

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES

The Middle Tennessee State University Board of Trustees met on March 19, 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 1:00 p.m. Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Keith Huber led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Introduction of Student Veteran

Gen. Huber introduced Army veteran Skylar Pilcher. Ms. Pilcher is a Chattanooga, Tennessee native who joined the Army as a wheeled vehicle mechanic immediately after graduating high school. She was initially assigned to an intelligence unit in Afghanistan whose responsibilities included drones. While she was adept at machinery problem solving, she also learned about the sensitive and meticulous collection of intelligence. Pilcher shared that during her tour of duty she transitioned into an administrative assistant role for her commander and executive officer providing support to over 200 individuals. In this position, she found her passion for systems - maintaining systems and operating systems, and also business operations. Upon completion of her military service, she decided to return to Tennessee and ultimately picked MTSU to continue her education based on the stellar reputation of the Jones College of Business. Before applying though, she first contacted the Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center to inquire about the resources available to veterans and came away impressed by the assistance she received from a fellow veteran during her initial contact. Pilcher expressed her thanks to the Army and the Daniels Center, and advised that she will graduate in May with a bachelor's in business administrative and information systems and analytics as well as a certificate in cybersecurity.

Roll Call

Board Secretary James Floyd called the roll. The following trustees were in attendance: J.B. Baker, Tom Boyd, Pete DeLay, Bill Jones, Mary Martin, Molly Mihm, Steve Smith, Chris Karbowski Vanek, Michael Wade, and Pam Wright. A quorum was declared.

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; Sarah Sudak, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students; Alan Thomas, Vice President for Business and Finance; Andrew Oppmann, Vice President for Marketing and Communications; 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.

Request to Address the Board

Chairman Smith noted that a timely request was made by Rick Kurtz to address the Board. Rick Kurtz was granted the opportunity to address the Board for 5 minutes with Board Secretary Floyd responsible for keeping track of time.

Kurtz, an MTSU employee, advocated to the Board for a biweekly or semimonthly pay schedule for hourly employees. He submitted that such a payroll adjustment would support the growth of MTSU and enhance its competitiveness in recruiting and retaining personnel. He presented that under the current monthly pay schedule, pay periods and amounts vary greatly based on the calendar, which causes a hardship with budgeting for MTSU employees. This includes support staff, student workers, graduate teaching assistants, and adjunct professors. At present, he stated that MTSU is one of two LGI's that has not adapted a biweekly or semimonthly pay schedule for hourly employees. Kurtz observed that he has been privileged to be an MTSU employee for twenty-nine (29) years and while a pay schedule adjustment may not benefit him, he believes it can be of value in retaining our best and brightest.

Approval of December 6, 2023, Meeting Minutes – Action

The first agenda item was approval of the minutes from the December 6, 2023, meeting. Trustee DeLay made the motion to approve the minutes from the December 6, 2023, meeting, and Trustee Baker seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Rulemaking Hearing – Action

Rulemaking Hearing was called to order by Chairman Smith at 1:18 p.m. on March 19, 2024, to consider one rule. The hearing was conducted in manner set by the Uniform Administrative Procedures Act, T.C.A. § 4-5-204. The meeting was video recorded as a record for the hearing. The purpose of the hearing was to afford all interested persons an opportunity to present facts, views, or arguments relative to the rule. Notice of the hearing on the prescribed form was submitted for publication to the Tennessee Secretary of State's office; emailed to all MTSU students, faculty, and staff; posted on the Board of Trustees webpage; and provided to the Associated Press, Murfreesboro and Nashville area newspapers, radio, television stations and digital publication, newspapers in adjacent counties, and MTSU student media. Anyone interested in making comments on the rule was instructed to sign-in on the provided forms. Copies of the rule were made available.

Chairman Smith noted there were no interested parties present to speak on the rule being presented. Board Secretary Floyd reported that there were no written comments received for the rule being presented.

