



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE
CAMPUS ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES
September 5, 2025
KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Advisory Board met at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, September 5, 2025.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair John Tickle called the meeting to order at 9:59 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Roll call of board members conducted with the following present:

Mr. John Tickle, Chair, Mr. Kaden Grace, Ms. Alexia Poe, Dr. Beth Schussler, Mr. Todd Skelton, and Mr. Tom Smith

Absent: Mr. Allen Carter

III. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Mr. Tom Smith made a motion to approve the May 2, 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. Todd Skelton seconded the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved.

IV. RECOGNITION OF NEW MEMBER

Chancellor Donde Plowman welcomed Mr. Kaden Grace, the student representative for 2025-2026. Mr. Grace is a fourth-year economics PhD candidate in the Haslam College of Business. His interests are public finance and health economics. Since 2023, he has served as chairperson of the Haslam doctoral student association. Chancellor Plowman thanked Mr. Grace for serving in a leadership position within his college and now on campus.

V. CHANCELLOR'S UPDATE

Dr. Donde Plowman, Chancellor

Chancellor Plowman shared how proud she is that the group is meeting in the new UT Medical Nursing Building. She thanked Dean Vickie Niederhauser for her leadership of the college and the building project. Chancellor Plowman expressed her excitement for the group to tour the building and see the impressive labs where top-rated training takes place for all nursing students.

Chancellor Plowman spoke to several of the positive things taking place on campus. The UT Medical Nursing Building ribbon cutting took place at the beginning of the semester. We recently announced Mr. Peyton Manning's gift to establish an endowed dean's chair and an endowed director's chair. Chancellor Plowman reminded the group of Mr. Manning's gift that provides scholarships to four students annually. Today we will break ground on the new chemistry building. Chancellor Plowman expressed her appreciation to Governor Lee and the General Assembly for the financial support of the new building. We received approval in advance to begin the planning process, so when we received final approval for the building, we were ready to proceed with demolition and begin building. The new building will serve 8,000+ students. The polymer section of the chemistry department is ranked second in the country. The new building and labs will assist with our efforts to move to the next level of research. Our football team had a great win over the weekend.

Chancellor Plowman reviewed the historic fall the university is experiencing. Retention is at a new high of 92.4%. Our six-year graduation rate increased to 74.5% and we anticipate improvement again next year. Enrollment is up across the board. We anticipate a final count of 7,143 new first-year students, which is an increase from last fall. We are currently at 40,422 total students. Our total number of students includes 500 undergraduate students online. Chancellor Plowman reminded the members of the UT System goal for Knoxville to contribute 41,000 students to the total system enrollment. Increasing the number of graduate students will also play a role in reaching that goal. We have increased the number of faculty members to meet the needs of our growing campus.

Chancellor Plowman reported that the university continues to make investments in capital projects to meet the needs of the growing student body. Chancellor Plowman commented on Dean Niederhauser's persistence in securing the new building. Dean Niederhauser provided insight into how the college functioned in buildings spread out across campus while the building was demolished and the new building was built.

The Haslam College Business building is one of the largest projects we have undertaken. The building will primarily serve undergraduate students. The goal is to be the building fall 2027. The new student success building is underway. The university is funding the project from funds we set aside over time. The building will house classrooms, advising, tutors, and the student success staff members. Dr. Frank Cuevas will update the group on the new residence halls and Dr. Danny White will provide the athletics projects later in the meeting.

Chancellor Plowman highlighted the record-breaking donor support over the past year. More than 70,000 donors contributed \$428 million to the university. The university will host a naming dedication of the Winston College of Law this fall. Mr. Tickle spoke to the legacy of Mr. Bill Gatton and his attorney Mr. Winston. Mr. Brian Broyles shared the Gatton Foundation chose to honor Mr. Winston with this incredible gift, which allowed for the naming of the college and provides student scholarships. Mr. Manning's endowed chairs gift. UT Medical Center's gift to name the new College of Nursing Building. Major gifts in support of student veterans, Baker scholars, and the student communication and leadership academy. Chancellor Plowman shared the university will begin a new campaign in fall of 2026. Mr. Broyles commented the university is well positioned to do remarkable things. Chancellor Plowman applauded the sophisticated and analytical approach to the next campaign. The capacity analysis provides us with information to develop a successful campaign. Chancellor Plowman expressed her appreciation of the work Dr. White and his team, along with the provost, deans, and faculty do daily to support the mission of the university.

