

Staff Advisory Committee

April 3, 2025 – 1:30 p.m.

Members Present: Brian Allen, Joyce Arnold-Hesson, Christa Blair, Eric Carlile, Jennifer Dewar, Emily Disbrow, Joni Gilmore, Liam Harder, Melanie Mabrey, Amy McCoy, Peggy Nettenstrom, Lisa Norsworthy, Lisa Rice, Catherine Warren, Deborah Yu

Members Absent: Gary Stafford, Noel Stojkov

Others Present: President Oldham, Kevin Vedder, Lee Wray, Aleta Cannon

Summary:

Approved Agenda

Approved January 16, 2025 minutes

Discussed Staff Day planning for 2025

Discussed updated traffic and parking signage on campus

Comments by the President

Proceedings:

Chair Lisa Rice called the meeting to order at 1:32 pm. Eric Carlile motioned to approve the agenda for April 3, 2025. Debe Yu seconded. Motion APPROVED.

Carlile motioned to approve the January 16, 2025, minutes. Peggy Nettenstrom seconded. Motion APPROVED.

Chair Rice explained that the planning committee met again in February and March. Aleta Cannon provided notes on the most recent planning meetings. Quotes were in on the t-shirts and the prices had not changed much since last year, except a few of the larger sizes had gone up about \$1-2 each. The two designs the planning group had narrowed the selection down to were projected for the full committee to see. The heart design was the group's favorite, but Cannon was unable to recreate the design. It was suggested to see if the Office of Communications and Marketing would be able to recreate the design and incorporate words from the Wings Up Way. The other design had the trendy groovy font design and said "100 Years of Awesome-ness" on the back, incorporating Awesome Eagle's 100th birthday. Cannon next showed the t-shirt color options for the Gildan Soft Style shirts. The group agreed they wanted to do a daisy yellow shirt with purple text.

Registration this year would run similarly to last year, with a cut off in mid-July to get t-shirt orders in and shipped on time. Liam Harder asked if it was possible to make the words within the

heart design a collaborative process and do a poll to the rest of campus and ask what words encapsulated Tennessee Tech to them, so the words could be incorporated into the design. Melanie Mabrey suggested it could run in the Tech Times and Cannon said she could do it similarly to registration and use Microsoft Forms. President Oldham suggested adding in a review step to weed out any inappropriate words.

The schedule for the day was finalized at the last planning meeting. Two guest speakers had been confirmed so far: Apple Garcia from Human Resources would take the 10:45-11:20 am spot, and Amy New from the Cookeville-Putnam County Chamber of Commerce would take the 11:20 am – 12:00 pm spot. Any remaining guest speakers' times needed to be finalized soon. Debe Yu stated she would be hearing back from Susan Wells soon. Joyce Arnold-Hesson stated that Rob Owens and Charria Campbell were open to taking any available spot.

Mabrey updated on parking signs and updates throughout campus. For Cody Circle near the Hooper Eblen Center, University Police had been waiting on a "Do Not Enter" stencil and weather that would permit the paint. There would be a "Do Not Enter – One Way" signpost going up as well. There was work being done to plan improvements for the direction of traffic flow. At Foundation Hall, the signs up front for the pull through would be redone to make it a one-way, designated time and visitor slots, and a "Do Not Enter" sign. Auxiliaries Director Nick Dolata would review additional requests.

Nettenstrom asked if Willow Avenue, 9th Street, and Wings Up Way had been reviewed as there had recently been an accident there. Mabrey answered that she and Chief Nichols had looked at that, but it was a state highway, and any plans would have to go through the state. Mabrey stated she believed more lighting was required there. Nettenstrom said accidents still happened during the day, as people had been trying to cross four lanes of traffic with no crosswalk. Oldham stated this had been discussed and Willow Avenue was scheduled for a complete renovation, but not until 2031. There had been discussions with TDOT and the City of Cookeville about the safety issue, specifically students crossing the road. Something was needed to slow down traffic. It was believed that the right kind of streetscaping could force cars to slow down but the design had not been completed yet. A pedestrian bridge and underpass had been suggested as well, but it seemed that people would not always use pedestrian bridges.

Harder stated that Stadium Drive and 12th Street had some issues as well. People would stop to let others turn into campus and would almost be rear ended. Oldham stated that the City of Cookeville had contacted him and were interested in updating 12th Street from Willow Avenue to Washington Avenue, making it more of a boulevard to help slow people down and revamp the area. There was no timeline on this, but discussions were happening. Nettenstrom asked how the handicap parking was regulated. Mabrey answered that it was enforced 24/7 as it was state regulated. Nettenstrom stated there had been an issue at the fitness center after 4:30 pm with people parking in handicap parking spots.

Chair Rice stated that she was nervous about Dixie Avenue each day due to others speeding through there, she was afraid that a student would be hit. Rice asked if it was possible to get the flashing traffic signs in place there. Oldham stated it might be more effective to sit a patrol car there with a flashing light on. Mabrey stated that the University Police Captain had gone to a

grant meeting with the state recently and brought back some traffic control information regarding speeding. There was a company that went to campuses, conducted a flow of traffic speeding and put up cameras around campus. If vehicles are speeding, it would mail a ticket to them and the owner of the vehicle would be charged a speeding citation. The University would receive half of the cost of the fine, and the company would receive the other half. University Police had been considering this option but would have to be strategic about the placement of cameras if this was adopted, as some of the roads were state or city roads.

President Oldham explained that he wanted the members of the committee to think about their three biggest concerns and their three biggest positive things about campus while he discussed some other updates. He stated that Captain Barry Wilmore had made a safe return home from the International Space Station. He had spoken with him a few times and he was doing well; he would possibly be on campus a few times this summer. There were plans in the works of how to honor him on campus. Kudos to women's basketball for a great year. They had faced a difficult team, but they handled themselves well. President Oldham was proud of Coach Rosamund and her coaching staff. Athletics provided great representation for Tennessee Tech.

The state legislature was about to finish their session. They had been putting the final touches on the supplemental budget. Tennessee Tech had been fortunate enough to receive the funding to finish out the ACME Engineering building. Groundbreaking for the building would likely happen in fall 2025. While the state of Tennessee was supportive of higher education, the funding formula did not fully support the university funding. This had led to a need for further tuition increases than what was originally predicted. There was a need for additional funding, and President Oldham would go to the Board of Trustees on April 30, 2025, to approve the increased tuition rate for the fall. It was the Board's responsibility to decide on the matter. The funding for Rural Reimagined had previously only been one-time funding but had been made permanent.

Harder asked if the ACME building would be replacing the current foundry and what would happen to the bricks. Oldham answered that yes, the ACME building would be replacing the existing foundry. A donation had been made to name the foundry and the write-up for that story was forthcoming. There had been no discussion about the bricks from the foundry, but he would love to save the façade to the old foundry building and give some of the bricks to those who wanted one.

President Oldham asked for feedback on the committee members' three biggest concerns on campus. Parking was the first listed. Mabrey stated that labor and resources were her biggest concerns from her department, and Oldham asked if the topic of campus safety would be sufficient cover that concern. Mabrey agreed. Oldham stated that he and Chief Nichols had discussions with Tennessee Homeland Security and local partners such as city police and county sheriffs about how to improve education cooperation training. Plans were in the works to better educate the campus on situational awareness and other issues, and addressing labor would be a part of this. Mabrey noted another concern was long-time employees who were paid less than new hires. Oldham asked Kevin Vedder to discuss phase three of the compensation study, which would deal with compression adjustment.

