

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MINUTES

May 23, 2025
Johnson City, Tennessee

The East Tennessee State University Board of Trustees met on Friday, May 23, 2025, at 1:05 p.m. in the East Tennessee Room of the D.P. Culp Student Center. The meeting was also live-streamed and recorded.

I. Call to Order

Chair Dr. Linda Latimer called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. With the spring semester having recently come to a close, she reflected on several accomplishments that demonstrate how ETSU students, faculty, staff, and programs continue to advance the university's mission with distinction. Among the highlights:

- The Quillen College of Medicine has been named a Tier 1 medical school for primary care by *U.S. News & World Report*, placing it among the top 16 institutions in the country in this field, and the magazine recognized Quillen as the number-two medical school in the nation for serving underserved communities.
- Degrees were awarded to more than 2,000 graduates during spring commencement, including the first 16 graduates of the new doctoral program in Occupational Therapy.
- ETSU junior Leah Loveday, from the College of Public Health, received the highly competitive Truman Scholarship, making this the second year in a row that ETSU has celebrated a Truman Scholar. And a record-setting nine students received the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship.
- College of Business and Technology faculty member Stokes Piercy has been selected as a Fulbright Scholar by the Hungarian-American Fulbright Commission, and Dr. Theresa McGarry, from the College of Arts and Sciences, was awarded a Fulbright to Sri Lanka.
- The university has identified more than \$4 million in recurring funds to invest in strategic, targeted salary enhancements for a significant number of faculty and staff.

Chair Latimer told the board that it has been her pleasure and privilege to serve during such a dynamic and transformative period in ETSU's history. She thanked members of the board, Provost McCorkle, the administration, faculty, staff, and students for providing a foundation for

continued success, and she thanked President Noland for his vision, integrity, and tireless dedication to ETSU and its mission.

II. Roll Call

Board Secretary Dr. Adam Green led the roll call.

Trustees physically present were:

Chair Dr. Linda Latimer
Trustee Charles Allen
Trustee Janet Ayers
Trustee Steve DeCarlo
Trustee Dorothy Grisham
Trustee Melissa Steagall-Jones
Trustee Tony Treadway
Trustee Trent White

Dr. Green informed the board chair that a quorum was present.

III. Public Comments

No individuals were signed up to speak to the board during the public comment period.

IV. Approval of Minutes from February 21, 2025

The minutes from the February 21, 2025, meeting of the Board of Trustees were approved as submitted, with Trustee Melissa Steagall-Jones making the motion to approve and Trustee Janet Ayers seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

V. Report from the Academic, Research, and Student Success Committee

Trustee Janet Ayers began by thanking Board Chair Dr. Latimer for her passion, leadership, and integrity. She said her committee took action on two items and heard presentations on three information items. The first action was approval of the university's recommendations for faculty tenure and promotion. The second action item was approval of a Letter of Notification regarding the establishment of a new BBA degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management.

Chair Ayers reported that Provost McCorkle gave the committee an update on initiatives across the Division of Academic Affairs. These included a review of the first year of the new academic structure and the Compass general education core curriculum, as well as a report on Community-Engaged Learning.

Chair Ayers then told the board that her committee heard a presentation on the accomplishments and future plans of the Student Government Association. The presentation highlighted the SGA's involvement in such campus initiatives as the return of football, the renovation of the Culp Student Center, and the forthcoming Student Life Village.

Finally, Chair Ayers said, her committee heard a presentation by Dr. Nick Hagemeyer, Vice Provost for Research, covering such topics as recent changes in research designation between R1 and R2 and the university's efforts to expand research in areas of strength.

VI. Report from the Finance and Administration Committee

Trustee Steve DeCarlo also expressed thanks to Chair Latimer for her leadership during her four years with the board. He reported that his committee approved the spring estimated budgets for FY25 and the July proposed budgets for FY26, which are included in the board's consent agenda. Chair DeCarlo pointed out that these budgets were reviewed and discussed in detail during the committee's called meeting on April 11.

Chair DeCarlo reported that the committee approved reducing the College of Medicine's \$125 microscope fee to \$25 and renaming it as a microscope lab fee. Chair DeCarlo summarized the staff presentation to the committee on capital budget submittals and disclosures for FY26. The presentation included capital outlay projects totaling \$70.4 million, a capital demolition project at \$250,000, capital maintenance projects totaling \$23.4 million, and disclosed projects of \$95 million. The committee received a financial update comparing operating revenues and expenditures for the current year to the prior year. The FY24 Composite Financial Index was presented, showing a 4.58 CFI score for ETSU, which is well above the standard.

The committee heard a report on agreements and contracts over \$250,000, covering the period from January through March of the current year.

Chair DeCarlo told the board that at its April 11 called meeting, the Finance and Administration Committee reviewed proposed tuition and fees for FY26. He then called on Ms. Christy Graham, Chief Financial Officer, to present those figures to the board.

Ms. Graham explained to the board all the various factors that are considered when tuition and mandatory fees are recommended. She indicated that the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's funding model for 2026 was predicated on constant enrollment with a 3.3 percent outcomes growth and inflationary adjustment, which equated to \$1.2 million for ETSU. She said that Governor Bill Lee's proposed budget for an expenditure increase and a partially-funded 2.3 percent salary pool was \$3.3 million. She noted that although tuition and fees increased by 5.25 percent in FY25, in two of the four prior years, tuition was held flat. Ms. Graham added that the university must consider THEC's binding tuition and mandatory fee ranges, which were set at 0 to 6.5 percent during THEC's March meeting.

Ms. Graham reported that ETSU's proposed tuition and mandatory fees were posted for public comment from April 15-29, and no comments were received.

Ms. Graham said that ETSU is proposing a 5.09 percent increase for in-state tuition, with additional increases for international and out-of-state students, as well as a 3.88 percent increase for graduate tuition. Assuming flat enrollment, she said, this should result in an increase in revenue of \$5.6 million. The proposed mandatory fee increase includes an \$8 increase for the Parking Student Campus Access Fee and a \$40 per semester fee for the Student Life Village. The total tuition and mandatory fee increase requested is 4.98 percent for all classes of undergraduate students on the main campus: 5.09 percent in tuition and 4.58 percent in fees, for a total increase to full-time undergraduate students of \$213 per semester for tuition and \$48 per semester for fees. Ms. Graham underscored the fact that ETSU is still an affordable option for public education in Tennessee.

Trustee Grisham made a motion that the proposed tuition and mandatory fees be approved as presented, and Trustee Allen seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

VII. Report from the Audit Committee

Committee Chair Melissa Steagall-Jones thanked Board Chair Latimer for her leadership over the past four years. She said the Audit Committee's meeting consisted of several housekeeping items that were all approved, including: the Audit Committee Charter, the Internal Audit Charter, the Compliance Charter, the Internal Audit Policy, and the Preventing and Reporting Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Policy. She told the board that the committee approved an addition to the Audit Plan to cover ProCard consulting and voted to delay the Family Medicine timekeeping review until after the conversion to Voyager.

Ms. Steagall-Jones reported that the committee reviewed both the Conflict of Interest Policy and the Employee Code of Conduct Policy and recommended no changes in either. She added that two investigations were recently completed by the Office of Internal Audit: the College of Health Sciences Dean's Office and the College of Nursing Dean's Office. There were no findings or recommendations in either.

Ms. Steagall-Jones informed the board that her committee then went into executive session, with no votes or deliberations taking place.

VIII. Consent Agenda

Chair Latimer then called the board's attention to the Consent Agenda that included several routine items as well as items acted upon during the morning's committee meetings. Chair Latimer asked if there were any items on the Consent Agenda that needed to be pulled for discussion and consideration by the full board. There were none.

Chair Latimer then asked for a motion to approve the full Consent Agenda. Trustee Steve DeCarlo moved that the Consent Agenda be approved, and Trustee Janet Ayers seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

IX. Trustees Self-Evaluation Report

Dr. Adam Green, Board Secretary and ETSU Chief of Staff, reminded the board that its Self-Evaluation Policy and SACSCOC accreditation standards require Trustees to participate in a routine self-evaluation. He said that Trustees completed their self-evaluation earlier this semester. The evaluation consisted of 10 questions. Five of them asked Trustees to respond using a 1 to 5 Likert scale, with 5 being excellent. Trustees were also given the option to share open-ended written comments.

Dr. Green summarized the Likert scale results, indicating that items receiving the highest ratings, all 5s, were:

- Abides by Tennessee Open Meeting Laws
- Approves revised and proposed ETSU policies, when appropriate
- Grants tenure and/or promotion to eligible members of the faculty upon the positive recommendation of the president
- Approves the final operating and capital outlay budgets for each fiscal year

Dr. Green then reviewed each of the five questions.

Question #1: Board Function: Trustees rated this question at 4.43 or higher.

Question #2: Board Operations: Trustees rated this at 4.57 or higher, with three being 5 out of 5.

Question #3: Board Role: Trustees rated this question at 3.86 or higher.

Question #4: Board Meetings: Trustees rated this question at 4.43 or higher.

Question #5: Board Communication: Trustees rated this question at 4.71 or higher.

X. President's Report

President Noland centered his remarks around access and success; strategic initiatives; a legislative and budget update; the changing landscape of college athletics; and reflections on 2024-25.

In discussing the theme of access and success, Dr. Noland described preparations for the fall 2025 class, noting that applications received are running over 2,000 higher compared to the fall of 2021: 10,804 for fall 2025 and 8,393 for fall 2021. He reported that the number of students planning to attend freshman orientation is up compared to the fall of 2024. Given these figures, he expressed confidence that the freshman class will again be around the 2,100 mark.

Dr. Noland reviewed retention statistics from fall 2024, showing that persistence among first-time freshmen stood at 90.4 percent. Taking all classifications of students under consideration, 92.2 percent were retained or graduated. Enrollment projection for fall 2025, Dr. Noland said, now stands at 14,438, an increase of more than 400 students. Dr. Noland then reviewed key strategic priorities for the year 2024-25. He reported the following:

- The strategic enrollment management and recruitment plan is done
- General education redesign has been completed and the Compass core curriculum has been actualized
- The academic portfolio has been restructured as it relates to colleges and schools
- Financial aid has been optimized
- Strategic resource alignment and campus budget modeling have been completed
- Voyager is set for July 1 implementation
- Market salary enhancements have been granted
- The classification and compensation system has been restructured

Looking to the year 2025-26, President Noland asked Dr. Michael Hoff, Vice Provost for Decision Support and Chief Planning Officer, to discuss adult degree completion and how the university can bring more adults with some college but no degree back into higher education and how we can provide better opportunities for people who have retired and moved to Northeast Tennessee.

Dr. Hoff told the board that there are 36 million adults with some college but no degree in the United States, with over one million of them residing in Tennessee. He said an important characteristic of that population is that some 50 percent are working full-time. He added that only 28 percent of those surveyed after coming back to college said they did so for a new career. Approximately 72 percent said they did it for some other reason, ranging from a change in finances to having a child to moving to a new location. Many, he said, liked the career they had but needed a new certificate, a short-term set of courses. In light of these facts, Dr. Hoff said the ETSU School of Interdisciplinary and Continuing Studies, of which he is Interim Director, is creating a strategic plan to leverage all of ETSU's assets to create a clearinghouse for adult students, focusing on applied science and workforce development. Dr. Hoff also discussed professional development needs and the creation of non-credit courses, noting that several states recognize credentials of value as part of their funding formula. And, given the fact that people are living longer and retiring earlier for different reasons, Dr. Hoff said ETSU will be addressing the concept of lifelong learning in more depth.

Dr. Noland returned to the podium to continue the discussion of plans for 2025-26. He said a priority for the upcoming year will be the repurposing of the Mary Jordan Center with an emphasis on student success. Another major project for the fall, he said, will be the creation of a strategic plan for research. Dr. Noland elaborated on Provost McCorkle's comments earlier that day to the Academic, Research, and Student Success Committee about the future of engineering at ETSU, which will be part of the expansion of our academic portfolio.

In covering the topic of P20 and Rural Education Enhancements, Dr. Noland told the board that work is ongoing with regional school superintendents and others to make sure that we are continuing to build a college-going culture. He said that one of the things that gets lost in P20 discussions is the fact that ETSU was started in 1911 as a teachers' college. For those students who are on the traditional path to teacher licensure, he noted, ETSU produces more teachers than any other institution in the state. He added that there is a 4,800-person gap between the number of teachers that are needed and the number of teachers currently in the workforce.

In considering recent student achievements at ETSU, President Noland reinforced the importance of Board of Trustees leadership. He commented that the board had challenged the university to make sure that our students had opportunities similar to any other university in the country. He said the awards that ETSU students are now winning underscore the wisdom of that challenge, noting the presence of two Truman Scholars at ETSU at the same time.

Dr. Noland shared a status report on the university's legislative agenda:

- Support full funding of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission state appropriations funding recommendation—Completed
- Support the THEC recommendation regarding the Gatton College of Pharmacy and the Quillen College of Medicine—Partially completed, with some work to do on Gatton
- Funding for Brown Hall Phase II, Valleybrook, and deferred maintenance projects—All three completed
- Support updates and enhancements to state-supported scholarships (THEC Bill)—Completed

Dr. Noland indicated that budget planning for FY26 is underway and that the budget will be predicated on a constant enrollment. If enrollment is up as projected, he said, resources will be directed toward salaries. Dr. Noland described ETSU's new, aggressive vacancy management system as well as the new classification and compensation system, which is built into Voyager. Dr. Noland reviewed the recent history of salary enhancements, including the board-approved 3 percent across-the-board salary enhancement from last fall. Since then, he said, ETSU has taken what was the salary pool that the board identified and came close to doubling it. He reported that two months ago, we distributed \$2.1 million in salary enhancements to faculty and that later, on the afternoon of the board meeting, \$2.4 million in market salary adjustments will be distributed to 599 staff members. All of these enhancements were retroactive to November 1.

Dr. Noland provided an update on facilities, saying that Brown Hall renovation will begin in the summer of 2025. However, he said, the project really began several months ago when the university executed the lease with Johnson City to acquire the former Northeast State space downtown. He said that biology faculty are there now, having taught some courses in that location during the spring semester, and more faculty will be teaching there in the fall. Renovations to Burleson Hall were completed this spring. Now that funds are in place, work

will begin at Valleybrook soon. Dr. Noland said he expects to hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony in January or February of 2026 for the new Academic Building. ETSU is in the final planning stages for the Integrated Health Sciences building, with groundbreaking expected in the upcoming academic year. President Noland said he expects ground to be broken for the new Student Life/Greek Village in the fall. He also announced details on the new five-year lease with the City of Johnson City for the Ashe Street Courthouse, which will house a variety of functions from small business development to bluegrass music to art space.

In the realm of athletics, Dr. Noland said that instead of discussing uncertainty, which we cannot control, it is important to share data on issues we can control, such as student-athlete success. He summarized the performance of the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics as of the close of the spring semester, lauding the department for the cumulative GPA of student-athletes, which was above that for the campus as a whole, and the fact that 43 student-athletes recorded perfect 4.0 GPAs. He added that 174 student-athletes were on the Dean's List for spring.

