



Middle Tennessee State University Board of Trustees Executive and Governance Committee

Tuesday, May 19, 2026

MEC Meeting Room – 2nd Floor
Miller Education Center
503 East Bell Street
Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37132



**Middle Tennessee State University
Board of Trustees**

Executive and Governance Committee

May 19, 2026

AGENDA

Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Roll Call

Approval of Minutes (Action)..... Tab 1

Institutional Mission Profile (Action) Tab 2

Policy Revision (Action)

 Policy 103 Free Speech on Campus Tab 3

Legislative Update (Information) Tab 4

Presidential Search Update (Information)

Closing Remarks

Adjournment



**Middle Tennessee State University
Board of Trustees**

Executive and Governance Committee

Action Item

DATE: May 19, 2026

SUBJECT: **Minutes of the November 11, 2025
Executive and Governance Committee Meeting**

PRESENTER: Stephen Smith
Committee Chair

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Executive and Governance Committee met on November 11, 2025.
Minutes from the meeting are provided for review and approval.

**MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**EXECUTIVE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

The Executive and Governance Committee met on Tuesday, November 11, 2025.

Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Chairman Steve Smith called the meeting to order at 10:43 a.m.

Roll Call

Chairman Smith asked Board Secretary James Floyd to call the roll. Trustee Tom Boyd participated in the meeting electronically. Consistent with Tennessee Code Annotated § 8-44-108(c)(3), he was asked and responded in the affirmative that he could hear clearly and confirmed that no one else was in his location. Chair Steve Smith was present while Vice Chair Christine Vanek was absent. A quorum was declared.

Also present were Dr. Sidney A. McPhee, President; Joe Bales, Vice President for University Advancement; Dr. Mark Byrnes, Provost; Andrew Oppmann, Vice President for Marketing and Communications; Yvette Clark, Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer; Drew Harpool, Interim Vice President for Business and Finance; Danny Kelley, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students; Leah Ladley, Chief Audit Executive; Keith Huber, Lt. Gen. (Ret.); and James Floyd, University Counsel and Board Secretary.

Approval of Minutes

The first agenda item was approval of the minutes of the August 19, 2025, meeting of the Executive and Governance Committee. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Trustee Boyd and seconded by Chairman Smith. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion to approve the minutes of the August 19, 2025, meeting of the Executive and Governance Committee passed unanimously.

Discussion of 2025 Self-Evaluation Results and Action for Improvement – Information

Chairman Smith opened a discussion on the Board's self-evaluation survey results for the Committee's assessment. The MTSU accreditation body, SACSCOC, requires a governing board to define and regularly evaluate its responsibilities and expectations. In addition, the Board of Trustees' Policy on Committees requires the Executive and Governance Committee to review and discuss the results of the self-evaluations, including Board comments or questions. In compliance, members of the Board of Trustees received access to an online, anonymous evaluation survey in October. Board Secretary Floyd noted that there were ten (10) participants in the survey.

Chairman Smith advised that the survey results were shared with all members in advance of this meeting. He observed that the majority of responses to each question were either "strongly agree" or "agree," noting that surely there are areas the Board can improve. In addition, the comments indicated that members generally have a positive assessment of the Board's functions.

Chairman Smith solicited comments from the Trustees present. Trustee Granbery suggested flipping the color codes in the legend and designating green for "strongly agree" rather than red, as red has a negative connotation. Trustee Neely suggested including a submit page at the end of the survey so that each Trustee would affirmatively know that they are submitting their response. Regarding comments on specific objectives for the Board to pursue in the future, Trustee Boyd noted the Board should again rank objectives so it can prioritize its goals and strategies. Board Secretary Floyd responded that he would prepare an objectives survey and report back at the next Executive and Governance Committee meeting.

President Sidney A. McPhee seconded Trustee Boyd's recommendation on identifying the top four (4) objectives, recalling that one of the top objectives from the previous self-evaluation

was increasing the number of national rankings. Trustee DeLay added that the Murphy Center was another priority that had been discussed.

The meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Executive and Governance Committee

DRAFT



**Middle Tennessee State University
Board of Trustees**

Executive and Governance Committee

Action Item

DATE: May 19, 2026

SUBJECT: **Institutional Mission Profile**

PRESENTER: Mary Hoffschwelle
Vice Provost for Planning and Effectiveness

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

T.C.A. §49-8-101(d) requires the institution to annually submit its institutional mission profile to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission for review. On April 17, 2026, the University Planning Committee considered revisions to the University's mission profile. Once approved by the Board at its June meeting, the University will report on changes to the mission profile to THEC in fulfillment of this statutory requirement.

