

**MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**MINUTES**

The Middle Tennessee State University Board of Trustees met on September 10, 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**

General Huber introduced Ian Hedrick, an Army Veteran. Mr. Hedrick started college at MTSU but left to serve in the Army Special Forces for five (5) years. After his tour of commitment, he decided that he needed to care for his fifteen (15) year-old sister and his mother, who had been stricken with Lyme. Shortly afterward, he resumed his studies at MTSU and earned his BS in international relations. Mr. Hedrick is married and has two (2) children, a three (3) year-old daughter and a six-day-old son. Presently at MTSU, he is improving his language capabilities in Russian and Italian, and studying drones. He has been accepted into the Johns Hopkins graduate program for Advanced International Studies in Italy. Mr. Hedrick expressed his appreciation for MTSU. He described his journey as a student who labored academically during his initial enrollment to now being accepted into Johns Hopkins. He also shared his experiences struggling with life and how this was unfortunately typical for many of his fellow veterans. Lastly, Mr. Hedrick disclosed how General Huber and staff at the Daniels Center have gone above and beyond to assist him.

### **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, Shaylaine Roker, 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; Khalilah Doss, 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.

### **Approval of June 11, 2024, Meeting Minutes – Action**

The first agenda item was approval of the June 11, 2024 meeting minutes. Trustee Vanak made the motion to approve the minutes, and Trustee Boyd seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion was approved unanimously.

### **Committee Report: The Audit and Compliance Committee**

Committee Chair Boyd reported that the Audit and Compliance Committee met on August 20, 2024. The Committee approved the minutes from its May 21, 2024, meeting. The Committee report contained two (2) action items, unanimously approved by the Committee, to be considered and voted on by the Board. Several information items were also presented.

Materials outlining these actions were made available for review before the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

### **Annual Report for Audit and Consulting Services – Action**

TCA 49-14-102, the MTSU Board of Trustees Bylaws, and Policy on Board Committees require that an annual comprehensive report on the internal audit function be submitted for the Committee's review. The Annual Report for Audit and Consulting Services was submitted and reviewed. In addition, Policy 70 Internal Audit requires the Audit and Compliance Committee's approval of the audit plan. Leah Ladley, Chief Audit Executive, presented the Internal Audit Plan for Fiscal Year 2025. The Committee unanimously approved the annual plan as presented.

### **Risk Assessment Reporting – Action**

T.C.A. § 9-18-104 of the Financial Integrity Act requires higher education institutions to prepare and provide a management assessment of risk to the State of Tennessee's Commissioner of Finance and Administration and the Comptroller of the Treasury by December 31 annually. For 2024, Business and Finance along with Academic Affairs performed and provided risk assessment reporting.

In addition, a risk assessment report detailing university-wide risk and control activities was completed. The risk assessment documents are designated as confidential and are discussed in the Committee's non-public executive session. Drew Harpool, Associate Vice President for Business and Finance, presented the risk assessment reports to the Committee for approval prior to the reports' submission to the State, as required by law.

### **Motion**

Trustee Boyd made the motion to approve the action items recommended by the Committee, and Trustee Boyd seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion to approve the action items was carried unanimously.

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

Committee Chair Wright reported that the Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee met on August 20, 2024. The Committee approved the minutes from the May 21, 2024, meeting. Informational items included an overview of the Division of Student Affairs, a report on Fall 2024 enrollment, and an Athletics update.

### **Finance and Personnel Committee**

Trustee Jones reported that the Finance and Personnel Committee met on August 20, 2024. The Committee approved the minutes from its May 21, 2024, meeting. The Committee report contained one (1) action item, unanimously approved by the Committee, to be considered and voted on by the Board. The committee report also contained four (4) information items. First, Bill Waits, Vice President for Campus Planning, presented a Capital Projects Status Update. Second, Lisa Batey, Interim Assistant Vice President for Human Resources, presented the Classified Employee Grievance Annual Report, which showed that the University had zero grievances for the 2023-24 year. Third, Ms. Batey also presented an update on the Incentive Pay Plan. Fourth, Joe Bales, Vice President for University Advancement, provided a philanthropy update. At the conclusion of Mr. Bales's presentation, Chairman Smith inquired about getting information on how other states match gifts and investments to explore possible legislative initiatives. Materials outlining this information were made available for review before the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

### **Capital Disclosures - Action**

This item involves a request to disclose the MTSU Road and Safety Improvements project. This project aims to enhance traffic flow and safety at the northern perimeter of campus, specifically along Middle Tennessee Boulevard and Greenland Drive. The proposed scope of work includes a pedestrian bridge over Middle Tennessee Boulevard, improved lighting and signaling, and

upgraded crosswalks. This project will utilize \$2.5 million in FY 2024 U.S. Department of Transportation Community Project funding.

### **Motion**

Trustee Jones made the motion to approve the action item recommended by the Committee, and Trustee Wright seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion to approve the action item was carried unanimously.

### **Report from the President**

Dr. McPhee expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to update the Board on matters and activities at the University.

### **Horse Science Center**

Dr. McPhee reminded the Board that he periodically has asked various divisions of the University to come before the Board to bring attention to some of the excellence that occurs on campus. For this meeting, he highlighted through the College of Basic and Applied Sciences, our equestrian team and stock horse team, which have done an outstanding job in winning national championships, and the academic performance of the Horse Science Center. Dr. McPhee introduced Dr. Greg Van Patten, Dean of Basic and Applied Sciences, for him to brief the Board on the horse science center and the equestrian team.

Dr. Van Patten expressed how these teams are a source of pride for the college and School of Agriculture. He introduced the two coaches for the respective teams, Ariel Higgins, Director - Equestrian Programs, and Andrea Rego, Lecturer. Ms. Higgins then presented the equestrian team members and outlined their team and individual accomplishments. She also described the seven (7) levels of their competition format. Ms. Higgins stated that the wonderful thing about the MTSU equestrian team is that it mirrors so much of what we look for in our horse science students. The team accepts students of all levels, members who come in with a lifetime of horse experience already, and those who just have a deep interest and passion. Similarly, the

department not only has people who go on to ride successfully and professionally beyond the University but also has those persons who contribute to the industry in other ways. Ms. Rego next spoke about the stock horse team and our Center of Equine Recovery for Veterans (CERV). She highlighted the team's participation in the National Championship Show in Amarillo, Texas, this past spring, where they were a top-six Division Two team competing against eighteen (18) other teams. Ms. Rego presented the team members and noted their accomplishments. She also shared that CERV is a partnership between the Veterans Recovery Center (VRC) in Murfreesboro and MTSU Horse Science, which she presently coordinates. IN CERV, veterans come to the MTSU Horse Science Center and work with students in her equine assisted therapy class. The class helps anywhere from six (6) to eight (8) veterans per semester. We have helped over one hundred fifty (150) veterans since the program's inception. Lastly, student Simone Allen spoke about MTSU's third horse team, the horse judging team, and the championships they compete in.

### **2024 Fall Recruitment and Enrollment**

Dr. McPhee informed the Board that our official census enrollment information shows a total enrollment of 20,540 registered students for the 2024 Fall. This represents an increase of 342 students, or 1.69% more than last year. Dr. McPhee emphasized that this is a remarkable achievement. He mentioned that all universities in the state were facing challenges with regard to the FAFSA and, in fact, MTSU has the largest number of Pell-eligible and first-generation college students among the major universities. He stressed that with our students and their families being dependent on financial aid from the federal government, we were concerned that there could be a significant decline in enrollment. He further emphasized that our enrollment increase did not just happen by accident. Rather, there was a tremendous amount of work by our recruiters, our admissions office under the leadership of Dr. Laurie Witherow, our faculty, and staff. Our enrollment numbers include the following: new freshmen are up by 1.06%; new transfers are up 2.8%; and total graduate enrollment is 2448 students, just 67 students shy of last year.

On the recruitment front, Dr. McPhee stated that True Blue Tours begin tomorrow. Stops will include counselor lunches and receptions for prospective students and parents in thirteen (13) different locations. Dr. McPhee again thanked the admissions staff and the faculty, who continue working hard to keep our enrollment headed in a positive direction.

### **The Princeton Review and the Wall Street Journal**

Dr. McPhee stated that one of the four major goals that the Board of Trustees identified this past year included the University being recognized by national rankings. He was pleased to report that MTSU was named in the Princeton Review's list of best colleges and universities for the sixth straight year. The Princeton Review publishes college rankings based on surveys of students from 390 higher education institutions and covers a variety of topics, from academics to campus life. In addition, the Princeton Review awarded MTSU's Student Government Association a spot in its Top 25. The Princeton Review looks at how strongly students feel about engagement, involvement, the quality of life on campus, and extracurricular activities. MTSU is the only Tennessee higher education institution to place on this list, which only ranks 25 in total, making the list more exclusive. Dr. McPhee recognized Michai Mosby, SGA President, for the wonderful job he is doing. Dr. McPhee was also excited to announce that the Wall Street Journal has recognized MTSU as one of America's Best Colleges 2025. He explained that there are about 5300 private and public universities in the United States. And for the first time, MTSU has been put on this list as one of the top universities in the country.

### **Hotel Development Project**

Dr. McPhee advised that on Tuesday, September 3, MTSU issued the intent to award notice to select Sila Developments as the best evaluated proposer for the MTSU Public-Private hotel development project. Based in Nashville, Sila brings experience in hospitality development to Middle Tennessee, and its leadership team includes two MTSU graduates who are excited about the future partnership with MTSU that will provide not only convenient lodging but also

experiential learning opportunities for MTSU students in various academic programs including the MTSU Tourism and Hospitality program. The hotel development concept includes a four-story, 122-key hotel developed on the existing Middle Tennessee parking lot at the southwest corner of Middle Tennessee Boulevard and Greenland Drive. In the following months, MTSU staff will enter into final negotiations with Sila, finalize legal agreements, and proceed with the development. The hotel brand will be finalized after design, and Sila told Dr. McPhee that a number of major hotel brands have inquired about this project.

### **Conclusion**

Dr. McPhee thanked the Board of Trustees for allowing him to present his report and for its continued support.

### **Closing Remarks from Chairman Smith**

Chairman Smith commended the efforts that have been extended on the hotel project. He also shared that on October 10, 2024, General Jim Mattis will be the featured speaker at a breakfast fundraiser benefitting the Daniels Center at the Hutton Hotel in Nashville. He encouraged everyone to support and attend the event. As of today, the Daniels Center has \$375,000 in commitments and \$250,000 in the bank, including checks from the president of our university and the athletic director. At the event, Senator Bill Frist is scheduled to interview General Mattis and Chairman Smith anticipates a lively conversation on world events.

### **Adjournment**

Chairman Smith adjourned the meeting at 1:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James C. Floyd, Board Secretary