



## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

December 4, 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, December 4, 2025, in Roaden University Center, Room 282. Chair Rhedona Rose called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m.

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

- Michael Allen
- Teresa Chasteen-Dunn
- Allen Foster
- Trudy Harper
- Tom Jones
- Thomas Lynn
- Garry McNabb
- Braxton Westbrook
- Barry Wilmore
- Rhedona Rose
  
- Fred Lowery - absent
- Camron Rudd - absent

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

#### AGENDA ITEM II – RECOGNITION OF STUDENTS

The Tennessee Tech Eagle Works Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition supports students from all colleges in developing their innovative ideas through rigorous validation, business planning, and live pitching to judges. The program fosters a vibrant entrepreneurial community by providing workshops and resources such as mentorship and networking. Each April, Eagle Works awards over \$20,000 in scholarships to help fund and launch the winning

*Lee Wray*  
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student business concepts. Elena Gould, Business Information Technology and Business Management double major, from Kingsport, Tennessee and Maddy Ray, finance major, from Smithville, Tennessee, presented information about their concept. Elena and Maddy's second place winning project included a kit that includes a cookbook made by and for students, equipment needed to cook in a small space, tips on how to grocery shop and essentials needed, and other helpful meal prep tips for students starting out.

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

Chair Rose asked for approval of both the morning and afternoon minutes of September 25, 2025, Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees meetings. Chair Rose asked if there were questions or comments regarding the minutes. There being none, Trustee Jones moved to recommend approval of the September 25, 2025, morning and afternoon Board of Trustees meeting minutes. Trustee Harper seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a voice vote. The motion carried 8-0; Trustee McNabb had briefly stepped away from his seat.

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

Student Trustee Braxton Westbrook stated it had been a historic semester for Tennessee Tech. Our Golden Eagle football team delivered a great season, winning 11 games. Many students were thrilled to see Tennessee Tech's resident astronaut serve as the Grand Marshal at homecoming. Beyond athletics, Tennessee Tech has been recognized as a Top National University by "U.S. News and World Report" for ten consecutive years. For the fifth consecutive year, Tennessee Tech set a record for externally funded research, topping \$48,000,000 in fiscal year 2025.

Trustee Westbrook reported that through survey feedback, results indicated the student body feels connected to Tennessee Tech with 78 percent of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing they feel a sense of community and belonging here on campus. Week of Welcome activities involved fairs and various cultural events, giving students numerous opportunities to connect with one another.

While students are proud of Tennessee Tech, they also identified opportunities to strengthen student experiences. Students noted specific issues with the gravel parking lot. Every student is particularly excited about the future parking garage slated to open in the next couple of years. Transportation was another concern. Students who rely on the campus shuttle expressed concern about bus route reliability. The last concern was reliability of wi-fi, library access hours and occasional delays in opening on time on weekday mornings.

Students are thankful the Board and the university are making efforts to improve the student experience at Tennessee Tech. Trustee Westbrook thanked the Student Government Association for the continued partnership and advocating for student needs. He also recognized the faculty and staff who work tirelessly every day to make Tennessee Tech feel like a home for every Golden Eagle.

Trustee Wilmore commented that internet connectivity is a must. If there are common areas where internet connections are less than ideal, we need to focus on getting those rectified.

*Handwritten signature and date: [Signature] 03/18/26*

## AGENDA ITEM V – PRESIDENT’S REPORT

President Phil Oldham stated presented dashboard information consisting of key performance indicators for Tennessee Tech, available to all Trustees. He thanked Dewayne Wright and his staff for preparing the information.

He stated that Tennessee Tech had a decrease in enrollment in the mid twenty-teens, but the university has been working on this by changing recruiting efforts. In the last four years the University has seen the largest freshman classes in its history, with an average ACT score of 24.2 and a high school GPA of 3.72. First-year retention rate hit a record high of over 80 percent this year. We are nearing a 50 percent graduation rate in four years.

