



**THEC Master Plan Statutory Committee Meeting
February 20, 2025, 1:30-2:30pm CST (Teams)**

Amanda Klafehn initiated the meeting and referenced general housekeeping items.

Amanda introduced Executive Director, Dr. Steven Gentile, for remarks about the Master Plan.

- The group is critically important to the future direction of higher education in TN.
- There are no formal bylaws for the Statutory committee. The goal with these meetings is to have discussion.
- This meeting (and others like it) will be to learn about what you think is important and needed in the master plan. Encouraged participation of principals and their designees. Emphasized the importance of transparency from participants.

Question and Answer with Dr. Gentile

Question (Greg Turner): Where does the outcomes-based funding formula fit into the Master Plan discussion?

- i. The master plan will capture the vision for higher education. We as staff will use this to inform such things as the outcomes-based funding formula. An example was shared for how the academic program approval process relates to the master plan.

Presentation

Amanda presented a slide deck to the Committee outlining the statutory authority, the proposed master plan process, relevant stakeholders, communications, and input. Amanda emphasized a desire for feedback throughout the presentation and at specific points on specific subjects.

Emphasized two goals for the master plan:

- Ensure the statewide master plan for higher education is developed collaboratively and with input from key stakeholders.
- Develop a focused, living document that sets the vision for higher education and state partners through the establishment of priorities and goals for higher education.

Amanda described the steps in the master plan process and key activities that will take place during those steps (slide 8).

Amanda clarified planned communications and engagement of this body throughout the master planning process.

Question and Answer with Amanda Klafehn

Question (President Oldham): Uncertainty was expressed about the timing of the plan. Expressed that the master plan should be driven by constituency groups. The most important stakeholder is the next governor. Need to be mindful of leadership transitions and implications for longevity of the plan.



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Steven: TBR and State Board of Education are facing this as well. We are getting pressure from stakeholders to come up with the next drive to 55 and that cannot wait another two years.

Amanda prompted the group for whether there are any gaps in this process.

Comment (President Oldham): Suggested creating a strategic plan that focuses on the safe spots and then builds a placeholder for the next governor.

Steven suggested creating a "more to come" category.

Comment (Bernie Savarese): Voiced his support and appreciates the focus on collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and consensus building.

Comment (President Hardgrave): Voiced his support on doing the best we can. Emphasized not leaving placeholders but being responsive to a new governor's direction.

Steven: Agreed and emphasized the goal to make this a living, breathing document that can morph quickly and be nimble over time.

Amanda asked how can we incorporate the principal's staff into the process?

Comment (President Noland): Suggested that we continue to work with natural affiliates in place: Chief Academic Officers, Chief Planning Officers, and Provosts.

Comment (Greg Turner): Voiced his request that decision points would be identified as early as possible so that there is sufficient time to consult with representative parties.

Question (Bernie Savarese): Asked whether an outside firm will be contracted.

Amanda clarified that THEC is partnering with Education Strategy Group (ESG) to help facilitate this plan. **Steven** mentioned that Dr. Kenyatta Lovett is the team lead at ESG.

Amanda transitioned the presentation to discuss the data collection that informed the master plan process. The slide deck highlighted the higher education priorities survey and interviews conducted by ESG with select stakeholders. Amanda reviewed the results of the survey and a synthesis from the interviews [13 total interviews completed].

Question (William Radford (TSU): What are the top three emerging workforce needs in the state of Tennessee?

Amanda responded that we have not collected any specific data on the top three emerging workforce needs. We have been in conversations with the Boyd Center for Business and Economic Research.



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Comment (President Hardgrave): Expressed concern about the representativeness of the survey responses, specifically by higher education sector. Expressed reservation with overreliance on these survey results to represent all voices in higher education.

Amanda clarified the sampling for the survey and President Hardgrave voiced that he wanted cautiousness when communicating the representativeness of the survey and who was more/less represented than others. Amanda noted that THEC will release a survey analysis type document.

Steven added that since FOCUS Act, this review committee has gotten even more institution heavy. We want to be sure that we also get as many voices as we can from those that are non-institution such as leaders in the Senate and House and Commissioner of F&A.

Comment: President Hardgrave suggested exploring the crosstabs of survey results by sector to understand similarities or differences and use those comparisons to initiate dialogue. These comparisons can help build consensus on the challenges and opportunities.

Comment (President Oldham): Agreed with President Hardgrave's point and emphasized that we must get more input from outside the traditional academic communities.

Amanda asked if there any examples across this group of ways you've effectively engaged the public or other entities around?

Comment (President McPhee): Suggested that TN leadership business council be consulted as they influence business and industry at a high level.

Dr. Gentile's takeaways:

- Lean into having a flexible plan or recognizing that we'll need to update in a couple of years due to governor change.
- To provide some crosstab analysis of what we're seeing from the surveys and perhaps some type of analysis that is sent to the group to understand what the top priorities are by segmenting the pie chart and then looking by 4-year, 2-year, and TCAT.
- Continue to bounce ideas off principal staff that are already convening in our regular called meetings.
- Collaborate with other business roundtables as well.

Question (Greg Turner): Have the members of the five topical working groups been identified?

Amanda responded that we are in the process of determining the scope and participation. We are hoping in the next two weeks the first group will be scheduled, and the rest between March and May.



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Question (Bernie Savarese): Are the themes being determined based on the priorities? What is the process between the priorities we see on the slides today and what might get us to a theme for a working group? How would this group be engaged in that process from today into that future stage?

Amanda: We are continuing to analyze survey results and blend results from ESG's interviews as part of the foundation to this master plan process.

Steven: This master plan is not just focusing on the priority list results. It is not the end all be all. There will be issues like research that did not make it to the top of the list that we will be focusing on.

Amanda reiterated points from the slide deck about communication. Regular communications with this group will take place on a monthly cadence. Amanda asked if there are preference or strategies when it comes to communication?

Comment (Greg Turner): When a working group meets, please provide a report of what the working group discussed. What are the topics and concerns being discussed.

Comment (Bernie Saverse): Email is preferred. Consider using Teams as a central place to communicate documents.

Thank you and closing.