis provided two revisions to the audit plan to include the College of Nursing Dean's Office and follow-up to the Sunset Audit. She also provided three reports on audits completed since November including WETS-FM and other investigations. The committee reviewed the recommendation log for completed investigations and the heat map indicated that everything appears to be moving smoothly with no delays. Next, committee members met Chief Caesar Gracia and Mr. Jeff Blanton and heard a safety update on the CLERY Report.

VI. Report from the Academic, Research & Student Success Committee

In her report, Chair Latimer said the committee approved two action items – a New Academic Program Proposal for the Doctorate in Occupational Therapy and a Letter of Notification for the M.S. in Applied Data Science. Dr. Wilsie Bishop also presented the Academic Action Notifications for August 1 through December 31. Dr. Jana Scarborough gave a presentation on the Center of Excellence in STEM Education and the committee received an update from Dr. Keith Johnson on the search for a new Senior Vice President of Academics/Provost. Dr. Cheri Clavier then provided an overview of the complex work that goes into the accreditation process for

the Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Dr. David Linville briefed the committee on the Ballad Coordinating Council and the meeting ended with an exciting update on the Research Corporation provided by Dr. Noland and Mr. David Golden, followed by lively discussion.

VII. Report from the Finance and Administration Committee

Chair DeCarlo reported that the committee approved the housing and food service rates for 2021-22, which are included in the consent agenda. The salary pools in the Governor's proposed budget were also discussed as the university could receive \$3.1 million in salary improvement funding if the proposed state budget is approved. The committee reviewed comparative tuition and mandatory fee information for all public universities in Tennessee, and ETSU continues to be an affordable option. The committee also discussed preliminary tuition and fee increases to guide budget development. The colleges of medicine and pharmacy did not request a tuition increase for 2021-22.

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission has proposed a 2% limit on tuition and mandatory fee increases. A 1.93% increase will be used for budget preparation to provide the university's match for the salary increase as well as fund an SGA wellness initiative, student activity fee, faculty tenure and employee insurance increase. Next, the committee reviewed a comparative analysis of the Composite Financial Index that shows ETSU is performing well in all ratios. The committee also reviewed agreements of \$250,000 or greater and received reports on capital outlay and maintenance projects from Mr. Jeremy Ross, and profiles and trends in Human Resources from Ms. Lori Erickson.

VIII. Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of Audit Committee Minutes from November 13, 2020**
- B. Approval of ARSS Committee Minutes from November 13, 2020**
- C. Approval of Finance and Administration Committee Minutes from November 13, 2020**
- D. Revisions to the FY 2020-21 Audit Plan**
- E. Approval of the New Academic Program Proposal – Doctorate in Occupational Therapy**
- F. Approval of Letter of Notification – M.S. in Applied Data Science**
- G. Approval of Housing and Food Service Rate Increases for FY22**
- H. Capital Budget Submittals and Disclosures for FY 2021-22**

Trustee Wolfe made a motion to adopt the consent agenda as presented that was seconded by Trustee Ron Ramsey. The consent agenda was adopted following a unanimous roll call vote.

IX. 2022 Board Meeting Dates

Secretary Green explained that the Board of Trustees is required by law to meet quarterly. Staff is recommending the approval of the proposed 2022 schedule found in the agenda packet. The proposed dates align closely with previous meeting dates.

Trustee Latimer made a motion to approve the 2022 meeting dates as presented. Trustee Grisham seconded, and the dates were approved unanimously by roll call vote.

X. Trustee Self-Evaluation Report

Secretary Green said Trustees completed a self-evaluation last spring before the pandemic. The evaluation consisted of 10 questions, half requiring a rating between 1-5 and the other half allowing for open comments. The response rate was 70 percent, and a summary of the responses is available in the agenda packet.

Secretary Green said Trustees will be asked to complete another self-evaluation in the coming weeks and to determine availability for a retreat to be held this summer.

XI. Public Records Rule

Dr. Mark Fulks reported that the Public Records Rule was recently published and public comments accepted. The proposed rule tracks existing state law and formalizes the process that was already in place as part of the Board of Trustees' responsibility to adopt its own rules and follows what was already in place from the Tennessee Board of Regents. Since ETSU became a locally governed institution, the public record rule prescribes the process that will govern public records requests and designates the public records request coordinator for the university. TCA 10-7-503 requires that public records be available during business hours to any citizen of the State of Tennessee unless an exemption exists by statute. ETSU is also permitted to recover reproduction costs, he added.

Dr. Fulks provided a summary of the proposed rule:

- Purpose is to provide economical and efficient access to public records as provided under the Tennessee Public Records Act;
- Section 3 provides that all ETSU records will be available during business hours for inspection by any Tennessee citizen unless an exception applies;
- Section 4 directs requests to a public records coordinator, a change in terminology because requests previously went to a public records custodian;
- Section 5 provides the process for reviewing and making determinations with regard to records requests and the requirement to consult with university counsel for legal questions;
- Section 6 states the schedule for reproduction costs and process for billing;
- Section 7 provides exceptions to inspect and copy public records that include certain confidential exceptions.

Dr. Fulks said two public comments were received during the comment period that were included in the agenda packet. One question resulted in the clarification of the title of public records coordinator. A hearing was held Feb. 2 via Zoom.

Trustee Steagall-Jones made a motion to adopt the Public Records Rule as presented. It was seconded by Trustee Latimer and passed unanimously following a roll call vote.

XII. COVID-10 Response – Center for Teaching Excellence and Information Technology

Dr. Amy Johnson provided an overview of the Center for Teaching Excellence, which was established in 2017 and works in partnership with many other groups on campus. In March, she and staff offered virtual office hours to assist faculty and provided several new programs and services such as “Pedagogy Preppers” and “Course Innovation Camp.” New publications were developed to respond to the pandemic and remote teaching as well as four teaching modalities with best practices for each.

During the summer, the Center for Teaching Excellence offered equity and inclusion resources including the “21 Day Antiracism Challenge” for faculty and another for students, a “Creating Culturally Inclusive Classrooms” workshop, and more. Dr. Johnson reported that faculty who attended workshops and/or engaged with the Center shared how it positively impacted their course structure and teaching methods.

Dr. Johnson showed a series of testimonial videos from students providing examples of how they benefited from virtual faculty interactions. Many students said faculty went above and beyond to connect and engage in the remote learning environment.

Information Technology Services partnered with the Center for Teaching Excellence to support remote learning initiatives. Dr. Karen King gave a report on the ways ITS has supported the university throughout the pandemic that includes:

- Outdoor Wi-Fi access expanded; 1GB connectivity now supported;
- VoIP Upgrade to Cisco Jabber for use on any platform that allows users to answer office phone calls on their home computer;
- Increased bandwidth across campus;
- Zoom – Due to the high volume of video recordings saved on Zoom, storage was increased to 14TB, then recordings were moved to Panopto platform offering unlimited storage and live closed captions;
- At least 100 cameras were added to classrooms. All classrooms are Zoom and lecture capture ready;
- Purchased extra equipment for checkout – hotspots, laptops, webcams and headsets;
- Provided accelerated course development for instructors moving an on-ground course to remote delivery quickly;
- High performance computing from Amazon Web Services – Offered students remote lab connectivity via virtual computer desktop in AWS and went live within four days after request;
- Assisted with technology needs for COVID-19 testing site.

XIII. Supporting Students with Critical Needs

Dr. Joe Sherlin provided Trustees with a broad overview of the actions taken by the Division of Student Life and Enrollment during the COVID-19 pandemic. One early action he noted was the institution's efforts to call all ETSU students to check-in and provide support as needed. He commended students for being resilient, appreciative, tough, humble, and respectful as they navigated their pursuits of a degree during a pandemic. Dr. Sherlin stated that as a result of the institution's safety protocols and the reduction of the number of students residing in the residence halls, the number of students that had to be quarantined or isolated remained low throughout the entire pandemic. He then called on Dr. Michelle Byrd, Dean of Students to provide additional information.

Dr. Byrd presented the following:

- Instruction is still being delivered primarily online.
- Residential occupancy is at approximately 55 percent of capacity.
- Non-athletic, co-curricular activities and events continue to be delivered primarily online.
 - ETSU hosted more than 400 virtual events and more than 100 in-person events in the Fall 2020.
- Student service offices, including the Counseling Office, continue to provide virtual appointments with students when face-to-face appointments cannot take place.
- On-campus students and staff continue to adhere to appropriate safety protocols.
- Bucky's Food Pantry has experienced an increase of 30 percent during the pandemic.
 - Plans are underway to bring a distribution site to the D.P. Culp Student Center and a "swipe out hunger" program will start this fall allowing students to donate their guest passes from their meal plan so they can be reassigned to students in need to provide access to a hot meal from the cafeteria.
- Staff across the institution have partnered to provide students technology support including loaner lap-tops, hotspots, enhanced Wi-Fi in outdoor campus spaces, and increased technology support.
- The Day of Giving "Bucs Help Bucs" campaign raised over \$100,000 for emergency funding last year. The average emergency grant award to students has been \$500.

Dr. Byrd concluded her presentation by thanking the board and commending the resiliency of ETSU students, faculty, and staff.

Chair Niswonger applauded staff for treating students as family.

XIV. Key Performance Indicators and Committee for 125 Chapter 2 Update

Dr. Noland provided an overview of the upcoming work of the Committee for 125 Chapter 2. He recalled the work of the Committee for 125 noting that ideas emerged

from the bottom up rather than top down and shaped the vision for ETSU. As ETSU embarks upon a new strategic planning process, landscape changes since 2012 will need to be considered, such as the creation of the Board of Trustees, the looming demographic cliff, affordability and public perceptions of higher education.

