EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MINUTES

May 21, 2026
Johnson City, Tennessee

The East Tennessee State University Board of Trustees met on Thursday, May 21, 2026, at 1:01 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

Chair Melissa Steagall-Jones called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. She began by highlighting some of the university's recent successes and achievements. Among them:

- ETSU conferred 2,061 degrees during spring commencement exercises
- Two ETSU students, Trent Lewis and Raina Desai, recently earned the prestigious Goldwater Scholarship
- With strong support from the Northeast Tennessee legislative delegation, the Tennessee General Assembly approved $3.2 million in additional recurring funding for the Bill Gatton College of Pharmacy
- ETSU Health Family Medicine has been awarded a $2.4 million grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration to begin a new street medicine program, which will serve people experiencing homelessness across the region. The program, called "Taking to the STREETs," will initially train 60 resident physicians, with plans to expand to 140 residents within five years. ETSU Health is one of only 24 grantees nationwide to receive this funding. Care will be provided directly in shelters, day centers, and encampments.
- The Tennessee Higher Education Commission has approved the launch of two new academic programs at ETSU: the M.S. in Environment, Health, and Disaster Sciences and the B.B.A. in Hospitality and Tourism Management

II. Roll Call

Board Secretary Dr. Adam Green led the roll call.

Trustees physically present were:

Chair Melissa Steagall-Jones
Trustee Charles Allen
Trustee Janet Ayers
Trustee Wade Farmer

Trustee Dr. Steph Frye-Clark
Trustee Dorothy Grisham
Trustee Jon Lundberg
Trustee Ron Ramsey
Trustee Grant Summers
Trustee Tony Treadway
Trustee Aashi Vora

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

III. Public Comments

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

IV. Approval of Minutes from February 20, 2026

The minutes from the February 20, 2026, meeting of the Board of Trustees were approved as submitted, with Trustee Janet Ayers making the motion to approve and Trustee Grant Summers seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

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

Trustee Janet Ayers reported on the following:

- The committee approved Provost Kimberly McCorkle's request to grant promotion and tenure for 56 faculty members. The faculty presented for promotion and tenure were recommended by President Noland as meeting the university's requirements.
- The committee approved four action items presented by Provost McCorkle related to tenure and promotion:
  - The Tenure and Promotion Policy for Tenure-Track and Tenured Faculty
  - The Promotion Policy for Renewable Term Faculty
  - The Termination of Tenure Policy
  - The Faculty Misconduct Policy
- The committee heard, as an information item, a presentation by Dr. Nick Hagemeier, Vice Provost for Research. Dr. Hagemeier presented the university's new Research Strategic Plan, which includes an updated vision for research at ETSU over the next five years. The plan includes five emphasis areas. Dr. Hagemeier also provided an update on recent research highlights and metrics.
- The committee then heard a presentation by Provost McCorkle on highlights from the Division of Academic Affairs. She referenced the two new academic programs recently approved by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, gave updates on two college dean searches, and discussed ETSU's recognition as a Carnegie Community Engaged University. Provost McCorkle outlined plans

now underway to develop new academic programs, including engineering and a nurse anesthetist program in the College of Nursing.

VI. Report from the Finance and Administration Committee

In the absence of Committee Chair Steve DeCarlo, Board of Trustees Chair Melissa Steagall-Jones provided the report on the committee's activities. During its morning meeting, the committee approved the tuition and mandatory fees for FY27 (included in the board's Consent Agenda). She said the proposed undergraduate in-state tuition and mandatory fee rates would come to $474 per academic year, bringing total undergraduate in-state tuition and mandatory fees to $11,468, a 4.31 percent increase. The committee approved a reduction in tuition for the Bill Gatton College of Pharmacy for FY27, made possible by additional support from the state. (This item is also included in the board's Consent Agenda.) The committee approved the university's spring estimated budgets and the July proposed budgets (included in the Consent Agenda). The budget for the main campus and auxiliaries reflects approximately $344 million in revenues and expenditures. The committee approved the FY27 capital budget submittals and disclosures (included in the Consent Agenda). Capital outlay projects total $166 million, capital maintenance $27 million, and capital disclosures $125 million. The committee's final action item was approval of the university's Financial Exigency Policy (also included in the Consent Agenda).

The committee received a quarterly financial update, showing growth in unrestricted E&G revenues and expenditures compared to the prior year. The committee then reviewed the university's Statement of Net Position. Discussion of the FY25 Composite Financial Index was deferred to the committee's next meeting because of time. Finally, the committee heard a report on agreements of $250,000 or greater for the period of January through March, including RFPs upcoming and in process.

