

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MINUTES

February 21, 2020  
Johnson City, Tennessee

The quarterly meeting of the East Tennessee State University Board of Trustees was held at 1 p.m. on Friday, February 21 in the Millennium Center on ETSU's main campus in Johnson City, Tennessee. The meeting was also livestreamed for those who could not be in attendance.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Scott Niswonger called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

In his opening remarks, Chair Niswonger welcomed everyone to the ninth meeting of the ETSU Board of Trustees and highlighted a few of the numerous activities occurring across campus:

- Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee visited campus on Thursday, Feb. 6, for his “State of East Tennessee” address. Gov. Lee continues to provide significant funding increases for higher education across the state, and this includes strong support for ETSU. His proposed budget includes:
  - Additional investments in personnel through the recommendation of a salary enhancement for eligible employees;
  - Funding for deferred maintenance; and
  - A \$1.1 million improvement for ETSU to recruit additional pediatric surgeons and subspecialists.
- Last week the University hosted its second Annual Festival of Ideas Series, an initiative that began in 2019 and focuses on the University's role as a thought leader in the region and beyond. This year's theme was Dreams and Discord and included numerous speakers such as Jon Meacham, a Pulitzer Prize winning presidential biographer, historian, and television commentator.
- With the Board's support, President Noland announced that Dr. Bill Block, who has served as Dean of the Quillen College of Medicine for the past year, will assume additional responsibilities as the University's Vice President for Clinical Affairs and Dean of the College of Medicine. In his role as Vice President for Clinical Affairs, Dr. Block will be ETSU's lead liaison to Ballad Health, handle all contracts between ETSU and its health care partners, and hold clinical oversight of ETSU Health in association with the ETSU Health Advisory Board, which consists of all five deans of the colleges within the Academic Health Sciences Center at ETSU. These responsibilities are in addition to his ongoing duties as Dean of Quillen College of Medicine.

- Major renovations to the D.P. Culp Student Center are almost complete. Several offices began moving into the Culp this week, and the official opening will be Monday, Feb. 24. A weeklong grand reopening celebration is planned for March 2-6.
- Additionally, construction continues on the Martin Center for the Arts next door. Many Trustees participated in a celebratory event at the venue last week, and Chair Niswonger said it is going to be a truly transformative space for students, faculty, and community.
- Finally, he congratulated Trustees Grisham, Latimer, and Wolfe on their successful confirmation hearings with the Senate and House Education Committees of our General Assembly a couple weeks ago.

## II. ROLL CALL

Secretary Adam Green stated that Trustees Ayers and Grisham were attending the meeting by phone, which requires him to run through a series of questions before calling the roll. Because some Trustees were participating remotely, he said votes must be taken by roll call. In accordance with Tennessee Code § 8-44-108 section (c) (3), Secretary Green asked Trustees Ayers and Grisham individually if they could clearly hear and participate in the meeting and if any other persons were present in the room. Both Trustees answered yes that they could clearly hear and that they were alone. Members of the Board present in the room also indicated they could hear both Trustees Ayers and Grisham clearly.

Secretary Adam Green called the roll, and the following trustees were in attendance:

Janet Ayers (electronically)  
 Steven DeCarlo  
 Virginia Foley  
 David Golden  
 Dorothy Grisham (electronically)  
 Linda Latimer  
 Scott Niswonger  
 Ron Ramsey  
 Cristopher Santana

Chairman Niswonger noted that the previous day, the Executive Committee met to discuss a petition from Dr. Anthony Masino, a tenured faculty member who was terminated by the University on July 31, 2019. In light of that meeting, he asked for a motion to add a report for the Executive Committee to the agenda after the approval of the minutes. Trustee Golden made a motion to add the report to the agenda, which was seconded by Trustee Foley. The motion passed by roll call vote.

### **III. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No public comments were brought before the Board of Trustees.

### **IV. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 15, 2019**

Trustee Latimer made a motion to accept the minutes of the November 15, 2019, Board of Trustees meeting which was seconded by Trustee Ramsey and unanimously approved by roll call vote.

### **V. REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Trustee Golden said the Executive Committee met in executive session to review the matter of Mr. Anthony Masino and receive advice from counsel. This is a matter delegated to the Executive Committee in accordance to the bylaws. After review of the matter, the Executive Committee recommends that Mr. Masino's petition to appeal the President's decision to discharge Mr. Masino from his employment at ETSU should be denied. The Executive Committee are of the opinion that the University followed the proper procedures and correctly applied the law. Therefore, based on the Executive Committee's recommendation, Trustee Golden moved that the Board deny Mr. Masino's petition to appeal. Trustee Ramsey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

### **VI. REPORT FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Committee Chair Golden said two policies were presented and approved at the committee meeting:

1. Policy Development and Administrative Rulemaking
2. Public Records Rule

Trustee Golden made a motion for the Board to accept the policies. Trustee Ramsey seconded the motion and the policy as well as the rule were approved unanimously by roll call vote.

### **VII. REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC, RESEARCH, AND STUDENT SUCCESS COMMITTEE**

Committee Chair Latimer said the agenda included a review of the Academic Action Notifications for the period of August 1 through December 31, 2019, as well a presentation by Mr. Scott Carter to provide a Title IX overview of acrobatics and tumbling. The committee also received an update on Graduate Medical Education, the ETSU and Ballard Health Coordinating Council, and had a rich discussion on the creation of a university wide database of current research activities. The Committee also spent time discussing the matrix for ETSU and ETSU Eastman Valleybrook site and possibilities in the emerging field of synthetic biology. Framework for the Vice

President of Research and Innovation was also discussed, and the Committee voted to approve the Student Immunization Requirements Rule. Trustee Latimer made a motion to accept the rule. This was seconded by Trustee Golden and approved unanimously by roll call vote.

### **VIII. REPORT FROM THE FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**

Committee Chair DeCarlo outlined the following discussion items:

- The committee approved a 2% tuition increase for Quillen College of Medicine and 1.5% increase for Gatton College of Pharmacy, which were based on a cost study. Both colleges increased tuition by 2% last year.
  - a. The tuition increases approved by roll call vote
- The committee approved the Housing and Food Service Non-Mandatory Charges. Meal plan rates will not increase and Auxiliary will absorb the cost increase passed on from the food service contract while a market study is underway for housing and food service.
  - a. Approved by roll call vote
- Implementation of the 2.5% salary pool in Gov. Lee's budget. The state funds 60% of salary and benefits increases and the University funds 40%, or about \$1 million. Discussions are still underway on how to apply the salary pool.
- The committee discussed comparative tuition and mandatory fees for public institutions in Tennessee. Tuition and mandatory fees for 2020-21 will be presented at a called meeting in April. Tuition increases require a public comment period.
- Conducted a review of the annual Tuition Transparency Report, which shows how tuition and fees generated in the last year were expended.
- Conducted a quarterly review of agreements over \$250,000.

### **IX. CONSENT AGENDA**

Trustee Golden made a motion to accept the consent agenda. It was seconded by Trustee Foley and approved unanimously by roll call vote. Items included on the consent agenda were:

- A. Approval of Audit Committee Minutes from November 15, 2019
- B. Approval of ARSS Committee Minutes from November 15, 2019
- C. Approval of Finance and Administration Committee Minutes from November 15, 2019
- D. Revisions to the FY 2019-2020 Audit Plan

### **X. 2021 BOARD MEETING DATES**

Trustee Ramsey made a motion to accept the Board of Trustees' meeting dates for 2021 in accordance with the FOCUS Act. Trustee DeCarlo seconded the motion that was approved via roll call vote.

## **XI. STRATEGIC PLAN PROGRESS AND UPDATE WITH KPI REVIEW**

Dr. Michael Hoff, Associate Vice President of Planning and Decision Support, Chief Planning Officer and Director of Institutional Research, introduced the new Institutional Director of Research, Dr. Joseph Chappell. He said spring enrollment is slightly down, but applications exceed expectations, therefore the outlook for fall is positive. KPIs show that ETSU is meeting or exceeding the demands of the Strategic Plan. Some of the best progress is around extramural funding and giving. He said the University is well on its way to reaching 85% retention and 60% graduate rates. Despite the challenges with enrollment, we continue to see success with students when they choose to attend ETSU.

President Noland asked to provide context around some of the numbers in the KPI review. He noted that even in areas where the trend line is down, such as out-of-state enrollment, it is because we have not made the progress we expected to make in order to meet the aspirational benchmark. He then spoke about international enrollment and the uncertainty around visa and immigration status that can have a disproportionate impact on the institution.

## **XII. ETSU PROMISE PLUS**

Dr. Joe Sherlin, Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment, and his team have developed a plan that is uniquely fitted for ETSU. Promise Plus is a comprehensive program that serves Tennessee students who come to ETSU with greatest financial need and strong academic achievement. They receive the Hope Scholarship and are students with great need and great promise. ETSU Promise Plus supports their success, lights their path to ETSU and graduation. The program will be implemented this fall.

ETSU Promise Plus is a last-dollar scholarship that covers tuition and program service fees for four years, a critical foundation for this population. In addition to the scholarship, the program provides pillars of success that will help students progress toward graduation:

- Faculty and peer mentors
- Waiving costs for pre-college success programs
- Membership in the Buccaneer Family Association
- First-year transition course
- Offers financial support for on-campus living

The challenge is communicating this program and getting the word out. Dr. Sherlin said his team is reaching out to high school students, their families, and high school counselors, as well as faith-based leaders and ETSU faculty, staff, and alumni.

The University must also deliver this comprehensive program and provide a high quality experience for students. ETSU Promise Plus offers an affordable, direct path to ETSU and gives families the opportunity to make a choice based on fit, not price. It allows students and their families to plan even if tuition increases. ETSU Promise Plus also supports enrollment and success targets by going beyond community service to provide comprehensive support that will lead students to graduation. It also serves our state because higher education is the only path to a living wage. Dr. Sherlin said 80% of 2010 high school graduates who went directly into the workforce are making minimum wage 10 years later. This program is directly focused on bringing students to a university experience who have the potential to succeed. It serves our region because 16 of 33 East Tennessee counties are economically distressed or at risk. Currently, around 300 of admitted incoming students may be eligible for ETSU Promise Plus. The target is around 100 for this fall and 1,000 in four years.

Dr. Sherlin said he is looking for feedback on ways to make ETSU Promise Plus better. Trustee Santana asked if the housing scholarship will increase as rates increase. Dr. Sherlin said it is currently capped at \$1,500, but it will need to be evaluated as rates increase. Trustee Foley asked if students who are already admitted for fall 2020 are being evaluated for ETSU Promise Plus. Dr. Sherlin said all students who have been admitted are being evaluated to see if they meet the qualifications.

### **XIII. ESPORTS UPDATE**

Dr. Karen King, Chief Information Officer, provided an update on the Esports team. She said an active club already exists at ETSU so there was a lot of interest in developing an Esports Varsity Program. Esports is one of the fastest growing industries in the world and is open to both men and women, and students of all capabilities. It is not an NCAA sport, but it does have a governing body. ETSU will be in the Eastern College Athletic Conference and will be broadcasting on Twitch, the ESPN of Esports. The Varsity Team is sponsored by ETSU Online, but many collaborations across campus helped the team get off the ground, including the Clemmer College, which will offer a graduate certificate in Esports management. The team will have a video wall in the Cave located in the newly renovated Culp Student Center. The team will compete in League of Legends and Overwatch, two of the most popular games in Esports. The players are most excited about having premier equipment and tryouts started a few weeks ago. The roster will be announced in June 2020 and some scholarships will be provided. Dr. King said they are also establishing partnerships with area high schools to provide refurbished computers to help them establish gaming clubs.

### **XIV. PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

In his report, Dr. Noland provided updates on a series of topics relative to the University:

### **Legislative Update**

Dr. Noland outlined the legislative initiatives for the 2020 session:

- Support for THEC outcomes formula
- Support for pediatric surgeons and subspecialists
- Greater predictability for capital project funding (Humanities Building)
- Support for deferred maintenance projects
- Continuation and expansion of THEC campus safety initiative
- Gatton College of Pharmacy scholarships
- Continued examination of roles and responsibilities of the university system in the post-FOCUS environment

Gov. Lee recently visited campus to give his State of East Tennessee address, which focused heavily on K-12 initiatives. As Dr. Noland noted, this will benefit the university over time because students will be better prepared for post-secondary education, and the investments align with the institution's founding mission to train teachers. The state wants to grow computer science programs and double the number of graduates.

Dr. Noland outlined a broad range of bills and among those being closely tracked by ETSU are:

- Ability to hold Board meetings telephonically without the necessity of roll call votes (SB2719/HB2496)
- Scholarships/waivers funded by the state (SB1558/HB2130)
- Tuition transparency (SB2503/HB2601)
- Student right to carry (SB2671/HB2817)
- NCAA related issues regarding image and likeness legislation that would allow athletes to benefit financially from advertising (SB2486/HB2112), (SB2804/HB2649), (SB2725/HB2648), (SB1636/HB1694), (SB1767/HB1710),)

### **Construction Update**

- Staff will soon begin moving into the Culp Student Center as renovations are nearing completion. A series of grand reopening events are scheduled the first week of March and additional food service options will be available.
- The Martin Center for the Arts will be open and operational this time next year.
- The east side of the Mini-Dome is undergoing access renovations that will increase seating capacity from 8,000 to 10,000.

- Lamb Hall is moving through the design phase and by Spring 2021 construction should be underway.
- This is the third year the Humanities Building was on the THEC list. Its ranking moved from 10 to 5 to 8. Dr. Noland has been in multiple conversations with THEC staff about their process and now the focus has turned to securing planning money so that when funds are received construction can begin faster.
- Brown Hall has undergone several focused investments as many students take science classes in the building.

Trustee Golden asked when the Mini-Dome project would be complete. Dr. Noland said late April, early May is the target so that the area is open for Spring Commencement.

### **Budget Update**

**State Budget** – President Noland said ETSU is very fortunate in terms of the benefits provided since the transition to the THEC outcomes formula. This year, ETSU was the top performing institution in the outcomes based formula and led the state in degree production and growth in graduation rate. He mentioned Dr. Sherlin’s presentation on ETSU Promise Plus, which is different from other programs because it focuses on support and student success services.

\$62 million in appropriations will be invested in higher education throughout the state, with \$4.3 million going to ETSU. The bulk is an investment in salary.

There are several budget lines for Quillen College of Medicine, including funding for pediatric surgeons and subspecialists that made the budget this year. Dr. Noland and Dr. Bill Block met with legislators to address the need for this funding to move forward. The new positions will be funded by investments from the state, Ballad Health, and ETSU.

Gov. Lee is funding four capital projects at higher education campuses and Dr. Noland said ETSU is working with Austin Peay to obtain planning money for respective capital projects.

**ETSU Budget** – The University is deep in the budget season and the Strategic Planning and Budgeting Committee has wrapped up budget hearings, which are open meetings. A top to bottom review of scholarships and discount rates will take place during the summer months to ensure that scholarships are maximizing impact. Out-of-state fees will also be reviewed with a new structure likely next year. The budget is balanced and funds were put into reserves and across-the-board salary enhancements were made. The decentralized budget model is working, but not



perfectly, and some base adjustments could be made in the future as enrollments shift and impact college-level enrollment, Dr. Noland noted.

### **Operational Alignment Update**

This time last year, Dr. Noland outlined a number of studies underway to examine structural issues across the university. A realignment is necessary in order to hit the goals and objectives in the Strategic Plan, and the following realignment measures have taken place thus far:

- Human Resources was restructured under the leadership of Lori Erickson
- Compliance Unit was created
- Enrollment Services was restructured and moved from Academic Affairs to Student Life and Enrollment
- ETSU Health was launched and Dr. Bill Block was named the Vice President of Clinical Affairs and integrated the diverse clinical activities across the institution
- The Division for Equity and Inclusion was created under the leadership of Dr. Keith Johnson
- Review of Undergraduate Advising currently underway
- Launched a committee led by Dr. Jim Bitter focused on the service mission of ETSU
- Review of program and college alignment will take place in summer/fall
- Discussions continue around the creation of the Vice President of Research and Innovation

### **Enrollment Update**

Even after the announcement of Tennessee Promise in 2015, enrollment at community colleges has remained flat. Applications for fall 2020 are up 1,000 from last year, and the University is tracking application activity from the local high schools very closely. Transfer applications are down slightly, but transfer season begins now so those numbers will likely increase.

Dr. Noland recapped ongoing enrollment activities:

- ETSU Promise Plus
- CRM (Customer Relationship Management) implementation underway
- Conducting tuition pricing and scholarship review
- Enrollment consultant to help market programs, including online

Trustee Latimer inquired about the number of transfer applications from Northeast State Community College. Dr. Noland said applications are trending flat and

downward, same as enrollment. When their enrollment grows, so will the transfers to ETSU. The decrease in applications from Daniel Boone High School was also discussed. Dr. Sherlin said this was likely due to admission counselor turnover and the larger trend of males choosing not to attend college. Dr. Noland provided an example of his many visits to Dobyys-Bennett High School to award scholarships before students receive a letter in the mail. Faculty also visit high schools to give guest lectures. Everyone is doing all that they can to stand out in the competitive landscape.

### **Student Success Update**

In addition to a record 50% graduation rate, ETSU also had its largest graduating class in 2018-19. Demographics research indicates that in the middle of this decade, the number of high school graduates will reach a cliff, which means there will be significantly less high school graduates in 2026 than in 2025. The work on enrollment now is in anticipation of what is to come. The outlook in Tennessee is a bit different and not as pronounced, Dr. Noland explained, but Dr. Mike Hoff is gathering more localized data to create projections.

### **Strategic Visioning**

In 2012-13, a group of individuals who participated in the Committee for 125 were focused on the mission of ETSU to improve the lives of the people of our region, Dr. Noland explained. Chairman Niswonger and Trustee Grisham were members of the committee, which was formed right after the University's Centennial Celebration in order to create a vision for the next milestone anniversary in 2036. The Committee for 125 vetted ideas and brought new ideas forward and defined ETSU as a beacon for social and cultural education and a foundation for the community as a whole. They also set a vision for 2036 that ETSU is visible everywhere – the center of arts and culture and the center of the region. They set key strategic themes as well as 5 and 10-year action agendas. The 5-year horizon called for a review of structure, including budget and financial systems, institutional advancement, and other areas. This led to a decentralized budget process and the hiring of embedded advancement officers in each college. The 10-year horizon outlines new program investments, a performing arts complex, and other items. Although many of these items have been accomplished, we are in a different landscape now, Dr. Noland said. ETSU is now governed by a Board of Trustees, the public perception of higher education has changed, and there have been major changes in technology.

Dr. Noland said this would be an opportunity for the Board of Trustees and campus to look toward a vision to determine where we want to be by 2030. Dr. Noland proposed putting a structure and timeline together to launch the Committee for 125 Chapter II. ETSU would hold focus groups with business and K-12 leaders, as well as faculty and students to ask where our opportunities and challenges lie and how we can continue to stay true to our mission and define our dreams for the University.

He asked Trustees to provide feedback on launching the Committee for 125 Chapter II. Trustee Grisham said she would like to move forward with Chapter II and revisit the accomplishments over the past eight years. Trustee Golden said Board members have held very robust conversations about vision in committee meetings for the last two years and asked that the Committee for 125 Chapter II not get in the way of progress currently underway. Dr. Noland said he wants to bring individuals from across the region together to focus on the question of what their dreams are for ETSU. Trustee Golden said to not discount current Board members who also represent and share feedback from others across the region.

Dr. Latimer referred to the discussion that took place earlier in the day around ETSU's role in economic development. She said it makes a lot of sense that ETSU would be heavily involved. Many of the things accomplished in the Committee for 125 could be accomplished by the President with help from ETSU, and now the Board of Trustees has a different view on things that would involve the entire region, such as public/private partnerships. These partnerships have not really been explored but could help grow the university, she noted. From an economic development standpoint, we are thinking about what we could help create that would elevate everyone. Changing the vision is sometimes scary, because ETSU has not historically been known as a research university, but there are some emerging fields that are extremely powerful and cross almost all sectors within the University, one example being synthetic biology. She thinks this will be an exciting change for ETSU.

Trustee DeCarlo spoke about job growth and while Charlotte is only three hours from Johnson City, many of his colleagues do not know where it is. He said the definition of a region is much larger than people realize and the advantage of East Tennessee as the educational point is to pull people here and build opportunities. He encouraged the Committee for 125 Chapter II to engage not only the local business community, but talk to larger companies in Atlanta, Charlotte, and Washington, D.C.

Trustee Ayers said that the Ayers Foundation is helping to educate and graduate thousands of students in rural Tennessee, many of them in Unicoi County. She said their major focus is how to keep students in the region. ETSU graduates can have a better quality of life here than people in larger cities. During the Committee for 125 Chapter II she would like to see conversations not only about education but how to connect education with workforce development. She said the ultimate impact ETSU can make is to keep people in this region.

Trustee DeCarlo mentioned that flights from Nashville to Johnson City are nonexistent, but could help pull jobs from Nashville if people could fly back and

forth. Trustee Golden said it is very difficult to get this specific flight because the demographics do not show Northeast Tennessee as a growing area.

Trustee Ramsey asked if the Committee for 125 Chapter II was moving forward. Dr. Noland said he would create an action agenda and ask for assistance from senior staff to identify key thought leaders to participate. This group would then connect with the Board to begin a strategic visioning campaign with various focus groups running concurrently. This work would continue through the summer with the goal of coming together in September to put forward a shared vision from the campus and the Board. The Board agreed that Dr. Noland should move forward with planning the Committee for 125 Chapter II.

**XV. OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was brought before the Board of Trustees.

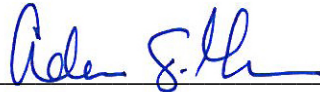
**XVI. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The Board of Trustees did not convene in executive session.

**XVII. ADJOURNMENT**

Trustee Ramsey made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



---

Adam Green  
Secretary of the Board of Trustees

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