

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES

The Middle Tennessee State University Board of Trustees met on March 17, 2026, 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 1:08 p.m. Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Keith Huber led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Introduction of Student Veteran

General Huber introduced United States Army Veteran Madalynne Dobbs. Born in Germany, both her father and grandfather served in the United States Airforce as air traffic controllers. Following her high school graduation in 2020, Ms. Dobbs enlisted in the Tennessee National Guard as an air traffic controller. Two years later, she joined Middle Tennessee State University's Aerospace and ROTC programs, where she met her future husband, who is currently serving as a UH-60 Black Hawk MEDEVAC Pilot. This May, Ms. Dobbs will graduate from MTSU and be commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Tennessee National Guard, specializing in Military Intelligence.

Ms. Dobbs expressed her utmost gratitude for the opportunity to speak before the Board. She thanked General Huber, Dr. Miller, and the Board for their time and effort in making the campus what it is today and for fostering a wonderful support system for veterans with the Charlie and Hazel Daniels Center. Noting that when choosing a college, she was unsure of where she wanted to go, Ms. Dobbs decided she wanted to further advance in the aerospace field but hadn't found an institution that provided everything she was looking for until she found MTSU. Unexpectedly, she decided to enter the ROTC program to pursue her leadership, discipline, and teamwork skills, and praised both programs as outstanding. Ms. Dobbs noted that as a military

spouse, a ROTC cadet, and a service member, she could not have asked for better mentors, giving special thanks to Mr. Chris Rochelle and Dr. Miller, who have fostered a community of inclusions amongst veterans and cadets alike.

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, Steve Smith, Christine K. Vanek, Michael Wade, Chad White, and Michai Mosby. A quorum was declared. Trustee Kari Neely was absent.

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; Brenda Burkhardt, Chief Audit Executive; Chris Massaro, Director of Athletics; Lt. Gen. Keith Huber, Senior Advisor 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 December 3, 2025, and December 15, 2025, Meeting Minutes – Action

The first agenda item was the approval of the meeting minutes from December 3, 2025, and December 15, 2025. Trustee DeLay motioned to approve the December 3, 2025, and December 15, 2025, meeting minutes, and Trustee Granbery seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Approval of Permanent Appointment of the Vice President for Business and Finance – Action

President McPhee requested a title change and a compensation adjustment for Drew Harpool, Interim Vice President for Business and Finance. Harpool has been employed within the Division

of Business and Finance at MTSU since November 2021. Prior to his arrival here, he held leadership roles in the Tennessee Department of Education.

Mr. Harpool has served as interim vice president since Alan Thomas' retirement in June 2025 and is a key member of the university's executive team. After consultation with and support from Chairman Smith, President McPhee stated that he is seeking the Board's approval to appoint Drew Harpool as Vice President of Business and Finance and to adjust his salary to \$280,210, an increase of \$22,192, equal to that of the previous vice president, effective retroactive to January 1, 2026.

Motion

Trustee Boyd motioned to approve the action item recommended by the President, and Trustee Baker seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion to approve the action item carried unanimously.

Approval of Change in Title and Compensation for the University Counsel and Board Secretary

– Action

President McPhee requested a title change and a compensation adjustment for James Floyd, University Counsel and Board Secretary. Requesting a change of James Floyd's title to Vice President for Legal Affairs, General Counsel, and Secretary to the Board of Trustees, President McPhee noted that his current title does not fully reflect Floyd's contributions and impact on University pursuits.

Mr. Floyd serves as the chief legal advisor to the president, the Board of Trustees, and the University administration, advancing our mission by leading the office's collaboration on academic/business initiatives and providing sound legal counsel. This name change better reflects his duties and aligns with higher education title norms for those obligations. Equally important, he is a peer to Dr. McPhee's direct reports, who have the title of Vice President. Additionally, Mr. Floyd serves in a dual capacity as chief legal officer and board secretary. No

other LGI (locally governed institution) legal counsel performs both of these responsibilities except for TSU, which pays a considerable amount more than Mr. Floyd's salary.

Moreover, MTSU's legal office serves the highest combined student and employee count per attorney amongst the LGs.

Based on this background and Mr. Floyd's accomplishments, President McPhee requested the Board's approval to appoint him as Vice President for Legal Affairs, General Counsel, and Secretary to the Board of Trustees and adjust his salary to \$281,394, an increase of \$30,000 annually, effective retroactive to January 1, 2026.

Motion

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

Committee Report: Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee

Committee Chair Wade reported that the Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee met on February 24, 2026. The Committee approved the minutes from its November 11, 2025, meeting. The Committee report contained one (1) action item, unanimously approved by the Committee, and two (2) information items 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.

Approval of a New Academic Program: A Master of Science in Mechatronics Systems Engineering – Action

The interdisciplinary graduate program will provide advanced instruction in robotics, autonomous systems, artificial intelligence, advanced control, reinforcement learning, and systems modeling.