VII. Report from the Audit Committee

Committee Chair Ron Ramsey reported that the Audit Committee approved revisions to the FY26 audit plan, including the addition of an advisory services engagement as well as fraud, waste, or abuse concerns. The committee completed annual reviews of charters and policies. The committee then heard a report on the completion of one audit that has taken place since January. The committee went into executive session to discuss active audits, enterprise risk management, and to review university risks and related internal controls. No deliberations occurred, and no action was taken.

VIII. Consent Agenda

Chair Steagall-Jones asked if there were any items on the Consent Agenda that needed to be pulled for discussion and consideration. There were none. Trustee Ramsey moved that the Consent Agenda be approved, and Trustee Lundberg seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

IX. Student Success Update

Dr. Michelle Byrd, Dean of Students and Senior Vice President for Student Life, led a panel discussion with three ETSU students to get their perspectives on factors that most influence student success. Those students were Hannah Tate, representing the Center for Academic Achievement; Cole Hoover, representing the First-Year Experience and BIGs (Buccaneer Involvement Guides) program; and Hunter Mahaffey, representing Community-Engaged Learning.

Dr. Byrd noted a marked increase in the number of first-time freshmen who are taking First-Year Experience courses, as well as the growth of the BIGs program, from 29 students in 2019 to 65 last year. She added that the one-on-one tutoring and supplemental instruction offered through the Center for Academic Achievement are making a decided difference in student grade outcomes. Further, she said, there are now over 100 courses designated for Community-Engaged Learning at ETSU and over 5,000 students have taken a CEL-designated course.

In responding to Dr. Byrd's question about their motivation to choose ETSU, the students pointed to the institution's personality, one-on-one support, and smaller class sizes; its proximity to home and being within commuting distance; and the sense of community that exists on campus.

Other major themes that emerged during the discussion were:

- The value of self-advocacy for peers
- The confidence that these first-year programs instill in students
- The sense of belonging that students feel
- The value of knowing where to go and whom to see to access resources
- The way in which Community-Engaged Learning is teaching students to be active members of the community
- The need for the institution to keep investing in these types of student success initiatives

X. President's Report

Dr. Noland began by reviewing the mission of the university, a mission that has guided us for 110 years: to improve the quality of life for the people of the region and beyond. Dr. Noland then turned to the university's Strategic Planning Framework and one of its pillars, Access and Success. He provided a look at spring 2026 enrollment, which was up by 336 students year over year. Graduate and professional enrollment was down slightly, consistent with national trends. The fall-to-spring persistence rate is up, at 90.9 percent, which is close to a university record. Dr. Noland provided a look at application data for the incoming freshman class. The applicant total was 10,830, an increase of 26 students over the previous year. Dr. Noland predicted that ETSU would be on track to meet its enrollment projection for the fall 2026, which aligns with the institution's budget planning parameters.

Dr. Noland then reviewed recent accolades. The College of Medicine is ranked in the top 50 nationally for its focus on primary care, and for the third consecutive year, it is in the top five nationally for graduates who go on to practice in underserved areas. The College of Pharmacy's licensure pass rates place it in the top five in the country, number two in the Southeast, and number one in Tennessee. Eighteen ETSU programs recently underwent successful accreditation reviews, and many had no findings. The most recent state audit for the university included no findings. Dr. Noland said that for an access-oriented institution where 40 percent of the students are first-generation, and more than half are Pell-eligible, ETSU's honors and recognitions are most impressive. Among them are three Rhodes Scholarship finalists, two Truman Scholars and a Truman finalist, 14 Benjamin Gilman Scholars, eight Fulbright semi-finalists, and two Goldwater Scholars.

Turning to Research and Innovation, Dr. Noland told the board that ETSU has seen an increase of more than 500 percent in research expenditures since 2015. Against that backdrop, the new Research Strategic Plan outlines this new vision: ETSU is recognized, through funding, rankings, and impact, as one of the premier regional public research universities in the nation. Dr. Noland described the emphasis areas included in the new plan: applied technology and engineering; biomedical sciences and clinical translation; environmental systems, hazards, and the outdoors; rural health and Appalachian thriving; and the science of education and engagement.

