

**MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, STUDENT LIFE, AND ATHLETICS COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

The Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee met on Tuesday, November 10, 2020, in the Miller Education Center Meeting Room at Middle Tennessee State University.

Call to Order

Committee Chair Pam Wright called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

Roll Call

The following Committee members were in attendance: J.B. Baker, Tom Boyd, Pete DeLay, Joey Jacobs (arriving at 10:10), Mary Martin, Steve Smith, Pam Wright, Delanie McDonald, Keith Huber, and Chris Massaro. A quorum was declared.

Also present were Trustees Darrell Freeman and Chris Karbowiak. President Sidney A. McPhee; Joe Bales, Vice President for University Advancement; Mark Byrnes, University Provost; Andrew Oppmann, Vice President for Marketing and Communications; Bruce Petryshak, Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer; Deb Sells, Vice President for Student Affairs and Vice Provost for Enrollment and Academic Services; Alan Thomas, Vice President for Business and Finance; Brenda Burkhardt, Chief Audit Executive; Heidi Zimmerman, University Counsel and Board Secretary; and, Kim Edgar, Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff, were also in attendance.

Approval of Minutes - Action

The first agenda item was approval of the minutes from the August 18, 2020, Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee meeting. Board Chair Smith moved to approve the minutes from the August 18, 2020, meeting and Trustee DeLay seconded the motion. A voice vote was

taken and the motion to approve the minutes from the August 18, 2020, meeting of the Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee passed unanimously.

COVID-19 Response – Information

Committee Chair Wright indicated they would take the next item out of order and would consider information on the Campus COVID-19 Response. At the request of Chairman Smith, President McPhee gave an update on MTSU's decisions made and actions taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to mitigate risk for students, faculty, and staff. At the onset in March, President McPhee convened the Campus Crisis Leadership Team, which transformed into the Executive Leadership Team to include the Student Health Center Director and the Medical Director. The team met bi-weekly, sometimes over the weekend, to deal with issues connected with the pandemic. They worked diligently to put in place protocols, procedures, and operational policies to address the pandemic. Throughout this time, an effort has been made to keep the Board fully informed of all actions and decisions. On May 27, a Zoom meeting with the trustees took place to inform them about the comprehensive action plan to re-open campus. The trustees were informed about policies and procedures to guide operations for the university, allowing it to re-open. These steps, taken to manage the day-to-day operations of the institution, fall within the authority delegated by the Board to the President. With Policy 825-A COVID-19 Illness and the *Charting Our Course* campus plan to guide faculty, staff, administrators and students, the campus was safely opened on August 24 and there has not been a major outbreak during this time.

In addition to Executive Team meetings twice per week, President McPhee meets weekly with medical personnel to discuss protocols, issues, and concerns regarding athletes on campus. Medical Director Dr. Eric Clark, Student Health Center Director Richard Chapman, and Dr. Paul Patel, NCAA sanctioned physician, were introduced and prepared to answer any questions.

President McPhee stated that the advice and counsel of state and local public health officials and campus medical professionals have been followed. Chairman Smith assisted in securing a commitment of 1,000 tests per month. Dr. McPhee stated that while everything done has not

been perfect and done 100% correctly, nonetheless a relatively good job in managing this virus continues to be done.

President McPhee asked Chris Massaro to give an update about Athletics efforts to monitor and mitigate COVID-19. Mr. Massaro stressed that there is a trustworthy process in place for athletes. Dr. Patel serves as chief medical officer for Athletics and oversees weekly meetings. The meetings start with test results. Athletics has an arrangement with Path Group to send reports to Student Health Services and the State of Tennessee. The Athletics Compliance Officer spot audits the test results and reporting. Any policy changes are discussed in the weekly meetings. Athletics wants to make sure there is integrity in the process, and they try to address issues that would strike at the integrity of the process. He stated that President McPhee has always made sure these processes can stand in the public light. Mr. Massaro praised the efforts of the training room staff along with medical personnel.

Trustee Freeman asked how many tests per week are administered to athletes. Mr. Massaro said 600 tests per week as determined by NCAA, C-USA, and internal controls. Approximately 400 athletes have taken 5,000 tests and 64 have been positive as of that date.

Dr. Clark advised that MTSU is administering around 300 tests per week to the rest of the student population on campus. There is an 11% positivity rate of symptomatic students and 2.26% positive rate of asymptomatic students. MTSU is the only university doing testing and contact tracing seven days per week.

There are weekly consultations with the state epidemiologist and liaison who recommend against mass testing because it is a point-in-time and could vary the next day. They advised that resources be put towards testing symptomatic individuals since the positive rate was so low for surveillance testing. Fourteen-day quarantine is better than surveillance testing at this point.

The campus community is keeping density down, practicing social distancing and masking in classrooms. There have not been documented any cases from spreading in a classroom.

Trustee Martin inquired about the general wellbeing of students. Dr. Clark stated that he sees depression and anxiety daily in the clinic because this is an age group where social interaction is needed but has been shut down dramatically. It is a difficult balancing act, but all decisions are based on science and safety.

Dr. McPhee reminded the Committee that through surveys, it was learned that students (and parents) want to be on campus and feel safer on campus, and if the campus were to close, they would not return.

Chairman Smith congratulated Dr. Clark and expressed admiration for the work that has been done. The Committee applauded Dr. Clark.

Committee Chair Wright felt it was appropriate for the Committee to make the recommendation that it supports and endorses the administration's action and effort. In order to do this, she made a motion to move this COVID-19 Information Item to an Action Item. Chairman Smith seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and the motion to move the Information Item to an Action item carried.

Trustee Baker moved to acknowledge, support, commend, and endorse the administration's actions and responses with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic. Trustee Martin seconded the motion and added that the early response, decision infrastructure, wide communication, and the continuation of ongoing projects are important to the health and future of MTSU. She commended the way MTSU modified instruction, graduated students, and kept everyone safe and working.

A voice vote was taken and the motion to acknowledge, support, commend, and endorse the administration's actions and responses with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic carried.

Approval of New Academic Degree Program – Action

Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies

Provost Byrnes told the Committee that the Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies program has been a long time coming. Program leadership has already been hired, as specified by the accrediting agency, and the first cohort will begin May 2022. Graduates of this program will have excellent, well-paying prospects for employment.

A motion was made by Chairman Smith to approve the Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies and Trustee DeLay seconded the motion. During discussion, Chairman Smith asked what the Physician Assistant Studies students must do to be employed after graduation. Provost Byrnes explained that students have hours of clinical experience and must pass a licensure exam. Trustee Boyd suggested consideration of a differential tuition rate due to future equipment costs. Trustee Martin asked about capping the program at 84 students as going beyond 84 would require more faculty and space.

A voice vote was taken and the motion to approve the Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies passed unanimously.

Approval of Expedited Tenure - Action

A new chief online learning officer was hired after a very competitive search. Pre-pandemic, an institutional goal was to expand online enrollment and offerings, and post-pandemic, it is advantageous to continue this momentum.

Trustee Boyd moved to approve expedited tenure for Trey Martindale and Trustee Martin seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and the motion to approve expedited tenure for Trey Martindale passed unanimously.

Approval of New Policy - Action

204-A Tenure Policy Amendment

Typically, a faculty member applies for tenure at the beginning of their sixth year, but a provision in Policy 204 Tenure allows for stopping the tenure clock for one year due to illness or other life event. This policy provides for the grant of one additional year of clock stoppage, if requested, due to COVID-19. Not only have faculty spent numerous hours transitioning their classes to online delivery, but their research and service activities have been curtailed because they are not able to travel to conferences or deal with human subjects.

Trustee DeLay moved to approve 204-A Tenure Policy Amendment and Trustee Boyd seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and the motion to approve 204-A Tenure Policy Amendment passed unanimously.

Approval of Revisions to Policy - Action

206 Tenure and Promotion Appeals

Policy 206 outlines procedures for faculty who want to appeal the provost's tenure recommendation to the president. The policy has been utilized a couple of times in the last few years, and areas requiring more clarity are proposed in this revision.

Trustee Baker moved to approve revisions to 206 Tenure and Promotion Appeals, and Trustee DeLay seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and the motion to approve revisions to Policy 206 Tenure and Promotion Appeals passed unanimously.

Performance Metrics - Information

Provost Byrnes stated that the Board has made requests for various performance metrics and indicated that the summary format was approved at a previous meeting. He pointed out that retention and graduation numbers have improved significantly. Dr. Sells distributed an overview of the previous year's recruitment activities.

Athletics Update - Information

Chris Massaro gave an academic update and provided graduate success rates. These numbers have been submitted to NCAA and will be announced in the Spring. Academic Progress Rate measures in real time what the Graduation Success Rate will be five years from now.

Diversity Efforts - Information

President McPhee said this presentation was added to follow up on an item from the last Committee meeting on graduation rates concerning other populations. Provost Byrnes introduced Dr. Vincent Windrow, Associate Vice Provost for Student Success, who has a particular interest in graduation rates for students of color.

Dr. Windrow said the Quest for Student Success 2013-2016's five functions and features helped to lift all students. Nestled within the Quest framework were other initiatives with very specific resources directed to interventions for sub-populations, Black males, and at-risk populations. The results have been transformative. This Fall the University saw a 78.4% retention rate.

Quest 2025 is in progress with five strategic priorities. Priority 2 is intended to eliminate achievement gaps and increase faculty and staff diversity. Dr. Windrow stated that there is a moral and ethical imperative to graduate those who are admitted. Resources must be directed to support their success and specifically as regards race, generation, income and first-generation status. Equity gaps are a national issue. Federal and state comparative data was discussed.

Trustee Freeman stated that the data he received shows a 13% four-year graduation rate for first-generation Black males; he asked what emphasis will be put on this student population. Dr. Windrow said MTSU must develop and implement these broad initiatives that help all students, but also drill down and look at the subpopulations and develop a catalog of resources to be directed their way, make individual goals, set a timeline for implementation, and identify leading indicators to track progress along the way. Best practices for onboarding, assimilating, and tracking Black males that can be prescribed directly to them should be identified. For example, REBOUND is a program to bring back students with lower than a 2.0 GPA for academic advising

and to talk about skill sets to move them forward. Students who participated in REBOUND were 50% more likely to return the next Fall semester.

Trustee Freeman asked how much additional funding would be received if the Black male graduation rate increased to the same rate as that for White students. Mr. Thomas answered that the Black male population would fit in focus population groups as well as the graduation rate category, so they would count as 1.8; if they were also adults, they would count two times. MTSU would receive more funding in tuition alone.

Trustee Freeman asked about increasing African American tenured faculty. Dr. Windrow said this would be addressed in the Quest 2025 as well.

Trustee Freeman asked if students who have dropped out are tracked. Dr. Windrow introduced Dr. Rick Sluder, Vice Provost for Student Success and Dean of University College, who explained that MTSU has a real-time, sophisticated system of reaching out to students who drop out or have not registered for the next semester. It is made clear that their reenrollment is the goal.

Trustee Freeman mentioned the 100% graduation rate among athletes and asked what is being done to help them cross the finish line that could possibly carry over to other students. President McPhee said that 50 new academic advisors were hired, and their responsibilities are to follow through and work with every student as is done with student-athletes. The structured activities in Athletics is a differential factor when dealing with a larger population. Chairman Smith added that coaches expect their student-athletes to go to class or they can't play. Other students do not have this pressure.

Trustee Freeman wrapped up by stating he is hopeful that MTSU can do better as it relates to graduating people of color, not just for them to live their dreams, but also for the Board to say it has done its best to make this happen.

President McPhee responded that faculty and staff believe exactly what Trustee Freeman said and are making every effort to support these students. This is a priority especially for students who come with a certain economic disadvantage.

Trustee McDonald added that it is very encouraging to see MTSU making this a priority.

Trustee Boyd added that according to THEC data, MTSU awards 17.9% of total bachelor's degrees by Tennessee universities, but for the focus populations we have 20.2% of total, so progress is being made.

Trustee Martin added the most renowned longitudinal study of what factors impact students at the college level, the top three, number one is an engaged and active faculty, which MTSU has. Number two is a strong curriculum, which the board oversees and takes recommendations from Academic Affairs to make sure the curriculum is very up to date. Number three is student engagement, which the Office of Student Success works on. All of these with the new skill sets that have been brought on board due to the pandemic, and the strong base being maintained, means that MTSU is in a good place to go toward success.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:48 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Academic Affairs, Student Life, and Athletics Committee