

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
ACADEMIC, RESEARCH, AND STUDENT SUCCESS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

February 20, 2026
Johnson City, Tennessee

The East Tennessee State University Board of Trustees' Academic, Research, and Student Success Committee met on Friday, February 20, 2026, at 9:01 a.m. in the East Tennessee Room of the D.P. Culp Student Center.

I. Call to Order

Trustee Janet Ayers, chair of the committee, called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

II. Roll Call

Board Secretary Dr. Adam Green conducted the roll call. The following committee members were physically present:

Trustee Janet Ayers
Trustee Dr. Steph Frye-Clark
Trustee Jon Lundberg
Trustee Melissa Steagall-Jones
Trustee Tony Treadway

Other Trustees present were Charles Allen, Steve DeCarlo, Wade Farmer, Ron Ramsey, and Aashi Vora.

III. Approval of the Committee Minutes from November 14, 2025

The minutes from the November 14, 2025, meeting of the Academic, Research, and Student Success Committee were approved as submitted with Trustee Tony Treadway making the motion and Trustee Jon Lundberg seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

IV. Academic Notification for Period of August 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025

Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Kimberly described curricular items that have been vetted through ETSU's approval process and that require

action by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. The first item was the Bachelor of Business Administration program in Hospitality and Tourism Management. Provost McCorkle said the Commission required an external site review, which will take place February 27, and the goal is to present the program proposal for approval by the Commission at its May meeting. It is anticipated that the program will launch in the fall of 2026. Provost McCorkle reported that two new certificate programs have been submitted for THEC approval: a graduate certificate in Nonprofit Management and a graduate certificate in Urban Planning and Regional Development, both through the ETSU Department of Political Science. Further, ETSU is requesting that the name of the Department of Exercise Science be changed to the Department of Exercise and Sport Science, and the university is requesting the Commission's approval to inactivate the Master of Arts degree in Sociology because of declining enrollment.

Provost McCorkle indicated that several curricular items were fully vetted on the campus level and do not require Tennessee Higher Education Commission approval. Substantive curricular revision for the Master of Arts degree in Criminal Justice and Criminology includes a reduction in required credits to 33. In the Department of Media and Communication, the academic minor previously called Advertising will be changed to Public Relations and Social Media Management. The admissions policy for the Master of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education will be changed to reflect a reduction in the GPA requirement. For the Master of Public Administration degree, the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) will no longer be required for admission.

Provost McCorkle informed the committee that the proposal for a new master's program in Environment, Health, and Disaster Science is moving forward, and it will likely be submitted to the Commission in Spring 2026.

Provost McCorkle then turned her attention to the federal level, indicating that ETSU continues to follow and closely monitor changes at the U.S. Department of Education related to academic programs and eligibility for federal financial aid. She said the university is also continuing to monitor proposed changes to federal student loan limits.

V. Annual Institutional Review for Graduate Medical Education

Dr. David Linville, Associate Vice President for Clinical Affairs and Vice Dean for Academic Affairs in the Quillen College of Medicine, reviewed for the committee the breadth and depth of Graduate Medical Education at ETSU, which encompasses 16 different programs: 10 residency programs and 6 fellowships. He indicated that the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education requires each institution to perform an Annual Institutional Review and that an executive summary of that review must be provided to the Board of Trustees once a year. Dr. Linville told the committee that GME programs at ETSU are doing very well, with only a single citation across 16 programs and two areas of concern that are being addressed. Our programs, he said, are fully accredited. No adverse action has been taken by the accrediting body, there is no warning status, and there is no probationary status. Dr. Linville concluded his report by

telling the committee that ETSU, in partnership with Ballad Health and the Veterans Administration Medical Center at Mountain Home, is exploring areas of growth in Graduate Medical Education.

VI. Center for Rural Health and Research (CRHR): State, Appalachian, and National Rural Health Policy & Evaluation Work

Mr. Michael Meit, Director of the Center for Rural Health and Research in the College of Public Health, made his first presentation before the Academic, Research, and Student Success Committee. The center was established in 2019 by Governor Bill Lee, with a state appropriation and a substantial gift from Ballad Health. The center has been successful in securing grant funding from federal agencies such as the Health Resources and Services Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Appalachian Regional Commission. Mr. Meit told the committee that we hold one of eight federally-funded Rural Health Research Centers and the only one housed at a regional university. In addition to the resources received from the State of Tennessee and Ballad Health, the center has already attracted approximately \$18 million in external funding.

Mr. Meit pointed out that ETSU has done extensive work for the State of Tennessee, including a Rural Hospital Bypass Study, Public Health Infrastructure grant evaluation, and a COVID-19 Disparities Grant evaluation. The center has built data dashboards for the state, such as the Tennessee Livability Indicators Dashboard. It serves as a resource for the public, nonprofits, academia, and government to examine key factors that contribute to livability in communities all across Tennessee. The dashboard presents over 60 quantitative indicators. Categories include age-friendly communities, community engagement, community infrastructure, economy, education, employment, fiscal responsibility, food access and nutrition, health care access, health status, housing, natural environments, and transportation.

Mr. Meit described the center's work with the Appalachian Regional Commission, including evaluation of the ARC's health grants and INSPIRE grants. Another major component of the center's work is the Regional Public College and University Central Appalachia Health Consortium, involving seven regional universities that share and mentor students, lifting them up into health care professions. Mr. Meit then highlighted STRONG LINK, a partnership with Ballad Health. It is a long-term study following cohorts of mothers and babies across 18 years to look at health outcomes, social outcomes, and to improve well-being for children in our region.