Motion

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

Committee Report: The Audit and Compliance Committee

Committee Chair Boyd reported that the Audit and Compliance Committee met on February 24, 2026. The Committee approved the minutes from its meeting on November 11, 2025. The Committee report contained no action items for the Board's consideration, and five (5) information items to be considered by the Board. Materials outlining this information were made available for review prior to the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

Committee Report: The Finance and Personnel Committee

Committee Chair DeLay reported that the Finance and Personnel Committee met on February 26, 2026. The committee approved the minutes from its November 11, 2025, meeting. The Committee report contained no action items for the Board's consideration, and one (1) information item to be considered by the Board. Materials outlining this information were made available for review prior to the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

The Board Secretary's Report

Discussion of Board Objectives Identified in the 2025 Self-Evaluation Results, Action for Improvement – Information

The MTSU accreditation body, SACSCOC, requires a governing board to define and regularly evaluate its responsibilities and expectations. Standard 4.2.g. As evidence of compliance with that standard, SACSCOC recommends a regular board self-evaluation. After completion of the 2025 self-evaluation survey, the trustees completed an additional survey to identify the top four (4) objectives for the Board. Board Secretary Floyd presented the results for discussion and consideration of any potential action steps for improvement. Items included:

- Work with University leadership to consummate the Nashville School of Law merger;
- Work with University leadership to increase the capacity of University programs where student demand exceeds capacity;
- Continued efforts of the Lighting Zone and Shelbyville Airport Ad Hoc Committees;
- Continue to be very active at the state government level to make the case for additional support for the University; and
- Work with University leadership to maintain and improve the University's ratings in the Princeton Review, Forbes Magazine, U.S. News & World Report, and the Wall Street Journal;

The President's Report

President 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

President McPhee stated that the university has two sources of revenue that support its mission: tuition and fees and state appropriations. Noting the decline in state appropriations, President McPhee emphasized the importance of recruitment in the growth of the university.

Undergraduate recruitment for Fall 2026 is focused on increasing both applications and enrollment, with spring efforts dedicated to yield. Building on last year's successful inaugural Admitted Student Day (1,469 attendees), the University expanded to two February sessions this year, welcoming 1,901 admitted students—a nearly 30% increase. Strong participation from families contributed to high campus engagement and visibility, supported by a well-attended presidential reception and over \$30,000 in bookstore sales.

The post-event meet-and-greet at the President's residence drew strong engagement, with attendees arriving early and staying beyond the scheduled time. President McPhee, joined by Trustee Mosby, noted the excellent turnout and positive atmosphere. Students received

graduation lanyards and “MTSU Bound” yard signs, which are now increasingly visible in the community.

With more than 9,500 freshmen admitted to date, upcoming True Blue Orientation sessions will support class registration and continued enrollment momentum. President McPhee commended Dr. Laurie Witherow and Enrollment Services for their strong leadership and preparation efforts.

Conflict in the Middle East

In the wake of the conflict in the Middle East, the university has reached out to offer our support to students from the affected area, and the staff in Counseling Services are prepared to help if needed. President McPhee thanked Dr. Danny Kelley and his staff for providing their support and services.

SACSCOC

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) site review committee is scheduled to be on campus from March 23 through March 26. During their visit, reviewers will meet with campus administrators, faculty, staff, and students to follow up on standards identified in the off-site review and to verify compliance with the standards related to the United States Department of Education.

Stressing the importance of the committee’s visit and review, President McPhee explained that federal funding - student loans and Pell grants - depends heavily on their stamp of approval. At the conclusion of their visit, the committee will share its findings with the university leadership in a formal report. Following the on-campus visit, the Committee on Compliance and Reports of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees will review the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee's Report. The Executive Council and the full SACSCOC Board of Trustees will then determine MTSU’s accreditation status, and the final decision will be announced to the College Delegate Assembly during the December 2026 Annual Meeting.

President McPhee noted that under the extraordinary leadership of Dr. Mary Hoffschwelle and her team, he is confident that the university is prepared for next week.

Search for Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students

In the search for the new Vice President of Student Affairs and the Dean of Students, the search committee met with the top four (4) candidates during the last week of February. President McPhee also met with each candidate and, last week, with the Chair of the search committee, Dr. Peter Grandjean, Dean of the College of Behavioral Health and Sciences, to review feedback collected after each candidate's interview.

Based on that feedback and any necessary follow-up, the university should be in a position to pursue a preferred candidate very shortly.

Faculty Reception

President McPhee reminded everyone that immediately following the meeting, the Faculty Showcase will be held in the Miller Education Center (MEC) atrium and will feature research exhibits from various departments. He encouraged everyone to attend and support the event.

Retirement Announcement

President McPhee announced his retirement, effective December 2026. Expressing that it has been one of the greatest professional honors of his life to serve as the tenth (10th) president of this remarkable institution for more than a quarter century. The past twenty-five (25) years have afforded him and his colleagues the opportunity to provide leadership and guide the university through an era of incredible progress and success.

