

**Meeting of the Tennessee State University Board of Trustees
Governance and Governmental Affairs Committee Meeting
June 12, 2025
Tennessee State University – The Farrell Westbrook Complex (the “Barn”)**

MINUTES

Committee Members Present: Trustees Terica Smith, Trevia Chatman, and Dakasha Winton. Other Board members present: Charles Traugher, Jeffery Norfleet (virtual), Marquita Qualls, Dimeta Smith Knight, Artenzia Young-Seigler.

University Staff Present: Interim President Dwayne Tucker; Ginette Garza Brown, Interim General Counsel and Board Secretary; Dr. Robbie Melton, Acting Interim Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs; Bradley White, Interim VP of Business and Finance; Sterlin Sanders, Chief Information Officer; LoLita Toney, Associate Vice President of Institutional Advancement; Jim Grady, Alvarez & Marsal

I. CALL TO ORDER

Trustee Smith called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

Committee Chair Smith declared that everyone was present. Secretary Brown conducted the roll call. The following committee members were present: Trustees Terica Smith, Dakasha Winton, and Trevia Chatman.

III. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Committee Chair Smith announced the next agenda item, which was the Legislative Update. Committee Chair Smith introduced Leah Dupree Love to provide the Board with a summary of the most recent legislative session.

Ms. Love began by extending thanks to Interim President Tucker for his active engagement with the legislature during the 2025 session, noting that his participation significantly strengthened relationships with both legislative and executive branch stakeholders. She emphasized that his involvement made the work of the Ingram Group and TSU’s advocacy efforts more effective.

Ms. Love reported that the 2025 legislative session began on January 14, 2025, with a special organizational session, which required the rescheduling of TSU Day at the Hill. While the event did not occur in its traditional format, the University successfully coordinated with THEC and Dr. Mosby to participate in HBCU Day at the legislature. Students, faculty, and staff attended, delivering swag bags and plants, which were well-received and reflected positively on TSU.

During the regular session, the Ingram Group worked with locally governed institutions, the University of Tennessee system, and other stakeholders to advance supportive legislation and

block harmful proposals. Out of approximately 43 bills tracked that impacted higher education, around a dozen passed. Key topics included Athletics Department updates related to name, image, and likeness policies, pronoun usage, and anti-discrimination measures concerning race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, and religion.

Ms. Love also reported that the administration worked with the legislature on twelve resolutions, including those related to the confirmation of Board members. She noted that these confirmations proceeded smoothly and were approved.

In terms of the state budget, Ms. Love provided a detailed review of TSU's budget allocations for 2025, emphasizing the University's status as a land-grant institution. The following funding buckets were included:

- TSU McMinnville Center: \$1.6 million
- TSU Institute for Agriculture and Environmental Research: \$6.0 million
- TSU Co-op Education Program: \$6.2 million
- TSU McIntire-Stennis Forestry Research Program: \$233,000
- Outcome Growth Funding: \$1,738,400

Ms. Love explained that outcome growth funding is recurring and tied to institutional outcomes, such as student progression, degree production, and mission-related performance metrics. She compared TSU's outcome growth funding with peer institutions: UT Chattanooga (\$2.6M), UT Knoxville (\$11.7M), UT Martin (\$1.5M), Austin Peay (\$2.5M), ETSU (\$3.3M), University of Memphis (\$5.8M), MTSU (\$4.7M), and Tennessee Tech (\$2.6M). She also noted additional budgeted funds for maintenance of the Avon Williams Campus chiller.

Next, Ms. Love discussed legislation affecting university boards. She explained that previously, each Board consisted of ten members: eight gubernatorial appointees, one student, and one faculty member. The new legislation expands boards to twelve voting members while reducing gubernatorial appointees from eight to six. It introduces appointments by the Speaker of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. She clarified that student and faculty appointments remain internal and are unaffected by the legislature. She reviewed the current Board members' terms. She explained how the new appointments would phase in as existing terms expire, noting some uncertainty in cases where multiple members' terms end simultaneously, but reaffirmed that reappointments remain possible.

Ms. Love also addressed legislation enabling the redirection of non-committed capital outlay funds. She outlined the process: the University submits a request to the Comptroller, who, in consultation with the Commissioner of Finance and Administration, the institution, and THEC, executes a memorandum of understanding to approve or deny the request. This allows the University flexibility to utilize funds that had previously been earmarked but unspent.

Ms. Love concluded with an update on the FOCUS Act's sunrise-sunset audit process. She explained that TSU, like all public universities, undergoes a periodic review of finances and operations, with audits examining improvements on prior findings. TSU's Board received a two-year extension in 2024, with the next audit and subsequent legislative recommendations expected

prior to the June 2026 sunset. Ms. Love noted that the Board would be kept informed of developments and that the process is standard across public institutions.

Ms. Love concluded by updating the Board on federal matters, including the resignation of Congressman Mark Green and the upcoming special election affecting TSU's congressional district. She confirmed that she would provide ongoing updates to the President, Chair, and General Counsel, ensuring timely dissemination to the Board.

Trustee Smith asked about the scope of the audit. Ms. Love explained that it covers finances, operations, repeated findings, and progress on previous observations. President Tucker provided additional context regarding the timing and coordination with the Comptroller.

Trustee Qualls inquired about the timeline for new legislative appointments. Ms. Love responded that while there is no specific deadline, the vacancies will likely be filled in the coming weeks. Until the new process is implemented, existing vacancies will be treated as gubernatorial appointments.

Trustee Traugher asked about the changes to the Sunshine Law legislation. Ms. Love referred to Secretary Brown, and they both noted that the legislation primarily codifies existing practices regarding closed meetings and has a limited impact on Board operations.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Committee Chair Smith stated that she would consider a motion to adjourn. Chair Winton moved to adjourn, and Trustee Chatman seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, with Trustees Smith, Winton, and Chatman voting in favor of the motion. The meeting was adjourned.