



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING  
(SPECIAL FOCUS SESSION - COVID-19)

June 25, 2020  
Knoxville, Tennessee

The University of Tennessee Board of Trustees held a Special Focus Session on COVID-19 in conjunction with the Annual Meeting. The meeting was held at 11:30 a.m. (EDT) on Thursday, June 25, 2020. Following continuing guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding COVID-19 and in compliance with the Tennessee Pledge and other state and local guidelines, the meeting was held virtually with Board members participating electronically and by telephone. The meeting was hosted from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville campus.

**I. Call to Order and Roll Call**

The Chair of the Board, John C. Compton, called the meeting to order. Board Secretary Cynthia Moore called the roll, and the following members of the Board were present: John C. Compton, Chair; Student Trustee Spencer Ammen; Brad Box; Commissioner Charlie Hatcher; Decosta E. Jenkins; Kara Lawson; Amy E. Miles; William (Bill) C. Rhodes III; Donald J. Smith; Kim H. White; Alan Wilson and Jamie Woodson.

Others present included: President Randy Boyd; Tiffany Carpenter, Vice President for Communications and Marketing; Linda Martin, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Success; David Miller, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer; Stacey Patterson, Vice President for Research, Outreach and Economic Development; Ryan Stinnett, General Counsel; Chancellors Angle, Carver, Plowman and Schwab; Tim Cross, Senior Vice President/Senior Vice Chancellor for the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture; and other members of the UT senior leadership and administrative staff.

Ms. Moore addressed requirements for meetings conducted with members participating electronically and announced the presence of a quorum. The meeting was webcast for the convenience of the University community, the general public, and the media.

**II. Opening Remarks of the Chair**

Chair Compton began his remarks by noting that the Board has received regular updates from President Boyd, and the University's response to the coronavirus pandemic has been discussed at two special meetings of the Board held on March 27, 2020 and April 24, 2020. He indicated that,



over the next two-day period, the Board will hear more details of the administration's plan for re-entry for the upcoming Fall 2020 academic semester. Chair Compton reflected on the scale of this planning effort, based on the size of the student body, the number of employees, and the countless number of visitors to the University's campuses.

Chair Compton remarked that there is a lot for the Board to consider, including how the University will be positioned to:

- provide students with the highest level of academic instruction;
- continue to promote discovery;
- connect through the University of Tennessee Institute for Agriculture (UTIA) and other important outreach and service programs;
- deliver an exceptional college experience; and
- ensure the health, safety, and welfare of all those involved.

In closing his introductory remarks, Chair Compton noted that there are no actions that would be voted upon by the Board during the meeting. The Finance and Administration Committee and the Education, Research, and Service Committee will meet later in the day (Thursday, June 25, 2020), and the Board will consider the re-entry plan and related actions at the Annual Meeting (Friday, June 26, 2020).

### **III. Requests to Address the Board**

There were no requests to address the Board pertaining to matters set forth on the meeting agenda.

### **IV. COVID-19 Update and Planning for Fall 2020**

President Boyd thanked the Board members for attending an additional and critically important session. He indicated that the overarching goal has been to deliver a great educational experience, while protecting the health, safety, and wellbeing of the entire University community. He provided an overview of the planned presentation and stated that the financial implications to the University associated with the pandemic would be discussed in detail at the Finance and Administration Committee meeting.

President Boyd expressed how proud he was of the University's response to this unprecedented situation. He emphasized the extraordinary level of teamwork that has been demonstrated across and within the UT System. President Boyd reviewed a COVID-19 timeline of events, beginning with the initial announcement of the interim suspension of in-person instruction on March 11, 2020, followed by the suspension of in-person instruction for the remainder of the Spring 2020 academic semester, and the subsequent cancellation of in-person instruction for Summer 2020 classes. He explained that, while the University did not hold commencement ceremonies, students did graduate.



Throughout the process, decision-making has been guided by four key principles –

- Teamwork;
- Communication;
- Transparency; and
- Decisiveness.

Following a decision made collectively to return to in-person instruction this fall, task forces were established at the campus level. In addition, a UT System Task Force was created under the leadership of Dr. Jon McCullers, Senior Executive Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs at UTHSC and an accomplished researcher in infectious diseases. The UT System Task Force released its “Best Practices for Re-opening University of Tennessee Campuses.” Subsequently, each campus has published detailed operational plans following this guidance.

President Boyd advised that, in connection with the Annual Meeting, the administration will be presenting its proposed guiding principles for Fall 2020 for consideration and approval by the Board. He stated that today’s presentation is intended to be a deep dive discussion with respect to the University’s planning efforts. He asked for the Board members to critically examine the assumptions, plans, and scenarios and to challenge the administration where there may be opportunities for further improvement. President Boyd called upon Chancellor Keith Carver to cover the first topic area.

- **Academic Affairs** – Chancellor Carver provided an overview of various academic-related matters, including: (i) adjustments to academic calendars and course schedules; (ii) instruction (in person, hybrid, online); (iii) accommodations for high risk individuals; and (iv) travel restrictions (study abroad/research). Chancellor Donde Plowman reviewed space planning assessments and the resulting impacts to the class schedule. Chancellor Steve Schwab indicated that the academic calendar is different for UTHSC and that clinical training experiences were continuing. In response to questions raised by the Trustees, the Chancellors addressed: (i) revisions to the class day/week (e.g., extended hours); (ii) bandwidth capacity to support online and hybrid classes in the fall; and (iii) technology support (e.g., laptops and hot spots) for students.
- **Campus Life** – Chancellor Plowman reviewed planning details associated with campus life and the unique challenges pertaining to: (i) residence halls (density levels, capacity for students in isolation/quarantine); (ii) student organizations; (iii) face coverings, signage, and other health and safety expectations; and (iv) campus events and other gatherings. The Trustees raised concerns about off-campus activities. The Chancellors updated the Board about on-going conversations with local city officials and business owners to enforce best practices. General Counsel Ryan Stinnett answered questions regarding liability and risk concerns, and he highlighted risk mitigation efforts and potential state legislation that would provide immunity for COVID-19 claims.



- **Education and Support Services** – Chancellor Steve Angle explained the efforts being taken by the campuses to address: (i) COVID-19 education for students, faculty, and staff; (ii) health services, inclusive of expanded mental health services (e.g., telehealth); (iii) financial aid for students (CARES Act, donations for student emergency funds, and UT Promise); and (iv) work from home policies for faculty and staff (reduce density and protect vulnerable populations). In response to questions raised by the Trustees as to special considerations for faculty, the Chancellors emphasized efforts undertaken to promote safe working environments (e.g., plexiglass, face shields, and reduced density). It was also noted that the goal has been to work with and accommodate those individuals who may be in a high-risk category or have other members of their immediate household at high risk. Additional information was shared as to technology training that has occurred over the summer.
- **Extension** – Dr. Tim Cross updated the Board on (i) UTIA programming; and (ii) the status of the work being performed through the extension offices. He advised that UTIA has employed the same approach as UTK with regard to public access, phased reopening, and ongoing educational activities. Dr. Cross stated that the operations of the extension offices vary widely, as they are impacted by restrictions set at the local community level. He highlighted certain COVID-related initiatives (publications, online programming, sewing of masks, and food delivery), along with research and other services that have continued throughout the pandemic. Dr. Cross closed his remarks by discussing veterinary services and clinical education. President Boyd remarked on the critical work being performed through the extension offices, especially with respect to food assistance given the closures of schools and summer camps.
- **Health and Safety** – Chancellor Schwab began his remarks by providing an overview of the work being performed by UTHSC in setting up testing centers and offering lab services for COVID-19 testing. He then reviewed the plans in place to address health, safety, and welfare concerns, including: (i) personal protective equipment, face coverings, and hand sanitizer; (ii) immunizations and self-health checks; (iii) research lab safety; (iv) clinical rotations; (v) facilities (cleaning, signage, access, etc.); and (vi) testing, contact tracing, and reporting. Chancellor Schwab advised that UTHSC faculty, staff, and students are also required to follow the health and safety requirements of partner hospitals/clinics. The limitations of the effectiveness of one-time testing for students prior to arrival on campus were outlined, and he offered support for the recommended influenza immunization requirements for faculty, staff, and students. In response to questions, Mr. Stinnett explained the proposed immunization and vaccine requirements and exemptions therefrom, along with the rulemaking requirements pertaining to students.
- **Preparedness Plans** – Tiffany Carpenter, Vice President for Communications and Marketing, shared the University’s planning activities involving: (i) crisis communication; and (ii) tabletop exercises with the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency. The Trustees recommended the development of a communication strategy for COVID-19, such as identifying the top 5 to 10 things everyone should know for returning to campus. Ms. Carpenter highlighted examples



of signage and other materials being developed by the campuses in this regard. It was also suggested that advertising the support services, technology, and financial support being offered by the University to students during the pandemic could be beneficial from a recruitment perspective.

Following the presentations, the trustees and the administration discussed the following COVID-related matters –

- Impact on student success (in class v. online) for the spring and summer semesters;
- New initiatives to support student success for the upcoming fall semester;
- Peer benchmarking; and
- Engagement and support from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission.

Trustee Kara Lawson shared information as to the testing and safety protocols being followed by the Boston Celtics applicable to players and coaches. She also recommended that the administration reach out to other colleges/universities where students have returned to see what lessons may have been learned from their actual experiences.

#### **V. Other Business**

None.

#### **VI. Closing Remarks**

Chair Compton acknowledged the complexities and significance of the issues facing the University in light of the current environment. He expressed his gratitude for the efforts of the faculty, staff and students in responding to the crisis and for the thoughtful and detailed work that has been undertaken in planning for a reopening of the University’s campuses for the upcoming fall semester. It was noted that additional information would be provided in the Committee meetings and that there would be opportunities for further questions before any formal action is taken by the Board at the Annual Meeting.

#### **VII. Adjournment**

With no further questions or other business to come before the Board, the Chair adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cynthia C. Moore".

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Cynthia C. Moore  
Secretary and Special Counsel