

East Tennessee State University

Strategic Plan, 2010-15

**Approved by the University Planning Committee
August 8, 2011**

Strategic Priorities

Access

ETSU will increase access to and participation in its educational programs while providing the human, financial and infrastructure resources needed to support these programs.

Student Success

ETSU will increase persistence to graduation and the number of graduates while maintaining high academic standards.

Scholarship

ETSU will support and enhance scholarship through research, service and creative activity.

Stewardship

ETSU will advance a culture of stewardship that promotes the wise use of resources.

Diversity

ETSU will foster a university community that enhances and supports diversity of people, thought and culture.

Arts and Culture

ETSU will expand engagement in the arts and culture among students, faculty, staff and the community.

Sustainability

ETSU will create a university community that is aware of, engaged in and committed to advancing sustainability.

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ACCESS

ETSU will increase access to and participation in its educational programs while providing the human, financial and infrastructure resources needed to support these programs.

1.1 Restructure undergraduate and graduate scholarships

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ETSU can improve access to higher education by revising its merit-based scholarships. The Academic Performance Scholarship Program, ETSU's largest scholarship program for undergraduate students, has not increased in seven years. As maintenance fees continue to rise, the APS is covering a decreasing percentage of the cost of attendance each year. Whereas ETSU's APS awards are \$3000 per academic year, our competitors now offer as much as \$7500. Hence our APS award is no longer competitive, and not surprisingly, a number of academically exceptional students who apply to ETSU do not enroll. Furthermore, a number of exceptional, currently enrolled ETSU students do not receive any scholarship support. When such students are at risk of leaving college due to financial hardships, we want to offer scholarships to help them stay enrolled and finish their degrees. Finally, we can use scholarships to improve graduate student completion rates. It is common for students to take more than one semester to research, write and defend their theses and dissertations, especially when they must work many hours each week supporting themselves and their families. We can facilitate timely completion of theses and dissertations by offering competitive one-semester thesis/dissertation scholarships.

1.2 Increase distance education enrollment

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Increasing opportunities for and participation in distance education is a significant means by which ETSU can expand access to higher education. A recent labor, market and competitor analysis and a student demand survey conducted for ETSU by a higher education consulting firm indicate significant opportunities to attract new students through distance education programming. In 2009-10 distance education enrollment was 5,019; our goal for 2014-15—7,980—reflects the number of distance education courses now offered at ETSU, current enrollments in those courses, their maximum capacity and the number of distance education courses in development.

STUDENT SUCCESS

ETSU will increase persistence to graduation and the number of graduates while maintaining high academic standards.

2.1 Strongly advise students qualifying for learning support to take ETSU 1000

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Currently about 1200 ETSU students qualify for learning support (LS) annually, some of whom receive support in more than one area. These students are at greater risk than the general student population, and taking ETSU 1000 can improve their academic success and commitment to their college education. Hence we will strongly advise these students to enroll in the course. If most enroll, we will need to offer nearly 60 course sections to accommodate them. When the plan is fully implemented, ETSU will be offering 75 sections annually (15 open to all students, 60 for learning support students). Managing a course with this many sections—which in the case of ETSU 1000 includes recruiting and training instructors (all of whom are volunteers paid modest stipends), overseeing course activities common to all sections, and assessing the effectiveness of the course—will also require additional released time and summer pay for the Director of the ETSU 1000 Program.

2.2 Strongly advise pre-health professions students to take ETSU 1350

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ETSU 1350 is designed for first-year students in the pre-health disciplines and the Colleges of Nursing, Clinical and Rehabilitative Health, and Public Health. Taking ETSU 1350 can support retention of pre-health professions (PHP) students, especially in light of the fact that a considerable majority of these students will not be accepted into the health professions programs for which they originally come to ETSU. Thus we will strongly advise all PHP students to take ETSU 1350. To accommodate these students we will offer up to 40 course sections per academic year; managing a course with this many sections will also require funding for a course director.