Next, Dr. Hoff outlined the structure and the focus for the Committee for 125 Chapter 2 process and the important role that data will play in the planning process. Key performance indicators (KPIs) factor into how strategic planning is structured, and in 2016, enrollment was both the biggest challenge and opportunity. Nationwide enrollment fell 11 percent from 2011-19 but only fell six percent at ETSU, which is better than the market. Additionally, giving to the institution increased, and we reached the highest graduation and retention rates in the history of the university.

Dr. Hoff walked the Trustees through the steps completed prior to the launch of the Committee for 125 Chapter 2. A retrospective and discovery report will be shared with campus and committee membership will be named in the coming weeks and will comprise of national and regional leaders. Membership of the taskforces will be announced in Mid-April. The taskforces will focus on:

- Academics
- ETSU Health
- Student Success/Experience
- Research and Scholarship
- Sustainability

Dr. Noland said Trustees would receive a progress update at its April meeting, and the work of the Committee for 125 Chapter 2 will frame the discussion of the Board of Trustees retreat this summer.

XV. College of Public Health Spotlight

Dr. Randy Wykoff provided an overview of the College of Public Health which aims to be the school of choice for students who want an exceptional education and a world-class experience. Dr. Wykoff compared the approach to the “hotel analogy” and the importance of the experience, establishing relationships and having a laser focus on excellence. Enrollment has doubled since the college gained accreditation with 6.5 percent annual growth and spring 2021 enrollment was up nearly 11 percent. Research productivity has surpassed \$5 million with an annual growth rate of 25 percent. Additionally, the College of Public Health is a recognized national leader in Addiction Science, Women’s Health and Rural Health. To maintain momentum, Dr. Wykoff highlighted several areas the college must focus on in the coming year including the Lamb Hall renovation and how to maintain student engagement while the building is offline.

Trustees congratulated Dr. Wykoff for the success achieved by faculty, staff and students in the College of Public Health.

XVI. President’s Report

President Noland began his report by providing a statement about events impacting the region in recent days. He said that in addition to the pandemic, over the last year, we have witnessed protests against inequity and violence, and that the campus is searching for ways to bring healing to these issues. Each of us, he continued, brings our individual life experiences to the table and are all part of a quilt that ties us together as a community. Dr. Noland said over the last year, student athletes have shared their experiences and together have looked for ways to express their pain and frustration. In mid-February at an away basketball game, a group of student athletes knelt during the national anthem, something that has repeatedly occurred on college campuses across the country. Dr. Noland said he does not believe the students had any intention of being disrespectful to our nation's flag or our service members, veterans and their families. Upon hearing from many across the region, he recognized the hurt, pain and emotions as these events have unfolded. Purposeful and intentional conversations regarding social justice, equity and structural disparities are healthy and healing, he continued, and will plant seeds of change. The values of East Tennessee State University have defined our campus this past year, and the campus will strive to move forward as a place where the diversity of ideas and perspectives are respected. In conclusion, Dr. Noland reaffirmed ETSU's commitment to its mission to serve the region.

Next, Dr. Noland spoke about enrollment challenges that exist across the state. The decrease in enrollment that ETSU experienced in fall and spring are within the budget parameters. In terms of applications, last year was a banner year but did not result in high yield, or students attending, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While application numbers are up for fall 2021, students have expressed concerns about paying for school and academic fatigue, and not being able to access high schools to meet with students and counselors one-on-one.

The university has expanded its marketing and outreach initiatives such as Free Application Week and new students will receive orientation gift boxes to welcome them to ETSU. Dr. Noland provided an example of a digital ad aimed at prospective students and said every student accepted receives a hand-written note. Those receiving scholarships receive personal phone calls encouraging them to enroll in courses for fall 2021.

Dr. Noland then provided a budget outlook upcoming fiscal year. He also reminded Trustees that last fiscal year, the university faced an \$8.2 million budget gap, resulting in several budget adjustments including:

- 5.3 percent cut for administrative units and 4.3 percent cut for academic units
- Purchasing and travel restrictions
- Voluntary retirement program was implemented

Auxiliary services were negatively impacted due to the decrease in housing occupancy, but the university remains in solid shape. In comparison to other public institutions, ETSU is in a good position because of Governor Bill Lee's decision to hold higher education harmless from budget cuts.

In terms of capital funding, Dr. Noland noted that he would continue to work with the General Assembly on opportunities to fund the proposed Academic Building to replace the Campus Center Building. He then went over several initiatives for the spring semester, including planning for an increased on-ground presence in fall 2021.

At the conclusion of his report, Trustees discussed current challenges and opportunities to unify the campus and community around common goals presented by the Committee for 125 Chapter 2.

XVII. Other Business

No other business was brought before the ETSU Board of Trustees.

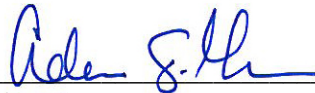
XVIII. Executive Session

The Board of Trustees determined it was not necessary to meet in Executive Session.

XIX. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Adam Green
Secretary of the Board of Trustees

Approved by the Board of Trustees at its April 23, 2021 meeting.