

University Council
March 9, 2020
President's Conference Room

1. Call to Order

Dr. Wilsie Bishop called the meeting to order.

2. Roll Call

Ms. Jennifer Hill called the roll. Those in attendance were: Dr. Joe Bidwell, Dr. Wilsie Bishop, Dr. William Block, Dr. Cheri Clavier, Dr. Dennis Depew, Dr. William Duncan, Dr. Susan Epps, Dr. Mark Fulks, Dr. Adam Green, Mr. Stephen Hendrix, Dr. Mike Hoff, Dr. Keith Johnson, Dr. Karin Keith, Dr. B.J. King, Dr. Karen King, Dr. Claudia Kozinetz, Mr. Joseph Kusi, Dr. Sam Mayhew, Dr. Brian Noland, Mr. Jeremy Ross, Dr. Don Samples, Dr. Janna Scarborough, Dr. Joe Sherlin, Mr. Joe Smith, Mr. Andrew Worley

Those absent were: Ms. Bridget Baird, Mr. Scott Carter, Ms. Candy Massey, Ms. Pam Ritter, Dr. David Roane, Mr. Aamir Shaikh

Others in attendance: Dr. Doug Burgess, Ms. Mary Cradic, Ms. Jennifer Hill, Ms. Amanda Mowell

3. Standing Items

3.1 Approve minutes of February 10, 2020, meeting

A motion to approve the February 10, 2020, minutes was seconded and unanimously approved.

3.2 Review agenda

Dr. Bishop said that the Executive Team has information to share related to COVID-19 at this time.

3.3 COVID-19 Report

President Brian Noland reported that everyone is becoming knowledgeable about COVID-19 and taking action out of a sense of safety for their families and loved ones. He said COVID-19 is in front of us and the campus must make decisions in the interest of the health and welfare of the campus community, and other institutions are going through the same processes. A team has been working on this for three weeks and is continuing planning to position the university to move forward as the situation evolves rapidly. A website with detailed, up-to-date information on COVID-19 is being developed. Dr. Noland stated that as of this date (March 9, 2020), all international travel and study abroad activity for ETSU has been suspended until June 15, and domestic travel is being monitored. Administrators are working through issues surrounding reimbursements and refunds.

Joe Smith, Executive Assistant to the President for University Relations/Chief Communication Officer, reported that the Campus Communication Team is meeting daily to talk about how to provide information regarding COVID-19 to the campus community and determined that a special website was needed beyond that of the University Health Center website, which was built over the weekend; this website will be linked to the main ETSU home page.

Amanda Mowell, Director of Communications, introduced this web page to the University Council, noting that it outlines current plans and will be continually updated with timely announcements. It will include numerous resources and a FAQ section.

During discussion, Dr. Noland replied to questions regarding travel and stated that the university has been able to track study abroad students and obtain information on those quarantining at home. He pointed out that Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines are to quarantine for 14 days at home. He encouraged Council members to begin planning in case the university needs to conduct part of the semester from a distance. Dr. Noland said travel reimbursements for conferences and other events would be worked through on a case-by-case basis; in some circumstances, the sponsoring organizations may waive costs, but if they are not able to do so, the liability might be on the institution. At this time, there are no plans to restrict domestic travel, but Dr. Noland said the situation is changing daily. He thanked members of the Council for their work and noted that if this situation gets worse, the region will look to the university for leadership.

3.5 Call for Voluntary Reports of UC-Essential Action Items from Governance Organizations

Stephen Hendrix reported that a full faculty vote on Faculty Senate constitutional changes will be finished by the end of next week and that a communication survey is being taken. The Faculty Senate is also working with the Staff Senate and Student Government Association to raise additional products for Bucky's Food Pantry.

Mr. Joseph Kusi reported that the Graduate and Professional Student Association has activities planned for learning grant-writing and other various seminars scheduled for graduate students.

