

**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 16, 2022, in the Miller Education Center Meeting Room at Middle Tennessee State University.

**Call to Order**

Committee Chair Pam Wright called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and asked everyone to pause for a moment of silence to honor fellow Trustee Darrell Freeman.

**Roll Call**

Board Secretary James Floyd called the roll. The following Committee members were in attendance: J.B. Baker, Pete DeLay, Steve Smith, Chris Karbowski, Pam Wright, Rick Cottle, Drew Carpenter, Keith Huber, and Chris Massaro. Trustees Tom Boyd and Joey Jacobs were absent. A quorum was declared.

President Sidney A. McPhee; Mark Byrnes, University Provost; Joe Bales, Vice President for University Advancement; Andrew Oppmann, Vice President for Marketing and Communications; Yvette Clark, Interim Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer; Deb Sells, Vice President for Student Affairs and Vice Provost for Enrollment and Academic Services; Kathy Thurman, Associate Vice President for Business and Finance; Diane Snodgrass, Interim Chief Audit Executive; James Floyd, 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 May 24, 2022, Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee meeting. Trustee Karbowski moved to approve the minutes from the May 24, 2022, meeting, and Trustee Delay seconded the motion. A voice vote

was taken, and the motion to approve the minutes from the May 24, 2022, meeting of the Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee passed unanimously.

### **Approval of Expedited Tenure - Action**

Provost Byrnes presented for expedited tenure the recently appointed chair of the Department of Psychology, Dr. Nancy Stone, who began employment at MTSU on August 1, 2022.

Trustee DeLay moved to approve expedited tenure for the candidate. Trustee Baker seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion to approve expedited tenure passed unanimously.

### **Tenure Process - Information**

At the Committee's request, Provost Byrnes gave a presentation on the tenure process. Tenure track and tenured faculty are responsible for teaching, research, service, curriculum development, student mentoring, and shared governance, all of which are central functions to the academic mission. Non-tenurable faculty are focused on teaching and are not expected to focus on research or governance.

Policy 204 Tenure details the process. Tenure application is typically made in the faculty member's sixth year of employment at the University after five years of compiling their record of teaching, research, and service achievements in an online platform. The application is reviewed by the faculty member's department chair, department committee, college committee, dean, vice provost, provost, and president before coming to the Board of Trustees for final approval.

Trustee Karbowski asked if the process is audited. Provost Byrnes said that his office looks at every record and how each moved through the process to ensure the recommendation of every level was reported accurately in the online platform. President McPhee added that he and his staff also take time review each record to make sure that the University is not put into a position where there is an issue with the process. The courts defer the decisions for tenure and promotion to the faculty except in cases where processes were not followed.

Trustee DeLay asked how the percentage of tenured faculty has evolved as curriculum changed, and Provost Byrnes responded that it has been stable, between 55-60%, for the last decade and referred to the charts showing percentage tenured from the group hired in Fall 2016 and another slide showing percentage tenured from the group hired 2012-2016. He also showed a graph comparing MTSU to other locally governed institutions.

President McPhee asked Provost Byrnes to discuss the tenure appeals process and the Board's role. Tenure candidates can submit a rebuttal at each level of review up to the dean and can file a formal appeal of the provost's decision to the president. If the candidate is not happy with the president's decision, then they can appeal to the Board of Trustees.

Trustee Baker asked if there was a schedule for the tenure process. Provost Byrnes responded that each Spring his office posts a calendar of the next academic year's tenure review deadlines.

Trustee Wright asked if our percentages are consistent with our peers. Provost Byrnes said we would not know the percentages of candidates achieving tenure at other institutions. President McPhee added that while he was Executive Vice Chancellor at the Tennessee Board of Regents, his office was responsible for the tenure process for all the universities and community colleges, and MTSU was consistent with the other institutions.

### **Post-Approval Monitoring Report - Information**

Provost Byrnes reminded the Committee that we report to THEC the progress of degree programs for five years after they are approved, and the projected benchmarks are our best estimates provided as part of our new program proposal. Also, there are a variety of steps to be taken when a program does not meet its benchmarks. President McPhee added that we have eliminated programs in the past, and the Board has been notified of those, such as business education.

### **Enrollment Update - Information**

Vice President Deb Sells distributed a handout and reported that application, admission, and enrollment numbers across the state and country have been unprecedented. Although we are ahead by 25% admitted, we are only 3% ahead for enrolled (freshman) students. Transfer

numbers will be a problem (7.9% down) because of the number of students enrolled in community colleges declined. Overall undergraduate enrollment decreased about 3.27%. Graduate enrollments are suffering due to the current economic and employment situation (10.5% down). We purged fewer students compared to last year. With the Trustee's assistance, \$15,000 was dispersed to 33 students who would have otherwise lost classes.

President McPhee added that we have been the number one transfer institution in the State of Tennessee for 10 to 15 years with about 52% of student enrollment from transfer students, but since community college enrollment has declined, it directly impacts us. The good news is the interest in MTSU seen by the number of applications is historically high, and first-time freshman enrollment is up. We have been discussing corporate partnerships and other initiatives to mitigate the decline in community colleges.

Vice President Sells said we will look at these numbers in retrospect and compare with other schools. Chairman Smith agreed and said he looks forward to seeing numbers from community colleges and other institutions at the next Board meeting. He also asked if we help students who do not qualify for MTSU go to community college. Vice President Sells explained the MTSU Promise agreement we have with eight community colleges.

Trustee Baker asked about campus housing. Vice President Sells said that we provided housing for everyone on waiting lists and continue to work with hardship cases. She added that as the Murfreesboro market is getting tighter, more students are wanting to live on campus.

President McPhee stated that MTSU would have had the same problem as UT if we required freshmen to live on campus, and plans are being developed for additional housing on campus. Recruiting for next year commences tomorrow with the first True Blue Tour.

### **Athletics Report - Information Item**

Athletics Director Chris Massaro shared that last year we graduated 48 student athletes, and five student athletes earned graduate degrees. The NCAA graduation success rate for the last two years has been 93%, and we think we will shatter that school record this year with thanks to the

collaborative efforts of our coaches, student athletes, academic advisors, and tutors. We were the highest ranked finisher in Conference USA for the Learfield Cup, an award based on postseason success. We look forward to the groundbreaking for the new tennis outdoor facility which launches the Build Blue Campaign. At the end of football season, we will break ground on the student athlete performance center. Two other items of interest, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Title IX celebrating a tremendous history of women's athletics. Also, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Murphy Center with celebrations planned.

Trustee Cottle asked how many student athletes MTSU has. Athletics Director Massaro responded approximately 350-400.

Trustee Baker asked about fundraising efforts. Athletics Director Massaro said they had two visits last week, and he is very pleased with the work of the new hires in the department.

### **Adjournment**

Committee Chair Wright adjourned the meeting at 10:07 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee