

Board of Trustees Meeting
September 24, 2019
Roaden University Center, Room 282

MINUTES

AGENDA ITEM 1—CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees met in regular session on September 24, 2019, in the Roaden University Center, Room 282. Chair Trudy Harper called the meeting to order at 1:08 p.m.

Chair Harper asked Kae Carpenter, Secretary, to call the roll. The following members were present:

- Mason Hilliard
- Tom Jones
- Sally Pardue
- Rhedona Rose
- Johnny Stites
- Teresa Vanhooser
- Barry Wilmore
- Trudy Harper

A quorum was physically in attendance.

Tennessee Tech faculty, staff, and members of the public were also in attendance.

AGENDA ITEM 2—SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENT AND FACULTY EXCELLENCE

Chair Harper introduced Dr. Janet Isbell, who worked with the Freedom School during the summer at Jere Whitson Elementary School and stated that the program had made a positive difference in the lives of 30 first through fifth grade students in Cookeville.

Dr. Isbell introduced the Freedom School Director, Dr. Amber Spears, from the College of Education, and Lindsay Graystead, a graduate student in the College of Education. She stated that the Freedom School was a summer literacy and cultural enrichment

program for children who were disadvantaged by poverty. She stated that the program had 29 participants and stated that next year she hoped to have 40 participants. She stated this was a Children's Defense Fund program, and one of more than 200 sites across the country.

Dr. Isbell stated that the program focused on a rich multicultural curriculum in literacy as well as family involvement and provided two meals per day for the students. She stated the program also trained college students to work with both the children and the families. She stated the program also included social action and civic engagement where the children chose a local social action project that they completed themselves and they also participated with the Freedom School in a national social action project. She stated the project taught the love of books, the love of learning, and helped the children realize that they can make a difference in the world.

Dr. Spears stated, among other things, that at the end of the program each child was able to take 50 books home for his/her own personal library.

Ms. Graystead stated that the students completed cultural enrichment activities such as ukulele lessons, learning how to make yogurt, or participating in Reader's Theater. She stated that the students, who were allowed to choose a local social action project, decided to repaint an old wooden ship on their playground in bright, rainbow colors so all the children would not argue about what color to paint it. She stated that this showed the students what impact they could have on their community and in their lives.

Dr. Isbell stated that last year the program had a budget of \$40,000 and the budget was provided by grants and donations. She stated that next year's budget would be \$46,000, which would provide about \$1,300 per child.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS BY THE CHAIR

Chair Harper stated that she wanted to welcome Dr. Sally Pardue and Mason Hilliard as new trustees.

Chair Harper introduced Senator Paul Bailey and Representative Ryan Williams and welcomed them to the Board meeting.

Chair Harper thanked Johnny Stites and Rhedona Rose for accepting the roles of chairs of, respectively, the Audit & Business Committee and the Academic & Student Affairs Committee.

Chair Harper stated that Dr. Geist was the inaugural faculty representative and she stated that Dr. Geist embraced her responsibilities and duties fully. She stated that Dr. Geist was relentless in educating the Board on the world of academia and expressed the passions and goals of the faculty. She stated that the Board was blessed to have her as part of the Board and her students would also be blessed.

Dr. Oldham added his congratulations and thanks to Dr. Geist.

Chair Harper presented Dr. Geist with a plaque expressing appreciation for her service.

Chair Harper stated that Tom Jones, as the inaugural Chair of the Board of Trustees, was able to dedicate his time to the Board when he was also CEO of his own company. She stated that Mr. Jones set a tone of professionalism, efficiency, and candor and reminded the Board to stay student-focused. She stated that Mr. Jones started the tradition of beginning each Board meeting with a focus on excellence in faculty and students. She stated that Mr. Jones' leadership will continue to benefit future students.

Dr. Oldham stated that there was no better timing for Mr. Jones to be chairman of the Board. He stated that Mr. Jones was a great friend and supporter of Tennessee Tech.

Chair Harper presented Mr. Jones with a plaque expressing appreciation for his service.

