

TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

Minutes of the Fall Quarterly Commission Meeting

Nashville Room, 3rd Floor

Tennessee Tower

312 Rosa L. Parks Ave.

Nashville, TN 37243

November 16, 2023

Link to recording: [THEC Fall 2023 Commission Meeting 11/16/2023](#)

Chairwoman Scarlett called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. CST.

Member	PRESENT	ABSENT
Chairwoman Tara Scarlett	X	
Commissioner Whitney Allmon	X	
Commissioner Evan Cope		X
Commissioner Jacob Knight	X	
Commissioner Pam Koban	X	
Commissioner Jimmy Matlock	X	
Commissioner Jay Moser		X
Commissioner Vernon Stafford, Jr.	X	
Commissioner AC Wharton	X	
Commissioner Dakasha Winton		X
Secretary Tre Hargett	X	
Treasurer David H. Lillard, Jr.	X	
Commissioner Sara Morrison		X
Comptroller Jason Mumpower	X	

At the start of the meeting there were eight (8) voting members physically present and one (1) voting member participating electronically, constituting a quorum. Commissioner Wharton participated electronically. At approximately 11:00 a.m., Commissioner Jimmy Matlock entered the meeting electronically. Comptroller Mumpower physically left the meeting at approximately 11:07 a.m. and then participated electronically starting at 12:33 p.m. Treasurer Lillard left the meeting at 12:50 p.m. A statement of necessity was adopted at 12:50 p.m. as a physical quorum was no longer present.

Adoption of Agenda

Comptroller Mumpower made a motion to adopt the agenda. Treasurer Lillard seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with nine (9) ayes.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes: August 15, 2023, Summer Quarterly Meeting

Commissioner Stafford made a motion to approve the August 15, 2023, Summer Quarterly Meeting Minutes. Comptroller Mumpower seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with nine (9) ayes.

Approval of Minutes: October 3, 2023, Special Called Meeting

Commissioner Koban made a motion to approve the October 3, 2023, Special Called Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Stafford seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with nine (9) ayes.

Regular Calendar I

I. Interviews of Executive Director Candidates (*Informational Only*)

At approximately 9:15 a.m., Chairwoman Scarlett commenced the interview of Dr. Robert Donley. Dr. Donley gave an overview of his background, the Commission members asked questions, and a discussion was held.

At approximately 10:06 a.m., Chairwoman Scarlett commenced the interview of Dr. Steven Gentile. Dr. Gentile gave an overview of his background, the Commission members asked questions, and a discussion was held.

II. Selection of Executive Director (*Action Item*)

Chairwoman Scarlett provided an overview of the search for the new Executive Director and made a motion to hire Dr. Gentile as the new Executive Director with a starting salary of \$265,000 annually. Comptroller Mumpower made a motion to amend Chairwoman Scarlett’s motion and to hire Dr. Gentile as the new Executive Director with a starting salary of \$240,450. Secretary Hargett seconded the motion to amend. Commissioner members asked questions, and a discussion was held. After legal advice was given by counsel, the Commission decided to vote on the Executive Director selection and salary separately.

Chairwoman Scarlett made a motion to hire Dr. Gentile as the new Executive Director. Secretary Hargett seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with ten (10) ayes.

Chairwoman Scarlett made a motion to approve a yearly salary of \$265,000 for Dr. Gentile. Comptroller Mumpower made a motion to amend Chairwoman Scarlett’s motion to approve a yearly salary of \$240,450 for Dr. Gentile. Secretary Hargett seconded the motion to amend. A roll call vote was taken on the amendment, and the amendment failed with four (4) ayes and six (6) nays.

Chairwoman Scarlett made a motion to approve a yearly salary of \$265,000 for Dr. Gentile. Commissioner Koban seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with ten (10) ayes.

Dr. Gentile was brought back into the meeting and officially offered the position of Executive Director at the yearly salary of \$265,000. Dr. Gentile accepted the offer.

Chairwoman Scarlett thanked everyone who participated in the Executive Search Committee and AGB Search. Treasurer Lillard also thanked Dr. Donley for his interest in the position.

Lunch Break

The Commission meeting was called back to order at 11:48 a.m.

Chair’s Report

Chairwoman Scarlett provided her report with an overview of THEC activities since the last quarterly meeting. Chairwoman Scarlett highlighted staff work, including a new THEC newsletter and the convening of institutional leadership to discuss THEC's academic program approval process. Additionally, Chairwoman Scarlett discussed THEC's new committee structure. Chairwoman Scarlett discussed the recent concerns related to THEC and stated that she had met with legislative leadership as well as the Governor's office. As a result, she offered suggestions for how THEC could provide and prove its value to the state of Tennessee.

Executive Director's Report

Dr. Gentile, Executive Director, gave his report. Dr. Gentile then introduced Paige Elliott, Research and Strategy Analyst, who gave an update on postsecondary enrollment and the college-going rate. Commission members asked questions and a discussion was held. Dr. Julie Roberts, Chief Academic Officer, gave an overview of the Access, Academics, and Student Success Committee Meeting. Mr. Jason Cavender, Chief Financial Officer, gave an overview of the Finance and Operations Committee Meeting.

Agenda Items

Chairwoman Scarlett stated there were three (3) items on the consent calendar and that without objection, the Commission would vote on these items as a set. Commissioner Stafford made a motion to approve the items on the consent calendar. Commissioner Allmon seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with nine (9) ayes.

I. 2024-2025 Operating State Appropriation Recommendations (*Action Item*)

Mr. Russell VanZomeran, Senior Director of Fiscal Policy, provided an overview of the 2024-25 Operating State Appropriation Recommendations.

Mr. VanZomeran stated that the Finance and Operation Committee voted to recommend the request for the Tennessee Board of Regent's Student Support Network be amended from \$1.6 million to \$1.8 million and the request for the Tennessee Board of Regent's Creating a Multi-Generational Pipeline be amended from \$3.3 million to \$3.8 million.

Treasurer Lillard made a motion to approve the 2024-25 Operating State Appropriation recommendations with the amendment by the Finance and Operations Committee. Chairwoman Scarlett seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with ten (10) ayes.

II. 2024-2025 Guiding Tuition and Fees Ranges (*Action Item*)

Mr. Russell VanZomeran, Senior Director of Fiscal Policy, provided an overview of the Guiding Tuition and Fees Ranges Recommendations. Commission members asked questions, and a discussion was held.

Treasurer Lillard made a motion to approve guiding tuition and fees ranges of zero to four percent (0-4%). Commissioner Stafford seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with ten (10) ayes.

III. 2024-25 Capital Projects (*Action Item*)

Mr. Paul Marshall, Senior Director of Facilities Planning and Preparedness, provided an overview of the lifecycle of capital projects, the twelve recommended capital projects for 2024-25, the capital outlay budget of \$861.6 million dollars, and the additional \$5.5 million request outside the capital outlay budget for demolitions. Commission members asked questions, and a discussion was held.

Treasurer Lillard made a motion to approve the 2024-25 Capital Projects. Commissioner Stafford seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with nine (9) ayes and one (1) nay from Secretary Hargett.

IV. New Academic Programs (Action Item)

Chairwoman Scarlett stated there were three (3) new academic programs and that without objection, the Commission would vote on these items as a set. Secretary Hargett made a motion to approve all three (3) new academic programs. Treasurer Lillard seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with ten (10) ayes.

Statement of Necessity

Board Secretary Rachel Hitt read the following:

Commission Members,

A quorum of members are participating electronically today. As such, Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-108(b)(2), requires that the Commission make a determination that a necessity exists in order for a quorum of members to participate by electronic or other means of communication.

A “necessity” means that the matters to be considered by a public body at a meeting require timely action by the body, that physical presence by a quorum of the members is not practical within the period of time requiring action, and that participation by a quorum of the members by electronic or other means of communication is necessary.

In this case, two facts support a determination of necessity:

First, today’s agenda items require timely action by this commission to provide information for the upcoming legislative session and institutional board meetings and needs. Second, scheduling conflicts and other commitments prevent a quorum of members from being physically present today.

Secretary Hargett made a motion to approve the statement of necessity. Commissioner Koban seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with nine (9) ayes.

V. Financial and Statistical Reporting Policy Amendment (Action Item)

Dr. Jacob Kamer, Data Strategist, provided an overview of the policy amendments to both clarify the language to align with historical practices and establish a data governance steering committee to standardize agency procedures on data acquisition, management, usage, reporting, and sharing.

Secretary Hargett made a motion to approve the Financial and Statistical Reporting Policy Amendment. Commissioner Stafford seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with nine (9) ayes.

VI. Post-Approval Monitoring Report (Information Only)

Dr. Julie Roberts provided an overview of the Post-Approval Monitoring Report including associate degrees and certificates being monitored on a three (3) year cycle, bachelor and master level degrees being monitored on a five (5) year cycle, and doctoral level degrees being monitored on a seven (7) year cycle. Dr. Roberts provided an overview of the new Pilot Post-Approval Monitoring Metrics initiative that focuses on programmatic alignment of student success and outcomes, program efficiency, and workforce alignment and demand. Commission members asked questions, and a discussion was held.

VII. Systems Report (*Information Only*)

Dr. Michael Licari, President of Austin Peay State University (APSU), provided an overview of the structure and programs at APSU, as well as the collaboration that APSU has with other higher education institutions. Commission members asked questions, and a discussion was held.

VIII. Other Business

Chairwoman Scarlett stated that the only other business was for the commission members to consider moving the Summer 2025 Quarterly Commission meeting from July to August.

Chairwoman Scarlett adjourned the meeting at 1:24 p.m. CST.

NEXT THEC COMMISSION MEETING:

Thursday, January 25, 2024, in Nashville

THEC Chairwoman Tara Scarlett

THEC Secretary Whitney Allmon