THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION, RESEARCH, AND SERVICE COMMITTEE
June 30, 2026

The Education, Research, and Service Committee of The University of Tennessee Board of Trustees met at 8:00 a.m. (CDT) on Tuesday, June 30, 2026. The meeting was held in the Gault Fine Arts Building at the University of Tennessee Southern in Pulaski, Tennessee.

Committee Members Present: Jamie R. Woodson (Committee Chair); John C. Compton (Board Chair); Hon. William E. Haslam; Ashlee C. Mallon (Student Trustee); 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; Dr. Bernie 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 Committee Chair

Committee Chair Jamie Woodson called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance. She thanked Chancellor Melinda Arnold and the UT Southern team for their hospitality and recognized the progress underway on the campus. Chair Woodson also expressed appreciation to Faculty Representative Kenneth Vickers and Student Trustee Ashlee Mallon for their service and contributions to the Committee during the year.

Requests to Address the Board

There were no requests to address the Committee.

Proposed Campus and Academic Unit Reorganizations

UT Martin. Dr. Laurie Couch, Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, presented a proposal to reorganize the College of Business and Global Affairs and establish a School of Business within the renamed College of Business. The proposed school would

consolidate the Department of Accounting, Economics, and Finance; the Department of Marketing, Management, and Information Systems; and the MBA program under a single academic structure led by an Associate Dean. The Undergraduate Student Services Center, Chairs of Excellence, and Regional Entrepreneurship and Economic Development Center would remain outside the School and report through the College.

Dr. Couch explained that the reorganization is intended to increase faculty collaboration, support interdisciplinary curriculum and stackable credentials, create a more streamlined point of engagement for students and external partners, and align the organizational structure with common business-school practice. Faculty governance would be maintained through a faculty advisory committee and discipline- and school-level processes for curriculum, tenure, and promotion.

UT Southern. Dr. Prentice Chandler, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Student Experience, presented a proposal to establish UT Southern's inaugural College of Arts and Sciences and College of Professional Studies, together with a Center for Continuing Education and Workforce Development, for implementation in Fall 2026. He explained that the reorganization would replace the existing structure of six schools reporting directly to the Provost with two colleges led by deans and departments led by department heads.

Dr. Chandler stated that the new structure is intended to strengthen academic leadership, improve coordination and interdisciplinary collaboration, support shared governance, and provide a scalable organizational framework for the University's continued growth. The Center for Continuing Education and Workforce Development would provide an institutional home for adult learners, prior learning assessment, competency-based education, microcredentials, professional development, and workforce partnerships. He noted that the proposal was developed through a campus task force and broad faculty engagement and is expected to be budget neutral through the reallocation and repurposing of available resources.

Dr. Chandler discussed the proposed revisions to the UT Southern Faculty Handbook (presented in the consent agenda) in the context of the campus's academic reorganization. He explained that the revisions reflect the new college structure and associated changes in academic leadership and governance, including the transition of existing unit leaders to department head roles under the newly established deans. The revisions are intended to ensure that the Faculty Handbook appropriately reflects the organizational and governance structure being implemented for Fall 2026.

The Committee discussed the proposed leadership structure at UT Southern, including the roles of deans and department heads.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee approved a recommendation that the Board of Trustees adopt the resolutions approving the proposed academic reorganizations at UT Martin and UT Southern.

Consent Agenda

The Committee considered the Consent Agenda, which included: (i) approval of the minutes of the last meeting; (ii) 2026 Institutional Mission Profile Statements; (iii) authorization for conferral of degrees for the 2026-27 academic year; (iv) proposed Faculty Handbook revisions for UT Knoxville, UT Martin, and UT Southern; and (v) tenure recommendations requiring Board approval, including grants of tenure upon initial appointment and upon early consideration. Chair Woodson asked whether any Committee member wished to remove an item for separate consideration. There being no requests, and upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee approved the Consent Agenda as presented.

Proposed Changes to Board of Trustees Policy BT0006 - Policies Governing Academic Freedom, Responsibility, and Tenure

General Counsel Ryan Stinnett presented proposed revisions to BT0006 necessary to comply with Tennessee Public Chapter 761. He explained that the new law requires governing boards of public higher education institutions to adopt disciplinary policies addressing faculty misconduct and establishes requirements for notice, an opportunity to be heard, and decision-making authority in cases involving suspension or termination for misconduct.

