

**Tennessee State University Board of Trustees
Student and Academic Affairs Committee Meeting
March 13, 2025
Tennessee State University – The Barn Agricultural Building**

MINUTES

Committee Members Present: Trustees Jeffery Norfleet (Committee Chair), Terica Smith, Artenzia Young-Seigler, Dakasha Winton, Tyler Vazquez (virtual)

Other Board Members Present: Trustees Dimeta Smith Knight

I. CALL TO ORDER

Trustee Norfleet called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. (CT) on March 13, 2025.

II. ROLL CALL/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

Trustee Norfleet proceeded with the roll call vote. Board Secretary Brown called the roll at the Committee Chair's request. Trustees Norfleet, Smith, Young-Seigler, and Winton were present. Secretary Brown announced the presence of a quorum.

III. APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 22, 2024, STUDENT AND ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

The minutes from the November 24, 2024, meeting of the Student and Academic Affairs Committee was approved as submitted, with Trustee Norfleet making the motion and Chair Winton seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. STUDENT AFFAIRS REPORT

Committee Chair Norfleet asked Dr. Bridgett Golman, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, to provide an update on Student Affairs.

Dr. Golman began by referencing a detailed 30-page report previously distributed to the Trustees. She noted that rather than going through the full report, she would highlight key areas. She shared that Student Affairs comprises 16 units and focused her presentation on Enrollment Services, the Aristocrat of Bands (AOB), Health and Mental Health Services, and TimelyCare.

Dr. Golman provided a forecast for Fall 2024, noting a goal of 968 new first-time freshmen. Current trends project 286 in-state and 540 out-of-state students, totaling 826. An additional 89 transfer students are expected. Spring 2024 enrollment exceeded the budgeted FTE by 610 students. For Fall 2023, TSU had 6,310 enrolled students—49% in-state (3,206) and 51% out-of-state (3,104).

For Fall 2025, enrollment is projected at 5,706. Dr. Golman explained that despite incoming enrollment increases, retention challenges are contributing to overall declines. She emphasized that persistence and retention significantly impact the ability to sustain higher enrollment figures. Long-term projections show a gradual return to a 6,000-student baseline by 2030, based on pro forma models.

Dr. Golman highlighted the national visibility of AOB, which ranks 4th on ESPN's Band of the Year list and was one of eight HBCU bands selected for a major event. Performances included appearances at TSU home games, the Heritage Classic, the John Merritt Classic, First Take, and the Milwaukee Bucks HBCU Night. Recruitment efforts are ongoing, with \$200,000 spent on recruitment this year. The band will cap at 200–210 members for the upcoming season. Last year, AOB awarded 155 scholarships, totaling \$2.3 million.

Health and Mental Health Services

Dr. Golman reported that TSU's on-campus health clinic, led by Dr. Dorsha James, has seen increased student utilization—rising from 1,500 visits last year to 2,100. Services include flu shots, STD testing, and gynecological care. The department also hosts an annual health fair with over 22 vendors.

TimelyCare, a 24/7 telehealth and mental health service, is available to all students at no cost under a Title III-funded, three-year contract. Students can access medical professionals and behavioral health support through the app. As of the meeting, 573 students (11% of the student body) were enrolled, with 91 having used the behavioral health "TalkNow" feature. Counseling Services sees approximately 40 students weekly and handles emergency and crisis interventions, including five suicide-related cases this semester.

Trustee Young-Seigler inquired about proactive measures following a hazing-related death at another institution. Dr. Golman stated that TSU mandates anti-hazing training each semester for all Divine Nine organizations.

Trustee Vazquez asked about student fees supporting student life. Dr. Golman explained that budgets are supported through E&G funds, fee allocations, and grants, which are distributed among SGA, Mr. and Miss TSU, and programming.

Trustee Winton asked about retention strategies. Dr. Golman noted that this topic would be addressed further in Dr. Melton's presentation.

Trustee Smith asked about recruitment and alumni engagement. Dr. Golman shared that a full enrollment plan is in development for Fall 2026 and will be presented at the June Board meeting. She also noted that additional recruitment staff positions have been approved.

Trustee Winton asked if services were adequate to meet growing student needs. Dr. Golman responded that targeted campaigns are underway, including required app downloads and training for incoming students.

A trustee inquired about contingency plans if TimelyCare funding were lost. Dr. Golman stated student fees would be used if necessary.

Trustee Qualls asked whether equivalent services were available for staff. Dr. Golman confirmed they are.

V. ACADEMIC AFFAIRS REPORT

Committee Chair Norfleet asked Dr. Robbie Melton, TSU's Interim Provost and Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, to provide a report on Academic Affairs.

Dr. Melton invited Dr. Anderson to present on the SACSCOC Fifth-Year Interim Report. Dr. Anderson outlined the four required components: (1) signature page verifying report integrity, (2) institutional summary form, (3) compliance certification, and (4) quality enhancement plan and impact report. The University is currently in the self-study phase and on track to submit the third and final draft by March 2026.

Dr. Melton then addressed low-producing academic programs, defined as programs with fewer than 10 graduates over a five-year period. She noted that 17 programs currently fall into this category. One example, Architectural Engineering, although graduating 8.6 students on average, has high enrollment (92 students for Spring 2025) and is recommended for continuation due to increasing faculty support and growth potential.

At Trustee Winton's request, Dr. Melton brought in the Dean of Engineering to explain the challenges of Architectural Engineering. The Dean cited reliance on adjunct faculty and course scheduling difficulties due to a 120-credit hour requirement. These issues previously led some students to switch majors. The Dean reported that full-time faculty is increasing to five, which will improve program delivery.

A Trustee asked how under-staffing impacts students. The Dean explained that low faculty numbers limit cross-discipline engagement and delay required course offerings. Trustee Smith Knight inquired about plans for addressing low-producing programs. Dr. Melton confirmed that each dean is required to develop a five-year improvement plan for continued programs.

Dr. Melton recommended sunseting the Dental Hygiene program, which currently has only one enrolled student. She clarified that sunseting results in program termination, requiring a full restart if reintroduced. Dr. Miranda Sanford-Terry explained that the industry trend now favors associate degrees for dental hygienists, making the bachelor's degree less in demand. Trustee Qualls asked about faculty implications. The Dean of Health Sciences confirmed the existing faculty member will be reassigned and not terminated.

Regarding other programs, Dr. Melton recommended sunseting or inactivating several graduate programs, including Computer and Information Systems Engineering, Elementary Education, Professional School Counseling, and Instructional Leadership. She proposed placing Chemistry on inactive status and continuing Public Policy Administration with a plan in place.

Dr. Melton then presented updates on the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan, which includes a structured advising model to enhance student engagement with their majors. The plan targets a 5% increase in retention each year over five years, supported by efforts in advising, use of DegreeWorks, student engagement, and teaching excellence. She reported that Spring 2025 retention improved to 79%, compared to 51% the previous year.

The plan also includes a redesign of general education courses, which have a 50% drop/failure rate and significantly impact student progression. These courses are typically taken within the first two years. Trustee Vazquez inquired about students who test out via AP or dual enrollment. Dr. Melton stated she would follow up with that information.

Dr. Melton confirmed that summer semester classes are still being offered and that students with outstanding balances will not be permitted to enroll, though scholarships were made available. General education courses make up most summer offerings.

She also announced a return to Friday classes during the summer, aligning with other LGIs and as part of efforts to improve student outcomes. Assistant Vice President Eric Schmeller noted that reintroducing Friday classes supports improved retention.

Finally, Dr. Melton invited Dr. Mohamed Kanu (College of Health Sciences), Dr. Rodney Stanley, Dr. Kimberly Triplett (College of Public Service), and Dr. Muhammed Miah (College of Business) to provide college updates.

VI. APPROVAL OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE POLICY

Trustee Norfleet introduced the next agenda item: the approval of the proposed Policy on the Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence at TSU. He called on Dr. Robbie Melton, TSU's Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, to provide background and supporting information on the matter.

