



## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**June 26, 2025**

**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, June 26, 2025, in Roaden University Center Room 282. Chair Trudy Harper called the meeting to order at 1:36 p.m.

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

- Tom Jones
- Fred Lowery
- Jeannette Luna
- Thomas Lynn
- Claire Myers
- Rhedona Rose
- Camron Rudd
- Johnny Stites
- Barry Wilmore
- Trudy Harper

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

#### **AGENDA ITEM II – RECOGNITION OF STUDENTS**

Chair Harper introduced Tennessee Tech Rugby Club student members, Lane Travis, Todd Harris and Caleb Dunlap. The Rugby Club earned a bid for the collegial Rugby National Championship Tournament held in April, Tennessee Tech's first entry to a national tournament since the Club's founding in 1977.

*LEE 12/17/25*

### **AGENDA ITEM III – APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MARCH 6, 2025, AND APRIL 30, 2025, MEETINGS**

Chair Harper asked for approval of the minutes for the March 6, 2025, in-person meeting and the virtual April 30, 2025, Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees meeting. Chair Harper asked if there were questions or comments regarding the minutes. There being none, Mr. Jones moved to recommend approval for the March 6 and April 30, 2025, Board of Trustees meeting minutes. Mr. Stites seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion carried unanimously.

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

Student Trustee, Claire Myers, reported that it had been an exciting and eventful semester. During Spring Break, the 48<sup>th</sup> annual Appalachian Studies Association Annual Conference was hosted on Tennessee Tech campus with campus members and visiting attendees from across the nation sharing interest in the current struggles of Appalachia.

March was Women's History Month, and the Women's Center and Intercultural Affairs hosted a campus conversations panel show casting the positive impacts of female faculty, staff and students on campus. A petition opposing program cuts within the foreign languages department was signed by current students, alumni and others concerned.

The Tennessee Tech chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers is an award-winning student organization focused on improving the recruitment and retention of black and other minority engineers in both academia and industry. A joint diversity panel with alumni members, the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers and the Society of Women Engineers was held.

The Student Government Association (SGA) University Infrastructure Committee hosted a safety walk to address student safety concerns and accessibility concerns across campus. This event was a collaborative and multi-level effort.

The third annual Student Leadership Awards were hosted by SGA and the Leadership Honor Society. This semester ended with several highly anticipated events including the annual Solo Concert featuring country artists, Gretchen Wilson and Vincent Mason. Campus and community groups celebrated Earth Day at the Office of Sustainability Annual Earth Day Celebration.

With summer in full swing, current students and recent graduates are starting new full-time positions in internships across the country with companies from Farm Bureau Insurance to Microsoft to Top Golf. Although most students are away for the summer, campus has been anything but quiet with cheer and dance camps, Boys State, Explorations and Engineering Camps, band camps and the Governor's School for Technological Innovation and Business Leadership. Campus tours and SOAR (Student Orientation Advisement and Registration) sessions are in full swing to prepare for the next class of Golden Eagles.

*Handwritten signature and date: 12/11/25*

## AGENDA ITEM V – PRESIDENT’S REPORT

President Oldham stated that his report was going to be a little different from past meetings for reasons that will become obvious. However, he began with a few important highlights.

Enrollment at Tennessee Tech is strong and continues to climb. We anticipate another entering freshman class this fall of over 2,000 freshmen – for the fourth consecutive year. The incoming class is also a strong academic class. This freshman class will propel us to near 11,000 students – likely, the largest overall headcount enrollment at Tennessee Tech in approximately ten or eleven years.

He stated that he is also anticipating a potential record in terms of student retention rate for this fall. Currently, we are tracking at just over 80% first-time freshman retention rate. If this holds, that will also be a record.

Research numbers are still increasing. We have already surpassed last year’s record with a few days remaining in this fiscal year. We are at over \$47,000,000 in research funding activations for the current fiscal year.

The west stadium project can now be seen coming out of the ground and we are very excited about that. Hopefully, the project will be completed for the fall 2026 season.

We anticipate groundbreakings this fall for both the JJ Oakley Innovations Center and Residence Hall, as well as the new ACME Engineering building. They will both be signature buildings for this campus.

President Oldham stated that leadership matters and he was talking about the general leadership on campus. Leadership throughout the institution has made these and many other successes possible because of good leadership at all levels. We have excellent Vice-Presidents and Directors here on campus. He stated that he wanted to thank and recognize all individuals on campus that made this possible because of the hard work, effort and leadership they contributed.

A couple of key leadership positions are now in transition. He thanked and congratulated Dr. John Liu for taking on the responsibilities of interim Provost over the next several months as we search for a new Provost. His efforts and everything he is doing on campus are appreciated. He has done a phenomenal job with the Research Office, and he will take on the additional role as Provost for this year.

We are also in transition with the Athletic Director position. We have a new Athletic Director, Casey Fox, that will arrive later in July. We have a lot of exciting things to look forward to in Athletics.

Dianne Murphy has been called out of retirement to help us as acting Athletic Director during the interim period. She has served as former Athletic Director of the University of Denver and Columbia University.

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So, the rest of my report – again – it gets back to leadership and all of you are a big part of that at the Board level. Your leadership is important and the reason you are in the seats that you are in is because you have demonstrated leadership in various capacities of your life. Trustees bring all that talent and experience to Tennessee Tech, and we greatly appreciate it.

We will now recognize one individual for his talent and leadership, and I'm thankful we can do that for Captain Barry Wilmore. His dad, Eugene, his daughter, Logan, and a family friend, Maggie, are all with us today.

It is an honor to be associated with Board members, especially Board members like Barry. We have a special little video and a couple of presentations to follow the video.

About ten years ago, we initiated a special recognition called the Order of the Eagle. The Order of the Eagle honors individuals whose contributions to Tennessee Tech, whether literal or by association, exemplify the university's tradition of excellence. Awarded at the discretion of the President, inclusion in the Order of the Eagle is reserved for eagles whose impact on the university and its reputation is unparalleled. Inaugural members were Everett and Joan Derryberry, President and First Lady of Tennessee Tech from 1940-1974. Until today, we had presented this award only one other time and it was awarded posthumously to the Derryberrys during our Centennial celebration. It is my pleasure to present this Order of the Eagle to Captain Barry Wilmore.

Tennessee Tech's most iconic symbol is the golden eagle as mascot and as manifested by the eagle gracing the clock tower on Derryberry Hall. The base is personalized and is a work of art created by our Tech alum and local artist, Brad Sells.

Mr. Sells explained that the base is made from a giant holly tree that was located near the men's dorms. The base includes a picture of a football helmet, a space helmet, stars and planets, and a space shuttle. Dr. Oldham stated that Brad has worked at The Smithsonian and is an extremely accomplished artist.

Chair Harper read a resolution to recognize Captain Barry "Butch" Wilmore, alumnus of Tennessee Tech University, member of the Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees, and NASA astronaut for his historic contributions to human space flight and scientific discovery with the naming of Wilmore Way, pedestrian walkway, on Tennessee Tech campus.

Multiple motions and seconds to approve the resolution were received. A voice vote was called and the motion passed unanimously.

Jonathan Frank, with the Office of Communication and Marketing, came up to the podium and stated that when Trustee Wilmore embarked on his latest space flight, he didn't just inspire students, faculty and staff on Tennessee Tech's campus. He also earned the admiration and respect of millions of onlookers the world over. One such person is Pam Inman. Pam is a Special Olympian and cancer survivor from Nashville who is among Trustee Wilmore's biggest fans. Despite the challenges that Pam has faced since early in life, she competed and won gold, silver and bronze medals in the Special Olympics in various competitions. Pam embodies Tennessee

Tech values being bold, fearless, confident and kind.

