

TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

Minutes of the Winter Quarterly Meeting

Nashville Room, 3rd floor

Tennessee Tower

January 28, 2021

Link to recording: [THEC Commission Meeting 1/28/2021 \(tn.gov\)](https://www.tn.gov/newsroom/2021/01/28/2021-01-28-the-commission-meeting-1-28-2021)

Chairman Evan Cope called the meeting to order at 8:59 a.m.

Member	PRESENT	ABSENT
Chairman Evan Cope	X	
Commissioner Nancy Dishner	X	
Secretary Tre Hargett	X	
Commissioner Tara Scarlett	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 Jason Mumpower	X	
Commissioner Dakasha Winton	X	

At the start of the meeting there were nine (9) members physically present and four (4) members present via conference call, constituting a quorum. Comptroller Mumpower left the meeting at 10:51 a.m. Since Chairman Cope was not physically present at the meeting, he passed his gavel to Vice Chair Winton for the meeting.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Commissioner Wharton made a motion to adopt the agenda. Commissioner Scarlett seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with 13 ayes.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 6, 2020 MINUTES

Commissioner Scarlett made a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Moser seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with 13 ayes.

APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 21, 2020 SPECIAL CALLED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Koban made a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Wharton seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with 13 ayes.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Vice Chair Winton delivered her report.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:

Interim Executive Director Dr. House provided her report.

AGENDA ITEMS

Vice Chair Winton suggested that the commission vote on the consent calendar as one item unless there were any objections. Secretary Hargett made a motion to approve the consent calendar as one item. Treasurer Lillard seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with 13 ayes.

I. SARA Rules

Vice Chair Winton recognized Julie Woodruff, Division of Postsecondary State Authorization, and she presented the SARA Rules and the comments made at the rulemaking hearing.

Commissioner Wharton moved to adopt the rules as written. Commissioner Moser seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with 13 ayes.

II. New Academic Programs

A. Middle Tennessee State University, Physician's Assistant Studies, Master of Science

Provost Mark Burns proposed a Master of Science (MS) in Physician's Assistant Studies which will require a 27-month, full-time program consisting of 15 months of didactic curriculum and 12 months of supervised clinical practice experiences. Graduates of this program will have the needed background and credentials necessary for licensure with as a Physician Assistant. The program is seeking accreditation by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc. (ARC-PA).

Commission members asked questions regarding the program and discussion followed. A motion to approve the program was made by Secretary Hargett. Commissioner Wharton seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with 13 ayes.

B. Austin Peay State University, Criminal Justice, Master of Science

Provost Marie Cronley proposed a Master of Science (MS) in Criminal Justice with an optional concentration in Homeland Security. This program requires 30 credit hours and will prepare students for a range of careers in law enforcement, homeland security, courts, and corrections. The option of the concentration in Homeland Security differentiates this program from others that are offered in Tennessee.

Commission members asked questions about the program and discussion followed. A motion to approve the program was made by Commissioner Wharton. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with 13 ayes.

III. Outline for Executive Director Selection Process

Vice Chair Winton called on Board Secretary Shauna Jennings to read the Commission's authority to hire the Executive Director as follows:

"T.C.A. § 49-7-205 Staff:

- (a) (1) The commission is empowered to employ an executive director, define the executive director's duties and, within budgetary limitations, fix the executive director's compensation.

(2) The executive director shall serve at the pleasure of the commission.

(3) The executive director shall have the educational preparation and experience that qualifies the executive director, in the commission's judgment, to understand and evaluate the problems and needs of the state's institutions of higher learning and to direct the studies of the commission.
- (b) Within budgetary limitations, and subject to the approval of the commissioner of human resources, the executive director may employ other professional and staff employees necessary to efficiently discharge the duties of the agency.
- (c) The executive director and all other employees shall be reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with the comprehensive travel regulations promulgated by the department of finance and administration and approved by the attorney general and reporter. "

Vice Chair Winton then recognized Commissioner Scarlett on the development of an executive director search process. Commissioner Scarlett stated that there were four (4) options for the Commission to discuss:

- (1) The Commission may consider the appointment of an external Search Committee deputized to manage the details of the search, vetting resumes, conducting preliminary interviews, and providing a list of finalists to the Commission. This external committee would be comprised of one (1) Commission member and four (4) external committee members. The search committee would be further empowered to establish timeline parameters as necessary and to contract with a national search firm.
- (2) The Commission may consider establishing a formal interim period for an established amount of time after which a special called can be properly noticed and a decision made as transitioning the Interim Executive Director to the permanent Executive Director.
- (3) The Commission may consider a concise human resource model whereby the position is posted on the relevant trade publication websites for an established amount of time. The THEC Human Resources Director can be charged to organize the subsequent submissions and transmit to the Commission for consideration. The Commission could then meet via a properly noticed special called meeting to determine a viable candidate for consideration.
- (4) The Commission may consider the immediate employment of a candidate, in accordance with statutory authority, whose titled position, salary, and duties are at the will of the Commission.

Commission members discussed the options presented by Commissioner Scarlett. Following the discussion, Commissioner Koban made a motion to hire Interim Executive Director Dr. Emily House as the Executive Director of THEC effective immediately. Commissioner Moser seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with 9 ayes, 3 nays, and 1 abstention. Commissioners voting aye were: Cope, Dishner, Hassler, Koban, Moser, Stafford, Watson, Wharton, and Winton. Commissioners vote nay were: Scarlett, Hargett, and Mumpower. Treasurer Lillard abstained.

IV. COVID Student Survey

Dr. Steven Gentile and Dr. Jacob Kamer presented information regarding the COVID Student Survey. The commission discussed the survey and asked several questions.

V. Other Business

A. Plan to honor former THEC Executive Director Mike Krause

Commission members discussed ways to honor former THEC Executive Director Mike Krause.

Vice Chair Winton adjourned the meeting at 11:07 a.m.

NEXT THEC COMMISSION MEETING:

Thursday, May 20, 2021 in Nashville

THEC Chairman Evan Cope

THEC Secretary AC Wharton, Jr.