

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

MINUTES

September 20, 2019  
Johnson City, Tennessee

The East Tennessee State University Board of Trustees Academic, Research and Student Success Committee met at 9:45 a.m. on Friday, September 20, 2019, at the Millennium Center.

I. Call to Order

Dr. Linda Latimer, chair of the Academic, Research and Student Success Committee, called the meeting to order.

II. Roll Call

Board Secretary Adam Green called the roll. Board members in attendance were:

Dr. Linda Latimer, Chair  
Janet Ayers  
Dr. Virginia Foley  
David Golden

III. Approval of the Committee Minutes from April 26, 2019

Chair Latimer stated that she noticed two items missing from the April 26, 2019, minutes of the committee. Missing items included: 1) a rich discussion regarding medical research-focused efforts and 2) the decision to set aside time in each committee meeting for general discussion and focused work.

Trustee Golden made a motion that the minutes of the April 26, 2019, meeting of the committee be approved with Trustee Latimer's additions. Trustee Ayers seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

IV. Approval of the Letter of Notification – Master of Science in Prosthetics and Orthotics

Dr. Wilsie Bishop, Senior Vice President for Academics, presented to the committee the Letter of Notification (LON) as the first step in the approval process for the proposed Master of Science in Prosthetics and Orthotics. Dr. Bishop stated there are no other master's level orthotics and prosthetics programs in Tennessee or the Appalachian region surrounding ETSU, and very few at public institutions throughout the United States. She said this program, along with the doctoral degree program in Occupational Therapy that is currently in the review process, will expand the services offered by the College of Clinical and Rehabilitative Health Sciences.

Dr. Bishop explained that following Committee and Board approval, the LON will go to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) for review. Upon the completion of THEC's review process, President Noland be notified. Assuming that that the THEC recommendations are positive, the ETSU Board of Trustees should vote for final approval of the program in September 2020.

Trustee Golden stated that this approval process is slow and that it puts the university and the state of Tennessee at a competitive disadvantage to not move faster when there is a market need for an academic program. He said he had an earlier conversation regarding this issue with THEC Executive Director Mike Krauss, who indicated willingness to figure out how to move faster on approvals.

Dr. Bishop noted that university officials had conversations with THEC officials during the summer regarding ways the process could be expedited. She stated that the process is delayed when THEC requests additional information on program proposals and/or engages external consultants to ensure there is no redundancy of programs in order to save taxpayers' money. She stated that the university is looking at its own internal processes to see where the process could be expedited.

Trustee Ayers expressed frustration at the lack of nimbleness in the academic approval process as compared to the business sector.

President Noland explained that the internal ETSU processes include market analysis by the dean and staff to determine the need for new programs. He reiterated Dr. Bishop's explanation of the THEC review process and noted that private institutions can move forward faster because they do not require state review and approval.

Trustee Ayers noted that the creation of the Boards of Trustees was intended to help universities to have more flexibility than they had previously, and suggested that the Board could advocate at the state level to make changes that would allow such flexibility.

President Noland provided information and context for such a conversation explaining that in the 1980s the bulk of program start-up costs were paid for by the state. In contrast, today's program start-up costs are covered by institutional resources. He said that state structures are still geared toward the operating parameters of the 1980s. He reiterated that the boards of small private schools have the ability to approve programs, but that part of the state's focus is avoiding unnecessary duplication of academic programs. He suggested the idea of an expedited path to approval of "mission-germane" programs, such as those in the health sciences. He also noted that the Department of Computing now has a cybersecurity concentration because the university has the flexibility to approve concentrations. Dr. Noland also reminded the committee that THEC set a precedent for changing academic approval authority four years ago when it ceded approval of associate degrees and certificates at the community college level to the Tennessee Board of Regents.

Committee members reiterated their willingness to advocate for the university with THEC regarding this issue. Chair Latimer suggested asking that the issue of academic program approval processes be placed on the agenda of the next Board of Trustees Member Training that THEC organizes on a regular basis. She stated that she believes the other institutions' board members may agree. Committee members requested background information and statistics from the university in preparation for discussions with THEC, and President Noland said the university would provide a document with policy background and talking points.

