



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

June 22, 2023

Roaden University Center, Room 282

MINUTES

Meeting streamed live via link found on this web page:

<https://www.tntech.edu/board/board-and-board-committee-meetings.php>

AGENDA ITEM I – CALL TO ORDER

The Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees met on Thursday, June 22, 2023, in Roaden University Center, Room 282. Chair Trudy Harper called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.

Chair Harper asked Mr. Lee Wray, Secretary, to call the roll. The following members were present:

- Savannah Griffin
- Fred Lowery
- Tom Jones
- Thomas Lynn
- Rhedona Rose
- Johnny Stites
- Barry Wilmore
- Trudy Harper

- Dan Allcott, virtual

Professor Allcott confirmed that he could simultaneously hear and speak to the Board members, that he was by himself, and that he received the Board materials in advance of the meeting.

A quorum was physically present. Tennessee Tech faculty, staff and members of the public were also in attendance.

LEE 10/12/23

AGENDA ITEM II – SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENTS

Chair Harper introduced three student orientation assistants (SOAs) who represent a group of about 20 students who welcome, teach, and inspire students and parents during Student Orientation, Advisement, and Registration (SOAR.) These students teach Tech traditions and provide new freshmen with the advice and knowledge they need to live Wings Up.

Bri Pharris stated that she led SOAR and helped facilitate it. Through SOAR, she became a true leader. She stated that her favorite part about serving as an SOA was learning to bring students, family and guests out of their shells. She stated the role was a blessing that she will take with her throughout the remainder of her life.

Cole Campbell introduced himself as a sophomore electrical engineering major, originally from Kansas City, KS and currently from Dickson, TN. He stated that it was an honor and privilege to be an SOA and to gain the leadership qualities provided by the role. He also stated that he has a desire to make the students' transitions to campus easier and more enjoyable.

Lindsay Taylor introduced herself as an Interdisciplinary Studies major – business, leadership and organizational behavior with a minor in finance - from Johnson City, Tennessee. She stated that her favorite part of being an SOA was helping incoming students who were not familiar with Cookeville and the middle Tennessee region make the adjustment to campus and the region.

Chair Harper asked Lindsay to explain the difference in Trailblazers and SOAs. Lindsay stated that Trailblazers provide potential students – primarily juniors and seniors in high school – VIP, one-on-one tours around campus. SOAs interact with incoming freshmen and transfer students and help those new students become acclimated to Tech.

Bri also stated and Cole agreed that the professors and students at Tennessee Tech really care about learning and academics. Class sizes and professor-to-student ratio was good. Bri stated that she got to know all of her professors, and they want to get to know her and to see her succeed.

Cole also commented on how clean and maintained our campus is and stated that was one of the reasons he chose Tennessee Tech.

Lindsay stated that one of the best things new students can do to get the most from their experience at Tennessee Tech was to get involved. Joining one or more of the 250 available organizations makes students' campus experiences better. Students need more than just an academic life to connect to campus. The new Marc L. Burnett Recreation Center is often a highlight of campus tours.

Cole agreed that the Lab Science building and the Stonecipher Lecture Hall are beautiful buildings. Potential students and other guests love the Commons area and Einstein Bagels in

Lee 10/12/23

the Lab Science building; students love to study in that area. The Main Quad is another popular area.

Chair Harper stated that she was very proud that the SOAs are Golden Eagles and make Tennessee Tech degrees look more important because of what the students are doing.

AGENDA ITEM III – APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Harper asked for approval of the minutes of the March 9, 2023, Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees meeting. Chair Harper asked if there were questions or comments regarding the minutes. There being none, Mr. Jones moved to recommend approval of the March 9, 2023, Board of Trustees minutes. Mr. Stites seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion carried unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM IV – STUDENT TRUSTEE REPORT

Chair Harper stated that the next agenda item was a new item and Ms. Griffin, in her last meeting as a Trustee, would provide a report from the student perspective.

Ms. Griffin stated that as student Trustee, she had the privilege of representing a diverse and vibrant student body this past year. She also stated that academic performance remained outstanding because more than 3800 students earned top academic performance honors by being named to the Dean's List. Students continued to excel in their studies.

Ms. Griffin stated that many faculty members go above and beyond to ensure students' educational experiences remain engaging. Through their efforts, an environment is fostered to encourage critical thinking, creativity and collaboration. However, it is important to acknowledge that Tennessee Tech's student body includes individuals with varying levels of academic motivation and abilities. Some students face challenges related to time management, workload and balancing extracurricular activities which can impact their overall academic performance. Continued strategies to support and guide students in navigating these challenges are essential to foster academic success.