AGENDA ITEM 3—APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Jones moved to approve the June 20, 2019, meeting minutes and the August 2, 2019, meeting minutes. Ms. Vanhooser seconded the motion. After an opportunity for further discussion and there being none, the motion carried unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM 4—PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Oldham thanked Senator Paul Bailey and Representative Ryan Williams for their support for the work of Tennessee Tech.

President Oldham stated that Chair Harper stated at a previous meeting that Tennessee Tech must always act as a major university. He stated that he agreed with this statement because he hoped Tennessee Tech would continue to echo this statement. He stated that he was proud to say Governor Lee would be in Cookeville to speak at the College of Business Celebration Dinner, he appreciated the Governor's support of higher education, and he looked forward to collaborating with the Governor in his rural initiative.

President Oldham stated that Tennessee Tech's financial position was good. He stated if all continued as expected, there would be more information about a salary increase at the December meeting, which would be the eighth consecutive salary increase. He stated that it would remain a priority to reward the faculty and staff for the work they did.

President Oldham stated that US News and World Report rankings were released and Tennessee Tech was ranked among the top 400 national universities. He stated that Tennessee Tech was one of three public universities in the state of Tennessee that had a numerical national ranking and ranked 135 among public universities.

President Oldham stated that among Tennessee public universities, Tennessee Tech ranked second in the state student retention. He stated that Tennessee Tech was consistently above 75 percent for first-year retention. He stated that the goal was to reach 82 percent for first-year retention by 2025.

President Oldham stated that the national standard for graduation rates was to report a six-year rate, which is considered one and a half times the norm. He stated that Tennessee Tech's six-year rate was at 54-55 percent, which was an all-time high. He stated that the five-year graduation rate was also increasing and was not much different from the six-year rate. He stated that the four-year graduation rate was at a record high for Tennessee Tech at 37 percent. He stated that the goal for 2025 was to pass 50 percent for a four-year graduation rate. He stated that this was important because for every year Tennessee Tech reduced a student's time spent in school, that would equal approximately a \$75,000 to \$80,000 benefit to that student. He stated that the average cost was about \$20,000 to \$25,000 per year that would be saved. He stated that the student would also be entering the workforce earlier, and the average starting salary for a Tennessee Tech graduate was roughly \$56,000 per year. He stated that this equaled about a \$75,000 to \$80,000 difference for the student and his/her family. He stated that Tennessee Tech would continue to push the four-year graduation rate because the students benefit from it.

President Oldham stated that Tennessee Tech was also seeing a significant increase of students graduating in three years.

President Oldham stated that among Tennessee public universities, Tennessee Tech had the second highest ACT range, the second highest graduation rate, and the second highest number of classes with less than 20 students. He stated that Tennessee Tech was the lowest in terms of typical debt. He stated that 47 percent of Tennessee Tech students graduate debt-free, and that the typical debt was roughly \$16,500, which was among the lowest of public universities. He stated that in comparison to median starting salaries of graduates, Tennessee Tech was among the highest with about \$55,200 per year. He stated that Tennessee Tech was graduating students on time, saving students money, and graduating students with the least amount of debt.

President Oldham stated that Tennessee Tech graduated over 2,500 students last year, and in order to maintain a stable enrollment, Tennessee Tech needed to enroll 2,500 freshmen. He stated this was accomplished, as Tennessee Tech brought in roughly 1,700 freshman and 800 transfer students last year. He stated that the enrollment census headcount was 10,140, which was slightly lower than last year's enrollment.

President Oldham stated that Tennessee Tech officially surpassed the \$60 million Tennessee Tech Tomorrow campaign goal. He stated this was two years ahead of schedule and there would be a celebration, An Evening of Thanks, on October 17th to officially end the campaign. He stated Tennessee Tech would continue to raise money for special focus areas, such as the new engineering building and scholarships.

President Oldham stated that Tennessee Tech had set a record for sponsored research activity the past year, receiving over \$20.2 million in grants and contracts. He stated this represented an 18 percent increase over the previous record high.

President Oldham stated that Tennessee Tech graduated 26 PhD students, which was another record high and that Tennessee Tech was on track to increase that number in the future.

President Oldham stated that the Tennessee Higher Education Commission gave final approval for two new academic programs, an online Master's in Engineering Management and a campus PhD program in Counseling and Supervision.

