

**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, August 18, 2020, in the Miller Education Center Meeting Room at Middle Tennessee State University.

**Call to Order**

Trustee Wright called the meeting to order at 12:50 p.m.

**Roll Call**

The following Committee members were in attendance: J.B. Baker, Tom Boyd, Pete DeLay, Joey Jacobs, Mary Martin, Steve Smith, Pam Wright, Delanie McDonald, Keith Huber, and Chris Massaro. A quorum was declared.

Also present was Trustee Darrell Freeman. President Sidney A. McPhee; Joe Bales, Vice President for University Advancement; Mark Byrnes, University Provost; Andrew Oppmann, Vice President for Marketing and Communications; Bruce Petryshak, Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer; Deb Sells, Vice President for Student Affairs and Vice Provost for Enrollment and Academic Services; Alan Thomas, Vice President for Business and Finance; Brenda Burkhart, Chief Audit Executive; Heidi Zimmerman, University Counsel and Board Secretary; and, Kim Edgar, Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff were also in attendance.

**Approval of Minutes - Action**

The first agenda item was approval of the minutes from the June 2, 2020 Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee meeting. Trustee Baker moved to approve the minutes from the June 2, 2020 meeting and Trustee DeLay seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and the motion to approve the minutes from the June 2, 2020 meeting of the Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee passed unanimously.

### **Approval of New Academic Degree Program – Action**

#### **Bachelor of Arts in Art Therapy**

#### **Master of Arts in Art Therapy**

In discussing these new degree programs, Provost Byrnes told the Trustees this is another example of programs with a clear career path. Letters of support demonstrate a need in the market for qualified people. No public institution offers a bachelor's degree and no school in the state, public or private, currently offers a master's program in art therapy, which is required for board certification and licensure as an art therapist.

A motion was made by Trustee Boyd to approve the Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in Art Therapy and Trustee DeLay seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and the motion to approve the Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in Art Therapy passed unanimously.

### **Approval of New Academic Degree under Consideration - Action**

#### **Master of Science in Data Science**

The Bachelor of Science and a graduate certificate in Data Science launched this fall. There is great demand for these graduates. These proposals will still have to go through the campus curriculum process and external reviews with THEC, if approved by the Board of Trustees. This program is part of the university's broader initiative concerning data science.

Trustee Boyd moved to approve consideration of a Master of Science in Data Science and Trustee Baker seconded the motion. During discussion, Trustee Boyd asked if the actual versus the projected enrollment numbers for new programs approved by the Board could be provided. Provost Byrnes explained that this information is provided to THEC for the first five (5) years after a program is initiated in a post-approval report. He agreed that this information will be shared with the Board. A voice vote was taken and the motion to approve consideration of a Master of Science in Data Science passed unanimously.

### **SACSCOC Fifth-Year Interim Report - Information**

Dr. Mary Hoffschwelle, Associate Provost for Strategic Planning and Partnerships and SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison, reminded the Committee that the Commission last reaffirmed the university's accreditation in 2016 with no recommendations. She informed the Committee of the Fifth-Year Interim Report due March 2022. Academic Year 2020-2021 will be the year of record for reporting. Institutional achievements and areas for improvement will be recognized while reporting on 22 accreditation standards that impact many aspects of the university. Dr. McPhee formed a Fifth-Year Report committee, led by Provost Byrnes, with representatives from across the university. An impact report on the Quality Enhancement Plan, MT Engage, will be submitted. Peer reviewers will evaluate selected new off-campus instructional sites. An off-site committee will review the complete report, and the SACSCOC Board of Trustees will report their findings in December 2022.

Trustee Freeman added that although MTSU did not receive any recommendations from SACSCOC in 2017 regarding the substantive change of governance review, they did express a concern relative to the Board of Trustees' role in university operations.

Trustee Boyd asked Dr. Hoffschwelle if she would share with the Board progress toward the Fifth-Year Interim Report. Dr. Hoffschwelle agreed to do this.

President McPhee noted that SACSCOC can visit or request information at any time as they are looking for continuous compliance.

### **Data Science Initiative Update – Information**

Dr. Charlie Apigian gave an overview of the progress of the Data Science Initiative since its announcement last February. The bachelor's degree (25 students enrolled) and graduate certificate (25 students enrolled with a second cohort of 25 planned) launched this semester, and development of a master's degree will begin. Dr. Apigian explained that the program involves numerous departments in various colleges.

The Data Science Institute brought in over \$1M in research funding and is collaborating with Tennessee Tech and UT-Chattanooga on an NSF grant for workforce development. It is also funding two teachers in the degree program who will teach data science at the high school level.

