

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MINUTES

March 23, 2020
Johnson City, Tennessee

A special called meeting of the East Tennessee State University Board of Trustees was held at 4 p.m. on Monday, March 23 via teleconference call due to extraordinary circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak. The meeting was livestreamed to allow individuals to attend remotely.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Scott Niswonger called the meeting to order. He noted that the meeting was being conducted through Zoom and streamed live, and he asked Secretary Adam Green to go through the process of conducting telephonic meetings.

II. ROLL CALL

Secretary Green provided special instructions for telephonic meetings. Because Trustees participated remotely, he said any votes must be taken by roll call vote. He then called roll and asked Trustees if they could clearly hear and participate in the meeting and if any other persons were present in the room. The following Trustees were present, able to hear the telephonic meeting and did not have any persons in the room from which they participated in the meeting:

Janet Ayers
Steven DeCarlo
Virginia Foley
David Golden
Linda Latimer
Scott Niswonger
Ron Ramsey
Cristopher Santana
Kelly Wolfe

Secretary Green said he did not detect a physical quorum present; however, a quorum existed by the inclusion of members participating by electronic means. He explained that in accordance with Tennessee Code § 8-44-108 section (b) (2), the meeting was necessary due to the COVID-19 virus outbreak and its impact on the East Tennessee State University. Secretary Green also contended that participation by a quorum of the Board members by electronic or other means of communication was necessary. He then asked Chairman Niswonger for a motion and roll call vote for a determination on the necessity of holding the meeting. Trustee Wolfe made a motion

that was seconded by Trustee Golden. Secretary Green initiated a roll call vote, and all present Trustees voted to signify a necessity for the meeting to proceed. Trustee Grisham joined the meeting after roll call.

III. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Brian Noland thanked Trustees for convening by Zoom to allow him an opportunity to provide an update on a number of elements underway across campus as the university responds to the COVID-19 virus.

He thanked Trustees for their support and Chairman Niswonger for his guidance and counsel to the leadership team. Dr. Noland said that while the pace has changed over the last couple of weeks, and at times been overwhelming, he could not be more proud of faculty and staff at ETSU for the manner they have responded to the changing world around them. They worked throughout spring break to ensure that we were ready for classes to resume online. Two weeks ago, only 900 of the 3,000 classes currently offered were online and today all those courses have resumed online, he said. Dr. Noland also thanked faculty and staff for their patience and commitment to the teaching, research, and service mission.

In addition to moving courses online, the university has developed new operating procedures so that staff can work from remote environments and set up new support structures for students. Dr. Karen King and her staff in Information Technology Services have worked around the clock to ensure that technology needs are met.

Dr. Noland has sent regular updates to inform the Board of the measures provided in this update. He said it is critical as one of the leaders of the health sciences operation in our region and in the state to do our part to flatten the curve. Part of that is limiting the scope of public access to campus. The president reported that the bulk of faculty and staff are working remotely as of mid-March.

Knowing that it is only a matter of time before there is a case from our campus as cases have been confirmed at sister institutions from students returning to campus after spring break, Dr. Noland said it has been very important to make sure students move out of residence halls. Two weeks ago, more than 2,700 students were living in residence halls. Initially, around 850 students registered their intent to remain on campus, and work was done to reduce that number. There are a number of students who must remain on campus, such as international students and those with no place to return. Dr. Noland said ETSU will support and serve those students. For students who have left campus and returned to their permanent home, the university is committed to offering refunds, credits, or the opportunity to donate to those in need, and the process through which this will occur is being examined, he stated. The Board of Trustees' Finance Committee will meet April 1 and will hear a proposal for how the university plans to handle refunds, credits, and donations as it pertains to outstanding housing balances and balances on meal plans. The details are forthcoming, he

continued, but the university remains committed to offering prorated refunds as appropriate.

With respect to Commencement, Noland noted that he is reticent to cancel the ceremony for he hopes that conditions change, but, he is aware that details are needed about the postponement. He assured Trustees that degrees will be conferred in May, but details have not been worked out about the ceremony. All events on campus have been canceled through the end of the spring semester. This is very hard for all of us to absorb, Dr. Noland continued, and many capstone projects and other activities can hopefully continue in a virtual concept. For those seniors who have worked so hard to achieve these final goals and seasons, it is as if a piece of the institution has been removed.

