

TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

Minutes of the Summer Quarterly Meeting

Electronic / Remote Location

July 23, 2020

Link to recording:

<https://www.tn.gov/thec/about-thec-tsac/commission-members0/commission-meetings/summer-2020-commission-meeting.html>

Chairman Evan Cope called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Member	PRESENT	ABSENT
Chairman Evan Cope	X	
Commissioner Nancy Dishner	X	
Secretary Tre Hargett	X	
Commissioner Pam Koban	X	
Treasurer David Lillard	X	
Commissioner Sarah Morrison		X
Commissioner Jay Moser	X	
Commissioner Vernon Stafford	X	
Commissioner Dawson Hassler	X	
Commissioner Frank Watson	X	
Commissioner AC Wharton		X
Comptroller Justin Wilson	X	
Commissioner Dakasha Winton	X	

At the start of the meeting, there were ten members present, constituting a quorum. Secretary Hargett joined the meeting at 9:07 a.m., which raised the count to eleven members.

ELECTRONIC PARTICIPATION NECESSITY

Board Secretary Shauna Jennings read the following statement:

Chairman Cope and Commission Members,

In Executive Order No. 51, Governor Bill Lee suspended Tennessee's open meeting laws as necessary to allow a governing body to meet by electronic means and conduct essential business under certain conditions if the governing body "determines that meeting electronically is necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of Tennesseans in light of the COVID-19 outbreak." The conditions are:

- Live access to the meeting by the public, if possible;
- No adjustment to existing quorum, meeting notice, or voting requirements;
- Clear notice to the public of the meeting agenda and how to access the meeting in a manner reasonably accessible to members of the public;
- Each part of the meeting subject to the Open Meetings Act must be audible to the public;

- Each member participating electronically must be able to simultaneously hear each other and speak to each other during the meeting;
- Any member participating electronically shall identify the persons present at the location from which the member is participating;
- Each member participating electronically must be provided, before the meeting, with any documents that will be discussed at the meeting, with substantially the same content as those documents actually presented;
- All votes taken during a meeting shall be by roll call vote; and
- Electronic participation allows a member to vote but does not make a member eligible for a per diem.

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) has ensured that each of the required conditions have been met. For purposes of this THEC meeting, we are using WebEx, which accommodates up to 1,000 participants. Commission Members and Commission Staff with items on today's agenda were given a link that allows them to participate in the meeting. All other attendees were given a link that allows them to watch the meeting, but not unmute themselves. However, attendees will be able to raise their hand during the meeting and be unmuted by the Host for participation, as needed. Notice of the meeting, agenda, materials, WebEx link for those participating via webinar, call-in number for those participating by phone only, and applicable codes were posted to the THEC/TSAC website and emailed to members of the Commission last week. Notice of the meeting, agenda, materials call-in number, and applicable codes were posted on the THEC website and emailed to the members of the Commission last week. All votes will be by roll call and there have been no changes to existing quorum, meeting notice, or voting requirements. Each member has introduced themselves and listed all persons at their respective location. Lastly, members will be considered present for voting purposes but not for purposes of a per diem.

All conditions listed in Executive Order No. 51 having been met, the only remaining item needed to ensure compliance with the Open Meetings Act and Executive Order No. 51 is for the Commission to determine that meeting electronically is necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of Tennesseans in light of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Commissioner Stafford moved that meeting electronically was necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of Tennesseans in light of the COVID-19 outbreak and that Ms. Jennings's comments be included in the minutes of this meeting. Commissioner Dishner seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously, with ten ayes.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Commissioner Dishner made a motion to adopt the agenda. Commissioner Stafford seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously with 11 ayes.

APPROVAL OF MAY 15, 2020 MINUTES

Commissioner Winton made a motion to approve the minutes from May 15, 2020, and Secretary Hargett seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously with 11 ayes.

APPROVAL OF JUNE 26,2020 SPECIAL CALLED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Dishner made a motion to approve the minutes from June 26, 2020, and Commissioner Koban seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously with 11 ayes.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Chairman Cope delivered his report.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:

Director Krause provided his report.