2.3 Strongly advise undecided sophomore students to take HDAL 2350

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Currently nearly 300 undergraduate students with 60 credit hours or more have not declared majors. The absence of a major or career path puts these students at greater risk than our general student population. HDAL 2350, Solving the Puzzle of Life, helps students acquire the self-knowledge, decision-making skills and knowledge of the world of work required to select a major. Having offered HDAL 2350 to all students for several years at ETSU, we will now strongly encourage undeclared sophomores to take the course. We will offer nine sections of the course in the fall term, providing seats for 180 students, and nine sections in the spring. This will accommodate ETSU's undeclared sophomores and other students who would like to take the course. In addition to staffing already provided by the Counseling Center and the Peer Career Center, implementation of the plan will require hiring two Teaching Associates.

2.4 Use technology to aid early identification and support of at-risk students

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ETSU will use technology for early identification of at-risk students and follow-up assistance with them. In fall 2010 staff in Adult, Commuter and Transfer Services (ACTS) piloted GradesFirst, a web-based academic alert program. The pilot continued in spring 2011. Participating course instructors refer students using the GradesFirst platform to ACTS, which contacts the students and ask them to make appointments to see ACTS staff or their academic advisors. The purpose is to help students by discussing their situation and providing referrals to campus resources. If the pilot program proves effective, we will expand the program in the remaining years of the 2010-15 cycle.

2.5 Embed learning support in general education courses

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Annually about 1200 ETSU students qualify for developmental studies in reading, writing or mathematics based on their ACT subscores or comparable tests; some require support in more than one subject. We must help these students succeed if Tennessee is to realize its goal of increasing the percentage of citizens with post-secondary credentials. However, the traditional model of developmental studies, in which students take courses to remediate high school learning deficits, has sometimes failed to provide the particular knowledge and skills needed for college success. Because developmental studies courses do not award college credit, taking them can also undermine students' motivation. Beginning in fall 2012 ETSU will discontinue developmental studies courses and instead embed learning support (LS) in selected general education courses, thereby providing just-in-time help for students and allowing them to earn credits toward graduation. This approach should improve students' academic performance and motivation.

2.6 Create a mentorship program for first-year students

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The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics' academic advisement and support model has improved the academic performance of ETSU's student athletes from a ranking of 10th of 10 schools in the conference in fall 2006 to first in the conference in fall 2010. The model features academic mentoring of students, study halls, tutoring, and strong support from team coaches. We will create a program for new undergraduate students at ETSU that emulates several elements of this model. New students will be invited to join the program in the summer prior to their first year at ETSU. The program will include weekly, individualized mentoring (or "coaching") sessions with each student, referrals for tutoring in the Center for Academic Achievement (CFAA), and enrollment in ETSU 1000. The last of these will help create a cohort experience for participating students. Students will pay a modest fee (e.g., \$100 per term) to participate, and the revenue will help cover the costs of the program. We plan to pilot the program with 50-100 students in fall 2011 and spring 2012. Should it prove successful, we may choose to expand the program.

2.7 Use Intercollegiate Athletics to engage current and prospective students

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College students who are engaged in the university community are more likely to stay in school and graduate. Because of the high visibility of intercollegiate athletics on campus, in the community and in the media, ETSU athletics—particularly men's and women's basketball—can strengthen students' identification with the university, recognize student success and increase community, regional and national awareness of the university's excellence. The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics will partner with Enrollment Services, Student Affairs and ETSU's academic colleges and departments to promote and recognize student success in all areas of university life.

2.8 Improve students' ability to track their progress toward graduation

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DegreeWorks, a Sungard product, provides degree progress advising worksheets, degree completion audits, student education plans, and academic curriculum planning analytics and "what if" scenarios. An optional component, TreQ, provides computer-assisted transfer credit articulation. Deployment of this product can support ETSU'S efforts to improve student progression and degree production by helping students and advisors track their progress toward graduation and make better informed decisions about how to meet remaining requirements. The success of this project depends on broad support from the campus.

2.9 Increase the Emergency Loan fund

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The current University Emergency Loan fund is approximately \$25,000. The purpose of the loan is to assist students with emergency needs or unexpected expenses related to educational costs. At a maximum of \$500 per loan only 50 students can receive assistance each semester. Due to the limited amount of money available in the fund, there are a number of students each semester who need assistance but are unable to receive assistance, thereby jeopardizing their ability to stay in college. We recommend an increase of \$25,000 each semester to assist our students with emergency needs or unexpected expenses related to educational costs.

2.10 Increase participation in student activities, organizations and leadership opportunities

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ETSU has over 200 student organizations and a diverse program of student activities. To encourage participation in these organizations and programs we will create an emerging leaders program, an extracurricular engagement transcript, and partnerships that support student engagement.

2.11 Increase participation in living-learning communities

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Over two-thirds of ETSU's on-campus residents are first- or second-year students, many of whom would benefit from participating in living-learning communities. The creation and development of more living-learning programs in partnership with academic colleges and other university departments will provide opportunities to enrich student experience outside of the classroom. Establishing living-learning programs will allow residents to engage with fellow students and explore their academic fields. The plan will also increase opportunities for mentoring, tutoring, job-shadowing and interaction with faculty and staff.

2.12 Expand Campus Recreation facilities and participation in programs

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Due to several years of continual growth in enrollment and predicted future growth, ETSU's highly popular Basler Center for Physical Activity (BCPA) and Campus Recreation programs should expand. Therefore ETSU will expand the BCPA and build a Campus Recreation Field Complex that will support the growth of Campus Recreation programs. We will also create additional programming and actively promote students' use of the expanded facilities and participation in recreational programming.

2.13 Reduce systemic obstacles to students' timely progress toward degrees

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To navigate their college careers efficiently and make timely progress toward their degrees, students must (a) understand their degree requirements, (b) know which courses to take each term to meet these requirements, and (c) be able to register for the courses they need when they need them. Although skillful academic advisement can help students manage their course work, ideally requirements and curricula should be sufficiently transparent to allow students to know what they need to do, when. Therefore, we plan to identify and remove systemic obstacles to timely progress toward degrees.

Examples of such obstacles might include:

- confusing or unclear descriptions of degree requirements (e.g., in majors) in the Undergraduate Catalog;
- needlessly restrictive requirements in majors or general education;
- specific requirements that in practice academic units often waive or modify for individual students, but which, on their face, appear to limit students' timely progress toward degrees;
- limited availability of seats in required courses; and
- unanticipated, but predictable, obstacles that arise as students near graduation.

2.14 Promote public communication reinforcing student success

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In addition to the specific programs and strategies through which ETSU will seek to increase degree completion over the next strategic planning cycle, it is important to create a university culture that reinforces student success. Although many students come to ETSU fully expecting to graduate, others arrive without such expectations. Frequent public communication within the university community about staying in college, succeeding in college and graduating can energize our students' commitment to their educational goals and our employees' commitment to help students succeed. Hence we will mount an organized communication campaign that will promote student success. Examples such communication include:

- clear messages at Orientation that anticipate students' graduation;
- frequent public remarks by the President that emphasize the priority ETSU places on graduation and encourage our students to persist in completing their degrees;
- use of ETSU's home page, social media sites and other technology to communicate messages regarding student success;
- use of ETSU's public spaces, such as the Culp Center and the Sherrod Library, to deliver such messages;
- email or postal mail congratulations from the President or the deans to students and their families upon completion of major milestones in their college careers; and
- use of the ETSU web site and other media to tell the stories of successful alumni who overcame obstacles similar to those facing many of our current students.

2.15 Strengthen ETSU identity of students, faculty, staff and alumni

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We will create a team that will promote ETSU pride and identification with the university. These emotional components of the college experience play a key role in students' decisions to choose ETSU and to stay in school and graduate. The ETSU Identity Team might include faculty or staff from Student Affairs, Alumni Affairs, Intercollegiate Athletics, University Relations, Enrollment Services, Undergraduate Education, Graduate Studies, Department of Communication, E-Learning, Residential Life, International Programs, and interested faculty or staff in the colleges and other units.

SCHOLARSHIP

ETSU will support and enhance scholarship through research, service and creative activity.