Dr. Melton emphasized TSU's leadership in the field of artificial intelligence, noting that the university is home to a premier AI research center. She stated that TSU facilitates AI-related innovation and support for teaching, learning, research, and workforce development for stakeholders from 28 countries. Dr. Melton described the proposed AI policy as a necessary action item that will have a direct impact on faculty, staff, and students.

Next, Dr. Melton invited General Counsel Ginette Brown to speak on the policy. Attorney Brown provided legal context, explaining that the proposed policy aligns with Public Chapter 550, which was enacted into law last year. This legislation requires all public institutions of higher education in Tennessee to implement a policy governing the use of artificial intelligence for instructional and assignment purposes by students, faculty, and staff.

Attorney Brown noted that the law requires TSU to adopt and publish the policy on its website and to submit it to the Chairs of the Senate Education Committee and the House Education Administration Committee by July 1, 2025. She mentioned that the Academic Affairs Office, the

Office of Technology Services, and the Office of General Counsel collaborated on drafting the policy, incorporating feedback from other local government institutions across the state.

Dr. Melton concluded by emphasizing the university's proactive efforts to ensure compliance while continuing to lead in AI education and implementation.

Trustee Norfleet requested that the policy be revisited as the Board needs more time to review it. He expressed a desire to set up a meeting with Attorney Brown. Trustee Smith suggested that guidelines should also be included with the policy.

VII. RESEARCH AND SPONSORED PROGRAMS REPORT

Dr. Quincy Quick, Associate Vice President for Research and Sponsored Programs, presented a comprehensive report outlining recent developments, achievements, and challenges within the Division of Research and Sponsored Programs at Tennessee State University (TSU). His remarks addressed the effects of federal executive orders on research activity and funding, as well as the university's strategic direction in building research capacity.

Dr. Quick began by sharing data on TSU's grant activity for FY25. He reported a 15% increase in the number of grant submissions and a 60% increase in the total amount requested, compared to FY24. However, he noted a slight decrease in the number of awarded grants, with 133 grants awarded in FY25 versus 135 in the prior year—a 1.5% decline. Trustee Qualls inquired whether these awards included multi-year grants. Dr. Quick clarified that while some awards may span multiple years, his reported figures are unduplicated and represent new funding for FY25, distinct from FY24.

The report highlighted several strategic infrastructure improvements to support TSU's research enterprise. These include the renovation of thirteen research laboratories and two teaching labs in Harned Hall, home to the Department of Biological Sciences. Additionally, the university has relocated its small animal facility to the Research and Sponsored Programs (RSP) Building, allowing for better space utilization and operational efficiency. Dr. Quick also announced that TSU successfully regained its Institutional Animal Assurance Number after 13 years of inactivity, enabling the institution to pursue federally funded research involving small animals.

In terms of economic development and entrepreneurship, Dr. Quick noted that the Division of Research and Sponsored Programs has assumed direct oversight of TSU's Business Incubation Center (BIC). The center is now staffed by the Small Business Development Center team, led by Director Greg Jones. One proposed initiative involves converting 2,000 square feet of the BIC into a childcare facility, with a projected annual revenue of \$500,000. This effort is in collaboration with TSU's Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance, Early Head Start, and the Center of Excellence in Learning Sciences—all state-funded programs housed within the Division.

Dr. Quick shared that a total of \$921,995 in extramural grant funds has been allocated to support faculty and student research. These funds are being used not only to advance academic inquiry but also to help students reduce their institutional debt. He emphasized that the initiative is not a scholarship program, but rather a work-based opportunity that provides students with upfront

funding in exchange for job placements, with approximately 70% of students receiving placement through the program.

