

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

The Middle Tennessee State University Board of Trustees met on June 17, 2025, 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 1:03 p.m. Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Keith Huber led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Introduction of Student Veteran**

Board Chair Steve Smith proudly noted that the MTSU tradition of calling special attention to a veteran at board meetings is one no other school in the country does. Following his remark, Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Keith Huber introduced Navy veteran Deann Hathaway, who enlisted in the Navy immediately upon graduation from high school and served for twenty-one (21) years. Because she had not yet reached eighteen (18), her father had to sign permission for her to do so. Upon retirement, Deann entered the academic and administrative world as she worked at Saint Rose of Lima in Murfreesboro for fifteen (15) years. She then applied and was selected for a duty position at MTSU as a certified administrative professional within the Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center. As a veteran, a current student at MTSU, and the mother of a current student at MTSU, she understands the challenges families face. Deann tearfully remarked on her passion for serving the veteran community and recalled her experience arriving in Murfreesboro alone, without any fellow veterans or a community to call her own – until she found the Daniels Center. Deann emphasized the Daniels Center's life-changing impact on her and the lives of other veterans and their dependents, calling it a “safe place.”

### **Remarks from the President**

Dr. McPhee welcomed Drew Harpool as the new Interim Vice President for Business and Finance.

### **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, Christine 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; Andrew Oppmann, Vice President for Marketing and Communications; Yvette Clark, Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer; Khalilah Doss, Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students; Leah Ladley, Chief Audit Executive; James Floyd, University Counsel and Board Secretary; Chris Massaro, Director of Athletics; and Kim Edgar, Executive Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff, were also in attendance.

### **Request to Address the Board**

Mr. R.J. Ware, President of the Student Government Association (SGA), stated his concern regarding how the proposed student fees increase, specifically the sixty-four (64) dollar allocation to the Athletic department, was brought forward for consideration. He noted that, unlike every other department that submitted a fee request, the Athletic fee was developed without direct student engagement or consultation with the SGA. According to Mr. Ware, no opportunity was provided for discussion or feedback despite prior assurances that students would be included in these deliberations and be allowed to provide input, which Mr. Ware noted has been a recurring issue. Mr. Ware described the plethora of messages expressing frustration and disappointment that his office has received and emphasized the importance of maintaining a strong relationship between students and university leadership. Chairman Smith thanked Mr. Ware for his respectful comments.

### **Approval of March 18, 2025, and June 6, 2025, Meeting Minutes – Action**

The first agenda item was approval of the meeting minutes for March 18, 2025, and June 6, 2005. Trustee DeLay motioned to approve the meeting minutes, and Trustee Vanek seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken to approve the minutes, and the motion was approved unanimously.

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

Trustee Wright reported that the Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee met on May 20, 2025. The Committee approved the minutes from the February 25, 2025, meeting. The Committee report contained four (4) action items, which the Committee unanimously approved for the Board's consideration. Three (3) information items before the Committee included a report on the institution's compliance with Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-7-188 regarding Research Security, the annual Post-Approval Monitoring Report, 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.

### **Tenure and Promotion Candidates – Action**

The Committee was informed that faculty members applied for tenure and/or applied for tenure and/or promotion in September 2024. They were reviewed by their department chair/school director, department/school committee, college committee, college dean, provost, and president as stipulated by MTSU Policies 204 Tenure and 205 Promotion of Tenured and Tenurable Faculty, along with their respective college and department policies. The president and provost recommended that the specified candidates be granted tenure and/or promotion effective August 1, 2025. The Committee unanimously approved twenty-eight (28) candidates for tenure and fifty-eight (58) candidates for promotion.

**Modification of an Existing Academic Unit – Action**

A reorganization of the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences was presented to provide more visibility and competitiveness to its degree programs. The Committee unanimously approved the modification.

**New Academic Program – Action**

The Committee unanimously approved a new academic program: a Master of Science in Project Management degree.

**University Policy: 323, Instructional and Assignment Use of Artificial Intelligence – Action**

The Committee unanimously approved this new policy, as required by Public Chapter 550.

