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Members Present: Mark Abolins, Murat Arik, Kathryn Blankenship, Andrew Brower, Larry Burriss, William Canak, Tricia Farwell, Joey Gray, Tina Hall, Joshua Harms, Pippa Holloway, Robert Kalwinsky, Yang Kim, Paul Kline, Vanessa Lefler, Alfred Lutz, Preston MacDougall, Mary Martin, David Otts, John Pennington, Joshua Phillips, Terry Quinn, Deana Raffo, Jason Reineke, Michael Rice, Lauren Rudd, Saleh Sbenaty, Kristi Shamburger, Mary Ellen Sloane, Sherri Stevens, Kristen West

Members Absent: Don Aliquo, Tyler Babb, Tammy Bahmanziari, Martha Balachandran, Tom Black, Alan Boehm, Laura Cochrane, Mamit Deme, Mark Doyle, Justin Gardner, Tim Greer, Scott McDaniel, Ariana Postlethwait, Michael Principe, Nat Smith, Shane Smith, Donald Snead, Michelle Stevens, Deborah Wagon, Zhifu Yang

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## Agenda

1. President Mary Martin called the meeting to order at 3:28 p.m.
2. The purpose of this called meeting was for President McPhee to update the Senate on various matters and to address questions from Senators.

## **Summary of President McPhee's remarks**

For the past six months, President McPhee, his office, and campus administrators have been preparing for implementation of the MTSU Board of Trustees. At the Board's inaugural meeting on April 10, they selected officers and committee chairs. Dr. McPhee is now preparing to submit proposed MTSU Policy revisions to the appropriate Board committees. The committees are responsible for recommending policy approval to the entire Board. We will continue to operate under applicable TBR policies until the Board approves replacement MTSU policies. The Board's Finance and Personnel Committee met today (April 24).

This will be an active board. The Board elected Stephen Smith as Chair and Darrell Freeman as Vice Chair. Chairman Smith in turn appointed other board members to chair the standing committees. Dr. McPhee is pleased that Pam Wright will be chairing

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the Academic Affairs, Student Life & Athletics Committee and that Dr. Tony Johnston will serve on that committee and on the Finance and Personnel Committee. Christine Karbowski will chair the Audit and Compliance Committee.

One of Dr. McPhee's goals is to help the Board members understand MTSU's budget and to provide an intensive orientation so they can make informed decisions. Only 22% of the university's \$417 million revenue budget comes from state appropriations, whereas student tuition and fees account for almost half of MTSU's revenue. Personnel costs account for 72% of the expenditure budget. In his presentation at the first Board meeting, Alan Thomas highlighted the cumulative \$38 million dollar budget reduction MTSU has experienced in the last 9 years.

At the Board meeting, Dr. McPhee reminded Governor Haslam that he set aside \$25 million for state employee salaries, and that we need to do that for higher education employees. The only way we're going to significantly address our salary disparity is through a major infusion of dollars from the state.

Dr. McPhee has spent considerable one on one time with each Board member over the last few months and feels they will be sensitive to the needs of our employees. The majority of the Board members understand their role as oversight rather than management and they understand there are differences between operating a business and an institution of higher education.

Chairman Smith and several other Board members feel strongly about metrics and the idea of evaluating programs and departments based on metrics. Dr. McPhee will inform the Board that this is nothing new to us, but that we have too much diversity of programs to use a cookie cutter approach to measurement. Developing appropriate metrics is an administrative responsibility, not a board responsibility.

Student Success is another topic that Dr. McPhee will discuss with the Board. We are working hard to increase and retain our yield. Every 1% increase in enrollment is equivalent to an additional \$1.5 million in revenue.

MTSU is the only public university in Tennessee that does its own recruiting without contracting with an outside entity for recruitment services. We chose to act strategically and to identify areas where we could realize enrollment increases. This year we're adding Birmingham as a stop on the True Blue Tour, along with stops in Atlanta, Huntsville, Louisville, and Bowling Green. Enrollment from Williamson County has increased almost 20%. Even with our challenges, we have never compromised our admission standards. This year, we also named the first set of True Blue 100 honorees—100 outstanding high school freshmen who consistently demonstrate True Blue values (see <http://mtsu.edu/TrueBlue100/>).

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Another topic the Board is interested in is what is happening to our students when they graduate. Board members want to know who is graduating and who is getting a job. Student success and employment are related.

We are aware of the need to inform the Board about and stress the importance of tenure at our university. As the Provost meets with the Board's academic affairs committee, that will be a large part of the agenda.

Q: Can MTSU now establish our own list of institution peers that will provide a vision for MTSU, rather than using the peer list we inherited from TBR?

A: We will still be working with the THEC peer list, but a list of aspirational peers would be very helpful. It would be a great idea for the Faculty Senate to discuss the elements and characteristics of an aspirational peer. I can have some discussions with Board members about their ideas concerning aspirational peers.

Q: I appreciate that Dr. Sells' presentation to the Board included a statement about the number of student involuntary commitments last year. Can we work to help Board members understand that students require a lot of support? Many students need much more help than a faculty member can provide, and faculty members are often forced to wear many different hats in order to help students succeed.

A: Yes; I will also be stressing that the socioeconomic characteristics of our students and their families are much different than at a school such as UT. The funding formula, however, doesn't account for such differences.

Q: What is your stance on outsourcing maintenance services? Will we be notified when Terry Cowles, Director of Customer Focused Government for the State of Tennessee visits campus?

A: I'm not a fan of outsourcing for higher education. A university with students on campus 24/7, snow days to manage, etc., is different than a business. Unless the governor and the MTSU Board say we have to outsource, my position is we won't be a part of that. Yes, I will let you know when Terry Cowles is scheduled to be here.

Q: You have described Tony Johnston as our representative to the Board. Can you elaborate on his role and if it would be appropriate to invite him to a Faculty Senate meeting?

A: The faculty, as the core of our campus, appointed Dr. Johnston as the faculty trustee. He is a full voting member of the Board. He may, however, have to make decisions as a board member that are not universally popular. There is no reason the Faculty Senate can't invite Dr. Johnston to a meeting to provide a report or to answer questions. That

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would be a consistent action based on his position as a representative of the entire campus.

Q: To what extent do you think the Board's priorities will align with ours in relation to student success?

A: I would be surprised if they do not agree that student success needs to be a major part of our strategic plan.

Q: Do you think the lack of support for higher education in Tennessee will ever change?

A: I am not optimistic that it will. The legislature is putting a lot of money into the community colleges and technology centers, and into the Tennessee Promise and Tennessee Reconnect programs. Tennessee is beginning to attract national notice for these programs. But we received only \$500,000 in enhancement funds this year, and the mandated 3% salary increase for higher education employees was not fully funded. On the other hand, the state fully funded a 4% salary increase for state employees and an additional \$25 million for salary equity. Higher education doesn't have any advocates. Tennessee Tech announced employee layoffs a few weeks ago, as a direct result of dropping enrollment. I will hammer this message [of political and financial climate] home to the Board.

Q: Do our students pay more out of pocket percentage-wise than private school students do?

A: I suspect they do.

Q: Would it help us to have more visibility at legislative committees?

A: There is a fear that the universities will be cannibalizing each other as they fight for funding. We don't want an all-out fight for attention yet. Although the governor doesn't want us in the lobbying business, he can't stop us. It will be survival of the fittest. We've added a person downtown in addition to John Hood. There are some sneaky university projects in this budget amendment, and it will be interesting to see if they're approved. The Board can make decisions about tuition and fees, but will be restricted by THEC's cap on undergraduate tuition. Graduate tuition doesn't have a cap.

Q: Our top three feeder high schools are from Rutherford County. Why do we receive so few applications from Davidson County?

A: We've looked at these numbers, and that's why we have been focusing on Williamson County. We get a good number of applications from Davidson County, but we should be getting more. In both cases we're making progress but are still not doing well. Competition is tough. Dependence on tuition is forcing other universities to up their

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game. We hope to see a healthy increase in overall fall enrollment, though it's still too early to predict.

Q: Will you be conducting a search for the Provost position?

A: My office has been so busy preparing for the governance transition that I haven't had time to address the Provost vacancy. I welcome your comments and thoughts about this matter and about Dr. Byrnes' performance as interim Provost. I hope by the late fall to make a decision about appointing the interim Provost to the permanent position or about conducting a search. Dr. Byrnes will be welcome to apply if we conduct a search.

Q: The Provost is the primary advocate for the faculty and has to have a vision for the future.

Q: I suggest asking what kind of person you want in that office. A transformative leader? Transactional person? Someone who will set priorities and lead? I also suggest looking at Dr. Byrnes' time as dean and his evaluations during that time.

Q: Perhaps we should stress to the Board the need to recruit and keep good faculty—that argument may be better received than one based on academic freedom. Several trustees are MTSU alumni. Can ask them about their experiences with instructors when they were students, and remind them that most of their instructors would have been tenure track faculty?

Q: Tenure, academic freedom, and shared governance form an interdependent triad. The only way to make a good argument for these principles is to demonstrate how they support student success.

Q: The AAUP just released its annual faculty compensation study ([https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/FCS\\_2016-17\\_nc.pdf](https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/FCS_2016-17_nc.pdf)). Every year you say you want to see us in it and every year we aren't.

A: The omission isn't intentional. Send me an email about the details.

Q: What do you see as the role of research as part of academic freedom?

A: We don't want to separate teaching from research and service. We're not a major research institution, but we need to give attention to the areas where we do excel at research and service. With the percentage of full time faculty we have, we should expect excellence in teaching, service, and research. While I've been here, we've tenured some excellent teachers who were shaky in research. We also need to do a better job of recognizing faculty service on campus, particularly by women. Research plays a part in formula funding.

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Q: Will faculty salaries be available on the MTSU Web site now that they aren't on the TBR Web site?

A: They need to be.

Q: What is your "crystal ball preview" of the next six months?

A: Don't overreact or become particularly excited about certain comments from trustees as they work out their roles on the Board. They will be active and you will hear a lot from them—some things you like and some you don't. The majority of the trustees are going to do the right thing for campus. The political climate could be totally different in six months. Although not finalized, the League of Women Voters has identified MTSU as a likely site for a gubernatorial debate. I hope the university will continue to make progress and be in a position to do something beyond a one or two percent salary increase. People are our number one resource. I have to get that message across to the Board. You can never do too much communicating.

3. Mary Martin adjourned the meeting at 5:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristen West  
2016-2017 Faculty Senate Recording Secretary