Chancellor Plowman spoke to the aspiration to bring the university to the next level in three areas – unparalleled student experience, high-impact research, and top-tier athletics. Beginning with an unparalleled student experience, Chancellor Plowman asked Dr. Cuevas to speak about the beginning of the fall semester. Dr. Cuevas reported 9,100 students moved into the residence halls this fall compared to 8,400 last fall. With the addition of two new residence halls, housing was able to retire some of the older residence halls. Dr. Cuevas shared over 50% of our residence halls have been built in the last decade. Chancellor Plowman stated more residence halls will be retired and replaced.

Chancellor Plowman complimented Dr. Cuevas and Dr. Amber Williams on their ability to provide good quality student experiences to scale. Dr. Cuevas shared 7,800 students attended Tennessee Saturday Night. It is a block style party that welcomes new and continuing students back to campus. Undergraduate and graduate students are not required to attend, but they showed up to engage with each other and build a sense of community. Chancellor Plowman reported over 8,000 students participated in Torch Night.

Chancellor Plowman shared the Division of Student Success will conduct a one-year pilot to engage with the students who receive the UT Promise scholarship. The program is called UT Promise on Rocky Top. The program involves mentorship, community service, and assistance with persistence.

Dr. Cuevas shared a record 3,051 first-year students participated in Greek recruitment, which is a 16% increase from last fall. Currently 33% of our total enrollment is involved in Greek life. For the last 16 semesters, the students have done very well academically. Chancellor Plowman spoke to the need for additional housing needed for those interested in being part of the Greek community.

Chancellor Plowman shared that more than 8,000 first-year students attended an “Authoring Your Story” required orientation presentation. They write down their goals for the semester, discuss their strengths and how they can use them to accomplish their goals. A survey of the students indicated 94% felt more confident in their ability to succeed following the session.

Chancellor Plowman complimented Dr. Cuevas and Dr. White on their ability to assist students with obtaining tickets to a football game. Last year more than 22,000 unique students attended a football game. Chancellor Plowman reported over 11,000 students completed service in the community. Dr. Cuevas commented the service equated to 173,000 hours with an economic impact of \$6M.

Chancellor Plowman explained how our research capabilities as a university align with regional industries and state and federal priorities. The university has a new partnership with Y-12 that will involve our faculty in advanced materials. We are excited about a \$5M award from the Office of Naval Research to develop next-gen military steel. Dr. John Sorochan and his team are developing turf grass for all sixteen stadiums and practice fields participating in the FIFA World Cup. Dr. Sorochan’s fLEX machine simulates how athletes’ feet strike the field to help with athlete safety. Dr. Sorochan was one of the first recipients of the Chancellor’s Innovation Fund awards, which assisted him in developing the machine. We have faculty partnering with a technology development firm to develop a device using biomarkers to diagnose PTSD and other complex conditions. Cherokee Research Park recently held a ribbon cutting for the Center for Precision Health working on 3D printed body parts for humans and animals. All serve as examples of collaboration across university departments, colleges, and community partners.

Chancellor Plowman asked Dr. White to address key points related to top-tier athletics. Dr. White reported we finished sixth in the Learfield Director’s Cup. All twenty sports competed in post-season play for the last two years. We are the only power four school to do so. Proud of our soccer team, which is ranked second. Five sports finished in the top five nationally. Last year both men’s and women’s teams combined for a 3.0 or higher GPA for the 25th straight semester. Athletics had its largest fundraising year ever with \$169M in gifts and its fourth consecutive year of record revenue. Dr. White spoke of his desire to continue to improve in every category.

Chancellor Plowman spoke about a recent retreat with the deans, which addressed their bold ideas for the next level. We have made funds available to hire premiere faculty to join our top-tier faculty on campus to help us raise our research stature.

Chancellor Plowman shared an update on three place-based innovation districts. The Peninsula Innovation District includes the UT Research Park at Cherokee Farm and focuses on advanced materials. The Maplehurst Innovation District will be near campus and downtown Knoxville. The location will be focused on technology related innovation and economic growth. The Oak Ridge Innovation Corridor will support advancement of next-

generation materials and advanced manufacturing technology essential to advancing US advanced energy dominance.

Mr. Tom Smith commented on his experience with Greek life in the past and where it is today. He complimented the university on the work being done to encourage community across the university. These improvements and more lead to a higher retention rate.

Mr. Grace shared that he has heard from fellow students that they feel seen and heard by the community the university has established. This generation has experienced isolation and loneliness and the steps the university has taken to build community are appreciated.

Mr. Skelton asked what the biggest factors that impact the hiring of rock star faculty. Chancellor Plowman expressed her concern about getting facilities ready quick enough to allow faculty members to conduct top-tier research. Compensation is the easiest piece. Chancellor Plowman thinks there are faculty out there that want to be part of building on our success to reach the next level.