Trustee Ayers made the motion to recommend adoption of the Board of Trustees resolution approving the LON of the establishment of a Master of Science in Prosthetics and Orthotics and sending it to THEC for consideration. Trustees Foley and Golden seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

#### V. Out-of-Cycle Tenure Actions

Dr. Bishop recommended the approval of tenure upon appointment for three individuals hired after the annual review was approved for the last academic year. These individuals include: 1) Dr. Frederick Gordon, Associate Professor and Director of the Master of Public Administration Program in the Department of Political Science, International Affairs and Public Administration; 2) Dr. Christopher Keller, Professor in the Department of Literature and Language and Dean of the Honors College; and 3) Dr. Brian Partin, Assistant Professor and Director of University School.

Trustee Ayers made the motion to approve the recommendation. The motion was seconded by Trustee Foley and unanimously approved.

#### VI. Revised Student Code of Conduct Rule

Dr. Michelle Byrd, Dean of Students, presented three revisions to the Student Code of Conduct necessitated since the March 24, 2017, Board approval of the General Policy on Student Conduct and Disciplinary Sanctions. These include:

- A resolution by the Student Government Association recommending the addition of a Medical Amnesty process within the Student Conduct Rule. Dr. Byrd said this would “allow for discretion in exempting students who call for help for (other) students who are impaired to potentially not be charged with drug- or alcohol-related policies.” She said this is consistent with medical amnesty policies that other states in the South and nationwide are moving toward.
- Requirements associated with sexual misconduct hearing processes, rights, and responsibilities as outlined by Tennessee Public Chapter 980. Dr. Byrd said this would ensure due process for all individuals involved, and one of the biggest changes is allowing students to be represented by counsel when appearing before the university judicial board. Some of the changes are things the university has already been doing and will continue to do, such as providing training for the judicial board on an annual basis.

- Recommendations stemming from a Student Conduct review team, suggesting slight amendments and an addition to the list of violations. Dr. Byrd noted there are some slight changes that provide additional clarity to alcohol and drug violations as described in the packet. She noted one new policy relates to the possession of ammunition on campus and allows the university to address such cases as ammunition visible inside vehicles or residence hall rooms when no reasonable explanation is provided.

Trustee Golden made the motion to recommend adoption of the Student Code of Conduct changes. This motion was seconded by Trustee Ayers and approved unanimously through a roll-call vote.

VII. Academic Action Notifications for the Period of January 1, 2019, through July 31, 2019

Dr. Bishop called Committee members' attention to the 44 curricular actions in the addenda materials that did not require Board of Trustees or THEC approval. She stated that these actions are examples of the nimbleness the university does have in such cases as making curricular titles and naming more consistent.

President Noland called attention to the reference to the cybersecurity concentration as an example of areas where the university has the flexibility to move quickly.

VIII. Chairs of Excellence Update

Dr. Cheri Clavier, Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation Liaison, gave a presentation on the status of ongoing reviews of ETSU's Centers and Chairs of Excellence. At the behest of then-Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Bert Bach, the Office of Planning and Decision Support has been conducting a more extensive periodic review of the Chairs and Centers. This more extensive reviews ensure that the work of the Chairs and Centers is aligned with the university's academic programs and with regional accreditation requirements; the process incorporates peer review, identifies expected outcomes and demonstrates the extent to which those outcomes are achieved.

The Centers of Excellence created in the 1980s with state and matching donor funds were reviewed to make sure they maintained their original purposes and will be reviewed once every five years. Those not part of the original funding match in the 1980s are undergoing annual reports this year. Periodic reviews of the Chairs of Excellence will occur every four years; two of these are not being conducted this year because the chairholders have announced their plans to retire before next September, and another, which is a rotating position with a different chairholder each year, takes longer to review.

IX. ETSU Student Success Update

Dr. Joe Sherlin, Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment, delivered a presentation updating the Committee on four major reviews supporting the

institution's student success agenda, which have been underway since November 2018.

He said the university is taking a multifaceted approach to improving the current undergraduate metrics of a 50% six-year graduation rate, 75% first-year persistence rate and a 16% increase in degree production since 2012.

