



## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**March 12, 2026**

**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 AND ROLL CALL**

The Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees met on Thursday, March 12, 2026, in Roaden University Center Room 282. Chair Rhedona Rose called the meeting to order at 1:31 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
- Fred Lowery
- Thomas Lynn
- Garry McNabb
- Camron Rudd
- Braxton Westbrook
- Barry Wilmore
  
- Tom Jones - absent

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

*Lee 07/04/26*

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

Chair Rose stated she wanted to recognize a student joining via Microsoft Teams, Isabella Tkachuk, a double business major in Operations in Logistics and Supply Chain Management. Tkachuk was a native of Ukraine and came to the U.S. when war had broken out in Ukraine. Her parents were the co-founders of the non-profit Raising Hope Ukraine, which provided food, clothing, medicine, and shelter to Ukrainians and refugees in need. Ms. Tkachuk was given the opportunity in Dr. Jeremy Shun's class to organize a fundraising event for a charitable cause. She planned a pickleball and cornhole tournament and raised \$275 for Raising Hope Ukraine. She addressed the trustees, explaining her mother was an alum of Tennessee Tech and how she chose the university, and her long-term goal of continuing to help Ukraine while using her business degree.

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

Chair Rose asked for approval of the minutes of the December 4, 2025, and January 9, 2026, Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees meetings. Mr. McNabb moved to recommend approval of the December 4, 2025, and January 9, 2026, Board of Trustees minutes. Ms. Harper seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion carried unanimously.

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

Mr. Westbrook reported that students were excited for the new Tucker Stadium, particularly the student section. New, notable talent from the transfer portal included three of the top fifteen wide receivers and third-ranked quarterback.

College of Engineering Students in Dr. Steven Canfield's course designed an altered wheelchair for a local student who had been paralyzed in a motorcycle accident, and the students' efforts had received news coverage. The campus calendar had been full of events, showcasing the breadth of student programming available on campus.

The eighth annual "I Heart Tech Students" campaign had recently launched, rallying both students and departments to support campus initiatives. Thanks to the generosity of trustee Trudy Harper, student donations of at least \$10 would be matched. Tech Honors program students had represented Tennessee Tech at the Tennessee Collegiate Honors Conference.

The autonomous robotics club (ARC) earned a place at the VEX U Robotic Championship. The College of Business 2026 Spring Celebration would host author Walter Isaacson as the speaker. President Oldham had recently surprised the Golden Eagle marching band by joining them on his trombone at a basketball game.

Trustee Fred Lowery has recently been named CEO of Henry Schein, Inc., a Fortune 500 company and the world's largest provider of healthcare products to office-based practitioners. Alumnus Jake Hoot would be joining NBC's The Voice: Battle of Champions. SGA members and students reported a strong sense of belonging, crediting this to quality faculty and staff relationships. Continuous infrastructure improvements, variety of events on campus, and

improved communication with leadership were other highlights. Students had noted the need for renovations in some academic buildings and parking improvements. Students looked forward to the remainder of the spring 2026 semester and events.

Mr. Lynn asked Mr. Westbrook if students were staying on campus more on the weekends and Mr. Westbrook stated that yes, they were, due to investments by the university to connect with local businesses that attract students. SGA was working on an initiative to dedicate a portion of SOLO funding for weekend events as well. Mr. McNabb asked how to get students more involved in athletics. Mr. Westbrook stated that continued momentum from the sports teams, entering the Southern Conference, and the new football stadium was promising for student involvement.

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

President Oldham began his report by thanking the trustees for their time and talent. He stated that it had been ten years since the FOCUS Act passed and displayed a photo of the day the Act was signed by Governor Haslam. He reflected that the FOCUS Act had not been without controversy and questions. The FOCUS Act had followed the examples set by the Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010, the Tennessee Promise free community college initiative, and the efforts to ensure 55% of Tennesseans had post-secondary degrees or credentials. Ultimately the Act had created the Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees, which had made a positive difference. Oldham reflected on writing a piece for *The Tennessean*, in which he noted that higher education must be held accountable to fulfil its role to provide relevant educational opportunities to fuel the state economy. He felt the Act had made this possible and had been a success despite its challenges.

In a few weeks SACSCOC, Tennessee Tech’s regional accreditors, would visit campus for a site visit. Oldham had high expectations that there would be no recommendations. The recent state audit had positive results, with no findings for the fifth year. The recent sunset hearing for the Board of Trustees was completed, with the general assembly awarding a five-year extension.

In the last ten years since the FOCUS Act, Tennessee Tech had become a research 2 (R2) university, with research funding increased four times over previous numbers. This meant the university had increased from the 316<sup>th</sup> ranked research university to 255<sup>th</sup>, with goals of moving into the top 250 in the coming years. Enrollment had increased by seven percent over the last ten years, with freshman enrollment increasing by 25%. The four-year graduation rate had increased 15% which meant roughly 500 more students were graduating at least one year sooner than previous years, saving students an average of \$20,000 to \$30,000. This was due in part to the flat rate tuition model adopted by the Board.

Fifteen new undergraduate and graduate majors and 78 new concentrations have been created in the last ten years. Eleven new buildings had either been constructed or were in progress and approximately \$750 million in campus renovation investments had been made. In 2016, Tennessee Tech was reclassified as a national university by U.S. News & World Report and had continued to be ranked in that category. Tennessee Tech was currently ranked as the number one public university in Tennessee by Money Magazine for return on investment. In the last ten

years, Tennessee Tech had contributed to \$7 billion additional economic impact to the state of Tennessee. Rural Reimagined was initiated during that time and had seen approximately 2,000 projects in 75 counties across the state and assisted 500 small businesses and entrepreneurs. The average faculty salary had increased by approximately \$14,000 and more than \$24 million in merit raises and compensation study recommendations were implemented. The university endowment had grown by \$140 million in private donations during the last ten years. This was all possible due to the efforts of the Board of Trustees and the university's continued dedication to setting new goals.

Mr. Rudd asked Dr. Oldham for his perspective on the capital projects that had been rejected in the governor's budget. Dr. Oldham stated that the state was cautious with funding and the UT Health Science Center needs had overshadowed many other projects. Tennessee Tech had been taking an approach to fund designs first and then the project funding later, which had proved to be beneficial.

Ms. Harper explained that she had been at the state capitol the day the FOCUS Act had been signed and spoke with Governor Haslam about wanting to keep President Oldham at Tennessee Tech. She credited the accomplishments at the university to his continued role on campus. Dr. Oldham thanked her and explained that the Board's work had made it more possible than they might think.

Mr. Lynn noted that the Upper Cumberland and Tennessee Tech benefit each other and Dr. Oldham has played a role in making that possible. Mr. Westbrook commented that Tennessee Tech's reputation has an impact beyond our immediate community. Dr. Oldham stated that his belief was the best way for Tennessee Tech to serve the Upper Cumberland was to be a nationally recognized university and to draw attention to this region.

#### **AGENDA ITEM VI – ACADEMIC & STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION – A. NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAM PROPOSAL (NAPP) FOR THE PH.D. IN INTEGRATIVE BIOLOGY**

Upon the committee's recommendation, Mr. Rudd moved the approval of the new academic program proposal (NAPP) for the Ph.D. in Integrative Biology. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion carried unanimously.

#### **AGENDA ITEM VII – AUDIT & BUSINESS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION – A. COMPENSATION PLAN**

Upon the committee's recommendation, Ms. Rose moved the Board approve the proposed compensation plan:

1.5% to 2% pool for recurring salary increases effective September 16, 2026, pending approval of Governor's 2026-2027 budget

- Employees with satisfactory or better evaluation are eligible for raise.
- Employees who are on or were on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIR) or Performance Enhancement Plan (PEP) for FY 2026 are ineligible.

- Employees hired on or before 3/1/2026 and still employed on 9/1/2026 are eligible.
- Minimum award of 1% to maximum award of 5%.

Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion carried unanimously.

#### **AGENDA ITEM VIII – OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

#### **AGENDA ITEM X – ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Approved,

A handwritten signature, which appears to be "Lee Wray", is written over a horizontal line. To the right of the signature, the date "07/14/20" is handwritten.

Lee Wray, Secretary