

**Middle Tennessee State University**  
*Diversity Plan for 2011-2015*

**Introduction**

Promoting diversity at all levels of academic life is a central goal of Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) and a strategic objective of the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR), as well as a requirement of all TBR institutions. In the process, we create environments that assure equity and inclusive excellence. Consequently, diversity is integral to the entire educational process as evident in the MTSU mission statement, the Academic Master Plan, and the MTSU Strategic Plan.

MTSU's *Mission Statement* – Middle Tennessee State University commits to “promoting openness and educating a diverse student body from across the nation and around the world through comprehensive undergraduate and select master’s and doctoral degrees. MTSU prepares students...to employ...an understanding of culture and history...and to participate as citizens in the global community.”

MTSU's *Academic Master Plan* highlights the institution as “delivering quality education in instruction, scholarship, and service in an environment that is inclusive, values diversity, expands opportunities for international education and responds to the needs of multicultural student population.”

The *Institutional Strategic Plan* for MTSU (proposed Mission Statement) “embraces its role as the destination of choice for Tennessee undergraduates while expanding its reach nationally and internationally through signature programs and select master’s and doctoral programs...The university is committed to preparing students to thrive in their chosen professions and a changing global society.”

MTSU is the largest institution in the TBR system with an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 26,000. The institution responds to the vision of the TN Board of Regents (TBR) to "be distinguished by public trust in its program quality, research, service, wise use of resources, and commitment to access and diversity."

The TBR system plan addresses priority areas along with the plans of each of its institutions to "set new directions for higher education in the state of Tennessee." In its 2010-2015 Strategic Plan – *Charting the Course* - the TBR has identified four priorities: access, student success, quality, and resourcefulness and efficiency (p.10).

- I. Access: “Improving opportunities for more Tennesseans to earn post-secondary credentials is a primary area of focus for the TBR system. Vital to this effort will be addressing barriers such as affordability, preparedness and technology, as well as issues related to increasing participation levels of traditionally underserved populations.”
  
- II. Student Success: "Increasing the number of citizens with diplomas, certificates, and degrees is a critical area of focus for the TBR system. Fostering greater success of students to persist and complete credentials and degrees enhances the viability of academic programs... Measures of student success can be improved by continuing to work with Tennessee high schools through P – 16 agreements and dual credit and dual enrollment programs...e-learning, co-curricular activities, and faculty-guided research

and mentoring...”

III. Quality: "Improving access and completion rates in higher education can improve the lives of Tennesseans only to the degree that students acquire and retain knowledge, skills and abilities they need to become productive employees and responsible citizens. To achieve excellence in all areas of our collective mission, we must provide high quality academic programs, faculty, services and facilities.”

IV. Resourcefulness & Efficiency: “A major point of focus must be to identify resources that can be used for need-based aid for students who cannot afford the rising cost [of tuition and fees] but are not eligible for achievement-based financial aid. Decisions leading to increasing tuition must include addressing the basic financial needs of these students.”

Accordingly, the MTSU *Academic Master Plan* identifies three foundational goals which are:

**I. Excellence:** Middle Tennessee State University will promote academic quality by enhancing learning, teaching, scholarship and service and by celebrating MTSU's distinctive strengths.

**II. Student-Centeredness:** Middle Tennessee State University will promote individual student success and responsibility for accomplishments through fostering a student-centered learning culture.

**III. Partnerships:** Middle Tennessee State University will promote partnerships and public service to enhance educational, social, cultural, and economic well-being.

Currently at MTSU, diversity is integrated into the core curricular in accordance with its mission and goals – academic and administrative. For example, the responsibility for creating a multicultural environment for the students has been relocated to the Office of Intercultural and Diversity Affairs (IDAC) Center – which reports to student affairs - to maximize efficiency. The responsibility for coordinating all institutional diversity efforts is under the auspices of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (VPAA) for purposes of planning and communication. This is the central place on campus for unifying those efforts. Working with an 18-member Diversity Advisory Board, the VPAA with the support of deans, department chairs, and directors-who in turn liaise with their respective faculty and staff –prepares the institution to achieve its diversity goals and in the process meet the guidelines of the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR).

During Summer and Fall 2010, through a Diversity Summit and Town Hall organized by the Office of the VPAA to foster dialogue on diversity at MTSU, we began to identify key players and gather suggestions for implementing various diversity programs at MTSU. The information gathered was included in this plan.

MTSU has identified diversity as an essential part of the educational process. The plan will propose a thorough review of what data needs to be gathered and what special initiatives need to be supported or implemented in order to achieve the goals to which MTSU has committed itself. Each effort will have an educational rationale and will be designed to meet specific objectives that are the result of a comprehensive look at underrepresented groups on the campus. These objectives will be identified based on data, information, and input from a variety of sources including institutional resources, business and industry, community leaders, etc. Additionally, mechanisms should be in place to track the progress of the program and include periodic review to determine whether the program has had its desired effect.

This plan is organized to identify both the TBR and MTSU goals that are to be realized upon the accomplishment of the diversity goals established in this document. All of the MTSU diversity goals (**in brown print**) that have been identified for this period are under the TBR "Access" priority (**in red print**) and under all three of the MTSU goals (**in blue print**): "Excellence", "Student-Centeredness" and "Partnerships".

**TBR Priority: Access**

The TBR system and its institutions will develop a methodology to utilize access and diversity resources to implement best practices for increasing participation levels of traditionally underserved populations.

**Goal:**

TBR and its institutions will use technology to increase participation in post-secondary education and workforce development.

**Indicator(s):**

Measurable factors of achievement after using system-wide strategies to increase participation of underserved populations in learning including use of access and diversity funds for scholarships.

**MTSU Goal I**

Middle Tennessee State University will promote academic quality by enhancing learning, teaching, scholarship, and service and by celebrating MTSU's distinctive strengths.

**MTSU Strategic Direction 2**

1. Middle Tennessee State University will review and improve processes that lead to enhancement of instructional quality.

**MTSU Diversity Plan Objectives:**

1. Working through the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE), compile baseline data on diversity demographic that track progress/lack in providing access to under-served population-increasing access to learning and developing a critical mass of diverse student groups. By 2013 our access objective will increase (as institutional enrollment increases) among underserved populations.
2. Compile and analyze MTSU faculty/staff demographic data to understand which employee groups might be underrepresented as compared to other TBR institutions. Comparative data are now being gathered.

3. Identify the faculty/staff demographics that determine what employee groups, by unit, might be underrepresented compared to their numbers in the student population of the same unit.
4. Explore with the faculty how to develop, implement, and assess culturally-based competency in teaching. Responsible parties include: VPAA, Deans, and department chairs.
5. Determine the diversity climate [update the last climate study] at the university and department levels for students, faculty and staffs.

**MTSU Diversity Plan Benchmark:**

1. By 2015 MTSU will have recruited and retained in 50% of all departments a diverse, highly qualified, and active faculty- both in instruction and scholarship-who develop and deliver exemplary courses of study and engage students in collaborative inquiry. In the interim, data will be gathered each year beginning Fall 2012.
2. In collaboration with the various stakeholders, conduct a diversity town hall meeting every fall, and a summit (with a guest speaker) on cultural diversity every summer. The information gathered is included in this report, and continues to be used to guide dialogue and decisions across campus.

**MTSU Strategic Direction 3**

1. Middle Tennessee State University will provide adequate facilities to meet the diverse learning needs of students.

**MTSU Diversity Plan Objectives:**

1. To increase the available space for the social and cultural needs of minority students. Rationale: The creation of the Office of Institutional Diversity and the MTSU Scholars Academy has helped meet the social and cultural needs of minority students. However, as the office staff and Scholars Academy have grown, the facility space has increasingly become too small.

**MTSU Diversity Plan Benchmark:**

1. Begin conversation with the Director of Facility Services on the possibility of having a space for a Multicultural Center. Responsible parties include Provost, VPAA, and Coordinator for space issues. Dialogue is on-going. A target date is Fall 2011.
2. Working with the Office of Development on finding funds for a Multicultural Center at MTSU. Discussion will commence during summer 2011.

**TBR Priority: Student Success**

Increasing the number of citizens with diplomas, certificates, and degrees is a critical area of focus for the TBR system. Fostering greater success of students to persist and complete credentials and degrees enhances the viability of academic programs.

**Goal:**

The TBR system and its institutions will enhance student persistence to the completion of the post-secondary credential or degree.

**Indicator(s):**

- a). Progression rate, which measures both full time and part time degree or certificate-seeking students who either complete an ward or enroll in the subsequent term, and
- b). Number of students completing post-secondary credential annually.

**MTSU Strategic Direction 1**

Middle Tennessee State University will increase student academic attainment and encourage students to engage in life-long learning.

**MTSU Diversity Plan Objectives:**

In efforts to make MTSU a diversified campus, all stakeholders including the VPAA, the Advisory Board, faculty, staff and students) will work together to ensure that all students and those from underrepresented groups are provided the resources to complete college, and continue to graduate and professional school. The VPAA convenes on a monthly basis.

**MTSU Diversity Plan Benchmark:**

Annual data compiled showing continuous improvement in degree attainment, and evidence of continuation to graduate and professional school. This system should be fully implemented by 2015.

**TBR Priority: Quality**

Achieve excellence in all areas of our collective mission by providing high quality academic programs, faculty, services and facilities.

**Goal:** Institutions will monitor and improve the effectiveness of their educational programs.

**Indicator(s):**

Annual report on TBR General Education outcomes.

**MTSU GOAL II**

Middle Tennessee State University will promote individual student success and responsibility for accomplishments through fostering a student-centered learning culture.

**MTSU Strategic Direction 1**

Middle Tennessee State University will develop and implement academic programs and initiatives that enrich student learning and success through experiential activities.

**MTSU Diversity Plan Objectives:**

1. Identified or measure diversity content in each major (curriculum) for all students.
2. Review and analyze enrollment demographics, by colleges/departments/ programs/units that determine what student groups, by year, might be underrepresented compared to their numbers in the State of Tennessee-among TBR institutions, or by field of study.
3. Identify major/program enrollment demographics that determine what student groups might be underrepresented in some majors and over-concentrated in others.
4. Identify course withdrawal, failure (DFW) rates by student groups to determine if some

student groups are not passing "gate-keeping" courses.

5. Identify the retention rates by major and students groups.
6. Identify the graduation rates by major and student groups.
7. Identify student group access to special program/ organization/institution support that increases the likelihood of graduation?

### **MTSU Diversity Plan Benchmark**

1. By 2015, each major will have a baseline report for the following rates by diverse student groups to determine which groups are underserved in what areas:
  - a. Enrollment by major
  - b. Enrollment by college
  - c. DFW (drop, failures, and withdrawals) classes
  - d. Retention
  - e. Graduation

Interim data will be gathered at the end of each academic year. The offices of admissions, enrollment management, the departments, and Institutional Effectiveness will monitor these trends.

2. MTSU will continue to see increases in recruitment, retention and graduation rates in the Scholars Academy as a model for underserved students. A ten percent increase annually is realistic depending on funding availability.
3. Through increased coordination and collaboration, work to enhance and to increase the opportunity for more resources for underserved students (graduate and undergraduate). Responsible parties: the VPAA, Admissions Office and Equity and Compliance.

### **TBR Mission:**

Through innovation and judicious use of resources, the Tennessee Board of Regents system advances excellence in its diverse educational programs, research, service and outreach in order to benefit Tennessee and its citizens.

### **MTSU GOAL III**

Middle Tennessee State University will promote partnerships and public service to enhance educational, social, cultural, and economic well-being [of all].

### **Strategic Direction 3**

1. Middle Tennessee State University will pursue innovative and creative partnerships that enhance learning, scholarship, and engagement and that further social, cultural, and economic development.

MTSU Diversity Plan Objectives:

1. MTSU will institutionalize an Access and Diversity Advisory Board.
  - a. The Access and Diversity Advisory Board will advise the Office of the University provost on all matters pertaining to diversity; write the institution's Annual Report and the MTSU Diversity Plan; update all plans, and

b. Assist the VPAA in implementing diversity initiatives at MTSU.

2. MTSU will embrace a diversity mission statement and definition jointly developed by the various stakeholders and approved by the Access and Diversity Advisory Board. [See *Attachment Two* for current formulations. These will be updated if necessary].

3. MTSU will share and promote its Diversity Mission Statement and Definition among the various academic units.

**MTSU Diversity Plan Benchmark:**

1. By 2015, the MTSU Diversity Mission statement –already in place- will have become fully institutionalized (implemented, communicated, and subjected to ongoing assessment). As institutional needs change (e.g. through hiring of Chief Diversity Officer) it may be necessary to revisit the mission statement. Responsible parties: the A&D Advisory Board, the VPAA, and faculty and staff.

**TBR Priority: Resourcefulness & Efficiency**

Identify financial resources that can be used for need-based aid for students who cannot afford the rising costs.

**Goal:**

TBR System and institutions will address fiscal constraints through multiple approaches such as the prudent management of resources, development of other sources of support, and the pursuit of entrepreneurial initiatives.

**Indicator(s):**

Each institution in the TBR system will develop plans that a) show funds being raised through sources other than state appropriations and student tuition and fees, and b) promote efficiency. *TBR Strategic Plan 2010-2015*, p.16.

**MTSU Strategic Direction 5 (Section 5)**

1. MTSU will enhance and enhance student learning through financial support of students; actively seek additional scholarships and stipends to increase the number and quality of students in its undergraduate and graduate programs.

**MTSU Diversity Plan Objectives:**

1. Identify diverse or underserved student groups' according to their access to state and federal financial aid by academic year (freshman, sophomore, junior and senior year).
2. Continue to increase scholarships available to underserved student groups. For some underserved groups, possible scholarship options are more limited than in previous decades due to the elimination of minority scholarship programs; for other groups, scholarship opportunities have always been limited, and students in such groups have historically been underserved.

**MTSU Diversity Plan Benchmark**

To ensure accountability, the Vice Provost will continue to work closely with the Office of

Equity and Compliance, the Financial Aid Office, Office of graduate Studies, the Intercultural & Diversity Affairs Center (IDAC) and others administering Access and Diversity funds, to ensure proper record-keeping and reporting to the appropriate agencies. This system should be fully implemented by Spring 2015.

**Attachment One**  
**Middle Tennessee State University**  
***Access and Diversity Advisory Board***

David Cicotello, Associate Vice Provost, Admissions and Enrollment Services

Stephen White, Director, Financial Aid

John Harris, Director, Disabled Student Services

Kathy Musselman, Assistant Vice President, Human Resources

Vincent Windrow, Director, Intercultural and Diversity Affairs

Rick Henegar, Director, International Graduate and Undergraduate Admissions

Laurie Witherow, Director, Academic Support Center, University College

Barbara Patton, Director, Institutional Equity and Compliance

Warner Cribb, Faculty Senate President (or representative appointed by Warner)

Brandon Batts, SGA President (or representative appointed by Brandon)

Terri Johnson, Director, June Anderson Center for Women and Non-traditional Students

Rosemary Owens, University Strategic Partnerships

Guanping Zheng, Director, Confucius Institute

Cathy Delametter, Center for Veterans Affairs

*Faculty-at-Large*

Lynn Hampton, Asst Professor, Sociology and Anthropology

Loren Mulraine, Chair, Recording Industry

Dorothy Valcarcel Craig, Professor, Educational Leadership

*Community-at-Large*

George Smith, MD [Board member, MLK Jr. Fund]

## Attachment Two

### **Diversity Statement:**

*The mission of* Middle Tennessee State University articulates a commitment to diversity as a core value: "The University is dedicated to promoting openness and educating a diverse student body from across the nation and around the world through comprehensive undergraduate and select masters and doctoral programs. MTSU prepares students to live productively and to become lifelong learners; to employ scientific knowledge and an understanding of culture and history; to think logically, critically, and creatively; to communicate clearly; to make sound judgments; to acquire working knowledge of a discipline or group of related disciplines; and to participate as citizens in the global community."

The University recognizes that our nation is fast becoming a majority of minorities. While the distribution of power and privilege remains much the same, students must be equipped for many other changes. The truly defining issue of the age is necessarily learning to deal with diversity. Responsible citizens must acquire the courage to forego single cultural perspectives and the skills and knowledge to see, consult and find understanding with people of other cultures. A community cannot live without some level of understanding on many basic questions. Learning to come to an understanding, while taking account of multiple points of view, is a skill needed for both individual and community prosperity. To educate students to this reality, it is imperative that MTSU provide a representatively diverse student, faculty, and administration environment.

### **Diversity Defined:**

Diversity means difference. It is inclusive and can embrace *innate characteristics* (such as age, race, gender, ethnicity, national origin, physical appearance and/or abilities, and sexual orientation), and *acquired characteristics* (such as education, socio-economic class, religious beliefs, work experience, language skills, geographic location).

Diversity is a core value at MTSU providing an invaluable competitive asset that promotes excellence because it generates a multiplicity of ideas, attitudes and perspectives. Diversity leads to more innovative and efficient problem solving, fosters an understanding and acceptance of individuals from different backgrounds, and cognizes the contributions that a variety of individuals and groups can make. Diversity at MTSU means being concerned with issues of access to resources, equity, and power. Our ultimate goal is a campus climate that is inclusive, understanding, respectful, and appreciative of the full range of human experience.