

TECH MORROW STRATEGIC PLAN

2025

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 identifies 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).

Meetings

The faculty leaders meet weekly. Over the course of the academic year, they have met with President Oldham and 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.

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.

Alignment of Program and Student Learning Outcomes

Institutional Effectiveness' outcome template allows units to align Program and Student Learning Outcomes with Strategic Priorities (2024-2025). The table below details the number of outcomes associated with a Tech Tomorrow Strategic Priority for each of the Institutional Effectiveness areas.

Priority Action	Academic Programs	Academic & Student Services	Administrative Support Services	All
1.A	113	23	10	146
1.B	32	8	11	51
1.C	14	14	6	34
1.D	57	20	17	94
1.E	35	3	2	40
2.A	67	10	17	94
2.B	117	6	20	143
2.C	15	1	4	20
2.D	9	5	11	25
3.A	36	25	55	116
3.B	2	0	5	7
3.C	1	2	7	10
4.A	7	6	17	30
4.B	65	8	11	84
4.C	17	5	9	31
4.D	6	4	7	17
4.E	2	2	11	15

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.

Faculty Lead

Lenly Weathers, professor of civil engineering, Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering, College of Engineering

Curricular Learning Communities

A pilot program of seven distinct learning communities across multiple disciplines were launched for incoming freshmen for Fall 2024: 2 in the College of Business, 2 in Civil and Environmental Engineering, and one for undecided students in the College of Interdisciplinary Studies. Along with its main goal of positively affecting first-year retention, other goals of the program include strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration and student engagement.

Moving forward, ongoing evaluation of the program will focus on measuring its impact through:

- Student Self-Evaluation Surveys – Gathering feedback on student experiences, engagement, and perceived benefits of participating in a learning community. The initial student survey showed the communities promoted stronger social integration and classroom comfort, and students in the communities felt better supported by faculty and more connected to their peers in comparison to a control group of students.
- Retention Data Analysis – Assessing fall-to-fall retention rates to determine how participation in learning communities influences student persistence and success.

These assessment efforts will provide valuable insights for refining and expanding the program, ensuring that it continues to support student learning, academic success, and institutional goals at Tennessee Tech.

Alignment of New QEP with Tech Tomorrow

Work was done to ensure Tech's new Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is aligned with Strategic Goal #1 (Education for Life). The selected QEP focus, "Durable Life Skills and Career Readiness," is designed to equip students with transferable skills essential for long-term professional success. It has been structured to enhance career readiness, foster lifelong learning, and ensure graduates are well-prepared for an evolving workforce.

Microcredentials & Digital Badges

Focusing on using Tech's existing Career Readiness program and its inclusion in the university's next QEP (see above), progress has been made in how to integrate digital badging into the university's academic and career development framework. Along with the development of visuals for a Career Readiness digital badge, work has been done in collaboration with the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CITL) to develop the infrastructure needed to issue digital badges. Once finalized, this system will provide students with a verified, shareable credential that highlights their competencies. This work can serve as a foundation for future development of microcredentials at Tech.

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.

Faculty Lead

Holly Anthony, professor of mathematics education, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education

General Education Implementation Committee

<https://www.tntech.edu/strategic/gen-ed-implementation.php>

During the 2023-24 academic year, the Gen Ed Vision Committee gathered information from students and faculty – through 27 town halls and a university-wide survey with more than 1,200 responses – to discern the vision for Tennessee Tech’s general education program. The Vision Committee prepared a series of recommendations to guide the Gen Ed Implementation Committee as it examines and plans for the implementation of a new general education program.

Working throughout 2024-25, the Gen Ed Implementation Committee was assembled by Provost Lori Mann Bruce, with representation from across Tech.

Goals

The goals for the Gen Ed Implementation Committee were to work closely with the members of the university’s existing General Education Committee to:

- Review the Vision Committee’s recommendations, and
- Involve campus stakeholders to develop a detailed implementation plan for those recommendations.