This summer the Data Science Institute found partners in private industry capable of helping local and state governments identify additional revenue streams. MTSU would be the resource to use data to help the state.

Trustee Boyd asked what the capacity is for each level of the program. Dr. Apigian explained that the master's degree curriculum will utilize currently existing courses. New faculty were hired for the undergraduate program, and with the certificate program, he stated that 50 students in 2 cohorts a year is a great number.

Trustee Martin stated, and Dr. Apigian agreed, that PhD programs require considerable resources. Dr. McPhee stated that he and the Provost have made it clear that they will reallocate resources for programs that have growth potential. He praised the work of Dr. Apigian and his colleagues in putting together these programs in a short period of time. He also shared that former Speaker Beth Harwell has been an advocate for these programs, working for appropriations to support them.

### **Athletics Update - Information**

Chris Massaro, Director of Athletics, gave highlights of academic progress for the department. He stated that for the sixth straight year a department record for graduation success rate (92%) was set. The football team's rate was 95%, which was third in the nation, tied with Vanderbilt. He acknowledged that this came as a collective effort with the Division of Student Affairs, which runs the Student-Athlete Enhancement Center. Other statistics offered from the 2019 fall semester: of 368 student-athletes, 58% had a GPA of 3.0 or higher; 121 or 34% made the Dean's List with a GPA of 3.5 or higher; 35 or 10% earned a perfect 4.0 GPA; 12 of the 15 teams had a semester GPA of 3.0 or higher. In the spring 2020 semester, of 340 student-athletes 77% had a GPA of 3.0 or higher; 172 or 51% made the Dean's List; 95 students or 28% had a perfect 4.0 GPA; and 14 of

the 15 teams had a GPA of 3.0 or higher. The semester GPA for all student-athletes was a 3.36 with a cumulative average of 3.18. The academic progress rate, an NCAA measurement, each of the 15 teams had a multi-year rate of 950 and above. Forty-three student-athletes graduated last year.

Then Mr. Massaro gave an overview of testing and safety protocols for student-athletes, athletic practices, and competition as relates to the pandemic. Dr. McPhee said the conference is requiring athletes be tested three times per week, and he is not comfortable with the costs associated with this frequency. Testing costs and turnaround time for results are the two major obstacles.

Trustee Freeman expressed concern for athletes and opposition to athletic competition as well as in-person classes. He raised the issue of African-Americans being adversely impacted by the coronavirus at disproportionate rates. Mr. Massaro stated that they are watching the rates of infection in student-athletes and, so far, they have not seen this with the student-athletes. He agreed with Trustee Freeman that adequate testing is essential to being able to have sports. He explained the safety precautions put in place with the football team to manage the risk and mitigate the possibility of infection. Trustee Freeman stated that while those in the Committee meeting were adhering to CDC guidelines through social distancing and mask wearing, student-athletes are being asked to engage in conduct not in adherence with these guidelines and may expose themselves to the virus. He reemphasized his opposition to sports and in-person classes during the pandemic. Dr. McPhee stated that he shares those concerns for student safety. However, he explained that he participated in a meeting during which a leading cardiologist stated that

If precautions are taken, the risk is significantly reduced. The risk cannot be eliminated but steps have been and are being taken to mitigate risks. He also reminded the Committee that he is keeping up with circumstances related to the virus and that triggers have been identified that would result in pivoting from in-person to remote learning, as well as, ceasing to play football. Trustee Freeman asked if plans are in place for where students will go should the campus need

to close; will they be sent home, infected, to their families? Dr. McPhee reminded the Committee that 107 single-occupancy rooms have been set aside for the purpose of isolating infected students. Chairman Smith stated that students are safer on campus with the healthcare options available to them than they would be at home. Mr. Massaro stated that student-athletes were given an opt-out option with regard to playing that would not impact their status or scholarships. He stated his belief that student-athletes' ability to engage in their sports is significantly important for their wellbeing, and they are owed the institution's best efforts to safely allow this to occur.

### **Chicago Statement** – Action

Ken Paulson, Director of the Free Speech Center, discussed the 2015 Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression at the University of Chicago. The Chicago Statement guarantees the broadest possible latitude to write, speak, listen, challenge, and learn on college campuses. MTSU adopted Policy 103 Free Speech on Campus, effective January 1, 2018, which meets the standards of the Chicago Statement. This is recognized by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), so MTSU is viewed as a university that has a real commitment to free speech on campus.

Chairman Smith moved to reaffirm Policy 103 and enthusiastically endorse the Chicago Statement; Trustee DeLay seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and the motion to reaffirm Policy 103 and enthusiastically endorse the Chicago Statement passed unanimously.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 2:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee