



**ETSU 125**

*Progressing toward ETSU's 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

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**July 2013**

## **ETSU 125 Visioning Report**

**“Advancing the University’s Culture and Practice of  
Excellence and the Quality of Life in the Region”**

**Developed by *The Committee for 125* for  
East Tennessee State University**

## ETSU Visioning Plan Committee for 125

### Executive Summary

*“In 2036, when a visitor approaches Johnson City, the presence of East Tennessee State University looms large. It is seen in the far outskirts of the city on “Welcome to ETSU” signs; in the high-tech, manufacturing and health care corridor that embraces the region; and in the vibrant college town of Johnson City, where campus and community are synonymous. The message is clear – ETSU is the preeminent player in the region, contributing to the overall high quality of life, innovation, industry and business, health, well-being, vitality and diversity through education, arts and culture and athletics. These themes define its overall ‘Culture of Excellence,’ whose attributes guided visioning and planning for ETSU’s 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.”*

This is the ETSU Committee for 125’s vision for the university in 2036. Commissioned by President Brian Noland, the new “visioning plan” was a nine-month project led by the Committee for 125, developed further by six task forces and completed with constituent engagement among students, faculty, administrators, staff, government officials, business and community leaders, alumni and other stakeholders. More than 2,000 individuals within ETSU and the broader community participated in task forces, town halls, employer roundtables and other activities dedicated to the project, which was also communicated thoroughly in news articles by campus and regional media. The Committee’s aspirations, incorporating the views of the ETSU community, paint a picture of “what might be” for ETSU as *the* model regional university in the U.S.

The six task forces, broadly representing the campus and community, were charged by President Noland to “dream” and identify “what if?” opportunities to advance ETSU’s “Culture of Excellence” over the next 25 years – Academics (Programs and Opportunities), Academics (Health Sciences), Athletics, Culture and Outreach, Extramural Resources and Student Life and Services.

The following major themes of this “ETSU Vision 2036” are proposed by the Committee for 125 along with an expectation of quantifiable outcomes and measurable performance:

**1. Academically ETSU will be nationally recognized for its outstanding undergraduate and graduate education so that the entire region achieves higher educational attainment, knowledge and skills vital to their lives, careers and a thriving economy.** An ETSU education will be marked by distinctive programs, greater accessibility and affordability through the latest learning technologies and delivery methods, a commitment to evolving career needs and a distinguished showcase of the arts for the campus and the region. Through partnerships with regional high schools, the university will have prepared new teachers who model innovation and will have significantly increased college attainment.



For enrolled students, ETSU will meet or exceed best practices and legislative standards for retention and degree completion.

**2. The Health Sciences Center will be the premier national model for community-based health care, one that improves the health and well-being of the region and those who benefit from its far-reaching innovations.** This model will be distinguished as a fully integrated system of interprofessional teams and as a visible leader in rapidly translating discoveries to change lives at the bedside and in daily living.

**3. With a powerful university brand, ETSU will be recognized nationally as a student-centered university fostering a transformative educational experience that affirms the value and richness of diversity.** Student success will be enhanced through a comprehensive First-Year Experience, maximum student financial assistance and a student advising system that integrates campus academics and career support. The physical and virtual campus will offer student-centered services that include a welcome center, one-stop shop for enrollment services and 24x7 access to key student services online. Student engagement will be advanced through a new multi-cultural center, online communities and other integrated institutional courses and experiences.

**4. ETSU will be a model “Education Corridor” renowned for its constituent-based relationship, in which each individual has access to the knowledge they need, and for the “learning exchange” it has developed with governments, businesses, other schools and colleges for shared resources and collaboration.** By reconstructing education, this approach will offer a lifelong experience that is not constrained by location, is both residential and virtual and, by eliminating boundaries, serves as a gateway to education, culture and other benefits of a richly diverse region and for those accessing ETSU from a distance.

**5. Bringing the campus to the community and the community to campus, ETSU will be an even more significant partner in the region’s thriving business and intellectual center, which serves as the foundation for a stronger economy and vitality in all areas of life in East Tennessee and neighboring states.** ETSU will have increased alumni giving and involvement, developed a culture of philanthropy contributing to a stream of new resources, fostered mutually beneficial partnerships and established national prominence for research and knowledge. ETSU will continue to be the hub of the region and central to its citizens, economic health and quality of life. Through the development of enhanced facilities, resources and community engagement, ETSU will become an institution that fosters an environment of excellence for faculty, staff, students and the region. There will be an inextricable link between ETSU and the community as a whole.

**6. Adopting a front-porch philosophy, ETSU Athletics will significantly engage the campus and the region so that a “culture of success” permeates its character and provides an inclusive community-building experience through recreation and competitive sports.** It will be known for its vibrant “game-



day” character, continuously modernized facilities and championship teams – excellence that enhances a spirit of community across the region and attracts new students, faculty, staff and friends.

This is the overview of the Committee for 125’s vision, which sets the stage for the next 25 years at ETSU. These recommendations to President Noland will be evaluated, prioritized and implemented by ETSU executive leadership in concert with faculty, staff and students through short- and longer-term planning activities. Implementing this vision also will involve establishing operational processes, taking advantage of opportunities as they emerge and engaging in strategic planning.

