

University Council
May 11, 2026

1. Call to Order

Dr. Kimberly D. McCorkle called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. She opened the meeting by expressing gratitude to faculty and staff for their contributions to recent campus celebrations, particularly the commencement ceremonies held the previous week. She highlighted the dedication of volunteers who support these events each year.

2. Roll Call

Ms. Melissa Nipper led the roll call. Members present were: Ms. Bridget Baird, Dr. Ginni Blackhart, Dr. Bill Block, Dr. Debbie Byrd, Dr. Cheri Clavier, Dr. Dena Evans, Ms. Christy Graham, Dr. Adam Green, Dr. Nick Hagemeyer, Dr. Mike Hoff, Dr. Chris Keller, Dr. Karen King, Ms. Kay Lennon-McGrew, Provost Dr. Kimberly D. McCorkle, Mr. Cody Morelock, President Dr. Brian Noland, Dr. Rob Pack, Dr. Tony Pittarese, Mr. Howard Reddy, Dr. Richard Sander, Dr. Alan Stevens, and Ms. Jess Vodden.

3. Standing Items

3.1 Approve Minutes of the April 13, 2026, meeting.

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the April 13, 2026, meeting. The motion was seconded; the minutes were approved.

3.2 Review Agenda

3.3 Call for Voluntary Reports of UC-Essential Action Items from Governance Organizations

Faculty Senate: Dr. Alan Stevens reported that Faculty Senate has been wrapping up the year, highlighted by a celebratory gathering of past presidents and special recognition of Dr. Paul Trogen for 20 years of service on the Senate. He noted that the Senate will meet with the administration later in the month to conclude the year's business.

ITS: Dr. Karen King began by introducing and thanking Myra Jones, who will serve as interim CIO upon her departure next month. She provided an ITS update covering several initiatives, including the upcoming completion of a new HIPAA firewall migration, a June 2 cybersecurity tabletop exercise, an AI task force exploring tools such as BoodleBox and Google AI, a successful first migration of student data into Banner, and an ongoing computer and classroom

equipment replacement program. She noted that adjunct, faculty renewal, and GA contracts for summer and fall will again be processed through the e-contract system.

Athletics: Dr. Richard Sander reported a strong year with five conference championships in men's and women's basketball, volleyball, and men's and women's tennis, with baseball and men's and women's track still competing. Significant changes to the collegiate athletics landscape were also discussed, including newly passed NCAA legislation extending athlete eligibility to five years beginning from high school graduation or age 19, as well as the growing financial pressures of NIL compensation.

Staff Senate: Mr. Cody Morelock announced Staff Senate's annual Staff Celebration scheduled for May 20 from noon to 2:30 p.m. at the Ballad Health Athletic Center. The event includes awards. The annual blood drive will be held the day prior (May 19) from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Borchuck Plaza.

4. Action Items

4.1 Old Business

There was no old business to come before the council.

4.2 New Business

There was no new business to come before the council.

5. Information Items/Presentations

5.1 Campus Budget Update

Ms. Christy Graham presented the proposed tuition and fee structure for the upcoming year. She explained that tuition increases are necessary because rising operational costs — including salaries and benefits, health insurance, utilities, and new initiatives such as graduate stipends — significantly outpace the level of new state funding the university will receive, leaving a substantial gap that cannot be fully covered without additional tuition revenue. In setting tuition rates, the university considers factors such as the level of state support, total cost of attendance, efforts to mitigate the financial effect on students, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's binding tuition and mandatory fees ranges, and other factors.

The proposal, which will be presented to the ETSU Board of Trustees on May 21, includes a 4.29% increase in undergraduate in-state tuition, a 2.62% increase for graduate rates, no increase to the out-of-state rate, and a \$48 per semester mandatory fee increase for campus safety and

facilities, bringing total undergraduate tuition and mandatory fees to \$11,468 annually — still below the Tennessee university average.

5.2 Research Strategic Plan

Dr. Nick Hagemeyer presented the newly completed Research Strategic Plan, developed over the past year by a 26-member task force led by Drs. Saurabh Mehta and Pam Mims, which will be presented to the ETSU Board of Trustees as an informational item. The plan establishes a new research vision for ETSU to be recognized as one of the premier regional public research universities in the nation, moving away from the shifting R1/R2 classification landscape. The plan identifies five emphasis areas: Applied Technology and Engineering, Biomedical Sciences and Clinical Translation, Environmental Systems and Hazards in the Outdoors, Rural Health and Appalachian Thriving, and the Science of Education and Engagement.

Key initiatives across the plan's four focus areas include establishing competitive funding mechanisms, creating a Trailblazer Research Hub as a single-entry point for research support, formalizing a clinical trials office, optimizing pre- and post-award infrastructure, strengthening external and industry partnerships, and expanding student engagement in research. With estimated research expenditures approaching \$50 million for FY25 — the new threshold for R2 classification — the university is currently ranked 13th among rural-serving regional public universities and is positioned to continue climbing in national research rankings.

6. President's Report

President Noland provided an enrollment and budget update, reporting that fall enrollment continues to trend positively, with housing numbers strong and the budget built on an assumption of constant enrollment. Strategic Initiative Fund distributions of approximately \$400,000 were made to support new academic program development, and the Strategic Capital Fund distributed approximately \$1 million, with primary investments in the library and street realignment infrastructure. New revenue distributed through the funding formula is anticipated to be no less than \$2.5 million, split evenly between colleges and administrative units.

Salary enhancements will be distributed in May, including approximately \$750,000 in market adjustments to roughly 300 faculty, averaging \$2,300 each. Details on staff salary distribution will be announced shortly.

At the upcoming Tennessee Higher Education Commission meeting, two new ETSU degree programs are on the agenda along with the binding tuition and fee cap, which is expected to be set at 4.5%, though some institutions are anticipated to appeal for higher increases.

He reported that the upcoming Board of Trustees meeting on May 21 will include action on tuition and fees, tenure and promotion, budgets, and revised tenure and promotion policies.

He closed by sharing a memorable commencement story about a graduate in his mid-70s who completed a degree begun more than 50 years prior, reflecting on the importance of the university's mission.

7. Announcements

There were no additional announcements.

8. Adjournment

Provost McCorkle adjourned the meeting at 9:33 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for June 13, 2026, at 8:30 a.m.