Dr. Joseph Bidwell reported that the Council of Chairs met last week and that the Council will start developing chair training functions based on feedback from chairs and focus groups.

Dr. William Duncan reported that the Research Council is working on communication and a website that pertains to an issue that has become very high-profile for the National Institutes of Health and other federal agencies regarding foreign influence on research. This website will remind people about the increasing focus on export control. Dr. Duncan said the Council is finishing up the bidding process for an electronic events management system; there will be a one-year implementation. This will be efficient for faculty and give deans and chairs immediate access to information on grants.

Dr. Karen King (Information Technology Council) reminded Council members that there will be a notice of a change to two-factor authentication.

The only thing users should notice is that they will be prompted to log in again, and if anyone has difficulties, they should call the Help Desk.

Dr. Bishop shared the Notification of Academic Council Curriculum Approvals from Feb. 13 and 27 (*see [attachment](#)*), which indicates numerous program name changes, creations of programs from concentrations, certificate creations, program revisions, establishment of new minors and articulation agreements and more.

Dr. Bishop also reported that a new society to recognize high-achieving students will be announced this week. Ten to 15 students per year will be chosen through a stringent application and review process as members of The 1911 Society, which recognizes the founding of the university, and will be honored at a special luncheon between commencement ceremonies, during which they will wear tartan stoles. She said there are numerous other student recognition events held at the college and university levels, sometimes at times when parents cannot attend, but this new program will honor students at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional student levels who stand out above the rest. Dr. Adam Green added that this will establish a new tradition on the ETSU campus, with the names and pictures of honorees placed in the D.P. Culp Student Center, and Dr. Bishop noted that these students could become future recruiters and donors for the university. President Noland thanked those involved in establishing this new society, noting that he has wanted for some time to create an opportunity for parents to see these students celebrated on commencement day.

4. President's Report

In a legislative update, President Noland noted that it is the midpoint of the legislative session, and budget hearings have wrapped up for higher education, with operational enhancements, salary enhancements, and support for deferred maintenance and for positions in Quillen are all moving through without many questions. He anticipates letters of endorsement from both the House and Senate for \$2.5 million in planning for ETSU's new humanities building, but following the recent tornadoes in Nashville, he anticipates some planning funding will be redirected to institutions that sustained damage, such as Tennessee State University's agricultural campus, which was demolished. Dr. Noland said he does not anticipate that legislation regarding weapons will go anywhere; he noted that Gov. Bill Lee introduced his constitutional carry legislation last week, but that will not impact the university. He said that he does not see tuition caps legislation or anything affecting the day-to-day operations of the campus.

Dr. Noland reported that the Board of Trustees last met in February. The next Board of Trustees meeting will be in April, when tuition and fees, tenure and promotion, and budgets will be considered. He noted that Board conversations continue on research and how the university can add value to the ETSU/Eastman Valleybrook Campus through research, small business development, start-ups, and more.

In his construction update, Dr. Noland said he hoped Council members had had the opportunity to see the newly reopened Culp Center and thanked staff for their efforts

toward what is still a work in progress. He reported that pedestrian access behind the Culp Center is being examined, and what is now an on-street parking area between the Culp Center and Ross Hall should be converted to a pedestrian-friendly green space by the fall. In discussion, Council members expressed concern about patient access to clinics in Lamb Hall as the parking space between Carter and Lamb Hall will be occupied for construction use. Dr. Noland said progress continues on the Martin Center for the Performing Arts, which is to be open by the fall, and current conversations are centering on the operational budget, staffing, and programming structures. He also said the university looks to break ground on the Lamb Hall renovation in the near future.

Dr. Noland said efforts are continuing on improving internal communication, with changes to the weekly updates on Mondays and the month in review email. He also called attention to the banners and other visuals that have been going up across campus affirming the university's values; elevator wraps and signs on the outside of buildings will be forthcoming, along with a social media campaign to reaffirm the messaging.

Dr. Noland reminded the Council that at the last meeting, he brought up the possibility of implementing a Chapter 2 of the Committee of 125, which developed a vision for the university at its 125th anniversary in 2036, and he said he "saw a lot of shaking heads." He said the Board of Trustees also concurred, and strategic planning has begun on the staff level. He said he anticipates the coming months will be spent with forums, roundtables, focus groups, and listening sessions on hopes, dreams, and aspirations to work toward by 2030, with the assistance of national experts being sought to help guide the campus and Board in the process. He encouraged Council members to dream big and reminded them of the major accomplishments over the past 10 years, including achieving the highest graduation rate in the history of the institution; the modernization of Advancement Services, which has resulted in back-to-back record years in private giving as well as the largest gift in ETSU history; significant growth in the arts, including the implementation of a strings program, the re-establishment and growth of the marching band, and new scholarships in addition to the near-completion of the Martin Center for the Performing Arts; and the renovation of the D.P. Culp Student Center and Building 60.

5. Action Items

5.1 Old Business

There was no old business.

5.2 New Business

5.2.1 Policy on Fitness for Duty

Dr. Doug Burgess, Professor/Chair, Department of History, presented a report on the proposed Fitness for Duty Policy (*see [attachment](#)*) following the 14-day comment period. Burgess said the idea for the new policy, which specifies the method for determining employees' fitness for duty, goes back 10 years when faculty and administrators saw a need for a policy that covered what could be done if an employee was not functioning at an optimum level but treated the employee with fairness.

Dr. Burgess shared that some of those who commented “found the policy contrary to ETSU’s values of treating people with dignity and respect,” thought it discriminatory, and suggested that the responsibility for paying for a fitness for duty evaluation should be covered by the university rather than the employee. He said the policy is not discriminatory and that the policy was determined by University Counsel to be lawful, and the cost should be covered by insurance. Other commenters “questioned why another policy was needed when the university has a progressive discipline policy,” but he said those individuals had not seen the Observed Behavior Summary Form, which “shows why a Fitness for Duty policy is necessary and how it is different than a progressive discipline policy.”

Dr. Burgess said the proposed policy has been revised based upon comments to change the length of time for a second opinion from 14 to 21 days and to incorporate a provision prohibiting conflict of interest on the part of health care providers.

Dr. Burgess said the policy was developed with good intent to provide assistance to individuals undergoing various physical and mental health difficulties in a way that is respectful and helpful to the individual and maintains integrity in classes.

Following a motion and second to approve the policy, Dr. Susan Epps recommended an editorial change in the “Procedure(s)” section, item A.6., where there is a 6.a. but no 6.b., and the word “must” needed to be deleted. She recommended revising item A.6. to read “After consultation with the Human Resources representative, if appropriate, the supervisor sends a memorandum specifying any incidents and/or behaviors that are affecting the employee’s performance or workplace duties and the Observed Behavior Summary Form...” A motion was made and seconded to approve the policy as amended.

In discussion, Dr. Bishop noted that all of the councils to which the policy had been presented were supportive, and Council members expressed appreciation for the work that has gone into the development of the policy and said it would be helpful.

The policy as amended was approved unanimously.

6. Information Items/Presentations

6.1 Strategic Initiatives Update

Dr. Mike Hoff noted that in his last presentation on KPIs there was a discrepancy in patient encounters in which it appeared that one clinic had been dropped. As a result, improvements have been made in how patient encounters will be reported going forward.

Dr. Hoff reported that he, Dr. Joe Bidwell, and Dr. Adam Green will meet later in the week to develop a calendar and prepare for formal announcements regarding the Committee for 125 process to which President Noland referred. He asked for naming suggestions for this process, and also requested Council members to think about one question as they approach the new visioning process: “What would make a quality institution?”

