



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE
CAMPUS ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES
May 2, 2025
KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Advisory Board met at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, May 2, 2025.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair John Tickle called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Roll call of board members conducted with the following present:

Mr. John Tickle, Chair, Mr. Allen Carter, Mr. Dante Grayson, Ms. Alexia Poe, Dr. Beth Schussler, Mr. Todd Skelton, and Mr. Tom Smith

III. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Mr. Tom Smith made a motion to approve the February 7, 2025, minutes provided the Secretary is authorized to make any necessary edits to correct spelling, grammatical, or format errors or other technical errors subsequently identified. Mr. Allen Carter seconded the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved.

IV. RECOGNITION OF OUTGOING MEMBER

Chancellor Donde Plowman acknowledged the service of Mr. Dante Grayson over the last year as an advisory board member and as the Student Government Association President.

V. CHANCELLOR'S UPDATE
Dr. Donde Plowman, Chancellor

Chancellor Plowman reminded the group May 1 was confirmation day for students to declare which university they plan to attend in the fall. The admissions team is working on the final



numbers and analyzing the profile of the incoming class for fall 2025. Two new residence halls will open this fall to assist with housing demand.

Chancellor Plowman shared an overview of the recent events related to Arizona State University President Michael Crow's visit in April. The university has partnered with ASU to expand our digital learning offerings. The two universities are working together to increase our enrollment in our digital course offerings.

Chancellor Plowman reported on some of the most recent highlights taking place on campus. We broke ground on the new student success center. The center will house the academic success center, honors programs, veteran's success and benefits, disability services, Vol study center, and five classrooms.

Chancellor Plowman recently visited the turfgrass research center operated by Dr. John Sorochan. Dr. Sorochan and his team are working with FIFA to develop turfgrass for the sixteen locations across the three countries hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2026. Dr. Keith Carver shared some of the potential post-World Cup opportunities for the Tickle College of Engineering, Haslam College of Business, and work in life sciences. The last World Cup was viewed by 1.8 billion people around the world. Mr. Smith asked how we are telling our story. Ms. Tisha Benton shared that a comprehensive marketing strategy of both owned and paid media, will be rolling out over the next year. Marketing and communications team members across campus are working with outside vendors to take advantage of multiple opportunities. An international magazine recently published a feature story on our research and our role in the World Cup. The marketing and communications team will continue to explore opportunities over the next year and will take advantage of all the opportunities available. The Today Show will air a story on the work being conducted in June.

Chancellor Plowman talked about our relationship with Volkswagen. We celebrated our five-year anniversary of their innovation hub located here in Knoxville. Volkswagen researchers work with our faculty and graduate students daily to advance research. As a result of this innovation hub, they were also able to connect with Eastman to conduct research together.

Chancellor Plowman spoke to three of the university's strengths we plan to use as we work toward our next level goals. The three areas are an unparalleled student experience, high-impact research in service to Tennessee, and the best athletics department in the country.

The student experience is made up of two areas, student success and student life. The enormous growth in enrollment prompted the need for growth in all areas related to student life and student success. The spring persistence rate for the fall 2024 cohort was 97.6%. More than 90% of the 2024 graduating class reported they are either employed or continuing their education. At the end of fall 2024, 95% of the first-year scholars were in positive academic standing. Our Vol Study Center had 130,000+ visits this year. We continue to see record applications. We received over 62,000 applications in the last admissions cycle.

We have experienced a 27% growth increase in the use of our RecSports facilities. Our intramural and club sports have experienced an increase of 78%. Greek Life participation has increased 30%. Mr. Smith spoke to the perception of wanting Greek Life to no longer exist. Chancellor Plowman shared Student Life increased staff and is very intentional in the work being done with the Greek Life organizations. A new sorority was added this year. Returning student housing applications increased 55%. The student union saw a 42% increase in foot traffic. Mr. Todd Skelton and Mr. Smith shared their recent positive experience in the Student Union and Vol Shop. The Center for Health, Education, and Wellness has seen a 71.5% increase in group therapy, a 50.9% increase in intake sessions, and referrals through 974-HELP have doubled over the last six years. Work will continue in all these areas to meet demand and improve offerings.

Chancellor Plowman spoke to our expertise in critical research areas along with strong industry and government partnerships that have positioned us to grow our impact across the state. Our research expenditures reached \$386.9 million for FY24, which is a \$50 million increase from FY23. We are working to continue to grow and support our researchers and students as we navigate the changing environment in research. Five faculty entrepreneurs received Chancellor Innovation Awards worth \$50,000 to advance their technology and innovation. Four of our faculty members were named American Association for the Advancement of Science Fellows. Seven faculty members were named among the most highly cited researchers in the world.

We continue to develop partnerships with the City of Knoxville, the Chamber of Commerce, industry, and community organizations to build an innovation economy for Knoxville and Tennessee. Mr. Smith appreciated seeing the Mayor at the ASU event. He expressed concerns that Nashville was becoming unaffordable to live for most people. He encouraged the university to continue to work with the City of Knoxville and east Tennessee to develop economic development for everyone. Chancellor Plowman confirmed the university is heavily involved in the community.

A video created while FIFA President Gianni Infantino visited campus in April was shared with the group. Dr. Carver provided the history of Dr. Sorochan's and Dr. Stier's work that began at Michigan State University in 1996 when they worked with FIFA at the Silverdome. They continued to work with FIFA after they moved to the University of Tennessee. FIFA approached them to work on the natural turf that would grow on top of artificial turf. FIFA awarded UT the first financial gift to a higher education institution to move forward with the project. FIFA has also asked the team to work with them on the 2030 World Cup that will take place in Uruguay.

Dr. Danny White addressed the group on a few of the exciting things happening in our athletics department. Dr. White shared recent announcements regarding our number one ranking in apparel and concession sales. Dr. White stated the athletics leadership team is working on becoming the best athletics department in the country, and the university already has the best fan base in the country. Dr. White commented on the growth in revenue over the



last few years. In FY24 we set a record of \$234 million. Dr. White anticipates reaching \$280 million this year. Sponsorships have doubled and fundraising has tripled. The recent Big Orange Caravan experienced great attendance at every stop. All twenty teams made post-season play last year for the first time in school history. Eleven of our teams finished in the top ten in the country. Our student athletes are doing a great job. Baseball, softball, and men's and women's tennis teams are hosting NCAA regional competitions this weekend. Mr. Brian Broyles remarked how much impact the winning programs have on our student experience. Chancellor Plowman highlighted the principled leadership in our athletics department. Dr. White brought to the group's attention that the overall combined GPA of 3.38 was recorded last semester. Student athletes continue to break records in the classroom.

Chancellor Plowman shared photos of the new residence halls. Both residence halls are opening on time and on budget. A third residence hall will be completed and open fall 2026. The new College of Nursing building will open this fall. The second Haslam College of Business building and the new Student Success building will open fall 2027. The new chemistry building was approved by the state and is currently in the design phase. The state of Tennessee is assisting with funding for the chemistry building. The state also allocated funds for the economic and community development fund to assist with the state match for federal grants related to research projects.

Chancellor Plowman reminded the advisory board members that the work of the university is driven by our commitment to our students and our covenant with the state.

VI. FY 25-26 BUDGET PRESENTATION

Mr. Paul Byrnes, Sr. Vice Chancellor, Finance and Administration

Chancellor Plowman invited Mr. Paul Byrnes to present the FY25-26 budget for the advisory board's approval.

Mr. Byrnes expressed his appreciation to all the university staff that worked hard to provide the data to prepare the budget being presented today.

Mr. Byrnes stated a budget should reflect our academic priorities and feels the one being presented today accomplishes that task. The budget and fee proposals are based on the campus' financial performance, aspirations, the principles of access, affordability, and value, along with external factors that may affect them were considered. We expect to manage the 2025-2026 academic year with no tuition increase and minimal fee increases while advancing student success, research objectives, and the volunteer experience.

Mr. Byrnes shared a review of the UTK operating dollar. Chancellor Plowman pointed out that state appropriations make up 23% of our revenue. Both expressed their appreciation of the role the state plays in our budget. The funds are critical to many campus programs. Mr. Byrnes noted that 82% of our financial resources are spent to support students and faculty.

Mr. Byrnes shared that strong financial performance has continued over the past four years and expects it will continue in the upcoming year. Mr. Byrnes provided an overview of external factors that could impact all universities. The University of Tennessee has been able to manage through them so far.

Mr. Smith asked what the impact is when we lose a grant. Mr. Byrnes reported the university has not been widely affected at this point. In each case we determine if the university will provide support or end the project. We will continue to monitor changes in the research area. Mr. Smith commented that it is fortunate that we continue to see large numbers of applicants. Economic uncertainty can impact students' ability to pay tuition. Does the university have the ability to decrease expenses if we see uncertainty begin to have an impact on the campus financially. Mr. Byrnes confirmed processes are in place to address expenses as needed. Leadership continues to monitor the economy and will proceed with caution on large investments. Mr. Smith noted the main job of the advisory board is to approve the annual budget and wanted it on the record the university is being prudent with expenses and has the ability to expenses as needed.

