

**MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**MINUTES**

The Middle Tennessee State University Board of Trustees met on December 3, 2025, in the Miller Education Center Meeting Room at Middle Tennessee State University.

**Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance**

Board Chair Steve Smith called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Keith Huber led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Introduction of Student Veteran**

General Huber introduced Marine Corps Veteran Greg Palm. He shared that within a week of graduating from high school, Palm enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, where he served for six (6) years, including service as a military police officer with an overseas tour at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. While in the Marine Corps, Mr. Palm was attracted to and appreciative of their emphasis on history, teaching, and training, which led to his decision to become a teacher. To date, he has taught Social Studies to sixth and seventh-grade students at Stewarts Creek. In May, he will graduate from Middle Tennessee State University with a Bachelor of Science in History. Expressing his gratitude for everything the Charlie Daniels Center has done for him and his family, Mr. Palm recalled his experience of enlisting in the USMC and telling the recruiter he chose the Marine Corps for the camaraderie and brotherhood. Upon completing his service in 2022, he found himself wondering about his purpose and what he should do next, which led him to the Charlie Daniels Center in search of the same camaraderie and brotherhood he had experienced as a Marine. Mr. Palm thanked General Huber, Dr. Hilary Miller, and everyone at the Veterans Center for everything they have done for him and his family.

## **Roll Call**

Board Secretary James Floyd called the roll. The following trustees were in attendance: J.B. Baker, Tom Boyd, Pete DeLay, John Floyd, Jimmy Granbery, Bill Jones, Kary Neely, Steve Smith, Christine Vanek, Michael Wade, Chad White, and Michai Mosby. A quorum was declared.

President Sidney A. McPhee; Joe Bales, Vice President for University Advancement; Mark Byrnes, University Provost; Andrew Oppmann, Vice President for Marketing and Communications; Yvette Clark, Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer; Danny Kelley, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students; Drew Harpool, Interim Vice President for Business and Finance; Leah Ladley, Chief Audit Executive; Chris Massaro, Director of Athletics; Lt. Gen. Keith Huber, Senior Adviser for Veterans and Leadership Initiatives; Kim Edgar, Executive Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff; and James Floyd, University Counsel and Board Secretary were also in attendance.

## **Approval of September 9, 2025, Meeting Minutes – Action**

The first agenda item was the approval of the meeting minutes from September 9, 2025. Trustee Baker motioned to approve the September 9, 2025, meeting minutes, and Vice Chair Vanek seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion was approved unanimously.

## **Committee Report: Finance and Personnel Committee**

Committee Chair DeLay reported that the Finance and Personnel Committee met on November 11, 2025. The Committee approved the minutes from its August 19, 2025, meeting. The Committee report contained two (2) action items, unanimously approved by the Committee, and one (1) informational item to be considered by the Board. Materials outlining these actions were made available for review prior to the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

### **Compensation – Action**

Trustee DeLay stated that the Committee considered a recommendation to implement market salary increases for faculty and staff. The proposed market adjustments will be effective January 1, 2026, for employees on the payroll as of December 31, 2025. The Committee unanimously approved the compensation proposal as presented.

### **2025-26 October Revised Budget – Action**

Trustee DeLay stated that, as required by THEC, one of the three budgets submitted annually for approval by the Board of Trustees is an October (Revised) budget. The revised budget contained changes since the July Budget related to tuition and fee revenue, appropriations, and expenditures, as well as auxiliaries and restricted budgets. Materials were provided showing details of these changes for the Committee.

The Committee unanimously approved the 2025-26 October Revised Budget as presented.

### **Performance-Based Pay – Information**

Interim Vice President Harpool provided an update on the work of the University's Compensation Committee. He reported that the committee met regularly to discuss the development of a potential performance-based pay plan for the University. The committee identified challenges associated with implementing such a plan in higher education and submitted a report to the President for review.

Mr. Harpool noted that the University is implementing an updated performance review framework for staff and a new evaluation instrument for faculty. Data collected through these evaluations during the current year will inform future consideration of a performance-based pay structure.

### **Motion**

Trustee DeLay motioned to approve the action items recommended by the Committee, and Vice Chair Vanek seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion to approve the action items carried unanimously.

### **Committee Report: The Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee**

Trustee Wade reported that the Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee met on November 11, 2025. The Committee approved the minutes from its August 19, 2025, meeting. The Committee report contained three (3) action items for the Board's consideration. Information items presented included four (4) topics: annual performance metrics and a presentation to add context to the Metrics; an update on Quantum and meetings with Oak Ridge National Laboratory; an update on the School of Nursing; and an update on Athletics. Materials outlining these actions were made available for review prior to the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

#### **Approval of Degree Program Under Consideration – Action**

A Master of Health Care Administration in Health Care Administration was considered. Data and industry support letters demonstrate high demand for healthcare administrators. The Committee unanimously approved consideration of a Master of Health Care Administration.

#### **Approval of New Academic Program Under Consideration – Action**

A Master of Fine Arts in Film and Television was considered. The 60-hour program will provide advanced instruction in production, directing, editing, cinematography, sound design, and emerging technologies. The Committee unanimously approved the new Master of Fine Arts degree.