Addressing recent disruptions, Dr. Quick discussed the temporary pause on all spending related to Agriculture and Federal Grant Awards, including the 1890 Foundation, the Evans-Allen Grant, and the Next Generation Inclusion Consortium. The pause, which lasted from February 28 to March 12, was implemented as a cautionary measure while the university assessed the impact of recent federal executive orders and engaged in conversations with federal agencies. Dr. Quick confirmed that the Evans-Allen Grant—characterized as a capacity-building program for research—has since been reinstated, allowing access to previously allocated funds. He assured the committee that TSU now has full access to the federal payment management system and is in a stable position to move forward.

In response to questions about TSU's future research strategy and performance-based funding, Dr. Quick explained that the university is focused on expanding research capacity. He noted that 17% of faculty are responsible for 85% of submitted grants and emphasized the need to engage a broader segment of the faculty. To that end, the Division has hired a staff member to oversee expenditure tracking and provide individualized support to faculty members, helping them remain compliant and meet project milestones.

When asked about the university's progress toward achieving R1 classification, Dr. Quick affirmed that TSU remains on track. He cited the Department of Educational Leadership, which enrolls approximately 150 doctoral students annually, as a major contributor toward meeting Carnegie R1 requirements. However, he cautioned that overall research expenditures remain the most significant hurdle in reaching that goal.

Trustee Qualls concluded the discussion by reaffirming the original purpose of the Evans-Allen Grant, emphasizing its role in supporting research capacity at historically Black land-grant institutions like TSU.

VIII. ATHLETICS REPORT

Dr. Mikki Allen presented the Athletics Report, beginning with an update on the football program. He acknowledged that the university is currently without a head football coach, following the former coach's departure to Bowling Green. However, he reassured the committee that both the football team and the marching band will remain active. The athletics department continues to prioritize academic success, reporting a departmental semester GPA of 3.31 and a cumulative GPA of 3.34 across all 15 sports programs. A total of 171 student-athletes earned a GPA of 3.0 or higher, while only 39 fell below that threshold. Additionally, 32 student-athletes achieved a perfect 4.0 GPA. The department's graduation success rate stands at 82%, with the remaining 18% attributed to student transfers through the NCAA transfer portal.

Dr. Allen highlighted the football program's achievements over the past year. The team shared the OVC Big South Championship and qualified for the NCAA playoffs for the first time since 2013. The success brought national recognition, including honors such as Defensive Freshman of the Year, National Coach of the Year, and Conference Coach of the Year. Looking ahead, the

university has scheduled a home-and-home series with Alabama A&M University, beginning on September 13, 2025, and continuing annually through 2028. TSU will also compete against other HBCUs, including North Carolina Central and Howard University.

In basketball, both the men's and women's programs are focusing on retention and recruitment under the leadership of their respective head coaches. Cross Country qualified for NCAA regionals, Men's Tennis claimed the HBCU National Championship, and the Softball team is currently ranked second in the OVC standings. Dr. Allen also discussed the hockey program, noting continued support from the NHL through an annual \$125,000 donation and in-kind equipment gifts from Bauer. However, he clarified that TSU will not launch any new sports programs without securing independent funding, emphasizing the need to focus resources on the 15 existing programs.

Dr. Allen reported that TSU will host eight home football games this season. In an effort to support the university's broader financial strategies, the athletics department has reduced the number of scholarships awarded. The department aims to raise \$1.2 million in fundraising revenue and has already secured approximately \$650,000. Additional cost-saving measures include standardizing athletic apparel through a partnership with Under Armour to ensure all student-athletes are uniformly outfitted.

Facility enhancements have also been prioritized. Investments have been made in the student-athlete weight room, which also serves as a treatment space. TSU has formed a partnership with X3 to provide physical therapy services at no cost. The university also received an NCAA grant that funded new academic learning labs and computer equipment for student-athletes.

Looking ahead, Dr. Allen stressed the importance of securing a dedicated on-campus stadium. He noted that regaining the university's stadium would bolster school spirit, enhance recruitment efforts, increase alumni engagement, and yield significant economic impact. Plans for this initiative are currently in development, with the intent to pursue private funding support.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Having no other business, Trustee Norfleet asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Trustee Smith moved to adjourn the meeting, and the motion was seconded by Trustee Young-Seigler. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned.