



# THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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## MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION, RESEARCH, AND SERVICE COMMITTEE June 30, 2025

The Education, Research, and Service Committee of The University of Tennessee Board of Trustees met at 2:30 p.m. (EDT) on Monday, June 30, 2025. The meeting was held in the Wolford Family Athletics Facility at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Committee Members Present: Jamie R. Woodson (Committee Chair); John C. Compton (Board Chair); Charles Hatcher, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Agriculture; Shanea A. McKinney; Elizabeth K. Crawford (Faculty Representative); and Lisa N. Patel (Student Trustee).

Other Trustees Present: Bradford D. Box, Decosta E. Jenkins, William C. (Bill) Rhodes III, and David N. Watson.

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 Melinda Arnold (UT Southern); Chancellor Lori Mann Bruce (UT Chattanooga); Chancellor Peter Buckley (UT Health Science Center); Chancellor Yancy Freeman (UT Martin); and Chancellor Donde Plowman (UT Knoxville). Additional members of the UT senior leadership and 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.

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### Opening Remarks of the Chairperson

Committee Chair Jamie Woodson called the meeting to order, expressing appreciation to the UT Chattanooga campus for its hospitality. She thanked Interim Chancellor Robert Dooley for his leadership and welcomed Chancellor Bruce. Chair Woodson acknowledged the service of Dr. Beth Crawford and Lisa Patel, both completing their terms on the Committee, and introduced the incoming representatives – student representative Ashlee Mallon (UT Martin) and faculty representative Dr. Ken Vickers (UT Southern) – who attended as observers.

### Requests to Address the Board

Chair Woodson noted that there were no requests to address the Board assigned to be heard by the Committee.

## Consent Agenda

Chair Woodson referred to the items listed under the Consent Agenda in Tab 1 of the meeting materials and asked if any items should be removed for separate consideration. 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).

## Presentations

Federal Research Landscape. Dr. Kari Babski-Reeves, Associate Vice President for Research, provided an overview of the University's primary research funding sources, noting that approximately 48% of such support was related to federal funding. She then addressed recent changes in the federal research funding landscape and the impact on the University. Dr. Babski-Reeves reported that, as of May 31, 2025, grant terminations and suspensions across the UT System impacted sixty (60 grants and awards), totaling \$38.7 million in unspent funds, with one grant from the US Department of Agriculture accounting for \$27 million. These grants involve 96 faculty and staff members, along with 35 graduate students and 23 undergraduate students.

Dr. Babski-Reeves outlined trends affecting major funding agencies, including potential reductions in indirect cost rates and proposed budget cuts. She indicated that the gap in new research funding is even more concerning than the current lost funding. In this regard, she highlighted the decrease in number of new awards between May and June 2025, compared against prior years. She explained that the slowing of new federal awards and the termination of some existing grants had created uncertainty across higher education, but the UT System remains positioned to adapt and pursue emerging opportunities. She shared strategies for both the short-term and long-term to retain and protect research expertise and capacity, such as opportunities for collaboration with industry and state partners, improvements in process efficiency, and the need for continued investment in infrastructure and faculty development.

Committee members commended the administration for maintaining research momentum and discussed strategies to expand private-sector partnerships and faculty recruitment during a period of national funding constraints.

UT System Performance Compared to Peers. Dr. Bernard Savarese, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Research, and Student Success, presented the annual UT System performance analysis comparing each campus to its peer institutions. He reviewed five-year trends in enrollment, highlighting the following retention, yield, and graduation rates:

- UT Knoxville – Enrollment increased by more than 23% over five years, with record retention (2024, 91.9%) and strong in-state demand. The campus continues to focus on improving graduation rates and expanding capacity.

- UT Chattanooga – Graduate enrollment and yield rates showed improvement; and first year retention for Fall 2024 stands at 71.9%.
- UT Southern – Enrollment grew by more than 8% over five years, and first-year retention reached 77.2%, a 22-point increase since 2021.
- UT Martin – Achieved three consecutive years of enrollment growth and record retention (2024, 76.8%), outperforming peer institutions.
- UT Health Science Center – Enrollment remained stable overall; a decline in number of pharmacy enrollments was an intentional decision based on the recent increase in pharmacy schools and anticipated open pharmacy workforce positions.

Dr. Robert Dooley, who had been serving as Interim Chancellor of UT Chattanooga, provided additional context regarding UT Chattanooga’s recent efforts to strengthen student retention and engagement. He shared that the campus is finalizing its strategic plan, which sets a goal of achieving an 80% first-year retention rate by 2030. He shared that two task forces were established earlier in 2025 to develop actionable recommendations, and a number of short-term initiatives were launched for the current academic year, including enhanced advising, early intervention outreach, and retention grants. Dr. Dooley reported encouraging early results, with UT Chattanooga’s unofficial first-year retention rate already improving by several percentage points over the prior year. He expressed optimism that the combination of faculty engagement and expanded student support services will sustain upward progress. Trustees commended the focused approach and discussed the importance of sharing effective retention strategies across campuses.

Trustees inquired about the relationship between retention and graduation rates, noting that while first-year retention has improved significantly across campuses, corresponding gains in four- and six-year graduation rates have not yet been fully realized. Chancellor Plowman observed that graduation rates lag behind retention improvements, and ongoing student success programs – particularly those launched in Fall 2022 – are expected to yield measurable gains beginning with the 2026 and 2027 cohorts.

Additional Trustee discussion included:

- A request that future reports display each campus’s specific enrollment, retention, and graduation goals alongside peer data to provide visual benchmarks for progress.
- Interest in campus-level breakdowns of persistence by year (first-to-second, second-to-third, etc.) and by college or major, to help identify areas for targeted intervention.
- Questions about how economic and programmatic factors—such as co-op programs, part-time enrollment, or changes in student demographics—affect persistence and graduation metrics.
- A recommendation to expand reporting to include post-graduation outcomes, such as employability, licensure passage, and salary averages.

President Randy Boyd and Chair Woodson emphasized that progress in these areas directly supports the University's broader goal of enrolling and successfully graduating 71,000 students by 2030. Chair Woodson added that ongoing collaboration among campuses to identify and scale successful student success strategies remains critical to meeting that objective.

UT Knoxville: Next Level Aspirations. Chancellor Donde Plowman presented on UT Knoxville's "Next Level Vision" for advancing research and academic excellence. She outlined the campus's aspiration to become a world-class public research university that drives innovation and economic growth for Tennessee. Chancellor Plowman emphasized that achieving this goal will require strategic investment in faculty and facilities and the use of data-driven decision-making tools. The presentation highlighted three major components:

- Faculty Excellence – Expanding cluster and targeted hires in priority research areas such as quantum computing, advanced materials, and artificial intelligence.
- Place-Based Innovation – Developing new research districts that foster collaboration among faculty, students, industry, and government partners.
- Data for Decision-Making – Leveraging the Academic Analytics partnership to benchmark research productivity and guide strategic growth.

Representatives from Academic Analytics discussed tools and data used to benchmark UT Knoxville against members of the Association of American Universities (AAU), focusing on research expenditures, citations, major faculty awards, and other metrics. The analysis showed UT Knoxville at approximately the 70th percentile for research strength per capita relative to faculty size among peer and aspirational peers, with opportunity to grow faculty awards and recognition. The data supports strategic hiring, retention efforts, and understanding departmental strengths and weaknesses, as well as leveraging unique assets and relationships across Tennessee.

Committee members expressed strong support for the campus's forward-looking vision and encouraged continued alignment of research priorities with state and federal needs. The Committee members expressed interest in periodic updates on these efforts.

### Campus Strategic Enrollment Plans

#### **University of Tennessee at Martin**

Chancellor Yancy Freeman presented UT Martin's Strategic Enrollment Plan, outlining a comprehensive approach designed to strengthen recruitment, retention, and the overall student success profile. He reported that UT Martin has achieved three consecutive years of enrollment growth, reversing post-pandemic declines and positioning the campus for

sustained stability. UT Martin aims to reach an enrollment target of 10,000 students by 2030; a key goal embedded in the UT System’s Strategic Plan.

Chancellor Freeman explained that UT Martin has adopted a data-informed enrollment management framework that integrates recruitment, financial aid, and student success strategies. The plan focuses on four priority areas: (1) expanding the student pipeline through targeted outreach; (2) improving yield and retention; (3) enhancing academic and student life support; and (4) strengthening the connection between degree programs and workforce demand.

UT Martin has transitioned to a fully in-house enrollment management model, which allows for greater control and coordination of recruitment efforts. The campus is leveraging predictive analytics to identify high-potential student markets within Tennessee and surrounding states, with particular emphasis on rural, first-generation, and adult learners. A growing number of partnerships with Tennessee high schools, community colleges, and dual-enrollment programs are helping to expand the institution’s reach.

On the student success side, Chancellor Freeman highlighted several initiatives that have yielded measurable gains in persistence and retention. These include the implementation of a case management advising system, a restructured first-year experience course, and expanded academic coaching and tutoring services. Financial support programs—such as “retention grants” for students facing short-term financial challenges—have also contributed to record fall-to-spring and year-to-year retention rates.

Trustees commended UT Martin’s momentum and raised questions regarding potential barriers to achieving the goals set forth in the enrollment plan, including international student recruitment and future infrastructure needs to support the anticipated growth.

## **University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

Chancellor Donde Plowman thanked the Trustees for challenging the administration’s thinking around its enrollment strategy, citing standardized testing and early, guaranteed admissions. Kari Alldredge, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, then provided an overview of UT Knoxville’s Strategic Enrollment Plan, which combines for the first time undergraduate, graduate, and online goals.

The plan sets forth a goal of increasing enrollment to 55,000 students by 2030. Ms. Alldredge stated that UT Knoxville’s plan is guided by three interrelated priorities: (1) delivering an exceptional Volunteer experience; (2) expanding access to the modern land grant; and (3) advancing Tennessee through workforce and community impact.

Ms. Alldredge reflected on recent outcomes, highlighting record enrollment (26.7% growth from 2020-2024) and record first-year retention (91.9%). This growth, she explained, has required careful management of admit rates and capacity to ensure that the institution

continues to serve Tennessee students effectively while maintaining its national competitiveness. She also provided an overview of certain demographic and competition trends, which were considered when developing the plan.

Key elements of the enrollment growth strategy are: (1) transfer pathway programs and partnerships; (2) growing graduate pipelines through four-plus-one programs and leveraging financial aid such as the fifth year of the HOPE scholarship; (3) expanding online offerings; and (4) enhancing student success initiatives. Ms. Alldredge concluded her remarks by reviewing some of the primary objectives and key performance indicators, including:

- Achieving an 80% 6-year undergraduate campus-based graduation rate by 2030;
- Maintaining annual enrollment of 4,000+ first-time, first-year Tennesseans to support our in-state access mission;
- Increasing transfer student enrollment by 20% by 2030 by streamlining pathways, enhancing partnerships with community colleges, and improving support for transfer student success; and
- Increasing total online enrollment to 14,000 by 2030 to meet learner demand.

Chair Woodson concluded the discussion by noting that both UT Martin and UT Knoxville have demonstrated progress in aligning their enrollment and student success strategies with the UT System's overarching goal of enrolling 71,000 students by 2030. She encouraged the administration to look at their goals in terms of addressing performance gaps (e.g., Pell v. non-Pell recipients). With respect to the UT Knoxville plan, Chair Woodson recommended a continued emphasis on identifying highly qualified Tennessee students so as to exceed the goal of 4,000 first-time, first-year Tennesseans and expressed an interest in learning more about the campus' strategies to attract and enroll more of these students.

### **Other Business and Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Chair Woodson thanked the presenters and participants for their contributions and adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

### Approved Consent Agenda Items

- Minutes of the Last Meeting (February 27, 2025)
- 2025 Institutional Mission Profile Statements
- Authorization for Conferral of Degrees, 2025–26 Academic Year
- Faculty Handbook Revisions:
  - UT Chattanooga
  - UT Martin
- New Academic Programs:
  - Bachelor of Science in Applied Engineering (UT Knoxville)
  - Bachelor of Science in Applied Cybersecurity (UT Knoxville)
- New Academic Units – UT Chattanooga
- Tenure Recommendations
  - Grant of Tenure upon Initial Appointment
  - Grant of Tenure upon Early Consideration

### Information Items

- Certification of Degrees Conferred
- 2025 Tenure & Promotions
- UT Southern Nursing