During Trustee Wilmore's extended stay at the International Space Station, Pam sent a moving handwritten letter to the university expressing her admiration for Trustee Wilmore's bravery and sharing a selfless desire to give him one of her most prized possessions. Mr. Frank introduced Pam, along with her mother, Mary, her father, Tom, and her brother, Jeffrey, who is the proud parent of a current Tech student. A portion of the letter reads as follows:

*I'm in the Special Olympics and I have won lots of medals. Some of our motto says, "Let me be brave." I was brave when I got breast cancer four years ago. I think the astronaut, Mr. Wilmore, was brave. I am sending you my gold medal to give to him. He earned it.*

Captain Wilmore stated that he has rarely been without words, but he wanted to take the opportunity to say thank you, and that he was touched and grateful. He stated that he took several items with him to space because he wanted to bring them back and give them to individuals with the university that have made an impact on this campus. He presented football jerseys or caps to Johnny Stites, Tom Jones, Chair Harper, President Oldham, and Pam Inman.

President Oldham stated that he had one more presentation for Pam, and he asked Kari, Tennessee Tech First Lady, to join him. Several years ago, Kari initiated "Wings of Kindness," an award given on campus to recognize students, faculty, staff and others across campus for choosing kindness in today's busy, often hectic, world. Described in her own words, "Kindness is often displayed as simple acts such as opening a door for someone, taking time to say please and thank you, making eye contact and smiling, paying an unsolicited compliment, helping campus visitors feel welcome or cleaning up someone else's mess." Maya Angelo put it this way: "Learn that people will forget what you said. People forget what you did, but people never forget how you made them feel."

Tennessee Tech presented to Pam Inman the Wings of Kindness Award. President Oldham and Kari thanked Pam for all the kindness she gives to this world. You are a winner in every way. As we say at Tennessee Tech, "Wings up."

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

Chair Harper stated that the Ohio Valley Conference (OVC) requires the Board of Trustees Chair to attest that the President is responsible for administration of the athletics program, that he has the support of the Board in operating a program of integrity, and may vote on behalf of the institution on NCAA and OVC matters, and that attestation must be presented to the Board. Chair Harper read the attestation and stated that she will sign it as required by the OVC.

- **CONTINUATION OF TRUSTEE APPOINTMENTS**

At the Chair's prerogative, this agenda item was added at the time of the meeting. Chair Harper asked President Oldham to explain the upcoming changes to the Board structure.

*lex 2/17/25*

President Oldham stated that there has been a revision in state statute coming out of the last General Assembly in Nashville that changes the Board structure for all LGIs (locally governed institutions.) The change will expand the board to twelve members so there will be two additional appointments made to the Board. It also changes who makes those appointments. In addition to gubernatorial selections, there will also be selections based on a formula from the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Lieutenant Governor in the Senate. We are still awaiting those appointment announcements, so with that in mind --because some terms are ending, others are up for reappointment if chosen to be reappointed, and there will be additional open seats -- there is too much confusion around that right now to proceed with appointments or elections around committee assignments and leadership of the Board. The plan is to call a special meeting as soon as we get clarity out of Nashville.

Chair Harper explained that the faculty and student Trustees would be replaced later in this meeting, as originally planned, because they are confirmed via a different kind of a process than the appointments made by the Governor and the Legislature.

Mr. Jones moved that until appointments to the Board are made by the Governor and/or Legislature and a meeting for new elections and appointments are held, the current slate of officers remains in place. These positions are as follows. Chairman Trudy Harper; Vice Chairman Rhedona Rose; third Executive Committee member, Fred Lowery; Audit and Business Committee Chair, Johnny Stites; Audit and Business Committee members Tom Jones and Thomas Lynn; Academic and Student Affairs Committee Chair, Rhedona Rose; Academic and Student Affairs Committee members, Camron Rudd and Barry Wilmore; and committee members, Claire Myers and Jeannette Luna - as their replacements have been named - will be replaced by Braxton Westbrook (following ratification by the Board) and Michael Allen, respectively. Camron Rudd seconded the motion. Chair Harper requested that Secretary Wray call a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM VII – CONSENT AGENDA – A. EMERITUS PRESIDENT CONTRACT B. TENURE RECOMMENDATIONS C. TTU POLICY 205 (FACULTY TENURE) D. TTU POLICY 511.1 (FEE CHARGES, REFUNDS AND FEE ADJUSTMENTS)**

Following discussion at the morning committee meeting and upon the committee's recommendation, Mr. Lowery moved to approve the consent agenda. Mr. Stites seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM VIII – ACADEMIC & STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION – GENERAL EDUCATION HISTORY REQUIREMENT**

Following lengthy discussion at the morning committee meeting and upon the committee's recommendation not to revise the General Education History requirement, there was no need to act on this agenda item.

**AGENDA ITEM IX – AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS – A. FY2024-25 ESTIMATED & FY2025-26 PROPOSED BUDGET B. DISCLOSED PROJECTS C. CAPITAL BUDGET**

## **FY2026-27**

Following discussion at the morning committee meeting and upon the committee's recommendation, Mr. Stites moved to approve Tennessee Tech's FY2024-25 estimated and FY2025-26 proposed budget and organizational chart. Mr. Jones seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

### **AGENDA ITEM IX – AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS – B. DISCLOSED PROJECTS**

Following discussion at the morning committee meeting and upon the committee's recommendation, Mr. Stites moved to approve the disclosed projects for the Biology Greenhouse and the Bike Shelter. Mr. Lynn seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

### **AGENDA ITEM IX – AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS – C. CAPITAL BUDGET FY2026-27**

Following discussion at the morning committee meeting and upon the committee's recommendation, Mr. Stites moved to approve the FY2026-27 Capital Budget requests. Mr. Jones seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

### **AGENDA ITEM X – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT – A. ANNOUNCEMENT OF ATHLETIC DIRECTOR B. ANNOUNCEMENT OF INTERIM PROVOST AND VP FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

Chair Harper provided a report from the most recent Executive Committee meeting, held on June 19, 2025. A new athletic director, Casey Fox, and the interim Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Dr. John Liu, were both approved. Mr. Fox will begin on July 23rd. Dr. Oldham reported earlier that Diane Murphy will be helping in athletics until Mr. Fox arrives on campus.

### **AGENDA ITEM XI – ELECTION OF STUDENT TRUSTEE**

Upon a recommendation from the Student Government Association, Mr. Stites nominated Braxton Westbrook to serve as the student Trustee for fiscal year 2025-26. Mr. Jones seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

### **AGENDA ITEM XII - BOARD SECRETARY REPORT**

Secretary Wray reported that THEC (Tennessee Higher Education Commission) will convene all Trustees for state universities in Tennessee on October 12 and 13 in Murfreesboro.

The second reminder is the President's evaluation. Trustees and President's Cabinet members will be receiving information about the evaluation the week of July 7<sup>th</sup>. Rhedona will be coordinating the evaluation. It will be like past years and will consist of a similar questionnaire for completion. It will be anonymous; no one – not even Rhedona -- will know

who the responses are received from.

Secretary Wray stated that the last thing he wanted to mention is we have our newly elected faculty Trustee with us today. Michael Allen has served as a past Faculty Senate President and will begin his term as faculty Trustee on July 1.

#### **AGENDA ITEM XIII – OTHER BUSINESS**

Plaques were presented to outgoing Trustees, Claire Myers, Jeannette Luna and Johnny Stites, and appreciation was expressed for their service to the Board of Trustees and to Tennessee Tech.

#### **AGENDA ITEM XIV – ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees meeting adjourned at 2:56 p.m.

Approved,

 12/17/15  
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Lee Wray, Secretary