Rule 0240-07-04 Academic Misconduct – James Floyd, University Counsel and Board Secretary, provided a rule summary. Motion was made by Trustee Jones to approve Rule 0240-07-04 Academic Misconduct on as presented and seconded by Trustee Martin. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously. The hearing on Rule 0240-07-04 Academic Misconduct concluded.

Rulemaking Hearing adjourned at 1:22 p.m.

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

Committee Chair Wright reported that the Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee met on February 27, 2024. The Committee approved the minutes from the November 14, 2023, meeting. The Committee report contained one action item, which was unanimously approved by the Committee, and informational items for the Board's consideration. Information items presented included post-approval monitoring report, annual report of academic program actions, and an update on Athletics. Materials outlining these actions were made available for review prior to the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

Revision to Policy 312 Academic Misconduct – Action

Revisions were presented to include artificial intelligence and integrate sanction processes for graduate and undergraduate students. Rule 0240-07-04 Academic Misconduct was also presented for amendment and captures the revised version of Policy 312. The Committee unanimously approved the policy and rule revision.

Motion

Committee Chair Wright made the motion to approve the action item recommended by the Committee and Trustee DeLay 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 27, 2024. The Committee approved the minutes from its November 14, 2023, meeting. The Committee report contained no action items. Several information items were presented including report of conflict of interest disclosures in 2023; review of President's Statement of

Disclosure of Interest for 2024; report on compliance with public records policy; results of external reviews including Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury Financial and Compliance Audit Report for the Year Ended June 30, 2023, Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury NCAA Agreed-upon Procedures Applied to the Athletic Programs Statement of Revenue and Expenses for the Year Ended June 30, 2023, and Tennessee Higher Education Commission, Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC) Compliance Review, December 1, 2023; and the quarterly report – Results of Internal Audit Reports. The Committee adjourned, and the Committee went into the executive session to discuss cybersecurity, audits, and investigations. Materials outlining these actions were made available for review prior to the Board meeting and are contained in the Board notebooks.

Committee Report: Executive and Governance Committee

Vice Chair Vanek reported that the Executive and Governance Committee met on February 27, 2024. The Committee approved the minutes from the November 14, 2023, meeting. The Committee report contained action items revising the University's Mission Statement and Mission Profile. The Committee unanimously approved the Mission Profile as amended to include veterans. Materials outlining these actions were made available for review prior to the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

Institutional Mission Statement and Mission Profile – Action

Associate Provost Mary Hoffschwelle presented revisions to the Institutional Mission Statement and Mission Profile. Upon discussion, the Committee suggested that the Mission Statement should continue to reference preparation of students to thrive in their chosen profession. Action on the Mission Statement was tabled until the March 19, 2024, Board meeting. In addition, the Committee determined that the Mission Profile should be revised to include a specific reference to veterans as part of the student population.

Motion

Vice Chair Vanek made the motion to approve the mission profile action item recommended by the Committee and Trustee Wade seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and the action to approve was carried unanimously.

Institutional Mission Statement – Action

At the February 27, 2024, Executive and Governance Committee Meeting, additional edits to the Institutional Mission Statement were discussed. Subsequently, the University Planning Committee reviewed the proposed edits. Vice Provost Mary Hoffschwelle presented a revised Mission Statement for the Board's consideration.

Motion

Vice Chair Vanek made the motion to approve the revised Mission Statement and Trustee DeLay seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and the action to approve was carried unanimously.

Strategic Planning

At the February 27, 2024, Executive and Governance Committee meeting, Vice Provost Mary Hoffschwelle and Associate Dean Jeff Gibson began a discussion of the University's strategic planning process and invited committee members to provide feedback. The committee members asked for additional time to prepare for a future conversation planned for the March 19, 2024, Board meeting.

