

**TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION**

Minutes of the Summer Quarterly Commission Meeting

Tennessee Board of Regents

Boardroom, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

1 Bridgestone Park

Nashville, TN 37214

August 17, 2023

Link to recording: [Stream \(tn.gov\)](#)

Chairwoman Scarlett called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. CDT.

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

At the start of the meeting there were eight (8) voting members physically present and two (2) voting members participating electronically, constituting a quorum. Commissioner Wharton and Comptroller Mumpower participated electronically. At all times that voting occurred, there was a physical quorum present at the meeting.

**Adoption of Agenda**

Commissioner Cope made a motion to adopt the agenda. Secretary Hargett seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with ten (10) ayes.

**Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

**Welcome from TBR Executive Vice Chancellor Dr. Russ Deaton**

Dr. Russ Deaton welcomed the Commission and provided an update on TBR initiatives and the Reimagined Community College experience. Commission members asked questions and a discussion was held.

**Approval of Minutes: May 11, 2023, Spring Quarterly Meeting**

Commissioner Winton made a motion to approve the Spring Quarterly Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Allmon seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with ten (10) ayes.

### **Approval of Minutes: June 21, 2023, Special Called Meeting**

Commissioner Winton made a motion to approve the June 21, 2023, Special Called Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Knight seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with nine (9) ayes and one (1) abstention from Commissioner Stafford.

### **Approval of Minutes: July 11, 2023, Special Called Meeting**

Secretary Hargett made a motion to approve the July 11, 2023, Special Called Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Stafford seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with ten (10) ayes.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Dr. Robert Smith, Executive Director, introduced Dr. Steven Gentile, Chief Policy and Strategy Officer, who provided updates on the Policy, Planning, and Research Bureau, including an overview of graduation rate research. Dr. Gentile then introduced Ms. Amanda Klafehn, Senior Director of Research and Strategy, who provided information on the new Data Strategy Council, which was developed to guide policy decisions and the utilization of data to advance THEC's mission and goals. Commission members asked questions and a discussion was held.

Dr. Smith then spoke about recession-proofing the Tennessee economy through increasing post secondary educational opportunities and programs, such as continuing programs like our Momentum Year, as well as developing better transfer pathways, and alternative workplace credentials that lead to obtaining and sustaining gainful employment.

### **Chair's Report**

Chairwoman Scarlett gave her report and discussed the challenges facing higher education in the face of post-COVID reality. Chairwoman Scarlett suggested improvements to Tennessee's higher education system and how to ensure students receive value for their education.

## **AGENDA ITEMS**

### **I. Election of Officers (*Action Item*)**

Chairwoman Scarlett stated that pursuant to Article V of THEC Rules and Procedure, the Commission shall elect officers annually at the regular summer meeting to serve one-year terms. The offices consist of a chair, two vice chairs, and a secretary. The chair and each vice chair must reside in different grand divisions of the state.

The current Commission officers are:

Chair: Tara Scarlett (Middle Grant Division)  
Vice Chair: Vernon Stafford (West Grand Division)  
Vice Chair: Dakasha Winton (East Grand Division)  
Secretary: AC Wharton

Chairwoman Scarlett then passed the gavel to Treasurer Lillard, who conducted this portion of the meeting. Treasurer Lillard proposed that the Commission consider the officer elections as a slate, with a single vote at the end of the nominations. He then opened the floor for nominations for chair.

Comptroller Mumpower made a motion for Commissioner Tara Scarlett of the Middle Grand Division for Chair. Commissioner Winton seconded the motion.

Commissioner Cope made a motion for Commissioner Vernon Stafford of the West Grand Division for Vice Chair. Secretary Hargett seconded the motion.

Secretary Hargett made a motion for Commissioner Dakasha Winton of the East Grand Division for Vice Chair. Commissioner Cope seconded the motion.

Commissioner Winton made a motion for Commissioner Whitney Allmon for Secretary. Secretary Hargett seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken, and the motions passed with ten (10) ayes. The gavel was then passed back to Chairwoman Scarlett.

## **II. Transmission of 2023-24 Proposed Operating Budgets (*Action Item*)**

Mr. Russell VanZomeren, Senior Director of Fiscal Policy, provided an overview of the proposed operating budgets for 2023-24 with a total of \$1.56 billion in recurring costs and \$598 million in specialized costs. Commission members asked questions and a discussion was held. Commissioner Stafford made a motion to approve the transmission of the proposed operating budget. Commissioner Allmon seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with ten (10) ayes.

## **III. New Academic Programs (*Action Item*)**

Dr. Julie Roberts, Chief Academic Officer, introduced the three new academic programs for the Commission to consider.

### **A. University of Tennessee, Chattanooga – Management, Master of Science (MSM)**

Dr. Jerry Hale, Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, provided information on the Master of Science in Management program. This program will be a fully online, 30-hour asynchronous program, which will include a weekend immersion experience on campus to enhance the leadership and management skills for current and future career opportunities of students. Commission members asked questions and a discussion was held.

Commissioner Stafford made a motion to approve the academic program. Commissioner Cope seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with nine (9) ayes.

### **B. University of Tennessee, Knoxville – Business Cybersecurity, Master of Science (MS)**

Dr. John Zomchick, Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor at University of Tennessee, Knoxville, spoke on the Business Cybersecurity Master of Science degree program. Dr. Zomchick stated that this program will prepare students to fulfill roles at the intersection of business management and cybersecurity. This program will be fully online and will consist of ten (10) courses. Commission members asked questions and a discussion was held.

Treasurer Lillard made a motion to approve the program. Secretary Hargett seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with ten (10) ayes.

### **C. University of Tennessee, Health Science Center, and University of Tennessee, Southern – Joint Nursing, Bachelor of Science (BSN)**

Dr. Cynthia Russell, Vice Chancellor for Academic, Faculty, and Student Affairs at University of Tennessee, Southern, spoke on the need to increase the number of baccalaureate level nursing degrees to meet the healthcare needs of the people of Tennessee. This joint nursing Bachelor of

Science program will be the only BSN program in the 12-county south-central region of Tennessee. Commission members asked questions and a discussion was held.

Commissioner Stafford made a motion to approve the program. Commissioner Allmon seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with ten (10) ayes.

#### **IV. Financial Policies (*Action Item*)**

##### **A. F4.0 – Capital Projects**

Ms. Patti Miller, Chief of Facilities Planning, provided an overview of the revision of the Capital Projects policy, which included changes to the disclosure requirements as necessitated by recent legislation changes to Tenn. Code Ann. § 4-15-102(e).

Commissioner Stafford made a motion to approve the policy changes. Secretary Hargett seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with ten (10) ayes.

##### **B. F4.1 – Master Plans**

Ms. Patti Miller, Chief of Facilities Planning, provided an overview of the revision of the Master Plans policy, which included removing the designation for master plan updates and the inclusion of additional master plan considerations.

Treasurer Lillard made a motion to approve the policy changes. Commissioner Stafford seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with ten (10) ayes.

##### **C. F4.2 – Lease Space Funding and License Agreements**

Ms. Patti Miller, Chief of Facilities Planning, provided an overview of the revision of the Lease Space Funding and License Agreements policy, which included the removal of the quarterly report on leases that the FOCUS Act allowed institutions to submit directly to the Office of the State Architect.

Commissioner Stafford made a motion to approve the policy changes. Treasurer Lillard seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with ten (10) ayes.

#### **V. Off-Campus Location: Jackson State Community College – Gibson County Center (*Action Item*)**

Ms. Anjelica Jones, Director of Academic Affairs, spoke on the Gibson County Center. This center was approved in 1994 as part of Dyersburg State Community College; however, some of Dyersburg State Community College's service area was transferred by the Tennessee Board of Regents to Jackson State Community College. Gibson County Center will keep the current programs offered and will add additional services.

Secretary Hargett made a motion to approve the off-campus location. Treasurer Lillard seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with ten (10) ayes.

#### **VI. Other Business**

Chairwoman Scarlett stated that Dr. Smith will be resigning effective September 15, 2023, and made a motion that Dr. Steven Gentile be named Interim Executive Director upon the resignation of Dr. Smith. Comptroller Mumpower seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with ten (10) ayes.

Chairwoman Scarlett provided an update on the Executive Director search and the contract with AGB Search, with a final candidate selection anticipated by November 16, 2023. Commission members asked questions and a discussion was held.

Commissioner Winton requested a university housing update to ensure that there was adequate housing for this school year. Ms. Patti Miller, Chief Facilities Planner, will provide this information to the Commission.

Chairwoman Scarlett discussed a letter that Comptroller Mumpower sent to the Commission members on August 1, 2023. Comptroller Mumpower discussed his letter and his opinion on THEC's mission moving forward. Commission members discussed the changes suggested by Comptroller Mumpower as well as a need for more open communication among stakeholders as well as fellow Commission members, THEC leadership, and members of the General Assembly. Several Commission members suggested the potential for a committee structure within THEC moving forward that they felt would address some of these matters.

Chairwoman Scarlett adjourned the meeting at 12:35 p.m. CDT.

**NEXT THEC COMMISSION MEETING:**

Thursday, November 16, 2023, in Nashville

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**THEC Chairwoman Tara Scarlett**

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**THEC Secretary Whitney Allmon**