

**Meeting of the Tennessee State University Board of Trustees
Student and Academic Affairs Committee Meeting
September 18, 2025
Tennessee State University – The Farrell Westbrook Complex (the “Barn”)**

MINUTES

Committee Members Present: Trustees Jeffery Norfleet, Terica Smith, and Artenzia Young-Seigler. Other Board members present: Dakasha Winton, Azana Bruce, Trevia Chatman, Marquita Qualls, Dimeta Smith Knight, Leticia Towns, and Charles Traughber.

University Staff Present: 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; Jim Grady, Alvarez & Marsal

I. CALL TO ORDER

Trustee Norfleet called the meeting to order at 11:41 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

Committee Chair Norfleet declared that all members were present, constituting a quorum. Secretary Brown conducted the roll call. The following committee members were present: Trustees Jeffery Norfleet, Terica Smith, and Artenzia Young-Seigler.

III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Trustee Smith moved to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Trustee Young-Seigler. A voice vote was taken, with all Committee members present voting in favor of the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**A. APPROVAL OF JUNE 13, 2025, STUDENT AND ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

The minutes from the June 13, 2025, meeting of the Student and Academic Affairs Committee were approved as submitted, with Trustee Norfleet making the motion and Trustee Young-Seigler seconding the motion. A voice vote was taken, with all Committee members present voting in favor of the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**B. APPROVAL OF JULY 1, 2025, STUDENT AND ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

The minutes from the July 1, 2025, meeting of the Student and Academic Affairs Committee were approved as submitted, with Trustee Norfleet making the motion and Trustee Smith seconding the motion. A voice vote was taken, with all Committee members present voting in favor of the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

V. CONSIDERATION OF 2024-2025 TENURE AND PROMOTION RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee Chair Norfleet introduced the next agenda item, consideration of the 2024–2025 tenure promotion recommendations. He invited Provost Melton, Dr. Schmeller, and Faculty Senate Chair Dr. Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi to present on behalf of the administration.

Dr. Schmeller opened the presentation by providing context regarding the University’s faculty composition, noting that TSU has a higher percentage of assistant professors compared to national averages and local Tennessee institutions. He explained that this imbalance reflects faculty turnover due to retirements and resignations, with some faculty members leaving for higher-paying opportunities elsewhere.

Provost Melton added that while TSU has comparatively more assistant professors, the University ranks lower in the number of associate and full professors. She stated that compensation remains a critical factor in faculty retention and progression, and that the University continues to work toward strengthening salary competitiveness and faculty development support.

Turning to the tenure and promotion process, Dr. Schmeller outlined the multi-level review structure, beginning with annual departmental evaluations and advancing through college-level, University Personnel Committee, Vice President, President, and ultimately Board review. He emphasized that the applicants presented have been vetted through this rigorous process and have submitted complete portfolios.

At the request of Committee Chair Norfleet, Provost Melton summarized the applications under consideration:

- Tenure only – 4 applicants
- Promotion only – 9 applicants
- Tenure and promotion – 13 applicants
- Total applications – 26 submitted, with 1 applicant withdrawn due to resignation, leaving 25 for approval

Provost Melton affirmed that the recommendations have been fully reviewed by the Office of Academic Affairs, are financially supported within the budget, and represent faculty who have demonstrated sustained excellence over a seven-year period.

Committee board members engaged in discussion regarding faculty development programming, including onboarding, annual evaluations, and professional development opportunities such as the University’s partnership with ACUE. Members also inquired about financial considerations, and

Provost Melton confirmed that all promotions and tenure awards are supported by the budget and that prior resignations reduced the financial impact.

Following discussion, a motion was made by Committee Chair Norfleet and seconded by Trustee Smith to recommend to the full Board approval of the 2024–2025 tenure and promotion recommendations, as presented and modified in the meeting materials. The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote of the Committee members present.

VI. APPROVAL OF POST-TENURE REVIEW POLICY

Committee Chair Norfleet introduced the next agenda item, approval of the post-tenure review policy and invited Faculty Senate Chair Dr. Venkataswarup Tiriveedhi (V.T.) and Provost Melton to present.

Dr. Tiriveedhi explained that the Faculty Senate established a subcommittee to review post-tenure review (PTR) policies across all 13 LGIs in Tennessee, with a particular focus on the UT System and the University of Memphis. Based on this review, the Senate sought to balance the principles of academic freedom with the need for rigor in faculty accountability. The proposed policy was developed, presented to the Faculty Senate, and unanimously adopted.

Trustee Young-Seigler noted that the revised policy reflects faculty commitment to maintaining high standards and was supported broadly across the institution. She also acknowledged that prior concerns from the Board regarding the clarity of language triggering PTR had been addressed, with the revised language included in the meeting materials.

In response to questions, Dr. Kenneth Chilton explained the rationale for recommending a “triggered” rather than mandatory review process. He emphasized that TSU does not have the faculty size or administrative capacity to conduct mandatory PTR at scale, unlike larger institutions such as the University of Tennessee. He noted that rigorous annual evaluations already provide a mechanism to identify underperformance and initiate improvement plans where necessary. He further explained that requiring mandatory reviews for faculty who consistently perform at high levels would create unnecessary administrative burdens without meaningful benefits.

Dr. Chilton further explained that the annual performance review serves as the University’s first and most consistent accountability measure, covering teaching, research, and service. Faculty who receive unsatisfactory ratings in these annual reviews may be placed on a performance improvement plan (PIP). If performance does not improve under the PIP, this serves as a formal trigger for PTR. He emphasized that this linkage ensures PTR is not duplicative but rather serves as an escalated process for cases where annual evaluations have already demonstrated ongoing concerns.

Provost Melton added that five faculty members are currently on PIPs, which include specific, measurable goals tied to teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and service contributions.

Following discussion, a motion was made by Trustee Norfleet and seconded by Trustee Smith to recommend to the full Board approval of the post-tenure review policy, effective immediately, as presented in the September 18, 2025, committee materials.

A roll call vote was taken:

- Trustee Norfleet – Yes
- Trustee Smith – Yes
- Trustee Young-Sigler – Abstain

With two votes in favor and one abstention, the motion passed.

Provost Melton then provided an informational update on student retention, progression, and graduation. She reminded the Committee that the University's retention and graduation plan had been presented last fall and shared progress data for spring 2025. Out of approximately 5,500 enrolled students, 2,754 were named to the Dean's List. She noted significant progress in reducing students on academic probation, down from a prior high of 1,272 to 132, as well as reductions in suspensions.

Provost Melton attributed these improvements to enhanced student support services and the work of retention coaches, advisors, and academic affairs leadership. She also highlighted the University's graduation completion task force, which includes over 75 stakeholders, including students, to improve completion rates.

In addressing financial barriers, Provost Melton explained that data confirm students who are financially stable demonstrate higher retention, progression, and graduation outcomes. She reported that the fall retention rate for first-time freshmen improved significantly, rising from 33% to 58%, recovering from an anomalous year in 2022 when underprepared students required greater support.

Provost Melton further noted that for the first time, 96% of the fall freshman class enrolled in 15 credit hours, positioning them to remain on track for timely graduation. She emphasized that this milestone reflects the University's commitment to academic excellence and will positively impact progression and graduation rates in coming years.

Committee Chair Norfleet thanked Provost Melton for the report.

VII. STUDENT AFFAIRS REPORT

Committee Chair Norfleet introduced the next agenda item and invited Dr. Brent Dukhie, Executive Director for Residence Life and Housing and Dean of Student Engagement, to provide the Student Affairs report.

Before turning to student affairs, Dr. Dukhie provided an enrollment update for Fall 2025. He reported a total headcount of 5,293 students, including 4,156 undergraduates and 1,137 graduate

students, reflecting a decrease of 1,225 students, or approximately 19%, compared to the prior year.