Committees

Holly Anthony, faculty lead for the Innovation in All We Do goal of the Tech Tomorrow strategic plan, and Linda Null, professor of English and chair of the General Education Committee, co-chaired the Gen Ed Implementation Committee. A complete listing of all committee members and subcommittee assignments, is available at online.

Final Recommendation

The Committee’s final recommendation was approved by the University Curriculum Committee on March 27, the Academic Council on April 9, and the University Assembly on April 16.

The final recommendation and working documents from the Committee used in the development of the final recommendation are available online.

One-to-One Technology Initiative

The committee working on this last year did not meet this year, largely due to the extensive workload required of the Faculty Lead needed on the Gen Ed Implementation Committee. Though dormant this year, this is still an initiative to be examined in the future.

Tech-infused Course/Program

The committee tasked with looking at this was released from service out of respect for the members' time as other university efforts were already looking into this concern. With the expansion of resources and infrastructure to support online and hybrid teaching support and teaching innovation, especially with instructional technology, through the Center for Advancing Faculty Excellence (CAFÉ) and the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CITL), it was decided that completing the initial task of the committee (a manual inventory of Tech-infused courses) at this time would not match the pace of a rapidly changing landscape of tech-infusion of courses and programs at Tennessee Tech.

Regardless of the brief committee launch around this initiative, the Tech Tomorrow Priority Action Items (Innovation in All We Do) remain the same:

A: Every college will develop and implement technologically infused programs.

C: Implement specific strategies, structures, and resources to serve adult learners and offer online/hybrid delivery systems to increase accessibility, expand our reach, and enhance our impact and reputation.

Future efforts include working closely with the Office of Institutional Assessment, Research, and Effectiveness and other personnel within Academic Affairs, the CAFÉ and CITL on a self-study to determine next steps in accomplishing these priorities.

New Initiatives

The Innovation in All We Do faculty lead has worked with the College of Education and Human Sciences on a focus area of their strategic plan regarding the college's Child Development Lab. The college's goal is to elevate the role of the CDL on campus and address space needs. A document was created to show the alignment of this college-level focus area and the Tech Tomorrow strategic plan. A proposal is under development from the college.

Exceptional Stewardship

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

Faculty Lead

Tom Timmerman, Professor and the Mayberry Chair of the Department of Decision Sciences and Management, College of Business

Non-credit Certificate Programs

We made significant progress this year in developing non-credit certificate programs tailored to meet the needs of industry partners. A structure is emerging that will draw upon the expertise of Tech faculty and staff. These new offerings should support relationships between the university and external partners and pave the way for new, innovative educational pathways and research collaborations.

University Compensation Study

Tennessee Tech engaged the services of a professional consulting firm to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the compensation levels and structure among faculty and staff. As a major determinant of attracting and retaining talented employees, the compensation plan plays a key role in driving the effectiveness and efficiency of employees' daily work.

- The consulting firm proposed a new job and career structure for staff jobs that should clarify roles and career paths.
- Phase 1 of the study was implemented retroactive to January 1, 2024. All employees were brought to a minimum pay rate of at least \$15/hour. Additional adjustments were made to increase faculty and staff salaries closer to their market medians.
- Phase 2 of the study was implemented effective July 1, 2024. A salary pool of 3% was used to increase salary levels to new minimums of staff salary ranges. In addition, faculty salary inversions and market disparities were addressed.
- In 2025-26, Phase 3 will be implemented, and approximately \$500,000 will be used to make market-based adjustments to faculty and staff salaries. After the market-based adjustments, \$1,611,155 will be used to make merit-based increases.

University Great Place to Work Survey

As the work environment is also a key driver for employee effectiveness and efficiency, Tennessee Tech employees were invited to participate in the Great Place to Work Survey. In the second year of participation, Tech was recognized as one of 13 Best Places to Work in Tennessee.

New Initiatives

Additional projects related to stewardship are being pursued including:

- Additional analytics projects related to enrollment, retention, and the Launchpad Advising Center.
- An interactive dashboard to promote budget understanding and transparency.

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.