Dr. Noland then turned his attention to Key Performance Indicators at ETSU, reporting on data from 2017, the first year of the Board of Trustees' existence, the COVID era of 2020, and the present day:

- First-time freshmen: 2017: 2,050; 2020: 1,651; 2025: 2,138
- Retention rate: 2017: 73 percent; 2020: 67 percent; 2025: 76 percent
- Number of students in residence halls: 2017: 2,814; 2020: 1,473; 2025: 3,263
- Sponsored awards: 2017: \$42.5 million; 2020: \$53.6 million; 2025: \$70.3 million

Another Key Performance Indicator and goal was to be designated a Great College to Work For, and ETSU achieved that recognition this year. Further, Dr. Noland reported, the university's Composite Financial Index has almost doubled during this period, from 2.57 in 2017 to 4.58 in 2025. President Noland then chronicled ETSU's response to the board's insistence that more money be placed in reserves. With the addition of \$20 million during the time period described here, the level of reserves now stands at \$38 million. Dr. Noland concluded this section of his report by summarizing the progress that has been made since 2017 in the enhancement of faculty and staff salaries.

Dr. Noland said that these kinds of numbers are driven by people who make the difference at ETSU. He highlighted the work of Dr. Bonnie Burchett, who has led the Housing division for more than 40 years. He said she was "among the hardest working people I've ever met" and noted the role she and her staff have played in increasing on-campus housing, as she approaches retirement.

Dr. Noland praised the work of Roger Lowe, who had worked at Shelbridge for more than 30 years and who passed away two days prior to the board meeting. Dr. Noland said Mr. Lowe "gave his heart and soul to the grounds of this campus" and told the board that Mr. Lowe's

family asked for his ETSU service pin for his burial. Dr. Noland said, “We have the most beautiful college campus in the state of Tennessee because of people like Roger.”

XI. Action Item: Selection of Board Chair

Dr. Adam Green provided an overview of the next three action items on the agenda: the selection of a Board Chair, Vice Chair, and Executive Committee member. He then turned the nomination process over to Board Chair Dr. Linda Latimer.

Dr. Latimer entered into nomination the following slate of officers:

Melissa Steagall-Jones as Chair

Steve DeCarlo as Vice Chair

Janet Ayers as the third at-large Executive Committee member

NOTE: These nominations were acted upon in the aggregate by the board.

Trustee Grisham made a motion that all three individuals be elected, and Trustee Allen seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

XII. Action Item: Selection of Board Vice Chair

See item XI. above.

XIII. Action Item: Selection of Executive Committee Member

See item XI. above.

XIV. Action Item: Resolution of Appreciation for Mr. Trent White

President Noland presented a Resolution of Appreciation recognizing Student Trustee Trent White for his service to the Board of Trustees. Trustee Steagall-Jones made a motion that the resolution be adopted, and Trustee Ayers seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

XV. Action Item: Resolution of Appreciation for Ms. Dorothy Grisham

President Noland presented a Resolution of Appreciation recognizing Trustee Dorothy Grisham for her service to the Board of Trustees. Trustee Steagall-Jones made a motion that the resolution be adopted, and Trustee Janet Ayers seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

XVI. Action Item: Resolution of Appreciation for Dr. Linda Latimer

President Noland presented a Resolution of Appreciation recognizing Dr. Linda Latimer for her service as Chair of the Board of Trustees. Trustee Steagall-Jones made a motion that the resolution be adopted, and Trustee Treadway seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

XVII. Action Item: Student Trustee Selection

President Noland announced to the board that Aashi Vora of Knoxville, a Quillen Honors Scholar, was nominated by the ETSU Student Government Association to serve as the new Student Trustee for academic year 2025-26 and as a member of the board's Finance and Administration Committee. Trustee Grisham made a motion that the nomination be accepted, and Trustee Ayers seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

XVIII. Other Business

There was no other business to come before the committee.

XIX. Executive Session

There was no need for an executive session.

XX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Adam Green
Secretary of the Board of Trustees

Approved by the Board of Trustees at its September 12, 2025 meeting.