



## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**September 26, 2024**

**Roaden University Center, Room 282**

### **MINUTES**

**Meeting streamed live via link found on this web page:**

<https://www.tntech.edu/board/board-and-board-committee-meetings.php>

#### **AGENDA ITEM I – CALL TO ORDER**

The Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees met on Thursday, September 26, 2024, in Roaden University Center Room 282. Chair Trudy Harper called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m.

Chair Harper asked Mr. Lee Wray, Secretary, to call the roll. The following members were present:

- Tom Jones
- Jeannette Luna
- Thomas Lynn
- Claire Myers
- Rhedona Rose
- Camron Rudd
- Johnny Stites
- Trudy Harper
  
- Fred Lowery – joined electronically

A quorum was physically present. Tennessee Tech faculty, staff and members of the public were also in attendance.

Mr. Lowery confirmed that he could simultaneously hear and speak to the Board members, that he was by himself, and that he received the Board materials in advance of the meeting. Captain Barry Wilmore was absent.

*LEE 12/09/24*

## **RECOGNITION OF CITY/COUNTY LEADERS**

President Phil Oldham stated that it was his pleasure to introduce several individuals who deserve public recognition. He stated that Tennessee Tech is heavily dependent upon relationships and partnerships and was blessed to have some outstanding partnerships. He asked City Mayor Laurin Wheaton, County Mayor Randy Porter, Cookeville-Putnam County President and CEO Amy New, and CityScape Executive Director Ferran Kefauver to join him.

President Oldham stated that each of the individuals represented larger groups, including the County Commission, City Council, Chamber Board, etc. He presented each of the leaders with a Tennessee Tech Centennial book and stated that Tennessee Tech also has great relationships with the Upper Cumberland business community. He stated that Cookeville City Manager James Mills was unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict.

Chair Harper also expressed her thanks and appreciation to the group of leaders and the Board's willingness to assist the leaders in any way that the Board can.

## **AGENDA ITEM II – SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENTS**

Chair Harper stated that the Board meetings were always begun with a recognition of students. A Tennessee Tech class, Marketing 4991, "Leadership the Disney Way," was offered this semester by Sherrie Cannon and Dr. Cheslea Dowell. Students, Baylee Dalton, Abbie Maffett, and Emma Parson, participated in Disney's Five Keys of Excellence during a four-day stay at Disney World, and learned to use marketing, effective communication, technology, critical thinking, branding, teamwork, situational influence and more the Disney way.

### **Call from the International Space Station**

During the Spotlight on Students, President Oldham received a call from Captain Barry Wilmore, currently stationed at the International Space Station (ISS). The meeting was adjourned at 1:56 p.m. to take the call. The call was not recorded and did not air as part of the board's livestream, per NASA's request. Upon completion of Captain Wilmore's call, the meeting reconvened at 2:03 p.m. and the Spotlight on Students resumed. No business was conducted during the time the meeting was adjourned.

## **AGENDA ITEM III – APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chair Harper asked for approval of the minutes for the June 20, 2024, Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees meeting. Chair Harper asked if there were questions or comments regarding the minutes. There being none, Mr. Stites moved to recommend approval of the June 20, 2024, Board of Trustees minutes. Mr. Jones seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion carried unanimously.

*WTE  
12/09/24*

#### **AGENDA ITEM IV – STUDENT TRUSTEE REPORT**

Chair Harper stated that the next item on the agenda was the Student Trustee Report. Claire Myers, the newest Board member, presented the report and discussed Week of Welcome events, the second annual College Town Kickoff, BienveNIDOS – a new welcome event tailored to support the growing Hispanic student campus population, university convocation for Freshmen, the grand opening of the Ashraf Islam Engineering building scheduled for October, the Peachtree pathway, wi-fi in the Swoops food court and Volpe library, parking, the SGA safety walk, Tech Aspires, Fall Career Fair, Mix and Mingle, the Wings Up 100 celebration and more.

#### **AGENDA ITEM V – PRESIDENT’S REPORT**

President Oldham reported that Tennessee Tech embraces competition – both internal and external -- because we compete to win, and competition serves as an arbiter for quality and success. He mentioned examples of competition occurring on campus now – including the competition between Computer Science and Mechanical Engineering to see who is going to be the largest major. He also stated that Tennessee Tech possesses twelve international championships in Mini Baja, our women’s basketball program ranks in the top 25 nationally of the winningest programs in the country, our baseball team finished eleventh nationally in 2018, and Tennessee Tech has three national championships in a varsity sport – rifle.

More recent examples of competition include competitors from Tennessee Tech’s CEROC, our Cybersecurity Education and Research Outreach Center, just won first place in the InfoSec Nashville Cybersecurity Conference. The Department of Chemistry recently was one of only eight recipients in the United States to win the prestigious Jean Dreyfus Lectureship for Undergraduate Institutions Award.

Dr. Russ Witcher, journalism professor, earned awards in the first-time screenwriter category at the 2024 Los Angeles Film Awards and the Oniros Film Awards held in New York. Five Tennessee Tech faculty are co-leads on a new \$3,000,000 National Science Foundation research grant.

Tennessee Tech was just recently named a recipient of an almost \$10,000,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education to promote college readiness in some of the state’s most rural and underserved communities – a Gear Up Grant.

The Office of Communications and Marketing earned ten awards with a first-place finish in three categories at the 2024 Tennessee College Public Relations Conference.

The College of Education currently has multiple faculty leaders serving in competitive statewide roles, in presidencies and leadership capacities in state associations of for educators in math, science, and literacy.