VI. FACILITIES UPDATE

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

Dr. Frank Cueveas, Vice Chancellor, Student Life

Dr. Danny White, Vice Chancellor and Director of Athletics

Mr. Paul Byrnes shared his staff work to better serve the students, faculty, and staff daily. Last year we prioritized commuter parking, promoted transit use, and moved vehicle storage to the edge of campus. One key initiative was park-and-ride permits and a new partnership with Knoxville Area Transit (KAT). A tiered pricing and purchasing hierarchy that favors graduate students and students with greater seniority was implemented. Transit ridership saw an increase of 74% from 2023-2024 to 2024-2025. We want to continue to improve upon that increase. This fall we introduced a new service providing a T Bus route that improves access to Downtown Knoxville. The park-and-ride shuttle service from the Knoxville Coliseum to Neyland Stadium runs every 10-12 minutes. The service is available for commuter students, staff, and faculty. We have added a route that runs from the Knoxville Coliseum to UTIA every 15-20 minutes. These shuttles are available Monday-Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Should someone need transportation after-hours they may use the T or Safe at UT apps to request transportation to the Knoxville Coliseum. This fall we will introduce a pilot rideshare program targeted to support first-year non-commuter undergraduate students without parking permits. The vendor contract is being finalized.

Ms. Alexia Poe asked how many spots are available to first year students. Mr. Byrnes reported 800 spots were allotted for residential first year students. We received very few parking requests from these students. The expectation was set not to bring a car, and many did not. Mr. Smith wondered if this is a generational trend of not having a car and using rideshare options easily.



Mr. Byrnes also shared information on a carshare program that will be piloted this fall. The vendor contract is currently being finalized. Chancellor Plowman stated students would like to have access to a car to travel home on the weekend and this new program will help.

Mr. Byrnes shared additional transportation offerings for students during the holidays. Student Life coordinates chartered bus service from Knoxville to West Tennessee for Thanksgiving, winter, and spring breaks. The chartered buses stop in Nashville, Jackson, and Memphis. They provide airport shuttles to McGhee Tyson for Thanksgiving, winter, and spring breaks. We are launching a motor assistance program to help students, staff, faculty, and guests with battery or tire issues. Chancellor Plowman pointed out there was a positive article in the *Daily Beacon* recently regarding parking.

Dr. Frank Cuevas spoke to the role residence halls play in the unparalleled student experience. Two new residence halls opened this fall. The residence halls were built as part of a public private partnership (P3). We broke ground on the new residence halls in January 2024. In a 20-month period, we were able to deliver 2,000 beds to campus that modernize our inventory and increase capacity to accommodate a growing student body. Beacon Hall is actually two buildings located on Caledonia near the Lake Avenue parking garage and Rocky Top Dining. Poplar Hall is located on Andy Holt Avenue on the old Andy Holt Apartment site. All residence halls opened on time and on budget, which allows for flexible pricing for our students. Each has a large community kitchen area for students to cook or hang out.

Torchbearer Hall will sit on the corner of Lake Loudoun Boulevard and Volunteer Boulevard. We broke ground in 2024, and it will open August 2026. It is an impressive building and will have 1,024 beds. We will have a satellite UT Creamery on the first floor. The interior courtyard will have synthetic turf for activities and a large fire pit for student gatherings.

Chancellor Plowman asked Dr. Cuevas to speak to the differences between the P3 process and the typical building process. Dr. Cuevas stated the P3 partnership allowed for an expedient process. Our partner RISE stepped up and met our expectations. The speed and efficiency with decision making allowed us to continue to move forward without delays in the building process. The developer owns the building and we own the land. In parallel with the developer, we staff the building. They use our services for maintenance. We recently conducted our monthly inspection and shared the findings with the developer for action, which allows us to meet the expectations of the residents in a timely fashion.

Dr. Danny White provided an update on the upgrades to Neyland Stadium. The game on Saturday will be the first time for our fans to experience the new south concourse. The new concourse should allow for easier access to the stadium for our students and fans. Capacity at Gate 9 has been expanded to allow for quicker entrance into the stadium. The ten Founders Suites will open tomorrow. This project required a capital gift and annual revenue, which allows them to pay for themselves. Windows in the skyboxes have been improved.

Dr. White shared Lindsey Nelson Stadium was scheduled to be completed last year, but it will be completed this year. The new Rocky Top Club and Suites will be available and provide a new amenity we have not had before. The new main entrance will be ready this season. On game days, Pat Summitt Drive will serve as a plaza space and will be used for multiple activities. The MVP Club will increase the capacity for premium guests. Several improvements have been made to improve the players' experience at the stadium.