AGENDA ITEMS

Commissioner Cope suggested that the commission vote on the consent calendar as one item unless there were any objections. Commissioner Dishner made a motion to approve the consent calendar as one item. Commissioner Stafford seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously with 11 ayes.

I. Expedited Approval Policy (Action Item)

Chairman Cope recognized Betty Dandridge Johnson, Chief Academic Officer, for the purpose of presenting the new Expedited Approval Policy. Ms. Dandridge Johnson provided an overview and the unique features of Expedited Approval Policy. The primary goal of an expedited approval process is to decrease the time of approval for new academic programs which meet workforce, economic, or other state needs while still assuring quality, student demand, uniqueness, and institutional capacity to deliver the proposed program. The proposed Expedited Program Approval Policy will allow institutions flexibility during the approval process when institutional governing board approval must be submitted for proposed high demand programs.

Chairman Cope asked if the criteria for determining high demand programs will be the same with this expedited approval policy. Ms. Dandridge Johnson confirmed that THEC will use the same data to define what is considered high demand.

Commissioner Stafford motioned to approve the policy. Commissioner Dishner seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously with 11 ayes.

II. Post Approval Monitoring Report

Dr. Corey Gheesling from the Academic Affairs Division of THEC presented the Post Approval Monitoring Report.

Chairman Cope asked if there was anything that the Commission could do to incentivize campuses to improve the programs that are struggling. Dr. Gheesling responded that most campuses that choose to engage in a thorough feasibility study prior to the program being approved are much stronger.

Commissioner Stafford asked how THEC determines the number of years to monitor a new program and if the program was not ready to exit the monitoring, how many renewals are allowed. Ms. Dandridge Johnson and Dr. Gheesling explained that the number of years to monitor were based on the potential degree obtained plus one (1) year. For example, an associate degree program is usually achieved in two (2) years, plus one (1) additional year of monitoring for a total of three (3) years of monitoring. The only exceptions to the one (1) additional year rule are for the master's and doctoral degree programs, which are monitored for an additional two (2) years. In addition, these monitoring guidelines are in alignment with the new academic program approval process. In terms of the number of renewals, THEC staff view their roles as advisory rather than a determiner of whether a program should be eliminated.

Commissioner Stafford asked whether THEC communicates with struggling institutions what works for those institutions that are not struggling. Director Krause stated that these are ongoing conversations and that this will be an agenda item at the next meeting with the institutions for a much more in-depth conversation.

Commissioner Hassler asked if those institutional programs with students who are struggling to complete internships as part of graduation requirements due to COVID-19 will be provided with lenience to graduate. Director Krause stated that this report will provide more information on how COVID-19 impacted graduation of students in these programs next year; however, this year it is the accrediting body that will make the decision on any graduation requirement leniency due to the impact of COVID-19.

III. New Academic Programs (Action Item)

A. Tennessee State University, Environmental Science, Master of Science

Dr. Chandra Reddy, Dean of Agriculture at Tennessee State University, presented the new academic program, Master of Science in Environmental Science. This program is designed to prepare graduates for successful careers in environmental sciences. The program will

prepare students through rigorous coursework with three primary degree concentrations: plant sciences, natural resources, and geospatial sciences through interdisciplinary studies.

Commissioner Koban asked if there was assurance that the program would receive federal funding. Dr. Reddy replied that yes, the department is currently receiving funds from the Department of Agriculture from both the federal and state levels and this would continue.

Commissioner Koban asked if this program would provide graduate assistants to faculty members from various departments as this program is interdisciplinary. Dr. Reddy responded that yes, the graduate assistants would be used for all areas.

Commissioner Stafford made a motion to approve the program. Commissioner Hassler seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously, with 11 ayes.

B. Tennessee Technological University, Health & Nutrition, Master of Science

Dr. Lori Bruce, Provost at Tennessee Technological University presented the new academic program, Master of Science in Health and Nutrition. This program will be an online degree program that is designed for working professionals and individuals who desire to complete requirements to become a Registered Dietician. This program prepares graduates to address the health and nutrition needs of rural communities, advancing application of research and programming in rural health, and will be the only graduate dietetic program in the state of Tennessee that focuses on rural health. This program will undergo program accreditation by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND), under the Future Education Model (FEM) program which the Tennessee Technological University was selected to participate in a national pilot program.

Commissioner Dishner made the motion to approve the program. Commissioner Koban seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed, with 10 ayes.

C. University of Memphis, Data Science, Master of Science

Dr. Thomas Nenon presented information on the Master of Science in Data Science program at the University of Memphis. This program is designed to prepare students for an advanced career in Data Science. This will be an interdisciplinary degree providing advanced research capabilities for professionals and academics dedicated to building Data Science capacity in the community.

Commissioner Koban asked if they were confident in their projected numbers since they were able to advertise this program prior to Commission approval. Dr. Nenon explained that they are confident in the numbers and that although the projection for 2020-2021 may be lower due to the enrollment of students for the fall semester, currently, they think that their enrollment may triple by 2021-2022.

Commissioner Dishner asked if there was a cumulative project that was part of the graduation requirements. Dr. Nenon stated that yes there was one (1) project requirement for graduation.

Commissioner Winton asked if the impact of COVID-19 will affect the classes being held in-person rather than online. Dr. Nenon responded that the initial plan was to have students take on-campus classes and transition to online; however, since COVID-19 this plan has changed, and students will be able to start the program online or on-campus.

Secretary Hargett made the motion to approve the program. Treasurer Lillard seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, the motion passed unanimously, with 11 ayes.

D. University of Tennessee Knoxville, Elementary Education, Bachelor of Science

Dr. John Zomchick presented information regarding the Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education at the University of Tennessee Knoxville. Students in the education program can currently only have Elementary Education as a minor. This new program will convert the minor to a major, in which students can elect from the start of their program. The students enrolled in this program will also have more coursework in literacy to provide them with the advantage of assisting young children in learning to read at their grade level. This degree meets the requirements to apply for a Tennessee Teaching Licensure K-5.

Commissioner Stafford motioned to approve the program. Comptroller Wilson seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously with 11 ayes.

IV. Election of Officers (Action Item)

Chairman Cope addressed the election of THEC officers for 2020-2021.

Pursuant to Article V of the THEC Rules of Procedure, the Commission elects officers annually at the regular summer meeting to serve one-year terms. The officers consist of a chair, two vice-chairs, and a secretary. The chair and vice-chair must reside in different grand divisions of the state.

Chairman Cope opened the floor for nominations.

Commissioner Koban nominated Chairman Cope to continue as Chair of the Commission for the coming year. Commissioner Lillard seconded it. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously with 11 ayes. Chairman Cope then passed the gavel to Commissioner Koban to conduct that portion of the meeting.

Commissioner Koban proposed that the board considers the officer elections as a slate, with a single vote at the end of nominations. Commissioner Stafford made a motion to that effect, and

Treasurer Lillard seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously with 11 ayes.

Commissioner Koban asked for nominations for the remaining three officer positions.

Chairman Cope nominated Vernon Stafford to be the Vice Chair from the West Grand Division, and Commissioner Hassler seconded.

Commissioner Stafford nominated Dakasha Winton for the Vice Chair of the East Grand Division, and Commissioner Moser seconded.

Chairman Cope nominated AC Wharton for Secretary, and Secretary Hargett seconded.

Commissioner Koban then called for a voice vote on all three nominations. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously with 11 ayes.

V. Selection of Audit Committee Member (Action Item)

Chairman Cope recognized Executive Director Krause to present his recommendation that Commissioner Dishner serve on the Combined THEC/TSAC Audit Committee.

Commissioner Stafford made a motion to approve the Executive Director's recommendation. Commissioner Hassler seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with nine ayes. Comptroller Wilson abstained from the vote.

Adjournment

Chairman Cope adjourned the meeting at 11:19 a.m.

NEXT THEC COMMISSION MEETING:

Friday, November 6, 2020 at 9 a.m. CT in Nashville

THEC Chairman Evan Cope

THEC Secretary AC Wharton, Jr.