



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MINUTES OF THE WINTER MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES February 28, 2025

The University of Tennessee Board of Trustees met at 10:00 a.m. (CST) on Friday, February 28, 2025. The meeting was held in the Russell Duncan Ballroom of the Boling University Center located at the University of Tennessee at Martin in Martin, Tennessee.

Trustees Present: John C. Compton, Chair; Bradford D. Box; Charles Hatcher, Tennessee Commissioner of Agriculture; Decosta E. Jenkins; Shanea A. McKinney; Christopher L. Patterson; William (Bill) C. Rhodes III; Donald J. Smith; David N. Watson; Lisa Patel (Student Trustee); and Jamie R. Woodson.

University Officers in Attendance: President Randy Boyd; Cynthia C. Moore, Board Secretary and Special Counsel; Interim Chancellor Robert Dooley (UT Chattanooga); Chancellor Peter Buckley (UT Health Science Center); Chancellor Yancy Freeman (UT Martin); Chancellor Linda Martin (UT Southern); and Chancellor Donde Plowman (UT Knoxville). Other members of the UT senior leadership and administrative staff were also in attendance.

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.

Opening Remarks by the Chair

Board Chair John Compton opened the meeting and welcomed Deacon Rodney Freed, who serves as Campus Minister, Skyhawk Catholic Campus Ministry, who provided the invocation. Chair Compton welcomed trustees and attendees back to UT Martin, noting the significant progress since the last visit, including the appointment of Chancellor Yancy Freeman. He acknowledged the contributions of the local team in their efforts in support of the Board's visit to the campus, and he praised the dual basketball victories the previous night. Chair Compton commended the quality and focus of the recent committee meetings, which addressed key topics such as enrollment growth, retention, faculty and student engagement, and survey results. He urged focus on addressing areas of opportunity identified in recent surveys, particularly those with lower satisfaction scores.

Requests to Address the Board

Chair Compton announced that there were no requests to address the Board.

President's Update

In his introductory remarks, President Randy Boyd reflected on the evolving and now collaborative relationship with the University Faculty Council, highlighting how trust and communication have

significantly improved since he began his tenure. President Boyd praised the faculty's engagement across campuses. Reflecting on the productivity of the two-day schedule, he commended the UT Martin campus for their hospitality, energy, and effective hosting of the Board's meetings and events. President Boyd underscored the value of interacting with students, calling those exchanges some of the most inspiring moments of Trustees' visits. He commended the Board for their commitment and leadership and emphasized the rare collaborative spirit across the Board, the administration, UT campuses, the governor and state legislature.

President Boyd then acknowledged current challenges from federal executive orders, rapidly changing regulations, and national uncertainty in higher education. He cited lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic response that are continuing to serve the University well in the current environment, including: (i) maintaining close working relationships (e.g., daily leadership calls during COVID); (ii) enhancing transparency; and (iii) making timely decisions with the best information available. President Boyd highlighted the University's strong financial position, stressing that this financial health allows it to weather storms and respond to crises without major disruption. He expressed appreciation for state's investments in the University's people, programs, and campuses and celebrated UT Health Science's recent designation as an R1 institution.¹

Proposed 2025 Goals and Objectives. President Boyd indicated that 2025 is the midpoint of the "Greatest Decade in the University's History." He then provided a high-level overview of certain 2025 Goals and Objectives for the coming year organized under the five pillars of the UT Strategic Plan.

➤ ***Enhancing Educational Excellence***

- Grow total enrollment systemwide to over 63,500 students
- Launch new student information system
- Host an inaugural summit to improve male student retention and success

➤ ***Expanding Research Capabilities***

- Secure contract renewal for managing Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL)
- \$30 million Angel Fund to foster a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem
- Facilitate the expansion of housing options near ORNL to support student opportunities with the lab

➤ ***Fostering Outreach and Engagement***

- Host Grand Challenges summit (already completed)
- Expand 4-H STEM² initiatives
- Establish a Land Use Institute (UT Institute of Agriculture)

➤ ***Ensuring Workforce and Administrative Excellence***

- Hire Chancellors for UT Chattanooga and UT Southern
- Improve Continuity Planning

¹ Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Research 1: Very High Spending and Doctorate Production).

² Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

- Develop Long-Range Financial Plans

➤ ***Advocating for UT***

- Advocate for state policy changes to advance capital project needs
- Expand state agency collaborations
- Promote UT Campuses through the “Find Your UT” campaign

The full list of 2025 Goals and Objectives are included in Tab 1.1 of the meeting materials filed with these minutes.

Statement of Aspirations. President Boyd presented the Statement of Aspirations as a reaffirmation of the University's commitment to its land-grant mission and values. Crafted in collaboration with the Board Chair and the Board Secretary and Special Counsel, the Statement emphasizes a dedication to removing barriers to higher education and making academic opportunities more affordable, while upholding high academic standards and preparing students to be responsible, engaged citizens. President Boyd clarified that the Statement does not signal any funding or mission changes for individual campuses; rather, it serves to elevate the foundational land-grant values of access, service, and outreach across the entire UT System.

The Board Chair read the Statement into the record.

Statement of Aspirations

We are dedicated to expanding access to educational opportunities, striving to remove barriers, and making academic pursuits more affordable. Consistent with the University's commitment to high academic standards, student achievement, and the preparation of responsible citizens, we believe that engaging with individuals from all backgrounds and perspectives fosters a vibrant learning environment that enhances critical thinking and intellectual growth. Our collective strengths make us stronger, and we are committed to promoting an atmosphere where all members of the University community feel welcome, can thrive, and achieve success.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Board of Trustees unanimously approved the Statement of Aspirations (**Resolution 002-2025**).

Committee Reports

Audit and Compliance Committee. Committee Chair Decosta Jenkins reported that the Committee addressed four action items, including (i) approval of the 2025 Institutional Compliance Plan, (ii) revisions to the Internal Audit Charter, (iii) revisions to the Committee's charter, and (iv) the 2025 Audit Plan. The Committee and department charters were updated to align with new auditing standards. It was noted that the Committee's Charter requires approval by the Board and by the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury. He highlighted that four presentations were also delivered, covering topics such as the systemwide continuity operations assessment, the development of a University-wide privacy program, a campus safety and security update at UT Martin, and litigation updates related to Title IX. In the executive session, the committee received the state's audit findings, which resulted in an unmodified (clean) opinion with no material

weaknesses — an outcome praised as a strong reflection of sound internal controls and management practices.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Board of Trustees unanimously approved the revised Audit and Compliance Committee Charter (*Resolution 003-2025*).

Education, Research, and Service Committee. Committee Chair Jamie Woodson outlined several action items, including adoption of a new artificial intelligence policy, approval of new academic programs and modifications, creation of a new academic unit and off-site centers, and faculty tenure recommendations. The Committee also received systemwide updates on enrollment trends, noting that Tennessee is projected to lead the nation in growth of high school graduates by 2041. Reports highlighted increasing college-going rates, improved retention and yield data, and findings from faculty and climate surveys. Additionally, an overview of the UT System's growing research impact and goals for better data tracking and analysis was shared.

Finance and Administration Committee. Committee Chair Bill Rhodes summarized that the committee reviewed positive financial performance, with revenues up 7.9% and expenses up 6.4% year-to-date. Updates were provided on the implementation of the new Oracle Cloud enterprise resources planning (ERP) system, athletics financial reporting, and revised budgets. The Committee approved key action items, which are being presented to the Board for approval. He noted that the resolution for approval of the master lease of the Cherokee Mills property (UT Knoxville) was modified to prioritize acquisition of the property in a timelier fashion. Workforce data, along with systemwide compensation benchmarking were discussed. The Committee also received an update on information technology initiatives and efforts to advance cybersecurity.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Board of Trustees in a single vote unanimously approved (i) the FY 2024-25 Revised Operating Budget (*Resolution 004-2025*); (ii) the FY 2024-26 State Budget Amendment Request (*Resolution 005-2025*); and (iii) the FY 2025-26 Tuition Levels, UT Health Science Center (*Resolution 006-2025*).

Proposed Strategic Plan, UT Martin

Chancellor Yancy Freeman presented the UT Martin Strategic Plan for 2025–2030, titled “*Watch us Soar.*” He emphasized that the plan is ambitious, data-informed, and designed to position UT Martin as the premier regional university in the Southeast. He noted that the planning process involved over 300 individuals across the UT Martin community, reflecting broad-based collaboration. The plan is built around five major goals, 24 strategies, and 55 measurable targets, each with defined metrics to track progress. The five strategic goals are structured around both ongoing initiatives and new priorities. They are designed to support sustainable growth, academic excellence, campus infrastructure, regional partnerships, and institutional pride. Chancellor Freeman categorized the plan's strategies into three types: initiatives already in progress, new ideas to be developed, and emerging goals that require baseline data. Chancellor Freeman provided the following highlights included in the proposed plan.

- ❖ **Goal 1: Sustainable Enrollment Growth.** This is the plan's centerpiece, with UT Martin aiming to grow to 10,000 students by 2030, requiring approximately 5% enrollment growth annually.

Key strategies/targets:

- Develop a comprehensive enrollment plan
- Improve retention for at-risk groups:
 - First-generation students: Increase retention from 69% to 81%
 - Pell-eligible students: Increase from 71% to 83%
 - Veteran and military students: Increase from 65% to 77%

- ❖ **Goal 2: Exceptional Education and Service.** This goal focuses on academic innovation and faculty development to enhance UT Martin's academic reputation.

Key strategies/targets:

- Invest in the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL)
- Promote active learning and technology adoption (e.g., AI training)
- Target: Ensure at least 50% of faculty participate in CTL-sponsored workshops

- ❖ **Goal 3: Physical and Virtual Campus Enhancement.** UT Martin recognizes the importance of its learning spaces—both physical and digital—in student success and retention.

Key strategies/targets:

- Expand and improve on-campus housing to support retention and growth
 - Target: Achieve 95% housing occupancy.
 - Target: Add 20% more housing beds by 2030.
- Monitor and improve retention rates of residential students

- ❖ **Goal 4: Regional Partnerships and Community Engagement.** UT Martin seeks to strengthen its role as a regional leader in West Tennessee through outreach, advocacy, and collaboration.

Key strategies/targets:

- Establish college-level advisory boards to connect with business and industry
- Increase the number of partnerships with regional organizations
 - Target: Grow from 56 to 70 partnerships (a 25% increase)

- ❖ **Goal 5: Celebrating Excellence and Achievement.** Chancellor Freeman stressed the importance of recognizing faculty, staff, and student success as part of building a strong campus culture.

Key initiatives/targets:

- Create a new student award, the *Skyhawk Pinnacle Award*, modeled after UT Knoxville's Torchbearer Award
- Launch digital badges and career ladders for staff professional development
- Publish an annual faculty scholarship and creative activity report to highlight academic contributions

Chancellor Freeman concluded his remarks with strong optimism about the plan's ability to transform UT Martin. He noted that the plan is ambitious but achievable and reflects a deep commitment to measurable progress and inclusive leadership. Trustees praised the plan for its specificity, data-driven targets, and commitment to growth and innovation.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Board of Trustees approved The University of Tennessee at Martin Strategic Plan – Watch us Soar (2025-2030) (*Resolution 007-2025*).

Consent Agenda

Chair Compton asked if there were any requests to remove any items from the Consent Agenda. There being none, upon motion duly made and seconded, the Board approved: (i) the Resolution to adopt the minutes of the prior meeting of the Board; 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

None.

Closing Remarks and Adjournment

In his concluding remarks, Board Chair Compton reflected on the significance of the meeting, praising the collaborative efforts of trustees, campus leadership, and staff across the UT System. He acknowledged that he and fellow trustees Donnie Smith and David Watson reappointments are subject to confirmation by the state legislature, and he expressed what an honor it is to serve on the University's Board of Trustees. He also highlighted the importance of strong leadership, especially with ongoing chancellor searches at UT Chattanooga and UT Southern and stressed that leadership continuity is critical to the University's continued success. Looking ahead, he noted the next key events on the calendar, including executive and annual meetings, and closed by thanking everyone for their dedication and professionalism, declaring the meeting a success and expressing enthusiasm for the next in-person gathering in Chattanooga.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/Cynthia C. Moore

Cynthia C. Moore

Secretary and Special Counsel

Approved Consent Agenda Items

- Minutes of Prior Meeting (October 25, 2024)
- Items from the Education, Research, and Service Committee
 - Board of Trustees Policy on Artificial Intelligence
 - New Academic Programs
 - Master of Science in Social Work, UTM
 - Bachelor of Science - Communication and Information, UTK
 - Master of Science in Retail, Hospitality & Tourism Management, UTK
 - Master of Science in Sustainability, UTK
 - Academic Program Modifications
 - Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies, UTK
 - Recreation and Sport Management, Bachelor of Science, UTK
 - New Academic Units
 - Dept. of Sociology, Anthropology, and Geography, UTC
 - Dept. of Criminal Justice, UTC
 - New Off-campus Centers, UTK
 - Grant of Tenure upon Initial Appointment
- Items from Finance and Administrative Committee*
 - Master Lease Agreement – 2200 Sutherland Avenue, Knoxville, TN, UTK
 - Sale of Transfer of Gift Properties Not Held for Institutional Use

() The proposed Increase of Administrative Fee – Consolidated Investment Pool was deferred by the Committee and not presented for approval.*

(See Resolutions 008-2025 through 019-2025)

Attachments

Copies of the following material(s) were shown or distributed at the meeting and are filed with the official minutes of this meeting.

- President's PowerPoint Presentation: Midway Through the Greatest Decade