Mr. Stinnett reviewed the principal proposed changes, including an updated definition of misconduct aligned with the University's Code of Conduct; application of the misconduct process to tenured and non-tenured faculty; authority for the Provost, following consultation with the Chancellor, to impose discipline for misconduct without a recommendation or vote by other faculty; and pre- and post-termination procedures designed to preserve due process. He emphasized that the revisions do not change the existing process for addressing unsatisfactory performance in teaching, research, or service.

The Committee discussed the placement of misconduct provisions within BT0006 and the need for a broader future review of the policy. Mr. Stinnett stated that the Administration intends to undertake a comprehensive review and may recommend separating the policy into more focused policies.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee approved a recommendation that the Board of Trustees adopt the proposed revisions to BT0006.

Proposed Reduced-Credit Undergraduate Degrees

President Randy Boyd introduced a proposal to authorize the development of reduced-credit undergraduate degree programs. He described the initiative as an opportunity to create more focused pathways that could enable students to enter the workforce sooner, reduce educational costs and student debt, and help address Tennessee workforce shortages. He emphasized that

proposed programs would focus on high-demand or emerging fields and would be expected to prepare graduates fully for success in their chosen careers.

The Committee heard from Dr. Stephen Pruitt, President of The Commission on Colleges and Universities (formerly known as the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges – SACSCOC), the University's institutional accreditor, regarding the accreditor's recently adopted framework for reduced-credit undergraduate degrees, and from Dr. Steven Gentile, Executive Director of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, regarding the State's developing approval framework. The discussion emphasized appropriate guardrails, including workforce alignment, strong curricular breadth and depth, work-based learning opportunities, clear differentiation from traditional bachelor's degrees, and consideration of pathways to further education.

Committee members discussed the potential for reduced-credit degrees to serve students who may not otherwise pursue a traditional 120-credit-hour bachelor's degree, rather than simply shifting students from existing programs. The Administration clarified that the action before the Committee would authorize the framework for such degrees; any specific reduced-credit degree program would return to the Board for separate approval.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee approved a recommendation that the Board of Trustees authorize the development and future consideration of reduced-credit undergraduate degree programs consistent with applicable accreditor and state requirements.

Proposed New Academic Programs

Bachelor of Fine Arts in Industrial Design, UTK. Dr. John Zomchick, Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor, presented a proposal to establish a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Industrial Design at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He described the proposed program as the first of its kind in Tennessee, connecting technology, manufacturing, design, and human-centered problem solving. The cohort-based studio program would prepare students to work in interdisciplinary teams and develop products and systems that are functional, intuitive, and responsive to consumer needs. Dr. Zomchick noted strong alignment with Tennessee's manufacturing and healthcare sectors and projected that program revenues would exceed costs by the second year.

Bachelor of Arts in Civic and Constitutional Thought, UTK. Dr. Zomchick presented a proposal to establish a Bachelor of Arts in Civic and Constitutional Thought through the Baker School of Public Policy and Public Affairs. The multidisciplinary curriculum would draw from political thought, law, history, economics, public policy, and philosophy and would emphasize civic literacy, civil discourse, analytical reasoning, and communication. The program is designed to support careers in law, education, government, public service, and other fields requiring strong critical-thinking and communication skills. It also would be structured to permit completion as a second major and to support an accelerated pathway to a J.D. degree.

Committee members expressed support for both proposals, noting their workforce relevance, interdisciplinary character, and contribution to the University's mission.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee approved recommendations that the Board of Trustees authorize UT Knoxville to establish the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Industrial Design and the Bachelor of Arts in Civic and Constitutional Thought, subject to required state approvals.

UT System Presentations

Periodic Post-Tenure Performance Review Update. Dr. Matt Matthews, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, provided an update on the University's Periodic Post-Tenure Performance Review process. He reviewed the history of the process, which was adopted in 2018 and implemented beginning in 2019, and explained its relationship to annual faculty performance reviews and other tenure and promotion reviews. The periodic review evaluates a faculty member's performance over a six-year period through faculty reflection, peer review, and administrative review.