Vedder gave a review of phases one and two of the compensation study. Phase three would include recognizing time in position and adjusting pay based on time in the current position. That would go into effect on July 1, 2025. The adjustments would be made prior to the merit-based adjustments to maximize the increase. Eric Carlile asked why longevity was based on time in a position instead of time at the university overall. Vedder answered that it was not longevity being considered, it was time in the position, recognizing the person's knowledge, skills, and abilities in their current position. Longevity was recognizing total service time with the university, which was mandated by the state of Tennessee and specified that after three years of service, individuals would start receiving longevity pay. There was a difference in time in position and longevity. Carlile asked if longevity would be addressed at some point. Mabrey stated that in her case, she worked in the job she had previously for ten years, then left for four years. When she was rehired, her previous ten years were not accounted for. She said people who changed jobs within the university were being left out. Vedder stated that often when people changed jobs, they had been reclassified or promoted into a higher position and had received a higher salary. Similarly, if someone completed a degree, they received a degree completion increase based on which degree they had obtained, and their tuition was paid for by educational benefits. This was to make them marketable across the university for higher level positions.

Chair Rice stated that she knew employees who had moved positions within the past five years to better themselves and had not received any of the benefits of the compensation study. She had been at the university for 39 years and when she moved positions, it was a lateral move, and she was not included in the compensation study benefits. Vedder stated that there were other factors that affected this as well. It depended on the type of position and the minimum qualifications for the position and the totality of knowledge, skills, and ability. Carlile stated the concern was with those that had made lateral position changes and were missing out on the phase three pay increase. Vedder stated that not everyone would benefit, as they had made the choice to take a different position in a similar pay level. That would be something HR could look at to see if it needed to be addressed. Oldham stated he would make a personal commitment for lateral position moves to be reviewed. He asked if Vedder could have someone review people who had made lateral position changes within the last five years. Vedder stated that yes, he would do that. Oldham explained that the goal had been to get every employee to at least the minimum salary of their new job classification. There was no perfect system, but it did not mean that salaries would not be looked at again. Annual maintenance on salaries would continue.

Chair Rice asked if there was money left over after adjustments were made, was there a way to spread what was left over to everyone, or if inversions could be looked at similarly to how they had been done with faculty salaries. Vedder stated that yes, that could be looked at, but that it would have to be looked at in individual areas where it would make sense. For example, job performance and evaluations would be considered.

Arnold-Hesson stated that she was concerned about the changing payroll schedule due to billing schedules. She stated that the financial literacy courses offered recently had been geared toward students. Vedder explained that they did offer financial planning and budgeting sessions earlier this year for employees and if there was more interest they could offer that again. Arnold-Hesson stated she would like sessions that were geared toward adults with established families that need budgeting assistance. Oldham stated that this had been discussed with Claire Stinson, Vice

President for Planning and Finance, and they would ensure financial planning assistance was available for any staff that needed help adjusting to the new payroll schedule. Mabrey stated that budgeting-centered assistance had been helpful to her and that this would be helpful to offer on campus as well. Vedder explained that Tennessee Tech also offered the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services as well that offered a wide variety of resources, including financial planning assistance. This was a free benefit to all employees.

Oldham asked the committee for the items they had identified as positive aspects of campus. Arnold-Hesson commented that both the men's and women's basketball teams were both voted by their peers in the Ohio Valley Conference (OVC) to win the sportsmanship award. Mabrey and Arnold-Hesson both commented that seeing the growth of the campus and how beautiful it was was a positive to them. Mabrey stated that the students were another positive aspect of campus. Christa Blair stated that a positive was how the university connects with the community. Oldham stated that there were a lot of campuses that could be transplanted somewhere else and it not make a difference, but Tennessee Tech was not one of those campuses. Jennifer Dewar stated that the programming that aimed toward student success, got students on campus, and helped provide funding from the state was a positive. Oldham said that all these good things were possible because of good people like the ones on the committee who made Tennessee Tech a great place. He thanked everyone for the feedback.

Carlile asked if there was any way to get more purple and gold out in the community. Oldham stated that the presence had increased over time and especially with events such as Campus Kick Off. Oldham wanted Tennessee Tech to be recognizable on campus so that it would be more recognizable off campus as well. The more efforts the campus put into this, the more the community would too. Partnership events within the community and winning in sports also helped with this.

Blair motioned to adjourn. Yu seconded. Adjourned at 2:51 pm.

Documents on file:

Agenda, April 3, 2025
Minutes, January 16, 2025

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