3.1 Expand and enhance research productivity

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ETSU will pursue several strategies to increase research productivity, such as identifying areas of established and potential excellence in research; setting research priorities for each college; and recruiting and retaining faculty with a high potential for research productivity by providing competitive salaries, start-up packages and mentoring. It is also important to provide adequate support for research programs. We also plan to promote interdisciplinary programs and research projects, develop partnerships that expand research activity, encourage the participation of students and postdoctoral fellows in research programs. Finally, we will increase the visibility of research activities at ETSU.

3.2 Expand and enhance community service-related activities

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To increase community service-related activities we will establish extramural service priorities for each college, department or unit; provide assistance and mentoring for faculty submitting proposals; recruit faculty with interest in extramurally funded service activities; provide awards for excellence; encourage student participation in extramurally funded service projects; and develop strategic partnerships that expand service activity.

3.3 Expand and enhance creative and scholarly activities

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ETSU will use several strategies to support scholarship in research, service and creative activity. These will include establishing priorities, where appropriate, for creative or scholarly activities for each college, department or unit; providing assistance and mentoring for faculty submitting proposals for extramural support; supporting travel to exhibitions and other events; aiding access to technology, facilities, tools and materials; providing awards for excellence in creative and scholarly activities; encouraging student participation in exhibitions and performances; and developing partnerships and outreach opportunities.

DIVERSITY

ETSU will foster a university community that enhances and supports diversity of people, thought and culture.

4.1 Integrate and coordinate efforts to support diversity

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To support cohesive efforts to enhance diversity at ETSU, the university will seek ways to improve the integration and coordination of diversity-related activities.

4.2 Explore creating a multicultural center

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To provide a tangible presence and organizational hub for diversity efforts, the university will assess the merits and feasibility of establishing a multicultural center.

4.3 Expand opportunities for education, dialogue and reflection on diversity

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To provide greater opportunities for education, dialogue and reflection about diversity, the university will charge a Diversity Programming Committee with increasing diversity-related partnerships, programming and activities. ETSU will also continue to provide support for its Student Diversity Educators Program after grant funding ends in 2011-12. Finally, we will recognize diverse alumni through the establishment of endowed scholarships, honorary degrees and other awards.

4.4 Support global awareness and appreciation of diversity of thought and culture in curricula

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The university will enhance global awareness and appreciation of diversity in undergraduate and graduate curricula in several ways. The advisory board for ETSU 1000, University Seminar, will examine devoting more time to the course's unit on diversity. The university will explore ways to expand Study Abroad options for students. It will create a standard for diversity inclusion in academic courses and experiences, as noted in ETSU's Diversity Plan. Finally, we will evaluate the need to broaden ETSU's multicultural studies curricula beyond the current programs in African and African-American Studies, Women's Studies and International Studies.

4.5 Increase enrollment, retention and graduation of traditionally underrepresented students

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ETSU's Diversity Plan calls for increasing the enrollment of traditionally underserved students, especially Black and Hispanic. However, the university's strategic plan addresses the participation of these students, as well as other underrepresented students (e.g., veterans, females in STEM disciplines). To increase participation of underrepresented students in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs (especially Medicine, Pharmacy and doctoral programs), we will marshal data regarding current populations of interest; set goals for 2015; and develop recruitment and retention plans institutionally and by college, department and program.

4.6 Recruit and retain diverse faculty, administrators and staff

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ETSU is committed to employing faculty, staff and administrators who reflect diverse racial and ethnic groups, genders, cultures and perspectives. The first step in attaining this objective is creation of a plan

for recruiting and retaining diverse faculty, administrators and staff. To create the plan we will form a university committee charged with establishing annual or biennial progress targets as well as a goal for 2015 and proposing a plan to increase, where appropriate, the diversity of faculty, staff and administrators.

4.7 Build partnerships with communities, businesses, civic and community organizations

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ETSU's community extends beyond the campus, and we should work with our partners to support diversity in the region. The 2010 census noted that the Hispanic and Latino population in northeast Tennessee doubled in the last ten years and was the fastest growing segment of the population. ETSU has worked with the Hispanic and Latino community and groups such as Umoja, but there is no concerted effort to coordinate these activities. This objective establishes a university workgroup that will identify current partnerships and develop and oversee plans to strengthen these partnerships and create new ones.

STEWARDSHIP

ETSU will advance a culture of stewardship that promotes the wise use of resources.

5.1 Exploit capacity for program growth to realize marginal cost revenue

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ETSU will realize marginal cost revenue by identifying programs in which unused capacity can accommodate enrollment growth without additional commitment of resources; programs in which enrollment growth will require no more than 20% of revenue to be derived from that growth; and programs for which demand would support growth, but insufficient capacity would require more than 20% of revenue the institution to be derived. Following identification of these opportunities we will analyze the costs and benefits of the actions needed to expand each program, then select programs to be expanded.

5.2 Achieve efficiencies in administrative and academic support required by enrollment growth

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ETSU will seek to grow enrollment responsibly during the strategic planning cycle. That strategy will require the university to provide instructional, academic support and administrative services that meet academic standards yet are cost effective. To this end academic departments, colleges and other units will develop and monitor the pursuit of staffing plans reflecting these criteria.

5.3 Facilitate fiscally sound decisions and monitor involvement in a culture of stewardship

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As mandated in the Tennessee Board of Regents 2010-15 Strategic Plan, ETSU will develop an Efficiency Plan and submit it to the TBR. The Board has not yet set the calendar for this item. ETSU's Strategic Budget Management Committee will play a central role in this process.

5.4 Maximize use of classrooms and other campus facilities

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ETSU will use its Physical Facilities Inventory to assess, monitor and maximize use of university space. We will implement data-driven space management practices to aid decisions about the use of space and maximize use of facilities, and we will refine the strategic space request process to assure ease of use, accuracy of information and timely response. With respect to classroom utilization, we hope to increase the utilization rate from the 2010 level of 55% to 60% by 2015.

5.5 Attract, develop and retain a highly qualified and committed cadre of faculty and staff

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ETSU will refine faculty and staff compensation plans to address issues of equity and salary compression.

ARTS AND CULTURE

ETSU will expand engagement in the arts and culture among students, faculty, staff and the community.

6.1 Increase public display of the arts on campus, including interior and exterior locations

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The arts enhance the overall quality of life by beautifying public spaces, promoting exploration and discovery, and stimulating dialogue. Permanent and temporary displays of the arts in public places will broaden the educational experience for ETSU students, faculty, staff and the general community. However, with the exception of the Reece Museum Collections Policy, no formal policies, procedures or guidelines exist regarding planning, acquisition, display and maintenance of the arts at ETSU. By writing and implementing a consistent and responsible policy we can set the stage for developing and displaying the arts more broadly on campus. Once the policy is in place we will actively pursue installation of more art in interior and exterior locations on campus. Furthermore, we will create and widely distribute curriculum guides and other materials to accompany installations.

6.2 Build campus and community support for a new visual and performing arts facility

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In 1998 ETSU submitted project support documentation for a capital outlay project for the construction of a performing arts center “to create a modern, functional building for rehearsal, teaching and public presentation of the performing arts.” Growing enrollment in arts programs, demands for larger auditorium spaces, and arts programming made possible through the newly emerging Mary B. Martin School of the Arts have created a critical need for a dedicated visual and performing arts facility. This strategic objective calls for developing a vigorous capital campaign and implementing the campaign. In support of the campaign we will study the economic, educational and community benefits of arts programming in a new facility.

SUSTAINABILITY

ETSU will create a university community that is aware of, engaged in and committed to advancing sustainability.

7.1 Attain a silver rating in the Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Rating System

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ETSU will participate in the Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Rating System (STARS) to meet this goal. We plan to submit our initial STARS application in September 2011 and hope to achieve a bronze rating, which will remain in force for up to three years, thereby establishing the baseline for this objective. Next we will create a plan to meet deficits revealed by the first submission and implement the plan in the following year. We will submit an updated application to STARS by 2014, for which we hope to receive a silver rating.