Dr. Matthews reported that the first full cohort has now completed the process across the campuses that were part of the System when the process began, with approximately 99% of faculty members reviewed meeting expectations. He noted that the process has contributed to more consistent and robust annual reviews and has become an established component of the faculty lifecycle. The Committee discussed peer-review selection, faculty retirement decisions occurring near the review period, and the administrative and faculty time required to conduct the reviews. Chair Woodson suggested that the history and operation of the post-tenure review process be incorporated into orientation for new Trustees.

Faculty Pulse Survey Results. Dr. Matthews then presented the results of the inaugural UT Faculty Pulse Survey, administered in April 2026 as part of the University's effort to maintain an ongoing connection with faculty between administrations of the more comprehensive COACHE Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey. Approximately 1,400 to 1,500 faculty members participated across the surveys discussed, with the 2026 response rate estimated at approximately 35 to 40 percent.

Dr. Matthews reported that the systemwide faculty Net Promoter Score was -1, indicating that the percentage of faculty who would strongly recommend UT as a place to work was approximately balanced by the percentage who would not. He noted, however, that 60 to 78 percent of faculty respondents, depending on the campus, reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their campus as a place to work. The presentation also highlighted differences among the campuses and identified faculty workload as a recurring concern.

Committee members discussed the importance of increasing participation in future surveys so that results can be examined more meaningfully by college, faculty rank, tenure status, and other relevant groupings. Dr. Matthews noted that each campus had received an interactive

dashboard permitting more detailed analysis by college and tenure rank. The Committee also asked about opportunities to benchmark faculty engagement against peer institutions. While directly comparable external data were not immediately available, University leadership indicated that additional information from the COACHE survey and prior engagement surveys could provide useful context and agreed to return to the Committee with additional benchmarking information.

The Committee emphasized that the initial results should be viewed as a baseline for continuous improvement rather than simply as a scorecard and encouraged the campuses to use faculty feedback to identify opportunities for improvement and increase engagement over time. Dr. Matthews stated that planning was already underway for the Spring 2027 Pulse Survey and that the next COACHE survey is anticipated for Spring 2028.

Student Success

UT System Performance Compared to Peers. Dr. Bernie Savarese, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Research, and Student Success, presented the annual comparison of UT campuses with their comparable and aspirational peers. He reviewed enrollment, first-year retention, and four-year graduation trends and noted that nationally reported IPEDS[1] data lag the University's most current results.

The presentation highlighted strong enrollment growth at UT Knoxville and UT Southern; improved retention at UT Knoxville, UT Southern, and UT Martin; and significant recent gains in four-year graduation rates across the undergraduate campuses. UT Knoxville's most recent four-year graduation rate was 66.8 percent; UTC improved to 42.7 percent; UT Southern improved to 39.4 percent; and UT Martin reached 39.5 percent. For the UT Health Science Center, the presentation included degree production and professional licensure pass-rate comparisons, with the campus exceeding peer averages on most reported first-time board pass measures.

Student Success Outcomes by Year. Dr. Savarese previewed a new report designed to show what happens to students between first-year retention and graduation. Using cohorts scaled to 100 students and National Student Clearinghouse information, the report distinguishes students who remain enrolled or graduate at their original UT campus, students who continue or graduate elsewhere in higher education, and students who leave higher education. The Committee expressed interest in using the report to better understand persistence across the full student lifecycle and to identify opportunities to improve four-year graduation outcomes.

Chair Woodson emphasized the importance of four-year graduation rates, continued improvement relative to peers, and a future review of campus peer and aspirational peer groups in light of newly adopted strategic plans. The Administration indicated that work to reassess peer groups would begin in collaboration with the campuses.

[1] *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, National Center for Education Statistics.*

Other Business

There was no other business to come before the Committee.

Closing Remarks and Adjournment

Chair Woodson thanked the presenters and Committee members for their participation and noted that the discussion of student success would continue with the chancellors later that morning. There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

Information Items

- Certification of Degrees Conferred
- 2026 Tenure & Promotions
- First-Time Board Pass Rates: UTHSC