

## TENNESSEE STUDENT ASSISTANCE CORPORATION

### Minutes of the Board of Directors- Regular Annual Meeting

February 25, 2021

Held Via Conference Call

Link to recording:

<https://www.tn.gov/thec/about-thec-tsac/tennessee-student-assistance-corporation/redirect-tsac/tsac-board-meeting/tsac-board-meeting---february-25--2021.html>

Chairman Tony Niknejad called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

| Member                                     | PRESENT | ABSENT |
|--|---------|--------|
| Chairman Tony Niknejad                     | X       |        |
| Treasurer David Lillard (Ashley Nabors)    | X       |        |
| Comptroller Jason Mumpower (Lauren Spires) | X       |        |
| Commissioner Butch Eley (Greg Turner)      | X       |        |
| Commissioner Dr. Penny Schwinn             | X       |        |
| Chancellor Dr. Flora Tydings               | X       |        |
| President Randy Boyd (Dr. Linda Martin)    | X       |        |
| Dr. Claude O. Pressnell                    | X       |        |
| Danette Seale                              |         | X      |
| Cyrus Vatandoost                           |         | X      |
| Sharon Hayes                               | X       |        |

Nine (9) members were present.

#### **ELECTRONIC PARTICIPATION NECESSITY**

Chairman Niknejad explained that due to the ongoing health crisis, there was a necessity to hold the meeting electronically and introduced Chief Aid and Compliance Officer Peter Abernathy to explain the requirements needed to conduct a meeting using electronic or telephone participation in compliance with Governor Bill Lee's Executive Order 16. Mr. Abernathy detailed the requirements under the order and how TSAC had met each of these in establishing today's conference call format.

Dr. Pressnell moved that the meeting electronically was necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of Tennesseans considering the COVID-19 outbreak. Dr. Martin seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

#### **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Dr. Martin made a motion to adopt the agenda. Ms. Hayes seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

## **APPROVAL OF MAY 19, 2020 MINUTES**

Dr. Pressnell made a motion to approve the minutes as amended to include that Commissioner Eley had been appointed as the new Commissioner of the Finance and Administration Department. Ms. Hayes seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:**

Chairman Niknejad delivered his report. He expressed his appreciation for the board's and agency's continuing good work during the prior year despite the many difficult circumstances facing the state. He also stated his appreciation for the ongoing attention to serving students and helping as many as possible maintain eligibility for financial aid.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:**

Executive Director Dr. Emily House provided a report on enrollment figures for the TN Promise, TN Reconnect, and HOPE scholarship programs. She highlighted the decline in enrollment in TN Reconnect as many adult students have faced unique challenges during the pandemic. She described the efforts of THEC/TSAC staff working with the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development to reach out to Tennesseans receiving unemployment benefits and encourage them to take advantage of the opportunities available through TN Reconnect. She then reviewed the temporary modifications made to financial aid program rules and policies in response to the COVID-19 crisis since the May 2020 Board of Directors' meeting, as authorized by Public Chapter 632 of 2020.

## **I. Decision Items**

### **A. Adoption of High-Need Dual Enrollment Courses and Programs**

Mr. Abernathy spoke regarding the Governor's Investment in Vocational Education (GIVE) Act that provides high school students up to four free dual enrollment courses in high-need programs. The TSAC Board annually identifies the programs that lead to in-demand, high-skill employment for inclusion in the GIVE dual enrollment grant program.

Director of Fiscal Policy Russell VanZomeren spoke regarding the process in which the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation, the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development worked to bring in-demand occupation lists and matched 54 occupations that meet the criteria against the Tennessee Board of Regent's (TBR) Academic Program Inventory (API) to assess which certificate, diploma, and associate programs were offered.

A motion to approve was made by Ms. Hayes. Chancellor Tydings seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, the motion passed unanimously.

### **B. Adoption of Rules - Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship**

Senior Director of Grants and Scholarships Tim Phelps presented on the proposed changes made to the Rules of the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship to comply with Public Acts of 2020, Chapter 794, the FAST Act.

Board members asked questions and a discussion followed. A motion to adopt the rules was made by Dr. Pressnell. Chancellor Tydings seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, the motion passed unanimously.

**II. Other Business**

There were no comments for other business. A motion to adjourn was made by Dr. Martin. Mr. Turner seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, the motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Niknejad adjourned the meeting at 2:39 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Claude Pressnell".

**TSAC Secretary, Dr. Claude Pressnell**