

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

MINUTES

November 14, 2025
Johnson City, Tennessee

The East Tennessee State University Board of Trustees' Academic, Research, and Student Success Committee met on Friday, November 14, 2025, at 9:00 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 9:00 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 Jon Lundberg
Trustee Melissa Steagall-Jones
Trustee Tony Treadway

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

III. Approval of the Committee Minutes from September 12, 2025

The minutes from the September 12, 2025, meeting of the Academic, Research, and Student Success Committee were approved as submitted with Trustee Jon Lundberg making the motion and Trustee Melissa Steagall-Jones seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS

IV. Approval of the Letter of Notification (LON) Regarding the Establishment of a Master of Science in Environment, Health, and Disaster Studies

Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Kimberly McCorkle requested the committee's approval to submit a Letter of Notification to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission outlining plans for a new interdisciplinary master of science degree program in Environment, Health, and Disaster Studies. She explained that the program would include two concentrations: Environmental Health Sciences and Disaster Science. She added that no other interdisciplinary programs of this kind exist in the state of Tennessee. Students would be able to complete the degree online or in person. The program is a collaboration between the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Public Health and will rely heavily on partnerships with external agencies. Provost McCorkle quoted a report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicating that employment of environmental scientists and specialists is projected to grow by seven percent from 2023 to 2033. The new master's degree program, if approved, would begin in the fall of 2026.

Trustee Tony Treadway made a motion to approve the Letter of Notification, and Trustee Jon Lundberg seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

V. Quality Assurance Funding Update

Dr. Michael Hoff, Vice Provost for Decision Support and University Chief Planning Officer, outlined the six metrics used for Quality Assurance funding by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, emphasizing that the process can yield 5.4 percent of the university's overall operating budget. He said the standards are evaluated every five years, and this year represents the end of the current five-year cycle. Over that five-year cycle, ETSU averaged 91.8 points on a 100-point scale. For the prior five-year cycle, 2015 to 2020, the university averaged 89.6. Dr. Hoff reviewed each of the six metrics that constitute the Quality Assurance funding program: General Educational Assessment, Major Field Assessment, Academic Programs, Institutional Satisfaction, Equity, and Focus Populations. ETSU achieved the maximum number of points in General Educational Assessment, Major Field Assessment, Institutional Satisfaction, and Equity. Dr. Hoff said these figures affirm the success of ETSU's educational mission. He explained that the metric entitled Focus Populations saw a drop in score related to the fact that fewer potential transfer students completed work at community colleges during the COVID-19 Pandemic, coupled with the fact that ETSU's graduation rates were accelerated post-Pandemic.

President Noland underscored the fact that ETSU students are consistently scoring above the national average in learning outcomes and in major field assessments and that we are above the national average in satisfaction surveys among students, faculty, and alumni. He added that the figures presented highlight the symbiotic relationship that exists between ETSU and the region's community colleges.

VI. Community-Engaged Learning Update

Dr. McCorkle reviewed the history of the university's student success initiative, Go Beyond the Classroom, and our Community-Engaged Learning focus, launched two years ago as part of the Quality Enhancement Plan, a component of our reaffirmation of accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. She shared a timeline of ETSU's Community-Engaged Learning efforts, noting that there are now over 80 courses that incorporate CEL with some 1,000 students participating.

Provost McCorkle then introduced Dr. Susan McCracken, Vice Provost for Community Engagement. She began her presentation by providing a definition of community-engaged learning: a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities for reflection designed to achieve desired learning outcomes (Jacoby, 2015). Dr. McCracken outlined ETSU's aspiration, which is to have at least 50 percent of all freshmen participating in a community-engaged learning experience during their first year and to involve 75 percent of all seniors in a CEL experience before they graduate.

Dr. McCracken outlined the goals of the Go Beyond the Classroom initiative: to provide infrastructure and resources to support long-term success; to expand student involvement; and to describe the impact of student involvement in CEL on student outcomes. She told the committee that based on last year's numbers, students who had a CEL experience had a retention rate of 85 percent.

Dr. McCracken summarized the purpose and success of the ETSU Elevates program and ended her presentation by stating ETSU's vision for CEL: that the experience will address economic and workforce needs of the region; that the experience will prepare students for the career demands of the future; and that CEL will be a signature experience for all ETSU students.

VII. ETSU Research Update: Orthotics and Prosthetics

Dr. Kyle Leister, Assistant Professor and Program Director of Orthotics and Prosthetics, began his presentation by noting that the World Health Organization estimates that between 25 and 40 million people worldwide require some type of orthotics and prosthetics care and that over 5.6 million Americans are living with limb loss or limb difference. Dr. Leister pointed out that there are 14 accredited orthotics and prosthetics programs in the United States. ETSU became the 14th this summer, after an on-site accreditation visit yielded no recommendations. ETSU's program is the only one of its kind in the state of Tennessee. Dr. Leister reviewed the mission of the program: To prepare competent practitioner-scholars to provide evidence-based services for individuals requiring orthotic/prosthetic care in Southern Appalachia and beyond.

Dr. Leister provided an overview of his own research in the field, pointing out the move from a fee-for-services model to value-based care based on outcomes. He summarized his work on wearable technologies and mobility and physical activity among the amputee population. His research, he pointed out, is collaborative, involving ETSU students, several units across campus, and external partners such as the Veterans Administration and the University of Pittsburgh.

VIII. Student Services Update: Transforming Student Care and Engagement

This presentation was made by Dr. Michelle Byrd, Senior Associate Vice President and Dean of Students, and Dr. Leah Adinolfi, Assistant Vice President and Dean of Student Engagement. They described the work of the Dean of Students' office in creating a culture of care on campus. The number of unique CARE reports, 1,331, is the highest ever, with the top concern being student mental health.

Dr. Byrd reviewed several internal grant programs available to assist students. Crisis Grants for 2024-25 amounted to \$12,675, for 28 students. Helene-related Crisis Grants amounted to \$43,000 for 62 students. In the category of Tuition Grants, a total of 64 students received over \$120,000 in retention grants, and 11 students received more than \$11,000 in returner grants. Helene-related Tuition Grants topped \$52,000, aiding 21 students. The Dean of Students office also offers textbook grants, in partnership with the ETSU Bookstore. Dr. Byrd reported that Little Bucs Childcare Funding assisted 36 ETSU students and their 42 children.

In July of 2025, Dr. Byrd noted, the Assistant Director of Wellness moved from Campus Recreation to the Dean of Students office, and one of the resulting programs is mental health first aid training for faculty and staff.

Dr. Adinolfi described the work of the Dr. Patricia E. Robertson Center, whose mission is now to help students build capacity for well-being, develop self-efficacy, and navigate challenges with confidence and purpose. She said the center has now taken over the university's basic needs initiative, which encompasses personal hygiene needs, clothing, and Bucky's Pantry. The pantry reported 5,321 total visits in 2024 and now averages over 100 student visits a week. Dr. Adinolfi acknowledged the help of partners such as Sodexo and Publix. She added that the Robertson Center offers social support and space, highlighting programs such as Crafting for a Cause and various personal development workshops.

Dr. Byrd summarized recent student mental health initiatives and reported to the committee that we are pursuing the opportunity to become a JED Campus, through the Jed Foundation, a non-profit organization that protects emotional health and prevents suicide for teens and young adults in the United States. In addition, she said, the ETSU Counseling Center is in the process of achieving accreditation, through the International Accreditation of Counseling Services.

President Noland recapped the university's work in addressing the basic needs of students, noting that significant resources were provided to assist students as a result of Hurricane Helene, and a significant portion of those resources came from private donors. During the recent government shutdown, he said, there was a marked increase in the number of students using Bucky's Food Pantry. On a weekly basis, he added, around 150 students have been relying on the pantry to put food on the table for they and their families.

GENERAL INFORMATION ITEMS

IX. Committee Discussions

There was no further discussion.

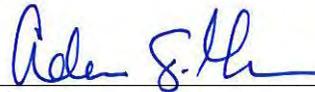
X. Other Business

There was no other business to come before the committee.

XI. Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 10:23 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Adam Green
Secretary of the Board of Trustees

Approved by the Board of Trustees at its February 20, 2026 meeting.