



PLANNING & BUDGET COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Date: October 27, 2025

Time: 9:00 AM

Voting Members	Title	Present?
Raaj Kurapati	Executive Vice Chancellor and COO	Yes
Dr. Ashley Harkrider	Interim Dean - College of Health Professions	Yes
Dr. Cindy Russell	VC for Academic, Faculty and Student Affairs	Yes
Dr. Jessica Snowden	VC for Research	No
Dr. Wendy Likes	Dean - Nursing	Yes
Dr. Mike Hocker	Dean - Medicine	Yes
Dr. Reginald Frye	Dean - Pharmacy	Yes
Keshia Giboni	Financial Coordinator - CoP, Staff Senate President	Yes
Dr. Karen Derefinko	Faculty Senate President	Yes
Dr. Ken Tilashalski	Dean - Dentistry	Yes
Dr. Charles Snyder	VC for Student Success	Yes
Dr. Karla Leeper	VC for Communications and Marketing	Yes
Non-Voting Members	Title	Present?
Michael Ebbs	AVC, Financial Strategy	Yes
George Ninan	AVC, Financial Operations	Yes
Melissa Moore	Associate General Counsel	Yes
Benjie Harmon	AVC Financial Planning and Budget	Yes

Dr. Wesley Byerly attended the meeting for Dr. Jessical Snowden.

Approve Agenda & Minutes from Prior Meetings



- **AGENDA:** The agenda was reviewed, Mr. Raaj Kurapati called for a motion to accept, which was then made by Dr. Mike Hocker and seconded by Dr. Wendy Likes.
- **MINUTES:** Minutes from the June 5, 2025 meeting were reviewed by Mr. Raaj Kurapati, and then he called for a motion to accept. The motion was made by Dr. Cindy Russell and seconded by Dr. Ashley Harkrider. The minutes were accepted with no changes requested.

General Update - Raaj

- Mr. Kurapati mentioned that our campus had been visited by several key and influential leaders throughout the state and in our state government. Additionally, he mentioned that the visits went very well and that the visit by the Lieutenant Governor resulted in an amendment that enabled us to proceed with the planning and design of the College of Medicine and Interdisciplinary Studies Building. This is a drastic change in how these measures have happened historically, usually requiring inclusion in the legislatively approved governor's budget and approved funding prior to such planning. This ability to begin planning will expedite the overall process by more than fourteen months.

Capital Update

- Raaj gave an overview of capital improvements as well as amounts invested in or committed to capital improvements and repairs over the past year.
- Overall we invested about \$6.2 million including about \$2 million in repair type items, boilers, etc. that would normally have come out of a repair and replacement or deferred maintenance fund, had be built one up. Thus, the reason it is so important to build reserves. Additional items included in the \$6.2 million total were the following:
 - \$750,000 to begin a capital master plan update



- \$1,000,000 in a Pharmacy Compounding Lab
 - \$1,500,000 for campus upgrades
 - \$120,000 in upgrades to the Pathology Labs
- Raaj mentioned that in order to get the Boilers to where they need to be, would require an investment of about \$35 million, which we do not have. Thus, we are exploring options related to a P3 type partnership for energy as a service to help fund the necessary repairs and improvements we need.

Budget Planning and Tuition Kick-off

- Raaj reminded the group that, because of our uniqueness and when we need our tuitions set, we will be the first to go before the Board of Trustees to have our tuition rates presented and to request approval.
- The group discussed where we would be based on different rates and that we want to build upon our strategic approach we began in previous years. We discussed an overall across the board increase, and then a strategic look at each college/program/residency approach on top of that.
- Noted was that for a 1% across-the-board increase, our tuition revenue would increase approximately \$1 million. Thus, each 1% increase would attribute about \$1 million to gross tuition revenue.
- Noted in the discussion, was that we were still working to “right” our tuition rates by college and programs and we still want to take a strategic approach by college/program. Some programs are underpriced and we do have some that are overpriced. Thus, looking at a 2% across the board adjustment, then strategically looking at each program, to adjust accordingly to where we need to be in the market and in comparison to our competition.
- Pricing ourselves right, based on our value and rankings, is imperative so show our value. Additionally, developing a strategic scholarship fund is important.
- We also discussed the current uncertainty in loans available to our students and some additional uncertainty around the nursing and audiology



programs and how they are being classified and how that will impact the availability of necessary loans for our students and prospective student, as well as the future impact on those programs and the development of necessary health care professionals for our state and region. More to discuss as more information is made available.

- In conjunction with our discussion, Raaj also touched on the availability of affordable housing, or lack thereof and that we have the approval to acquire the building adjacent to the old Holiday Inn building we are currently bringing down. He mentioned that we may look into a P3 arrangement for providing affordable student accommodations.

Financial Planning Update

- Raaj gave an update on the budget deficit and how much we have turned things around to date based on some of the hard decisions we had to make previously.

Faculty Research Incentive Policy

- Wes was in attendance in place of Dr. Snowden, who was not available. He mentioned that he was not sure where she was with meeting with Faculty Senate to go over any changes in the Incentive Policy.
- Dr. Derefinko mentioned that nothing had been presented to the Faculty Senate yet and that the current program is one of the key things that keep faculty at UTHSC. She mentioned that changes could bleed faculty and was concerned that it was changing this fiscal year. Raaj mentioned no changes would be made this fiscal year and that more discussions needed to occur, but also mentioned that our IDCR, which funds the incentive, had been reduced by approximately \$5 million.
- Raaj also assured that no action would be taken without significant discussions with faculty and with faculty senate.



Continued Discussion of Strategic Investment Requests for FY 26

- Continued the group process to discuss and prioritize strategic investment funding requests.

Strategic Enrollment Plan

- Dr. Russell gave an update on the Board Meeting surrounding enrollment
- Dr Russell also brought up the issue surrounding the data (GPA, MCAT, etc.) of students being prepared to come into our programs. She mentioned the discussion surrounding pre-health professions advising (i.e., that UTK has one advisor, but not a full department, and that UT Chatt. had hired a second advisor for these fields, but still not a full department. This was brought to the boards attention that these pre-health students may not be getting the help and guidance they need at the various UT campuses to ensure they are prepared to matriculate to us.

Other Business

- Dr. Snyder mentioned that he and Judy Waldrip would be meeting to discuss how to simplify the student fees for the students in Knoxville vs the students in Memphis and, also, enhance services provided to the students.

Closing Statements

- Raaj Kurapati ended the meeting at approximately 10:10AM