Faculty Lead

Jeremy Blair, associate professor of art education, School of Art, Craft and Design, College of Fine Arts

Center for Global Experiences

Work with the Center for Global Experience continued to enhance its presence and operational capacity, including the following:

- The Office of Study Abroad was renamed The Center for Global Experiences to better reflect the full scope of services offered to students and faculty.
- The Center moved from Derryberry Hall to the Volpe Library to enhance visibility and access, as well as expand operational space.
- A proposal was developed to add a new Coordinator position to support the center's expanding initiatives.

Already, the Center has seen increased interaction with both students and faculty.

Art on Campus

An interactive "Art on Campus" section within the university's online campus map has been developed to highlight significant public artworks and collections, provide images, detailed descriptions, and exact locations for each work or site. The map currently features various work across campus ranging from large public art such as Wings by John Henry (pictured on the cover of this report) to the R. Winston Morris TUBA Collection. The interactive map is at <https://www.tntech.edu/maps/index.php>; select "Art on Campus" from the Legend menu.

This initiative stemmed from a focus group I facilitated, where participants expressed the need to increase the visibility of art, culture, and innovation on campus. The project is ongoing, with plans to expand the map to include additional works, sites, and collections.

International Student Support

Working with a small group of international students to better understand their experiences at Tech, conversations focused on issues such as transportation, scholarships and financial aid, orientation to Tennessee, employment opportunities, and leadership and visibility revealed gaps in support that impact international students' success and well-being. In response, discussions with university executive administrators have led to a proposal for a new International Student Coordinator position to address these challenges.

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 (non-metric goal)
- Strengthen career development (non-metric goal)
- Be recognized as the champion and center of excellence regarding the future of rural Tennessee communities (non-metric goal)

Goal	2018-2019 Baseline	2024-2025 Current	+/-
12,000 total headcount enrollment	10,186	10,511	+325
22% Minority Enrollment	16.00%	20.90%	+4.90%
82% freshmen-to-sophomore retention rate	75.00%	78.20%	+3.20%
50% 4-year graduation rate	34.60%	41.20%	+6.60%
60% 6-year graduation rate*	55.20%	57.70%	+2.50%
\$40 million annually in sponsored research	\$20.23M	46.05M†	+\$25.82M

* Tech's 6-year graduation rate met the 60% goal for two consecutive years (2021-2022, 2022-2023)

† Sponsored research current is 2023-2024; 2024-2025 amount available late summer 2025

Progress on non-metric goals

Growth of online programs. When Tech Tomorrow was adopted, Tech had 13 online programs. As of 2024, the University now has 19 online programs. These numbers exclude individual concentrations to programs added as an online option. To support this goal, the University invested in a new position at the associate provost level in the Division of Academic Affairs to oversee online education and has expanded infrastructure in the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning through the expanded numbers of instructional designers and educational technology software. In 2023-2024, Academic Affairs committed \$300,000 of faculty, department, and college support through the launch of the Faculty Academy for Course and Program Development (FACPD). The purpose was to infuse faculty development with best practices in instructional design support to assist faculty, departments, and colleges, with rapid course and program development and delivery

to ensure course quality and optimal student engagement. The call for proposals sought to diversity and innovate with online course and program design that best supported student engagement and retention. Thirty faculty were accepted to the Academy and the impact was 16 undergraduate and 15 graduate projects completed with five of those immediately impacting online programs/certificates.

Strengthen career development. Since the adoption of Tech Tomorrow, the University reorganized its former Office of Career Services into the Center for Career Development. With a broader student-centered focus than its previous structure allowed, the Center works to help students in all areas of career development:

- Helping students find a major that fits with their skills, interests and values
- Identifying a student's potential career paths
- Strengthening a student's career readiness through Tech's Career Readiness Certification programs, which are based on the National Association of Colleges and Employers Career Competencies and George Kuh's high impact practices. They are designed to help students identify where their skills are being developed and how to better communicate those skills to employers.

The Center is working towards the goal of providing all Tech students with a career plan, and the Career Readiness Certification programs are integral to achieving this goal. This initiative is also part of the University's upcoming Quality Enhancement Program (QEP).

