

Middle Tennessee State University Strategic Plan

Leadership Committee

November 28, 2023

11:30 a.m.

Cope Administration Building Room 112

Meeting Minutes

Roll Call

Committee Members Present: Jeff Gibson, Mary Hoffschwelle, Layne Bryant, Robyn Ridgley, Danielle Rochelle, Lisa Green, Trey Martindale, Racha El Kadiri, Jennifer Vannatta-Hall, Sam Zaza

Committee Members Absent: Joe Whitefield

Update of Mission and Vision Review

Dr. Hoffschwelle reminded the committee that almost 2000 responses were received to the original Mission and Vision Review survey. A new request for comment on the revised mission statement and vision statement was sent to all stakeholders except alums on November 20, and an email to alums will be sent the week of November 27. Feedback will be collected from all groups until Monday, December 4, 2023.

The Mission Review subcommittee will meet the first week of December to review the second round of feedback and make further revisions to both statements. Constituents will have one final opportunity to comment in early January, and the final versions will be presented to the University Planning Committee in February. The statements will be then presented to the president and Board of Trustees for final approval. Dr. Hoffschwelle and Chair Gibson noted there are unlikely to be significant revisions to the institutional mission even if some of the wording is edited; therefore, the Strategic Plan committee should be able to proceed with our work with the understanding that the spirit of the mission and vision will be like the current revised versions.

Updates from Pillar Chairs and Co-Chairs

Chair Gibson asked each Pillar leadership team to report on their November 10 meetings:

Engagement Pillar:

Dr. Zaza shared that committee members discussed how they defined engagement in their respective institutional and extra-institutional roles. One community member noted a lack of engagement and communication between the community and MTSU. The member thought students could benefit from many opportunities in the community but might not receive adequate information to enable their participation.

The Engagement Pillar committee plans to meet the week of December 18 to review the SWOT analyses that each member will complete before listening to a broader audience. Dr. Zaza and Mr. Whitefield will aggregate the results and conduct a cluster analysis to see where perspective

overlap exists. Pillar members may additionally meet for a one-day retreat before classes begin in the spring to share more about their roles and how they view engagement. Dr. Zaza and Mr. Whitefield noted their preference to coordinate listening sessions with other pillars to avoid duplicating efforts. Chair Gibson agreed and affirmed chairs and co-chairs still need to decide who will coordinate these sessions.

Academic Quality Pillar:

Vannatta-Hall shared that she and Dr. El Kadiri gave an overview of the strategic planning process, where the committee is now, and where the institution wants to go. Much of the conversation during the meeting was about brainstorming the meaning of academic quality, which highlighted different perspectives depending on the member's role. Alums shared that knowing what students need to succeed in our rapidly changing environment is challenging. These members believed MTSU should prioritize critical thinking skills, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills across the curriculum.

The conversation was proactive, positive, and motivating. Members also discussed words such as rigor, excellence, teaching, and learning, as well as challenges to delivering a high-quality academic experience while respecting our roots as a teaching college. The chair and co-chair found it valuable to hear ideas from community members.

Innovation Pillar:

Green shared that the committee had a wide-ranging discussion around three questions:

- What is innovation?
- What is your experience with innovation at MTSU?
- What do you want to see in the future?

The committee discussed avoiding innovating only for innovation and budget constraints for the future. Members will be sharing their ideas for innovation, examples of institutions they believe to be innovative, and examples of ways they think MTSU has been innovative. Members agreed that the focus should be on how MTSU can encourage innovation rather than how the institution should innovate.

The discussion shifted to the possibility that ideas generated in pillar committees may overlap. Chair Gibson agreed and said the committee would navigate those throughout the planning process and noted previous plans had strategies or goals that overlapped. He reminded chairs and co-chairs that the committee will meet regularly in the spring and fall for more communication between pillars. He also advised that the retreat in May 2024 would offer an opportunity to discuss ideas emerging from pillars.

When discussing the plan format, Dr. Hoffschwelle confirmed that the document will be organized by pillar like the current Academic Master Plan and recommended members review that document as an example. She used the process of developing the Quest for Student Success as an example of how aspects of a goal might appear within different pillars, such as hiring new advisors and purchasing new software as components of improving student support services. Chair Gibson explained the difference between developing strategy and goals to address higher-level institutional needs compared to creating an implementation plan for specific actions to be taken to achieve those larger institutional goals.

