



# TECH TOMORROW

---

# STRATEGIC PLAN

---

2023

Annual Report

# Executive Summary

Each of the four strategic goals has a faculty member who leads efforts that fall under that goal.

- Lenly Weathers, Education for Life
- Holly Anthony, Innovation in All We Do
- Tom Timmerman, Exceptional Stewardship
- Jeremy Blair, Engagement for Impact

Each faculty leader preferred to identify ad hoc committees or task forces based on the expertise needed for the initiative or priority action at hand (instead of general committees formed for each goal). To facilitate this change, a new process was developed to streamline this by having the faculty leader work directly with the appropriate cabinet-level administrator to form committees, which would then develop proposals.

A presentation about this change was presented to the president's cabinet in early October.

## Meetings

The faculty leaders meet weekly. They also meet monthly with President Oldham and have met once each semester with Provost Mann Bruce.

They also met with nearly all of the colleges and schools early in the fall semester, primarily at faculty meetings prior to the start of classes.

In January, they met with the Faculty Senate.

No meetings of the full Implementation Steering Committee were held this year, but documentation of the topics the faculty leaders were interested in pursuing was distributed to ISC members as a way to inform them of the work being done and to solicit feedback.



---

# Education for Life

---

*Tennessee Tech provides education that unleashes the potential and passion within our students and prepares them for successful careers and culturally enriched lives. Tech also provides educational opportunities, programs, credentials, and degrees to fuel the lifelong learning necessary for enduring achievement.*



**Lenly Weathers**, associate professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering in the College of Engineering, is the faculty leader for the Tech Tomorrow Education for Life goal. His work this year has been related to learning communities and how they can positively impact student academic performance, freshman-to-sophomore retention and graduation rates.

## Curricular Learning Communities

This task force is examining benefits to students of curricular learning communities, and has developed a proposal for a pilot program of about 80 students for the Fall 2023 semester.

Research shows that students who participate in CLCs have higher retention rates, academic achievement (based on GPA course grades), graduation rates, and time to degree completion.

This proposal is also aligned with strategic goal 3 (Exceptional Stewardship).

### Task Force

Lenly Weathers (chair)

Julie Baker, Associate Dean, College of Education

Tony Baker, Professor of English, Director of First-Year Composition Program

Brandi Fletcher, Director of Records & Registration

Allan Mills, Associate Dean, College of Arts & Sciences

Allen Mullis, Executive Director of Student Success

Kumar Yelamarthi, Associate Dean, College of Engineering

## Residential Learning Communities

This group will examine potential benefits to students of a residential learning communities (RLCs) program at Tennessee Tech. RLCs are considered a cluster of students living in campus residential housing that share a living space based on their interest in a common topic. RLCs are widely acknowledged as a best practice in higher education, having been shown to increase student retention rates and academic performance, as well as increase overall satisfaction with college.

### Task Force

No task force or committee has been formed yet.

---

# Innovation in All We Do

---

*Tennessee Tech innovates in all we do, embracing and deploying our technological foundation in our education, research, service, and stewardship.*



**Holly Anthony**, professor of mathematics education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education, is the faculty leader for the Tech Tomorrow Innovation in All We Do goal. Her work this year has been on multiple aspects of the strategic plan: general education, technology-infused courses/programs, and one-to-one technology.

## General Education Vision Committee

Creating “a Tech-unique general education curriculum to provide the foundation for technologically adept, analytically capable, and career-ready graduates” is identified as a priority action in the strategic plan. As such, Tennessee Tech is beginning a long-term (multiple committees over multiple years) review of its General Education curriculum.

The goals for the Vision committee are to: (1) develop a vision/philosophy for general education on our campus, and (2) identify two or three potential pathways for operationalizing that vision. This work will engage numerous stakeholders (students, faculty, administration, community/industry, and alumni) through focus groups (and perhaps surveys) in the coming 12 to 15 months. The Vision committee will also be charged with looking at peers across the nation to see what might be possible as we “dream big.”

### Committee

Holly Anthony (co-chair)

Allan Mills (co-chair), Associate Dean, College of Arts & Sciences

Steven Anton, Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering

Jeremy Blair, Associate Professor of Art Education

Kent Dollar, Chair of History

Helen Hunt, Associate Professor of English

Samantha Hutson, Assistant Professor of Human Ecology

Jeanette Luna, Chair of Earth Sciences

Linda Null, Professor of English, chair of the General Education Committee

Wesley Pech, Chair of Economics, Finance & Marketing

Lenly Weathers, Professor of Civil Engineering

## **Tech-infused Course/Program Committee**

This committee will examine the degree of technological infusion, and the quality of that infusion, in Tech's current course offerings and programs.

This group will look at the ways in which courses/programs incorporate technologies and technology experiences for students (beyond instructional technologies) and is important for identifying potential programmatic changes for technological innovation. The committee will develop proposals for how to strategically increase the number and quality of technology-infused programs/courses at Tennessee Tech, as well as identify opportunities and investigate the feasibility of (1) every undergraduate program of study offering at least one course completely online/hybrid, and (2) every college/school offering at least one degree program (preferably undergraduate) completely online.

### Committee

Holly Anthony (chair)

Samantha Allen, Instructor of Environmental Sciences

Stacey Browning, Assistant Professor of Nursing

Jerry Gannod, Chair of Computer Science

Will Hoffert, Director of Academic & Client Technologies, ITS

Hunter Kaller, Manager, Academic & Client Technologies, ITS

Elizabeth Propes, Associate Professor of History

Bedelia Russell, Associate Provost of Online Education and Faculty Development

Robby Sanders, Associate Professor of Chemical Engineering

Jeremy Schoen, Assistant Professor of Decision Sciences & Management

Dennis Tennant, Director of School of Professional Studies

Kit Wheeler, Assistant Professor of Biology

Robert Wilbanks, Associate Professor of Accounting

## **One-to-One Technology Committee**

This committee will examine the feasibility of a one-to-one technology initiative at Tennessee Tech.

One idea to be explored by this university-wide committee is the feasibility of providing iPads/Laptops/etc. for students, particularly non-traditional adult learners and/or those enrolled in programs fully offered as online/hybrid. First-generation college students are another subgroup that might benefit most. Compared to their peers, these students often have a weaker sense of digital literacy and may come from rural communities that lack the resources to prepare them for college.

### Committee

Holly Anthony (chair)

Michael Allen, Professor of Mathematics

Jason Beach, Director of the Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning

Scott Christen, Associate Professor of Communication

Ismail Fidan, Professor of Manufacturing Engineering Technology

Steven Frye, Director of School of Interdisciplinary Studies

Will Hoffert, Director of Academic & Client Technologies, ITS

Barbara Jared, Director of Nursing

Lloyd Jones, Coordinator, ITS

Krystal Kennedy, Assistant Professor of Curriculum & Instruction

Brian Seiler, Associate Vice President of Information Technology Services

Jennifer Shank, Dean, College of Fine Arts

Susmit Shannigrahi, Assistant Professor of Computer Science

Kyle Turner, Assistant Professor of Decision Sciences & Management



---

# Exceptional Stewardship

---

*Tennessee Tech is committed to optimizing resources and continuously improving effectiveness, efficiency, and return on investment for students.*



**Tom Timmerman**, professor and chair of the Department of Decision Sciences and Management in the College of Business, is the faculty leader for the Tech Tomorrow Exceptional Stewardship goal. His work this year has been centered around employee satisfaction and using data to enhance student retention and recruitment efforts.

## Enrollment Data Analytics Task Force

Utilizing data about Tech students, this task force is leveraging university expertise in business intelligence via College of Business faculty and senior capstone students to examine factors in student retention and recruitment, and develop proposals on how to best use this intelligence.

### Task Force

Tom Timmerman (chair)

Curtis Armstrong, Professor of Decision Sciences & Management

Allen Mullis, Executive Director of Student Success

Judy Riggsbee, Senior Director of Enrollment Data & Systems

Michael Sliger, Data Analyst, Institutional Assessment, Research & Effectiveness

## University Compensation Study

Tennessee Tech University is reviewing the University's current compensation plan and classification structure which are essential elements to attracting and retaining faculty and staff.

To make progress toward this important goal, a full-time faculty and staff compensation and classification study is underway in partnership with Mercer, a recognized leader in higher education consulting.

While this university-wide effort is being led by Human Resources, Tom Timmerman is a member of the project team, which will provide input, guidance, oversight, and assistance to Mercer, our consultant partner, to identify strategies and options for upgrading or revising the current compensation model and classification structure.

---

# Engagement for Impact

---

*Tennessee Tech fosters partnerships with government, business, and non-profit organizations to advance economic and workforce development, create and disseminate knowledge, serve the public good, and generate cultural impact.*



**Jeremy Blair**, assistant professor of art education in the School of Art, Craft and Design, is the faculty leader for the Tech Tomorrow Engagement for Impact goal. His work this year has been on multiple ways to engage the community via multiple initiatives, including arts and culture engagement, academic community engagement, and global engagement.