In response to trustee questions regarding the categories of “first-time high school” and “new first-time freshmen,” Dr. Dukhie invited Dr. Eric Stokes, Vice President for Enrollment Management, to provide clarification. Dr. Stokes explained that “first-time high school” refers to dual-enrollment students earning college credit, while “new first-time freshmen” includes both recent high school graduates and students transferring with less than sophomore standing. He noted that some students may be classified as freshmen multiple years if they have not earned sufficient credit hours to progress. He also explained that “new transient” students are enrolled at other institutions but take courses at TSU on a non-degree basis with the intent to return to their home institutions.

Turning to graduate enrollment, Dr. Dukhie reported that of the 1,137 graduate students, 792 were continuing students, 267 were new first-time graduate and professional students, 47 were readmitted, and 31 were enrolled as non-degree or special students. He also provided full-time equivalent (FTE) counts: 735.25 for graduate students and 4,033.87 for undergraduates.

VIII. REPORT ON STUDENT HOUSING

Committee Chair Norfleet introduced the next agenda item and invited Dr. Brent Dukhie, Executive Director for Residence Life and Housing and Dean of Student Engagement, to provide the Report on Student Housing.

Dr. Brent Dukhie, Executive Director for Residence Life and Housing and Dean of Student Engagement, provided an update on residence life and housing operations. Dr. Dukhie highlighted enrollment reductions, noting a 19% decrease in overall enrollment and a 21.5% reduction in first-time freshman applications. Given these numbers, adjustments were made to residence hall assignments. Traditionally, Watson Hall houses first-time freshman males (with approximately 135 applicants), and Wilson Hall houses first-time freshman females (just over 300 applicants).

To better support first-year students, Wilson Hall was converted to a co-ed hall, consolidating all first-time freshmen into one space to enhance the first-year experience and foster a sense of community. Watson Hall, which would have been underutilized, was repurposed to offer single-occupancy rooms, addressing student demand for privacy and accommodating seniors who requested campus apartment housing. As a result, Watson Hall achieved 97% capacity, generating over \$356,565 in revenue, with projections of \$713,130 for the next semester. This financial flexibility supports maintenance and upkeep of residence halls. Dr. Dukhie clarified that Watson Hall has a capacity of 319 students and Wilson Hall 540 students. The single-occupancy rooms were priced higher, contributing to the increased revenue.

A discussion took place regarding room occupancy, housing priority, and graduate housing.

Dr. Dukhie concluded the report, noting that the adjustments to housing operations have improved student experience and financial outcomes.

IX. DISCUSSION REGARDING ADMISSION STANDARDS

A. APPROVAL OF MODIFICATION TO ADMISSION TESTING SCORES

Committee Chair Norfleet introduced the next agenda item, discussion of admission standards for first-time freshmen. He invited Dr. Eric Stokes, Vice President for Enrollment Management, to present on behalf of the administration.

Dr. Stokes explained that the current admission requirements include a minimum GPA of 2.5, an ACT score of 19, and an SAT score of 900. He noted that the SAT requirement is not aligned with the ACT requirement, as an SAT of 900 equates to a 16 ACT score. To provide greater clarity for students, parents, and school counselors, and to support the university's enrollment goals, Dr. Stokes proposed increasing the SAT requirement to 990 to align with the ACT score of 19. He emphasized that this adjustment promotes equity in the admissions process and helps ensure incoming students are better prepared academically.

Following discussion, a motion was made by Trustee Norfleet and seconded by Trustee Smith to recommend to the full Board approval of the modification of admissions testing scores for first-time freshmen, as presented in the September 25, 2025, committee materials. The motion passed unanimously, with Trustees Norfleet, Smith, and Young-Singler voting in favor.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Committee Chair Norfleet moved to adjourn, with the motion seconded by Trustee Smith. A voice vote was taken, with all Committee members present voting in favor of the motion. The meeting was adjourned.