Mr. Byrnes reported on the reputation survey conducted by the Office of Communications and Marketing. The survey looked at how respondents react to the University of Tennessee offering a strong undergraduate academic program. Over the last two years, more individuals have moved to agreeing or strongly agreeing to the statement. This is counter to what is happening across the country. Mr. Byrnes also addressed the number of high school graduates anticipated over the next few years. Tennessee is forecast to continue to see an increase, while other states will see decreases. This will increase the competition for our high school graduates. It is the role of the university to maintain access, affordability, and overall value to potential students. Chancellor Plowman expressed her concern over out of state universities recruiting Tennessee students. While this is happening, the interest in the University of Tennessee continues to grow as evidenced by the increase in applications and increase in our yield of those we offer admission.

Mr. Byrnes shared the principles for considering increases in tuition and fee rates. The proposed budget recommends no tuition increases for in-state or out of state students and minimal fee increases. The total fee increases for in-state students is \$736 and \$768 for out of state students.

Mr. Smith commended the work done to keep the cost increases low based on the current economic challenges.

Mr. Byrnes expects the university to remain among the most in demand and affordable universities in the nation and state. Mr. Smith spoke to the number of new facilities, buildings, student success, athletics success, new programs, retention, and academic success. The university's ability to maintain such high levels is remarkable.

Mr. Byrnes reviewed the proposed FY 26 budget for approval. Mr. Skelton asked what worries you the most and what surprised you the most about the university. Mr. Byrnes stated the deterioration of the revenue environment because it is the hardest to control. When interviewing for the position Mr. Byrnes was drawn in by the volunteer experience. He confirmed the volunteer experience is real, and it allows a small group of people to solve problems together and quickly. It allows for great partnerships across campus.

Mr. Carter moved for adoption of the following resolution:

Resolved: The University of Tennessee, Knoxville Advisory Board recommends approval of the proposed operation budget for FY2025-2026 attached as Attachment A hereto and authorizes the Chancellor to present the proposed operating budget to the President as provided in Board Policy BT0026.

Further Resolved: The Advisory Board authorizes the Chancellor to provide additional information to the President prior to the Board of Trustees meeting on June 30-July1, 2025, to support any needed adjustments to the proposed operating budget based on changed circumstances or new data made available to the Chancellor relating to UTK's anticipated operations in FY2025-2026.

The motion was unanimously approved.

VII. UT INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE UPDATE

Dr. Keith Carver, Sr. Vice Chancellor / Sr. Vice President, UT Institute of Agriculture

Chancellor Plowman introduced Dr. Keith Carver and asked him to provide the board members with an update on the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture.

Dr. Carver shared that agriculture, natural resources, and forestry are the biggest industries in the state of Tennessee. They have an annual economic impact of \$90 billion. Dr. Carver shared a video highlighting the many aspects of the University of Tennessee of Agriculture Institute and provided a brief history of the location of the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture along with how Dr. Harcourt Morgan began his time with the university.

Dr. Carver talked about the impact of UT Extension offices across the state with an office in all 95 counties. Each county office has three extension specialists. There are 41,000 active research acres across the state at ten Ag Research sites. At those active farm sites our team members are developing patterns, and technological advances for forestry and agriculture to help farming be profitable. A new cutting-edge broiler facility will be built in Maury County. The new facility will help drive decades of future industry advancement.

Dr. Carver reported the Herbert College of Agriculture is growing. The number of tours of the agriculture programs is reaching new highs. The College of Veterinary Medicine



celebrated its 50th anniversary last year. The college increased the class size from 80 to 105 this year. The veterinary hospital operates 24 hours a day 365 days a year and sees a wide variety of patients. Dr. Carver shared information on the state botanical gardens across the state. The gardens had over 100,000 visitors last year. The annual UT Gardens Gala was held last week and raised the most money in the history of the gala. The university received a \$40 million gift from the state of Tennessee to support the 4-H camps across the state. There are 151,000 active 4-H members.

Dr. Carver expressed his appreciation not only to the university leadership, but also the governor and state legislature and the Tennessee Farm Bureau.

Mr. Tickle shared a personal story about his interaction with the veterinary hospital a few years ago and the exceptional care they provided. Mr. Carter also praised the leadership of UTIA and the veterinary hospital for the care and outreach they provide.

VIII. CLOSING REMARKS

Chancellor Plowman thanked everyone for their attendance and support of the University.

IX. ADJOURN

With no further business coming before the advisory board, the chair adjourned the meeting at 11:52 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan E. England

Susan E. England, Secretary