

**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 19, 2025, in the Miller Education Center Meeting Room at Middle Tennessee State University.

Opening Remarks

Vice Chair Vanek called for a moment of silence in memory of Denise Smith, wife of Chairman Steve Smith. She then welcomed new Trustees: John Floyd, Jimmy Granbery, and Chad White.

Call to Order

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

President's Remarks

President McPhee expressed sympathy to the Smith family on behalf of the University. He welcomed Faculty Trustee Kari Neely and Student Trustee Michai Mosby.

Roll Call

Associate General Counsel Jeff Farrar called the roll. The following Committee members were in attendance: J.B. Baker, Tom Boyd, John Floyd, Jimmy Granbery, Bill Jones, Kari Neely, Christine Vanek, Michael Wade, Chad White, Michai Mosby, Keith Huber, and Chris Massaro. Chair Steve Smith and Trustee Pete DeLay were absent. 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; Danny Kelley, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students; Drew Harpool, Interim Vice President for Business and Finance; 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 May 20, 2025, Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee meeting. Trustee Baker moved to approve the minutes from the May 20, 2025, meeting, and Trustee Vanek seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion to approve the minutes was approved unanimously.

Approval of Degrees under Consideration – Action

Vice Provost Amy Aldridge presented three new programs that align with Strategy 1 of the new Strategic Plan 2035, which calls for delivering impactful academic offerings and elevating institutional research.

The M.S. in Concrete and Construction Engineering will be unique in Tennessee, and one of only a few in the southeast region of the United States, filling a critical educational gap. The program will be initially delivered in person, but there are plans to look at it for some online options in the future. It will be cost-effective, requiring no new faculty hires.

The M.S. in Mechatronics Systems Engineering will include cutting-edge topics like robotics, AI control systems, and computer vision. There are no existing standalone master's degrees in mechatronics in the Southeast, positioning MTSU as a regional leader. Projected costs are minimal and will be covered by program revenue.

The Doctor of Business Administration will prepare scholar-practitioners for leadership, consulting, and teaching roles. The curriculum includes leadership, analytics, finance, strategy, and pedagogy, with strong emphasis on applied research. The program will be self-funded by the Jones College of Business, requiring minimal startup funding.

Aldridge reminded the Trustees that new programs are presented to this Committee twice: initially to seek permission to develop, and subsequently with a fully written proposal and budget.

Trustee Boyd moved to approve the consideration of a Master of Science in Concrete and Construction Engineering, a Master of Science in Mechatronics Systems Engineering, and a

Doctor of Business Administration. Trustee Jones seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion to approve the consideration of the three graduate degrees passed unanimously.

School of Nursing Update – Information

Peter Grandjean, Dean of the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences, acknowledged a shortage of nurses across the state and nation. In addition, MTSU lacks capacity in its School of Nursing due to inadequate numbers of nurse educators, classroom and lab space, and clinical rotations.

To address these challenges, Dean Grandjean suggested partnering with sister institutions and external partners to create new programs such as accelerated BSN programs, dual enrollment programs with community colleges, and bridge programs for LPNs.

Current initiatives underway include revamping the curriculum to be more competency-based under new standards from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, which will lead to accelerated programs. Faculty are also exploring a PhD in Nursing Education to build capacity for additional nurse educators. We have a healthy master's program from which we could draw new instructors and preceptors.

Dean Grandjean is working on a comprehensive plan to present next summer. President McPhee added that 15 years ago, the number of Nursing majors was half of what it is today. Through federal grants of about \$15 million, the Nursing building was expanded, and more faculty were hired. We recognize that demand continues, and we must continue considering space, faculty, and clinical sites.

Athletics Report - Information

Athletic Director Chris Massaro reported that 60 student-athletes graduated in the last academic year. The Overall Academic Progress Rate is 976. Seven teams scored a perfect 1000: men's basketball, men's golf, men's tennis, women's tennis, men's cross country, men's track, and women's volleyball. Two sports declined due to coaching changes, which is the national norm. Academic success resonates with parents.

We had the dedication dinner honoring Denise and Stephen Smith on July 29 and the ribbon cutting on July 30 for the Stephen and Denise Smith Student-Athlete Performance Center. *The Tennessean* called the facility the best football facility in Tennessee. Every student-athlete can fully develop in this building. We are thankful for the support of public and private donations.

Trustee Boyd recognized conference championships by women's basketball, men's tennis, and national championships by the stock horse team and dance team. Massaro agreed and praised the accomplishments of many talented students at MTSU.

Adjournment

Acting Committee Chair Wade adjourned the meeting at 9:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee