

**MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, STUDENT LIFE, AND ATHLETICS COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

The Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee met on Tuesday, November 11, 2025, in the Miller Education Center Meeting Room at Middle Tennessee State University.

Call to Order

Committee Chair Michael Wade called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Roll Call

Board Secretary James Floyd called the roll. The following Committee members were in attendance: J.B. Baker, Pete DeLay, John Floyd, Jimmy Granbery, Bill Jones, Kari Neely, Steve Smith, Michael Wade, Chad White, Michai Mosby, and Keith Huber. Christine Vanek and Chris Massaro were absent. Tom Boyd participated in the meeting electronically. Consistent with Tennessee Code Annotated § 8-44-108(c)(3), Trustee Boyd was asked and responded affirmatively that he could hear clearly and confirmed that no one else was present in his location. A quorum was declared.

President Sidney A. McPhee; Joe Bales, Vice President for University Advancement; Mark Byrnes, Provost; 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; Andrew Oppmann, Vice President for Marketing and Communications, and Leah Ladley, Chief Audit Executive, were also in attendance.

Approval of Minutes - Action

The first agenda item was approval of the minutes from the August 19, 2025, Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee meeting. Trustee DeLay moved to approve the minutes

from the August 19, 2025, meeting, and Trustee Jones seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion to approve the minutes was approved unanimously.

Approval of Degree under Consideration – Action

Vice Provost Amy Aldridge presented for consideration a Master of Health Care Administration in Health Care Administration. The 39-credit-hour interdisciplinary program will be housed in the Jones College of Business and delivered fully online. Program directors will seek accreditation from both AACSB and the Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education. Letters of support from area healthcare providers and occupational data demonstrate high demand for medical and health service managers.

Trustee Smith moved to approve consideration of a Master of Health Care Administration in Health Care Administration. Trustee DeLay seconded the motion.

Trustee Neely inquired about operational costs and faculty workload, in light of the introduction of several new graduate programs. Vice Provost Aldridge suggested that graduate assistants could teach undergraduate classes, while tenured faculty focus on graduate programs. The curriculum would include existing courses that have enrollment capacity.

Trustee Boyd asked which institutions would be competitors in this area. Dr. Richard Tarpey, associate professor of management, mentioned Lipscomb, Vanderbilt, and ETSU but noted that there is room in the market for all. Chairman Smith added that we are in the healthcare capital of the world and applauded the action taken to address the need for this degree.

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion to approve the consideration of a Master of Health Care Administration in Health Care Administration passed unanimously.

Approval of New Academic Program – Action

Vice Provost Amy Aldridge presented the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Film and Television, a 60-credit-hour program delivered in person, with a full-time cohort of 15-20 students over three years. Tennessee's entertainment sector is fifth in the nation for employment, with a projected

19% growth over the next decade, according to the Tennessee Entertainment Commission's letter of support. The MFA is a terminal degree, so its graduates will be able to do advanced work in directing, cinematography, and production, and will be qualified to teach in higher education.

President McPhee added that at recent recruitment events, there has been great interest in the Scott Borchetta College of Media and Entertainment's successful undergraduate programs, which would feed into this graduate program.

Trustee DeLay moved to approve the Master of Fine Arts in Film and Television. Trustee Baker seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion to approve the Master of Fine Arts in Film and Television passed unanimously.

Approval of Modification to an Existing Academic Unit – Action

Provost Mark Byrnes introduced Neporcha Cone, Dean of the College of Education, who has been at MTSU for two years and has led the reorganization to align academic programs with workforce needs and trends. Existing departments will be renamed to the Womack Department of Teaching, Learning, and Innovation and the Department of Leadership, Development, and Educational Systems. Student pathways will be organized around professional identity and licensure outcomes, enabling undergraduates to transition into master's and doctoral programs within the College.

Trustee Wade asked about the impact of the restructure on existing faculty. Trustee Neely inquired about the impact on untenured faculty and a new department chair. Dean Cone stated that the organizational changes and policy revisions are being implemented throughout this academic year and will alleviate the burden on the new chair.

Trustee DeLay inquired about the effect of some school districts no longer incentivizing teachers to pursue advanced degrees. President McPhee reported that we noticed a decline a few years ago, but we are now gaining ground because some districts still offer incentives for graduate degrees. This is the first year we have experienced an increase in undergraduate and graduate

enrollment in the College of Education due to the work of the dean and her colleagues. Also, the Truist Foundation has provided a grant to support teacher candidates.

Trustee Jones moved to approve the modification to the College of Education. Trustee DeLay seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion to approve the modification to the College of Education passed unanimously.

Performance Metrics – Information

Provost Mark Byrnes gave a presentation to provide context around the annual metrics. All of our plans since 2013 have been centered around student success, and we are proud of the increases in retention and graduation rates that resulted.

Trustee DeLay reminded the Board that they had set a goal amongst themselves to reach a 60% graduation rate.

Chairman Smith asked what the optimal number of students would be for MTSU. President McPhee responded that his enrollment management group determined that around 23,000 students would be best for our facilities and staffing.

Trustee Floyd inquired about the employment prospects of MTSU graduates. Provost Byrnes responded that obtaining employment data is difficult, but a widget will be added to academic program web pages to display job and salary data.

Quantum Update – Information

Greg Van Patten, Dean of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences, reported that since the visit with Trustees to Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) last spring, he has been seeking guidance on what knowledge, skills, and experiences students need to contribute to the nuclear workforce, starting with roles that are hiring now, building toward emerging roles as demand and infrastructure mature, and maintaining close feedback loops with ORNL and industry to adapt quickly. In September, faculty and students participated in the Y12 Nuclear Innovation Expo and

were invited to a national Nuclear Educators Workshop in December, alongside representatives from Vanderbilt, MIT, Clemson, UT, and others.

Through our QRISE Center and TN-QuMAT, a collaboration with Fisk, Meharry, and Tennessee State, MTSU is leading a statewide quantum effort that complements ORNL's strengths and aligns with Tennessee's economic priorities.

School of Nursing Update – Information

Peter Grandjean, Dean of the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences, referred the Trustees to a one-page summary in their materials and discussed the challenges and opportunities for expanding the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program.

Chairman Smith asked Dean Grandjean to present a timeline and financial details, including staffing and facilities, required to implement the proposal, at a future meeting.

Athletics Report - Information

Deputy Athletic Director and Chief Revenue Officer Lee De León introduced Darryl Keckler, Associate Athletic Director for Development and Blue Raider Athletic Association.

The men's cross-country team won the Conference USA championship. Men's tennis qualified for the doubles national championship. Women's basketball plays the University of Tennessee next week. Also, 22 student-athletes will graduate in December.

Next, he presented the minutes of the October 29th meeting of the Lightning Zone Community Committee, formed by Chairman Smith and Trustee Boyd. Attendees included area mayors, MTSU alumni, and MTSU staff. The purpose of the advisory committee is to support the reimagining of the intersection of Middle Tennessee Boulevard and Greenland Drive, the Murphy Center renovations and remodeling, a pedestrian plaza, and the repair of Floyd Stadium and the Greenland Drive parking lot.

Adjournment

Acting Committee Chair Wade adjourned the meeting at 10:38 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee

DRAFT