University Council Meeting Minutes
October 12, 2026
Zoom

1. Call to Order

Dr. Kimberly D. McCorkle called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. She welcomed the Council, wished everyone a happy Monday and a restful fall break, and thanked those who participated in and helped organize the previous week's Founders Week activities. She noted that the meeting was being held virtually due to fall break and member travel.

2. Roll Call

Ms. Claire Shoun led the roll call. Members present were: Ms. Bridget Baird, Dr. Kate Beatty, Dr. Brian Bennett, Dr. Joe Bidwell, Ms. Christy Graham, Dr. Adam Green, Dr. Nick Hagemeier, Dr. Mike Hoff, Dr. Keith Johnson, Ms. Myra Jones, Dr. Dhirendra Kumar, Ms. Kay Lennon-McGrew, Dr. Sam Mayhew, Mr. Cody Morelock, Ms. Melissa Nipper, Dr. Brian Noland, Dr. Tony Pittarese, Mr. Howard Reddy, Mr. Jeremy Ross, Dr. Richard Sander, Mr. Alex Simmons, Dr. Alan Stevens, Dr. Sarah Thomason, and MS. Rebecca Tolene.

3. Standing Items

3.1 Approve Minutes of the September 14, 2026, meeting.

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the September, 2026, meeting. The motion was seconded. No edits or additions were requested, and the Council approved the minutes.

3.2 Review Agenda

The agenda was reviewed, and the Council proceeded with the scheduled items.

3.3 Consent Agenda Items
A motion was made to approve the policies on the consent agenda (noted below). The motion was seconded and approved.

3.3.1 Website Governance

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

Faculty Senate: Dr. Kate Beatty reported that the Faculty Senate has met several times during the academic year and is developing resolutions to improve university processes. Current priorities include

reviewing procedures for reporting and addressing building maintenance concerns, evaluating the faculty-to-faculty survey and plans for sharing its results across campus, and continuing discussions with Athletics regarding student-athlete experiences.

Staff Senate: Mr. Cody Morelock provided an update on the annual Staff Senate Holiday Food Drive. Collection boxes will be distributed beginning October 19, with donations accepted through November 16. Food distribution is scheduled for November 19–20 in partnership with Bucky's Pantry. Last year's drive served 90 individuals and families, and the goal for this year is to prepare approximately 100 food bags. Additional marketing materials and donation instructions will be distributed later in the week.

Council of Academic Chairs: Dr. Sarah Thomason reported that the Council of Academic Chairs continues to work toward a comprehensive revision of the Chair Handbook, provide monthly chair development sessions aligned with the academic year, finalize a policy addressing the periodic review of academic chairs, and provide representation on key university committees.

Student Government Association: No update was provided.

Graduate and Professional Student Association: Alex Simmons reported that GPSA will host its first panel discussion on mental health and addiction in Central Appalachia on Thursday at 3:00 p.m. in Culp Center, Room 311, featuring representatives from Public Health, Television, Radio and Film, and Psychiatry. GPSA is also preparing a podcast series highlighting graduate student research and accomplishments, with a planned launch the following month. Additional panel discussions are anticipated before the end of the semester.

Athletics: Dr. Richard Sander provided updates on the fall athletic season and upcoming events. He also discussed the evolving national landscape of college athletics, including legal challenges, student-athlete eligibility, and proposed federal legislation. He reported that the Protect College Sports Act had passed the Senate and would proceed to the House for consideration. This provision would limit the number of transfers student-athletes may make without sitting out a season.

Information Technology Services: Ms. Myra Jones announced that beginning at 8:00 a.m. the following day, faculty can transfer grades directly from D2L to GoldLink, with documentation available to support implementation. The new functionality is expected to reduce faculty workload, particularly in large classes.

Ms. Jones also reported that Panorama, an accessibility tool within D2L, was activated on Friday and had processed approximately 227,000 files. The overall accessibility score was 72%, while PDFs scored approximately 30%. Faculty have begun using the tool to remediate documents, and processing is expected to continue through Wednesday without performance issues. Dr. McCorkle reiterated that campus-wide accessibility concerns must be addressed by April 1 and encouraged continued progress toward the deadline.

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 Space Usage Management Process – Jeremy Ross, Laura Bailey, and Alyson Agan

Jeremy Ross, accompanied by Laura Bailey, Alyson Agan, and members of the Facilities and Capital Planning team, presented an overview of the university's space usage management process. They explained that all campus facilities are state property, and space assignments must follow established procedures. Maintaining an accurate inventory supports state reporting and compliance, resource allocation, transparent decision-making, conflict resolution, and alignment with the university's master plan.

A space request is required for new or revised assignments, temporary use of space, significant renovations or modifications, and the release of space back to the university inventory. Ms. Agan reviewed the request form requirements and noted that the university processes approximately 350–400 requests annually. When a department receives new space, its previous space generally returns to the university inventory for reassignment.

Facilities Management reviews submitted requests and coordinates with relevant departments to implement approved space changes. Requests with financial implications exceeding $50,000, campus-wide impacts, or sensitive considerations are referred to the Space Usage Advisory Committee; campus-wide or sensitive requests are reviewed regardless of cost. Approved projects proceed through the appropriate planning and implementation processes, and Capital Planning updates the university's reporting database and floor plans. Projects exceeding $100,000 in construction costs may be referred to the State Building Commission.

In response to questions, Mr. Ross noted that processing timelines vary by request complexity. Competing requests are addressed through coordination among affected departments and university leadership, with unresolved matters referred to the Space Usage Advisory Committee for recommendation. Approximately 98.5% of competing requests are resolved through this process. Dr. Noland emphasized the importance of internal review and prioritization before requests advance for approval, while Dr. McCorkle underscored the need for accurate space reporting to maintain the state inventory and avoid audit findings.
Mr. Ross also emphasized the importance of submitting maintenance and repair requests through the official work order system. Building coordinators work with Facilities Management, and any university employee may submit a work order to ensure requests are documented and tracked through completion.

He encouraged Council members to reinforce the use of established channels for space requests and maintenance concerns. Dr. McCorkle invited the Facilities Management team to provide a future presentation on the work order process and campus maintenance activities.

5.2 ETSU GEAR UP – Dr. Tony Norman

Dr. Tony Norman provided an update on ETSU GEAR UP, a seven-year federal grant launched October 1, 2025, to increase college readiness, postsecondary enrollment, and educational success for students across six Northeast Tennessee school districts. Year 1 focused on establishing infrastructure, hiring staff, formalizing partnerships, and launching services. Year 2 will focus on coordinated implementation, stronger data systems, and measuring student outcomes.

The program has expanded its central office and school-based staffing, including 20 site coordinators, and appointed Jamie Williams as Assistant Director of Communications and Engagement. Additional coordinators may be hired as participating schools expand. The team is also improving communication with students, families, and schools through earlier announcements and advance notices of activities.

Year 2 priorities include student and family engagement, educator involvement, academic preparation and Algebra 1 readiness, career exploration, college readiness, and summer learning. District work plans align activities across the six districts while accommodating local needs. The program also coordinates calendars and professional development, implements data collection systems, and aligns internal and external evaluation efforts.

A key academic initiative focuses on improving Algebra 1 success by ninth grade through professional development, coaching, curriculum review, and implementation support for grades 7–9 educators. The program has implemented the PIE data system through the Vela Institute to monitor services, participation, and implementation in real time.

The internal evaluation team began collecting educator survey data in spring 2026. Initial findings indicate general awareness of GEAR UP, but further communication is needed about specific goals and services. Surveys also established baseline measures of educator expectations for students' postsecondary outcomes and perceptions of college and career culture. Educator engagement is increasing through Tutor.com training, Appalachia Sessions Live, kickoff events, and college and career readiness activities. Student survey participation is also increasing across the districts.

As of September 30, 2026, approximately 64% of Year 1 grant funds had been spent or encumbered, with final expenditures projected at 68%. Approximately $3.5 million in matching funds had been accumulated, representing 87% of the Year 1 requirement, and $1.3 million in carry-forward funding was anticipated. Carry-forward funds primarily reflect salary and benefit savings from gradual hiring and unspent district funds during the initial implementation period. The program is also exploring expanded summer programming, including a potential overnight ETSU-based camp in summer 2027.

Early fall reporting showed several hundred students participating in college and career awareness, advising, assessment, and planning activities. Dr. Norman highlighted engagement through the ETSU Rural Youth Career Expo, district kickoff events, and other regional initiatives. He noted that the program has moved beyond startup and is focused on coordinated implementation, data-informed decisions, educator engagement, and increased student and family participation.

Following the presentation, Dr. Adam Green commended the team's progress and asked about matching requirements and survey response rates. Dr. Norman explained that matching support includes discounted tutoring through Tutor.com, academic preparation and readiness resources from Method Learning, and community partner contributions. These contributions are being documented toward the matching requirement. Dr. Norman agreed to confirm survey response requirements with the evaluation team. Dr. McCorkle thanked Dr. Norman and invited him to provide future updates.

7. President's Report

Dr. Noland thanked university staff and leadership for their contributions to Founders Week and the State of the University Address. He specifically recognized Fred Sauceman's presentation on George L. Carter and acknowledged the continued impact of community support on the university. He also expressed appreciation for the efforts of those who contributed to ETSU Elevates and the preparation of the State of the University materials.

Dr. Noland discussed potential state-level developments that may affect higher education, including uncertainty surrounding the transportation budget, lottery scholarship funding, and a proposed Department of Government Efficiency initiative within state government that includes postsecondary education. He expressed appreciation for the efforts of university leadership and staff in maintaining ETSU's strong position among higher education institutions and supporting its continued success.

Dr. Noland concluded by recognizing Facilities Management staff for their efforts to address water intrusion in Nick's Hall over the weekend. The University Health Center remained closed on the day of the meeting due to the water issues, with remediation efforts underway ahead of the campus community's return from fall break.

8. Announcements

Dr. McCorkle invited members to share announcements or other items for the good of the order. No additional announcements were offered.

9. Adjournment

Provost McCorkle adjourned the meeting at 9:39 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for November 9, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. in the Culp East Tennessee Room.