Grounds and custodial staff are backfilling with extensive cleaning and sanitation measures. All buildings will be locked and only faculty and staff with keys can access facilities on a limited basis. President Noland thanked Public Safety for the work they are doing to ensure the safety of campus and facilities.

Dr. Noland said the continued safety of endowments is also being considered. The ETSU Foundation Committee and others have met on multiple occasions. While the fund balance is currently at \$81.6 million, down from \$100 million at the beginning of the year, the endowment is stabilizing and ETU is positioned to honor payments for scholarships and endowed chairs, etc.

Moving to a 100% online format and other decisions were made quickly, but also within the spirit of shared governance. Senior staff worked with Faculty Senate and Staff Senate, as well as the Student Government Association to establish and change policies and protocols in the face of these extraordinary circumstances.

An example of our focus on the mission was evident last Friday, when the Tennessee Higher Education Commission asked for medical supplies. Shortly thereafter, a partnership emerged with STREAMWORKS and the College of Business and Technology to develop and produce items to address critical needs and shortages. Dr. Noland thanked Dr. Keith Johnson and Trustee Golden for their leadership efforts. Even though we are working in remote settings, we continue to be focused on meeting the needs of the people in this region.

Each passing day, it seems darkness is falling on our country, Dr. Noland said. Our institution will remain a source of inspiration, hope, and light for our region. These are challenging times, he added, and we are being asked to sacrifice in ways not seen in recent generations. Dr. Noland said he is confident that in the days to come we will play a leadership role in not only meeting the needs of students, but for the region as a whole. In days to come, he hopes we can demonstrate kindness, patience, and faith in one another. President Noland said he does not know what tomorrow brings, but he believes deeply in the mission of the university and his colleagues who can rise to meet this challenge. We are doing all that we can to keep this university moving

forward, he added. He recognized that there will be challenges in the days and weeks to come. Through the leadership of this Board and the staff, which have been trusted with these responsibilities, we are positioned to rise to these challenges.

Dr. Noland then asked for questions.

Chair Niswonger said that on behalf of the Board of Trustees and the region, it has been a blessing to have President Noland leading the team of people who have risen to the occasion, and he is proud to be associated with ETSU. Trustee Golden echoed Chair Niswonger's comments and said he was very impressed by how quickly things are running and the can-do cooperative that is clearly regionally focused.

Trustee Foley said she appreciated the guidance that the move to courses online would not cost students any additional fees. She is also thankful the university is allowing as many people as possible to work from home. She hopes the university is being flexible in how people have to account for their hours as long as they are getting their work done because many people are supervising their children who are home from school.

President Noland thanked Trustee Foley for her comment about no additional cost for students to take their courses online. He and others recognize that many people are home with their children because schools are closed. Faculty in University School also have to prepare. He said our commitment has been that all full-time eligible faculty and staff remain in their positions. As we move into summer, part-time employees and others may change, but through the close of the semester, all of our contract employees, etc. are working from home. We are going to put together an employee pool, so if there are employees with additional time, they can help with recruiting, providing student support, mentoring, etc., he added. We will work through those things once we get through these first couple days of learning what it is like to work in this environment.

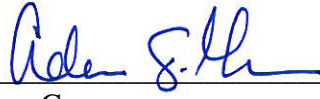
Trustee Ayers asked about the status of being progressive in implementing telehealth to meet the needs of people right now. Dr. Noland said physical health care practices remain open and a mobile COVID-19 testing site opened last week.

Dr. Block said his team has been examining telehealth and signed a contract last week with a provider that makes it possible to offer those services. He said it should be up and running in the next two to three days. Trustee Ayers added that the nimbleness and swiftness that we move in delivering health care is critically important and the way we deliver health care will be forever changed after this.

Chair Niswonger asked if there was any other business to come before the Board. Hearing none, he again thanked leadership for the quick reaction to the crisis in which we find ourselves.

Trustee Ramsey made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Adam Green

Secretary of the Board of Trustees

Approved by the Board of Trustees at its April 24, 2020 meeting.