MINUTES

TENNESSEE BOARD OF REGENTS

SPECIAL CALLED SESSION

February 18, 2016

The Tennessee Board of Regents met in a special called session on Thursday, February 18, 2016, at 9:00 a.m. (CST). The purpose of the special session was to hear an overview of the Focus on College and University Success (FOCUS) Act, receive an update from the FOCUS Steering Committee and Working Group, and receive information on a new TBR task force on safety and security. Vice Chair Reynolds called the meeting to order and asked Ms. Mary Moody, General Counsel and Board Secretary, to call the roll. The following members were present:

   Regent Emily Reynolds, Vice Chairman
   Regent MaryLou Apple
   Regent Russ Deaton
   Regent Greg Duckett
   Regent Tricia Farwell
   Regent Darrell Freeman
   Regent Tom Griscom
   Regent Fran Marcum
   Regent Barbara Prescott
   Regent Howard Roddy
   Regent Nick Russell
   Regent Leigh Shockey
   Regent J. Parker Smith
   Regent Bob Thomas
   Regent Danni Varlan

A quorum was present. Members not able to be on the call were Governor Bill Haslam, Commissioner Julius Johnson and Commissioner Candice McQueen. Media and other guests were on the call.

In December, 2015, Governor Haslam announced The FOCUS Act (SB2569/HB2578), which makes changes in the governance structure of higher education in Tennessee, particularly in the Board of Regents system. The bill is sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Mark Norris and Representative Gerald McCormick.

Governor Haslam named the higher education leaders and professionals as members of the transition task force to offer guidance on the proposed FOCUS Act legislation during the legislative process and during implementation, if the bill is approved by the General Assembly. The transition task force has two components: the Steering Committee to provide high level implementation guidance to the Governor and a Working Group that offers technical assistance
and reports to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is chaired by Governor Bill Haslam with the following appointees:

Sen. Mark Norris, (R-Collierville), Majority Leader
Rep. Curtis Johnson (R-Clarksville), Speaker Pro Tempore
Ms. Emily Reynolds, TBR Vice Chair
Mr. David Gregory, TBR Acting Chancellor
Mr. Evan Cope, THEC Chair
Dr. Russ Deaton, THEC Interim Executive Director
Dr. Tricia Farwell, TBR Faculty Regent, Middle Tennessee State University
Dr. Glenda Glover, Tennessee State University President
Dr. Sidney McPhee, Middle Tennessee State University President
Dr. Brian Noland, East Tennessee State University President
Dr. Phil Oldham, Tennessee Tech University President
Dr. David Russ, University of Memphis President
Dr. Alisa White, Austin Peay State University President

The Working Group is charged to research implementation issues and provide detailed recommendations to increase efficiency in data systems, policy processes and other issues involving state higher education alignment. Drive to 55 Executive Director Mike Krause is chair of the group, which also includes:

Dr. MaryLou Apple, TBR member, former Motlow State Community College President
Dr. Keith Carver, UT Executive Assistant to the President
Dr. Russ Deaton, THEC Interim Executive Director
Dr. Tristan Denley, TBR Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Mr. David Gregory, TBR Acting Chancellor
Dr. Brian Noland, East Tennessee State University President
Mr. Roland Raynor, TCAT – Memphis Director

Vice Chair Reynolds called on Acting Chancellor Gregory and Mr. Krause for the overview of the FOCUS Act. Acting Chancellor Gregory provided the members with a broad overview of the Act. Specific pieces of the legislation were highlighted by Acting Chancellor Gregory as well as information about the transition period. Members were provided a Section by Section Summary of SB2569/HB2578. Acting Chancellor called on Mr. Krause to provide the Board with an overview of the policy implications and the gains to be made through this proposed legislation. Mr. Krause reported on how the bill was originally drafted and then amended after input from key stakeholders, the task force steering committee and working group. He also gave a brief report on the transition.

After a period of questions from the members, Acting Chancellor Gregory gave a brief report on the work of the Steering Committee that met on February 8, 2016. He reported on the policy, guideline and communication efforts underway with the six universities. He then asked President Phil Oldham to report on Tennessee Tech’s communication plan. Dr. Oldham stated that early in the year he met with faculty from the various colleges, developed a website link
with links to the General Assembly so staff and faculty can monitor the bill as it progresses through the legislature, as well as containing media reports and a FAQ section.

Dr. Denley and Mr. Krause reported on the progress of the Working Group. Dr. Denley reported that the group had met twice. Once before the bill was written to review details of the proposal and to discuss major functional tasks such as SACSCOC, data, capital projects, etc. The second meeting was to discuss transitional details from one governance structure to another.

At the request of Vice Chair Reynolds, Mr. Krause provided the members with a brief update on Tennessee Reconnect, the Drive to 55 initiative to help more adults complete a postsecondary degree or credential. He reported that a major media campaign was launched with much success.

Next, Acting Chancellor Gregory gave a report on the formation of the TBR campus safety and security task force, an initiative arising from the panel discussion on that topic presented at the December 2015 quarterly Board meeting. The task force will be charged with surveying national best practices and providing a report to the Board at its September 2016 quarterly meeting. Vice Chair Reynolds was complimentary of the formation of this task force and asked for a brief update at the March 30th quarterly meeting.

Finally, Vice Chair Reynolds called on Ginger Hausser to give an update on pending legislation regarding tuition. She reported that there are several bills that have been filed during this legislative session that in some way limit the setting of tuition and fees by public higher education. They vary in methods but all result in decreasing the flexibility of institutions and boards to set fees. One bill particularly discussed was SB 2306/HB 2069 by Senator Gresham and Representative Daniel. Additionally, she provided members with the provisions of the bill and answered questions at the conclusion of her report.

There was no further business to come before the Board and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary G. Moody, Secretary

David B. Gregory, Acting Chancellor

Emily J. Reynolds, Vice Chairman