

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
ACADEMIC, RESEARCH, AND STUDENT SUCCESS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

November 18, 2022  
Johnson City, Tennessee

The East Tennessee State University Board of Trustees' Academic, Research, and Student Success Committee met on Friday, November 18, 2022, at 8:00 a.m. in the East Tennessee Room of the D.P. Culp Student Center.

**I. Call to Order**

Committee Chair Janet Ayers called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

**II. Roll Call**

Board Secretary Dr. Adam Green led the roll call. Since Committee Chair Janet Ayers participated remotely, in accordance with Tennessee Code § 8-44-108 section (c) (3), Dr. Green asked Committee Chair Ayers for the record if she could clearly hear so that she could participate in the meeting and if she would identify any persons present in the room with her from which she was participating in the meeting. She reported that she could hear and was alone. Those in attendance stated that they could hear Committee Chair Ayers. Additionally, Dr. Green stated that because a trustee is participating remotely, any votes must be taken by roll call.

Committee members present were:

Committee Chair Janet Ayers  
Trustee Dr. Virginia Foley  
Trustee Dr. Linda Latimer  
Trustee Melissa Steagall-Jones  
*Absent: Trustee Charles Allen*

Trustees Allen Archer, Dorothy Grisham, Dr. Lisa Piercey and Ron Ramsey also participated in the meeting.

### **III. Approval of the Academic, Research, and Student Success Committee Minutes from September 16, 2022**

The minutes from the September 16, 2022, meeting of the Academic, Research, and Student Success Committee were approved as submitted with Trustee Foley making the motion and Trustee Steagall-Jones seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **IV. Action Item: Approval of Expedited Letter of Notification Regarding Establishment of a B.S. in Mechatronics Engineering**

Provost Kimberly McCorkle presented for the committee's discussion and approval an Expedited Letter of Notification (ELON) regarding the establishment of a Bachelor of Science in Mechatronics Engineering to be housed in the College of Business and Technology.

Dr. McCorkle outlined the established academic approval process as follows:

- The ELON has been reviewed and approved internally by the Academic Council and President Brian Noland.
- The ELON must be approved by the Board of Trustees. If approved, the ELON will be sent to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) where it will be posted for public comment.
- Upon completion of all required program development processes, the new program will be presented to the Board of Trustees as a notification item before the proposed program implementation in Fall 2023.

Several members of the committee commended the work of staff in the Provost's Office and the College of Business and Technology for striving to meet workforce demands and for creating a stackable, portable credential that aligns with academic programs at Northeast State Community College. In response to questions posed by committee members, faculty from the department confirmed that representatives from local companies have offered letters of support and met with faculty and staff to discuss the proposed program. Provost McCorkle and faculty from the department also confirmed that ETSU has the facilities to launch the program but will need to purchase some additional equipment. Trustee Ayers encouraged faculty and staff to explore partnerships with local businesses to share space so that students may learn in real-world environments. President Noland noted that space needs and opportunities would be considered as part of the Facilities Master Planning process that is currently underway.

The committee voted to approve the ELON. Trustee Steagall-Jones made the motion, and Trustee Foley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **V. Overview of ETSU Global Year: Ecuador 2022-23**

Dean Chris Keller and faculty provided an overview of the ETSU Global Year: Ecuador 2022-23 program. Sponsored and led by ETSU's Center for Global Engagement, the ETSU Global Year Program is a comprehensive internationalization effort at ETSU that provides the campus, curricula, and surrounding community with opportunities for global learning and interconnectedness through a year-long series of events, course enhancements, projects, and initiatives that focus on a single country. Committee members expressed support for the program. Board Chair Dr. Linda Latimer asked staff to elaborate on scholarship opportunities available to assist students in studying abroad. Staff outlined various sources of support including:

- educational study abroad scholarships
- undergraduate research funding
- reallocation of student fee revenue by some colleges to support study abroad opportunities

## **VI. BlueSky Tennessee Institute Update**

Dean Tony Pitarese and Executive Director Leon provided an update on the BlueSky Tennessee Institute, ETSU's academic partnership with BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee (BCBST) to address workforce pipeline needs in informational technology. Key points included:

- The program allows students to earn an ABET-accredited computing degree in a little over two years.
- An initial cohort of 32 students was admitted in summer 2022 and will graduate in December 2024.
- As a part of the partnership, BCBST constructed educational space in their Chattanooga corporate headquarters and turned that space over to ETSU to operate as the BlueSky Chattanooga Center.
- Students enrolled in the first cohort will have all their educational expenses covered by scholarship funds provided from four external partners.
- The first round of admissions interviews for the second student cohort was held in early November.
- Recruitment for two additional BlueSky faculty members is underway.

Trustees commended the program and asked questions regarding the eligibility and entrance requirements. Staff confirmed that requirements mirror those of the university and that students of all ages and backgrounds could be considered. Trustee Grisham discussed her visit to the BlueSky Tennessee Institute site and commended staff and partners for creating an extraordinary learning environment with wrap-around student support.

## **VII. Overview of New and Expanded Student Success Initiatives**

Staff noted that retention rates dropped during the pandemic but are beginning to show signs of improvement. Staff members outlined a wide range of services and supports implemented during the fall 2022 semester to promote retention and progress toward degree. These include:

- Early outreach to freshmen
- Individualized graduation plans
- Development of a coordinated care network
- Additional academic coaching
- Expansion of first-year experience courses
- Expansion of peer mentoring
- Launch of an AI-powered chat bot to answer student questions

Trustee Piercey asked staff to elaborate on how they are aligning mental health services with student success efforts. Staff explained that course instructors and advisors refer students to the Dean of Students who then ensures students are connected with the ETSU Counseling Center.

## **VIII. Committee Discussions**

During the general discussion period, committee members applauded the recent Symposium on Innovation and Education for the Bioeconomy held on campus on October 27 and organized by Professor David Golden and the ETSU Research Corporation. Board Chair Dr. Latimer noted she had received a great deal of positive feedback from the community and encouraged those in attendance to consider how the university can continue and expand upon this community engagement.

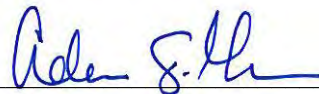
## **IX. Other Business**

No other business was brought before the committee.

## **X. Adjournment**

The committee was adjourned by Trustee Ayers.

Respectfully submitted,



---

Adam Green  
Secretary of the Board of Trustees

Approved by the Board of Trustees at its February 17, 2023 meeting.