

Tennessee Tech University
--- Office of Research and Economic Development ---

Minutes of the Meeting of

University Research Advisory Committee

The University Research Advisory Committee met at 2:00 pm Wednesday, November 11, 2020, via TEAMS, with Dr. Jeff Boles presiding.

Members Present: Dr. Jeff Boles, Dr. Steven Anton, Ms. Kelly Bell, Dr. Jeremy Blair, Dr. Tania Datta, Dr. Kristen Deiter, Mr. Cody Godwin, Dr. Brian Leckie, Dr. Satish Mahajan, Dr. Hayden Mattingly, Dr. Ramchandran Natarajan, Ms. Amanda Powell on behalf of Ms. Julie Brewer, Dr. Terry Saltsman, Dr. Mark Stephens, and Dr. Jennifer Taylor, Executive Officer

Members Absent: Dr. Jason Beach, Ms. Deborah Gernt, Dr. Adam Holley, Mr. Greg Holt, and Dr. Shelia Hurley

Others Present: Dr. Francis Otuonye and Ms. Sandra Storie

1. Approval of Minutes from October 21, 2020

The minutes from the October 21, 2020 meeting were reviewed with a motion to approve by Dr. Mahajan and a second by Mr. Godwin. Motion carried.

2. Old Business

Dr. Saltsman spoke about the appropriation process, providing information about the following projects that are being considered for funding:

- Department of Energy project to support a university educational program in Nuclear Engineering.
- Appalachian Regional Commission project to assist farmers with high tunnel and greenhouse agricultural methods to allow an extended growing season.
- U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center project regarding an adaptive modular sensor network system.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project to research aquatic nuisance control.

3. Discussion | Increasing Partnerships with Industry

Dr. Boles introduced a discussion of research partnerships with private industry. Tennessee Tech has relationships with companies that fund research projects, and a focus on this area could allow for growth in this type of funding. Dr. Taylor shared the importance of a diversified research portfolio. Grant funding from the National Science Foundation comprises a relatively large portion of Tennessee Tech's externally sponsored research. Nationally, research institutions strive to have 10%-15% of external funding through industry partnerships. While this is a lofty goal, a balanced approach helps ensure a strong research program despite changes in government administration, the market, and other circumstances. Committee members noted that individual industry grants may be smaller monetarily than government grants. The committee expressed interest in concepts such as creating space for industry to allow project work on campus and identifying industry leaders who might serve as adjunct faculty.

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Committee members also expressed interest in Cooperative Research and Development Agreements (CRADA). This type of agreement offers opportunities to engage with industry partners and to further relationships with organizations with a strong research orientation and resources, such as Oak Ridge National Lab.

Dr. Otuonye spoke about the positive perceptions of Tennessee Tech graduates by industry leaders and suggested alumni or other Tennessee Tech supporters might be helpful in increasing partnerships with industry. URAC members agreed that a coordinated strategy across the university would be most effective. Dr. Taylor, Dr. Otuonye, and Dr. Boles plan to approach officials with University Advancement to gather information and explore working together.

4. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sandra Storie, Committee Support Personnel

Date approved by committee: 02/04/2021