She stated that Tennessee Tech's new Eagle Engage system allows students to connect with organizations, campus events and more. More than 200 student organizations have registered with Eagle Engage and 2770 unique users are registered in the system. Almost 4000 total users are registered which includes students registered in multiple groups and it is expected that these numbers will continue to grow.

Tennessee Tech's Student Government Association allocates Student Organization Life Opportunity (SOLO) funding to different student organizations and SGA funded 227 organization events and activities. Through these activities, students developed valuable life skills, built lasting friendships and left a positive impact on our campus and the Cookeville community. Contrary to the commonly held notion that Tennessee Tech campus has been

characterized as a suitcase campus, Ms. Griffin's observations indicate a robust engagement of the student body with the surrounding college town community.

She stated that one of the students' main concerns was the need for more efficient campus shuttle routes. Students would like to see better transportation options, especially between the recreation center and library. Students are interested in the possibility of shuttle pickups from off-campus apartments and having more consistently communicated shuttle schedules. Students would like to see the possibility of a 24/7 library for unrestricted access to study materials. Students hope for more online tools provided by the library to support research needs.

Ms. Griffin stated that students have expressed a desire for improved textbook access to help them succeed without financial burdens. They would appreciate expanded counseling center resources to ensure support for well-being.

She stated that while students were excited about welcoming more Golden Eagles to campus, they were also curious about the plans for updated and additional housing options. Students believe expanding on-campus living options would provide a better overall experience for all students and create a more vibrant and inclusive community.

Ms. Griffin stated that she was incredibly proud of the achievements as a student body and honored to have had the privilege of representing such an exceptional group of individuals. Together, Tennessee Tech students live up to the university's motto of living "bold, fearless, confident and kind." She stated that she wanted to thank everyone for their support and she looks forward to keeping up with the Board and everything they are able to accomplish this next year.

AGENDA ITEM V – PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Chair Harper stated that President Oldham would provide the President's Report.

President Oldham thanked the Board members for all they do on a regular basis to support Tennessee Tech.

He stated that it was another successful appropriations cycle for Tennessee Tech in the Tennessee General Assembly. He thanked all of the representatives that support higher education, particularly the university's local representatives, Senator Paul Bailey, Representative Ryan Williams and Speaker Cameron Sexton, for their tremendous support for Tennessee Tech and higher education.

Tennessee Tech is scheduled to receive \$80,500,000 in annual state appropriations and that includes the portion of the five percent salary pool that was discussed previously. The university also is scheduled to receive an additional \$2,000,000 of recurring funding for the wind tunnel and super computer facility to be located in Crossville in Cumberland County.

President Oldham stated that Tennessee Tech received \$1,200,000, of which \$1,000,000 of that was recurring dollars for the Cybersecurity Education and Research Center. Tennessee Tech is also scheduled to receive another million dollars of one-time money for Rural Reimagined to support efforts that continue to exceed all expectations. The university also received \$150,000 for the Water Center and \$6,500,000 for capital maintenance. He stated that Tennessee was in a good financial position as a state and has heavily invested in higher education and that investment continues.

He stated that Tennessee Tech was still in the final part of the current recruitment cycle and final enrollment numbers won't be known until September. An update to include specifics will be provided at the fall Board meetings but enrollment numbers look quite positive at this point. More than 2,000 students have registered for freshman SOAR. About 1450 of those have already attended a SOAR session, with four more SOAR sessions remaining before the end of the summer.

President Oldham stated that academically, the group of potential freshmen are quite strong, with about one-third of the students having a perfect 4.0 high school GPA. The average high school GPA is 3.68. Six students in this cohort have a perfect 36 ACT score, five of which are national merit semifinalists. The current group is more diverse; we are seeing an increase in African-American, Hispanic and Asian.

He stated that of the roughly 2,000 freshmen, 1,850 are from Tennessee. Slightly less than one-third are from the Upper Cumberland region, a little more are from the metro Nashville area, and we also draw significantly from both the Knoxville and Chattanooga metropolitan areas. Tennessee Tech typically attracts a healthy mix of students from rural and suburban areas. West Tennessee requires a more challenging recruitment effort on our part but we do get students from west Tennessee.

President Oldham stated that Tennessee Tech's goal for enrollment is to reach 12,000 students in the 2025-26 year. The baseline year, in 2018-19 was just over 10,000. Last fall, we were at 9,902 and we will likely be slightly above 10,000 in fall 2023.

He also stated that the minority goal is 22 percent. Significant progress has been made in this area, reaching 19.5 percent this past year, and that should continue to climb.

Great strides were made in first year retention rate this past year; we reached 78.5 percent. At this time, we are tracking at about 80 percent for this next fall and are making good progress toward the 82 percent goal.