Concurrent with the ETSU 125 project, other consultants have conducted a series of assessment and evaluation activities in key areas of university advancement, finance and branding best practices. Their recommendations, which have been aligned with the Committee’s vision and report, will allow the university to aggressively move forward and implement its vision on a sound foundation, using fact-based and data-driven information and analysis.

In the first year following the adoption of this plan, the Committee for 125 proposes that some of its members be available to review progress and serve as a sounding board for opportunities and challenges facing ETSU and to assist in the integration and alignment of the visioning plan with future planning. To support a continuous implementation of the visioning plan and parallel strategic planning activities, the Committee for 125 also recommends the formation of a President’s Roundtable and/or another mechanism to provide perspectives and counsel from internal and external communities regarding critical issues as they evolve and are considered by the university.



## Part I: A Vision for ETSU in 2036

### **“Advancing the University’s Culture and Practice of Excellence and the Quality of Life in the Region”**

In 2036, when a visitor approaches Johnson City, the presence of East Tennessee State University looms large. It is seen in the far outskirts of the city on “Welcome to ETSU” signs; in the high-tech, manufacturing and health care corridor that embraces the region; and in the vibrant college town of Johnson City, where campus and community are synonymous. The message is clear – ETSU is the preeminent player in the region, contributing to the overall high quality of life, innovation, industry and business, health and well-being, vitality and diversity through education, arts and culture and athletics. These themes define its overall “Culture of Excellence,” whose attributes guided visioning and planning for ETSU’s 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Along State of Franklin Road, centered around ETSU’s main campus, a diverse composition of students, parents, alumni, tourists and others who live across the region populate the restaurants, retail stores, hotels and businesses that have developed into a “new downtown” geographically connected to the university. A Welcome Center and an Alumni Center, along with with a welcoming spirit, greet all visitors, and the university’s valued service culture is consistently demonstrated by students, faculty, staff and administrators. Some in this busy crowd are on their way to the world-class Fine and Performing Arts Center, which features the sweep of programs from the musical treasures of Appalachia to the ballets of Europe and the dance companies of China. Along with ETSU’s Multicultural Center, the vitality of a global society is brought home so that everyone, resident or visitor, can enjoy the richness of world culture.

Enthusiastic fans from across the region have gathered to enjoy various exhilarating “game-day” experiences due to the championship athletics environment. The Convocation Center is scheduled for remodeling after multiple years of sell-out crowds; both men’s and women’s programs are visible features of the ETSU brand and important to expanding student recruitment across the university. ETSU’s “front porch” philosophy toward athletics has significantly engaged the campus and the community; athletics excellence has attracted students, faculty, staff and new friends of the university. ETSU is well-positioned in its conference of choice, and due to a substantial array of modern facilities can host regional and national NCAA competitions, as well as tournaments for regional and state high schools. The Olympic Training Center has expanded beyond weightlifting and is tightly interconnected with ETSU’s training and conditioning programs in a facility that also features a fitness center open for community membership. All these improvements have been made possible by the sustainable athletics business plan and financial model that returns revenues to the academic infrastructure, embodies a shared-use philosophy and deepens connections with the community at large.



ETSU's academics are comprehensive but recognized in signature undergraduate and select doctoral programs defined by market needs. Fundamental to all learning is a core of critical thinking skills so that graduates can be successful throughout their lifetimes as society's needs for their talents shift with emerging realities. The spectrum of research and scholarship expands the strength and reach of the curriculum along with a particular focus on continuously evolving teaching and learning methodologies and best practices, such as standard and "flipped" classrooms, massive open online courses (MOOCs) and multiple access points for non-traditional students. In sum, the commitment to such approaches has generated a brand known for agility in its response to economic and workforce demands and for the ever-stronger intellectual and research capabilities of an educated population.

While ETSU has evolved into a deeply engaged research institution, it remains dedicated to its foundational mission priority to educate and prepare teachers to meet the needs of the modern classroom. Through concerted partnerships with regional school districts, ETSU has emerged as a model institution in the preparation of new teachers and has developed professional development practices that are recognized nationally for their innovation and flexibility. Through dual enrollment, early college and other access initiatives, ETSU faculty and staff have developed solutions to the college access challenge. As a result, the college-going rate for partner high schools exceeds 90 percent. Through coordinated curricula, these students graduate from high school prepared for post-secondary education and the phrase "remedial education" is a lexicon of the distant past.

With well-funded enrollment management programs, ETSU is enjoying a surplus of applicants because of its transformative student-centered programs that have been aggressively marketed and because of student success. These characteristics include a signature First-Year Experience that has supported its exceptional four-year retention rate, a model advisement program that directs each student along the best career path and multiple in-class and online channels utilizing the latest instructional techniques and technologies for access and learning. The university's strong partnerships with regional businesses provide opportunities for internship experiences essential to student success.

Educators from around the world visit ETSU to learn from the multitude of student success measures developed by visionary and dedicated faculty and staff. As one of the first Tennessee institutions to exceed the requirements first established by the Complete College Tennessee Act in 2010, the university partners globally to develop and apply state-of-the-art standards for retention and graduation rates. ETSU's multipurpose Student Center is a model for one-stop-shopping for all student services, from recruitment to career placement. As a premier institution known for its longstanding relationships with K-12 schools and community colleges in the region, ETSU is widely recognized for its continued engagement in career development and other support throughout the lives of graduates.

While ETSU's popularity as a residential campus is studied by public and private universities throughout the southeastern region of the U.S. and beyond, the university has also become a model for institutions serving the still-growing populations of non-traditional students who began changing higher education



demographics in the early 2000s. The educational options required by this diverse group of adult learners, as well as employees who study, low-income and first generation students, commuters and student parents, spawned major instructional changes and flexible approaches that facilitated their paths to degrees and careers.

ETSU's impact on the economic health of the region has positioned the university at the intersection of significant economic development solutions and innovative industries or partnerships fostering a thriving regional business center. ETSU Health Sciences is the premier national model for community-based health care – from education to research to practice – and the university enjoys a deserved reputation as the state's flagship institution in the arts. With graduates making up four-fifths of the workforce within 75 miles of campus and numerous alumni who have stayed to contribute to the region, ETSU has a powerful imprint on the leadership, personality and values of East Tennessee and neighboring states. These results have been enabled by the ETSU spirit – proudly aware of its historical strengths yet embedded in a tradition that is innovative, adaptive through regular planning and mindful of emerging best practices.

Through comprehensive marketing and financial planning, ETSU has achieved a solid and continuous resource base that allows it to define opportunities, prioritize initiatives and pursue a strategic growth agenda. Critical to these financial resources are integrated institutional marketing activities, a robust Foundation that generates private support, a Research Foundation that facilitates economic development and technology transfer and actively engaged alumni, with greater than 40 percent contributing annually to the university. These characteristics are further enhanced by an array of smart public-private partnerships and business practices built on the platform of resource-centered management and incentivized by quality-oriented, performance-based outcomes. Through a series of supportive measures, faculty can focus on educational excellence, student outcomes and their core responsibilities of teaching, research and service. The university's data-driven culture continuously informs improved policies and practices. Constant attention to cutting-edge technology has positioned ETSU to deliver academic excellence, administrative efficiency, cost-effective education and service at the leading edge of higher education in the U.S. and around the globe.

## **Part II: Highlights of Task Force Visions and Committee for 125 Discussions**

The Committee for 125 formed six task forces to apply their collective expertise and identify “what if?” themes and opportunities to shape the overall “Culture of Excellence” at ETSU over the next 25 years – Academics (Programs and Opportunities), Academics (Health Sciences), Athletics, Culture and Outreach, Extramural Resources and Student Life and Services. With varied backgrounds and experiences, the task forces represented the cross-section of the campus and community – administrators, faculty, staff, government officials, business and community leaders, alumni, students and other stakeholders. Their activities were framed by broad themes facing ETSU along with all colleges and universities – core focus, differentiation, efficiency and new revenues.



### **Academics: Programs and Opportunities**

Over the next five years, as a model for undergraduate education, ETSU will become known beyond Tennessee and the Southern Region for several characteristics – a viable academic advisement program with strong faculty participation, energetic general education “learning communities” focused on enhanced retention and increased intellectual interaction for cohorts of incoming students and an instructional development center that promotes and strengthens teaching. In addition, because graduate education resides within a national and international marketplace, over the next ten years more integrated and interdisciplinary programs will attract superior students and establish the university’s reputation in specific high-demand fields, such as interdisciplinary science, renewable energy, informatics and analytics, integrated STEM and art/humanities programs and global studies.

Building upon a long-standing culture of innovation, ETSU will utilize emerging instructional methods and technologies that will truly improve student learning and participate in the forefront of experimental activities that are proving their value and durability. Examples include MOOCs and multiple distance/blended education formats that expand access, offer convenience and are appropriately designed and conducted to fulfill the aspirations of graduates and the hands-on, applied learning workforce needs of employers. In ten years, ETSU will be solidly positioned for innovative leadership in widely used technology platforms that have secured East Tennessee’s rapid economic development and the health and well-being of its residents. Historically ETSU has been known for creating access; our size and longstanding dedication to this objective permit us to lead the way to optimize learning and respond with agility to broader economic and social forces. Emerging instructional technologies are already recentring the conversation; however, they are likely only part of the full spectrum that will promote higher quality life in East Tennessee and help the United States regain traction in global higher education.

### **Academics: Health Sciences**

Perhaps no area of education is in greater flux than the health sciences, and ETSU’s influence on the frontlines of health care for our region provide the foundation of a new business model, for which we are well on our way. Already ranking among the best performing institutions nationally in primary care and rural health, ETSU has defined a focus on community-based, rural and interprofessional education that is fundamental to who we are – and, importantly, why we are uniquely poised to respond to the challenges of the changing health care environment in the U.S. Over the next decade ETSU must improve and expand the array of programs, the maturation of interprofessional education efforts, health care delivery, infrastructure to support the growing complexity of our mission and necessary new areas of research and scholarship to advance health care. The dynamic landscape of health reform is placing increasing emphasis on population health, preventive care and primary care delivery – all areas of strength at ETSU. Yet, a new model for doing business in the academic environment is necessary to sustain our competitiveness.