Middle Tennessee State University

Institutional Mission Profile

Middle Tennessee State University is a ~~selective~~, comprehensive institution with a primary focus on teaching, research and creative activity, and public service that transforms students, their communities, the state, and the nation. ~~located in the geographic center of the State. The University embraces its role as the~~ A destination of choice ~~destination~~ for Tennessee undergraduates, ~~the University embraces its role as~~ and the top choice for Tennessee transfer students and the top producer of college graduates for the greater Nashville area. Its distinctive undergraduate and graduate programs draw students from ~~across the nation and~~ around the world. ~~Through Innovative~~ innovative undergraduate and graduate degree programs and a strong commitment to student success, MTSU empowers students to recognize their potential and achieve their academic and professional goals. ~~research and public service centers~~ MTSU attracts, welcomes, and supports a diverse, ~~largely full-time~~ student population with significant numbers of Pell-eligible, first-generation, veteran, non-traditional, and historically underrepresented students. ~~The University uses advanced~~ Through research-based practices and flexible learning modalities, MTSU prioritizes student success to help students recognize their academic promise and achieve success, and conferring confers approximately more than 5,000 ~~4,500~~ degrees annually. Dedicated faculty and staff prepare students for lifelong learning with global perspectives through an understanding of culture and history, scholarship, and creative undertakings to adapt to and shape a rapidly changing world. MTSU's signature experiential and integrative learning, international, cross-disciplinary, co-curricular programs, and Tennessee's first public Honors College deliver a value-added education rich in research, service learning, and civic engagement. MTSU houses centers of excellence in historic preservation and popular music and notable chairs of excellence and has earned the Carnegie Doctoral University: High Research Activity (R2) classification. ~~The University fosters~~ Academic offerings foster the pursuit of scholarly research, creative endeavors, and professional advancement through a broad array of programs spanning the arts and humanities, education, business, STEM, the social, behavioral, and health sciences, and media and entertainment. ~~MTSU houses centers of excellence in historic preservation and popular music and notable chairs of excellence. MTSU has earned the Carnegie Doctoral University: High Research Activity and elective Community Engagement Carnegie Classifications.~~

Approved by MTSU Board of Trustees, ~~March 19, 2024~~

Middle Tennessee State University

Institutional Mission Profile

Middle Tennessee State University is a comprehensive institution with a primary focus on teaching, research and creative activity, and public service that transforms students, their communities, the state, and the nation. A choice destination for Tennessee undergraduates, the University embraces its role as the top choice for Tennessee transfer students and the top producer of college graduates for the greater Nashville area. Its distinctive undergraduate and graduate programs draw students from around the world. Through innovative undergraduate and graduate programs and a strong commitment to student success, MTSU empowers students to recognize their potential and achieve their academic and professional goals. MTSU attracts, welcomes, and supports a diverse student population with significant numbers of Pell-eligible, first-generation, veteran, non-traditional, and historically underrepresented students. Through research-based practices and flexible learning modalities, MTSU prioritizes student success and confers more than 4,500 degrees annually. Dedicated faculty and staff prepare students for lifelong learning with global perspectives through an understanding of culture and history, scholarship, and creative undertakings to adapt to and shape a rapidly changing world. MTSU's signature experiential and integrative learning, international, cross-disciplinary, co-curricular programs, and Tennessee's first public Honors College deliver a value-added education rich in research, service learning, and civic engagement. MTSU houses centers of excellence in historic preservation and popular music and notable chairs of excellence and has earned the Carnegie Doctoral University: High Research Activity (R2) classification. The University fosters scholarly research, creative endeavors, and professional advancement through a broad array of programs spanning the arts and humanities, education, business, STEM, the social, behavioral, and health sciences, and media and entertainment.

Approved by MTSU Board of Trustees,



**Middle Tennessee State University
Board of Trustees**

Executive and Governance Committee

Action Item

DATE: May 19, 2026

SUBJECT: **Revision to
Policy 103 Free Speech on Campus**

PRESENTER: James Floyd
Vice President for Legal Affairs

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In accordance with Tennessee Public Acts, Chapter 831, this revision updates MTSU Policy 103 Free Speech on Campus to affirm the University's commitment to protect free and open expression. The required statement clarifies that the University may not suppress speech based on offense or disagreement, recognizes only narrow, lawful limits on expression, and affirms the University's and its community members' responsibility to preserve open debate while prohibiting obstruction of others' expressive rights.



103 Free Speech on Campus

Approved by Board of Trustees

Effective Date: July 1, 2026

Responsible Division: President

Responsible Office: Office of the University Counsel

Responsible Officer: ~~University Counsel~~ Vice President for Legal Affairs

I. Purpose

This policy affirms the principles of free speech on Middle Tennessee State University's (MTSU or University) campus.

II. Institutional Commitment to Free Expression

The ideas of different members of the University community will often and quite naturally conflict. But it is not the proper role of the University to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive. Although the University greatly values civility, and although all members of the University community share in the responsibility for maintaining a climate of mutual respect, concerns about civility and mutual respect can never be used as a justification for closing off discussion of ideas, however offensive or disagreeable those ideas may be to some members of our community.

The freedom to debate and discuss the merits of competing ideas does not, of course, mean that individuals may say whatever they wish, wherever they wish. The University may restrict expression that violates the law, that falsely defames a specific individual, that constitutes a genuine threat or harassment, that unjustifiably invades substantial privacy or confidentiality interests, or that is otherwise directly incompatible with the functioning of the University. In addition, the University may reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt the ordinary activities of the University. But these are narrow exceptions to the general principle of freedom of expression, and it is vitally important that these exceptions never be used in a manner that is inconsistent with the University's commitment to a completely free and open discussion of ideas.

In a word, the University's fundamental commitment is to the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by most members of the University community to be offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed. It is for the individual members of the University community, not for the University as

an institution, to make those SB 1741 judgments for themselves, and to act on those judgments not by seeking to suppress speech, but by openly and vigorously contesting the ideas that they oppose. Indeed, fostering the ability of members of the University community to engage in such debate and deliberation in an effective and responsible manner is an essential part of the University's educational mission.

As a corollary to the University's commitment to protect and promote free expression, members of the University community must also act in conformity with the principle of free expression. Although members of the University community are free to criticize and contest the views expressed on campus, and to criticize and contest speakers who are invited to express their views on campus, they may not obstruct or otherwise interfere with the freedom of others to express views they reject or even loathe. To this end, the University has a solemn responsibility not only to promote a lively and fearless freedom of debate and deliberation, but also to protect that freedom when others attempt to restrict it.

III. Definitions

- A. Constitutional Time, Place and Manner Restrictions. Restrictions on the time, place, and manner of free speech that do not violate the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution or Article I, Section 19 of the Tennessee Constitution that are reasonable, content and viewpoint neutral, narrowly tailored to satisfy a significant institutional interest, and leave open ample alternative channels for the communication of the information or message of its intended audience.
- B. Faculty or Faculty Member. Any person, whether or not the person is compensated by MTSU, and regardless of political affiliation, who is tasked with providing scholarship, academic research or teaching. For the purposes of this policy, faculty includes tenured and non-tenured professors, adjunct professors, visiting professors, lecturers, graduate student instructors and those in comparable positions, however titled. For the purposes of this policy, faculty does not include persons whose primary responsibilities are administrative or managerial.
- C. Free Speech. Speech, expression, or assemblies protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution or Article I, Section 19 of the Tennessee Constitution, verbal or written, including, but not limited to, all forms of peaceful assembly, protests, demonstrations, rallies, vigils, marches, public speaking, distribution of printed materials, carrying signs, displays, or circulating petitions. Free speech does not include the promotion, sale, or distribution of any product or service.
- D. Student. For the purposes of this policy, an individual currently enrolled in a course of study at MTSU; or, an organization that is comprised entirely of individuals currently enrolled in a course of study at MTSU and registered with MTSU pursuant to [MTSU Policy 561 Student Organization Operations](#).

IV. Policy

- A. MTSU affirms that students have a fundamental constitutional right to free speech.
- B. MTSU is committed to giving students the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, learn, and discuss any issue, subject to limitations set forth in this policy, or in state or federal law.
- C. MTSU is committed to maintaining a campus as a marketplace of ideas for all students and all faculty in which the free exchange of ideas is not to be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by most members of MTSU's community to be offensive, unwise, immoral, indecent, disagreeable, conservative, liberal, traditional, radical, or wrong-headed.
- D. Students and faculty are allowed to make judgments about ideas for themselves and to act on those judgments, not by seeking to suppress free speech, but by openly and vigorously contesting the ideas they oppose.
- E. It is not MTSU's role to attempt to shield individuals from free speech, including ideas and opinions they find offensive, unwise, immoral, indecent, disagreeable, conservative, liberal, traditional, radical, or wrong-headed.
- F. Although MTSU greatly values civility and mutual respect, the University will not use concerns about civility and mutual respect as justification for closing off the discussion of ideas, however offensive, unwise, immoral, indecent, disagreeable, conservative, liberal, traditional, radical, or wrong-headed those ideas may be to some students or faculty.
- G. Although all students and faculty are free to state their own views about and contest the views expressed on campus, and to state their own views on MTSU's campus, they may not substantially obstruct or otherwise substantially interfere with the freedom of others to express views they reject or even loathe. To this end, MTSU promotes a lively and fearless freedom of debate and deliberation and protects that freedom.
- H. MTSU is committed to providing an atmosphere that is most conducive to speculation, experimentation, and creation by all students and all faculty, who are always free to inquire, to study, and to evaluate, and to gain new understanding.
- I. The primary responsibility of faculty is to engage in an honest, courageous, and persistent effort to search out and communicate the truth that lies in the areas of their competence.
- J. Although faculty are free in the classroom to discuss subjects within areas of their competence, faculty shall be cautious in expressing personal views in the classroom and

shall be careful not to introduce controversial matters that have no relationship to the subject taught, and especially matters in which they have no special competence or training and in which, therefore, faculty's views cannot claim the authority accorded the statements they make about subjects within areas of their competence; provided, no faculty will face adverse employment action for classroom speech, unless it is not reasonably germane to the subject matter of the class as broadly construed, and comprises a substantial portion of classroom instruction.