He stated that Tennessee Tech still has a way to go with four-year graduation rates but we are making progress. We have been bouncing up and down around the 40 percent range for the past two or three years. Our long-term goal of 60 percent for the six-year graduation rate was met the past couple of years. Most freshmen starting at Tennessee Tech graduate within five

LOE 10/2/23
Page 5 of 10

years. We discussed at length at previous meetings about the benefits, particularly the financial benefits, to students to graduate on time and what we do to encourage that.

We continue to be among the best value in the region and certainly in the state. Approximately half of our students graduate debt-free and average federal indebtedness for a graduating class decreased over the last two or three years. Tennessee Tech students are back down below \$20,000 now for the average indebtedness on graduation.

President Oldham stated that the Ashraf Islam Engineering building is making substantial progress now. It is expected that this building will likely be completed next spring, about a year from now. We have privately raised close to \$10,000,000 which is a high watermark for Tennessee Tech in terms of capital fundraising efforts.

The big project currently ongoing in terms of parking and transportation is the pedestrian walkway through the center of campus, along Peachtree. It should be completed by late January or early February of 2024.

He stated that the Tucker Stadium project is moving along. It is in the design phase and great progress is being made. We anticipate that we will be in demolition of the west side of the stadium this December. If everything stays on schedule, tear down of the west side to make room for the new construction will begin soon after football season is completed. New construction will likely begin next summer and it is anticipated that completion will be roughly fall 2025 season. Current work is being done to ensure that the facility can be utilized throughout the construction phase. We expect to use the east side stadium for at least one full season to accommodate the construction.

Foster Hall, the old chemistry building, is expected to be demoed this fall and probably completed early next spring. Asbestos work needs to be done in the interior before it can be imploded.

President Oldham stated that the Johnson Hall renovation is in design phase and the building is expected to reopen after renovation in the fall of 2025.

He stated that the next newest building, the advanced construction and manufacturing engineering (ACME) building, is currently in the programming phase and we anticipate it will go to bid in 2024 for construction. A matching requirement is associated with the ACME building. We have already achieved a \$1 million private donation commitment for a portion of the required matching on the ACME building.

President Oldham also stated that Tennessee Tech has acquired \$32,400,000 year to date in research funding. That is a record high and is roughly 40 percent above last year's number. This number is a result of tremendous work on everyone's part, particularly the faculty, investigators involved in securing these funds, and the number speaks to the quality of the research that we do at Tennessee Tech. He stated that the scholarly work the faculty do is

lee 10/14/23

tremendous and those that publish their work or present it in peer-reviewed settings, speaks to the quality of the work. Our aspirational goal for research funding is \$40,000,000 so it is looking like that figure is much more attainable today than when we started that journey. President Oldham thanked Dr. Pinkert who has been with us this year helping out. I appreciate all the Research Office staff and everyone else who helped us reach this level.

President Oldham stated that Athletics finished second place for the OVC Commissioner's Cup, the highest Tennessee Tech has ever finished. Out of ten institutions, we had the best overall sports performance, second only to Southeast Missouri State University this year. That was a tremendous accomplishment for us and we did that while still maintaining a great deal of sportsmanship and integrity in how we competed, by winning the Overall Sportsmanship Award. This was our second time to win the award but it has been over a decade since that happened. Five of our 15 team sports actually won their Sportsmanship Award.

AGENDA ITEM VI – CONSENT AGENDA

A. EMERITUS PRESIDENT CONTRACT

B. TENURE RECOMMENDATIONS

C. ACADEMIC PROGRAM MODIFICATION (APM) FOR M.A. IN LEARNING DESIGN TECHNOLOGY

D. NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAM PROPOSAL (NAPP) FOR PH.D. IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Mr. Jones moved to pass the consent agenda as presented. Mr. Lowery seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Harper then stated that she would use her chair prerogative to raise an item, provide background, and an update on where we are with this topic. She stated that at the last meeting, the Board voted 6:1 to take a certain direction with salary increases for the upcoming year, to be effective July 1. The proposal included a merit component.

A statement was previously made in a Board meeting that the state has a statute that requires employees to be reviewed on a merit basis. The Faculty Senate questioned the validity of the statement, stating they were not aware there was such a statute and provided reasons they thought that was not the case.

Chair Harper asked Troy Perdue, General Counsel, to research the possible statute and he stated that there is a statute that says the state human resources department is charged with ensuring merit is used as a criterion for salary increases for state employees. However, an exception exists for higher education. So, higher education institutions are exempted from the requirement to use merit for employee salary increases.

Chair Harper stated that she wanted Trustees to have an opportunity to ask for a reconsideration of the March 9, 2023, decision. She also stated that, per Robert's Rules, only a person who voted in favor of the first motion can ask for a reconsideration but she would open it up for reconsideration. There being no motion for reconsideration, the prior decision stands.

