

University Council

September 14, 2026

1. Call to Order

Dr. Kimberly D. McCorkle called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. She welcomed the Council and opened the meeting by asking Dr. Joe Sherlin, Senior Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment, to share a mission moment.

2. Mission Moment

Dr. Joe Sherlin recognized the staff members who support students through the fall enrollment and disenrollment process, including Catherine Morgan, Director of Student Financial Aid; Brianne Hayes, Bursar; Ethan Hutchison, Executive Director of Academic Advisement; Michelle Byrd, Dean of Students; and Tom Donahoe in the Registrar's Office. He described the team's frequent meetings and extended work, including weekend efforts, to communicate with students, answer questions, secure documentation, process financial aid, and help eligible students remain enrolled.

Dr. Sherlin noted that at least 30 students in the freshman class would not have remained enrolled without the team's work during the final weekend of the disenrollment process. He shared an example in which Brianne Hayes identified two students who might be retained, and colleagues reached out to the students and helped them identify available financial aid. The example was presented as an illustration of collaboration and the day-to-day work supporting student enrollment and success.

3. Roll Call

Ms. Claire Shoun led the roll call. Members present were: Ms. Bridget Baird, Dr. Kate Beatty, Dr. Brian Bennett, Dr. Joe Bidwell, Mr. William Block, Dr. Debbie Byrd, Dr. Cheri Clavier, Ms. Christy Graham, Dr. Adam Green, Dr. Nick Hagemeier, Dr. Mike Hoff, Dr. Keith Johnson, Ms. Myra Jones, Ms. Shelby Koerten, Dr. Dharendra Kumar, Ms. Kay Lennon-McGrew, Dr. Sam Mayhew, Mr. Cody Morelock, Ms. Melissa Nipper, Dr. Brian Noland, Dr. Tony Pittarese, Mr. Howard Reddy, Dr. Joe Sherlin, Mr. Alex Simmons, Dr. Jeff Snodgrass, Dr. Alan Stevens, and Dr. Sarah Thomason.

4. Standing Items

4.1 Approve Minutes of the August 10, 2026, meeting.

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the August 10, 2026, meeting. The motion was seconded. No edits or additions were requested, and the Council approved the minutes.

4.2 Review Agenda

The agenda was reviewed, and the Council proceeded with the scheduled items.

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

Faculty Senate: Dr. Alan Stevens reported that Faculty Senate is beginning its work for the academic year. The Senate is editing and preparing results from its spring survey, with plans to release the results by the end of the week. Faculty Senate is also participating with the Policy Implementation Team working on new policies.

Staff Senate: Mr. Cody Morelock reported that Staff Senate has elected its executive team: Mr. Cody Morelock, President; Kari Albarado, Vice President; Jenny Lockmiller, Secretary; Suzy Hooven, Treasurer; and Archie Fortney, Member at Large. The Senate is working to fill committees and begin its work for the year. The Senate is also preparing for its holiday food drive outreach.

Council of Academic Chairs: Dr. Sarah Thomason reported that the Council of Academic Chairs, in partnership with the Provost's Office, is implementing a monthly comprehensive chair-development program based on a spring needs assessment. Trainings have been organized across the academic year to align with the issues chairs encounter during the year. The first development session focused on developing promotion and tenure guidelines at the academic-unit level. The Council continues to work with the Provost's Office on the Policy Implementation Committee and other university committees.

Student Government Association: Shelby Koerten reported that SGA continues campus partnerships, including a pool party with the CPA, Fresh Check Day with the Counseling Center, and will host a career-services collaboration on September 23 featuring media coaching and mock interviews. Current initiatives include intuitive study methods, resource accessibility, and a review of the Buck Fund program to ensure efficiency. SGA is also working to strengthen academic representation and has launched its Junior Senate program with 60 senators.

Graduate and Professional Student Association: Alex Simmons reported that GPSA has removed its \$10 membership requirement, and the first general member meeting is scheduled for September 29. GPSA is also launching a panel series, with the first fall panel planned for early October and focused on the landscape of mental health and addiction in Appalachia. The organization continues to seek student researchers and faculty members to participate.

Athletics: Ms. Kay Lennon-McGrew provided an update on behalf of Dr. Richard Sander. Women's volleyball will host South Carolina on Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. in Brooks Gym. Women's soccer will open Southern Conference play against Mercer on Thursday at 6:00 p.m. at Summer Taylor Stadium. A home football game against West Georgia is scheduled for Saturday and will include Gold Out and Scout's Day activities.

Information Technology Services: Ms. Myra Jones reminded the Council that annual cybersecurity awareness training is required by the state and encouraged members to complete the training and encourage their staff to do so. The training includes a new option allowing participants to move quickly to a five-question assessment. Ms. Jones also announced a September 23 tabletop exercise at 8:30 a.m. focused on retaining and restoring student services during a cybersecurity incident. The exercise will include the National Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

5. Action Items

5.1 Old Business

There was no old business to come before the council.

5.2 New Business

There was no new business to come before the council.

6. Information Items/Presentations

6.1 University Counseling Center Update

Dr. Britney Deaver, Associate Dean of Students, and Ms. Sarah Bedingfield, Director of the Counseling Center, provided an update on the Counseling Center's recent accreditation and the new Caring Crewmate student-support training program for faculty and staff.

The Counseling Center became accredited for the first time this year through the International Association of Counseling Services (IACS) following approximately two years of preparation. IACS accreditation emphasizes quality care, well-being, community, autonomy, and holistic support. The Counseling Center hopes accreditation will strengthen the Center's stature and visibility and support continued growth in services to students.

The presenters also introduced a new campus-wide student-support training initiative, Caring Crewmate. The initiative is intended to create a network of trained faculty and staff who can recognize students in distress, connect students with appropriate resources, and provide early intervention. The program is a collaboration among the Dean of Students Office, Student Wellness, the Counseling Center, the Roberson Center, and other campus partners.

The fall program received more than 140 expressions of interest, exceeding the initial goal of 50 participants. Training includes suicide prevention through either QPR or Mental Health First Aid, a Resources 101 workshop, and training on responding to difficult disclosures. The latter includes trauma-informed practices, Title IX reporting related to sexual assault, and alcohol and other drug resources.

Given demand, the program expanded into two tracks so interested participants could join this semester, and a waitlist had already begun for the spring.

6.2 Enrollment Update

Dr. Joe Chappell, Assistant Vice Provost of Institutional Research, provided an update on fall 2026 enrollment and emphasized the value of a diversified academic portfolio in supporting overall enrollment.

First-time freshman enrollment reached a record 2,288 students, with an entering high school GPA of approximately 3.6. ETSU is maintaining its market share in Tennessee, while enrollment from North Carolina and Virginia is slightly lower. International enrollment is down substantially, reflecting federal policy, visa, and other national-level issues. Dr. Chappell identified non-traditional students age 25 and older as an important opportunity for future growth. Potential strategies include academic portfolio adjustments, course scheduling, online offerings, and partnerships with businesses.

The university's fall retention rate is 78.4 percent, the highest in institutional history. Dr. Chappell emphasized that students who take 15 or more credit hours in their first semester generally have higher retention rates than students taking fewer than 15 hours. A higher proportion of this year's incoming freshmen are currently in the 12-to-14-hour range, which could place downward pressure on the next retention cycle. Lower first-term credit loads may also create challenges related to federal financial aid and four-year graduation.

The Council discussed reasons students may take fewer than 15 hours, including student preferences, advising practices, dual-enrollment credits, prerequisite structures, and course sequencing. Members noted the need for continued work with advisors, colleges, high school counselors, and families to understand barriers and communicate the importance of appropriate credit-hour loads. The Council also discussed the potential impact of federal financial aid changes when students move from full-time to part-time status, particularly for low-income students.

Dr. Chappell reported that enrollment across Tennessee public higher education is relatively flat compared with 2015 levels, with significant variation among institutions. The Council discussed increasing competition for students, including competition from institutions outside Tennessee seeking students in the state's population centers. ETSU is approximately 100 students below its strategic enrollment plan goal for the fall, with gains in the freshman class and retention offset by declines in transfer, adult, and graduate enrollment. The Council discussed continued outreach to high school guidance counselors through the Student Life and Enrollment area and its guidance counselor advisory group.

7. President's Report

President Brian Noland thanked staff across Student Life and Enrollment, Financial Aid, and the Bursar's Office for their work during the drop-for-nonpayment process. He also thanked Dr. Mike Hoff

and Dr. Joe Chappell for preparing enrollment information for the Board of Trustees meeting. He noted that enrollment data will be further refined before the State of the University Address on October 9.

President Noland highlighted the record freshman class, the university's highest retention rate, and increased student engagement. He also recognized the newly named Phil and Martha Bachman College of Arts and Sciences and the associated \$15 million gift, one of the largest gifts in the university's history. The gift primarily supports Arts and Sciences and also helps provide matching funds for the Academic Building and Brown Hall.

President Noland emphasized that moving retention rates from 78.4 percent toward the Board's goal of 85 percent will require deliberate work while maintaining ETSU's commitment to open access. He noted that four-year graduation is becoming increasingly important in state performance funding and that ETSU will need to align advising, credit-hour expectations, and other student-success practices around that goal.

Looking ahead, President Noland identified several strategic priorities. The university will bring a range of new academic programs to the Board, including engineering. He also identified non-traditional and continuing education as a significant area for growth and indicated a goal of launching a focused effort in this area.

President Noland said recommendations related to housing are expected to come before the Board in November. The university is evaluating options to increase housing capacity, including renovation and new construction, and is conducting due diligence regarding Ross Hall. He also emphasized the importance of P20 partnerships, including pipeline programs, TCAT partnerships, teacher education and principal leadership programs, and data sharing with secondary and postsecondary partners.

President Noland discussed plans to establish a group focused on process improvement, innovation, and efficiency across the university. The effort will examine burdensome processes and opportunities to streamline forms, hiring, requisitions, and other administrative activities. He encouraged units to review expenditures carefully and identify resources that could be eliminated or redeployed to higher priorities.

President Noland concluded by thanking the Council and the broader leadership team for their work and noted the Board's recent action affirming the continued leadership of the university's deans, vice presidents, and other senior leaders. He emphasized the importance of stability, continued progress on strategic initiatives, and working together to move the university forward.

8. Announcements

Dr. McCorkle announced that the Common Read kickoff will take place at 4:30 p.m. in the Culp East Tennessee Room, with Dr. David Harker, Chair of Philosophy, leading a discussion of the book. The Faculty Great Lecture Series will begin Friday at 2:00 p.m. in the Culp East Tennessee Room.

9. Adjournment

Provost McCorkle adjourned the meeting at 9:37 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 12, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. in the Culp East Tennessee Room.