



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION, RESEARCH, AND SERVICE COMMITTEE February 25, 2022

The Education, Research, and Service Committee of The University of Tennessee Board of Trustees met at 9:15 a.m. (CST) on Friday, February 25, 2022. The meeting was held in the Gault Fine Arts Center (Art Gallery) on the UT Southern campus located in Pulaski, Tennessee.

Committee Members Present: Donald J. Smith, Committee Chair; John C. Compton, Board Chair; Lane Gutridge (Student Trustee); Charles Hatcher, Tennessee Commissioner of Agriculture; Shanea A. McKinney; Phyllis A. Richey (Faculty Representative); Jamie R. Woodson.

Others in Attendance:

Trustees: Decosta E. Jenkins; Christopher L. Patterson; William (Bill) C. Rhodes III; and David N. Watson.

University Administration: President Randy Boyd; Linda Martin, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Success; Cynthia Moore, Board Secretary and Special Counsel; Stacey Patterson, Vice President for Research, Outreach, and Economic Development; Chancellor Steve Angle (UT Chattanooga); Chancellor Peter Buckley (UTHSC); Chancellor Keith Carver (UT Martin); Chancellor Mark LaBranche (UT Southern); and Chancellor Donde Plowman (UT Knoxville).

Ms. Moore announced the presence of a quorum. The meeting was webcast for the convenience of the University community, the general public, and the media.

Committee Chair Smith opened the meeting and welcomed new Trustee Shanea McKinney as a member of the Committee.

Consent Agenda

Committee Chair Smith asked if there were any requests to remove an item from the agenda. There being none, upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee approved: (i) the Resolution to adopt the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee, and (ii) the Resolutions pertaining to the other action items included on the Consent Agenda. (A complete list of the approved items appears at the end of these minutes.)

Authorization Concerning Extension of the Probationary Period Due to COVID-19 Crisis (Board Policy – BT0006)

Dr. Martin provided an overview of the Board’s policy with respect to the granting of extensions to the probationary period with respect to tenure review, including the changes that were approved to address the COVID-19 pandemic. She indicated that the crisis has proven to be more protracted and more disruptive to the work of the University’s faculty members than was anticipated in March 2020. The campuses’ Chief Academic Officers have recommended certain probationary period extensions in the following instances:

- An opportunity for faculty members who chose a one-year, rather than a two-year, extension during 2020, to seek an additional year of extension of their probationary period, for a total of a two-year extension due to the COVID-19 crisis.
- An opportunity for faculty members who opted out of any extension during 2020 to seek a one- or two-year extension of their probationary period due to the COVID-19 crisis.
- An opportunity for faculty members who were not employed at the University during 2020, including faculty members at the newly-added UT Southern campus, to obtain a one- or two-year extension of their probationary period due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee approved a recommendation that the Board of Trustees adopt the proposed Resolution granting authority to each campus Chancellor (or Chancellor’s designee) to make changes to tenure-track members’ probationary periods as a consequence of the pandemic (as set forth in Tab 2 of the meeting materials).

Standardized Testing in Admissions

Committee Chair Smith advised the members of the Committee that no action is being presented for the Committee’s consideration at this meeting. He indicated that the focus of the meeting’s conversation regarding standardized testing in undergraduate admissions will be to (i) provide an overview of the review process to date, (ii) outline the timeline for addressing Fall 2023 undergraduate admissions standards, and (iii) identify any remaining information that the Committee members believe is needed on this topic in advance of the June meeting.

Dr. Martin provided a detailed summary of the information provided to the Committee members on the use of standardized testing, beginning with the special session held on October 20, 2021, and the supplemental materials distributed in advance of the meeting (as set forth in an Appendix filed with these minutes). Dr. Martin also highlighted the results of the peer benchmarking that was performed, noting that a large number of the peer institutions are still reviewing what their policies may be post-COVID.

Committee Chair Smith highlighted that the final date for the Committee to consider any requests from the campuses for a change to the Board-approved admissions policies (the pre-

COVID) will be the upcoming June meeting. He opened the floor for comments and to solicit feedback from the Committee members and other Trustees present as to any additional information that they would wish to see before the June meeting.

An extensive discussion followed. Among items discussed, a request was made for the data to be consistently presented across all of the campuses and for the advocacy by the campuses to be separated from the objective data. In addition, the members requested that the administration continue to monitor the peer landscape and provide information that may be relevant to the question of possible competitive disadvantages associated with returning to the pre-COVID requirements. The Committee requested available peer-reviewed articles/data on the predictive value or biases associated with other individual factors considered in the admission review process (e.g., essays, letters of recommendations, etc.), along with any other information that may be available on other qualitative factors associated with the correlation of admissions decisions and student success. More information was also requested to better understand the overall process for evaluating admissions decisions with and without standardized tests. In the event that the campuses advocate for test-optional admissions, the Committee expressed an interest in having more information regarding how other matters such as awarding scholarships, placement, and student support services would be handled. Further, it was recommended that the Committee have an opportunity to hear from Penny Schwinn, Commissioner of Education, about the current landscape of Tennessee K-12 education and potential impacts from a broader state perspective.

Committee Chair Smith closed the discussion by requesting that any additional requests for information be presented to Dr. Martin by the end of February so that there is sufficient time to collect the requested information and distribute it in advance of the June meetings (prior to when the regular meeting materials are distributed).

Academic Affairs and Student Success

Dr. Martin presented an overview of Tennessee Public High School Graduate Trends and UT System Freshman Admission and Retention data. (Full copies of each of these reports are included in Tab 4 of the meeting materials filed with these minutes.)

Dr. Martin highlighted the disturbing decline in the number of college-going high school graduates both nationally and in Tennessee. The Committee members expressed their concerns over the data presented, especially the loss in prospective students to out-of-state colleges. Committee Chair Smith stated that he believes that the recent acquisition of Martin Methodist College and the establishment of UT Southern may provide an opportunity to address this trend. He noted the current demographics of high school graduates. More work is required in terms of improving the diversity composition of the institutions and ensuring that all prospective students have an opportunity to consider, attend, and be successful at a UT System campus.

With no further business to come before the Committee, the Chair adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,



Cynthia C. Moore
Secretary and Special Counsel

Approved Consent Agenda Items

- Minutes of the Prior Meetings (October 20, 2021 and October 21, 2021)
- Academic Program Modification, Bachelor of Mass Media and Strategic Communications (UT Martin)
- New Academic Program, Master of Science degree in Marketing (UT Knoxville)
- Grant of Tenure upon Initial Appointment