

**Staff Advisory Committee**  
October 31, 2024 – 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 Rice, Noel Stojkov, Catherine Warren, Denette Way, Deborah Yu

**Members Absent:** Lisa Norsworthy, Gary Stafford

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

**Summary:**

Approved Agenda

Approved September 19, 2024 minutes

Discussed Staff Day planning committee for 2025

Comments by the President

**Proceedings:**

Lisa Rice called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm. Peggy Nettenstrom motioned to approve the agenda for October 31, 2024. Jennifer Dewar seconded. Motion APPROVED.

Eric Carlile motioned to approve the September 19, 2024, minutes. Deborah Yu seconded. Motion APPROVED.

Lisa Rice explained that the committee would establish a secondary planning committee to help plan for the next year's Staff Day. A list was passed around and anyone interested in helping could sign up. Meetings for the planning committee would be scheduled soon, hopefully in November, so that ideas and thoughts for next year could be shared.

President Oldham explained that homecoming weekend had kicked off and it had been a great fall so far for Tennessee Tech. On October 15, 2024, the Ashraf Islam Engineering Building dedication took place. Governor Lee was in attendance and the event was a great success, possibly one the best events campus has had in the last several years. That same day the World Nuclear Forum was hosted on campus, welcoming global leaders and many others to campus. It was also a success. Women's soccer just won their third conference championship in a row. This was a great achievement, especially since there had been a change in coaches.

Oldham provided an update on enrollment. There were 2,006 first-time freshmen and 52% are Presidential Scholars. Overall enrollment was at 10,511 students, which was a 3.9% increase from last fall. The retention rate continued to increase and was at 78.2% for fall 2023 first-time

freshmen. Retention for Presidential Scholars was even greater, at 88%. This program had been successful and was carefully monitored to ensure continued success. A student group that was being focused on was first generation college students, as they faced obstacles that were new to their families. Tennessee Tech had joined the FirstGen Forward Network to assist with this goal. The first nuclear engineering majors were enrolled this fall as well.

For Capital Projects, Oldham explained that the west stadium project target date was August 2026. There should be only one more football season without west stadium. The Johnson Hall renovation had continued. The ACME building renovation had faced a funding issue. The project estimates were completed during Covid and due to inflation, costs had changed. The plan was to go back to the state and ask for additional funding. Oldham was confident this would be possible. The J.J. Oakley Innovation Residence Hall renderings were shown to the committee. This would be a 400-bed facility with an attached innovation center. It would be an impressive and beautiful facility.

Liam Harder mentioned that since the Ashraf Islam Engineering Building dedication, there had been an uptick in tours and many students were interested in nuclear engineering. President Oldham said this was great and said that initially, he had to be sold on nuclear engineering. In the last twenty years, nuclear engineering had experienced many false starts, and he wanted to be sure that graduates would be able to find a job. He initially thought that students would prefer the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, as they have a nationally ranked program. However, he had recently spoken with a student that said he was glad to not have to go to Knoxville and still be able to enroll in a nuclear engineering program.

Kevin Vedder explained that if anyone received the survey link distributed by Best Companies, it would be helpful to complete this and to encourage others to do so. It would help HR to compare data from last year's surveys and track changes. Vedder asked if anyone had seen the Talon Tracks updates for the new ERP system. He explained that those were the best way to stay up to date on the ERP project and that some great changes would be coming. The next phase would be the Conference Room Pilot 1 (CRP1).

Rice explained that the increase in University Police presence on Mahler Avenue had made a positive difference on the speeding problems that occurred there. Melanie Mabrey mentioned that if anyone had issues University Police could assist with to let her know. Joyce Arnold-Hesson asked if there was a way for signage to be put up at the Noble Cody Circle. Students and several others had been entering the wrong way and there was a concern that pedestrians might be injured by an electric scooter or vehicle entering the circle the wrong way. President Oldham said that signage could be installed there.

Christa Blair motioned to adjourn. Harder seconded. Adjourned at 2:05 pm.

Documents on file:

Agenda, October 31, 2024  
Minutes, September 19, 2024

cac