Dr. Gibson shared that as part of the process to develop the University's strategic plan for 2025-2035, the Strategic Planning Committee is engaged in a variety of listening sessions with two primary goals: 1) to gain a clear understanding of the current environment in which the University operates, and 2) to develop a plan that is well informed by input and perceptions of key stakeholders. In his conversation with the Board, he aimed to outline the strategic plan structure and planning efforts to date and describe the Board's role in that process. In addition,

Dr. Gibson noted that Dr. McPhee had initiated a survey with faculty, staff, students, and alumni, which received over 750 responds. He also reiterated Vice Provost Hoffschwelle's assurance to the Board that it will continue to receive updates and opportunities to provide input as the strategic plan develops over the next year leading up to its review and approval of that plan next spring.

The Board's interactive discussion with Dr. Gibson was designed to provide important perspective to the Strategic Planning Committee as the Trustees addressed the following questions with their comments noted below:

1) What do you see as the key strengths of the University?

- A key strength of the University is its focus on a very practical approach to education. The University provides a strong academic background, but also provides students the opportunity to have careers that are meaningful not just to themselves but are beneficial to the local community and the broader economic community that we all live in.
- Our outreach to and the engagement of nontraditional students (veterans, first generation, part time, etc.) to provide them with a meaningful academic environment that is unique in the state. The affordability of the University. Noting that cost is what you pay and value is what you get for what you pay. MTSU is at the very high end of the value matrix as people evaluate where they are going to go to school.
- The development of corporate partnerships is really important to the university in terms of engaging the community in the present and future.
- The University's breadth of programs and opportunities are critical. If an individual has a strength and an interest, they can find a way to pursue it here that moves them forward in their career.
- Communication is a strength. There is an openness in the University's communication both horizontally and vertical, which is important for an institution of our size.
- The University achieves its most basic mission, which is to prepare young people or students to participate in the world, business, and otherwise. While that is what we are here to do, we do that job well.
- The effectiveness of the administration and its ability handle issues quickly.
- The University has good financial management and controls. We have excellent staff and management who effectively handle financial management opportunities.
- The University has operated without audit findings of material weaknesses or significant deficiencies.

2) What do you see as the University's weaknesses or areas of needed improvement?

- Modernization of facilities.
- Opportunity to continue to promote the University so that we are not a secret, but recognized not only regionally, but across the country.
- Lack of broad communication of the University's mission and the value that the University provides. An opportunity for potential improvement is to increase our visibility not just within the middle Tennessee region, but within the southeast region and beyond.
- Funding – While we use our budget exceedingly well with the monies we are allocated and take very good care of the University enterprise, we are challenged by not being resourced enough to express our true ability to grow.
- While the funding formula is not within our control, it is a weakness that we suffer from. The current structure of the funding formula presents a huge risk to the University's operations going forward.
- There is a need to increase our donor base. In particular, more alumni involvement in funding the University.
- While we have improved significantly, young alumni engagement is still a weakness.

3) What are the critical issues that the University needs to face over the next five – ten years?

- The impact of the current funding formula.
- The changing college enrollment demographics.
- Staying abreast of emerging technologies.
- Aim to work with businesses to train for tomorrow's jobs, which is integral to the mission of the University is to prepare students for a life.
- The mental health stability of the college population and the ability of the University to meet the needs of students that have mental health issues.
- The threat of non-traditional competition in the form of businesses attracting/recruiting our prospective students for their training programs in lieu of higher education.
- Preparation for physical and cybersecurity threats.
- Competition for talent.
- Aging employee demographics.
- Focusing on student success programs for online learning as well as traditional on-campus students.

4) What do you see as the key priorities the University should establish in its strategic plan?

- Embrace challenges as opportunities.
- Pursue the identified top priorities from the Board's most recent self-evaluation.
- Maximize MTSU's status as being ideally situated in terms of quality of life, geography, and other key components to compete for employees and students.
- Effectively communicate where the institution is headed and focus on the strengths of our signature programs.
- Continue the acceleration of the building of our brand and aim to make a few good choices to change lots of lives.