#### **Approval of Modification to an Existing Academic Unit Under Consideration – Action**

A proposal was presented to restructure the College of Education to ensure its academic programs are housed within departments that reflect their primary discipline and professional focus. The Committee unanimously approved the modification.

## **Motion**

Trustee Wade motioned to approve the action items recommended by the Committee, and Trustee Jones seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion to approve the action items carried unanimously.

## **Committee Report: The Audit and Compliance Committee**

Committee Chair Boyd reported that the Audit and Compliance Committee met on November 11, 2025. The Committee approved the minutes from its meeting on August 19, 2025. The Committee report contained no action items for the Board's consideration. Information items presented included two (2) external reviews, which were completed with no findings or recommendations identified. The public meeting of the Committee adjourned, and the Committee went into executive, non-public session to discuss confidential matters as permitted by appropriate law.

Materials outlining this information were made available for review prior to the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

## **Committee Report: The Executive and Governance Committee**

Vice Chair Vanek reported that the Executive and Governance Committee met on November 11, 2025. The committee approved the minutes from its August 19, 2025, meeting. The Committee report contained no action items for the Board's consideration. Information items presented included a discussion of the 2025 Self-Evaluation results and action for improvement. Materials outlining this information were made available for review prior to the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

## **2025 Self-Evaluation Results, Action for Improvement – Information**

Under Section 11.4 of the Board's Policy on Committees, it is the responsibility of the Executive and Governance Committee to present and lead a discussion of the completed self-evaluations, including identifying board strengths, needs, and actions for improvement. This also meets our Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) responsibility

to define and regularly evaluate our responsibilities and expectations. As background, in October, Trustees received access to an online, anonymous evaluation survey consisting of twenty-four (24) questions designed to provide Board members with the opportunity to evaluate Board functions and operations, and six (6) questions soliciting comments.

At the November meeting, the survey results were presented for discussion and consideration of any potential action steps for improvement. The results included a bar graph of the responses for each survey question. The bar graph showed the number of individual responses to each of the four-point Likert Scale options (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree). The majority of responses to each question were either 'strongly agree' or 'agree'. Overall, the comments indicated that members have a generally positive assessment of the Board's functions.

Board Secretary Floyd will conduct another survey in order to identify the top four (4) objectives.

#### **Amendment to Board Bylaws – Information**

Chairman Smith requested an addition to the agenda to include an update from Board Secretary James Floyd on revising the Board's bylaws.

During the past legislative session, the General Assembly updated the makeup of the Board, extending it from ten (10) members to twelve (12) members. Therefore, a quorum is now six (6) members for any action taken by the board, so the bylaws need to be updated to reflect this change. In addition, the Governor no longer has eight (8) appointees but now has six (6) appointees. The Speaker and the Lieutenant Governor now have two (2) appointees each.

The bylaws need to be updated now because the University is presently under accreditation review. By the end of the week, Board Secretary Floyd will provide the board with a written update of the bylaws consistent with the requirement for at least ten (10) days' written notice

prior to voting on any bylaw amendment. Following that, during the week of December 15, we will hold a special meeting, with the sole topic being the review of the amended bylaws.

Trustee Granbery requested clarification on the total number of appointees and the number of voting members. Board Secretary Floyd explained that there are twelve (12) total board members, including the faculty and the student trustees, explaining that the student trustee is non-voting.

Trustee Granbery further requested clarification on the appointment process for the faculty and student trustees. Board Secretary Floyd explained that the faculty senate selects the faculty member to serve on the board, while the University's President recommends the student trustee in conjunction with the Student Government Association. The Board then approves the appointment of the student trustee.

Chairman Smith also noted that there was one significant change: that if you were appointed by Governor Haslam to the initial Board, you are eligible to be an initial appointee of the Speaker or the Lieutenant Governor. As a result, Trustee Baker was reappointed by the Speaker to serve another term.

### **Report of the President**

Dr. McPhee thanked the Board for the opportunity to give updates on matters and activities at the University since the last Board meeting.

### **Recruitment, Enrollment, and Admissions**

Dr. McPhee specified that the report he is presenting contains early numbers for the fall of 2026. As of December 1, 2025, we have ten thousand three hundred and thirty-one (10,331) freshman applications, compared to eleven thousand two hundred and twenty-three (11,223) in 2025, and seven thousand four hundred and seventy-three (7,473) admits compared to seven thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight (7,838) admits for the fall of 2025.

While we are slightly below last year on December 1 in total applicants, it is pretty understandable given the past three (3) previous years we've had a significant increase in overall applications at the University. This is also quite an accomplishment, considering the smaller number of high school graduates the state is producing.

Dr. McPhee also shared that the 2025 True Blue Tour recently wrapped up. The tour included thirteen (13) luncheons for high school counselors and community college advisors, and fifteen (15) receptions for prospective students and their parents in seventeen (17) different locations throughout Tennessee, Kentucky, Georgia, and Alabama. A total of eight hundred and twenty-three (823) students and six hundred and eighteen (618) counselors representing three hundred and sixty-eight (368) high schools and community colleges attended the True Blue Tour receptions and luncheons.

#### Recent Awards and Recognition

One of the board's strategic goals is to pursue additional national rankings. Dr. McPhee was pleased to report that MTSU had added three (3) new national rankings for the 2026 academic year since our last board meeting. The Wall Street Journal's list of America's Best Colleges, U.S. News and World Report's list of Top Colleges and Universities in the United States and Top Performers of Social Mobility (in which MTSU ranked 87<sup>th</sup> as a premier destination for first-generation and transfer students), and Newsweek's list of America's Top Online Colleges were among the new rankings.

Earlier this year, MTSU was included in the Princeton Review's top three hundred and ninety-one (391) colleges and universities in the United States. Within that list, there were only five (5) universities in the state of Tennessee that made the list, including MTSU. Additionally, MTSU was listed in Forbes Magazine's top five hundred (500), which is quite the accomplishment, as there are two thousand four hundred and four (2,404) colleges and universities in the United States.

MTSU has also achieved status as a national college of distinction in several of its academic programs. For example, it was just released a couple of weeks ago that MTSU was designated as a top program in the recording industry by Billboard magazine for the thirteenth (13<sup>th</sup>) year in a row.

Finally, just last night, the Tennessean had its 2025 Community Choice awards ceremony at the Music City Center in Nashville. There was a total of eighty thousand (80,000) votes for the best university in the area, and the finalists were: Vanderbilt, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and Middle Tennessee State University. Dr. McPhee was elated to announce that the winner was Middle Tennessee State University and noted that the event's master of ceremonies was an MTSU student who currently holds the title of Miss Tennessee.

The Division of Marketing and Communications ended the year with thirty-three (33) awards from five (5) state, regional, and national organizations. Dr. McPhee noted he is particularly proud of the University's work in video podcasting and digital media, which reflects our emphasis on new technology, as well as other traditional platforms such as graphic design and the MTSU magazine.

MTSU's 2024 Joys of the Season, our annual holiday program hosted by Andrew Oppmann, Executive Director and Producer, and Dr. Leah Lyons, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, received two (2) Telly awards in national categories. The premiere of this year's show will be aired on Nashville PBS on Friday, December 19, at 8 p.m.

Lastly, the student project in the Scott Borchetta School of Media and Entertainment received nine (9) Telly awards in student categories for news, sports, and animation.

#### Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

The University is currently going through the process of reaffirmation of institutional accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). MTSU submitted a compliance certification report for reaffirmation under the

SACSCOC differentiated review process on September 5, 2025. The off-site preliminary review committee issued its findings on November 17, 2025. The on-site review committee is scheduled to be on campus from March 23 to 26, 2026. The President's Office will send out notes as part of the review, which requires speaking with board members. Logistics are in place, and the communication plan for the on-site review will launch in January 2026. Dr. McPhee noted that Dr. Hoffschwelle and her colleagues have been working on this for at least two (2) years and took a moment to recognize her and her team for the incredible job they have done thus far.

#### Search for Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students

The search for the new Vice President of Student Affairs and the Dean of Students is underway and in process. Recently, a search committee was established to include MTSU faculty, staff, and community members, chaired by Dr. Peter Grandjean, Dean of the College of Health and Behavioral Sciences, with the help of Parker Executive Search. Together, they are tasked with identifying qualified candidates for the position. The plan is currently to have candidates on campus by the end of February 2026.

#### Commencement

The December commencement will take place on Saturday, December 13, 2025. Two commencement ceremonies will be held, with sixteen hundred (1,600) graduates. Dr. McPhee highlighted that MTSU has four to five thousand (4,000-5,000) graduates each year, of which a majority remain within the community and become a part of the workforce.

The morning speaker will be Dr. Chris Whaley, an alumnus of MTSU and the President of Roane State Community College. The afternoon speaker will be Mr. Brady Cooper, Senior Pastor of New Vision Baptist Church, an institution with which MTSU has a great partnership.

### Holiday Community Open House

Dr. McPhee invited the Trustees to attend the annual Community Open House at the President's Residence, taking place on Thursday, December 11, 2025, from 5-8 p.m.

### Conclusion

Chairman Smith described the fantastic turnout for the Shelbyville airport groundbreaking ceremony. He went on to say that the hallmark of any great organization is its ability to pivot, praising MTSU's capacity to transform a problem into a huge success.

Furthermore, Chairman Smith noted that the football team is ranked among the highest in the country in terms of graduation success rate. Chris Massaro, Athletic Director, confirmed that we are again in the top ten (10). Clarifying that the majority of our student-athletes will not make a living playing football, Chairman Smith emphasized the importance of the degrees and education they earn at MTSU. Trustee Boyd added that we were recognized as having one of the top graduation success rates in the country in 2017 as well.

### Adjournment

Chair Smith adjourned the meeting at 2:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James C. Floyd". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J".

James C. Floyd, Board Secretary