Student Success Pillar:

Dr. Ridgely shared that the committee members spent most of the time discussing how to define student success and how faculty, staff, and students talk about it at MTSU. She pulled information from current MTSU sources to illustrate that student success is currently framed in terms of persistence, retention, and graduation. In addition, they discussed how to measure student success beyond the number of students the institution graduates, such as employability, critical skills, and dispositions that are flexible and adaptable to many roles and contexts.

The pillar committee discussed potential stakeholder groups who should be included in listening sessions, including dual enrollment students and international students. Ms. Rochelle shared she learned that international students receive different communication and orientation to campus, so their insights may be instructive. The chair and co-chair asked members to review MTSU's current Quest for Student Success and Academic Master Plan in preparation for our future work.

Planning for Listening Sessions

Chair Gibson passed out the revised communication plan and asked the leadership team for their ideas for developing a plan to hear from all the constituencies identified within. He had developed a potential approach to offering large, midsize, and small sessions based on constituency type. One recommendation was that some sessions use the November 10 Strategic Plan Committee meeting format, with a joint meeting followed by breakout sessions. This format might be especially useful for recruiting student feedback, given they may be unlikely to attend four separate meetings.

Another suggestion was to develop listening days dedicated to constituency types, such as faculty, administrators, or students. Ms. Rochelle shared that getting students to come to meetings can be challenging. She noted the committee may have more success by bringing the listening session to events students are already attending or if invitations are shared by Student Affairs, student leaders, or faculty. Green recommended hosting events at tailgates or other events on campus. Dr. El Kadiri suggested opportunities for student engagement be offered in a variety of formats, including in-person, virtual, town halls, etc.

Concerning faculty, the group discussed potential challenges in offering sessions for faculty who may not have a consistent 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. schedule. Members agreed there should be multiple sessions for faculty to provide ample opportunity for their participation. There was also concern that engaging community members may be difficult. Dr. Hoffschwelle asked if chairs and co-chairs would like to invite all eight community members to share their thoughts on the four pillars simultaneously.

The committee also discussed the challenges of engaging many types of students, including those not enrolled in classes on campus, such as online and dual enrollment students. Dr. Zaza also asked if the committee should engage students' families, and there was agreement that a survey with defined questions or sessions at CUSTOMS would be more productive than the open Facebook page for parents and families.

Green recommended the committee meet before the start of the spring semester to develop a brief survey instrument. Students could sign up to participate in more extended focus groups or

interviews if they would like to provide more detailed feedback. Chair Gibson shared a concern that students may opt only to complete a survey rather than attend an in-person session where committee members may receive richer insights. Dr. Hoffschwelle noted there could also be a feedback form on the website to provide another place for people to leave comments. Green reminded the group that one of our goals should be for all groups to feel they have been listened to at the end of the process.

Spring Meeting Dates

Chair Gibson shared the committee will likely not meet again as a full strategic plan committee until the retreat in May 2024. Instead, the work in spring will primarily occur within pillars and in the different listening sessions. The committee will meet monthly beginning in January. Chair Gibson will send a poll requesting availability to determine the best dates for the most members.

Teams Space Issues

Co-chair Bryant shared that two community members indicated they continued to experience difficulties accessing Teams. Chairs and co-chairs were encouraged to share documents using links outside of Teams and include community members in emails to ensure they are receiving communications.

Documenting Feedback

Dr. Zaza asked if there will be a defined format for reports emerging from the listening sessions. Chair Gibson reminded the group our graduate assistant would be able to help determine the best way to document conversations and distill the feedback into helpful information. Dr. Hoffschwelle also noted that IEPR can help develop a report.

QEP Topic Development Committee

Co-chair Bryant shared that Dr. Hoffschwelle has convened a group of four faculty to serve as the leaders of the next QEP Topic Development committee: Nita Brooks, Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand, Grant Gardner, and Chandra Story. These co-chairs have decided to divide the Strategic Plan pillars to follow along with the ideas emerging from each. Co-chair Bryant will liaise between the SP leadership and QEP Topic Development committees to ensure both groups are informed. Chairs and co-chairs were also asked to include their QEP liaison in meeting invitations and discussions.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:47 p.m.