

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES

The Middle Tennessee State University Board of Trustees met on March 18, 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 8:04 a.m. Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Keith Huber led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Introduction of Student Veteran

Gen. Huber noted his 50th year reunion of his commissioning and reflected on entering West Point on July 1, 1971, with a draft number of three. He then introduced Rashieq Cockerham, a Marine veteran and recent graduate of MTSU. Gen. Huber shared that following Mr. Cockerham's high school graduation in 2014, he enlisted for a four-year tour through which he obtained the rank and responsibility of a Corporal. He then entered the Navy ROTC program at Vanderbilt, where he spent three (3) years before transferring to MTSU, his decision rooted in MTSU's exceptional and invaluable support for veterans and military-affiliated students. He chose to attend the Officer Candidate School, rather than earn his commission through an ROTC program. This May, he graduated from MTSU with a Bachelor of Science in Biology and will be commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps. Mr. Cockerham emphasized the importance of the policies and their role in shaping students' lives, and highlighted the urgent need to invest in mental health services. Mr. Cockerham thanked the Board and reiterated the fact that the Board's decisions will determine the course of many lives.

Remarks from the President

Dr. McPhee thanked the Board for adjusting their schedules to accommodate the need for him and other administrators to attend the University's budget hearing before the House Finance Committee later that afternoon.

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, Steve Smith, Christine Vanek, and Pam Wright. A quorum was declared. Trustees Shaylaine Roker and Michael Wade were absent.

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; Alan Thomas, Vice President for Business and Finance; 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.

Approval of December 4, 2024, Meeting Minutes – Action

The first agenda item was approval of the December 4, 2024, meeting minutes. Trustee DeLay motioned to approve the December 4, 2024 meeting minutes, and Trustee Baker seconded the motion. Vice Chair Vanek noted that she attended the meeting, but her name was omitted from the roll call. Vice Chair Vanek made a motion to amend the minutes to reflect her attendance, which was seconded by Chair Smith. A voice vote was taken, and the motion to amend was approved unanimously. A voice vote was then 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 February 25, 2025. The Committee approved the minutes from the November 12, 2024, meeting. The Committee report contained one (1) action item, which the Committee unanimously approved for the Board's consideration. Two (2) information items were also presented. Materials outlining these actions were made available for review prior to the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

Revisions to Policy 541 Residential Life and Housing - Action

The Committee unanimously approved the policy with one revision in Section XI, Visitation. The phrase "guest bathrooms are located in the lobby" was changed to "appropriate opposite-sex guest bathrooms are located in the lobby."

Information items before the Committee included the Annual Report of Academic Program Actions and an update on Athletics.

Motion

Trustee Wright motioned to approve the action item recommended by the Committee, and Vice Chair Vanek seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion to approve the action item carried unanimously.

Committee Report: The Audit and Compliance Committee

Committee Chair Boyd reported that the Audit and Compliance Committee met on February 25, 2025. The Committee approved the minutes from its November 12, 2024, meeting. The Committee report contained no action items. Information items presented included three (3) external reviews, which were completed with no findings or recommendations identified. The public meeting of the Committee adjourned, and the Committee went into executive session to discuss cybersecurity, audits, and investigations. Materials outlining this information were made available for review prior to the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

Committee Report: The Executive and Governance Committee

Vice Chair Vanek reported that the Executive and Governance Committee met on February 25, 2025. The Committee approved the minutes from its February 27, 2024, meeting. The Committee report contained one (1) action item, which the Committee unanimously approved for the Board's consideration. Materials outlining this information were made available for review prior to the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

2035 Strategic Plan – Action

Vice Chair Vanek stated that Mary Hoffschwelle, Vice Provost for Planning and Effectiveness, presented the 2035 Strategic Plan for the Committee's consideration. The 2035 Strategic Plan outlines the University's priorities and related strategies and initiatives. The University's current institutional plan ends in May 2025, and our institutional accreditor, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), requires formal, comprehensive, and institution-wide planning in the development of a strategic plan.

Vice Provost Hoffschwelle explained that the 2035 Strategic Plan framework was developed from a review of past plans, multiple surveys, and numerous listening sessions, including with the Board of Trustees. In addition, its development constituted a comprehensive and institution-wide planning process. It was thoroughly reviewed and approved by the University Planning Committee, the Provost, and the President, who all recommended Committee adoption.

Vice Provost Hoffschwelle outlined the annual implementation timeline and shared that the University has already organized implementation committees to begin preparing specific objectives and metrics, which will include an annual progress assessment. In sum, this will involve an analysis of specific metrics and strategies, initiatives for review, and approval by the

Planning Committee. Followed by a mid-year report and then a final reporting out process the following year. This will include updates to the Board of Trustees.

Implementation of the 2035 Strategic Plan will begin in May 2025.

Motion

Vice Chair Vanek motioned to approve the action item recommended by the Committee, and Chair Smith seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion to approve the action item carried unanimously.

Committee Report: Finance and Personnel Committee

Committee Chair DeLay reported that the Finance and Personnel Committee met on February 25, 2025. The Committee approved the minutes from its November 12, 2024, meeting. The Committee report contained no action items. Informational items presented included: (1) an update presented by Alan Thomas, Vice President for Business and Finance, concerning the Governor's 2025-26 Budget and its impact on the University; (2) an analysis prepared by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) showing the impact of the Governor's Budget on all higher education; and (3) a report on budget hearings. Materials outlining this information were made available for review prior to the Board meeting and were contained in the Board notebooks.

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. He shared that the Faculty Senate will have a reception in the atrium immediately after the meeting. The reception will feature a poster session on faculty achievement in research and creative activities, along with the opportunity to interact with featured faculty members and students to hear about some of the outstanding work happening at MTSU.

Recruitment and Enrollment Activity

Dr. McPhee noted that, to date, we have admitted 10,154 freshmen for Fall 2025, a fourteen percent (14%) increase compared to last year's enrollment of 8,916 freshmen. On February 22, 2025, Dr. McPhee hosted nearly three hundred (300) scholarship students and their families at the President's Residence. In addition, more than one thousand four hundred (1,400) students attended the first annual New Admitted Student Day activities event. Yard signs stating "I Am MTSU Bound" were passed out, and Dr. McPhee noted he has since seen them displayed around town. Next, Dr. McPhee stated that from May 20 through August 4, 2025, there will be twenty-two (22) sessions of orientation for freshmen and transfer students.

MTSU Debate Team

Dr. McPhee shared that we have special guests in the form of our world-class, nationally ranked debate team, which Trustee Boyd suggested for recognition. Dr. McPhee invited Dr. Patrick Richey, Associate Professor and Director of Forensics & Debate Coach, to speak and introduce the Debate Team. First, Dr. Richey introduced student leaders, Liam Boardwine and John Aduroja, and assistant coach, Dr. Natonya Listach. Dr. Richey shared MTSU's long history of speech and debate, highlighting its success as the oldest MTSU student club and noting its recognition as a national leader. Joining MTSU in 2010, Dr. Richey knew the students were capable of achieving national recognition and set out to accomplish this by utilizing his military background and leading from the front. The students passed out coins that read "Honor Before Victory," which is the team's mantra. Dr. Richey next invited his students to speak. Boardwine reflected on his fear of public speaking prior to joining the debate team, emphasizing the leadership and critical thinking skills he has since acquired through the program, which led him to become the club's President. Aduroja next reflected on his experience, emphasizing his new ability to speak and argue clearly since joining the team. In closing, Dr. Richey informed the Board that MTSU will be hosting the national tournament for the second time in 2026. Dr. Listach also expressed her pride in the student's growth and progress.

Spring Commencement

Dr. McPhee reminded everyone that the Spring Commencement is just seven (7) weeks away. Three (3) ceremonies will be held in May, with nearly two thousand four hundred (2,400) students graduating. Keynote speakers include MTSU Alumni Association President Rob Payne, the Honorable Cameron Sexton, Speaker of the Tennessee House of Representatives, and Tracy Rogers, a media executive and MTSU alumnus.

Dr. McPhee again invited the Trustees to attend the reception and avail themselves of the opportunity to meet faculty and students while learning about their research endeavors.

Conclusion

Chair Smith summarized the following items: 1) all earmarks got canceled with the budget deal, and new ones must be submitted by Friday; 2) the meeting with Dr. Stephen K. Streiffer, director of Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), was a success and will hopefully present growth opportunities.

Adjournment

Chair Smith adjourned the meeting at 8:42 a.m., and the Board went into confidential non-public executive session to discuss a matter not subject to public inspection under Tennessee Code Annotated Sections 10-7-503, 10-7-504, 49-7-107, and 49-7-140.

Respectfully submitted,

James C. Floyd, Board Secretary