

TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

Minutes of the March Special Called Commission Meeting

Virtual Meeting

March 19, 2025

Link to Recording: [THEC Special Called Commission Meeting --3.19.2025](#)

Chairwoman Scarlett called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m. CST.

Member	PRESENT	ABSENT
Chairwoman Tara Scarlett	X	
Commissioner Whitney Allmon		X
Commissioner Skylar Brackett	X	
Commissioner Jimmy Matlock	X	
Commissioner Will Perry	X	
Commissioner John Rader	X	
Commissioner Mike Ragsdale	X	
Commissioner Robert Smith	X	
Commissioner Vernon Stafford, Jr.	X	
Commissioner Charles Wood	X	
Secretary Tre Hargett	X	
Treasurer David H. Lillard, Jr.	X	
Nathan James, Designee for Commissioner Sara Morrison	X	
Comptroller Jason Mumpower	X	

At the start of the meeting there were 12 voting members participating virtually, constituting a quorum.

Statement of Necessity

Board Secretary, Ms. Rachel Hitt, read the following Statement of Necessity:

"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 approve binding tuition and fees ranges and consider an academic program with an anticipated start date of May 2025 to ensure the cohesive higher education enterprise of Tennessee.
- Second, scheduling conflicts and other commitments prevented a quorum of members from being physically present today."

Commissioner Stafford made a motion to approve the necessity. Commissioner Perry seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Adoption of Agenda

Chairwoman Scarlett asked the Commission to consider amending the agenda to allow for Middle Tennessee State University's (MTSU) new academic program to be considered first and the binding tuition and fees ranges to be second.

Commissioner Stafford made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Commissioner Perry seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Public Comments

Dr. Steven Gentile, Executive Director, stated there were no public comments.

Regular Calendar I

I. New Academic Program: Middle Tennessee State University – Legal Studies, Master of Science (Action Item)

Dr. Julie Roberts, Chief Academic Officer, introduced Dr. Amy Aldridge, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at MTSU.

Dr. Aldridge provided an overview of the Master of Science Legal Studies program and its partnership with the Nashville School of Law. William J. Koch, Jr., Dean of Nashville School of Law, provided information on the partnership with MTSU and how it will help students better understand how lawyers and the legal system work.

Commission members asked questions, and a discussion was held.

Commissioner Stafford made a motion to approve the Master of Science Legal Studies program at MTSU. Commissioner Rader seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

II. FY2025-26 Binding Tuition and Fees Ranges (Action Item)

Mr. Russell VanZomeran, Senior Director of Fiscal Policy, provided an overview of the FY2025-26 Binding Tuition and Fees Ranges with a staff recommendation of 0 to 5.5%.

Commission members asked questions, and a discussion was held. Commissioner Mumpower requested that the Commission hear how the Presidents respond to the tuition range at a future meeting.

Comptroller Mumpower made a motion to approve Binding Tuition and Fees Ranges from 0 to 6.5%. Commission members asked questions, and a discussion was held. Commissioner Ragsdale seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed with 7 ayes and 5 nays from Chairwoman Scarlett, Commissioner Matlock, Commissioner Rader, Commissioner Smith, and Treasurer Lillard.

III. Other Business

Chairwoman Scarlett stated that the next meeting will be in May, and she looks forward to hearing from Tennessee State University on its vision moving forward with the new Binding Tuition and Fees Ranges.

Comptroller Mumpower stated that he looks forward to hearing from each university on how they plan to use this range responsibly for their institution.

Chairwoman Scarlett adjourned the meeting at 2:25 p.m.

NEXT THEC COMMISSION MEETING:

Thursday, May 15, 2025, in Nashville, TN.

THEC Chairwoman Tara Scarlett

THEC Secretary Whitney Allmon