Lee 10/12/23

and they moved to the next agenda item.

AGENDA ITEM VII.A. – AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS – MAINTENANCE AND MANDATORY FEES

Upon the committee's recommendation, Mr. Stites moved the Board approve the proposed FY2023-24 maintenance and mandatory fees. Mr. Lynn seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM VII.B. – AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS - NON-MANDATORY FEE SUMMARY

Upon the committee's recommendation, Mr. Stites moved the Board approve the Non-Mandatory fee for Craft Center Housing, effective Fall 2023. Mr. Lowery seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM VII.C. – AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS – FY2022-23 ESTIMATED AND FY2023-24 BUDGET

Upon the committee's recommendation, Mr. Stites moved the Board approve Tennessee Tech's FY2022-23 estimated and FY2023-24 proposed budgets and organizational chart. Mr. Lynn seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM VII.D. – AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS – DISCLOSED PROJECTS FY2023-24

Upon the committee's recommendation, Mr. Stites moved the Board approve the FY2023-24 disclosed projects for the Student Event Center and J.J. Oakley Residence Hall and Innovation Center. Ms. Rose seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM VII.E. – AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS – CAPITAL BUDGET FY2024-25

Upon the committee's recommendation, Mr. Stites moved the Board approve the FY2024-25 Capital Budget requests. Mr. Jones seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM VII.F. – AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS – TECH FARM OPERATING AGREEMENT

Mr. Stites stated that following a lengthy discussion in the morning committee meeting and upon the committee's recommendation, he moved to approve the Tech Farm Operating Agreement with the understanding that the President would work with the General Counsel to

Lee 10/12/23
Page 8 of 10

make any needed amendments to the agreement to clarify that no state funds would be used to support the physical building infrastructure on the farm and to ensure that the agreement is consistent with the intent. Mr. Jones seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed 7-0, with Mr. Allcott abstaining.

AGENDA ITEM VIII.A. – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS – ELECTION OF CHAIR OF THE BOARD FOR JULY 1, 2023-JUNE 30, 2025

Upon the committee's recommendation, Mr. Jones moved approval of Trudy Harper as Board Chair for the term of July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2025. Mr. Lynn seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM VIII.B. – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS – ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR OF THE BOARD FOR JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2025

Upon the committee's recommendation, Mr. Stites moved approval of Rhedona Rose as Board Vice-Chair for the term of July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2025. Mr. Lynn seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed 7-0, with Ms. Rose passing.

AGENDA ITEM VIII.C. – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS – ELECTION OF THE ADDITIONAL MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Upon the committee's recommendation, Mr. Jones moved approval of Fred Lowery as the additional member of the Executive Committee for the term of July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2025. Mr. Stites seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM VIII.D. – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS – ELECTION OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND CHAIR

Upon the committee's recommendation, Ms. Rose moved approval of Johnny Stites as Chair, and Tom Jones and Thomas Lynn as Audit Committee members for the term of July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2025. Mr. Lowery seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM VIII.E. – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS – ANNOUNCEMENT OF ACADEMIC & STUDENT AFFAIRS CHAIR AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair Harper announced that she had appointed Rhedona Rose as Chair, and Barry Wilmore and Dr. Jeannette Luna as Academic & Student Affairs Committee members for the term of July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2025.

lee 10/17/23

AGENDA ITEM IX – ELECTION OF STUDENT TRUSTEE

Upon a recommendation from the Student Government Association, Mr. Lowery nominated Addison Dorris to serve as the student trustee for fiscal year 2023-24. Mr. Wilmore seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM X – BOARD SECRETARY REPORT

Mr. Wray welcomed Trustee Luna and Trustee Dorris to the board beginning July 1. He stated that Deb Combs would handle their transition process. He also stated that Trustees would be receiving information from Vice Chair Rose about the president’s evaluation process.

AGENDA ITEM XI – OTHER BUSINESS – RECOGNITION OF TERM-ENDING TRUSTEES

Chair Harper stated that she had other business to cover and it was bittersweet. A plaque was presented to Savannah Griffin for her time served on the Board. Savannah stated that she would be traveling to Auburn University this fall to earn a Master’s degree in Higher Education Administration. She also thanked Tennessee Tech for all that has been given to her, especially the opportunity to serve on the Board.

Chair Harper also stated that a plaque would be awarded to Professor Allcott when he returned to Cookeville. She also stated that he has helped her appreciate the role, perspective and the importance of the fine arts in our institution. Professor Allcott stated that he appreciated the opportunity to serve with everyone on the Board and he felt that he now knows more about the university.

AGENDA ITEM XII – ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees meeting adjourned at 3:01 p.m.

Approved,

LEE Wray 10/12/23

Lee Wray, Secretary

LEE 10/12/23