Be recognized as the champion and center of excellence regarding the future of rural Tennessee communities. Tech Tomorrow called for the development of "a grand challenge to address a significant problem and contribute to impactful interdisciplinary solutions" (Strategic Goal 1.A.iii). A group of faculty members, staff and students investigated possible paths forward and determined that a broad initiative to help rural communities would be beneficial to the university, to the regional communities around Tech, and to the State of Tennessee. The initiative, named "Rural Reimagined" was launched in 2019. Since its inception, the program has accomplished numerous positive impacts on rural Tennessee to the benefit of both its residents and the entire state (see the following page for details).

The University also has established a Center for Rural Innovation, which routinely receives \$1 million from the State of Tennessee in the state's annual budget, along with an additional \$1.5 million to \$2 million annually in sponsored federal research projects. The goal of the Center is to foster rural economic development by providing technical assistance and conducting applied research with outcomes that seek to increase the resiliency and economic outlook of Tennessee's rural and distressed communities. This U.S. Economic Development Administration University Center program's inputs and outputs seek to create outcomes that increase prosperity throughout rural Tennessee by addressing energy, critical infrastructure, mobility, poverty, small business development, and more. The Center partners and collaborates with public and private entities at the local, regional, state and national levels. Moreover, the Center partners with key state entities including the Departments of Agriculture, Economic and Community Development, Human Services, and Tourist Development to deploy strategic programs designed to enhance the quality of life in Tennessee's rural communities.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR
2019 – 2025



COLLABORATIVELY

EXAMINING AND ADDRESSING RURAL TENNESSEE'S
MOST CHALLENGING ISSUES

\$36M IN RESEARCH
ACTIVITY

24 RURAL TOURISM
PROJECTS

5,000 STUDENTS,
COMMUNITY, AND
FACULTY ENGAGED

1,500 SMALL
BUSINESSES AND
ENTREPRENEURS
ASSISTED

8 DISTRESSED COUNTIES HELPED WITH RESEARCH,
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND TOURISM

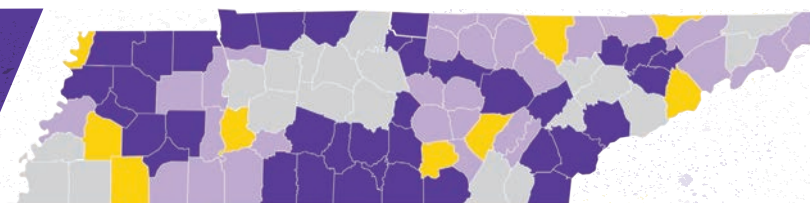
75 RURAL COUNTIES
HELPED

2,000 RURAL
PROJECTS

2,250 JOBS CREATED
OR RETAINED

TRANSFORMING RURAL LIVING

THROUGH SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY,
INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT



OUR FY 2025 GOAL
TO SERVE **ALL 78 RURAL COUNTIES** IN TENNESSEE

■ DISTRESSED
■ AT-RISK
■ TRANSITIONAL

ENTREPRENEURSHIP **EDUCATION** ENERGY
PUBLIC SAFETY **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
ADDICTION AGRICULTURE **POVERTY** INFRASTRUCTURE
RURAL TRANSFORMATION MENTAL HEALTH
SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ELECTRIC VEHICLES CYBER SECURITY
HEALTHCARE TOURISM **JOB CREATION**
PUBLIC SAFETY **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

ADDITIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

113,000
Volunteer/Service Hours

\$300,000
Faculty Grants Awarded

\$2.5B+
In Analysis of Economic Impact
On Public and Private Investments

Rural Reimagined
is powered by the Center
for Rural Innovation



Center for Rural Innovation
TENNESSEE TECH

TnTech.edu/grandchallenge
maikens@tnitech.edu

Appendix 1: *Implementation Steering Committee*

Phil Oldham, President

Michael Allen, Chair, Mathematics (Faculty Senate)

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

Lori Mann Bruce, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

Karen Lykins, Vice President of Enrollment and Communication

Rob Owens, Senior Executive for Access, Belonging, and Community Outreach

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 & Data

Lisa Zagumny, Dean, College of Education





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