

## **University Assembly**

**November 20, 2024**

### **TEAMS Meeting**

**Members Present:** Atkinson, Brown, Chang, Comer, Craven, Creter, Dewar, Donadio, Fennewald, Fidan, Fornehed, Foster, Gannod, Hanna, Hewitt, A. Hill, C. Hill, Kalyanapu, Kennedy, Killman, Langford, Liu, Loftis, Mabry, Manginelli, Mills, Nichols, Nucum, Null, Ojo, Owens, Payne, Peng, Rajabali, Rice, S. Seiler, Shank, Shipley, Skelton, Simpson, Smith-Andrews, D. Smith, Snider, Stinson, Suters, Tennant, Timmerman, Turner, Upole, Warren, B. Wilson, M. Wilson, Winkle, Xu, Yelamarthi, Zagumny.

**Members Absent:** Bare, Burch, Carlile, Christen, Ding, Dye, Edmonds, Field, Gotcher, Grimes, Le Borne, Majors, Mann, Nattrass, O'Connor, Russell, Slater, Spears, Weathers, Westbrook

**Others Present:** Baker, Braswell, Bruce, Cannon, Holderman, Huo, Oldham, Polk-Johnson, B. Seiler, Diane Smith, Vedder, Wray

#### **Summary of Proceedings:**

Approved agenda

Approved minutes from April 17, 2024

Received report of the Academic Council for Fall 2024

Received report of the Administrative Council for Fall 2024

Received remarks from President Oldham

Other such matters

#### **Proceedings:**

President Oldham called the meeting to order at 3:41 pm. Mark Wilson motioned to approve the agenda and Holly Mills seconded. Motion APPROVED.

A motion to approve the minutes from April 17, 2024, was made by Mark Wilson and seconded by Sandra Smith-Andrews. Motion APPROVED.

Kimberly Winkle presented the report of the Academic Council for fall 2024. Academic Council met three times during the fall semester. On September 11, 2024, approvals were made on an

admissions requirement, a new program, and received an information-only report on Policy No. 790. On October 9, 2024, four concentration terminations, two new concentrations, a concentration name change, a new certificate, and a new program were approved, and two information-only policies were received. On November 13, 2024, two new policies, four new concentrations, one concentration termination, one curricular change, an admission requirement change, a certificate change, and a new minor were approved. Winkle encouraged everyone to review the approved changes and new policies, as they affected the larger academic units. Winkle thanked Academic Council, as well as Amy McCoy and Angie Denson for their administrative support.

Kristine Craven presented the report of the Administrative Council. Administrative Council met three times during the fall semester. On September 4, 2024, the new Participation in Malign Foreign Talent Recruitment Program Policy No. 790 was received as information-only as it was approved out-of-cycle during the summer. On October 2, 2024, the new Research Security Policy No. 791, revised Hoverboards and Similar Personal Conveyance Vehicles Policy No. 191, which has been renamed Bicycle and Micro transportation Devices (MTDs), Cellular Service and Wireless Allowance Policy No. 560, and revised Solicitation and Acceptance of Gifts Policy No. 536 were received. On November 6, 2024, the new Research Security Policy No. 791, Bicycle and Micro transportation Devices (MTDs) Policy No. 191, and Cellular Service and Wireless Allowance Policy No. 560 were approved. Craven thanked everyone, including Diane Smith, for administrative support.

Kevin Vedder presented an update on the Talon project. Talon is for the implementation of an enterprise resource planning and human capital management application, or Oracle, which will replace the Banner system. The project had been underway for six to seven months and continued to make progress. Vedder served as the functional project lead for both the human capital management as well as the change management on the initiative. A timeline of the project was shown, and Vedder explained that they were in the development stage in Conference Room Pilot 1 which is initial design and testing of the functionality of the application by subject matter experts in human resources, business, and finance.

That portion would end in December 2024 and revisions would go into the Conference Room Pilot 2 that would begin in February 2025. The Business Partner Network (BPN) group had been instrumental in helping with the project and had given feedback and helped to represent several campus areas. They would also be included in the business process design session. As functions and workflows were solidified, the BPN group would do a hands-on demo and provide feedback to make further refinements. The Talon website provided good information about the project and changes that would occur, and the Talon Tracks newsletter went out monthly, providing updates about the project.

Harrison Simpson asked to what extent the transition to Talon would affect faculty or require new training. Vedder answered that there would be changes to business operations and Human Resource functions as far as leave requests, personnel action forms, and things of that nature, but these changes would be communicated to campus. President Oldham reminded everyone that this new system was for finance and human resources exclusively so it would not directly affect student information, and faculty would be impacted like any other employee on campus. Vedder

confirmed that the changes would mainly be from an employee standpoint and would not impact student systems or anything in Banner for students.

President Oldham thanked everyone for helping to make Tennessee Tech the number one public university in the Tennessee. Oldham commented that due to what had been experienced this semester with more than one student, to never forget that some students were struggling mentally and emotionally with issues that may not be obvious. It had been a tough semester with the suicide event on campus and hopefully this reminded everyone to take extra time to pay attention to each other and particularly the students, making sure they were in a good place emotionally and physically and helping wherever possible. While reflecting on what could have been done better or what more could have been done, there were no easy answers. Oldham encouraged everyone to continue to look for ways to make a difference in the lives of students.

Oldham reminded everyone that the Lighting of the Quad would be Tuesday, December 3, after returning from the Thanksgiving holiday and was always a great event. Enrollment growth for the year had seen about a four percent increase from last year and the total number of students was over 10,500. This was the largest class since 2015 and the fourth largest freshman class in history, at 2,006 first-time freshmen. They were good students, with high GPAs and an average ACT score above 24. The short term goal was to have 12,000 students and Tennessee Tech was on track to do that soon. Retention rates continued to increase, at 78% for first-time freshmen for fall 2024. Oldham noted the retention rate for Presidential Scholars, which made up around half of the freshman class, was at 88%. Through Dr. Polk-Johnson's efforts, Tennessee Tech was doubling their efforts to help first generation students with membership in the FirstGen Forward Network, a nationwide network of institutions that wanted to focus on first generation college students.

Several new programs had opened, most notably the bachelor's degree in nuclear engineering. First semester enrollment projections had exceeded expectations, with around twenty-five students currently enrolled for the first semester. Oldham believed the College of Engineering had the largest enrollment in the history of Tennessee Tech at over 3,100 students. Mechanical engineering had become the major with the highest enrollment, at over nine hundred students. Tennessee Tech now graduated more computer science majors than any other public university in Tennessee, which had been consistent over the recent years. Tennessee Tech also produced more teachers annually than any other university in Tennessee.

Phases one and two of the compensation study that launched over a year ago had gone very well and progress had been made, and plans were in place to continue making improvements. Research on campus continued to increase, it had surpassed \$46,000,000 in the last year in funded research and exceeded \$30,000,000 for the current fiscal year. Oldham congratulated all the faculty involved in making that happen and noted that they were doing innovative research. The research funding was great, but enabling students to engage in the work was the real prize of the effort. Fundraising had been very successful in the last year. About \$16,000,000 had been raised in fiscal year 2024 and Oldham believed it to be the third biggest year in Tennessee Tech history, and congratulated Dr. Braswell and his staff for another great year. Tennessee Tech was doing a capital campaign titled "It's Personal," with a working goal of \$125,000,000 and were on

the way to meeting that goal in the next three to four years. Oldham again thanked everyone for the work done to help meet these goals and excel.

Many significant milestones had occurred this semester. The grand opening and dedication of the Ashraf Islam Engineering Building with the new lake and the “Wings” sculpture took place, with plans for a ribbon cutting ceremony for the sculpture in the near future. The pedestrian pathway was almost complete and had been opened, with only a few minor additions that were being worked on. Foster Hall and the west side of Tucker Stadium had been demolished, as part of the efforts to continue to improve campus. Several projects were in the design phase currently. The new west side stadium had received support from Averitt Express, \$2,000,000 from Putnam County, and \$4,000,000 from the City of Cookeville. The target date for completion was summer 2026. The Johnson Hall renovation was underway. The advanced construction of the manufacturing engineering building needed additional resources. The state had been asked for assistance in the upcoming funding cycle through the governor’s office. There was approval to continue the design phase of the ACME building. The JJ Oakley Innovation residence hall, with 400 beds and an attached innovation center, was looking good with final design being determined. Early planning continued for the parking garage and the master plan for the landscaping, including the Foster Hall footprint as a green space. Early planning for a new student event center that would be located at the south end of Tucker Stadium would be a great addition to campus as well.

Oldham noted that Athletics was having a good year, particularly football. The team held a six and five record under coach Bobby Wilder. The team would be playing for at least a share of the conference championship on Saturday, November 23, 2024, at noon in Tucker Stadium against Eastern Illinois. Oldham encouraged everyone to come out and support the football team. They had won the York trophy for the year, meaning they had beaten their state rivals in the OVC: UT Martin and Tennessee State University. The trophy would remain on campus for the year. Student athletes had been competing well but had a great semester in terms of GPA as well. The overall GPA was over a 3.4 with fourteen of the fifteen spots holding above a 3.0 GPA.

The women’s soccer team had won the regular season championship in the OVC, and volleyball had had a good season as well. Both men and women’s basketball were off to a great start. Oldham wanted to acknowledge the Golden Eagle Marching Band, which had over 220 members and was the largest in history. If anyone had not heard them perform, another good reason to attend the upcoming game was to listen to the band play. Additionally, the cheer and dance teams had record membership, with fifty-five members. Oldham explained that these were exciting times for Tennessee Tech not because of the accomplishments, but because of the impact the accomplishments had on students. Students continue to deserve the best that could be offered. Tennessee Tech has had a history of producing career ready graduates known for their tenacity, creativity, and ability to solve problems and be practical thinkers. Oldham appreciated all that had been done to give them opportunities, and noted it was people that made communities better and campus was made up of people making things better. He thanked everyone for what they did everyday and encouraged them to continue to live wings up and finish out the semester strong. He hoped everyone would enjoy the extra day off at Thanksgiving and over the December holiday break.

Julie Baker asked if there was a completion date for the sidewalks and walkways surrounding the library and if that was separate from the brick walkways. Oldham explained there had been different completion dates given, and Lee Wray noted that the most recent update had stated the entire project would be completed by the end of the calendar year. The hold up had been the big letters going down in front of the library. They would spell out Tennessee Tech. Baker asked if it was the same project going on with the other sidewalks around the library and if the completion date was the same. Oldham replied that yes, he believed so, and the letters had been holding them up from completing the rest of the work.

Simpson stated he was excited there were plans for a parking garage, as this was something students had been hoping for. He asked how the funding was secured for that project, since the state does not offer funding for parking infrastructure. Oldham answered that the funding had not been secured yet and it was in the early planning stages. Tennessee Tech was committed to finding a way to build a parking garage and was working on finding ways to accomplish that goal.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:11 pm.

Diane Smith, recorder

Documents on file with minutes:

1. Agenda
2. Minutes of April 17, 2024
3. Received report of the Academic Council for Fall 2024
4. Received report of the Administrative Council for Fall 2024