



Research & Economic Development

TENNESSEE TECH

Research & Grants

AT TENNESSEE TECH UNIVERSITY

Michael Aikens, PhD

Associate Vice President for Research and Economic Development

9-25-26

Agenda

- Introductions
- FY26 Research Highlights
- FY27 Goal and Strategies
- How can ORED help?



Introductions

- ORED team
 - Liu, Aikens, Hunt, Lynam, Leong
- Aikens
 - 21 years at Tech
 - The 'economic development guy'
 - Substantial research activity that informs and funds economic development strategy/activity
 - Research areas: quant/qual surveys, economic impact analysis, business development, location intelligence, program planning & development
 - Founder/Executive Director Center for Rural Innovation & Rural Reimagined (2017)
 - 20 employees
 - 100% self funded
 - \$2.5M annual activations
 - PI for over \$20M in sponsored programs, additional \$20 million as COPI/key
 - ARC, DOE, EDA, NSF, USDA + state awards + foundations + giving



FY26 Research Highlights

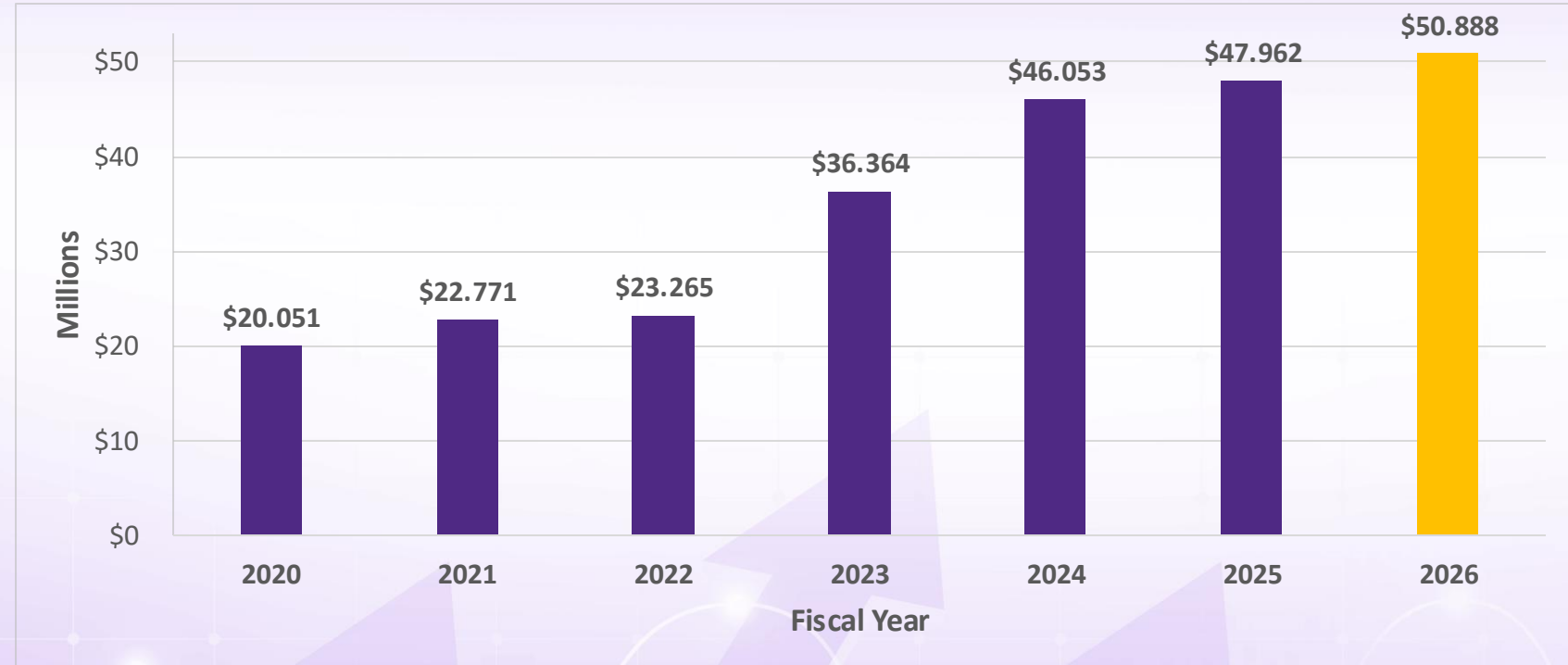
- FY26 performance
 - 177 activations
 - \$50.88M
- FY25 research expenditures: \$41.2M
 - FY26 are not available until January
 - Updated HERD → potentially higher expenditure recognition



A Track Record of Success

FY20 President Oldham challenged faculty to double sponsored program funding in 5 years

- Goal achieved in 4 years
- 6 years of record high award funding
- 10 years of growth for research expenditures
- FY27 goal: \$52M



FY27 Goal: Achieve \$52 Million in Activations

- Strategies
 - Stay the course on federal opportunities
 - Align with national priorities (AI, nuclear, defense, quantum)
 - Diversify portfolio
 - State grants (IRIS, Dept. Innovation, TDEC, etc.)
 - Industry Sponsored Research
 - Military/DoD + Chasm Opps Consultant
 - Private Foundations
 - ADRs in each college
 - Multidisciplinary proposals
 - Grant Forward software to connect/align opportunities with faculty
 - ORED/CITL Research Series



**WHAT DOES ORED DO,
AND HOW CAN YOU HELP ME?**



Support

- Faculty services
- Student support
- Internal Faculty Grant Programs
- Facilitate protection of Intellectual Property and technology transfer
- Innovator Showcase for faculty



Services

- **Proposal and Project Support**

- Facilitate the identification of funding opportunities
- Provide training and assistance with proposal development
- Provide training and guidance on research compliance
- Prepare and negotiate grants and contracts
- Administer faculty research grants
- Economic Impact analyses, data aggregation, and location intelligence

Learn more: tntech.edu/research/resources/index.php



Student Support

- Research and Creative Inquiry Day student research exhibition
- Eagle Works student entrepreneurship competition

Learn more: tntech.edu/research/research-day.php



Learning Opportunities

- **Faculty, Staff, and Graduate Student Training Series**

- Getting Started with Research Grants – Sep 25
- Faculty Research Mix and Mingle – Oct. 23
- Best Practices for Grant Management – Nov. 13

Learn more: <https://www.tntech.edu/cafe/research-series.php>



Internal Funding Opportunities

- **Rural Reimagined Faculty Grant Program**

- Apply for up to \$20,000 in funding to address rural challenges
- Application live now!
- Applications close Wed, Sept. 30 at 4:30 PM CST

Learn more: <https://www.tntech.edu/research/economic-development/grand-challenge/faculty-grant-program.php>

- **TnTech Faculty Research Grant**

- Apply for up to \$20,000 in funding to seed fund research
- Applications open December 2025

Learn more: <https://www.tntech.edu/research/faculty-research-committee.php>

- **Tech Transfer Proof of Concept Grant**

- \$50,00 total pool
- Funding to advance IP towards commercialization
- Applications open on rolling basis starting late 2025, early 2026

Learn more: <https://www.tntech.edu/research/economic-development/techtransfer/ttacgrant.php>



IP/Commercialization Assistance

- Commercialization IS research, and:
 - Protection of novel ideas
 - Revenue generator for PI and university
 - Not always a business (licensing, partnerships, etc.)
 - Professional development and accolades for faculty
- Resources
 - Invention disclosure assistance
 - Proof of Concept grant
 - LaunchTN network
 - Industry connections
- Faculty Innovator Showcase
 - Part of Research and Creative Inquiry Day
 - \$1,500 for each participant
 - Tradeshow, presentation
 - Industry and government connections

Learn more: tntech.edu/research/intellectual-property.php



Resource Links

Office of Research and Economic Development

<https://www.tntech.edu/research/>

Research Development Resources

<https://www.tntech.edu/research/research-development.php>

Finding Funding – Pivot RP, will transition to GrantForward

<https://www.tntech.edu/research/resources/findfunding.php>

Policies and Procedures

<https://www.tntech.edu/research/researchcompliance/policies1.php>

Additional resources for specific needs – human subjects, animal subjects, export control, etc. – are available on the site.



THANKS

Questions?