Vice Chair Vanak thanked Dr. Hoffschwelle and Dr. Gibson for the presentation and their overall efforts. She informed the Board that the Executive and Governance Committee will review the final Strategic Plan in February 2025.

Board Objectives Survey

The 2023 Board self-evaluation identified twenty-three (23) objectives that the Board should consider as priorities. On February 28, 2024, Board Secretary Floyd issued a survey to the Board, which asked each trustee to select the top four (4) objectives. He now presented the priority survey results to the Board. The results included background survey information to give trustees an understanding of the ranking and the disbursement of the rankings individually. The identified top objectives were:

- 1) Initiating a "professional" school such as a law school, medical school, or a more traditional engineering school;
- 2) Continue to be included in the Princeton Review top colleges and universities in the country;
- 3) Begin efforts to move to a R1 research designated institution; and
- 4) Actively and aggressively pursue the completion of fundraising for the Murphy Center.

Chairman Smith stated that while Princeton Review was specifically referenced, the University's goal should be recognition as a top school generally in publications or forums that make such

assessments. Also, Trustee Boyd observed that the survey was statistically interesting as the top nine (9) objectives were pretty closely ranked.

Finance and Personnel Committee

Committee Chair DeLay reported that the Finance and Personnel Committee met on February 27, 2024. The Committee approved the minutes from its November 14, 2023, meeting. The Committee report contained no action items. Information items included: an update on the Governor's Budget and Legislative Budget Hearings Update; and a Capital Projects update. Materials outlining these actions were made available for review prior to the Board meeting and are contained in the Board notebooks.

Closing Remarks from the Chair

Chair Smith shared that the *Tennessean* newspaper published an article that outlined the University of Tennessee Board of Trustee's approval of the university's plan to create an athletic foundation. This type of foundation could be a vehicle to use if and when we find ourselves paying athletes. He stated that he's not proposing such a foundation for MTSU, but would like for the president to explore what such a foundation would look like here. Chair Smith noted that the University of Memphis and three fourths of the Southeastern Conference already have such foundations. He emphasized that he is not proposing that we pay anybody or take any money in, but his focus is on being prepared.

Report of the President

Dr. McPhee thanked the Board for the opportunity to give updates on matters and activities at the University since the last meeting. First though, he stated how productive the Board's discussion was today on the strategic plan. It highlights the important role that a board of trustees should play, and this Board plays that role exceptionally well. There was a lot of good information, feedback, and recommendations that he thinks will help in the development of the

new strategic plan, which will be our roadmap for the next 5 to 10 years. Dr. McPhee expressed his thanks to each trustee for their very thoughtful comments and recommendations.

Enrollment

Dr. McPhee provided an update on the University's fall 2024 recruitment and enrollment projections. As of March 1, the University's freshman applications are up 0.5% compared to last year keeping in mind that we had a record not only in applications, but also enrollment last year. We are in the middle of recruitment and we are up over 349 admitted freshmen since last year. Our transfer applications are up 4% and our admitted transfer currently are up 12.8%.

Dr. McPhee expressed that the transfer numbers are particularly gratifying given the issues that community colleges are still experiencing with enrollment decline. On the graduate student front, applications are up 16.6% and admits are up 17.6%. Dr. McPhee noted that work and effort of Dr. Laurie Withrow and Dean David Butler along with their respective staffs. He also addressed efforts by each college, under the direction of the Provost, to develop and implement a plan to increase student yield. This is especially important in light of the enrollment demographics that the Board discussed earlier.

Awards and Accolades

In a first, MTSU won a regional Emmy Award for "We Do It All," our one-minute spot showcasing the College of Media and Entertainment. The commercial, which debuted last year at the April Board meeting, was made possible by a huge collaboration between faculty and students across departments in the college and the university's Division of Marketing and Communications.