ETSU has a remarkable opportunity to truly distinguish the university by developing a comprehensive approach to the health sciences and garner national recognition as a premier destination for undergraduate students seeking to enter the health professions. Over the next five and ten years, achieving this distinction would encompass: fully integrating all areas of interprofessional education, expanding our collaborative practice model to best serve our students and our community; implementing new programs, such as a College of Dentistry, to meet workforce demands and the needs of our region; and improving the integration of undergraduate and non-health sciences center programs, such as clinical psychology and social work. Such actions would streamline the path to health sciences practice for aspiring undergraduates, schedule programs in all disciplines on the same academic calendar, provide more programs such as home care and telemedicine to our communities, expand our rural practice sites and more. Strengthening education and practice would expand research in areas of existing strength – and in high-demand for the future – such as patient outcomes, primary care, bench-to-bedside research and strong public-private partnerships with state agencies, insurance and pharmaceutical companies and community health systems. In this time frame, we will also seek to locate the majority of our health science programs on a single campus with state-of-the-art technology that facilitates hands-on and virtual learning and care delivery.

### **Athletics**

ETSU will create momentum over the next five years by instilling a “culture of success” at the university through a unique and inclusive experience for students, faculty, alumni and the community. This reputation will result from a new “game day experience” that unites the community in support for ETSU. Elements include a vibrant campus residential community and a significantly expanded booster membership in the Buccaneer Athletic Scholarship Association (BASA). By strengthening programs with area high schools and making campus facilities more accessible for the community, ETSU athletics will promote the university’s connections throughout the region. Homecoming will become a major community event – not only bringing alumni back from great distances but also through enhanced partnerships with community organizations. Most importantly, ETSU athletics and academics will enhance their existing culture of collaboration to ensure the highest level of success in the classroom and on the field.

Within five years, ETSU will be far along the road toward higher levels of distinction and participation through a collaborative multi-purpose facility for championship basketball, well-positioned conference affiliation, plans for a football program in a new outdoor facility and for an expanded Olympic Training Site that is strongly integrated with development and training programs for student-athletes. Undergirding these and longer-term efforts, a sustainable financial model for athletics will focus on programs that generate the maximum return on investment for the entire ETSU community, innovative funding models and partnerships and a university-wide integrated marketing and branding plan that aligns athletics, the university, student life, alumni, community partners and other key constituencies. ETSU will have begun to truly make a name for its vision for athletics, generating greater levels of



participation, support and momentum as part of the university's comprehensive excellence initiatives. In ten years, in recognition of this progress, ETSU will be the host of NCAA regional championships.

### **Culture and Outreach**

By placing our emphasis on education as a lifelong experience (so that students can rationally analyze situations, make appropriate informed decisions and lead a self-directed productive life), our vision is to remove geographical or time-based constraints while engaging our regional communities and those beyond in the ETSU experience. One proposed term for this concept is an "education corridor" that reimagines the role of a university, the ETSU "brand" and ETSU's leadership in the innovative delivery of education in all its aspects. Enhanced by a clear message and story in our marketing, over the next five years ETSU would evolve to a constituent-based relationship, immersing ourselves in our regional "campus" and providing a broader gateway connecting others in Tennessee and border states in varied outreach activities and cultural experiences. This "gateway center" would be a dynamic multiple channel exchange of education that provides every constituent access to knowledge they desire to meet their educational and career aspirations. It would incorporate online and social media currently available and leave room for the inclusion of developing instructional technologies. It would support other activities designed to reengage our alumni and to recruit students, while providing ongoing value to our broader constituencies. Through this approach, ETSU would have the flexibility to reconstruct education, as envisioned by all who need and desire continued learning.

ETSU would lead the collaboration among governments, businesses, other schools and colleges and our constituents to forge a learning exchange that would offer joint recruitment, shared resources, flexible learning approaches, multiple-year degree options, student exchanges, faculty sharing and more. We would integrate technical options, generate new revenue and increase education participation and thereby enhance retention and graduation because constituents would be able to customize their educational experience. A transformative destination for our cultural outreach would be a world-class Fine and Performing Arts Center, for which many current activities are in place and which could be realized within ten years, and a parallel emphasis on science education and outreach that maximizes opportunities presented by the General Shale Natural History Museum and Gray Fossil Site.

### **Extramural Resources**

In a similar vein, the concept of bringing campus to community and community to campus is a broad theme to guide the development of new resources that will advance ETSU over the next 25 years. Multiple channels will require strategic development to fulfill our vision – aggressive campaigns for philanthropic support through the ETSU Foundation; cultivation of alumni; community, regional and other public and private partnerships; the fostering of partnerships with private developers to construct new facilities; the ETSU Research Foundation; the Innovation Laboratory, Valley Brook Campus and other potential revenue sites; sponsored programs and more. It is imperative that linkages be developed with regional business, government and non-governmental organizations and that these linkages influence the university's strategic plan in the coming years. The needs of the community should help define the nature of the academic and non-academic programs that ETSU pursues, its service initiatives



and the focus of its research. Opportunities for sharing facilities should be undertaken, thereby leveraging the resources of both campus and community partners. In turn, if the needs of the various communities are met, we can anticipate additional support for ETSU to grow high-demand programs, underwrite service initiatives, fund research and develop new facilities.