President Oldham stated that a design team was being selected for the new engineering building, which would be the first new engineering building built on Tennessee Tech's campus in 50 years. He stated that the design team would be selected within the next few weeks by the State Building Commission after taking into consideration recommendations made by the campus.

President Oldham stated the Fitness Center was nearly complete, and while the exact completion date could not be determined, late Spring 2020 was a likely timeframe for completion.

President Oldham stated that the completion date for the new Lab Sciences building would come in stages. He stated that the lecture hall facility would be completed by Fall 2020. He stated that the rest of the building would be completed sometime in late October 2020.

President Oldham stated that landscaping continued to improve. He stated that there was a new signage plan to improve campus signs.

President Oldham stated that the Grand Challenge "Rural Reimagined" was making progress. He stated that there were about 15 courses built into the curriculum related to Rural Reimagined. He stated there were about 300 students actively involved in meaningful ways.

President Oldham shared that the primary focus for this year was enrollment, recruitment retention, and overall student success. He stated one initiative, the Fall Preview Day, would take place Saturday, October 5th. He stated there were currently 800 students and a total of 2,000 family members preregistered for the event.

President Oldham stated the goals he had for Tennessee Tech included the following:

- Enrollment of greater than 12,000 students;
- Minority enrollment goal of 22 percent;
- Freshman-to-sophomore retention rate of 82 percent;
- Four-year graduation rate of 50 percent;

- Continued growth of online programs;
- Strengthening career development to ensure students were on the path for a successful career;
- Continued push in sponsored research with a goal of \$40,000,000 in sponsored research by 2025; and
- Recognition throughout Tennessee as the champion and center for excellence regarding the future of rural Tennessee communities.

He stated that the goals were ambitious but achievable. He stated it would take effort from everyone. He thanked the Board for its support and encouragement.

Mr. Jones asked President Oldham what worried him about Tennessee Tech.

President Oldham stated that he was concerned about moving fast enough. He stated he was certain Tennessee Tech would be able to be a great university, but it would take effort from the entire Tech community to continue to push forward and be willing to stay focused on what needed to happen next. He stated the worst thing that could happen would be Tech would be satisfied with its current state and not move forward.

Ms. Rose asked whether a student who took six months or a year for a school-sponsored internship increases his/her time to graduation.

President Oldham stated the six-year graduation rate was a federal metric. He stated that the number was determined by looking at how many freshmen entered the university as a cohort in one year and how many of those same students graduated four, five, or six years later. He stated this was used to compare universities. He stated that many students do participate in internships or co-op opportunities that delayed their graduation. He stated that internships would continue to be encouraged and for internal purposes, the Board could remove those students who left for significant reasons, such as an internships, from a cohort to determine what the graduation rate would be.

Mr. Jones stated that the five-year graduation rate should be the most important goal because students should be studying abroad, going on internships, etc. He stated that the five-year student may be a better-rounded student than a four-year student. He stated that looking at the graduation rate, the fifth-year rate was increasing dramatically, and the sixth-year graduation rate would likely increase as well. He stated that there was a large gap between the fourth-year and fifth-year graduation rates because of other programs like co-ops and internships that extended a student's time to graduation.

President Oldham stated that roughly 50 percent of students would change their major at least once, as well as experience other life events that could contribute to graduating later. He stated that, overall, the graduation rate was moving in the right direction and this was one part of the story. He stated that the other part of the story was additional opportunities that provide good experience for students.

Chair Jones stated he wished there was a conversion from undergraduate to graduate students. He stated this is another area that could be focused on.

President Oldham stated that many faculty and institutions actually discouraged students from staying at the same institution for all their degrees, but in some cases it would be the right thing to do. He stated that there was room to grow in that regard and opportunity for Tennessee Tech undergraduates to remain at the university. He stated that the right mix of graduate programs must also be highlighted to attract those students. He stated that the graduate enrollment had not increased much, but PhD enrollment had increased over the past two years.

Ms. Rose stated that tracking the number of students who were five-year students because of internships would be of interest. She stated that tracking how many students who participated in internships or co-ops now have a job in their field of study could be beneficial to review, as well.

President Oldham stated strategic planning placed emphasis on internships and co-ops. He stated that he was trying to explore having more companies sponsor on-campus internships for students. He stated this would be a good opportunity for both the company and students.

AGENDA ITEM 5—CERTIFICATION OF PRESIDENT’S RESPONSIBILITIES RELATED TO ATHLETICS

Chair Harper stated that the Certification of President’s Responsibilities Related to Athletics required the Chair of the Board to sign the letter and present the signed document to the Ohio Valley Conference. The Certification attested that the President was responsible for the administration of the athletics program, had the support of the Board in operating a program of integrity, and he could vote on behalf of Tennessee Tech on NCAA and OVC matters.

AGENDA ITEM 6.A—EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT, APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Chair Harper stated the Executive Committee met on August 21, 2019, to approve the appointment of Dr. Francis Otuoyne to the position of Interim Vice President for Research and Economic Development. She stated that Dr. Otuoyne was assuming the responsibility for the research effort at a time where Tennessee Tech was looking at its research policies and efforts and she thanked him for taking on this role.

AGENDA ITEM 6.B—EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT, REPORT ON COMPLETION OF PRESIDENT’S PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Chair Harper stated that the Board completed its annual evaluation of the President’s performance. She stated that there was no recommendation on a salary increase for the President because President Oldham asked that this be delayed until Tennessee Tech made a salary increase recommendation for other employees. She stated that she expected the Board would discuss the matter in December.

AGENDA ITEM 7—ACADEMIC & STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REPORT

Ms. Rose stated there were three staff updates in the morning meeting. She stated the first presentation was from Provost Bruce who gave an update on ongoing initiatives and activities related to student success and professional development. Provost Bruce discussed development workshops and briefed the Committee on what was happening with the Center for Advancing Faculty Excellence. Ms. Rose stated that Provost Bruce also discussed the establishment for the Provost Advisory Committee and the input she was receiving from that committee. She stated that Provost Bruce also shared that she had been nominated and was participating in THEC’s Leadership Innovation Fellows program.

Ms. Rose stated Dr. Johnson provided an enrollment update. She stated that Tennessee Tech’s undergraduate numbers were slightly down and graduate numbers were slightly up. She stated that Dr. Johnson discussed some of the freshman recruitment activities and student messaging and marketing for recruitment opportunities.

Ms. Rose stated that Mr. Burnett talked about diversity initiatives and the establishment of a new position of Chief Diversity Officer and a Director of Multicultural Affairs. She stated that Mr. Burnett discussed the fundraising campaign for scholarships for diverse and underrepresented groups, which had raised \$1,100,000 with a goal of \$2,000,000. She stated that he also mentioned the establishment of an admissions position specifically focused on diverse populations.

AGENDA ITEM 8.A—AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Stites stated the Audit & Business Committee reviewed and discussed the FY2019 Employee Performance Evaluation analysis for both faculty and staff. He stated that Dr. Leslie Crickenberger presented a three-year trend of average scores and performance increases for faculty and staff. He stated that the Board should recognize performance and pay for performance. He stated the Committee saw a trend indicating progress in rewarding high performance.

Mr. Stites stated the Committee also received an update on the five-year strategic financial plan. He stated that progress had been made over the past year to reinstate the operating fund balance, establish an investment pool, and allocate resources toward new programs.

AGENDA ITEM 8.B—AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS – NAMING OF FACILITIES

Upon recommendation of the Committee, Mr. Stites moved to name the Learning Resource Center “The Horace M. Jeffers Learning Resource Center”, the Alumni Building the “Varsity Building”, and the Lab Science Lecture Hall the “Stonecipher Lecture Hall.”

With an opportunity for further discussion and there being none, the motion carried unanimously.

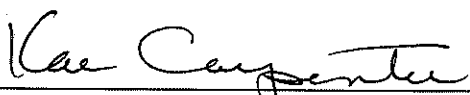
AGENDA ITEM 9—OTHER BUSINESS

Chair Harper stated that a Board informational session about auxiliary and ancillary entities was scheduled for November 12th, from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 10—ADJOURNMENT

With there being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 2:19 p.m.

Approved,



Kae Carpenter, Secretary