Chancellor Plowman complimented Dr. White's approach to generating revenue to make capital improvements. Dr. White and his team have worked to bring the facilities up to meet the expectations of the players and fan base. Mr. Smith commented on the attention to architectural features that have been incorporated into the athletic buildings and the residence halls.

VII. COLLEGE OF NURSING UPDATE

Dr. Victoria P. Niederhauser, DrPH, RN, PPCNP-BC, FAAN, Dean & Professor

Chancellor Plowman introduced and welcomed Dean Niederhauser to speak to the advisory board. Dean Niederhauser expressed her appreciation to the advisory board for the opportunity to share the great things happening in the College of Nursing. Dean Niederhauser recognized the members of her leadership team in attendance.

Dean Niederhauser opened her presentation with a personal story related to her newborn granddaughter in Colorado. During the medical event her granddaughter experienced, she met a graduate from the University of Tennessee College of Nursing. Dean Niederhauser said she knew at that moment her granddaughter was being cared for by one of the best because she received her training at our university. Dean Niederhauser reminded everyone of the need to produce excellent nurses for our state and across the nation so they can care for our family and friends.

Dean Niederhauser shared the vision of the College of Nursing. The vision statement is focused on leading in care, creating partnerships, and improving health.

The College of Nursing has been on a growth trajectory over the past few years. The total number of students this fall surpassed the original goal of 1,260 students to 1,380 students and next fall they anticipate reaching 1,500. There has been significant growth in undergraduate and graduate programs. We currently have a nursing workforce shortage now and it is predicted to continue over the next ten years. Growing the number of nursing students is critical to meeting our workforce needs.

Dean Niederhauser shared the BSN program is ranked 19th among public universities, 1st in the state, and 26th among all nursing schools nationally. The doctor of nursing practice degree includes nurse anesthetists, nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, and clinical specialists. Among public universities this program continues to rise and is currently 22nd.

Dean Niederhauser spoke to student outcome measures. The first-time NCLEX pass rate last year was 96.7%, which is well above the 91.16% national average. The APRN certification pass rate is 92%, which is above the 88% national average. The retention rate and graduation rates are high. Approximately 60% of graduates stay in state and over half of those that stay in state stay in the Knoxville area.

The nursing workforce faces challenges such as an aging population, increased nurse retirements, expanded nursing roles, education bottlenecks, lack of clinical rotation options, and geographic inequities. The demand for nurses is high. The college has expanded academic practice partnerships with UT Medical Center and East Tennessee Children's Hospital to build the workforce together. The college provides education around the use of AI and technology tools and is looking for ways to expand experiences in rural and global areas.

Dean Niederhauser and the leadership at UT Medical Center worked together to develop a partnership that would provide scholarships to nursing students in exchange for a three-year work commitment. As a result of the partnership, changes were made to the program for the scholarship recipients. All clinical rotations happen at UTMC, the college learning centers look like the spaces the students encounter in the hospital setting, changes to then schedule allow the students to graduate earlier, and begin work earlier. These changes allowed UTMC to decrease costs related to travel nurses. The college has a positive cash flow associated with the program. We currently have 107 students enrolled this fall.

Dean Niederhauser stated that through an interested donor, the college developed a similar program with East Tennessee Children's Hospital. Through the donation, students are provided with extra voluntary clinical experiences at ETCH, they conduct their clinical rotations at ETCH, and receive a job offer at graduation.

The Center for Nursing Practice oversees multiple community projects. Some of the programs were highlighted. The Vine School Health Center has been in operation for over 30 years. The Center offers telehealth services to ten additional schools. Staff from the Center follow up weekly with in person visits to those receiving telehealth services. The Precious Prints program began 13 years ago in conjunction with ETCH. The program provides fingerprints cast in silver to the parents who have lost a child. Eleven additional local hospitals currently participate. Rural and global service opportunities are also provided to students.

Research at the College of Nursing focuses on helping people get healthy, stay healthy, adjust to chronic illness, staffing, patient outcomes, medication adherence, reduction of symptoms, and bench science. Chancellor Plowman encouraged all colleges to step up research efforts, and we are working to increase our NIH funding levels.



Dean Niederhauser expressed her appreciation to the advisory board and looks forward to showing them the learning labs following the meeting.

Chancellor Plowman congratulated Dean Niederhauser on how the College of Nursing exhibits being part of a land grant university. Their work around workforce development, service to the community, and research efforts to improve lives.

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 11:59 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan E. England, Secretary