



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION, RESEARCH, AND SERVICE COMMITTEE October 24, 2025

The Education, Research, and Service Committee of The University of Tennessee Board of Trustees met at 8:30 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.

Committee Members Present: Jamie R. Woodson (Committee Chair); Hon. William E. Haslam; Andy Holt (Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Agriculture); Ashlee C. Mallon (Student Trustee); Shanea A. McKinney; Donald J. Smith; and Kenneth W. Vickers (Faculty Representative).

Other Trustees Present: Bradford D. Box; Decosta E. Jenkins; Christopher L. Patterson; William C. (Bill) Rhodes III; J. David Wade; David N. Watson; and T. Lang Wiseman.

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.

Opening Remarks of the Chairperson

Committee Chair Jamie Woodson called the meeting to order, expressing appreciation to system leadership for hosting the Board and to Chancellor Donde Plowman for the campus tour. Chair Woodson acknowledged the value of being able to engage with campuses and receive updates on key strategic initiatives. Chair Woodson welcomed the new members of the Committee - Governor Haslam, Commissioner Holt, Student Trustee Ashlee Mallon (UT Martin) and faculty representative Dr. Ken Vickers (UT Southern).

Requests to Address the Board

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, including the minutes of the prior meeting and the grant of tenure upon initial appointment, and asked if any items should be removed for separate consideration. There being none, upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee approved the Consent Agenda.

Action Item(s) - New Academic Unit, College of Nursing, UT Chattanooga

Chancellor Lori Mann Bruce presented a proposal to elevate the School of Nursing at UT Chattanooga to a standalone College of Nursing. She outlined the growth and scope of nursing programs on the campus, including strong enrollment demand, national recognition, high licensure pass rates, and the projected nursing workforce shortage in Tennessee. Chancellor Bruce emphasized that the proposed organizational change would enhance program visibility, strengthen faculty recruitment and retention, and expand student enrollment capacity, while requiring only modest financial and administrative adjustments. Committee members discussed workforce alignment, enrollment capacity, and the anticipated impact of new facilities on program growth. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee approved the proposed new academic unit.

Presentations

UT System Student Success Indicators

Dr. Bernie Savarese, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Research, and Student Success presented the annual UT System Student Success Indicators Report, explaining that the fall update focuses on enrollment, first-year retention, graduation rates, and time-to-degree as part of a recurring annual reporting cycle. He reported that the UT System continues to experience sustained enrollment growth, reaching a new systemwide record and reflecting more than a decade of consecutive annual increases. First-year retention reached an all-time high across the system, while four-year and six-year graduation rates continued to trend upward. Dr. Savarese emphasized that recent gains in four-year graduation rates reflect the maturation of student success initiatives implemented across campuses over the past several years.

Dr. Savarese further reported that average time-to-degree has declined systemwide, driven by improvements in academic advising, expanded use of degree planning tools, early intervention strategies, and increased four-year completion. He noted that these outcomes support the UT System's long-term goal of enrolling and successfully graduating 71,000 students by 2030. Dr. Savarese then reviewed campus-level performance.

Committee members engaged in extensive discussion regarding the interpretation and use of student success metrics. Trustees emphasized the importance of understanding student pathways beyond first-year retention.

Specifically, trustees requested that future reports:

- **Disaggregate persistence and retention data by year** (first-to-second year, second-to-third year, etc.) to better identify points of attrition and opportunities for targeted intervention.
- **Provide clearer treatment of intra-system transfers**, including how students who transfer between UT campuses are reflected in retention and graduation metrics and how those outcomes compare to students who remain at their original campus.
- **Include information on students who transfer outside the UT System**, distinguishing between those who continue in higher education elsewhere and those who exit higher education entirely.
- **Present campus-specific enrollment, retention, and graduation goals alongside peer and aspirational benchmarks**, enabling clearer assessment of progress toward stated objectives.
- **Expand reporting on post-graduation outcomes**, including employment, licensure passage rates, and other indicators of workforce and societal impact.

Trustees also expressed interest in understanding how factors such as part-time enrollment, experiential learning opportunities, financial aid policies, and changing student demographics influence persistence, graduation rates, and time-to-degree.

Dr. Savarese acknowledged these requests and indicated that the administration will continue refining future reports to provide deeper insight into student outcomes and pathways. Chair Woodson emphasized that enhanced reporting will support effective oversight and the sharing of successful student success strategies across campuses.

Campus Strategic Enrollment Plans

- ❖ **UT Chattanooga.** Chancellor Bruce presented UT Chattanooga's strategic enrollment plan, emphasizing a balanced approach that integrates measured enrollment growth, improved student success outcomes, and alignment with regional workforce needs. She reported that the campus has achieved multiple consecutive years of enrollment growth and continues to make progress toward its long-term enrollment and retention goals.

Chancellor Bruce highlighted the campus's focus on strengthening first-year and continuing student retention as a central enrollment strategy. Key initiatives include expanded advising capacity, enhanced early-alert and intervention systems, targeted outreach to at-risk students, and increased coordination between academic and student affairs units. She explained that these efforts are intended not only to improve first-year persistence but also to strengthen second- and third-year retention, which directly affects graduation rates.

In discussing enrollment mix, Chancellor Bruce outlined continued attention to transfer student pathways, graduate enrollment growth, and programmatic alignment with regional labor market demand, particularly in high-need fields. She emphasized the importance of managing growth within existing infrastructure and support capacity to ensure that enrollment increases do not outpace student success resources.

- ❖ **UT Southern.** Chancellor Melinda Arnold presented UT Southern's strategic enrollment plan, highlighting the campus's strong post-transition growth trajectory and substantial improvements in first-year retention following its integration into the UT System. She reported significant enrollment gains over the past five years and noted that these gains have been accompanied by meaningful improvements in student persistence and completion outcomes.

Chancellor Arnold described a comprehensive set of strategies supporting enrollment and retention, including strengthened recruitment pipelines, expanded merit-based financial aid, and targeted scholarship policies designed to reduce attrition related to financial barriers. She emphasized recent investments in professional advising, the implementation of scholarship recovery mechanisms for students who temporarily fall below renewal thresholds, and expanded academic support for courses with high D, F, and withdrawal (DFW) rates.

Trustees commended the campus's progress and emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum while ensuring that enrollment growth remains aligned with student success capacity, academic quality, and long-term institutional sustainability.

- ❖ **UT Health Science Center.** Chancellor Peter Buckley provided an introduction and Dr. Cynthia Russell, Vice Chancellor for Academic, Faculty, and Student Affairs, presented an update on the campus's strategic enrollment planning process, describing a coordinated, system-aligned approach to enrollment management across health science disciplines.

Leadership reported strong first-time licensure pass rates across professional programs and outlined plans to selectively expand enrollment in areas of demonstrated state and regional healthcare need. Dr. Russell emphasized that enrollment decisions are informed by workforce analyses, accreditation requirements, clinical placement availability, and faculty capacity, and that growth will be managed to preserve academic quality and program outcomes. The presentation also highlighted ongoing efforts to improve coordination across academic units, reduce silos, and strengthen interdisciplinary approaches to health sciences education, consistent with broader UT System priorities.

Trustees expressed interest in how enrollment targets align with projected healthcare workforce demand and requested continued access to demand and capacity analyses used to inform enrollment decisions.

Across all three presentations, trustees emphasized that enrollment growth should be evaluated in tandem with student success outcomes, including persistence, graduation rates, and time-to-degree. Committee members underscored the importance of aligning enrollment strategies with institutional capacity, workforce needs, and long-term student success, and encouraged continued refinement of enrollment plans informed by consistent, comparable data across campuses.

2025 COACHE Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey

Dr. Matt Matthews, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, presented results from the 2025 COACHE Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey, noting that this marked the first time all UT System campuses participated in the COACHE survey during the same administration cycle. He emphasized that systemwide participation enables more consistent benchmarking, comparative analysis across campuses, and a clearer understanding of faculty experience at the enterprise level.

Dr. Matthews clarified that the figures presented reflect response rates rather than satisfaction ratings and summarized key themes emerging across campuses, including faculty perspectives on workload, communication, professional support, and shared governance. He noted variation in results by campus and faculty cohort and explained that the survey supports both longitudinal trend analysis and peer benchmarking. Dr. Matthews reported that campus leadership teams are reviewing results and developing campus-specific action plans to address identified areas of concern. He also noted plans to use interim pulse surveys in non-COACHE years to monitor faculty sentiment and assess progress over time.

Committee members expressed appreciation for the systemwide administration of the survey and discussed the value of having a consistent baseline across campuses. Trustees emphasized the importance of translating survey findings into measurable actions, clearly communicating outcomes to faculty, and tracking progress over time. Chair Woodson encouraged continued transparency in reporting faculty climate data and expressed interest in future updates that connect survey results to specific institutional improvements.

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
- Grant of Tenure upon Initial Appointment

Information Items

- UT Research Foundation Annual Update
- Annual Report on Intercollegiate Athletics
- Overview of Campus Policies on the Use of Artificial Intelligence
- Education, Research, and Service Committee Work Plan
- Administrative Action to Terminate or Inactivate Academic Programs
- Non-degree Credential Enrollment/Completion Data
- Certification of Degrees Conferred
- Tenure Approvals and Promotions