Mr. Meit concluded with a look at some of the center's national work. He reiterated the fact that ETSU is one of eight federally-funded Rural Health Research Centers and part of the only federally-funded consortium that looks at public health workforce research, the Consortium for Workforce Research in Public Health. Mr. Meit added that the center is doing more foundation work, having recently received a contract with the

Commonwealth Fund for a project that will involve listening sessions all across the country to find out what resources that people in rural communities want.

Dr. Noland commended Mr. Meit and Dr. Randy Wykoff, Dean of the College of Public Health, for the world-class work that is being done in the Center for Rural Health and Research.

VII. ETSU College of Nursing: Major Initiatives in 2025

Dr. Dena Evans, Dean of the College of Nursing, updated the committee on her first year in the position. She described ETSU's nursing program as one of the largest in the state, with 70 faculty members, 188 staff members, 537 undergraduate students, 260 graduate students, and eight programs of study, from the BSN to the MSN to the DNP and the Ph.D. She reported that 100 percent of our graduates are employed upon graduation, with starting salaries ranging from \$72,000 to \$75,000 for the BSN.

Dr. Evans outlined her major initiatives for 2025: investing in brand and reputation, building infrastructure, renovating Nicks Hall, evaluating the academic portfolio, creating pipeline programs, and supporting faculty and staff. Much work has been done to build the name recognition of the college beyond Northeast Tennessee and to increase the college's presence on social media. Nicks Hall has been renovated from the first floor to the third, at a cost of \$3.5 million. To strengthen the college's infrastructure, an Academic Student Success Center and a Department of Academic Clinical Affairs have been added. Dr. Evans summarized several new pipeline programs that have been created, including a Direct Entry Pathway for first-year students, a Military and Veterans Pathway, and a DNP/MBA program in partnership with the College of Business and Technology. Future plans include a CRNA program to start in the summer of 2028, a Direct Entry MSN Program, an EMT/Paramedic Pathway, and a K-12 Pipeline Initiative and Nurse Summer Camp.

College staff have worked to support College of Nursing faculty and staff by emphasizing professional growth, investing in appreciation and recognition, reinforcing a culture of well-being, and supporting innovation. The Dean discussed the growth in Interprofessional Education within the college, with a goal of increasing IPE experiences at least four-fold by 2028-29. Summarizing the college's work in research and grant acquisition, Dean Evans noted that 12 Ph.D. students are currently enrolled and that research themes include health and wellness across the lifespan, clinical education and practice readiness, and rural and underserved populations.

Dr. Evans then described the work of the Tennessee Center for Nursing Advancement, which is housed within the College of Nursing. It was established through funding from the State of Tennessee and Ballad Health, with a focus on workforce development and increasing the pipeline for nursing in Tennessee. Dr. Evans highlighted the Voices from the Nursing Frontline initiative. Thus far, 58 episodes have attracted over 14,000 listeners. She reported that 28 nurses have been recognized, out of 1,000 nominations,

for the Nurse of the Month Program. The Tennessee Center for Nursing Advancement offers two educational programs, the Clinical Faculty Training Program, with 77 graduates so far, and the Emerging Nurse Leader Fellowship, with 24 graduates. Dr. Evans said the center has sponsored several events and that staff members have spoken at 15 events. The center's digital reach has increased significantly, with 13.3 million impressions, and it has created dashboards for those who want to learn more about the nursing workforce in Tennessee and the region. Dr. Evans told the committee that some 114 stories have been collected for the Nurse Narratives Initiative. Some of these were shown during the Nurse Empathy Heals event, which drew over 400 attendees.

VIII. Campus Recreation Update

Ms. Kari Osborne Albarado, Director of Campus Recreation, presented an update on the work taking place through the Basler Center for Physical Activity. She indicated that the CPA is on track to break all usage records this year, with use of the center being up by 20 percent compared to the fall of 2024. For fall 2025, the center recorded 113,219 entrances. Also last fall, 7,077 unique students made use of the center. Ms. Albarado noted increases in intramural sports, group fitness classes, and usage of the climbing wall.

In presenting a comparison with other campus recreation programs across the state, Ms. Albarado said the ETSU program employs eight professional staff and supports the largest graduate assistant program in collegiate recreation in the state. She pointed out that the ETSU Campus Recreation program recruits graduate students nationally. At the same time, ETSU has the second-lowest recreation fee in Tennessee.

Ms. Albarado focused on growth in sport clubs, which are run and led by students. For fall 2025, there were 600 participants and 22 teams. Ms. Albarado then described TREK, which serves first-year students through a six-day, five-night experience in the summer before their classes begin. Three sessions are held each summer, and the goal is to expand participation to 500 students.

Ms. Albarado noted that Campus Recreation is one of the biggest employers of students on campus, with over 130 student employees. Alyssa Livesay, a student employee and graduate assistant, gave a brief testimonial about the value of working at the CPA.

Ms. Albarado announced to the committee that on April 28, the Knoxville TVA Employees Credit Union Sports Complex will be dedicated. Future plans for the CPA include pickleball courts and an outdoor fitness court. She concluded her report by looking ahead to the spring of 2027, when the Basler Center for Physical Activity will turn 25.

GENERAL INFORMATION ITEMS

IX. Committee Discussions

There was no further discussion.

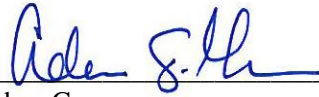
X. Other Business

There was no other business to come before the committee.

XI. Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 10:03 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Adam Green
Secretary of the Board of Trustees

Approved by the Board of Trustees at its May 21, 2026 meeting.