*WJE 12/09/24*

Tennessee Tech's CyberCorps Scholarship for Service program was recognized at the January 2024 Scholarship for Service National Job Fair among the top eight CyberCorps programs in the nation. Last week at the Wings Up 100 Awards, forty-seven faculty members – the most ever - were recognized as bringing in at least \$100,000 in competitive research awards. Ten of those awards were in the \$1,000,000 plus club.

These are all incredible examples of how competition pays off and makes us better. As a result of competition, we become better as a university, and we become better at helping students becoming successful.

This year, Tennessee Tech's headcount was the largest in almost a decade, in nine years. We are at 10,511 students - an increase of four percent year over year. This year we have the fourth largest freshman class in history of the campus - 2006 students. The College of Engineering hit an all-time high of over 3100 students, and the College of Engineering and the Department of Computer Science are now knocking on the door of being in the top 100 programs among public universities in the country.

Retention rates continued to bounce back up with this year's retention rate being over seventy-eight percent - moving closer to our goal of eighty-two percent - and that is a percentage point ahead of last year.

We appreciate the Board's support in our scholarship program. The first-year retention rate for our Presidential Scholarship program is at eighty-eight percent. Graduation rates continue to climb - forty-one percent for a four-year cohort and at fifty-seven percent for a six-year cohort, so we are moving closer to those goals, as well.

The most dramatic or obvious way we compete is in athletics. For the student athletes, athletics teaches discipline, work ethic, and resilience – high-level qualities that are important life skills and really pay off. Athletics also builds pride, excitement, enthusiasm, brings campus spirit to the entire campus, and improves our recognition to a broader community.

President Oldham stated that he had brought a special guest with him, new head football coach, Bobby Wilder, to talk a little about what we are doing with the football program and to get everyone fired up about athletics.

Coach Wilder stated that he was born and raised in Maine, has been a college football coach for thirty years, and he loved being around young people. He stated that his vision as a head football coach aligns with exactly what he sees for the growth of the University, and he wanted to bring successful football to Tennessee Tech. We all want the University to grow and to shine, not just on a regional level, but on a national level.

Chair Harper expressed her gratitude for what Coach Wilder and the student athletes were doing.

*Lee*  
*12/09/24*

President Oldham concluded his report stating that the compensation plan is critically important to be able to compete, and he stated that he appreciates the Board's support for what is being accomplished in that regard. Once phases one and two of the plans are complete this fall, the average faculty salary will be at the market median, and we started out about five percentage points below the market median just a few months ago. For staff, the median has moved from sixteen percent below market median to within five percent of the market median.

He concluded by thanking everyone – the city and county partners previously recognized, faculty, staff, coaches, the Board for challenging us, and everyone here at Tennessee Tech who are working to make us a better place – and he stated that we look forward to another great year at Tennessee Tech.

#### **AGENDA ITEM VI – CERTIFICATION OF PRESIDENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES RELATED TO ATHLETICS**

Chair Harper stated that the Ohio Valley Conference (OVC) requires the Chair of the Board to attest that the President of the University is responsible for three things. She stated that she attests that 1) the responsibility for the administration of the athletics program has been delegated to the Chief Executive Officer of the institution, 2) the Chief Executive Officer has a mandate to operate a program of integrity in full compliance with the NCAA and the OVC and all the rules and regulations, and 3) the Chief Executive Officer, in conjunction with the Director of Athletics and the Faculty Athletics Representative, determines how the institutional vote shall be cast on issues of athletics policy presented to the NCAA and the OVC.

#### **AGENDA ITEM VII – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION – PRESIDENT'S COMPENSATION**

Vice-Chair Rose moved that upon the committee's recommendation, the Board approve the President to receive a three and one-half percent raise for his performance during the 2023-24 fiscal year, with the raise to be retroactive to July 1, 2024. Because the recommendation came from committee, no second was needed. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion carried unanimously.

#### **AGENDA ITEM VIII.A. – AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION – CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE**

Committee Chair Stites moved that upon the committee's recommendation, the Board approve the FY2025-26 Capital Budget outlay. Because the recommendation came from committee, no second was needed. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion carried unanimously.

#### **AGENDA ITEM VIII.B. – AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION – DISCLOSED PROJECT**

Committee Chair Stites moved that upon the committee's recommendation, the Board approve the disclosed project for the Academic Wellness Center Renovation for Athletics. Because the

recommendation came from committee, no second was needed. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion carried unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM VIII.C. – AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION – TENURE UPON RECOMMENDATION APPOINTMENTS**

Committee Chair Stites moved that upon the committee’s recommendation, the Board approve the tenure upon appointment recommendations. Because the recommendation came from committee, no second was needed. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion carried unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM IX: BOARD SECRETARY REPORT**

Mr. Wray reported that he had sent Cybersecurity Risks for Higher Education to all Trustees for last quarter’s training. He also stated that the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) determined the top strategic issues for 2024-25: Board leadership, student success and the student experience, leadership support, and business model innovation and digital transformation. He stated that he would soon be sending information about the top strategic issues, as determined by AGB, to Trustees.

**AGENDA ITEM X: BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING DATES**

Chair Harper reported that the next Board meeting was scheduled for December 5, 2024. Meetings scheduled during the year 2025 include March 6, June 26, September 25, and December 4.

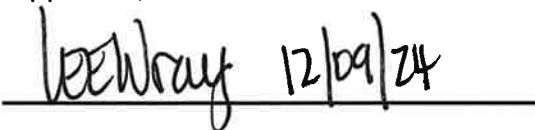
**AGENDA ITEM XI – OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

**AGENDA ITEM XII – ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees meeting adjourned at 2:53 p.m.

Approved,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lee Wray" followed by the date "12/09/24". The signature is written over a horizontal line.

Lee Wray, Secretary

lee 12/09/24

