

**Meeting of the Tennessee State University  
Board of Trustees  
Regular Meeting  
November 21, 2025  
Tennessee State University – the Barn**

**MINUTES**

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

**University Staff Present:** President Dwayne Tucker; Ginette Garza Brown, Interim General Counsel and Board Secretary; Dr. Robbie Melton, 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**

Chair Winton called the meeting to order at 11:31 a.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Chair Winton declared that a physical quorum was present. Board Secretary conducted the roll call. The following trustees were present: Trustees Dakasha Winton, Azana Bruce, Trevia Chatman, Jeffery Norfleet, Marquita Qualls, Terica Smith, Dimeta Smith Knight, Leticia Towns, Charles Traughber and Artenzia Young-Seigler.

**III. OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHAIR**

Chair Winton thanked the Board and administration for their preparation and commitment in advance of the upcoming Board meeting. She then requested a brief pause to recognize the life and legacy of Amos-Leon' Otis, a distinguished alumnus of Tennessee State University.

Chair Winton noted that although she did not know Mr. Otis personally, his impact on the University and the many lives he touched was evident. She invited Vice Chair Charles Traughber to share remarks.

Vice Chair Traughber reflected on Mr. Otis' extraordinary service to Tennessee State University, noting his leadership as Chair of the TSU Foundation Board and his historic personal financial contributions to the institution. He emphasized Mr. Otis' deep commitment to the University's mission, students, and future, and shared a personal reflection from time spent with Mr. Otis during homecoming events. Vice Chair Traughber remarked that Mr. Otis consistently attributed his professional success to TSU and exemplified a legacy of excellence and service.

At the conclusion of the remarks, the Board observed a moment of silence in honor of Amos-Leon' Otis. Chair Winton thanked Vice Chair Traughber for his tribute.

#### **IV. RECOGNITION OF OUTSTANDING SCHOLARS**

Chair Winton recognized President Tucker and Will Radford, who introduced remarks on the recognition of outstanding TSU scholars. Will Radford noted that Ms. Leah Granderson would present, highlighting student-led planning and design initiatives.

Ms. Granderson, Executive Director for Planning, Design, Construction, and Campus Operations, introduced three student scholars whose work has supported student-centered planning and campus enhancements, including projects at the Avon Williams campus and in residential facilities.

Students Mark Gray, Joy Walton, and Eli Smith introduced themselves and described their academic backgrounds and hands-on involvement in campus planning, design, and construction initiatives. They outlined a framework emphasizing student input, industry engagement, and execution of high-impact projects and highlighted completed improvements such as collaborative spaces, residence hall updates, marquee signage, facility renovations, and homecoming preparations. They also discussed future efforts, including enhancements to the Davis Humanities Building.

Following the presentation, Mr. Radford noted that the students represent a larger cohort and that an initial investment of approximately \$175,000 supported dedicated student innovation space. He emphasized the strong return on investment and the value of expanding similar experiential learning opportunities across campus.

Chair Winton thanked the students for their presentation and recognized their creativity, leadership, and contributions to the University.

#### **V. ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

The Board Chair called for a motion to adopt the meeting agenda as contained in the materials for the November 20, 2025, Board meeting. Trustee Chatman moved to adopt the agenda, and Trustee Young-Seigler seconded the motion. The Board Chair called for a voice vote, and the motion to adopt the agenda was unanimously approved.

#### **VI. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

Chair Winton presented the items on the consent agenda, which included the following minutes for approval:

- June 12, 2025, Governance and Governmental Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes
- June 13, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes
- August 5, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes
- September 18, 2025, Audit Committee Meeting Minutes
- September 18, 2025, Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

- September 18, 2025, Student and Academic Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes
- September 18, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Trustee Smith and seconded by Trustee Towns. The motion unanimously passed by voice vote.

## **VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Chair Winton introduced the next agenda item, which was committee reports.

### **A. Audit Committee Report and Recommendations**

Trustee Smith Knight reported that the Audit Committee met to consider and act on one item and to receive reports on several audit-related matters. The Committee received reports on internal and external audit activities, including the results of the internal and external quality assessment and gap assessment required under global internal audit standards, as well as an update on outstanding audit issues and the status of the Internal Audit Plan. This concluded the Audit Committee report.

### **B. Finance Committee Report and Recommendations**

Trustee Traughber reported that the Finance Committee met to consider and act on three items and to receive one informational report. He reported that the Committee reviewed and recommended approval of a revised Bank Reconciliation Policy. A motion to approve the revised Bank Reconciliation Policy, as presented in the board materials, was made by Trustee Traughber and seconded by Chair Winton. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Trustee Traughber further reported that the Committee reviewed and recommended approval of the Fiscal Year 2026 Revised Budget. A motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2026 Revised Budget, as presented in the board materials, was made by Trustee Traughber and seconded by Chair Winton. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

The Committee also received a report on Institutional Advancement. This concluded the Finance Committee report.

### **C. Student and Academic Affairs Committee Report and Recommendations**

Trustee Norfleet reported that the Student and Academic Affairs Committee met to receive reports on student affairs, enrollment, and academic affairs. The Committee received updates on the SACSCOC CLC Fifth-Year Interim Report status, retention and progression efforts, graduation rate data and related strategic initiatives, the Fall 2025 graduation plan, and Fall 2025 college achievements. This concluded the Student and Academic Affairs Committee report.

### **D. Governance and Governmental Affairs Committee Report and Recommendations**

Trustee Smith reported that the Governance and Governmental Affairs Committee met to receive one action item and one informational report. The Committee received a legislative update from Leah Love of the Ingram Group. This concluded the Governance and Governmental Affairs Committee report.

## **VIII. FEDERAL FUNDING UPDATE**

The next item on the agenda was a federal funding update. Chair Winton recognized Dr. Quincy Quick to present the report.

Dr. Quick provided an overview of the current federal research funding landscape, noting continued uncertainty due to recent federal budget negotiations, government shutdowns, and shifting priorities. He explained that year-to-date comparisons between Fiscal Years 2025 and 2026 reflect a decline in total grant awards, indirect cost recovery, and overall award volume, while grant submissions have remained relatively strong, reflecting sustained faculty engagement.

Dr. Quick reported that, despite the federal shutdown, the University received 16 grant awards during that period. He discussed proposed and enacted federal budget changes affecting major funding agencies, including USDA-NIFA, NIH, and NSF, with particular emphasis on implications for 1890 Land-Grant institutions. He noted that recent federal actions appear to stabilize funding levels for the Evans-Allen/1890 Research Capacity Program, avoiding previously proposed significant reductions.

Dr. Quick also addressed developments related to indirect cost recovery, reporting that current indirect cost rates remain in effect following passage of the federal budget. He noted ongoing national discussions regarding a potential transition to a new Financial Accountability and Research (FAIR) model, emphasizing that no final decisions have been made.

Finally, Dr. Quick outlined institutional strategies to mitigate federal funding volatility, including increased industry partnerships, expanded applied and translational research, and alignment with state and regional innovation initiatives. He concluded by noting that the University remains well positioned to adapt to evolving federal and state research priorities.

## **IX. PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Chair Winton recognized President Tucker to present the President's Report, including follow-up information requested by the Board regarding the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the formation of an advisory committee.

President Tucker provided updates since the previous Board meeting, highlighting progress in academic success indicators, including retention, progression, and graduation rates. He noted improvements in the University's financial position resulting from enhanced accounts receivable management and improved cash flow associated with the MOU with the State.

President Tucker reported several leadership appointments aimed at strengthening institutional capacity, including a Vice President for Enrollment Management, a Vice President for Human

Resources, and a Vice President for Institutional Advancement. He also announced the hiring of a Controller, who began on November 10, and a Chief Financial Officer, scheduled to begin January 1, 2026.

President Tucker discussed additional measures taken to support long-term financial sustainability, including shared cost-containment strategies, strategic investments in enrollment and recruiting, and adjustments to staffing and compensation initiatives. He also reported the development of a revised merit scholarship structure to support enrollment growth while maintaining net revenue.

President Tucker highlighted the success of the recent homecoming celebration, noting both increased revenue opportunities and positive reputational outcomes. He also previewed plans to reimagine future commencement ceremonies and alumni giving strategies.

President Tucker reported that the University exceeded its Fiscal Year 2025 deficit reduction target and is projecting continued progress in Fiscal Year 2026. He noted improvements in audit timelines and the addition of Tennessee Board of Regents support teams to assist with financial and audit-related matters.

Finally, President Tucker provided an update on compliance with the MOU requirement related to space utilization and real property assessment. He reported on efforts to form an advisory group, his identification of a third-party group, Hayat Brown, to assist with University, and the University's plans to present its space utilization plan and real property assessment to the State in early December.

## **X. CLOSING REMARKS AND ADJOURNMENT**

Trustee Smith Knight moved to adjourn the meeting, and Trustee Young-Seigler seconded the motion. Secretary Brown called the roll, and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned.