

# Middle Tennessee State University Strategic Plan

## Leadership Committee

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June 3, 2024

10:30 a.m.

Peck Hall Room 207 and Zoom

### Meeting Minutes

#### Roll Call

Committee Members Present: Jeff Gibson, Mary Hoffschwelle, Layne Bryant, Danielle Rochelle, Lisa Green, Jennifer Vannatta-Hall, Sam Zaza, Joe Whitefield

#### Emerging Themes Document Discussion

Chair Gibson shared the 'emergent themes to address' document and asked for feedback from the leadership team. Members mentioned no items related to processes or procedures, which were mentioned in several SWOT listening sessions. Members discussed other topics from the listening session that are not itemized in the emergent themes, including the need to support online and graduate students, expand in-demand professional programs, and improve communication. Chair Gibson pointed out the communication theme is included in the three-goal document.

The group also noted that one of the common comments in pillar meetings was about brand identity and R2 status. Chair Green shared that the Innovation pillar spent a long time discussing R2 and R1, and there were differing opinions about how much focus should be on research status. Chair Gibson offered that he intended to capture the research agenda without narrowing the focus to a specific Carnegie classification. VP Hoffschwelle and Chair Gibson asked leadership team members where, if anywhere, the benefits of R2 or the institutional perspective should be discussed in the strategic plan. Chair Gibson suggested we incorporate it into the narrative of the SP brochure.

Chair Vannatta-Hall stated she believed the overall format of the document was effective. Chair Green recommended flipping the themes to address and themes to leverage to put our strengths first. Chair Gibson explained that the following steps once the narrative is finalized would be to work with Marketing and Communication to create a public document for external circulation. The current version makes sense to the leadership team, but we also want a version that makes sense to laypersons.

#### Three Goals Framework Discussion

Chair Gibson explained the need to develop a comprehensive framework that captures the highest priorities from all the listening sessions this spring while incorporating the president's suggestion to include only 2 to 3 significant goals. He asked for feedback regarding whether the framework would enable the pillar groups to develop strategies or initiatives responsive to their member conversations.

Before the meeting, Chair Ridgley shared concerns about using the word 'premier' concerning the institution's research agenda and reputation. Chair Green shared that the 'premier research institution and top choice for students' language came from the Innovation pillar discussions. Some members engaged in research felt the institution does not support research well. Other pillar members felt MTSU should focus on teaching students rather than research. Co-Chair Rochelle noted she didn't think students chose MTSU precisely because of research opportunities; however, Chair Zaza mentioned her belief that some students choose the institution based on research.

The group discussed the merits of including research in one of the three goal or priority areas. Chair Vannatta-Hall shared that in the Academic pillar meetings, members discussed R2/R1 more than research in general, such as high-impact practices, scholarship, and best practices. She also cautioned that using only the word research risks alienating our scholars engaged in creative activity. Chair Green also noted that MTSU is distinctive because we are an effective teaching institution, and students are exposed to research, which may not be true at all R1 institutions.

Members discussed that some stakeholders only see MTSU as a teaching institution rather than a research institution. However, is there a need or desire to address that perception during the 10-year strategic plan? Chair Gibson reiterated that constituents who participated in listening sessions and the survey noted MTSU's strength in teaching. He also reminded the group that the president encouraged us to include and promote what makes MTSU distinctive, and teaching is one of the institution's defining features.

Members offered recommendations for revising the wording of the document. Chair Zaza mentioned that if we want to become R1 in the future, research must be a primary word. Members acknowledged that institutional stakeholders have differing views about whether we should strive to be R1. Chair Gibson offered his opinion that we should not specifically mention R1 in the next strategic plan. Instead, achieving R1 status should be one or two plans in the future.

Chair Gibson asked for comments about the other two priorities. Dr. Vannatta-Hall mentioned a proposal would be submitted to the Provost to consolidate professional development in the LTITC. This proposal aligns well with the second priority and its related strategies. Chair Green noted that any initiative would be challenging without additional financial resources. Graduate student pay, overload pay, and graduate stipends are very low and make it difficult to recruit faculty and students. Co-Chair Rochelle also asked for clarification about the 'support wellness' strategy, which Chair Gibson clarified would apply to faculty, staff, and students.

The Chair shared a document with potential initiatives for each priority and strategy based on pillar discussions. He impressed upon members the examples were not intended to squelch contributions or ideas from the chairs, co-chairs, and members. Instead, the document attempts to put as many ideas from the retreat as possible into the plan to see how well the priorities and strategies would be aligned with the initiatives.

Chair Gibson reminded the team that the role of the Leadership Committee is to develop the framework for the strategic plan. The Planning Committee will achieve implementation. He also noted the possibility of adding a third strategy to the first and third priorities since we currently

only have two. He also stated that the group does not have to use the framework if members believe a better option exists.

Chair Gibson asked members how they would like to proceed with the work for the next two weeks. Dr. Vannatta-Hall wondered whether the work should only be between chairs/co-chairs or should include members. Chair Gibson offered that the Chair and co-chair would lead the conversation. When we are ready for broader sharing, they can ask their members for feedback to ensure the initiatives capture their ideas and conversations.

### **Next Steps**

Chair Gibson stated the need to identify campus partners and decision-makers to see if our plan conception aligns with their thinking. Given that they will be the people charged with developing and implementing the action plan, we want to be inclusive and get their buy-in. Chairs/co-chairs will add their ideas to the ideation document before the next meeting.

Chair Gibson also asked the group to start thinking of how to develop plans for a listening tour for the fall to solicit the next round of feedback. Co-Chair Rochelle noted we didn't have heavy participation from student affairs in the spring.

### **Other Discussion**

Co-Chair Whitefield asked if VP Hoffschwelle would be involved in the campus master plan, and she shared that Bill Waits, Assistant Vice President of Campus Planning, met with Chair Gibson, Co-Chair Bryant, and VP Hoffschwelle to discuss the master plan timeline and the ideas coming from the strategic plan development process so far.

### **Next Steps:**

The next meeting will be held exclusively via Zoom on June 14, 2024. Chair Gibson will synthesize and share all suggestions with the group before the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.