

TECH TOMORROW STRATEGIC PLAN



2026
Annual Report



Executive Summary

This year marked a year of transition, for both the leadership structure of Tech Tomorrow and the pending completion of the 2025 Goals cycle.

It was the final term for the remaining faculty leads (one lead didn't return for 2025-2026). Primarily, the faculty leads focused on finishing what they had begun in previous years, especially work on Flight Foundations, Tennessee Tech's new general education program.

Administratively, work has been done to address what comes after the close of the 2025 Goals cycle this coming summer.

In 2019, President Oldham asked "Where will we be in 2025?" Tech was already making strides towards addressing the Tech Tomorrow Strategic Goals adopted in 2018, but there weren't specific, measurable metrics that could be used to keep us focused on key performance indicators such as enrollment, retention and graduation rates, externally funded research. In setting the 2025 Goals to answer Oldham's question, the university was able to establish a set of metrics.

As we approach the end of the 2025-2026 year and the final summary of the 2025 Goals, we don't want to lose the momentum that has been gathered by stopping to create a new strategic plan (see appendix 2 for some of the highlights). When we created the Tech Tomorrow strategic plan, the four established Strategic Goals were kept broad enough that all parts of the university could find ways to adapt their efforts to the plan.

As new metrics and standards are developed, they will be additions and updates to address opportunities to build on the momentum we have all worked so hard to establish and will be related to Tech Tomorrow's Mission, Vision, Core Principles, and Strategic Goals. They will answer the new question: Where will we be in 2035?

2025-2026 Activities

The three remaining faculty leads met biweekly in order to update and coordinate efforts.

There were no actions that required the Tech Tomorrow Implementation Steering Committee to be called.

A report on the outcomes of Tech Tomorrow efforts will be compiled and distributed early Fall 2026.

Education for Life

Tennessee Tech provides education that unleashes the potential and passion within our students and prepares them for successful careers and culturally enriched lives. Tech also provides educational opportunities, programs, credentials, and degrees to fuel the lifelong learning necessary for enduring achievement.

Faculty Lead Lenly Weathers, professor of civil engineering, Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering, College of Engineering

Curricular Learning Communities

A second group of curricular learning communities across multiple disciplines were conducted for Fall 2025. While student self-evaluation surveys showed the communities promoted stronger social integration and classroom comfort, and students in the communities felt better supported by faculty and more connected to their peers in comparison to a control group of students, fall-to-fall retention rates showed no difference.

ELEVATE (new QEP) aligned with Tech Tomorrow

Work was done to ensure Tech's new Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is aligned with Strategic Goal #1 (Education for Life). The selected QEP theme, "ELEVATE: Skills That Soar, Futures That Flourish," is structured to enhance career readiness, foster lifelong learning, and ensure graduates are well-prepared for an evolving workforce. This past fall saw the Center for Career Development moved to Academic Affairs in order to strengthen its connection with academic curriculum.

Innovation in All We Do

Tennessee Tech innovates in all we do, embracing and deploying our technological foundation in our education, research, service, and stewardship.

Faculty Lead Holly Anthony, professor of mathematics education, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education

Flight Foundations General Education Program

<https://www.tntech.edu/strategic/flight-foundations.php>

During the 2024-2025 academic year, the Gen Ed Implementation Committee, working from the research and recommendations of the previous year's Gen Ed Vision Committee, developed Tech's first revision to its general education program in more than 20 years.

During 2025-2026, the University Curriculum Committee and the General Education Committee have worked to review nearly 150 course proposals for both legacy courses and for new courses, along with updated programs of study in order to be able to advise incoming freshmen during the summer at SOAR.

Exceptional Stewardship

Tennessee Tech is committed to optimizing resources and continuously improving effectiveness, efficiency, and return on investment for students.

Faculty Lead Vacant (Tom Timmerman opted not to continue for 2025-2026)

Data Analysis for Recruiting

Work continued in utilizing data to optimize student recruitment efforts under the guidance of the director of strategic planning.

Engagement for Impact

Tennessee Tech fosters partnerships with government, business, and non-profit organizations to advance economic and workforce development, create and disseminate knowledge, serve the public good, and generate cultural impact.

Faculty Lead Jeremy Blair, associate professor of art education, School of Art, Craft and Design, College of Fine Arts

Center for Global Experiences

The faculty lead has piloted international trips with the Center for Global Experiences in order to better understand the process in order to help facilitate future international opportunities for both students and faculty.

Art on Campus

The interactive “Art on Campus” section within the university’s online campus map has been updated to highlight significant public artworks and collections, provide images, detailed descriptions, and exact locations for each work or site. The map currently features various work across campus ranging from large public art such as Wings by John Henry (pictured on the cover of this report) to the R. Winston Morris Tuba Collection. The interactive map is at <https://www.tntech.edu/maps/index.php>; select “Art on Campus” from the Legend menu.

2025 Goals

In summer 2019, President Oldham set out goals for the university to reach by 2025. Original announcement: <https://blogs.tntech.edu/president/where-will-we-be-in-2025/>.

Numbers for these goals are tracked each year, with the final numbers to be reported at the start of the 2026 academic year to accommodate goals requiring data calculated after the end of the 2025 academic year.

These goals were all set pre-pandemic.

- 12,000 total headcount enrollment
- 22% minority enrollment
- 82% freshmen-to-sophomore retention rate
- 50% 4-year graduation rate
- 60% 6-year graduation rate
- \$40 million annually in sponsored research
- Growth of online programs (non-metric goal)
- Strengthen career development (non-metric goal)
- Be recognized as the champion and center of excellence regarding the future of rural Tennessee communities (non-metric goal)

Goal	2018-2019 Baseline	2025-2026 Current	+/-
12,000 total headcount enrollment	10,186	10,701	+515
22% Minority Enrollment	16.00%	21.50%	+5.50%
82% freshmen-to-sophomore retention rate	75.00%	80.10%	+5.10%
50% 4-year graduation rate	34.60%	46.20%	+11.60%
60% 6-year graduation rate*	55.20%	56.00%	+0.8%
\$40 million annually in sponsored research	\$20.23M	47.9M [†]	+\$27.7M

* Tech's 6-year graduation rate met the 60% goal for two consecutive years (2021-2022, 2022-2023)

[†] Sponsored research current is 2024-2025; 2025-2026 amount available late summer 2026

Appendix 1: *Implementation Steering Committee*

Phil Oldham, President

Mustafa Rajabali, Physics (Faculty Senate)

Jeff Boles, Chair, Department of Chemistry (Faculty Liaison)

John Liu, Interim Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

Karen Lykins, Vice President of Enrollment and Communication

Rob Owens, Senior Executive for Access, Belonging, and Community Outreach

Tom Payne, Dean, College of Business

Claire Stinson, Vice President of Finance and Planning

Lee Wray, Chief of Staff

Dewayne Wright, Executive Director, Strategic Planning & Data

Lisa Zagumny, Dean, College of Education



Appendix 2:

President Oldham comments to Board of Trustees, March 12, 2026

On March 12, 2026, President Phil Oldham shared how Tennessee Tech has changed in the 10 years since the passage of the FOCUS Act, which established the independent Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees. While the establishment of the Board was prior to the adoption of this strategic plan, the approval of Tech Tomorrow was one of the board's early actions in 2018 and, as such, large parts of the president's list can be traced to the strategic plan.

Changes over the last 10 years

Research

- Became R2 research university
- Research dollars have increased 4x
- Moved from 316 to 255 in research universities ranking (National Science Foundation)

Enrollment and Student Success

- Domestic enrollment up 7%
- Freshman class size up 25%
- 4-year graduation rate up 15%

Academic Programs

- 15 new majors
- 78 new concentrations

Campus Facilities

- 11 new buildings
- Multiple renovation projects
- \$750 million invested in campus

Rankings

- Reclassified as national university in 2016 by U.S. News & World Report (ranked in this category ever since)
- Ranked #1 public university in state by Money

Impact

- \$7 billion economic impact to State of Tennessee
- Through Rural Reimagined: 2,000 projects in 75 counties; assisted 1,500 small businesses and entrepreneurs; over 2,000 jobs created or retained

His complete report to the Board of Trustees is available at

<https://www.youtube.com/live/EwmuDJOCnpg?si=E1bb7gPndeMem9R0&t=1432>



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