641 Student Fees – Incidental Charges and Refunds

Approved by Board of Trustees
Effective Date: _____________, 2020
Responsible Division: Business and Finance
Responsible Office: Business and Finance
Responsible Officer: Associate Vice President, Business and Finance

I. Purpose

This policy outlines significant provisions for the administration of fees, fines, charges, and refunds at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU or University).

II. Establishment of Fees, Fines, and Charges

A. The MTSU Board of Trustees (Board) must establish or approve all University fees, fines, and charges, unless specific exceptions are provided.

B. The President is responsible for the enforcement and collection of all fees, fines, and charges. Fees, fines, and charges which specifically do not require Board approval must receive formal approval by the President or designee.

C. The University should attempt to follow a general format in publishing information on fees, fines, and charges, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. All statements which include the fee amount should be complete and specific enough to prevent misunderstanding by readers.

2. When a fee is quoted, the refund procedures should be clearly stated. If there are qualifying conditions for refunds (i.e., specific dates), those conditions also should be stated. If there is no refund, it should be labeled as non-refundable.

3. It should be made clear that all fees are subject to change at any time.

D. Current tuition and fee rates, fee payment dates, and refund procedures can be found on the “What Does it Cost” webpage.
III. Approval of Exceptions

A. In accordance with this policy, the President has the authority to determine the applicability of certain fees, fines, charges, and refunds, and to approve exceptions in instances of unusual circumstances or for special groups.

B. All such actions should be properly documented for auditing purposes.

IV. Appeals Process

A. An appeals process should be established by the University, and communicated to students, faculty, and staff.

B. The process should provide for final appeal to the President or designee.

C. Separate appeals processes may exist for different types of fees, charges, and refunds.

V. Exchange of Revenue

Public institutions exchange funds for tuition and fees of employees’ spouses and dependents who participate in an education assistance program.

VI. Tuition and Fees Subject to Board Approval

A. Maintenance Fees. Charged to students enrolled in credit courses or on an audit basis. It is an enrollment or registration fee and is calculated based on the number of Student Credit Hours (SCH's).

1. Rates are established by student level (undergraduate and graduate). The hourly rate will be discounted when undergraduate students enroll in greater than twelve (12) hours and graduate students in greater than ten (10) hours, unless stated otherwise elsewhere in this policy.

2. For multiple summer sessions, maintenance fees and tuition are assessed by using the current part-time rate with no maximum amount for total credit hours enrolled.

3. Maintenance fees may not be waived unless specific exceptions are outlined in state statute. T.C.A. § 49-7-113 provides exceptions for certain disabled and elderly students, as well as state service retirees; T.C.A. § 49-7-102 outlines certain exceptions for dependents and spouses of military personnel; and T.C.A. § 49-7-2304 provides exceptions for certain military reserve and National Guard personnel.
B. Out-of-State Tuition. An additional fee charged to students classified as non-residents who are enrolled in for-credit courses, including audit courses. This fee is in addition to the maintenance fee.

1. A separate hourly rate for out-of-state tuition will be set for undergraduate and graduate students. A full-time student is defined as an undergraduate enrolled in twelve (12) hours or a graduate student enrolled in ten (10) hours.

2. Applicability of out-of-state tuition is determined pursuant to Policy 501 Residency Classification. The Business Office will collect fees based upon student classification as determined under that policy.

C. Regional Scholars Program

1. This program is restricted to:

   a. admitted undergraduate students who graduate from a high school located in a county within a specified radius of the MTSU campus as determined by the Board of Trustees and published on the Regional Scholars Program website, have at least a twenty-five (25) ACT, or the SAT equivalent, maintain full-time status (minimum of twelve [12] hours), and remain in good academic standing.

   b. admitted graduate students who have a permanent address that is located in a county within the same specified radius of the MTSU campus as noted above, maintain full-time status (minimum of ten [10] hours), and remain in good academic standing.

2. If a student drops below minimum hours stated above, they are assessed out-of-state fees for that term.

3. The out-of-state tuition rate charged to students eligible for the program rate will equal the University’s state subsidy per full-time equivalent for the prior fiscal year. This rate is capped at twelve (12) hours for undergraduate students and ten (10) hours for graduate students.

4. The program rate does not impact students who otherwise qualify for border county classification or other in-state residency classification.

D. eRate. Available to students who enroll at MTSU, who are classified as non-residents of Tennessee, and who are enrolled exclusively in online courses.

1. The eRate is one hundred fifty percent (150%) of the University’s approved undergraduate or graduate maintenance fee.
2. The hourly rate will not be discounted for students receiving the eRate and enrolling in greater than twelve (12) undergraduate hours or ten (10) graduate hours.

3. To qualify for an eRate, students must meet all University admission requirements and be verified as an online out-of-state student enrolled exclusively in courses delivered online by a procedure documented by the University. Out-of-state students refers to geographic location and does not include undocumented students living in Tennessee.

4. Students enrolled in any type courses other than online (on-ground, telecourse, distance education, etc.) will not be eligible for the eRate specified in this policy and will instead incur traditional non-resident fees and charges. Students who enroll in both online courses and other type courses, and subsequently drop the other type courses, will not then become eligible for the eRate.

5. Enrollment of eRate students as defined in this standard must mitigate any negative impact on the opportunity for Tennessee student enrollment in online courses.

E. Corporate Partnership Rate. Available to corporations that have entered into a formal partnership with MTSU to develop and deliver a degree completion program to their employees. The rate is equal to the approved undergraduate and graduate in-state rates.

F. Program Services Fee. A fee charged to students to support the following programs of the University:

1. Debt Service. Debt service fee revenue is used to retire debt on various capital projects of the University. At the conclusion of the debt retirement for a given project, the debt service fee attributed to the project will cease. Any new project requires the approval of a new debt service fee on its own merits without the reallocation of any existing fee. Any continuation of fees necessary for renewal and replacement of a project for which the debt is totally retired must be approved for that purpose by the Board.

2. Student Government Activity Fee. A student government activity fee may be established pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-8-109. Any increase in this fee shall be subject to a referendum pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-8-110 for student body approval or rejection. The fee will be administered in accordance with the provisions adopted by the University. These fees will be recorded as restricted revenue.

3. Technology Access Fee. Assessed by the University for the purpose of providing student access to computing and similar technologies.
a. The revenue from Technology Access Fees (TAF) should be used by the University for direct student benefit, for items such as new and improved high technology laboratories and classrooms, appropriate network and software, computer and other equipment, and technological improvements that enhance instruction. Specifically, TAF funds may be used for the following items:

(1) Computers and other technical laboratory supplies, equipment, software, and maintenance.
(2) Network costs (internet, interactive video, etc.)
(3) Classroom equipment and classroom modifications.
(4) Lab, helpdesk, and instructional support staffing by student employees.
(5) Renewal and replacement reserves as necessary.
(6) New machines for faculty use when faculty are actively engaged in developing and conducting on-line courses.
(7) Faculty and staff development directly related to the introduction or application of new technology which impacts students. Travel costs are not to be funded from TAF revenues.
(8) Infrastructure (wiring, network, servers, etc.) necessary to provide students maximum computing capability.

b. As part of the budget process, the University shall prepare a detailed spending plan for the use of funds generated by TAF.

c. The spending plan will be maintained by the University and will be updated throughout the year as needed. The President shall ensure that the spending plan is prepared. At the end of the fiscal year, a summary of the actual money generated and actual use of the money shall be prepared and maintained by the University.

d. Compliance with this policy will be audited by the internal audit staff and reported as determined by the internal auditor's annual risk-based planning process or other appropriate means.

4. Campus Access Fee. Assessed to all students each academic term for services provided related to parking and transportation on campus, as well as maintenance of the transportation infrastructure.

5. Postal Services Fee. Charged for U.S. postal services provided on campus to students.

6. Facilities Fee. Used to improve facilities and fund expenditures such as replacing carpets in student lounges, remodeling classrooms, provide matching funds for new academic building projects, etc. The fee is used to make improvements to areas that have an impact on students.
7. Student Recreation Fee. Used to improve facilities and fund expenditures related to operating the student recreation center for student, faculty, staff, and alumni use. The Student Recreation center is an auxiliary fully funded by this fee and sales revenue from fitness programs, locker rental, facility rental, etc.

8. Sustainable Campus Fee. A project voted on and approved by the students to support MTSU's participation in the TVA Green Power Switch program and clean energy initiatives on campus. A campus committee reviews proposals and assigns the funds to various projects.

9. Athletics Fee. A fee used to support athletics which allows students access to all athletic events with no additional entrance fee. This fee, along with general fund support from the education and general fund, ticket sales, game guarantees, concessions, etc. fully supports athletics.

10. Health Services Fee. Used to improve facilities and fund expenditures related to operating a Health Services facility for students, including a pharmacy. The Health Services center is an auxiliary fully supported by this fee and sales revenue.

11. International Education Fee. A fee charged to all students to support international programs. Fees are used to provide travel support for study abroad students participating in consortia programs, MTSU faculty led programs, bilateral exchange programs, and international experiential and service learning experiences and for internationalization of courses across the curriculum.

G. Specialized Academic Course Fees. Certain academic programs require expensive maintenance/updating of equipment and software and the employment of highly qualified staff. The high costs of instruction for these programs can be offset by establishing specialized academic fees, with the Board’s approval. Specialized academic course fee revenues are limited to funding only the related costs for providing these courses. To receive approval for a specialized academic fee, a program will be required to submit documentation to establish that the following criteria are met:

1. High Cost of Instruction. Programs qualifying for charging specialized academic fees must demonstrate that they are more costly than other programs offered by the University. If appropriate, the extraordinary cost of the program must be validated including benchmarking with similar programs in the region and nation.

2. High Demand. The number of students enrolled in the program and the student credit hours generated are sufficient to justify additional fees.

3. High Cost of Updating/Maintaining Equipment and Software. Programs qualifying for charging specialized academic fees are expected to be those that require extensive maintenance and regular updating of equipment and/or software, all of which are
very expensive. An average hardware/software cost per student credit hour serves as the basis for determining the amount of the fee.

4. Accreditation. Meeting standards of specific accrediting agencies may also qualify a specialized program for charging specialized academic fees. The accrediting standards that justify a fee are those that specify the possession and use of certain equipment and unique software that are extraordinarily costly and/or the employment of faculty with specific credentials that demand high salaries.

5. High Recognition and Quality. The programs approved for specialized academic fees are expected to be distinctive and with a regional or national reputation. The program must demonstrate that it has achieved exceptional recognition in its particular enterprise.

6. High Value to Tennessee. The program must demonstrate that it is a good investment for the State of Tennessee to justify charging extra fees to the student. The program should be distinctive and of integral value to Tennessee. The graduates’ earning potential and the associated benefit to the state economy should be projected, as well as the efforts taken by the University to aid graduates in finding appropriate employment in Tennessee.

7. Impact on Affected Students. Through surveys, questionnaires, or other suitable means, the program must demonstrate that the charging of additional fees will not diminish enrollment. The program should demonstrate that enrolled students realize that the potential earning power in the work force justifies their additional investment.

H. Materials Fees. A fee charged for certain academic labs requiring students have specialized consumable materials. These supplies should be consumable products that the student will use up during the semester. Non-hazardous materials may be retained by the student at the end of the semester. Each request should include course number and a list of expendable supplies that will be purchased as a convenience to the students. It should be financially advantageous to students for the University to purchase the course materials.

I. Miscellaneous Course Fees. Assessed for courses with additional requirements outside the normal instructional classroom or to provide additional support services to students (i.e., flight training fees, distance education fees, private instruction music fees, etc.)

J. Other Fees, Fines, and Charges

1. Application Fee. This is a non-refundable fee paid by an individual who applies for admission to the University. A student is required to pay this fee when he/she applies for admission as a graduate student even if the student attended another
institution as an undergraduate student. Additionally, the student is required to pay this fee when he/she applies for admission to a doctoral-level program after receiving a masters-level degree from the institution.

2. Applied Music Fees. This fee is charged for private music lessons or small group training sessions. It is refundable on the same basis as maintenance fees or as established by the University.