President Noland began his legislative and budget update with a quotation from Sidney G. Gilbreath, the first President of East Tennessee State Normal School: "The State college is not only a religious industry, a cultural industry, an educational industry, and a social industry, but it is one of the largest financial industries of the community. All are in favor of it. Now the problem is how to make our support politically effective." President Noland pointed out that ETSU faces these same challenges today. He reported that there was much conversation in this year's legislative session about higher education, tenure and promotion, and the role of faculty, free speech, and governance. He expressed gratitude to members of the Board of Trustees and the Northeast Tennessee legislative delegation for the additional state funding for the College of Pharmacy and for funding for capital and deferred maintenance projects. He said that the university is closely watching the Rural Health Transformation funding and how it might support our mission. Dr. Noland summarized legislation that changed the Outcomes Formula, requiring the Tennessee Higher Education Commission now to reward institutions on four-year graduation rates rather than six. He then reviewed changes that have occurred in the THEC formula over the years, beginning with the era when all state dollars were primarily based on enrollment. In 2011, he explained, THEC changed its formula, moving away from enrollment in favor of outcomes. Dr. Noland then outlined the criteria on which these outcomes and funds are now predicated and the various benchmarks within the formula.

Dr. Noland provided a look at the THEC Financial Needs Analysis for 2026-27, noting that 3.4 percent of the 4.31 percent increase in tuition and mandatory fees that was just approved by the board is going, in its entirety, to fund salaries. He reminded the board that when the state provides for salary increases, it only pays for half. He said if ETSU were to raise tuition and fees to keep pace with inflationary costs, the increase would have had to have been 8.2 percent. Therefore, he added, the university is taking steps to throttle expenditures and live within the existing budget. He underscored the fact that 70 percent of our budget is devoted to supporting faculty and staff salaries.

Dr. Noland reported to the board that a large percentage of capital funding this year went to the University of Tennessee Health Sciences Center, but ETSU's $19.2 million for main campus utility infrastructure is a first-of-a-kind project. Dr. Noland summarized the maintenance work that is occurring on campus this summer: safety and steam line repairs, site work on the Academic Building, housing renovations, Brown Hall renovation, pickleball courts at the Center for Physical Activity, and a modular classroom in Alexander Hall.

In presenting an overall summary of the university's budget, he said that of the more than $420 million total budget, some 43 percent is generated by tuition and fees, and 42 percent comes from state appropriations. Salaries and benefits account for 71 percent. Dr. Noland told the board that we now have $33.6 million in reserves. He said a minimum of $2.5 million in new resources will flow through the budget model to colleges and administrative units to support growth and outcomes once the new fiscal year begins.

Dr. Noland indicated that ETSU continues to make investments in faculty and staff salaries. From the fall of 2022 to the spring of 2026, we have invested more than $26.5 million in new dollars for faculty and staff salaries. Effective May 1, 2026, there will be another $1.5 million in market salary adjustments for approximately 290 faculty, at an average of around $2,300 each. Staff will receive a flat increase of $700. The goal is to move faculty and staff salaries closer to peer averages.

Dr. Noland closed his presentation by congratulating Trustee Vora for her recent graduation as a Quillen Honors Scholar at ETSU and her upcoming experience at Harvard University. He also noted that two former trustees, Aamir Shaikh and Allen Archer, recently received their M.D. degrees from the Quillen College of Medicine. Dr. Noland expressed thanks to Dr. Randy Wykoff, founding Dean of the College of Public Health, as he prepares to retire.

XI. Action Item: Resolution of Appreciation for Trustee Aashi Vora

Dr. Noland presented, for the Board's consideration, a resolution honoring and thanking Trustee Aashi Vora for her work as a member of the East Tennessee State University Board of Trustees. Trustee Lundberg made a motion to approve the resolution, and Trustee Grisham seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

XII. Action Item: Resolution of Appreciation for Dr. Karen King

President Noland presented, for the Board's consideration, a resolution honoring and thanking Dr. Karen King for her work as ETSU's Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer. Trustee Steagall-Jones made a motion to approve the resolution, and Trustee Grisham seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

XIII. Action Item: Student Trustee Selection

President Noland submitted the name of Thomas Bales for consideration by the Board to be its next Student Trustee, based on Mr. Bales' nomination and confirmation by the Student Government Association. Mr. Bales is a first-generation student from Greene County, Tennessee, and a political science major at ETSU. Trustee Farmer made a motion to accept the recommendation, and Trustee Summers seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. Mr. Bales will join the board as a member of the Finance and Administration Committee.

XIV. Other Business

There was no other business to come before the board.

XV. Executive Session

There was no need to go into executive session.

XVI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Green
Secretary of the Board of Trustees

Approved by the Board of Trustees at its September 11, 2026 meeting.