



# THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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## MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION, RESEARCH, AND SERVICE COMMITTEE June 24, 2024

The Education, Research, and Service Committee of The University of Tennessee Board of Trustees met at 2:00 p.m. (EDT) on Monday, June 24, 2024. The meeting was held in the Agriculture and Natural Resources Building, located at the University of Tennessee, in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Committee Members Present: Jamie R. Woodson, Committee Chair; John C. Compton, Board Chair; Charles Hatcher, Commissioner, Tennessee of Department of Agriculture; Shanea A. McKinney; Donald J. Smith; Sean Walker (Faculty Representative).

Other in Attendance:

*Trustees:* Bradford D. Box; Decosta E. Jenkins; Christopher L. Patterson; William (Bill) C. Rhodes III; David N. Watson; and T. Lang Wiseman.

*University Administration:* President Randy Boyd; Bernard Savarese, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Research, and Student Success; Cynthia C. Moore, Board Secretary and Special Counsel; Chancellor Steve Angle (UT Chattanooga); Chancellor Peter Buckley (UT Health Science Center); Chancellor Yancy Freeman (UT Martin); Interim Chancellor Linda Martin (UT Southern); and Chancellor Donde Plowman (UT Knoxville). In addition, other members of the UT senior leadership and administrative staff were present.

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.

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### **Opening Remarks of the Committee Chair**

Committee Chair Jamie Woodson welcomed everyone to the meeting. She recognized Sean Walker, the faculty representative serving on the Committee, and Woodi Woodland, the student trustee serving on the Committee, and thanked them for their many contributions over the past year. Committee Chair Woodson indicated that their terms would be expiring on June 30. Starting on July 1, the faculty representative to the Committee will be Dr. Beth Crawford from UT Chattanooga, and the student trustee will be Ms. Lisa Patel, who is a student at UT Knoxville.

### **Presentations**

UT Knoxville and Arizona State University Collaboration. Donde Plowman, Chancellor of UT Knoxville, provided an overview of recent efforts by the campus to expand its online capabilities. Dr. Plowman reminded the Committee of UT Knoxville's strategic vision approved by the Board, which is focused on "empowering learners of all ages and backgrounds." She reviewed the number of Tennesseans (977,000) with some college credits, but no degree. These individuals are often working full time who cannot enroll in a traditional degree program. The presentation also provided information on the number of Tennesseans currently studying fully online at out-of-state

institutions (41,000). Dr. Plowman introduced Dr. Bruce Behn and Dr. Shay Scott, who are both professors in the Haslam College of Business, who are leading UT Knoxville's Digital Learning team.

Chancellor Plowman indicated that UT Knoxville created the Digital Learning administrative unit to catalyze progress and to develop a strategy to double the programs available and triple the students studying online over the next three years. In order to accelerate such growth, UT Knoxville is collaborating with Arizona State University (ASU), the most successful public research institution serving online learners, which had over 65,000 students enrolled online in Fall 2023. The ASU collaboration has three main components: (i) optional advisory services; (ii) a course exchange that will allow fully online students to take selected courses from the other university, benefitting learners at both institutions; and (3) cooperation on innovation in instructional technology and pedagogy to better serve learners. Chancellor Plowman concluded her remarks by indicating that there will be a more detailed presentation made at the Fall 2024 meeting of the Committee.

UT System Performance Compared to Peers. Bernard Savarese, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Research, and Student Success, provided a review of the UT System's performance compared to its peers (comparable and aspirational as approved by the Board) broken down by each UT campus. Information was presented for the period from 2018 to 2022, which is the most recent data available. The presentation provided information on: (i) enrollment growth rankings (undergraduate, graduate, and total enrollment); (ii) admission and yield rates; (iii) first-year retention rates; and (iv) four-year and six-year graduation rates. The full presentation appears in Tab 1.2 of the meeting materials filed with these minutes.

FAFSA Update. Janet Schmitt, Assistant Vice Provost for Enrollment Management Operation (UT Knoxville), and Destin Tucker, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management (UT Martin), provided an update to the Committee on the new Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and its recent roll-out by the U.S. Department of Education. They began their presentation by highlighting some key statistics associated with the completion of the FAFSA form and college access:

- 35% of undergraduate students in the United States receive Pell Grants;
- 51% of Pell funding is awarded to students whose families earn less than \$20,000 annually;
- 88% of Pell funding goes to public universities;
- 133,225 recipients in Tennessee; average award of \$5,046; and
- FAFSA is required to be eligible for the Tennessee's Hope Scholarship and UT Promise.

Additionally, information was provided on the percentage of Pell recipients attending a UT campus.

The presentation included a summary of recent revisions to the FAFSA form, the delayed launch of the new FAFSA form, and the resulting impact on students and institutions. Across the UT System, there has been a decrease in the number of FAFSA forms received compared to the prior year. The presenters concluded their remarks by updating the Committee as to the University's activities to encourage students to complete the FAFSA form and other efforts to support students.

UT System Enrollment Plan. Dr. Savarese reviewed the status of the University's Strategic Enrollment Plan, including: (i) demographic trends; student availability; phase one priorities (coordinated systemwide strategy, system and campus operations (set of operating practices and metrics), and campus differentiation). He then shared with the Committee the UT System Enrollment Planning Vision:

*"To deliver on the public land-grant mission and help meet the workforce needs of the state, the five campuses of the University of Tennessee System, each with unique characteristics and offerings, seek to enroll and educate 71,000 students by 2030. Collectively, we will prioritize serving Tennesseans while enhancing academic quality, increasing access and affordability, ensuring fiscal sustainability, and supporting the success of all students. We will integrate campus enrollment plans and embrace our commitment to transparency, clarity, and integrity in the admissions process."*

The presentation provided further information on: (i) Fall 2023 enrollment and Fall 2030 enrollment targets for each of the campuses and, in aggregate, for the UT System; (ii) the framework associated with enrollment planning; (iii) strategic enrollment priorities and initiatives; and (iv) next steps. Dr. Savarese responded to questions raised by the Trustees pertaining to the enrollment goals, infrastructure to support the planned growth, collaboration among the UT campuses, and anticipated competition from institutions in neighboring states.

The full presentation appears in Tab 1.4 of the meeting materials filed with these minutes.

### **Guaranteed Admissions Policy Review and Update**

Dr. Savarese provided an overview of the history of the guaranteed admissions policy approved by the Board, including the rationale for the policy. He provided insights as to what has worked well during the first year of implementation, along with opportunities for improvement. Dr. Savarese shared feedback that the University has received from the high school guidance counselor community and others. He noted that only 30% of Tennessee High Schools were able to submit class rank data of their applicants. In addition, as the GPA/ACT requirements applicable to UT Chattanooga, UT Martin, and UT Southern for guaranteed admission are similar to their rolling admission standards, it has created some inadvertent confusion as to whether applicants were still eligible to apply if they did not meet the guaranteed admissions criteria. Dr. Savarese presented the University Administration's recommendation for adjusting the criteria for guaranteed admissions for the next admissions cycle (Fall 2025 class).

Committee Chair Woodson opened the floor for discussion on the proposed changes. There was an extensive discussion regarding the eligibility requirements and the potential impacts. Dr. Savarese and the Chancellors responded to Trustee questions regarding, among other things: (i) data to support the recommended changes; (ii) whether a change is warranted at this time (only a single year under the policy); (iii) the ability of prospective students to be successful, given the proposed reduction in the ACT score, and whether additional support services would be necessary; and (iv) the anticipated impact of raising the GPA requirement, at UT Chattanooga, UT Martin, and UT Southern. In order for the University Administration to properly consider and respond to

feedback provided by the Trustees, action on this item was deferred to full Board of Trustees meeting on June 25, 2024.

## **Consent Agenda**

Committee Chair Woodson 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).

## **Other Business and Adjournment**

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

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/ Cynthia C. Moore  
Cynthia C. Moore  
Secretary and Special Counsel

### Approved Consent Agenda Items

- Minutes of the Prior Meeting
- 2024 Institutional Mission Profile Statements
- Authorization for Conferral Degrees, 2024-25 Academic Year
- Granting of Honorary Degrees, UT Knoxville
  - Senator Lamar Alexander
  - Ms. Rita Geier
- Proposed Faculty Handbook Revisions, UT Knoxville
- Proposed New Academic Unit (Department of Political Science and Global Affairs, UT Martin)
- Tenure Recommendations Requiring Board Approval
  - Grant of Tenure upon Initial Appointment
  - Grant of Tenure upon Early Consideration

### Information Items

- Certification of Degrees Conferred
- 2024 Tenure & Promotions