

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES

The Middle Tennessee State University Board of Trustees met on December 4, 2024, 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 1:35 p.m. Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Keith Huber led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Introduction of Student Veteran

Gen. Huber introduced Marine veteran Elijah Eakins. He shared that immediately upon graduation from high school, Eakins joined the Marine Corps, following in a military service family tradition. Mr. Eakins spent four (4) years in active duty deployed worldwide, training other nations to defend themselves. Gen. Huber stated that our allies go to great lengths to train with us, serve with us, and benefit from our skills in peace and war. The training is both strenuous and dangerous. Mr. Eakins incurred several injuries during his service and decided to return to the academic world by matriculating at Middle Tennessee State University. Mr. Eakins thanked Gen. Huber and Dr. Miller for fostering a family environment at the Daniels Center. While he had other academic options, including the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, the choice of MTSU was very simple. MTSU is very unique in that it has a fully dedicated, highly funded veterans program. Besides giving him a community, the Daniels Center has allowed him to make professional connections and friendships, and prepared him to go into the professional world with all the tools needed to succeed. Mr. Eakins thanked everyone and asked the Board to take veterans into consideration when reviewing policies.

Roll Call

Board Secretary James Floyd called the roll. The following trustees were in attendance: J.B. Baker, Tom Boyd, Pete DeLay, Mary Martin, Shaylaine Roker, Steve Smith, Christine Karbowskiak Vanek, and Michael Wade. Trustee Pam Wright participated in the meeting electronically. Consistent with Tennessee Code Annotated § 8-44-108(c)(3), Trustee Wright was asked and responded in the affirmative that she could hear clearly and confirmed that no one else was in her location. A quorum was declared. Trustee Bill Jones was absent.

President Sidney A. McPhee; Mark Byrnes, University Provost; Joe Bales, Vice President for University Advancement; Yvette Clark, Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer; Khalilah Doss, Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students; Alan Thomas, Vice President for Business and Finance; Leah Ladley, Chief Audit Executive; James Floyd, University Counsel and Board Secretary; and Kim Edgar, Executive Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff, were also in attendance.

Approval of September 10, 2024, Meeting Minutes – Action

The first agenda item was approval of the September 10, 2024 meeting minutes. Trustee DeLay motioned to approve the September 10, 2024, meeting minutes, and Vice Chair Vanek seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved unanimously.

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

Trustee Wade reported that the Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee met on November 12, 2024. The Committee approved the minutes from the August 20, 2024, meeting. The Committee report contained three (3) action items, which the Committee unanimously approved for the Board's consideration. Two (2) information items were also presented. Materials outlining these actions were made available for review prior to the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

Tenure and Promotion - Action

The Committee considered the recommendation from the President and Provost to grant tenure to Professor Mary Ann Jones, effective December 4, 2024, and tenure and promotion to Associate Professor to Professor Lu Xiong, retroactive to August 1, 2024. The Committee unanimously approved the tenure and promotion.

New Academic Programs - Action

The Committee unanimously approved three (3) new master's degrees: Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences, Master of Science in Digital Media, and Master of Science in Legal Studies

Policy 51 Institutional Accreditation - Action

New University Policy 51 Institutional Accreditation was presented before the Committee to ensure compliance with Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-7-185. This policy identifies the accreditation agencies or associations that may serve as an accreditor for MTSU. The Committee unanimously approved the new policy.

Information items before the Committee included Annual Performance Metrics and an update on Athletics.

Motion

Trustee Wade motioned to approve the action items recommended by the Committee, and Trustee Martin seconded the motion. A roll call 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 12, 2024. The Committee approved the minutes from its August 20, 2024, meeting. The Committee report contained no action items. 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 session to discuss cybersecurity, audits, and investigations. Materials outlining this information were made available for review prior to the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

Committee Report: Finance and Personnel Committee

Committee Chair DeLay reported that the Finance and Personnel Committee met on November 12, 2024. The Committee approved the minutes from its August 20, 2024, meeting. The Committee report contained three action items, unanimously approved by the Committee, and informational 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.

Compensation – Action

Trustee DeLay stated that the Committee considered a recommendation to implement market salary increases for faculty and staff. The proposed market adjustments are based on 2020-21 CUPA data and will be effective January 1, 2025, for employees on the payroll as of December 31, 2024. With the allocated resources, employees whose current salary is below the market predicted salary will receive 46.7% of the recommended adjustment in accordance with the University's approved compensation plan.

The Committee unanimously approved the compensation proposal as presented.

2023-2024 October Revised Budget - Action

Trustee DeLay stated that Vice President Alan Thomas presented changes since the July (Original) Budget, which included adjustments to tuition and fee revenue to include the remaining tuition and enrollment increases; increased state appropriations for additional funding for the Medical Education Program; \$2.6 million in funding for increased employee benefits and risk management premiums; adjustments to expenditure budgets to reflect year-end account balances that were not known for the July Budget; and adjustments to auxiliary and restricted budgets related to funding for Federal Title IV and state financial aid programs.

The Committee unanimously approved the revised budget as presented.

Sale of Property - Action

The Committee evaluated the sale of property located at 915 E. Bell Street. This property is situated outside MTSU's current acquisition zone, noncontiguous with other MTSU-owned properties, and needs extensive renovations. With approval, the University will seek permission from the State Building Commission to dispose of the property by issuing a public notice of sale and then an award of sale by a sealed bid process.

The Committee unanimously approved the property sale.

THEC 2025-26 Operating Recommendations - Information

THEC 2025-26 Capital Outlay/Maintenance Recommendations – Information

Chair Smith asked Vice President Alan Thomas when the property sale would occur. VP Thomas responded that the University would work with the State's real estate division, which sets the timeline. Chair Smith then requested that the administration provide the Board with an after-action report on the sale. In addition, he requested a review of the condition of the University's residential property and the status of the current property management company. Dr. McPhee and VP Thomas advised that the University already has this information and will make it available.

Trustee Boyd observed that page 202 of the Finance Committee report shows the University's fund balance declining by roughly \$43 million. Vice President Thomas explained that this drop occurs yearly due to our budgeting process, which does not account for carryover until the October rebudgeting. Trustee Boyd emphasized that the drop in fund balance reflected in the materials will not be the situation at the end of the year.

Motion

Trustee DeLay motioned to approve the action items recommended by the Committee, and

Trustee Boyd seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion to approve the action item carried unanimously.

Report of the President

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

MTSU Leadership in Tennessee's Quantum Future

Dr. McPhee next asked Dr. Greg Van Patten, Dean of our College of Basic and Applied Sciences ("CBAS"), to introduce the Board to the University's newest efforts in Quantum Information Sciences ("QIS") and the opportunity at MTSU to become the State leader and a national leader in this rapidly emerging field. Dr. Van Patten first highlighted some of the progress within CBAS since MTSU's designation as an R2 Carnegie classification institution. Over the past two (2) fiscal years, CBAS exceeds five (5) million dollars in annual research expenditures and twenty (20) doctoral degrees per year. CBAS is now quite safely and consistently beating those benchmarks year after year. He described the grants awarded during this period and outlined faculty efforts in support. This research fully integrates with CBAS's educational mission and is an important recruiting tool. It is also nurtured by strategic faculty hiring and the collaborative environment that has been fostered.

Dr. Van Patten then focused on QIS as a key area of opportunity. He explained that QIS uses the physics of the atom and subatomic particles to fundamentally change the way information is detected, transferred, and processed. He noted that classical computing is based on binary data, on ones (1) and zeros (0). Quantum computing uses particles that can exist in multiple states at one time. This enables exponential increases in computing power and allows us to solve problems in completely different ways. Quantum is already shaping innovations in GPS and positioning. It is expected to lead to a technological revolution in several other important areas as diverse as medicine, cybersecurity, and national defense. Dr. Hanna Terletska, Associate

Professor of Physics, leads the MTSU Quantum Science Initiative and was singled out this past spring by her NSF program officer for special recognition and to present to other program officers about the model program representing interdisciplinary and collaborative efforts. Beyond research, MTSU also leads Tennessee in quantum workforce development.

Chair Smith and President McPhee shared that they have asked the Legislature for twenty-five (25) million dollars to support QIS at MTSU.

Recruitment and Enrollment Activity

Dr. McPhee advised that the True Blue Tour, the University's signature recruitment effort, began on September 11, the day of the last Board meeting, and lasted over ten (10) weeks. Over this period, twenty-four (24) True Blue Tour events were held in thirteen (13) cities, including two (2) new tour stops for this year: Shelbyville/ Bedford County and Lebanon/Wilson County. A total of nine hundred sixty-two (962) prospective students and five hundred thirty-six (536) counselors from two hundred ninety-nine (299) schools attended these events. Dr. McPhee thanked Dr. Laurie Witherow and her team, as well as deans and academic advisors who participated in the various stops. He believes these efforts will positively impact Fall 2025 enrollment as currently applications are up five (5) percent over last year and admits are up by twenty (20) percent.