Nine nominees with MTSU ties were up for honors at the 66th annual Grammys. This included including a nomination in the highest category, competing with Taylor Swift and Beyonce, for supergroup boygenius which includes Julien Baker, an MTSU graduate.

Dr. McPhee also highlighted that four (4) former football student-athletes played in the Super Bowl, with three (3) actually winning rings as members of the Kansas City Chiefs.

Gates Cambridge Scholarship

Dr. McPhee shared exciting news that Ms. Brittney Johnson, a 2020 graduate of our College of Liberal Arts, is the first MTSU student awarded the Gates Cambridge Scholarship, an international award that will allow her to pursue a postgraduate degree at the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Education in Cambridge, England. This is an extremely competitive scholarship, with around 1.3% of applicants in recent years receiving an award, which covers the full cost of attendance, including a \$25,000-plus allowance, round-trip airfare, inbound visa costs, and the cost of the immigration health surcharge, as well as discretionary funding such as dependents and fieldwork.

Dr. McPhee shared Johnson's background as a native of Martin, Tennessee, who earned a dual degree in Spanish and global studies, with a minor in economics, at MTSU. While at MTSU, she was a member of Phi Kappa Phi, a Presidential Scholarship recipient, and a member of the University's UNICEF chapter. She was also awarded two Fulbright Grants as an English Teaching Assistant in Spain and a Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship. She initially planned to attend law school upon completing her first Fulbright grant and working in immigration law, but changed that plan during her first year of teaching abroad. Dr. McPhee highlighted that what makes Johnson's academic journey even more compelling is the way she triumphed over challenges, including being a first-generation, low-income college student.

At Cambridge, Johnson is interested in researching development and implementation of anti-racist and inclusive curricula, particularly in diverse educational settings while earning her Master of Philosophy. As a Gates Cambridge Scholar, Johnson will become part of a global network of scholars and alumni who use their education and leadership qualities to improve the lives of others.

True Blue Core

Dr. McPhee announced that the University launched its newly redesigned 14-hour general education curriculum, the True Blue Core. He noted that this ties in with Vice Chair Vanek's earlier strategic planning comment about how we not only provide and prepare students for the world of work, but we provide them with a well-rounded education as reflected in the general education curriculum.

This project was initiated by Provost Mark Brynes. The redesign was a five-year faculty led change initiative that focused on developing a core curriculum that gives students the skills and knowledge they need to succeed academically, professionally, and personally. Faculty took the best of our current program and added new categories, new courses, and new student learning outcomes. Dr. McPhee thanked Dr. Susan Myers Shirk, professor of history, for her leadership in directing the redesign.

True Blue Give Campaign

Dr. McPhee advised that the seventh annual True Blue Give Campaign was an incredible success, raising over \$780,000, setting an all-time record and easily surpassing the \$700,000 goal we set. He stressed that this campaign represents cash, not pledges, received from February 13th to 15th. A number of programs achieved new milestones including our Athletics program, which raised over \$300,000 in support of Blue Raider student-athletes, and our College of Liberal Arts which secured more than \$159,000. In addition to these achievements, donations totaling over \$63,000 were directed towards scholarships, student emergency needs, and various student-centric programs, including the James E. Walker Library and the Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center.

Commencement

Dr. McPhee advised the Board that over 2,400 students will graduate at the spring commencement in just six weeks. We will have three (3) ceremonies: one on Friday, May 3, 2024, and two on Saturday, May 4, 2024. Dr. McPhee noted that the president of the Nashville

Chamber of Commerce has stated that MTSU annually produces the largest number of graduates for the Nashville and Middle Tennessee area than other local colleges combined.

Conclusion

Dr. McPhee thanked the Board for the work that they do as representatives of the University. He stated that if you look to find the definition of what a trustee should be and the role of a trustee in supporting a university, you would find the faces of our trustees.

Adjournment

Chairman Smith adjourned the meeting at 2:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James C. Floyd". The signature is stylized and cursive.

James C. Floyd, Board Secretary