3. Late Registration Fee. A late registration fee will be charged to students registering on or after the first day of the term or part-of-term.

4. Orientation Fee. An orientation fee will be charged to incoming students and their family who attend Customs Orientation.

5. Study Abroad Fee. Students participating in Study Abroad are charged a fee to cover a range of services available to them before, during, and after their abroad program. It also covers the Study Abroad online application fees.

6. Installment Payment Service Fee. Students who choose to participate in the installment plan will be charged a service charge.

7. Installment Payment Plan Late Fee. Students who do not pay their installment plan payments by the due date will be charged a late fee each month they are late.

VII. Fees, Fines, and Charges to be Established and Administered by the University

The following fees, fines, and charges may be established and administered by the University. No specific approval or notification to the Board will be required, unless subject to other Board or State requirements. These charges should be governed by an approved contract and/or approved by the Provost or the appropriate Vice President. The University will establish appropriate refund policies. Approval documents should be sent to the Office of Business and Finance.

A. Sales of goods and services of a commercial nature, including bookstores, food services, vending, laundry, and similar activities. This includes the University’s program which allows students to receive required course materials at a discounted rate on day one of a course.

B. Rental of non-student housing and facilities.

C. Admissions fees to athletic and other events open to the public, including special events sponsored by campus organizations and activities.

D. Sales and services of educational activities such as clinical services, publications, etc.
E. Registration for conferences, institutes, and non-credit activities.

F. Fees for use of campus facilities for recreational purposes.

G. Nonrefundable library fines, which apply to students, faculty, staff, and other library users.

H. Thesis and dissertation fee - nonrefundable. The fee will be determined based upon cost to the University.

I. Child Care Fees. Kindergarten, preschool, early childhood, day care, or similarly defined activities.

J. Special Exam Fee - nonrefundable. The fee will be determined based upon cost to the University (i.e., certification fees, etc.).

K. Standardized Test Fees - nonrefundable. The fee will be determined based upon the cost for administering the tests.

L. Identification Card Replacement - nonrefundable. There will be no charge for the original identification card. A fee may be set by the University to offset the cost of replacing the card. This fee applies only to student ID cards and not to faculty and staff ID's.

M. Returned Check Fee. The University will charge a nonrefundable returned check fee that is the maximum set by state law. This fee will apply to all returned checks received by the institution, whether from students, faculty, staff, or other parties. The University will review state statutes each spring to determine any changes.

N. Diploma Fee. Students wanting a second (2nd) copy of their diploma will be charged for the reproduction.

VIII. Deposits

A deposit may be established by the University for rent or lease of buildings and facilities, or for the issuance of other University property or equipment. Deposits should be subject to a one hundred percent (100%) refund if no damage or loss occurs. The amount of such deposits should be related to the value of the facilities or equipment subject to loss and the general ability of the University to secure reimbursement should loss or damage occur.

IX. Student Residence Halls and Apartments
A. All regular and special rental rates for student dormitories and student apartments shall be approved by the Board upon the recommendation of the University. The University may recommend special rates for non-student groups during summer periods, etc.

B. Pursuant to Policy 640 Payment of Student Fees and Enrollment of Students, rental for student dormitory or residence hall units shall be payable in full in advance of the beginning of a term. However, residence hall students can participate in the installment payment plan. See Policy 644 Installment Payment Plan.

X. Other Fee and Charge Considerations

A. Fees may be established to control the utilization of facilities and services or to offset the cost of extraordinary requirements as a result of specific programs or activities. See Policy 100 Use of Campus Property and Facilities Scheduling.

B. When fees and charges are incorporated in agreements with outside contractors and vendors, specific rates, refunds, and conditions must be clearly stated.

C. Fees for auxiliary services must take into consideration that auxiliary enterprises should be a break-even operation with rates and charges generating revenue sufficient to cover all expenses as defined in operating budget policies.

D. Fees established for non-credit courses and activities shall be sufficient to cover the total costs incurred in providing instruction plus a minimum of twenty-five percent (25%) of the annual instructional salary costs including contractual salary costs or personal services contracts.

E. Students enrolled for six (6) or more hours are eligible for full-time privileges, i.e., access to social, athletic, and cultural functions, pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-8-109.

XI. Refunds and Fee Adjustments

A. Adjustments to all fees and charges must be in accordance with the following provisions except as previously stated, or when required by federal law or regulation to be otherwise.

B. Pursuant to T.C.A. §§ 49-7-2301 and 49-7-2302, students called to active military or National Guard service during the semester are entitled to a one hundred percent (100%) adjustment or credit of mandatory fees. Housing and meal ticket charges may be prorated based on usage.

C. Maintenance Fee, Tuition, and Program Services Fee Refunds and Adjustments
1. Refunds are one hundred percent (100%) for courses canceled by the University.

2. Changes in courses involving the adding and dropping of equal numbers of SCH's for the same term at the same time require no refund or assessment of additional tuition or fees, unless the dropping and adding involves TN eCampus courses for which there would be a fee adjustment.

3. The fee adjustment for withdrawals or drops during regular terms (fall and spring) is seventy-five percent (75%) from the first (1st) day of classes through the fourteenth (14th) calendar day of classes and then reduced to twenty-five percent (25%) for a period of time which extends twenty-five percent (25%) of the length of the term. When the first (1st) day of the academic term falls on a Saturday, the one hundred percent (100%) refund period is extended through the weekend until the following Monday morning (12:01 am). There is no fee adjustment after the twenty-five percent (25%) period ends. Dropping or withdrawing from classes during either the seventy-five percent (75%) or the twenty-five percent (25%) fee adjustment period will result in a fee adjustment of assessed tuition and fees based on the total credit hours of the final student enrollment.

4. All fee adjustment periods will be rounded to whole days and included in all student communication. In calculating the seventy-five percent (75%) and twenty-five percent (25%) fee adjustment periods for other than the fall and spring (i.e., summer sessions), the number of calendar days during the term will be considered.

5. A full refund (one hundred percent [100%]) is provided on behalf of a student whose death occurs during the term. Any indebtedness should be offset against the refund.

6. A one hundred percent (100%) refund will be provided for students who enroll under an advance registration system but who drop a course or courses prior to the beginning of the first day of class.

7. A one hundred percent (100%) refund will be provided to students who are compelled by the University to withdraw when it is determined that through University error they were academically ineligible for enrollment or were not properly admitted to enroll for the course(s) being dropped. An appropriate official must certify in writing that this provision is applicable in each case.

8. When courses are included in a regular term's registration process for administrative convenience, but the course does not begin until later in the term, the seventy-five percent (75%)/twenty-five percent (25%) fee adjustment periods will be based on the particular course's beginning and ending dates. This provision does not apply to classes during the fall or spring terms which may meet only once per week. Those courses will follow the same refund dates as other regular courses for the term.
9. The fee adjustment is calculated as the difference between (1) the per credit hour cost of originally enrolled hours and (2) the per credit hour cost of the courses at final enrollment after adjustments have been applied for all courses dropped. Adjustments are calculated at the full per credit hour rate less the fee adjustment credit at the applicable fee adjustment percentage (regardless of the original number of hours enrolled). Not all drops/withdrawals will result in fee adjustments.

D. Student Residence Hall/Apartment Rent and Meal Plan Refunds. Refund of residence hall rent and meal plans after registration will be prorated on a weekly calendar basis when the student is forced to withdraw from the residence hall or University:

1. Because of personal medical reasons confirmed in writing by a licensed physician, or

2. At the request of the University for other than disciplinary reasons. Full refund will be made in the case of the death of the student. Withdrawals for other approved reasons will be subject to the same seventy-five percent (75%)/twenty-five percent (25%) fee adjustment periods as outlined for tuition and fees above.

Forms: none.

Revisions: June 5, 2017 (New); December 5, 2017; ____, 2020.

Last Reviewed: May 2020.

References: T.C.A. §§ 49-7-102; 49-7-113; 49-7-2301-2304; 49-8-109; 49-8-110; Policies 100 Use of Campus Property and Facilities Scheduling; 501 Residency Classification; 640 Payment of Student Fees and Enrollment of Students; 644 Installment Payment Plan.