6.2 Quality and Effectiveness Sub-Council Update

Dr. Cheri Clavier shared that since her last update in December, the Quality and Effectiveness Sub-Council has done some exploratory work around its strategic plan and how that relates to administrative effectiveness. She said that the first charge of the Sub-Council is to define and implement university policies and procedures related to quality and effectiveness, which parallels the SACSCOC standards requiring institutional planning and a 7.3 on administrative effectiveness. Dr. Clavier said that in looking at what individual units across campus do relating to the strategic plan in terms of administrative effectiveness, members discovered that there are usually not one-on-one parallels due to the complexity of the university. When the Sub-Council met in February, its members decided to look at what other institutions are doing and divided up into groups to examine three different groups of peer institutions (RPK, EAB, and SACSCOC level 6 institutions) before reporting back in April.

6.3 Update on the Budget

Dr. B.J. King provided an update on the budget for 2020-2021 (*see attached [PowerPoint presentation](#)*). She said ETSU is number 1 among four-year institutions in Tennessee in outcomes, but the outcomes adjustment is hidden in the Governor's budget in the way it is presented. Medicine and Family Medicine are getting some additional operating dollars, and higher education is getting a 2.5% salary pool which is funded at 60%, with the remainder to be funded through a proposed tuition increase of 1.66% for undergraduates and 1.67 for graduate students; management has proposed a 2% across-the-board salary increase with a \$500 minimum to be implemented July 1, with the remaining .5% to be placed in a pool for critical market adjustments. In total, ETSU stands to get over \$7.5 million in increased funds, which includes \$6.5 million in the Governor's proposed budget and \$1.095 million for the Peds Strategic Initiative. Dr. King noted that THEC's binding tuition limit for FY21 is 2%, and that the binding tuition increase has declined steadily in recent years, which leaves her concerned that it could go down to 1.5% for FY22. Students have requested a new wellness fee, which will leave a smaller percentage of any increase to go toward the general fund, which funds benefits, scholarships, and operating expenses. She said the maximum fee increase would generate \$1.6 million. Dr. King said that of the money on the table from the state that was shown on the first slide, \$512,000 will go toward funding OPEB liability and retirement benefits (the state gave ETSU \$2 million and billed the university \$2.5 million, which says the percentage the institution pays for employee benefits is around 2%). An additional \$625,000 will be needed for scholarship expenses. The budget anticipates an \$800,000 decline due to enrollment based on recent history. Dr. King encouraged Council members to work to maintain or grow enrollment, because if enrollment remains flat and the university has the \$800,000, the university would begin working on the list of requested items that were not funded.

Dr. King shared a comparison of tuition and mandatory fees across the state, and ETSU's program service fees almost match those of the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, and total tuition and fees are comparable to those of Middle

Tennessee State University, University of Memphis, and the three UT campuses. With an estimated increase of 2%, Memphis would go over the \$10,000 mark.

Dr. King shared that no funding is included in the Governor's budget for the Humanities Building and that funding for capital maintenance follows the Sherman Dergis formula for calculations.

In discussion, it was emphasized that the numbers given are not yet final, and Dr. King said she would be glad to give another presentation once the process is complete. The need for transparency on fees was also discussed, and it was noted that it is difficult to find a breakdown of what is covered by fees. Dr. King noted that fees are located on the Bursar's website, and in answer to questions, said that the university would begin to do as some other universities are doing and publish a breakdown of fees to make them easier to understand. It was pointed out that some employers that offer tuition reimbursement may not wish to cover such fees as parking, library, or wellness. Dr. King said ITS is working to implement an online calculator that will calculate financial aid, fees, and more, which will be helpful to students and parents.

7. Announcements

Dr. Epps announced that the men's basketball team would be playing tonight for the Southern Conference championship, and Dr. Noland pointed out that a bus would be available for students who wished to attend but did not want to drive to Asheville, North Carolina.

Dr. Bishop announced that the Great Colleges Workforce Study is out and encouraged Council members who received the study to respond.

She also encouraged members to stay calm in the mist of the COVID-19 situation, which the administration is monitoring and about which updates will be provided on the website discussed earlier.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:26 a.m.