Reflecting on his time as president, he expressed his pride in the institution that MTSU has become – a nationally recognized comprehensive institution. It has expanded its capabilities with new and innovative academic programs, a growing research agenda that led to an R2 research designation, and educational partnerships across the United States and around the world. Building a service-centered educational model that focuses on each student's success,

providing them with a high-quality education and the skills they need to prosper in their chosen field.

The campus footprint has been enhanced with over \$2 billion dollars in state-of-the-art new and renovated facilities. Many of our student-athletes have graduated with a championship ring in one hand and a diploma in the other. While achieving these successes, the university has done so with the highest level of efficiency among its higher education peers in the state of Tennessee.

These accomplishments would not have been possible without the many administrators, faculty, staff, and colleagues who have given their time and their talents over the years to strengthen and sustain our institution. Our work speaks for itself.

President McPhee expressed his deep gratitude to his executive team for their leadership and their wise counsel during his tenure. He honored the dedication and commitment of all our employees, the tireless support of our alumni, and the amazing students across campus who have made these an incredible twenty-five (25) years.

Announcing his official retirement at the end of the year, President McPhee noted that he will be a tenured professor in the College of Education after a two-semester sabbatical to retool. However, the work will continue each of his remaining days as president until the end of December to ensure that our progress and success continue, as there is still much to be done.

Thanking the Board for their continued support and hard work as trustees, President McPhee concluded his announcement and provided his letter of retirement to Chairman Smith. A deep sense of gratitude filled the room, and a standing ovation followed.

Chairman Smith extended his deepest thanks and appreciation on behalf of the Board and the entire university, remarking that President McPhee's list of accomplishments is so extensive that it would take all afternoon to name each one. Highlighting one major accomplishment,

however, Chairman Smith recalled the huge budget challenge the president addressed approximately a decade ago and how gracefully he handled it.

As MTSU's longest-serving president, McPhee has overseen more than \$2 billion in campus construction and improvements, including the \$150 million Science Corridor of Innovation. Additional projects totaling nearly \$100 million are planned, including the Shelbyville aerospace campus and Womack Commons, a new student housing complex with 554 beds.

During his tenure, the university has added nearly fifty (50) undergraduate programs, two (2) colleges, and more than twenty (20) institutes and centers. He led the university through major challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, where his decision to leave the dorms open for students was the first in the nation. Furthermore, President McPhee realigned priorities to address challenges posed by declining appropriations.

MTSU is recognized for strong return on investment, remains the largest locally governed institution in Tennessee, and is a leading provider of graduates in the Nashville region. We are the top choice for first-generation college students, transfer students, adult learners, and military-connected students. The university has earned national recognition for student success and athletic graduation rates.

Chairman Smith also acknowledged the lasting contributions of President McPhee and his late wife, Liz, whose dedication over more than 25 years has helped shape the university into what it is today. The campus continues to reflect the vision, leadership, and perseverance of President McPhee and his team.

The Board will begin a presidential search with a goal of naming a successor by January 1, 2027.

Conclusion

Chairman Smith reconvened the meeting after a brief non-public executive session.

Approval of President McPhee’s Decision to Retire as President of MTSU and Acceptance of his Role as a Tenured Professor – Action

Vice Chair Vanek stated that she would like to recognize the extraordinary efforts of President McPhee’s twenty-five (25) year tenure at MTSU and acknowledge that the university is what it is today because of all the hard work, energy, and effort of the president and his team

As specified in his letter dated March 17, 2026, and submitted to the board, President McPhee plans to retire in December 2026 and become a faculty member in the College of Education as a tenured professor following a two-semester sabbatical.

Motion

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

Approval of the Executive and Governance Committee to Initiate the Presidential Search Process – Action

The Executive and Governance Committee will initiate the presidential search process through the selection of an executive search firm.

Motion

Vice Chair Vanek motioned to approve the action item, and Trustee Granbery seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion to approve the action item carried unanimously.

Red Cross Hero Award

Trustee Baker noted that Trustee Floyd was a recipient of the Red Cross Hero award. His steadfast commitment to helping others was recognized at the 2026 American Red Cross Heart of Tennessee Chapter “Heroes Luncheon” held on Thursday, March 12, on campus at MTSU. Trustee Floyd has donated over \$5 million dollars to organizations that support children and

families, most recently through the John D. Floyd Charitable Foundation, which he established in 2023.

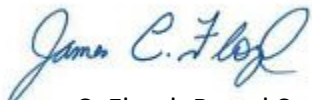
MTSU Women's Basketball

Trustee Granberry commended the Lady Raiders, who qualified for the Women's National Invitational Tournament.

Adjournment

Chairman Smith adjourned the meeting at 2:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James C. Floyd". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James C. Floyd, Board Secretary