

Board of Trustees: Enrollment and Student Services Committee
January 14th, 2026
Sandridge Student Center Banquet Room
Minutes

- I. Call to order: 12:15 p.m. by Chair, Bill Dunnavant
- II. Roll Call: Present – Bill Dunnavant, Alyson Quinn (Zoom), Mary Beth Johns (Zoom)

Absent – Jimmy Baker, Mac McCutcheon

Attendees: Dr. Alyson Gill, Richard Collie, Amy Garrison, Derrek Smith, Michael Radden, LaShanda Chamberlain, Chris Latham, Amber Martinez, Natalie Vedder, Bethany Jackson (Zoom), Tim Dempsey (Zoom), Dalton Turner (Zoom), Kim Dunnavant (Zoom), Ashley Beck (Zoom), DJ Doorenbos (Zoom)
- III. Approval of Agenda: Dunnavant motioned to approve and Johns seconded, all in favor, none opposed
- IV. Approval of July 17th, 2025 Minutes: Quinn motioned to approve, Dunnavant seconded, all in favor, none opposed
- V. New Business:
 - a. EMSS Realignment and Synergies
 - i. Dr. Alyson Gill presenting
 - ii. When Dr. Gill arrived, there was an AVP position (filled first by Sallie McMullin then Scott Rhodes as a consultant), but in the past months, there has been a reorganization discussed to remove that AVP position and have the Directors assume the reporting roles for their areas directly to Dr. Gill
 - iii. There would also be a combination of Student Wellness/Title IX/ADA under the Student Life umbrella and Veterans Affairs under the Financial Aid umbrella
 - iv. There is also a proposal to elevate Amy Garrison’s position to Dean of Students (currently Director of Student Engagement) to assist our students and residence halls at the ACA as well and expand outside of just student events, clubs, government, and Ambassadors
 - v. This would also begin a process for an individual to which to report student disciplinary issues (academic and non-academic) and a more formal procedure for handling concerns within student body and faculty
 - vi. Dunnavant asks how many historic instances we’ve had of those types of issues
 - vii. Garrison notes that we don’t really know because there has not been a centralized location for that kind of information, this would create that, but we would also need a system for keeping track of that long term
 - viii. Dunnavant asked how many there have been since Amy has taken over that
 - ix. Garrison notes that this is the first case she’s been asked to handle one of these cases, but there is likely still a history

- x. Jackson notes that she cleaned out the AVP suite offices when she arrived and found several files and folders for student and employee cases dating back as far as the 90s that had just been stored there
 - xi. Johns mentioned an issue she had with a student and she worked with her department chair on the issue for that semester, but the student came back after a time and there was no history for anyone to look back on to know how to handle potential issues or safety
 - xii. Dunnavant agrees that it is imperative that we safeguard our faculty and students and he's glad that this is being proposed
 - xiii. Dr. Gill mentions that for Veteran's Affairs, Carolyn Carthen has requested a space for a Veteran's Resources Center in the Student Center building so plans are happening for that as well
- b. Echo Delta Contract Discussion
- i. Chris Latham presenting
 - ii. We transitioned to Echo Delta Marketing in late July/early August of 2025 and built digital campaigns with similar rhythms as we had with GMB
 - iii. Since launching that in August, 5,894 total conversions (i.e., request for info contact form, click throughs, applications submitted) and 489 applications submitted since August
 - iv. As of yesterday, 1,289 total applications for the Spring semester, so 40% of those can be traced back to these digital marketing efforts
 - v. Dunnavant requested clarification about conversions
 - vi. Latham notes that these are actions online (social media, Google searches, etc.) rather than through email or text communications sent out
 - vii. There were even more than 489 apps started, so they will be working with Admissions about how to move those that didn't through the admissions funnel
 - viii. Dunnavant asked how many of those 489 are enrolled?
 - ix. Latham notes that we don't have that data yet, but we will be working with Target X to be able to know that for future semesters
 - x. We also want these efforts to find us the "right fit" students who will attend and be retained
 - xi. Looking at the new contract with Echo Delta, (Scope of Work), \$750k contract from Feb 1 to Dec 31st, would build and expand on current pieces and campaigns
 - xii. These are already budgeted funds
 - xiii. Would continue to concentrate on North AL but expand into Birmingham and TN, also explores secondary targets in Montgomery and Mobile
 - xiv. We intentionally cut the contract amount to allow for resources for ancillary projects to support these efforts (i.e., brand awareness in new areas to preempt the expanding digital efforts)
 - xv. Dunnavant asks how much was cut
 - xvi. Latham notes original amount was \$1.2mil, cut about \$350k
 - xvii. Dunnavant asks about the creative development budgeted amount, what does that include?
 - xviii. Latham notes that it will include testing to see what advertisements will resonate more with people, also updating our current messaging and images

- xix. If we do decide to exit the contract with them (which we can do with a 30-day notice at any time), we own all of the creative and the campaigns that we set up so there would be no down time if we part ways
- xx. Dunnivant confirms that the landing pages listed are our website
- xxi. Latham has enjoyed working with Echo Delta and feels like their efforts have paid off for us measurably
- c. Spring 2026 enrollment and admissions
 - i. Amber Martinez presenting
 - ii. We are currently down 6 members of the Admissions team, so the fact that our numbers are what they are is a testament to that team and their work ethic
 - iii. We had a record number of applications and only 1 person processing (Julie Johnson) compared to 2 or 3 people typically, she was a rockstar
 - iv. 71 student increase over 2025 Spring semester (2.5% increase)
 - v. 1.4% increase in continuing students enrolled, thanks to Derrek's team and faculty for that
 - vi. 516 total appointments with Admissions staff from September to December 2025 (Zoom, phone, and in person)
 - vii. Upcoming Recruitment and Enrollment Initiatives
 1. Streamlining application between Calhoun and Athens State so students can "apply" to both at the same time
 2. Birmingham Promise Scholarship for Birmingham city schools, gives students a "full ride" to college of their choice by matching their FinAid, so we work with those students to funnel them into two year and then to us
 3. Transfer Tuesdays with tours and admissions presentations every Tuesday
 4. Spring Transfer Day March 14th
 5. QR codes for application
 6. Grad Webinars for the semester open to General Public
 7. Monthly Lunch and Learns at Redstone Arsenal
 - viii. Dunnivant asks if there's anything we can promote specifically to that area (Redstone) with the FBI and Space Force presence
 - ix. Martinez recommends Strategic Leadership for that population
- d. Spring 2026 yield
 - i. Amber Martinez presenting
 - ii. Spring applications 1,250, admitted 780, enrolled 407, 52% yield (above national average, above other regional schools)
 - iii. Dunnivant asks how we got these other schools' numbers
 - iv. Martinez reports they came from an internet search, they are likely their fall numbers because spring is not public
 - v. Dunnivant confirms that these are brand new students
- e. Strategic scholarship leveraging – President and Dean Scholarships
 - i. LaShanda Chamberlain presenting
 - ii. Beginning in November 2025 we launched a campaign with two new scholarships, 10 President's (full ride with priority to Applied Management, Theater, and Homeland Security programs) and 75 Dean's (partial "test drive your degree", 6 credit hours)
 - iii. 263 Scholarship Applications

- iv. All 10 Presidents awarded; all three priority programs represented
 - v. All 75 Deans awarded as well, across programs
 - vi. Dunnavant asks the cost of that to us
 - vii. Dr. Gill notes we don't know the exact amount, but these funds came from unused, unawarded Financial Aid dollars
 - viii. We want to expand this, especially to the Birmingham area
 - ix. Dr. Gill notes that President's scholars can grow the program themselves to become Ambassadors for her and the scholarship
 - x. Martinez notes that letting students know there was a scholarship available if they completed their application by the scholarship deadline led to more completed Spring applications earlier than expected
- f. Call center impact
- i. Amber Martinez presenting
 - ii. Started working with call center in May
 - iii. Since then: 5,319 students called, 808 appointments scheduled, 472 apps, 350 enrolled
 - iv. They've been helpful in weeding through the students to find those who are truly interested and that helps our yield rate
 - v. They are former admissions workers, they communicate with students well, and work with us well to keep information they are giving current
 - vi. Latham notes that from a marketing standpoint, more resources for momentum at the top of the funnel will mean more people working the leads and the call center helps with having the people to do that
- g. Retention and Persistence Update
- i. Derrek Smith presenting
 - ii. Fall 2025 retention was 81.8% which is the highest it has been in our modern history and the first time it's been over 80% (retention is new undergrad students who started Fall 2024 and returned Fall 2025), highest in the state right now is Auburn and they are at 94% retention, 4.2% increase from last year for us
 - iii. Collaborative effort between staff and faculty
 - iv. Our version of "NIL money" is our retention scholarships, which are used to help students continue through their program when they face financial barriers
 - v. Success Coaching has also been integral, growing from 3 to 6 full time success coaches acting as initial academic advisors to help students move through their programs smoothly, a focus we didn't have ten years ago
 - vi. Persistence is term to term continuation, which you need to get retention, and is also very often discussed when it comes to performance-based government funding
 - vii. Throughout the years, realigning our institution scholarships has helped to make sure more credit hours are enrolled and completed
 - viii. Dunnavant notes that this number (retention) should be advertised (all agree)
- h. Looking Ahead: Student Engagement
- i. Amy Garrison presenting
 - ii. Student engagement drives retention and persistence, satisfaction, and completion
 - iii. We focus on flexible, purposeful, and personal event planning for all of our diverse student body

- iv. Garrison lists several upcoming events (included in Presentation materials)
 - i. 2026 Spring Goals
 - i. Dr. Alyson Gill presenting
 - ii. Our goals are still driving enrollment and serving our students, but we also know that nobody knows our students better than us and our team has been amazing at being flexible and adaptable with lots of big changes this past year
 - iii. We want more stability and to let our Directors lead us while they are working closely together
 - iv. Dunnivant agrees that it seems apparent that what they are doing is working, and offers his support to the team for whatever is needed
- VI. Discussion
- a. Dunnivant asks Marketing team if we have any influencers who work with us?
 - b. Latham does note that we have a shortlist of Huntsville influencers that we want to look into but we want to make sure it's authentic for our students
- VII. Adjourn: Dunnivant made a motion to adjourn at 1:10pm

Respectfully submitted by: Emily Jackson

Packet contents: Agenda
October 13th Meeting Minutes
Presentation materials