Student Capacity Within Degree Programs

In response to a request from the Board, Dr. McPhee asked Provost Mark Brynes and his staff to take a deep dive into the data and visit with deans to assess student capacity within degree programs. As a backdrop, Dr. McPhee stated that the University already regularly reviews the productivity of academic departments, including staffing levels and other needed resources for academic programs. In this instance, the Provost found that most of our degree programs manage capacity concerns very well and can accept all qualified students. Dr. McPhee then emphasized a few programs.

The B.S. in Aerospace with a concentration in Professional Pilot, is one of the University's most well-enrolled degree programs, with nine hundred forty-two (942) students majoring this fall. There is a concern related to flight hours and the eventual need for more planes as the program grows. However, this can be addressed by the move to Shelbyville, which will provide more classroom and hanger space. Unfortunately, the shortage of FAA check-ride examiners is beyond MTSU's control.

Dr. McPhee described another program, the M.S. in Physician Assistant Studies, which has received over one thousand two hundred seventy-five (1275) applications for the thirty (30) available spots. Due to accreditation standards, the cohort size cannot increase beyond thirty (30) until 2028. Even then, it will likely increase by ten (10) students at most. Provost Brynes shared that this program is accredited by a body called ARC-PA, a national accreditor which, as we would all hope for a healthcare program, is incredibly strict. ARC-PA is hyper-vigilant about the size of programs for various reasons, but primarily to ensure that there are enough clinical placements available for student training. He also stressed that the University has no say in the program's capacity determination. Vice Chair Vanek offered that there is quite a strain on the healthcare system in terms of qualified staffing at all levels. She inquired about whether our accreditor is considering taking a look at programs and accelerating the opportunity for qualified programs to move forward because their present position appears to exacerbate the critical situation that the U.S. healthcare system is in. Provost Brynes responded that he understands ARC-PA has gotten feedback on this issue but is hesitant to predict when or if they will do anything in terms of changing program capacity numbers. In addition, clinical site participation, unfortunately, has a ceiling. Thirty (30) spots do not seem like a big number until you try to arrange all the placements for these students in the different areas. And given all the academic institutions in the Nashville area, there is considerable competition for those sites. Plus, for a variety of reasons, such as liability, some clinical sites are reluctant to any students, not just MTSU's. Trustee Boyd then initiated a conversation on whether the Board should draft a letter to our congressional delegation on this issue. At the end of this discussion,

Trustee Boyd suggested that if a formal letter is not appropriate for expressing this concern, perhaps talking points can be developed to facilitate informal conversations supporting change. Provost Byrnes agreed to study this issue.

Dr. McPhee then shared the review of the BSN in Nursing program. Although it is up 4% from last fall in headcount, it is still down 18% for the past three (3) years. Thus, the program still has seat capacity, and we will keep an eye on it. It is important to note that if we were ever to increase capacity for the BSN, doing so would require significant investments in lab spaces, equipment, faculty, and clinical spots. And finally, a few of the STEM master's degrees were evaluated, including the M.S. in Data Science, which could benefit from more graduate assistants. This program's headcount is up 51% for the past year, but there is still a significant gap in admits, sixty-four (64) students, and enrollees, thirty-four (34) students. Graduate assistant lines could help yield those admits who are not enrolling.

Holiday Community Open House

Dr. McPhee reminded everyone that the Holiday Community Open House is scheduled for next Thursday, December 12, from 5:00 to 8:00 pm, and invited the Trustees to attend.

Conclusion

Chair Smith summarized the following items: 1) the University's MOU with the Nashville School of Law; 2) the Daniels Center breakfast fundraiser was a huge success, raising more than four hundred thousand (400,000) dollars; 3) in the new year, he and Dr. McPhee are scheduled to meet with Dr. Stephen K. Streiffer, director of Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), and Congressman Chuck Fleischmann, who serves on the House Appropriations Committee; 4) on the athletic front, men's and women's basketball teams are at a real peak; and 5) as reflected in the meeting materials, MTSU turns out more graduates with less taxpayer money than any other institution. We are efficiently using tax dollars to change lives.

Adjournment

Chair Smith adjourned the meeting at 2:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James C. Floyd, Board Secretary