

# Middle Tennessee State University Strategic Plan

## Strategic Planning Committee

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May 06, 2024

9:00 a.m. General Session  
Student Union Parliamentary Room

### Meeting Minutes

#### Morning Session

##### *Welcome*

Chair Gibson welcomed committee members to the retreat. He introduced the chairs and co-chairs and shared his excitement about hearing the perspectives of committee members at the retreat. He introduced undergraduate students Michai Mosby, SGA President, Luis Esmurria, SGA Representative, and Molly Mihm, Student Trustee and graduate student.

Chair Gibson introduced Dr. Mary Hoffschwelle, the Vice Provost for Planning and Effectiveness, who welcomed committee members and thanked them for participating in this initiative. She shared the many internal and external questions institutional decision-makers must consider when planning for the next ten years. She reiterated the committee's charge to create one comprehensive plan to guide our work into the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Chair Gibson outlined the agenda for the retreat, which will revolve around discussion. He cautioned participants to avoid worrying about plan implementation and specific action items. The implementation team will undertake those efforts once the plan is complete. The committee will be working with institutional leaders who will be responsible for developing actions.

##### *Timeline Review*

Chair Gibson reminded committee members of the creation and implementation timeline for the general strategic plan. The official charge was given by the president in fall 2023, followed by several activities this spring, including a survey of, and listening sessions for, constituent groups (students, alums, faculty, staff, administrators, the president, vice presidents, vice provosts, deans, chairs, interdisciplinary and center directors). In Fall 2024, drafts of the plan will be distributed for further feedback, with approval of the Board of Trustees in Spring 2025. Implementation will follow in Summer 2025.

##### *Mission and Vision Review*

Chair Gibson shared the final versions of the mission and vision statement. There were no questions about the revisions or process for updating the statements.

##### *SWOT Analysis Review*

Chair Gibson asked committee members to review the stakeholder rankings of the emerging themes from the SWOT survey and early listening sessions from February 2024. He explained that the themes were generated from voices from the survey and initial listening sessions in February, while the rankings were generated by the constituents (administrators) in the second phase of the listening sessions in March and April 2024. Members asked Chair Gibson to explain the rationale for the survey and listening session process, and the Chair described the process of creating the survey and listening session. Todd O'Neill noted the chaos in athletics across the country is a threat.

Chair Gibson asked members if they believed any themes were missing. Athletics was mentioned as one potential missing theme. Chair Gibson asked if we should think of Athletics as a strength or an opportunity, and both were recommended as necessary. Another commenter noted MTSU's role as a high-school championship host and suggested these events could also be an important recruitment tool.

There was a question about the definition of an R2 institution. Bill Ketron noted his goal was to obtain \$50 million from the state legislature; however, the institution requested \$10 million. Dr. Hoffschwelle noted we automatically benchmark to the LGIs and UT system, as well as the peer institutions developed by IEPR's committee.

A member asked how invested the upper administration is in the strategic planning process. Dr. Hoffschwelle shared that the process was deliberately designed to be informed by the administration but not dictated by them. They will be responsible for implementing the plan without mandating strategies or goals.

#### *Themes from Goals and Strategies Review*

Chair Gibson shared the broad themes from the phase two listening sessions. He shared his insights from the alums and foundation boards, as well as the conversation with the president.

The morning session adjourned at 9:51 a.m.

#### **Afternoon Session**

Pillar chairs and co-chairs reported on their committee discussions before and after lunch. Each provided a summary of their first draft of goals and strategies to be considered.

#### *Academic Quality Report*

Draft Goal 1 is to provide a vibrant academic experience that attracts a diverse student population who are seeking a quality education, career, and social experience. Potential strategies and initiatives include:

- Prioritize high-impact practices (HIPs), such as learning through collaboration and experience, interdisciplinary learning, and learning through research;
- Develop new online, graduate, and certificate courses and programs;
- Develop new signature programs and concentrations and re-envision existing programs;
- Increase industry partnerships;
- Expand the physical campus to accommodate additional housing and versatile learning spaces (fostering a vibrant community);
- Expand continuing education for professionals;
- Leverage new and existing structures (endowed chairs, marketing, Centers, affiliate faculty, advisory boards).

Draft Goal 2 is to leverage strategic planning to grow into and become an excellent R2 institution.

Potential strategies and initiatives include:

- Increase workload flexibility;
- Invest in research and teaching track faculty members;
- Customize faculty tracks to include teaching, research, and both (talent management)
- R2 compensation
- Allocate more resources for professional development/growth

#### Discussion of Academic Quality Goals and Strategies

One commenter noted we should be cautious about developing new programs only for sake of newness. The pillar chair and co-chair shared that the committee conversation centered on developing new programs that would serve students we may not be serving as well as we can.

### *Engagement Report*

Draft Goal 1 is to provide or elevate experiences to members of our on- and off-campus community through state-of-the-art facilities and to enhance campus life. Potential strategies and initiatives include:

- Identify meaningful experiences and expand opportunities for those on- and off-campus stakeholders;
- Formalize and institutionalize a brand and culture that identifies experiences that align with that brand/culture;
- Improve communication with alums;
- Identify current areas of concentration that reveal symmetries between faculty teaching and expertise, community stakeholders and their resources and needs, and audit program and community needs;
- Create more inviting and available spaces for use and engagement;
- Continuously update campus facilities for program suitability and sustainability to create a sense of place.

Draft Goal 2 is to adopt and create on- and off-campus communication channels to improve connections, foster collaboration, and project a positive image. Potential strategies and initiatives include:

- Ensure consistent and recognizable marketing and branding (MT logo, digital boards) and utilize existing structure for messaging and new opportunities;
- Prioritize the creation of content that resonates with different stakeholders and use multiple channels to communicate information and connect constituents;
- Identify and eliminate current communication barriers that prevent or disrupt communication and develop communication channels that foster communication and collaboration;
- Implement and communicate targeted messaging to constituent groups about the value added from specific MTSU partnership engagement on- and off-campus;
- Expand and implement a new internal vehicle to communicate engagement with external partners to eliminate redundancy and increase internal awareness;
- Create a centralized communications portal;
- Create a public interface that is social that is not transactional;
- Develop a culture of support and encourage upper administration to interact with campus and the community to show support, interest, and engagement in informal ways;
- Create a concierge hub with centralized communications and multiple features that provide resources for sustainability.

Draft Goal 3 is to build and grow sustainable integrated partnerships on and off campus to enrich the lives of members of our community. Potential strategies and initiatives include:

- Develop a customer experience management (CSM) program that captures and supports experiences and supports existing programs on campus;
- Increase connections between students and the community by leveraging and expanding upon existing internship opportunities;
- Provide data or a tool to connect academic specialties to potential community collaborators and/or economic needs in the region (in the model of the [Faculty Experts website](#));
- Celebrate celebrations of outcomes and successes to foster the town and gown community;
- Create a culture change off campus and seek to acquire buy-in from the community at large;
- Identify sectors and partners that align with MTSU culture and goals, identify silos and opportunities for strategic community engagement, and reframe the brand as an action versus a visual;
- Identify the needs of community partners and determine how MTSU can fulfill those needs specifically and strategically;
- Consider workloads and creative opportunities;
- Conduct a campus and community assessment;
- Create a community advisory board.

### *Innovation Report*

Draft Goal 1 is to allocate resources to align with becoming a premier research institution and a top choice for students. Potential strategies and initiatives include:

- Create an interdisciplinary committee on resource allocation
- Address issues with salaries, including faculty and staff salaries, adjunct pay, summer research support, removed/increased caps on summer pay, and increased start-up pay);
- Develop different tracks for tenure track faculty, such as teaching professors and research professors;
- Fully support the creation of new research PhD programs, including graduate assistantships and new faculty;
- Separate the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Vice Provost of Research into two positions.

Draft Goal 2 is to increase organizational agility. Potential strategies and initiatives include:

- Make decisions aligned with Draft Goal 1 instead of avoiding risk;
- Perform a general business practice review to identify or eliminate pain points related to contracts, purchasing, hiring, etc.);
- Create a phased retirement system and perform strategic succession planning;
- Develop additional fee-for-service model options similar to the pilot implemented by Marketing and Communication in the 2023-2024 academic year;
- Simplify and reduce the cost of space renovations.

Draft Goal 3 is to increase our regional dominance and national prominence. Potential strategies and initiatives include:

- Build on current strengths, such as 80% of our students remaining at the institution
- Promote current programs
- Value and recognize local impact (some constituents perceive work outside the state is more valuable than work inside Tennessee)
- Create a clearinghouse for expertise and services
- Ensure consistency in new faculty orientation
- Recognize and celebrate community partners, such as internship hosts
- Improve relationships with the community and organizations to foster innovation

### *Student Success Report*

Draft Goal 1 is to provide learning experiences, facilities, and services that support mental health, wellness, and a sense of belonging for both residential and non-residential students. Potential strategies and initiatives include:

- Creating a comprehensive orientation and ongoing support system/team for each student;
- Streamlining technology systems for communication and support;
- Increasing adaptability in spaces, processes, and services based on data;
- Identifying and connecting students with peers, community, mentors, and professional opportunities

Goal 2 is to provide holistic support that ensures students are job-ready, independent, resilient, and committed to lifelong learning and critical inquiry. Potential strategies and initiatives include:

- Expanding real-life experience opportunities through internships;
- Developing strong community relationships to better understand what opportunities are available;
- Expanding, coordinating, and communicating the existence of support services for intentional onboarding and offboarding.

### *Discussion of Student Success Goals and Strategies*

- One committee member shared that their academic department tried implementing mental health support but encountered barriers to implementation and funding. Members noted that mental health and wellness was a component of the first student success goal, but no specific strategies

were listed. The Chair and co-chair clarified that the committee believed mental health and wellness could be incorporated into all strategies. Another member shared current resources, such as the HLTH 1530 course, which has already been integrated into the curriculum and student experience. Georgia State University was suggested as an institution with a mature student success infrastructure that may have helpful resources for the committee to consider.

### **Closing Discussion**

Chair Gibson asked members to share if anything was omitted in the proposed goals or strategies. One member noted that there were no goals for creating housing. Chair Gibson clarified that strategies were developed for creating housing rather than a single goal dedicated to housing. The student committee representatives suggested the committee consider incorporating initiatives related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, specifically which concepts faculty will and will not be able to teach. Another member noted that department faculty makeup is often not diverse, and that the institution should reflect our community.

Several questions were raised for future consideration:

- Could we replicate the one-stop model for faculty and staff?
- Communication strategies should eliminate information overload. Could there be a daily digest that can be customized by the user?
- What can we remove or reduce for our faculty and staff who are already overloaded?
- What innovation strategies could be included that revolve around students to give them space to innovate?

Chair Gibson closed the meeting by explaining the next steps for the strategic planning process. The Leadership Committee will begin drafting goals and strategies over the summer, and the full committee will reconvene in August to have a focused conversation about the ideas that have been developed and to ensure the draft is ready for distribution and further feedback.

The afternoon session was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.