



# THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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## MINUTES OF THE FALL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES October 24, 2025

The University of Tennessee Board of Trustees met at 10:45 a.m. (EDT) on Friday, October 24, 2025. The meeting was held at the University's system administration office located at the UT Tower, Plaza Level, 400 W. Summit Hill Drive, Knoxville, Tennessee.

Trustees Present: John C. Compton, Board Chair; Bradford D. Box; Hon. William E. Haslam; Andy Holt (Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Agriculture); Decosta Jenkins; Ashlee C. Mallon (Student Trustee); Shanea McKinney; Christopher L. Patterson; William (Bill) C. Rhodes III; Donald J. Smith; J. David Wade; David N. Watson; T. Lang Wiseman; and Jamie R. Woodson.

University Officers in Attendance: President Randy Boyd; 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). Other members of the 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.

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### Opening Remarks by the Chair

Chair Compton called the meeting to order and welcomed the attendees. He invited Steve Moldrup, Co-Director of the Collegiate Abbey at UT Knoxville, to provide the invocation. He welcomed new Trustees – former Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam, Commissioner Andy Holt, David Wade, and Student Trustee Ashley Mallon – and thanked them for their willingness to serve.

Chair Compton reflected on the previous day's campus tour and committee meetings, noting the scale of capital investments underway, including significant academic, research, and student-life facilities. He emphasized the importance of transparency and accountability in financial reporting and capital planning, thanking University leadership for their candor and diligence.

He also highlighted the University's strong participation in the recent Tennessee Higher Education Commission's convening of Tennessee public higher education boards, noting that the Trustees and University leadership were well represented and that the University's collaborative posture with state partners continues to yield positive results.

Chair Compton stated that the primary focus of the Board meeting would be discussion of the proposed UT System strategic plan.

## Requests to Address the Board

Dr. Paul Gellert, Professor in the Department of Sociology at UT Knoxville and Treasurer of the UT Knoxville chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), addressed the Board regarding matters relating to academic freedom, freedom of expression, and concerns about potential federal actions affecting universities. A written copy of the speaker's full remarks is filed with these minutes.

## President's Address

### 2025 Achievements

President Boyd began his remarks by highlighting record-setting performance across the UT System.

- ***Educating Tomorrow's Workforce:*** Fall 2025 enrollment reached a record 64,866 students. Student success indicators also reached record levels, including first-year retention (85.8%), four-year graduation (57.7%), and six-year graduation (65.6%). In-state student debt declined by 6%, reflecting continued attention to affordability and responsible financial stewardship.
- ***Research Changing the World:*** Systemwide research expenditures (HERD<sup>1</sup>, unofficial) reached a record \$524.1 million, representing 21.5% growth. The Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) management contract was renewed, and new innovation initiatives were launched, including an Entrepreneurial Fellows Program, Angel Network Fund, and graduate student housing in Oak Ridge to support research collaboration.
- ***Fostering Outreach and Engagement:*** UT System initiatives included the Grand Challenges Summit, implementation of the SMART Opioid Settlement program in partnership with Tennessee counties, and the launch of STEMOVATE to strengthen middle school STEM pathways.
- ***Ensuring Workforce and Administrative Excellence:*** New Chancellors were hired at UT Chattanooga and UT Southern. A new debt policy was approved by the Tennessee State School Bond Authority to enhance capital flexibility, and the enterprise-wide ERP system was launched to improve operational efficiency and data integration.
- ***Advocating for UT:*** The University achieved a record fundraising year totaling \$492.8 million. Significant infrastructure investments were secured, along with more than \$58 million in new recurring funds for operational support. The statewide mural campaign continues ahead of schedule, contributing to increased public visibility and engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) survey conducted by the U.S. National Science Foundation.

## Investment and Impact: Legislative Recap

President Boyd provided a detailed overview of the 2025 legislative session and expressed appreciation to the Governor and General Assembly for historic investments in the University of Tennessee.

President Boyd highlighted several significant capital and recurring investments:

- ***UT Knoxville Chemistry Building - \$165.2 million:*** Fully funding the University's top capital priority, this facility will expand instructional and research capacity in high-demand STEM fields, support research competitiveness, and modernize aging laboratory infrastructure.
- ***UT Martin College of Business Building - \$57.5 million:*** A transformational investment that will strengthen workforce development in West Tennessee, enhance experiential learning, and expand capacity in business and applied economic programs.
- ***4-H Infrastructure - \$45.5 million:*** Funding to modernize statewide 4-H facilities, supporting youth leadership development and strengthening the agricultural and workforce pipeline across rural Tennessee.
- ***Expansion of the Institute of American Civics - \$1.4 million recurring:*** Ongoing support to advance civic education and programming, reinforcing the University's leadership in constitutional scholarship and public discourse.
- ***Center for Local Planning - \$2 million recurring:*** Recurring investment to assist Tennessee communities with infrastructure planning, economic development, and growth management.
- ***UT Southern Operations - \$1.9 million recurring:*** Operational support to strengthen academic programming and long-term sustainability at UT Southern.
- ***Medical Equipment Funding - \$10.3 million:*** Capital support to modernize clinical and research equipment, particularly within health science programs, ensuring high-quality training and patient care.
- ***Law Enforcement Leadership Initiative - \$500,000:*** Funding to expand professional development and leadership training for law enforcement across Tennessee.

President Boyd noted that these investments reflect continued legislative confidence in the University's ability to deliver measurable statewide impact in workforce preparation, research advancement, rural outreach, and healthcare.

## Tennessee Higher Education Commission Master Plan (2025-2035)

President Boyd provided an overview of the framework of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's Master Plan, organized around the themes of **Aligned, Achievable, and Agile**.

The statewide plan calls for stronger coordination across higher education, expanded access and affordability, and a more data-informed, workforce-responsive system. President Boyd noted that the University’s proposed strategic plan is reflective of these statewide objectives.

### Be One UT Strategic Plan

President Boyd presented the Be One UT Strategic Plan as the roadmap for completing the “Greatest Decade” and positioning the University for sustained impact through 2030. He reiterated that the University’s mission, vision, and values remain unchanged and that the plan is designed to translate those commitments into measurable institutional progress.

The plan identifies four strategic priorities – Accelerate Access, Academic Excellence & Student Success; Drive Research & Innovation; Fuel the Workforce of Tennessee & Beyond; Advance Community Engagement – supported by four strategic enablers (Develop Talent to Advance Our Mission; Administrative Excellence; Advocacy & Investment; and Infrastructure Modernization). President Boyd explained that each priority and enabler will be supported by a focused set of key performance indicators (KPIs) designed to provide transparency, accountability, and strategic discipline. He then proceeded to highlight certain measures for each of the priorities and enablers.

Trustees expressed support for the overall framework and its alignment with the THEC Master Plan. Discussion focused on sharpening the execution and measurement components of the plan. Trustees emphasized that “less is more” with respect to KPIs. They encouraged the Administration to identify a concise set of high-impact, outcome-driven metrics rather than an extensive list of measures. Trustees noted that a smaller number of clearly defined indicators – such as enrollment growth (distinguishing on-ground and online), retention and graduation rates, student debt levels, research funding growth, workforce placement outcomes, and capital project delivery benchmarks – would better drive institutional focus and accountability.

Trustees further recommended:

- Establishing clear baselines and specific numeric targets for each primary KPI;
- Prioritizing outcome measures (e.g., workforce placement in Tennessee, research commercialization results) over activity measures;
- Ensuring capital investments and debt financing decisions are explicitly linked to advancing defined strategic outcomes; and
- Implementing a consistent Board reporting cadence organized by strategic pillar.

Trustees underscored that KPIs should be ambitious, measurable, and aligned with state performance expectations, while remaining limited enough to maintain clarity and strategic discipline.

President Boyd thanked Trustees for their guidance and indicated that there would be further refinements to the plan reflecting the Board’s direction.

## Committee Reports

Audit and Compliance Committee. Trustee Decosta Jenkins, Chair of the Audit and Compliance Committee, reported that the committee met the day before and received an update on safety and security, which focused on recent “swatting” incidents, national events, and efforts on hazing prevention. The committee heard from each of the chancellors about proactive measures on their campus related to these types of matters. The committee then went into a non-public executive session for routine discussion of ongoing audits, investigations, litigation, and other confidential matters as permitted by state law.

Education, Research, and Service Committee. Trustee Jamie Woodson, Chair of the Education, Research, and Service Committee, indicated that the committee met earlier in the day and that two action items approved by committee are set forth on the Board’s Consent Agenda, namely grants of tenure upon initial appointment and the establishment of a new academic unit (College of Nursing, UT Chattanooga). The committee also received presentations on campus strategic enrollment plans (including UT Chattanooga, UT Southern, and UT Health Science Center), and an update on the 2025 COACHE Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey.

Finance and Administration Committee. Trustee Bill Rhodes, Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee, stated that the committee met the day before and reviewed fiscal year 2025 financial performance. The committee also received a detailed update on implementation of the Oracle Cloud ERP system. Committee Chair Rhodes reported that while meaningful progress and several operational improvements have been realized, additional work remains. He noted that leadership remains focused on ensuring that the system functions effectively and that employees have the tools and support necessary to perform their responsibilities efficiently.

Trustee Rhodes further reported that the committee reviewed the FY 2026–27 Operating Budget Appropriations Request for Specialized Units and is recommending it for Board approval. The committee also considered several capital projects (a proposed property acquisition in Memphis, a proposed lease in Knoxville, and a budget increase for the UTIA broiler and research facility), along with a proposed affiliation agreement for the benefit of the UT Health Science Center. The capital-related items and the affiliation agreement appearing on the Consent Agenda are recommended for the Board’s approval.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Board of Trustees unanimously approved the FY 2026-27 Operating Budget Appropriations Request for Specialized Units (*Resolution 055 -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

No additional business was brought before the Board.

## Closing Remarks and Adjournment

Before adjournment, Chair Compton thanked Chancellor Plowman and the UT Knoxville team, as well as the UT System staff, for hosting and organizing the meeting. He noted that it had been a productive two days of discussion and expressed appreciation to Trustees and University leadership for their engagement and thoughtful participation.

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

- Board Member Committee Assignments
- 2026 Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule
- Annual Report to the General Assembly
- Resolution Appointing a Managerial Group for U.S. Government Contracts
- Statement of Commitment and Annual Institutional Review Executive Summary, UTHSC
- Grant of Tenure upon Initial Appointment
- New Academic Unit, College of Nursing, UTC
- UTHSC Real Property Acquisition - 23 S. Pauline Street, Memphis, TN
- UTK Lease - 2400 Sutherland Avenue, Knoxville, TN
- UTIA ARP Budget Increase – Broiler and Research Facility
- UTHSC Affiliation Agreement (Starr Regional Medical Center)
- Report on Uses of FY 2025 Tuition and Fee Revenue

*(See Resolutions 056-2025 through 067-2025)*

## Attachments

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

- Presentation: President's Report (Oct. 24, 2025)
- Remarks of Professor Paul K. Gellert