## Center for Global Experience

The Center for Global Experience will be an all-inclusive global research and learning hub for both faculty and students. The Center's leadership develops, facilitates, and supports study abroad opportunities, student and faculty exchanges, international teaching residencies, sustainable global partnerships, international recruiting, and new global degree programs. The Center for Global Experience identifies workforce and business development opportunities, encourages global entrepreneurship, provides cultural enrichment for students, and sparks a lifelong spirit of exploration.

### Task Force

No task force or committee has been formed yet.

## Academic Community Engagement & Development Program

The Academic Community Engagement & Development (ACED) Committee will be a faculty-led and community-informed committee that identifies beneficial engagement topics and collaborative opportunities for K-12 and adult learners. Committee members will inventory existing Tennessee Tech academic community partnerships, programs, certificates, events, and offerings to identify gaps and evaluate existing engagement levels. ACED will evaluate community engagement topics and opportunities and encourage and support faculty involvement.

### Task Force

No task force or committee has been formed yet.

## Art, Culture & Innovation Program

The Art, Culture & Innovation (ACI) program will celebrate the creative, cultural, historical, and innovative offerings at Tennessee Tech by designing specialized campus tours and interconnected exhibitions highlighting the university's collections, artworks, architecture, historical sites, and innovations. This program will develop new experiential outreach initiatives and sustainable partnerships that will further shape and define Tennessee Tech's culture by creatively telling the university's story through diverse and multi-disciplinary perspectives.

### Task Force

No task force or committee has been formed yet.

---

# Grand Challenge

---

Tech publicly launched the Rural Reimagined grand challenge in Spring 2019. Rural Reimagined has an existing steering committee and is led by Michael Aikens, director of the Tennessee Tech Center for Rural Innovation.

Since March 2019, Rural Reimagined has:

- Impacted 60 Tennessee rural counties (with the goal being all 76 rural counties),
- Interacted with nearly 5,000 community members, faculty, staff and students,
- Worked on more than 750 rural projects, and
- Accumulated more than 100,000 student service-learning/volunteer hours.

While Rural Reimagined has been directly responsible for more than \$500,000 in research activity, Tech faculty members doing research connected to rural issues have received more than \$12 million in research grants, with an additional \$15 million in the proposal stage.

This year, for the first time, the state budget included \$1 million dollars in funding for Rural Reimagined (2022-2023 State of Tennessee budget). And the proposed budget for 2023-2024 includes \$1 million for Rural Reimagined.

<https://www.tntech.edu/grand-challenge/>

From left, Tech student Taylor Cadenhead; Megan Atkinson, university archivist; and Tech students Creek Anderson and Theo Kline look through old newspapers as part of a project to create a database on the history of climate in the Upper Cumberland. The project is funded through the Rural Reimagined faculty grant program.





---

# 2025 Goals

---

In summer 2019, President Oldham set out goals for the university to reach by 2025. The original announcement can be found at <https://blogs.tntech.edu/president/where-will-we-be-in-2025/>.

Numbers for these goals are tracked each year, with the final numbers to be reported at the start of the 2026 academic year to accommodate goals requiring data calculated after the end of the 2025 academic year.

These goals were all set pre-pandemic.

- 12,000 total headcount enrollment
- 22% minority enrollment
- 82% freshmen-to-sophomore retention rate
- 50% 4-year graduation rate
- 60% 6-year graduation rate
- \$40 million annually in sponsored research
- Growth of online programs
- Strengthen career development
- Be recognized as the champion and center of excellence regarding the future of rural Tennessee communities

Goal	2018-2019 Baseline	2022-2023 Current	+/-
12,000 total headcount enrollment	10,186	9,902	-284
22% Minority Enrollment	16.00%	19.50%	+3.50%
82% freshmen-to-sophomore retention rate	75.00%	78.50%	+3.50%
50% 4-year graduation rate	34.60%	39.10%	+4.50%
60% 6-year graduation rate	55.20%	60.20%	+5.00%
\$40 million annually in sponsored research*	\$20.23M	\$23.65M*	+\$3.42M

\* Sponsored research current is 2021-2022; 2022-2023 amount available late summer 2023

---

# Appendix 1: *Implementation Steering Committee*

---

Phil Oldham, President

Jeff Boles, Chairperson, Department of Chemistry (Faculty Liaison)

Lori Mann Bruce, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

Karen Lykins, Vice President of Enrollment and Communication

Jeanette Luna, Professor, Earth Sciences (Faculty Senate)

Rob Owens, Chief Diversity Officer

Tom Payne, Dean, College of Business

Cynthia Polk-Johnson, Vice President of Student Affairs

Claire Stinson, Vice President of Finance and Planning

Lee Wray, Chief of Staff

Dewayne Wright, Executive Director, Strategic Planning

Lisa Zagumny, Dean, College of Education











---

**Tennessee**  
**TECH**

---