**Motion**

Trustee Wright motioned to approve the action items recommended by the Committee, and Trustee Wade seconded the motion. A voice 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 May 20, 2025. The Committee approved the minutes from its February 25, 2025, meeting. The Committee report contained two (2) action items, which the Committee unanimously approved for the Board's consideration. Three (3) information items were also presented: the Annual Internal Audit Assurances were confirmed; two (2) external reviews were completed with no findings or recommendations identified; and the quarterly internal audit report, which consisted of an investigation that was administratively closed and the completion of a Loss Review. Materials outlining these actions were made available for review prior to the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

**Approval of the Internal Audit Department Charter – Action**

The Internal Audit Charter was revised in response to the new Global Internal Audit Standards. In addition, the accuracy of the referenced statutory language was confirmed. The Committee unanimously approved the revised charter.

#### **Approval of MTSU Policy 70 Internal Audit – Action**

Policy 70 was revised to incorporate current terminology in alignment with the new Global Internal Audit Standards. The Committee unanimously approved the new policy, noting that the Office of Audit and Consulting Services should review its name to avoid conflicting terminology.

The public meeting of the Committee adjourned, and the Committee went into executive session to discuss cybersecurity, audits, and investigations.

#### **Motion**

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

#### **Committee Report: Finance and Personnel Committee**

Committee Chair DeLay reported that the Finance and Personnel Committee met on May 20, 2025. The Committee approved the minutes from its February 25, 2025, meeting. The Committee report contained six (6) action items, which the Committee unanimously approved for the Board's consideration. One (1) information item was also presented on the status of performance-based awards.. Materials outlining these actions were made available for review prior to the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

### **Approval of the 2026-27 Capital Outlay Project Submittals – Action**

The Committee reviewed the proposed MTSU capital outlay requests for FY 2026-2027, which included the Civic Leadership and Applied Humanities Building that will provide academic classrooms, class labs, faculty and staff offices, and support space for selected Liberal Arts departments and the associated Center for Innovation and Leadership, History Museum, and MTSU archives and exhibit spaces. In addition, the Committee considered the Aerospace Campus Phase II project in Shelbyville, which includes two academic buildings, additional vehicular parking, green space, and expanded aircraft tie-down space. The Committee unanimously approved the proposed capital outlay request for FY 2026-27.

### **Approval of the 2026-27 Capital Disclosures – Action**

The Committee considered projects requiring disclosure approval, including one amendment to the FY 2025-2026 Capital Budget Request and one new project for the FY 2026-2027 MTSU Capital Budget Request. In addition, four (4) new project disclosures meet recently enacted thresholds that allow for local project disclosure with MTSU Board approval. The Committee unanimously approved the recommended capital disclosures.

### **Approval of the 2026-27 Capital Maintenance Projects Submittal – Action**

The Committee considered capital maintenance requests for THEC submission, which included thirteen (13) projects covering a variety of maintenance needs for FY 2025-26 and totaling \$23.5 million. It also evaluated proposed capital maintenance projects for an additional four (4) years, FY 2027-2028 through FY 2030-2031. The Committee unanimously approved the capital maintenance projects submittal.

### **Approval of the Proposed 2025-26 Tuition, Fees, and Housing Rates – Action**

Trustee DeLaunay advised that THEC had adopted binding ranges for tuition and tuition plus mandatory fees at 0-6.5%. The University proposed a 5.76% increase in undergraduate, graduate, and out-of-state tuition rates, with the exception of the University's e-rate. In addition, the Committee considered two (2) recommended scenarios for increases in

mandatory fees that would result in the combined tuition and mandatory fees increase of either 5.93% (Scenario 1) or 6.49% (Scenario 2) in compliance with THEC's combined range. A proposed 3.5% increase in housing rates was also reviewed, along with two (2) non-mandatory fee increases. The Committee approved the proposed tuition, mandatory fees outlined in Scenario 2, non-mandatory fees, and housing rates.

Trustee DeLay noted that public notice of the proposed increases to tuition and mandatory fees was properly given and that public comments were received and made available for review consistent with Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-7-1603.

#### **Approval of the Proposed 2025-26 Employee Compensation – Action**

University administration recommended using the salary funding received by the State to provide employees with a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), which equates to a 1.8% increase with a \$750 minimum. This allows employees earning \$42,400 or less to receive the \$750 increase, while other employee increases will be based on 1.8% of their annual salary. The Committee unanimously approved the proposed compensation plan.

#### **Approval of the 2025-25 Estimated Budget and the 2025-26 July Budget – Action**

The Estimated Budget recommended is the final budget for the 2024-25 fiscal year and reflects adjustments needed for spring enrollment, additional funding provided through state appropriations, and other miscellaneous adjustments. The July budget is a base budget for the upcoming fiscal year. It is based on tuition and fee increases, salary and operating appropriation increases approved by the General Assembly for 2025-26, and flat enrollment. The Committee unanimously approved the 2024-25 Estimate Budget and the 2025-26 July Budget.

#### **Motion**

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

### **Introduction of Faculty Trustee - Information**

Chairman Smith addressed his trustees and colleagues, explaining that it is time for a few changes in our trustee membership as the semester ends. He thanked Trustee Mary Martin for serving two non-consecutive terms as faculty trustee and asked her to say a few words for her final meeting. Trustee Martin expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to work alongside her fellow trustees and thanked them for their expertise and commitment to the University.

President McPhee introduced Dr. Kari Neely to the Board of Trustees as the new Faculty Trustee selected by the Faculty Senate. Dr. Neely served as president of MTSU's Faculty Senate for the 2023-2024 academic year. She received her B.A. and M.A. in Anthropology from the University of Arkansas and her Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies from the University of Michigan, and in 2007 joined the MTSU faculty in the Department of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. Dr. Neely teaches courses on the Arabic language, international graphic novels, and graphic novels about the Middle East. President McPhee welcomed her on behalf of the Board and invited her to say a few words. Dr. Neely thanked her colleagues for entrusting her with the honor of representing their voices and Trustee Martin for sharing her wisdom and preparing her for this role.

### **Approval of Appointment of Student Trustee – Action**

Chairman Smith expressed his appreciation for Trustee Shaylaine Roker's service as the eighth (8th) MTSU Student Trustee and asked her to say a few words for her final meeting. Trustee Shaylaine thanked her fellow trustees for welcoming her to the Board and treating her as a colleague. She voiced her appreciation for the opportunity to serve and her confidence that this experience will help her in her career journey.

Article 4.5 of the Board Bylaws states that the appointment of the student representative will be for one (1) year. President McPhee gave a summary of the Student Trustee selection process, noting that the process was managed by the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs and



the Student Government Association (SGA). Applications were submitted to the SGA Office. The SGA Executive Board reviewed the applications and selected applicants to be interviewed. After the interviews were conducted, the three (3) finalists' applications were sent to the Office of the President. President McPhee personally interviewed the top applicants.

President McPhee recommended Mr. Michai Mosby as the next Student Trustee. Mr. Mosby is accomplished academically and has actively participated in numerous activities across campus. For example, he has proven to be an outstanding leader among his peers, having served two (2) terms as President of the Student Government Association. He graduated this past May with his undergraduate degree and is currently enrolled as a graduate student.

### **Motion**

Trustee Wright motioned to accept the recommendation of Mr. Michai Mosby as the student representative for the MTSU Board of Trustees, and Trustee Wade seconded the motion. A voice 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 matters and activities at the University since the last Board meeting.

### **Recruitment and Enrollment Activity**

Dr. McPhee shared that all early indicators for Fall 2025 enrollment are trending positively. As of the previous week, the University was up one point five percent (1.5%) in total enrollment for the Fall. In addition, housing applications and assignments are at capacity with a waiting list, emphasizing the dire need for the new housing facility, which will accommodate five hundred fifty (550) beds. Also, the financial aid office packaged seven percent (7%) more students with financial aid than at the same time last year. The University admitted thirteen percent (13%) more freshmen than last year. Fourteen (14) freshman orientation sessions are scheduled over the summer. In the first five (5) summer orientations, one thousand five hundred and thirty-

three (1,533) students attended, a seventeen percent (17%) increase over the first five (5) sessions last year. At present, one thousand four hundred (1,400) students have signed up for the remaining nine (9) sessions, and students will continue to have the chance to register through July.

President McPhee noted his concern that pauses in international student visa processing and new DEI measures could potentially have an adverse impact on enrollment. He confirmed that the University has not been impacted so far, but will continue to monitor these issues very carefully for the upcoming semester.

#### Aerospace Department Update

President McPhee invited Dr. Chaminda Prelis, Chair of the Aerospace Department, to provide an update on the move to Shelbyville and what our plans and aspirations include for the relocation. Dr. Prelis first described the current student population by sharing that in the last ten (10) years, the number of students has almost doubled from six hundred seventy-three (673) to one thousand three hundred twenty-five (1,325). The student profile includes the largest veteran composition on campus at ten percent (10%). Dr. Prelis then outlined the accredited undergraduate concentrations within the department: Aviation Management; Flight Dispatch, Maintenance Management; Professional Pilot, Technology, and Unmanned Aircraft Systems. He also noted the online graduate programs, including a hopeful Ph.D. in Aviation. He highlighted the student cost, which includes \$60,000 in flight costs, and that it is generally less than that of peer institutions. Dr. Prelis next shared some of the department's challenges, such as faculty/staff hiring and retention due to industry salary pressure, and funding for equipment and facilities.

Regarding the program transition, Dr. Prelis shared the location of the Shelbyville campus in relation to the current Shelbyville airport terminal. The project footprint covers over sixteen (16) acres, which is much bigger than our Murfreesboro space. Shelbyville currently contains a temporary facility that has allowed operations to start this past January with twelve (12)

airplanes, about a third of the fleet, and one hundred students. Dr. Prelis presented renderings of the exterior and interior of the Phase 1 construction, which includes a flight operations building and a hangar for fleet maintenance. In addition, ramp space will be built out for up to sixty-five (65) airplanes. The program currently has forty-five (45) airplanes with additions planned over the next three (3) years. Phase 1 will hopefully be completed by the fall of 2027. Despite some obstacles that have delayed the project, including the discovery of wetlands, he is optimistic that groundbreaking will occur this fall. Phase 2 construction includes lab space for maintenance and a classroom building with a likely completion timeline between 2029 and 2031. Later, student housing and a parking garage will be added to complete the Shelbyville aerospace facility.

In response to Trustee questions, Dr. Prelis advised that the Diamond DA40 training planes cost \$500,000 each and, while their lifespan is unknown due to their very durable composite airframe, they will be replenished every seven (7) years to keep them on the cutting edge. He also explained that the Delta Propel Pilot Career Path Program provides MTSU aerospace students a direct path to become a Delta pilot after an interview in their sophomore year. Selected students receive mentorship and a guaranteed job offer after meeting program requirements. Also, the MTSU aviation program is ranked #3 based on various factors. Chairman Smith inquired about the ranking determination factors and how the program can move to #1. Dr. McPhee noted that establishing the Shelbyville facility will likely increase our ranking, and we will continue efforts to improve student-faculty ratios, compensation, and other factors that go into rankings. Dr. McPhee also observed that the unmanned aircraft systems discipline offers growth opportunities, including expanding our partnership with the Department of Defense.

Chairman Smith noted the support of the City of Shelbyville and the assistance of Congressman Scott DesJarlais in moving the project forward. In addition, he recognized the contributions of Governor Bill Lee and Deputy Governor and Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Transportation, Butch Eley.