Areas under review include Undergraduate Enrollment Services, Undergraduate Advising, First Year Experience, and Financial Aid and Scholarship. Dr. Sherlin described a number of early findings and next steps in these areas, some of which include breaking down silos between divisions; building a data-driven environment that will assist admissions counselors in managing their territories; integrating communication efforts to better tell the university's stories; improving efficiencies in Admissions to reduce application processing time from two weeks to 48 hours; ensuring professional advising for all students from the first year through graduation; implementing customer service training; requiring Preview, the first-year course, and a possible freshmen live-on campus requirement; continuing to align financial aid with enrollment and success goals; and improving internal and external communication related to financial aid. Dr. Sherlin said ETSU is making an impact on students not only from this region, but also from around the globe, and that the university views this work as a calling and with urgency.

In discussion, Trustee Ayers echoed Dr. Sherlin's points regarding breaking down silos and improving communication, saying that once those are done, the other elements will fall into place. Trustee Golden expressed appreciation for a realistic presentation that will enable Board members to "roll up their sleeves" and do their part to help make things better.

#### X. Memorandum of Understanding with Ballad Health

President Noland called Committee members' attention to the agenda materials outlining the Memorandum of Understanding between ETSU and Ballad Health. He stated that the MOU provides a foundation for working collaboratively within the areas of education, clinical and community-based care and innovation, and research. He also pointed to a memorandum outlining ETSU's proposed membership for the Coordinating Council and councils on Education, Clinical and Community-Based Care and Innovation, and Research. This is an outgrowth of previous Memoranda of Understanding with the former Mountain States Health Alliance and Wellmont systems prior to the Ballad merger. In response to a question from Chair Latimer, Dr. Noland said that to the best of his knowledge, this was the only operating MOU between Ballad and an academic partner.

Chair Latimer stated that the former Coordinating Council with Mountain States frequently cancelled meetings. President Noland added that partnership goes two ways and proposed that each meeting of the Academic, Research, and Student Success Committee include an agenda item to review highlights of council meetings so that members could ensure that the meetings are occurring and have a sense of the pace and scale of activity. Committee members concurred.

Following discussion regarding Ballad Health and ETSU residency programs and the competition for Ballad residencies between students from ETSU and other institutions, President Noland suggested—if possible—a joint meeting of the Ballad and ETSU boards. Committee members concurred.

Committee members inquired about the qualifications of the individuals proposed as council members from both ETSU and Ballad. President Noland assured the Committee that ETSU's proposed council members are highly qualified and said he would obtain and provide the qualifications of members proposed by Ballad.

President Noland stated that ETSU would provide the Committee with the full background on all of the council members.

#### XI. Research and Innovation Working Group Research Report – Phase I

President Noland called Committee members' attention to the materials in their agenda materials. Dr. Noland stated that the university pledged to undertake a review of the complete university structure during the current academic year and that in March, the Board approved the strategic plan that called for aggressive goals in research. A team of faculty and administrators was formed into a Research and Innovation Working Group and given its charge to be completed over the summer. President Noland presented the resulting report. In its work, the group benchmarked best practices at institutions with established research protocols as well as institutions currently building their research enterprises. According to President Noland, a critical recommendation from the report is the creation of a Vice President for Research and Innovation position that will report directly to the president and lead the university's efforts in these areas. This individual would chair and lead the reconstitution of a research foundation and be responsible for budgets and facilities, among other duties as listed in the report, which includes KPIs, an action plan and an organizational chart. He noted that this is not a definitive plan and solicited the feedback of Committee members.

Discussion ensued in which Committee members strongly recommended involving an outside consultant with experience with both academic research enterprises and large hospital systems in reviewing the plan and position description of a potential Vice President for Research and Innovation.

President Noland stated that he has a sense of urgency in this effort and asked if the university could get back with the committee prior to the November Board should an outside consultant(s) provide feedback before the November Board meeting. He stated that waiting could result in missing the hiring window to have a new Vice President in place by the spring of 2020 in the fall.

There being no further discussion, Chair Latimer adjourned the meeting at 11:33 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



---

Adam Green

Secretary of the Board of Trustees

Approved by the Board of Trustees at its November 15, 2019 meeting.