Through our strategic vision, ETSU must become an even greater factor in the regional economy, not only as a provider of higher education but as a major partner in its economic and entrepreneurship development. At the same time, in the short term, we aspire to increase targeted student enrollment, improve and influence pricing models, control academic program costs, grow academic program revenues, foster a culture of philanthropy and a culture of research and enhance research and service revenue. To become a nationally preeminent center of research and scholarship that contributes to the intellectual, social, cultural and economic benefit of our region will require sustained academic program cost controls, targeted program revenue growth and an improved research infrastructure.

### **Student Services**

The vision for becoming a truly premier student-centered university incorporates three broad categories – success, environments and engagement. ETSU would develop a national model for student programs, services and outcomes related to performance, persistence and graduation. The supportive environments would enhance the university’s physical and virtual campus to promote student life and provide student services that are accessible, seamless and affirming of a diverse learning community. The focus on engagement would also build a culture of involvement, learning, leadership and service in which students are actively making a difference across both the campus and region as a whole.

In addition, advanced and diverse technologies must be pursued and more fully utilized in student success and engagement initiatives as the university moves toward its 125<sup>th</sup> year. That means virtual services with 24x7 access, diverse mobile applications and a wide range of other technologies. Important, too, are providing infrastructure and a coherent vision and plan across the university. To ensure the success of these aspirations, within five years we will undertake or complete several activities that are core to our momentum – including becoming a national leader in addressing college costs and providing advising, expanding student-centered spaces and services and shaping a vibrant campus culture. These and other initiatives would be improved and expanded over the next decade to foster the institutional culture of student engagement that would be synonymous with the ETSU brand.

## **Part III: Visioning Project Overview**

### ***Background - A History of Achieving Bold Ideas and Aspirations***

East Tennessee State University (ETSU), founded in 1911 to educate teachers, has a more than 100-year history of innovation and accomplishments that benefit the region, the state and the nation. From its origins as East Tennessee State Normal School to Tennessee’s fourth largest comprehensive university today, ETSU has demonstrated remarkable progress because its leadership, at critical milestones,



examined opportunities and responded to challenges with bold aspirations framed by innovation and possibility.

In October 1986, ETSU concluded a year of activities celebrating 75 years of service, achievement and tradition and, recognizing a series of “watershed” years occurring with unusual rapidity, launched the Commission on the Future to define a vision for ETSU as it anticipated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Commission’s report, “Turning Toward 2011,” shaped the foundation for ETSU’s second century and laid the groundwork for timely responses to identified needs, such as a College of Pharmacy and a College of Clinical and Rehabilitative Health Sciences. In the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the leadership of presidents D.P. Culp, Ronald E. Beller, Roy S. Nicks, Bert C. Bach (interim) and Paul E. Stanton Jr. paved the way for distinction. Such notable successes include the Quillen College of Medicine – recognized as one of the top schools nationwide for rural medicine and primary care education; the unique Roan Scholars Leadership Program; the state’s most distinguished Honors College; a nationally acclaimed and accredited program in Bluegrass, Old Time and Country Music; the nation’s only master’s degree in Storytelling; and other signature Appalachian Studies programs.

Building on these decades, in August 2011 a University Planning Committee approved the current ETSU Strategic Plan, 2010-2015. Its vision – to “become the best regional university in the nation” – was established on the strategic pillars of access, student success, scholarship, diversity, stewardship, arts and culture and sustainability.

In 2012, upon becoming the ninth president of ETSU and leveraging the university’s history and culture of innovation, Dr. Brian Noland appointed the Committee for 125. Its charge was to creatively explore and develop ideas which would establish an institution and culture that foster the highest level of excellence over the next 25 years, ending in 2036 at ETSU’s 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Committee’s members, respected and experienced leaders in various fields, were challenged to build on 100 years of success and the university’s strengths to boost the institution to higher levels of measurable excellence. Their work would be guided by data, analysis and trends and best practices in higher education as well as the state of Tennessee’s education reform agenda and be framed by the challenge to “dare to dream.”

ETSU’s visioning project comes at a dynamic time in U.S. higher education, which faces complex strategic challenges as the U.S. attempts to regain its preeminent status in global postsecondary education. Multiple factors are forcing institutions to transform structures, processes and programs to be more flexible and responsive to changing societal needs. These include expanding “privatization” of public education as state support declines substantially, accelerated growth of alternative educational delivery models such as MOOCs, increasing numbers of older and non-traditional students, and mandates for “student success,” college completion and workforce development. Innovation, competitiveness and financial stability are significant themes in institutional planning and policy discussions focused on enrollments, costs, infrastructure, delivery methods, partnerships, majors, quality, access and the growing population of non-traditional students.