- K. As set forth in [MTSU Policy 100 Use of Campus Property and Facilities Scheduling](#), Section IV. B. 2. c., MTSU will maintain the generally accessible, open, outdoor areas of its campus as traditional public forums for free speech by students and will not restrict students' free speech only to particular areas of the campus.
- L. MTSU will not deny student activity fee funding to a student organization based on the viewpoints that the student organization advocates.
- M. MTSU will not establish permitting requirements that prohibit students' spontaneous outdoor assemblies or students' outdoor distribution of literature, but will allow members of the MTSU community to reserve certain outdoor space in advance, consistent with [MTSU Policy 100 Use of Campus Property and Facilities Scheduling](#), Section IV. B. 2. c.
- N. MTSU will not charge students security fees or costs based on the content of their speech, the content of guest speakers invited by students, or the anticipated reaction or opposition of listeners to speech.
- O. MTSU will allow all students and all faculty to invite guest speakers to campus to engage in free speech regardless of the views of guest speakers consistent with [MTSU Policy 100 Use of Campus Property and Facilities Scheduling](#), Sections IV. B. 2. d. and IV. B. 3.
- P. MTSU will not disinvite a speaker invited by a student, student organization, or faculty member because the speaker's anticipated speech may be considered offensive, unwise, immoral, indecent, disagreeable, conservative, liberal, traditional, radical, or wrong-headed by students, faculty, administrators, government officials, or members of the public.

IV.V. Effect of Policy

- A. Nothing in this policy shall require MTSU to fund costs associated with student speech or expression.
- B. Nothing in this policy shall be construed as prohibiting MTSU from imposing measures that do not violate the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution or Article I, Section 19 of the Tennessee Constitution such as:

1. Constitutional time, place, and manner restrictions;
2. Reasonable and viewpoint-neutral restrictions in nonpublic forums;
3. Restricting the use of MTSU's property to protect the free speech rights of students and faculty and preserve the uses of the property for the advancement of MTSU's mission;
4. Prohibiting or limiting speech, expression, or assemblies that are not protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution or Article I, Section 19 of the Tennessee Constitution; or
5. Content restrictions on speech that are reasonably related to a legitimate pedagogical purpose, such as rules enacted by faculty.

Forms: none.

Revisions: ~~none~~ July 1, 2026.

Last Reviewed: ~~Jan. 2018~~ June 2026.

References: 2026 Public Acts, Chapter 831; 2017 Public Acts, Chapter 336; MTSU Policies 100 Use of Campus Property and Facilities Scheduling; 561 Student Organization Operations; First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution; Article I, Section 19 of the Tennessee Constitution.



103 Free Speech on Campus

Approved by Board of Trustees

Effective Date: July 1, 2026

Responsible Division: President

Responsible Office: Office of the University Counsel

Responsible Officer: Vice President for Legal Affairs

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V. Effect of Policy

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1. Constitutional time, place, and manner restrictions;
2. Reasonable and viewpoint-neutral restrictions in nonpublic forums;
3. Restricting the use of MTSU's property to protect the free speech rights of students and faculty and preserve the uses of the property for the advancement of MTSU's mission;
4. Prohibiting or limiting speech, expression, or assemblies that are not protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution or Article I, Section 19 of the Tennessee Constitution; or
5. Content restrictions on speech that are reasonably related to a legitimate pedagogical purpose, such as rules enacted by faculty.

Forms: none.

Revisions: July 1, 2026.

Last Reviewed: June 2026.

References: 2026 Public Acts, Chapter 831; 2017 Public Acts, Chapter 336; MTSU Policies 100 Use of Campus Property and Facilities Scheduling; 561 Student Organization Operations; First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution; Article I, Section 19 of the Tennessee Constitution.



**Middle Tennessee State University
Board of Trustees**

Executive and Governance Committee

Information Item

DATE: May 19, 2026

SUBJECT: **Legislative Update**

PRESENTER: Bill Ketron
Government Relations Liaison

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

This legislative update is intended to provide the Board with a high-level overview of recent state legislative developments that affect the University's operations, compliance obligations, strategic planning, and budgetary and financial outlook. The update highlights enacted laws relevant to higher education, with particular attention to state appropriations and funding models, as well as compliance.