



## **ACADEMIC & STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**September 28, 2023**

**Roaden University Center, Room 282**

### **MINUTES**

**Meeting was streamed live via link found on this web page:**

<https://www.tntech.edu/board/board-and-board-committee-meetings.php>

#### **AGENDA ITEM 1 – CALL TO ORDER**

The Tennessee Tech Board of Trustees Academic & Student Affairs Committee met on September 28, 2023 in Roaden University Center, Room 282. Chair Rhedona Rose called the meeting to order at 8:13 a.m.

Chair Rose asked Mr. Lee Wray, Secretary, to call the roll. The following members were present:

- Rhedona Rose
- Jeannette Luna
- Addison Dorris
- Barry Wilmore

Other board members also in attendance were Trudy Harper, Thomas Lynn, Fred Lowery, Tom Jones, and Johnny Stites. A quorum was present. Tennessee Tech faculty and staff and members of the public were also in attendance.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 2 – APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chair Rose asked for approval of the minutes of the June 22, 2023 Academic & Student Affairs Committee meeting. Trustee Wilmore moved to recommend approval of the June 22, 2023 Academic & Student Affairs Committee minutes. Trustee Luna seconded the motion. Mr. Wray called a roll call vote. The motion carried unanimously.

*Lee Wray 12/20/23*

### **AGENDA ITEM 3 – ENROLLMENT UPDATE**

Karen Lykins, vice president for enrollment and communication, joined the meeting via teams and noted that the university's overall headcount for fall 2023 rose to 10,117 students (8,838 undergraduate and 1,279 graduate), fueled by the addition of nearly 3,000 new students and the fourth largest freshman class in university history (1,988 new first-time freshmen). New freshmen at Tennessee Tech had an average high school GPA of 3.68 with an average ACT score of 23.7 and are from 85 of Tennessee's 95 counties, 28 other states and 21 other countries. Ms. Lykins also shared a snapshot of the overall students' and new freshmen students' ethnicity, race, and gender; including gender differences for the colleges.

Ms. Lykins also informed trustees of ongoing 2024 recruitment efforts, including Tennessee Tech's preview day, campus visits, Tech to You tours (admission events in targeted areas of the state), high school counselor visits, a new application system, and the addition of 67 Trailblazers (Tennessee Tech students who give personal tours to prospective students and their families).

Ms. Lykins concluded her presentation by sharing that her team has created focus groups and a follow-up survey, to study why last year's students who were admitted and chose not to come to Tennessee Tech did so. They are hoping to use the data to improve recruitment efforts in the future. She also mentioned that digital marketing has been expanded to include graduate studies.

### **AGENDA ITEM 4 – PROVOST'S REPORT**

Provost Bruce began her report by providing an overview of how Tennessee Tech students are, on average, enrolling in courses both in terms of the number of Student Credit Hours (SCH) and the mix of online vs on ground courses. Provost Bruce shared data that showed that Tennessee Tech's undergraduate students are enrolling predominantly in in-person/on-ground courses (57% all on ground). The average SCH for these students was 14. Forty percent of undergraduate students took some on ground and some online and only 3% took all online. Graduate student data showed 48% took all on ground, 42% all online, and 10% some on ground and some online.

She then provided a very high-level overview of the number of courses being taught this fall semester (over 2300 undergraduate courses and over 400 graduate courses, for a total of almost 2800 course sections).

Provost Bruce then provided details about how our students, as a whole, academically performed this past year (fall, spring, summer). The data indicated that at the end of the spring semester, Tech's undergraduate students as a group had a collective GPA of 3.15. The freshmen class GPA was slightly lower than the previous year by 0.08. The table that Provost Bruce shared indicated that our retention of last year's freshman class did decline slightly. The retention rate has varied from 77% to 78.5%, with this most recent year being 77.3%. However, withdrawals

from the university this past year were significantly fewer, showing an almost 20% decrease.

Provost Bruce also shared a snapshot of graduation rates and degrees awarded. The data indicated that last year we awarded 1,824 Bachelor's degrees, which was lower than the past few previous years, due to the fact that we had much smaller entering freshmen classes four, five, and six years prior to that. The master's and doctoral degrees were up with the master's degrees awarded being significantly up, which prompted an increased effort in marketing the graduate programs that has produced more than a 25% increase in applications.

Provost Bruce also provided data showing that Tennessee Tech's rate of first-time freshmen completing at least 30 credit hours during their first full year at the university has increased to 40% – far outpacing the state and national average of universities participating in the study. Provost Bruce attributed this, in part, to Tech's flat-rate tuition model, implemented before the start of the 2020 – 2021 academic year and how we responded to COVID.

Provost Bruce shared some student success initiatives that included an emphasis on in-person experiences and attendance reporting tools with follow-up advising for all undergraduates. She also shared some initiatives specific to freshmen and sophomore students that include a focus on courses that impact student retention, course restructures, supplemental instruction, peer-to-peer tutoring, and college specific initiatives.

Provost Bruce concluded her report by highlighting Tennessee Tech's study abroad program. She reported that 155 students studied abroad in the spring and summer of 2023. She then highlighted a specific group student study abroad trip where 10 students participated in a two-week study abroad course led by two faculty members, in the country of Ghana in West Africa. The students were undergraduate and graduate students studying elementary and secondary education, exercise science, and music. The trip included working with a village school where Tennessee Tech students offered interactive lessons, reading activities, and presentations. The students, supported by donations from faculty, staff, and the community, also provided the school's library with reference and story books, assisted with their teaching lab, and band equipment repairs.

## **AGENDA ITEM 5 – STUDENT AFFAIRS REPORT**

Dr. Polk-Johnson, vice president for student affairs, detailed the success of fall 2023 Week of Welcome activities, which included 35 events over 9 days. One of these events included the first-ever "College Town Kickoff," held on Aug. 19. The event was a block party-style community gathering in downtown Cookeville that drew more than 2,500 attendees. She shared that this was a great way to bring the students and the community together. The event included a ferris wheel, community booths, carnival games, a concert, and much more. Dr. Polk-Johnson said that the event was a huge success and that they are planning on doing the event again next year.

Dr. Polk-Johnson also detailed the recent renovation of the Leona Lusk Officer Black Cultural

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Center and noted that Intercultural Affairs' mentoring program has seen a 30% increase in mentee participation year-over-year.

Dr. Polk-Johnson concluded with a report on efforts to maintain student safety on campus, including threat assessment trainings for faculty and staff. She also reported that we have no students in hotels this year and that we have contracted with off-campus consultants for students interested in transitioning from residence halls.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 6 – RESEARCH END-OF-YEAR REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023**

Dr. Carl A. Pinkert, interim vice president for research, highlighted the university's recent all-time record for externally funded research – reaching \$36.3 million for fiscal year 2023. Dr. Pinkert also noted the continued success of the university's Rural Reimagined outreach efforts, for which students have now collectively contributed more than 110,000 volunteer service hours over the last year, and the university's annual Eagle Works entrepreneurship program and pitch competition, which has yielded two patents and one pending patent and has led six students with startup businesses creating 38 jobs. Dr. Pinkert also highlighted the 2023 Research and Creative Inquiry Day, which was a university-wide research and scholarship "mini conference" with 237 student and 82 faculty advisor participants.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 7 – UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT END-OF-YEAR REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023**

Dr. Braswell, vice president for university advancement, provided an end-of-year report for university advancement for fiscal year 2023. Dr. Braswell, shared fundraising totals for fiscal year 2013 to fiscal year 2023. He pointed out an overall upward trend, even with the total for FY23 slipping some from the record-setting previous two years. He then shared reasons FY23 was a little lower, including large gifts from three philanthropists in the previous two years and the totals reflect the nearly \$10 Million committed for the Ashraf Islam Engineering Building. He mentioned that with a campaign forthcoming and the presence of several large projects, he expects future totals to continue in an upward trajectory.

Next Dr. Braswell, discussed the importance of donor-funded scholarships. He commented that to continue growing enrollment and keep Tennessee Tech affordable for students, donor-funded scholarships are more important than ever. He shared information regarding the number and total amounts of scholarships awarded over the last ten fiscal years, pointing out that together these measures indicate that donor-funded scholarships play an important role in the University's scholarship portfolio. He shared that in the last five years, the number of awards has increased by 61% and the amount of total awards offered has increased by 96%. He informed the Board members that scholarships will be a heavy emphasis in the upcoming campaign.

Dr. Braswell then pointed out that fundraising is currently playing a role in at least six projects and informed the Board members that Tennessee Tech is counting on private gift support of at least 50 million dollars to fuel ongoing campus revitalization. He also mentioned the

importance of faculty from all disciplines who obtain external funding for their creative work and scholarly endeavors, the vast majority of which involve working with students. He shared the four named endowed faculty positions and mentioned the need to increase these positions to retain and recruit outstanding faculty and bolster externally-funded research.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 8 – POLICY 217 (STUDENT ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT)**

Provost Bruce presented Policy 217, Student Academic Misconduct, to the Board of Trustees for an out-of-cycle approval of recommended revisions.

Provost Bruce explained that she tasked two groups to examine the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on Tennessee Tech. These two groups were the standing university academic misconduct committee and an ad hoc task force on AI. Provost Bruce explained that in the late spring, early summer of this year, these two committees jointly recommended an immediate revision to policy 217 so that language concerning academic integrity with regards to the use or misuse of generative AI platforms could be included in the policy prior to the start of the fall 2023 semester. Per Policy 101, the President approved the out-of-cycle revision with the contingency that these revisions would be brought before the Board of Trustees at the earliest possible date.

New guidelines for student use of generative AI platforms in classroom assignments were addressed. Importantly, the revised guidelines do not prohibit student use of AI outright, but rather ensure university instructors have final say in approving sources used for classroom assignments. The revised guidelines prohibit the unapproved use of generative AI to create content that is submitted as one's own. Provost Bruce shared that the ad hoc AI task force has also been working to harness the capabilities of AI and recommending thoughtful ways to bring this changing technology into the classroom experience, so Tennessee Tech students are prepared to effectively utilize AI technologies in their future careers.

Trustee Luna moved to send Policy 217 to the Board for approval and to be placed on the Board's consent agenda. Trustee Willmore seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 9 – EXPEDITED LETTER OF NOTIFICATION (ELON) FOR THE MASTER OF SCIENCE (MS) IN INDUSTRIAL AND SYSTEMS ENGINEERING**

Provost Bruce briefed Trustees on the university's plan for a new Master of Science in Industrial and Systems Engineering. She informed the Board members that the university submitted a Letter of Notification (LON) to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (TEC) outlining a proposal for the degree program earlier this month, noting that THEC's own reporting showed that industrial engineering is an "in-demand occupation" that is key to eight of the nine industry clusters in Tennessee. The university proposes an implementation date of spring 2025.

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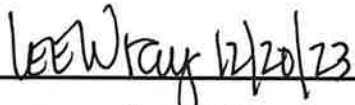
**AGENDA ITEM 10 – OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

**AGENDA ITEM 11 – ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the Academic & Student Affairs Committee adjourned at 9:44 a.m.

Approved,

  
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Lee Wray, Secretary