

University Council

January 12, 2026

1. Call to Order

Dr. Kimberly D. McCorkle called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

2. Roll Call

Ms. Melissa Nipper led the roll call. Members present were: Dr. Ginni Blackhart, Dr. Bill Block, Dr. Debbie Byrd, Dr. Cheri Clavier, Dr. Dena Evans, Dr. Joel Faidley, Mr. David Finney, Ms. Christy Graham, Dr. Adam Green, Dr. Nick Hagemeier, Dr. Mike Hoff, Dr. Keith Johnson, Dr. Chris Keller, Ms. Tricia Korade, Dr. Dhirendra Kumar, Ms. Kay Lennon-McGrew, Dr. Sam Mayhew, Provost Dr. Kimberly D. McCorkle, Mr. Cody Morelock, President Dr. Brian Noland, Dr. Rob Pack, Dr. Tony Pittarese, Mr. Howard Reddy, Mr. Jeremy Ross, Dr. Richard Sander, Dr. Alan Stevens, and Dr. Sarah Thomason.

3. Standing Items

3.1 Approve Minutes of the December 8, 2025, meeting.

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the December 8, 2025, meeting. The motion was seconded; the minutes were approved.

3.2 Review Agenda

Provost McCorkle began the meeting by inviting Dr. Dena Evans, Dean of the College of Nursing, to share a mission moment, highlighting the Nurse Narratives initiative, a partnership with Story Collab and Ballad Health that collects and shares nurses' stories to promote empathy in health care and nursing education. The project has influenced curriculum changes focused on empathy and recently culminated in a red-carpet premiere of an award-eligible film featuring nurses' stories, drawing nearly 400 attendees and advancing ETSU's mission regionally and beyond.

3.3 Call for Voluntary Reports of UC-Essential Action Items from Governance Organizations

Faculty Senate: Dr. Alan Stevens reported that the Faculty Senate is finalizing the faculty survey, which will launch in February. They are also continuing to work with the Provost's Office on policies, including tenure and promotion.

Staff Senate: Mr. Cody Morelock reported that the Staff Senate is working with the President's Office to finalize a date for the Staff Celebration at the end of May.

Council of Academic Chairs: Dr. Sarah Thomason reported that since the last meeting, they had conducted chair training sessions on Voyager on Crucial Conversations. Another session is planned this week with the Center for Teaching Excellence. Representatives from the council are working on the Research Strategic Plan work group and with the Student Success Work Group. They are also working to provide feedback on policies in process across the university and are developing a new policy for periodic review of chairs.

SGA: Dr. Michelle Byrd provided an update on SGA's work to plan the Appalachian Folk Festival, a one-day event to be held the first week of April. SGA is working with Dr. Ron Roach and Mr. Dan Boner, and ETSU alumna Amythyst Kiah will perform at the festival.

Athletics: Dr. Richard Sander noted an intensive football recruiting period, with approximately 50–55 roster spots to replace due to the transfer portal and athletes graduating. Men's basketball is currently leading the conference, women's basketball is rebuilding with a young roster, and baseball facilities were upgraded with a new locker room and turf in time for the season.

4. Action Items

4.1 Old Business

There was no old business to come before the council.

4.2 New Business

There was no new business to come before the council.

5. Information Items/Presentations

5.1 Enrollment Update

Drs. Sam Mayhew and Heather Levesque presented an update on spring term enrollment management. Dr. Levesque noted that student headcounts at risk of being dropped were decreasing rapidly due to coordinated outreach efforts across the Registrar, Bursar, Financial Aid, and Advising offices.

They highlighted key drop and census dates and encouraged campus partners to assist students who may be experiencing confusion or financial barriers to remaining enrolled. These cross-unit efforts aim to stabilize enrollment through the start of the term.

Updates were also provided on fall 2026 recruitment, showing growth in both freshman and transfer applications, with particularly strong early transfer interest. They presented information about the TN Direct Admissions pilot program, which has generated a higher-than-anticipated number of new prospective students, many of whom had not previously engaged with ETSU.

While the program presents challenges related to data gaps, student confusion, and additional processing requirements, it also aligns with the institution's access mission and offers meaningful recruitment potential as participation continues.

Additional highlights included positive progress with the earlier FAFSA opening and timely distribution of financial aid awards and the launch of Buc Central as a future one-stop student services hub. Dr. Levesque noted that Dr. Kim VanWie will serve as the director of Buc Central.

Dr. Mayhew addressed ongoing challenges in international recruitment due to global travel and safety concerns, noting a decline in new international enrollments but continued efforts to support current students and strengthen recruitment strategies through agent partnerships and faculty engagement.

He also provided updates on housing application timelines. Housing is preparing to launch a new software system this month, which has resulted in the new timeline. Finally, he reported that the current dining contract is coming to an end, and they are working through the details to secure a new contract.

5.2 Update on Voyager and the Task Force

Dr. David Smith and Ms. Christy Graham provided an update on the Voyager system and the Voyager Task Force.

Dr. Smith thanked Dr. Tony Norman and members of the Voyager Task Force for their work and noted that an internal team was formed to work downstream from the Task Force in order to further investigate and address issues raised by the Task Force.

Several operational areas were discussed, including payroll, recruiting, time and absence, and training. Payroll continues to stabilize as staff refine processes within Oracle, supported by ongoing knowledge transfer from Huron consultants, resulting in efficiencies such as reduced manual steps for overpay adjustments. In HR recruiting, configuration improvements and expanded training were identified as priorities, particularly for search chairs and hiring managers, to better align system functionality with ETSU's varied hiring needs.

Time and absence issues received significant attention, including workflow complexities, holiday leave processing, and a recent issue with annual leave balances. The leave balance issue was attributed to an external consultant error, not ETSU staff, and a corrective plan is underway to restore balances based on prior payroll snapshots and rerun accruals. Leadership emphasized the seriousness of the issue, ongoing communication with Oracle and Huron, and the expectation that remediation work would not result in additional costs to the university.

The update concluded with progress on system enhancements and overall system performance. New workflows and forms — including check requests, cost center manager updates, and organizational changes—are nearing completion, along with expanded reporting tools such as labor encumbrance dashboards and payroll distribution reports. Voyager usage metrics showed declining help desk tickets, steady use of guided learning tools, and a high volume of transactions processed daily, underscoring continued progress, increased stability, and ongoing responsiveness to campus feedback.

6. President's Report

President Noland welcomed members back for the spring semester and reflected on significant institutional accomplishments over the past year, including the successful implementation of the Voyager system, a new classification and compensation system, a new budget model, continued rollout of the general education core and academic restructuring, record freshman enrollment, full housing capacity, strong research productivity, and substantial campus physical improvements.

He also welcomed new leaders, including Mr. Howard Reddy, ETSU Vice President of Advancement, and Ms. Kay Lennon-McGrew, who is serving as interim University Counsel. He thanked Provost McCorkle for chairing the search committee for the new Assistant Vice President for Human Resources, a position they hope to have filled mid-semester.

He outlined upcoming budget planning for the 2026–27 academic year. He highlighted increased budget predictability under the new budget model, anticipated a 2.5% state-funded salary pool, and confirmed the distribution of market-based salary enhancements this spring.

He provided an overview of the upcoming legislative session, encouraging deans to review legislative updates sent by Bridget Baird and to communicate relevant questions or concerns.

Looking ahead, President Noland discussed leadership conversations around institutional mission, shared expectations, core performance goals, and values, with the intent of clarifying a small set of university-wide priorities and reinforcing the institution's longstanding value statement.

He announced that the university has received the Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement Classification, noting it as a significant milestone reflecting a long-term collective effort. He closed by encouraging focus on controllable priorities – people, collaboration, planning, and student success.

7. Announcements

Ms. Kay Lennon-McGrew, interim University Counsel, announced that while progress has been made in updating the university website for accessibility, work on policies remains. Her office

sent an email in December requesting that those policy updates be made by the end of January. She noted that in February and March, her office begins work on policies that have not yet been updated by departments, which may slow the policy process during that period.

Mr. Jeremy Ross, Chief Operating Officer, updated the council on the campus landscaping project near the University Commons, noting the installation of 12 large American elm trees that will eventually form a substantial canopy. The project is intended to create a more defined, shaded plaza with enhanced materials and design elements that emphasize history, sense of place, and long-term campus transformation.

8. Adjournment

Provost McCorkle adjourned the meeting at 10:05 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 9, 2026, at 8:30 a.m.