### Athletics Department Update

President McPhee invited Chris Massaro, Director of Athletics, to provide an update on the NCAA, NIL, and all the changes in collegiate athletics. Mr. Massaro began by explaining that beginning in July 2021, following years of litigation, including the groundbreaking O'Bannon v. NCAA lawsuit, the NCAA enacted a policy removing restrictions on student-athletes' ability to profit from their name, image, and likeness (NIL). Student-athletes could now monetize personal attributes through endorsements, merchandise, appearances, social media posts, autographs, and similar methods. Importantly, it is not considered "pay-to-play" because the school does not pay student-athletes for their athletic performance. Instead, they are paid directly by either a company or through a collective.

Mr. Massaro then outlined recent changes due to the June 6, 2025, landmark House v. NCAA settlement. Most significantly, effective July 1, 2025, the settlement allows schools to share revenue directly with student-athletes, meaning student-athletes could receive up to twenty-two percent (22%) of their school's annual revenue up to a max of \$20.5 million.

With regards to the current revenue paths for student-athletes, Mr. Massaro explained that there are three (3) key models: 1) through the school (revenue share), 2) with a company, and 3) through a collective. He stated that Deloitte administers the "NIL Go" platform to review NIL deals worth six hundred dollars (\$600) or more that are outside the university revenue share. This review process is designed to ensure deals represent fair market value. In addition to shared revenue, several other substantial changes and restrictions went into effect as of July 1, 2025. A total roster limit for select sports, such as football, baseball, and basketball, replaced traditional limits on the number of scholarships. In addition, scholarship valuations may vary from full to partial across the roster. Mr. Massaro also described the College Sports Commission (CSC), a newly established organization created to oversee the new revenue-sharing model in college sports.

Lastly, the House v. NCAA settlement calls for \$2.8 billion in backpay to former and current athletes impacted by NIL compensation restrictions between 2016 and 2024. Mr. Massaro described the current environment as trying to build the airplane while it is flying. Athletics may take a while to feel the full impact of this new framework, and the department needs to be nimble enough to make timely adjustments to the marketplace.

In response to queries from Trustees, Mr. Massaro stated that a Title IX challenge has put a hold on the distribution of the \$2.8 billion backpay award. The backpay will ultimately come from all thirty-one (31) conferences on an NCAA developed formula basis. In MTSU's case, the Conference USA NCAA distribution will be reduced annually for the next ten (10) years. He commended Dr. McPhee because the conference amount was significantly higher, and he worked with the NCAA to get that lowered. Regarding the settlement's impact on operations, Mr. Massaro expressed that the settlement and other issues affect how they function. For example, the transfer rules have benefited student-athletes and created additional departmental costs in recruiting and apparel. However, the department is adjusting wherever possible to account for these costs, such as reducing the number of football uniform combinations.

Mr. Massaro stated that Raiders Rising, the official NIL collective for MTSU, is led by a group of committed individuals who have been terrific and will continue to be part of the student revenue equation. However, he noted that contributions to the collective are not tax deductible. While gifts for the benefit of the Athletic department may be considered charitable contributions, Joe Bales, Vice President for University Advancement, added that the IRS has not addressed the revenue share issue. He also shared that several legislative bills in Congress may clarify outstanding issues.

Acknowledging the challenges ahead, Mr. Massaro shared that he remains confident in the MTSU Athletics department and believes that recruiting and student welfare remain on a positive trajectory despite regulatory uncertainty.

### Summer Commencement

President McPhee noted that summer commencement is eight (8) weeks away, on August 9, 2025. As is tradition, Dr. Suzanne Sutherland, the past Faculty Senate President, will be the commencement speaker. President McPhee advised that if any trustees are interested in attending, they should please let his office know.

### **Conclusion**

Chair Smith did not have any closing remarks but announced that the Board will call a private executive session at the end of every meeting in the future.

### **Adjournment**

Chairman Smith adjourned the meeting at 2:33 p.m., and the Board went into confidential non-public executive session to discuss matters not subject to public inspection under Tennessee Code Annotated Section 49-8-201 (f)(7)(B)(iii)(b).

Respectfully submitted,



James C. Floyd, Board Secretary