

FOCUS ACT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

~OVERALL~

Q: WHAT ARE THE EXPECTED BENEFITS OF THIS CHANGE?

A: Governor Haslam said he believes the TBR universities need individual boards that will focus solely on making their local institutions more responsive to the needs of students and the communities they serve. Local boards will have greater speed and agility to respond to the changing dynamics of higher education and the specific needs of the institutions.

Q: WHAT CHALLENGES DO WE ANTICIPATE WITH THE TRANSITION?

A: As a result of the FOCUS Act, TSU will need to establish policies, procedures and processes that will support and center upon the direction of a local board, rather than a board that serves multiple institutions.

Q: HOW QUICKLY WILL THIS CHANGE TAKE PLACE?

A: The FOCUS Act calls for a transition period starting July 1, 2016. Board members will be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the General Assembly. We anticipate the boards to be functional by mid-2017.

Q: DOES THE FOCUS ACT AFFECT HOW THE STATE FUNDS TSU?

A: No. The state funds TSU primarily through a funding formula developed by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. THEC will continue to lead the state's funding formula process and allocation.

Q: WILL THIS AFFECT TSU'S TENURE PROCESS?

A: Under the former governance structure, the Tennessee Board of Regents was responsible for determining the tenure process. Under the new governance structure, the TSU Board of Trustees will assume that role. The FOCUS Act requires TSU's board to "promulgate a tenure policy or policies for faculty." The FOCUS Act requires that the "policy or policies shall ensure academic freedom and provide sufficient professional security to attract the best qualified faculty available for the institutions."

Q: HOW IS TSU ENGAGED IN THE FOCUS ACT DISCUSSIONS?

A: Governor Haslam named President Glover to serve on a Transition Task Force special steering committee that he established shortly after the announcement of the FOCUS Act. TSU representatives have also been in discussions with THEC and the Governor's office regarding FOCUS Act issues, including the appointment of members to the TSU Board of Trustees.

~UNIVERSITY BOARD QUESTIONS~

Q: WILL THERE BE FACULTY REPRESENTATION ON THE UNIVERSITY BOARD?

A: Yes. The FOCUS Act provides that each university board will have an active faculty member who will be a voting member of the board. The FOCUS Act states that the faculty member will have a two-year term and will be selected by the Faculty Senate.

Q: WILL THERE BE STUDENT REPRESENTATION ON THE UNIVERSITY BOARD?

A: Yes. Each university board will have a student member who would be a non-voting member of the board. The student board member will serve a one-year term.

Q: WHO ELSE WILL BE ON THE UNIVERSITY BOARD?

A: The university board will have 10 members (nine voting and one non-voting). The Governor will appoint eight of the 10 board members. At least six of the voting members must be Tennessee residents, and at least three of the Governor's appointees must be alumni of the institution.

Q: HOW LONG ARE BOARD MEMBERS' TERMS?

A: Initial appointments will be for staggered terms of three, four and six years. After the initial terms, all terms will be six years.

Q: IS THE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT A MEMBER OF THE BOARD?

A: No. The President will be a non-voting attendee, but not a member. The university board will select the president, as well as assess his or her performance.

Q: WHAT WILL BE THE POWERS OF THE UNIVERSITY BOARD?

A: The FOCUS Act specifies the board's powers, including the power to:

- Select and employ chief executive officers;
- Confirm the appointment of administrative personnel, teachers and other employees and set salaries and terms of office;
- Prescribe curricula and requirements for diplomas and degrees (but each board must maintain alignment across state higher education by advancing the Tennessee Higher Education Commission master plan);
- Establish "reasonable and appropriate" rules defining residency for tuition purposes;
- Approve operating budgets and set fiscal policies, with the board of regents providing final approval over the operating budgets of each former TBR university to meet bond issuance requirements, and;
- Establish policies and regulations regarding campus life.

~TENNESSEE BOARD OF REGENTS QUESTIONS~

Q: WHAT WILL THE TENNESSEE BOARD OF REGENTS GOVERN?

A: The Tennessee Board of Regents will maintain control over the community colleges and Tennessee College of Applied Technology locations.

Q: IS THERE ANYTHING THAT TBR WILL CONTINUE TO DO FOR THE UNIVERSITIES?

A: During the transition period (July 1, 2016 to November 30, 2017), TBR will continue the following functions on behalf of the state university boards:

- data systems
- capital project planning and management
- procurement