In 2010, through the Complete College Tennessee Act (CCTA), Tennessee became the first state to appropriate nearly all of the state’s tax dollars for higher education based on institutional outcomes, such as credit completions and graduation rates. This mandate puts the Volunteer State at the forefront of a movement to reward colleges that produce more degree holders. Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam, who serves as chairman of the board for The Board of Regents System and the University of Tennessee System, expanded this priority in 2012 by convening conversations across the state with businesses and postsecondary institutions to focus on institutional quality and higher education’s contributions to economic and workforce development.

### ***Activities and Timelines***

Launched officially on August 29, 2012, the Committee for 125 created a forum for developing ideas, concepts and “what-if’s” for ETSU over the next 5-25 years in a project occurring during the 2012-2013 academic year and supported by task forces and extensive engagement of campus and external constituencies.

Focusing on the “big picture,” the Committee conducted its activities cognizant of the current trends in higher education, including several central driving forces:

1. Pride in U.S. higher educational system, but not direction
2. National job recovery led by college graduates
3. Comprehensive, enterprise thinking driving planning and new business models
4. Leveraging assets rather than developing new lines of business
  - a. Regional versus National or Global
  - b. Undergraduate to Graduate
  - c. Secondary to Post-Secondary
5. Digital Age driving transformation in learning and teaching
  - a. Online and blended
  - b. MOOCs and other emerging instructional technologies
6. Aggressive efforts in alumni engagement and private support
7. Community partnerships and relationships that drive social and economic impact
  - a. Regional workforce development and well-being
8. Elevated roles for student life and “student success”
9. Increased focus on metrics and accountability

The visioning project was shaped around four phases – project launch (August-September), task force activities and data-gathering (October-December), draft visioning plan (January) and constituent engagement and development of the final plan for President Noland (February-May). It was facilitated by The Napa Group of Novato, California, a firm specializing in strategy, organizational design and leadership for higher education.



## ***Task Force Discussions***

With the “big picture” in mind, six Task Forces were formed by President Noland and the Committee through a nomination process across the university and from the community: Academics (Programs and Opportunities), Academics (Health Sciences), Athletics, Culture and Outreach, Extramural Resources and Student Life and Services. They were asked to produce high-level statements that would be culture shifting and community building, distinctive and positioning, financially sustaining and boldly leverage the university’s assets. Specific to their considerations were the attributes of ETSU’s “Culture of Excellence” as summarized by the Committee for 125 and desired outcomes to meet the CCTA objectives to produce more and more capable graduates to meet the state’s economic and workforce goals.

Working over six weeks, the Task Forces developed vision statements and detailed narrative reports (which backed up their recommendations and will serve ETSU’s longer-term planning). Representing key constituencies on campus and from the community, each Task Force was led by a chair and staff resource and had approximately 15 members each. The Task Forces included 102 participants (30 faculty, 27 staff/administrators, 26 community members, 9 students and a chair and a staff resource for each).

## ***Communications and Constituent Engagement***

Keeping the campus and external communities informed about the visioning plan activities and soliciting their ideas and input were critical to a successful process. President Noland and the Committee for 125 were committed to a broadly engaging and transparent project that would elicit the “best and brightest” directions and solutions from internal and external experts, drive cross-university and community collaborations, help create understanding and buy-in and generate vibrant discussions about opportunities for innovation and impact for the university, the region and the state.

A great deal of interest in the visioning plan surfaced early in the project. In response, both a communications plan and a constituent engagement plan mapped out regular updates and multiple channels of information and involvement. In September, a special ETSU Committee for 125 website became the project’s central archive and documented data and research, meetings, task force reports, decisions, news articles and plan drafts. A comment box allowed individuals to contribute ideas and other perspectives about the process and the evolving plan. These activities were supported by announcements to the campus community and interviews with the local news media.

Through ever-widening circles of engagement, starting with the task forces, activities included embraced multiple channels – individual meetings, roundtables and focus groups by the President, Committee for 125 and senior university leadership as well as presentations to various campus, community, regional and state organizations and leaders, including the business community.



Some highlights:

- The Johnson City Press and other local media began covering the Committee for 125 project when it was announced in May 2012 resulting in more than 20 press releases and articles
- Invitations to key campus constituencies to participate in and attend task force and other meetings, including the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate and Student Government Association
- Ongoing updates in the ETSU125 website ([www.etsu.edu/125](http://www.etsu.edu/125)), along with other updates, progress reports and invitations to provide comments about the plan in newsletters, news media and other electronic and print publications
- Interviews and surveys with well over 1000 constituents through the consultant projects
- A President's Listening Tour that made well over 50 visits to various colleges and departments on campus, other campuses and various major constituents in the region
- ETSU Alumni Association website information and emails and social media communications to alumni; alumni surveys related to the fundraising/development consultant project
- Videos of the Task Force presentations posted on ETSU's Facebook page
- Presentations to the President's Trust Dinner, BASA, Alumni Association Awards dinner, ETSU Spring Gathering, Alumni Association events (Abingdon, VA (100 attended); Greeneville, TN (150 attended); Washington, DC (125 attended); Atlanta, GA (100 attended).
- Interviews with community leaders, Economic and Community Development debriefing with 125 local business leaders, President's Roundtable with selected community leaders, Employer Roundtables, Education Roundtables and presentations to various civic clubs in the region
- Presentations to the Faculty Senate, articles in the ETSU staff newsletter and Grand Rounds in the College of Public Health
- A campus-wide and community Town Hall and Work Shop on February 27, 2013, a Student Roundtable on March 20, 2013 and an additional Faculty Roundtable planned on May 9, 2014

### *Related Projects*

President Noland and the university's executive team simultaneously engaged consultants in four other areas in parallel activities to address important infrastructure issues. These assessments and recommendations allow the university administration to identify and prepare for the core capabilities that will be necessary to advance the vision and strategic priorities. It is the view of The Napa Group consultants that such a process will accelerate the university's ability to move forward more aggressively so that implementation of the next strategic plan is not slowed by base-building operational issues. Such an approach gives ETSU an advantage over most other institutions, which typically spend the first few years of implementation developing the foundation for the new programs and priorities. In fact, integrating these activities as part of visioning establishes a best practice – linking and coordinating these critical analytics and planning frameworks into the visioning project.



In addition to the vision planning consultants, ETSU engaged consultants for fundraising/development, marketing/branding, financial services management and athletics. Their reports reflecting the following themes are reflected in separate documents:

1. A strengthened, more defined market position and brand
2. A revised, pro-active approach to budgeting
3. An Advancement Office and Foundation with the infrastructure to build substantial private support
4. Targeted athletics programs with signature programs and facilities

## Part IV: The Next Steps to 2036

These possibilities described in the Committee for 125's Vision for 2036 paint a picture of "what might be" for ETSU as *the model regional university in the U.S.* At the same time, the Committee affirms that its role is advisory and that its recommendations will be evaluated, prioritized and implemented by President Noland, senior executive leadership and the campus as a whole to achieve the best results for the university. The executive team also will be responsible for determining investments in immediate opportunities and longer-term strategic planning goals. The Committee recognizes that realizing these aspirations will be linked to other variables, including building appropriate infrastructure and support systems; generating additional revenues through private support, targeted use of facilities and expanded partnerships; and strengthening ETSU's market presence. Furthermore, these recommendations will be modified as appropriate by the university in response to changing circumstances, such as funding, regulatory activities and the higher education market.

Drawing on our expertise in higher education, The Napa Group consultants to the project, at the request of President Noland, suggest the consideration of the following activities as part of the roadmap forward. Through investments in this foundational infrastructure in years 1-5, years 5-10 and 10 and beyond will be timeframes that *mature, manage and realize* these aspirations and priorities. While advocates of thoughtful strategic plans, The Napa Group also encourages the university to remain flexible in the event of opportunistic activities that arise from circumstances not anticipated today. It is The Napa Group's view that through this visioning process, along with infrastructure improvements, comprehensive planning and appropriate sequencing of these activities, ETSU is poised to grow targeted student enrollment, improve and influence pricing models, control academic program costs, expand academic program revenues, develop an ongoing culture of philanthropy and enhance research, partnership and service revenues.



#### Years 1-5:

- Evaluate and reposition critical elements of the university infrastructure based on the opportunities created by this vision, including budget and finance systems; institutional advancement (the Foundation and alumni relations); university branding (messaging and visual identity); university administration, operations and planning; student affairs; and outreach to state and local communities.
- Prioritize investments and comprehensive planning in areas of growth, targeted needs and enhanced competitive standing, such as the performing arts, extramural support, College of Dentistry, interdisciplinary programs, continuity of undergraduate-graduate education across the main and Health Sciences campuses and athletics.
- Ensure that programs and outcomes for student success, both academic and co-curricular, meet completion standards established by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, Tennessee Board of Regents and other mandates.
- Continue to invest in technology for agile responses to the demand for online education through alternatives to traditional classrooms and advances in instructional technology.
- Review and revise facilities and campus master plans in consideration of aspirational priorities and emerging needs.
- Expand outreach and partnerships with businesses and community organizations for regional economic development and the pool of jobs and careers for ETSU graduates.
- Maintain ETSU's prestigious position in signature programmatic areas and its commitment to a "Culture of Excellence" throughout the university.
- Develop a culture of stewardship and engagement across the university that brings together the possibilities created by enhancements of co-curricular activities, such as athletics, thereby strengthening ETSU's presence in the higher education marketplace.
- Evolve to a constituent-based relationship with the broader community as a gateway that connects people in the region, Tennessee and nearby states through varied outreach activities and cultural experiences.

#### Years 5-10:

- Continue to assess and resource priorities identified for Years 1-5 and 5-10; mature, manage and realize their expected outcomes with expanded presence and impact.
- Target new investments in signature programs identified in the strategic plan and visioning plan, such as the university's research infrastructure and a School of Basic Science.
- Fully develop the performing arts complex and achieve a premier position in the performing arts.
- Launch a comprehensive fundraising campaign on the firm foundation of a highly engaged alumni program, which is built on lifelong involvement with ETSU.
- Continue to meet, if not exceed, the mandates of the Complete College Tennessee Act and other state measures for student success and college completion.



- Continue efforts to enhance the physical infrastructure of the institution through the construction of new facilities on the main and health science campuses.

#### Years 10+

- Become a destination institution through such areas as the “Education Corridor” and athletics – while building and expanding additional relationships and opportunities.
- Continue investments in the physical plant, redesigned traditional and online classrooms and evolving technological and teaching/learning methodologies.
- Be the national model for achieving enrollment goals and for student programs, services and outcomes related to student success, both as a residential campus for place-based education and a virtual campus facilitating the education of non-traditional students who will be increasingly part of the community.
- Be known through strong brand recognition locally and nationally and for ETSU’s vital contributions to economic and workforce development across Tennessee and in the multi-state region.
- Be widely recognized for leading-edge health science research that advances clinical care and education in a continually dynamic health care environment.

In the first year following the adoption of this visioning plan, the Committee for 125 proposes that some of its members be available to review progress and serve as a sounding board for opportunities and challenges facing ETSU and to assist in the integration and alignment of the visioning plan with future planning. To support a continuous implementation of the visioning plan and parallel strategic planning activities, the Committee for 125 also recommends the formation of a President’s Roundtable and/or another mechanism to provide perspectives and counsel from the community about critical issues as they evolve and are considered by the university. The concept of the Committee for 125 can serve as the basis of that new group, which will ensure linkages, accountability checkpoints and communications related to this visioning plan and resulting strategic planning.

Focusing its activities on the ideas, concepts and recommendations, the Committee for 125 believes that the same spirit of transparency that defined the visioning project will also be vital to track and bring visibility to data-driven decisions and progress forward as the Vision for 2036 is realized at ETSU.



## Task Force Vision Statements

### **Academics: Programs and Opportunities**

1. ETSU will be recognized for distinctive programs and practices that promote excellence in undergraduate education.
2. ETSU will have a global reputation for high quality, innovative, accessible graduate education that provides outstanding training, mentoring, and professional networking and community building.
3. ETSU will use emerging technologies to enhance student learning, make college more affordable, and encourage participation in higher education.
4. ETSU will be a showcase for distinguished programs in the arts and will provide inviting facilities, collaborative learning opportunities, and dynamic audience experiences.

### **Academics: Health Sciences**

By 2036, the ETSU Academic Health Sciences Center will...

1. Be fully integrated in all areas of interprofessional education and scholarship
2. Exemplify a visible collaborative practice model to best serve our community and educate our students
3. Include a College of Dentistry and implement other programs that meet workforce demands and enhance the practice and research capacity of AHSC faculty and students
4. Develop a research infrastructure with identified centers that allow faculty and students to excel in interprofessional and translational research
5. Create identifiable space for interprofessional practice and research to fulfill our mission

### **Athletics**

Theme: Adopting the front-porch philosophy, ETSU Athletics will significantly engage the campus and the community, and through excellence will attract new students, faculty, staff and friends.

1. Foster a culture of inclusion through athletics that elevates the student experience and develops a stronger identity and lasting connection with students, faculty and the community.
2. Maintain existing facilities and build new spaces that engage the community, attract high-quality student athletes and provide an unparalleled fan experience.
3. Develop sound, innovative business and financial models that sustain and enhance current athletic programs and prioritize expansion of future programs.
4. Pursue a powerful, recognizable and sustainable brand that distinguishes the university from our competitors and elevates the profile of ETSU Intercollegiate Athletics to national significance.



## Culture and Outreach

1. Geography: ETSU will represent a lifelong experience; one that is not constrained by location. The new education marketplace and its constituents demand accessibility and customization. ETSU will become an “Education Corridor,” leveraging the “cloud” concept, eliminating boundaries.
2. University / Student: ETSU will develop a unique student environment that offer rich cultural opportunities for our students and eliminates the barriers that keep students from fully engaging with their educational experience.
3. Constituent Connection: ETSU will develop a synergy that connects with its many constituents and become a “gateway” for varied outreach activities and cultural experiences.
4. Service: ETSU will be known for quality service. It will have a “from the ground up” culture of service that meets the needs of its diverse constituency (our campus, core and internationally).
5. Marketing/Communication/Branding: To provide a clear message and story that is consistently and visually recognizable to our constituents.

## Extramural Resources, Sponsored Programs and Initiatives: Research, Service and Instruction Task Force

Theme: Bring the campus to the community and the community to the campus

1. Become a significant player in the regional economy, not only as a provider of higher education, but as a major partner in its economic development.
2. Enhance significantly revenues from academic programming while reducing costs to provide better value and affordability to learners.
3. By developing a culture of philanthropy, realize a sustainable stream of new resources
4. Become a nationally preeminent center of research and scholarship that will contribute to the intellectual, social, cultural and economic benefit of the region.

## Student Life and Services

Theme: ETSU will be a premier student-centered University fostering a transformative educational experience that affirms the value and richness of human diversity

- Student Success
- Environments for Students
- Student Engagement