Trustee Wilmore asked if there was a national or regional number to compare with our four-year graduation rate. President Oldham replied that relative to our peer institutions, we are doing well. The largest cost driver for students is time; the longer it takes to graduate, the more it costs. Trustee Wilmore stated that technology-focused degrees are not easy to complete in four years, and President Oldham agreed.

Trustee Harper asked if we have any feedback on how our flat-rate tuition model has affected our graduation rate. President Oldham stated that he believed that the improvements in graduation rates over the last two years can be attributed to the flat-rate tuition, but in other efforts as well. Increasing our retention rate to 80 percent provides a better chance of graduating students on time and saving them money.

Early career average salary for Tennessee Tech graduates is over \$68,000, and we have the lowest student debt. Our strategic plan includes a goal to reach 22 percent diversity levels on campus; currently, it is just below that goal at 21 ½ percent.

We have surpassed our goal of \$40,000,000 in funded research and anticipate passing \$50,000,000 this year, now in position to become a Research 1 (R1) Institution in the future. Tennessee Tech was wrapping up a comprehensive campaign to reach this significant goal. We are having a tremendous fall semester in athletics, having won three Ohio Valley Conference (OVC) championships in athletics: women’s cross country, women’s soccer, and football.

The student to faculty ratio has decreased to around 16:1 student to faculty ratio overall on campus. Regarding retention rates for faculty, the focus is on attrition rates, which are at a healthy three to three and one-half percent. Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) is re-evaluating the funding formula for the next cycle.

Trustee Allen asked what “reverse associate”, or “reverse transfer” means. President Oldham explained that the State of Tennessee enacted a process affecting students transferring from a community college to a university before completing their associate’s degree. Reverse associate or reverse transfer is a mechanism for students to get credit for prior work completed, and they don’t have to wait until all requirements are completed from their prior institution.

Trustee Westbrook asked about the “admit to enroll” gap. President Oldham state that this is a result of students applying to multiple institutions, so some students never complete the

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admission process. Students that visit campus are more likely to enroll. Only about 20 to 30 percent of those that do not visit enroll. Reasons students have for not visiting are proximity to home (too close or too far), the program or the personality of the campus is not quite what they are looking for, etc. Data is reviewed regularly to identify actionable items.

Trustee Jones stated that in the past Tennessee Tech had a reputation of being a “suitcase campus” where most students go home on the weekends and wanted to know how that was changing. President Oldham replied that it is going quite well. Residence hall parking lots are quite full on weekends, and a successful football season helped. Student Affairs has done a phenomenal job in recent years of driving opportunities for student activities on weekends.

Trustee Jones asked if future parking garage spaces are sold to students, and if the students stay here, would those parking spaces be full on weekends? President Oldham replied that numbers indicate that would not be a major problem because about 25 percent of our students live on campus. The parking issue is during weekday class times, primarily from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m.

President Oldham stated that we were also ranked Best National University by “U.S. World and News Report,” with the best starting salaries, return on investment (ROI) in the state and least student debt in the state. President Oldham thanked Jonathan Frank and the entire Office of Communications and Marketing staff for doing a tremendous job getting us more news coverage and inquiries. A video compilation highlighting recent Tennessee Tech news stories was played. New programs such as the artificial intelligence major and ground breakings for the Advanced Construction Mechanical Engineering (ACME) building and the JJ Oakley Innovation Center and Residence Hall gained media attention, particularly in Nashville and Chattanooga.

We are also highlighting Tech faculty in meaningful ways that expand our audience. Dr. Michael Aikens, Dr. Lauren Harding, and Dr. Sean Alley and Dr. Alfred Kalyanapu have recently been interviewed within their areas of expertise.

In just a few days between Thursday, November 27, and the post season game on Saturday, November 29, Tennessee Tech was mentioned 339 times on television stations across the country. That is a 600 percent increase from the same period three weeks earlier. To expand our reach beyond our immediate area, Nashville Channel 2 came to campus. The weather broadcast was done from Tucker Stadium, providing us with significant coverage in the Nashville area that day. Billboards can be seen in and out of state and are continually updated to reflect what is relevant to students. A new commercial was recently launched as well.

We have several ways that we try to engage students in that recruiting process through on campus and off campus events like Preview Day and VIP tours. Well attended “Tech to You” events are hosted in Chattanooga, Murfreesboro, Franklin, Knoxville, and other locations around the region providing students an opportunity closer to home to see what Tennessee Tech is like.

#### **AGENDA ITEM VI – APPROVAL OF REVISED BOARD OF TRUSTEES BYLAWS**

Chair Rose stated that the Board Bylaws were being revised to increase the number for a

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quorum from five to six, now that the number of voting Trustees has increased from nine to 11. Trustee Jones made the motion to approve proposed changes to the Bylaws. Trustee Harper seconded the motion. There being no discussion, Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM VII – CONSENT AGENDA - A. TTU POLICY 207 (TENURED FACULTY) B. TTU POLICY 506 (GENERAL AND GROUP TRAVEL POLICIES) C. TTU POLICY 511 (PAYMENT OF STUDENT FEES AND ENROLLMENT) D. TTU POLICY 536 (SOLICITATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS)**

Trustee Harper made the motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. There being no discussion, Secretary Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM VIII – ACADEMIC & STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION – A. NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAM PROPOSAL (NAPP) FOR THE MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK (MSW)**

Upon the committee's recommendation, Trustee Allen made the motion to approve the New Academic Program Proposal for the Master of Social work. Trustee Harper seconded the motion. There being no discussion, Secretary Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM IX – AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS – A. FY2025-26 REVISED BUDGET/ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**

Upon the committee's recommendation, Trustee Jones made the motion to approve the FY2025-26 Revised Budget/Organizational Chart. Trustee Lynn seconded the motion. There being no discussion, Secretary Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM IX – AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS – B. TUITION TRANSPARENCY ACT REPORT (T.C.A. § 49-7-164)**

Upon the committee's recommendation, Trustee Jones made the motion to approve the Tuition Transparency Act Report for FY24-25. Because the motion came from committee, no second was needed. There being no discussion, Secretary Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM IX – AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS – C. MASTER PLAN**

Upon the committee's recommendation, Trustee Jones made the motion to approve the Master Plan to include the Landscape Plan. Because the motion came from committee, no second was needed. There being no discussion, Secretary Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

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

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Upon the committee's recommendation, Trustee Jones made the motion to approve the Disclosed Projects for the CRC Wind Tunnel, Tennis Complex, Parking Garage, and modification of the Student Event Center. Because the motion came from committee, no second was needed. There being no discussion, Secretary Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM IX – AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS – E. UNIVERSITY AND AG FOUNDATION AGREEMENT**

Upon the committee's recommendation, Trustee Jones made the motion to approve the University and Ag Foundation Agreement. Because the motion came from committee, no second was needed. There being no discussion, Secretary Wray called a roll call vote. The motion passed unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM X – BOARD SECRETARY REPORT**

Secretary Wray reminded Trustees to complete their Conflict of Interest forms and submit the forms to Becky Smith or Aleta Cannon. He also reported that SACSCOC would be on campus from March 23-27 and mock interviews would be conducted in February. He stated that several Trustees will be contacted about providing information to SACSCIC about the Board and how it functions. He also thanked Dr. Huo for all her great work with SACSCOC.

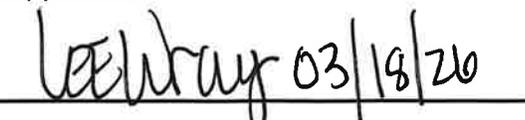
**AGENDA ITEM XI – OTHER BUSINESS**

President Oldham announced that Deb Combs would be retiring and thanked her for her years of service. Trustee Wilmore made remarks and presented a retirement vase to Deb.

**AGENDA ITEM XII – ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees meeting adjourned at 2:51 p.m.

Approved,

  
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Lee Wray, Secretary