

**MISSOURI SOUTHERN STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Board of Governors Minutes**  
**September 12, 2025**  
**BSC Boardroom**

The September 12, 2025 meeting of the Missouri Southern State University Board of Governors was called to order by Chairman Carlos Haley. Governors in attendance were Carlos Haley, Anita Oplotnik, Dr. Benjamin Rosenberg, Mariann Morgan, T. Mark Elliott, Michael Seibert, and Alison Hershewe.

Others in attendance included Dr. Dean Van Galen, Dr. Lisa Toms, Dr. Shellie Hewitt, Linda Eis, Michelle Wood, Rob Mallory, Dr. Nicole Shoaf, Dr. Stephanie Goad, Maddox Studdard, Morgan Robinson, Jeanie Nice, and Brittany Castell.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chairman Haley asked if there were any announcements. None were noted.

**SPECIAL RECOGNITION**

Chairman Haley invited Dr. Van Galen to acknowledge Mr. Maddox H. Studdard for his distinguished service as student representative. A resolution was presented honoring his achievements, and he was awarded a plaque. Mr. Studdard provided brief remarks thanking the Board.

**MINUTES**

Chairman Haley asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes of the June 12, 2025 Board meeting and the October 1, 2025 “Roy Blunt Health Science Innovation Center Deep Dive” attended by the Board; none were noted.

*A motion was made by Dr. Benjamin Rosenberg and seconded by Governor Mariann Morgan to approve the minutes of the June 12, 2025 Board meeting and the October 1, 2025 Special Board meeting as submitted. Motion passed unanimously (minutes are archived in the permanent record book).*

**REPORTS**

**President – Dr. Dean Van Galen:**

*Note: Highlights of Dr. Van Galen’s report are as follows. Additional information can be found in a handout distributed to the Board that is attached to the minutes in the permanent record book.*

**Start of Academic Year**

The university has enjoyed a terrific start to the 2025-2026 academic year. It’s difficult to believe that we are completing the fourth week of the fall semester. I have heard from many students that they felt welcomed and supported through our Southern Welcome activities and by the way our staff and faculty have been helpful and have emphasized that we want every student to succeed.

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#### **Campus Events**

There have been many activities and events on campus over the past month. I am especially grateful that several Board members were able to join Dr. Toms and me on August 21st at the Alumni Mansion to recognize the 13 outstanding faculty that the Board approved for promotion and/or tenure in June. A photo from the event is included in my report. It was a joy to recognize this group of outstanding educators.

#### **Statewide Mission Statement Expansion Celebration**

Last Friday, of course, we celebrated our new statewide mission and thanked those who were important advocates for Missouri Southern during the process that culminated in the signing of SB150 and SCR3. Today, we have displayed this legislation that Governor Kehoe signed on July 9th. The celebration in the Bud Walton Black Box Theatre brought together campus, community leaders, and legislators to mark a milestone in our university's history and to recognize the opportunities ahead. I was grateful that five members of our legislative delegation were present as well as Dr. Bennett Boggs, the Commissioner of Higher Education for the State of Missouri. We have some strong media coverage. We are strengthening our institutional identity, always with a focus on students.

#### **New Campus Leaders**

In my written report I highlighted two individuals in new leadership roles at Missouri Southern. Michelle Wood is serving as interim Vice President of University Advancement and Executive Director of the Missouri Southern Foundation. Michelle will also work with me relative to governmental relations. A 1992 graduate of MSSU, Michelle is an experienced advancement professional and has already been a great addition to President's Cabinet. Special thanks go to Michelle for her leadership in planning and executing the Statewide Mission Celebration last Friday. It was a great team effort. Welcome back, Michelle.

Also noted in my report, Dr. Rebecca Shriver is our new executive director of international education (following the retirement of Dr. Chad Stebbins). Like Michelle, Dr. Shriver has jumped right in. In this case, last month, leading an extraordinary visit to our campus from a delegation from one of our international partners, Zhejiang International Studies University. Thank you to Governors Rosenberg and Seibert for participating in this special event. This year, Dr. Shriver will be developing a strategic plan that includes expansion and broadening of opportunities for our students to study abroad – adding to the count of over 3,500 MSSU students who have had an international experience over the past 30 years. As I mentioned at the statewide mission celebration, many of our students and alumni tell us that these global experiences have been among the most impactful, transformational experiences in their lives.

#### **Themed Semester**

I have provided the Board with brochures on the various West Africa themed events. Next year the themed semester will focus on Vietnam.

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**Selection of Student Representative to the Board of Governors**

As we have had the opportunity to recognize Maddox Studdard for his service as student representative to the Board, I want to provide the Board with information on this important position. The qualifications and process for the student representative are outlined in State Statute, Chapter 174. The student representative must be a full-time student, a citizen of the United States, and a resident of the state of Missouri. The term of the student representative is two years. Regarding process, the student government president will submit a list of three student names to the Governor to be considered for appointment. I want to thank Morgan Robinson for leading efforts to identify potential student representatives to the Board, and I look forward to supporting President Robinson and Student Senate during this process in any way that is helpful.

**Special Thanks**

Finally, although she would not want me to do this – I will recognize and thank Jeanie Nice for her outstanding service to Missouri Southern. Jeanie has served with distinction as executive administrative assistant in the President’s Office and as Secretary to the Board of Governors. Jeanie is moving out of state, and this is her last full week at MSSU. Jeanie is an amazing professional, demonstrating high standards, outstanding judgment, and great insights. Thank you, Jeanie—and I know we all wish you the best in the next chapter of your life.

**Provost & VP for Academic Affairs – Dr. Lisa Toms:**

*Note: Highlights of Dr. Tom’s report are as follows. Additional information can be found in a handout distributed to the Board that is attached to the minutes in the permanent record book.*

**Social Work & Counseling Center Collaboration**

Our social work program is collaborating with the MSSU counseling center to develop a group therapy room in BSC 356. This collaboration is part of the lion fee immersive learning and will include opportunities for senior social work students to gain experience in co-leading psycho-education groups. These peer groups will cover topics such as stress management and social connection skills. Students from any major will be eligible with the intent to assist with retention by addressing common stressors in college life. It’s a great opportunity for our senior social work students to facilitate group sessions.

**MOSO CAPS Program Update**

MOSO CAPS continues to grow and do well; our enrollment for this year is 83 students with 70 new students and 13 returning for a second year. This is a 20% increase over last year. We’ve jumped from 43 in the program’s first year to 83, which is a great testament to that program’s efficiency and effectiveness. The program has over 190 industry partners with 314 student placements made for just this fall. The enrollment by strand is: health sciences 53, business 14, and human services 16.

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#### Health Science & Nursing Licensure Pass Rates

We are proud to report the first-time pass rates of our May graduates in our health science and nursing programs. Radiology had a 100% first-time pass rate. Dental hygiene had a 100% first-time pass rate. Respiratory therapy had a 75% first-time pass rate. The EMT spring 2025 cohort had an overall 85% pass rate for those who have completed testing. The paramedic class of 2025 has a 100% first-time pass rate. Lastly, for the fourth year in a row, the May 2025 nursing cohort also had a 100% first-time pass rate for the NCLEX. We are thrilled with the performance of our health science programs.

#### Interdisciplinary Research Collaboration

A significant interdisciplinary research collaboration between the departments of biology and environmental health and safety and kinesiology is underway under the sponsorship of Dr. Rawsam Alasmari, who is an assistant professor of kinesiology. Currently, seven of our MKEAP students are participating in this novel research project involving a pendle which is a swing-like device used for various exercises including therapy modalities. This work has resulted in one student receiving a prestigious student research grant from the Central States American College of Sports Medicine membership. Only two grants were awarded at the undergraduate level. Eisha Alam, a junior MQ biological a biomedical sciences major was the recipient of this prestigious award.

#### Reptile Rehabilitation & Diagnostic Project

Dr. David Penning has had the reptile research lab designated as an amphibian and reptile conservation program by the Missouri Department of Conservation. Dr. Penning applied and was granted the ability to care for turtles and tortoises. At this time, Dr. Penning has 19 turtles and tortoises in his care. It is the only opportunity at a college or university in this state for a rehabilitation program for amphibians and reptiles since many of them have been severely injured or noticeably sick or impaired. In one instance, a turtle Dr. Penning received was missing 60% of its shell. In efforts to diagnose the animals help them, Dr. Penning collaborated with radiology technology and dental hygiene to get diagnostic images made of four turtles and a snake. The students and the faculty were thrilled to be able to practice their skills on different species. The pre-vet students now have diagnostic experience that most won't have until vet school.

#### Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer – Ms. Linda Eis

*Note: Highlights of Ms. Eis's report are as follows. Additional information can be found in a handout distributed to the Board that is attached to the minutes in the permanent record book.*

#### External Audit Status

Our annual external audit for fiscal year 2025 is progressing. Each year a new annual federal compliance supplement is issued for guidance on review of the financial aid and federal programs and it is currently pending. Financial aid has been reviewed utilizing last year's criteria as we are anticipating it will remain relatively the same. We are still on track to present the audit at the November board meeting. However, depending on the

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timing of the federal compliance, we may issue a short form audit in November, which is without the federal section (the last few pages of the typical annual audit). That short form would be presented first due to deadlines and required reports to the state, with the long form to follow once available. We have done this once before, in 2020, during COVID.

#### **GASB 101: Compensated Absences**

This is a new GASB 101 standard. A tremendous amount of work has been done by Liz Bose in the HR payroll department, along with work from Michelle Arwood in my office. The university has a shared sick leave pool. This was something that was started by Staff Senate years ago. The sick leave pool is for employees who have major events and need additional time that they may not have in their own sick leave bank. Unused sick leave hours are often transferred when employees leave and they contribute significantly to the pool's balance.

This will now show up on our financial statements as a liability, and there will be an impact to compensation and fringe benefits. However, this is year one, so we will restate FY24, and the difference will show in FY25. We are still working through what those numbers look like, but we do have significant hours in that shared sick leave pool. Employees are generous, and it's a wonderful thing for someone who may need that benefit.

#### **Employee Benefits Update**

The insurance committee has worked very hard this year reviewing historical data and plan options to make a recommendation for insurance charges for calendar year 2026. Although in 2025 we were able to not increase rates and held those steady (two years in a row: 2024 and 2025), rising claims and overall industry increases mean both the university and employees will see an additional expense for the 2026 fiscal year. The committee minimized the impact by adjusting shared co-pays and maximum out-of-pocket limits but kept deductibles unchanged. There is still a zero-cost option for employees, which is an HSA plan and remains very popular. Dental and vision will remain the same. One of the most frequent requests from employees has been an option for pet insurance. This year during open enrollment, employees will have the opportunity to choose it voluntarily.

#### **Facilities Projects Update**

In your packet, I shared updates on facility projects, and I'll highlight a few items:

**Leggett & Platt Athletic Center:** The bleachers have been removed, the indoor track has been installed, and new bleachers will begin installation in less than two weeks.

**Dianne Mayes Student Life Center (Lower Level):** The steering committee has met with architects for preliminary renovation floor plans and renderings. Once finalized, we

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will work on the scope of work, select a contractor, and hope to begin work in January. Estimated completion is summer 2026.

**Roy Blunt Health Science Innovation Center:** Your report includes an architect's rendering alongside actual construction progress of the grand staircase.

**Spiva Library:** Renovations were completed over the summer, and the library reopened to students on September 2, 2025.

**Ongoing Facility Needs**

To address ongoing facility needs and deferred maintenance, we are undertaking a strategic planning process to develop a comprehensive three-year facilities plan beginning July 1, 2026. The facilities plan advisory task force will engage stakeholders through listening sessions with both students and employees. The plan aims to prioritize projects of \$250,000 or more and improve energy efficiency by reducing our campus footprint.

**Financial Statement Information**

We ended fiscal year 2025 (June 30, 2025) with unrestricted cash of \$21.3 million, a decrease of about \$230,000 from FY24.

For the current year, the financial statements for August 31, 2025 reflect:

- Cash balance: \$20.5 million
- Assets: \$229 million
- Liabilities: \$128 million
- Net assets: \$101 million

September is when we make our first semiannual bond payment, which is \$2.6 million.

**Revenue and Expense Comparison**

Looking at the comparative statement of revenues, expenses, and changes in net position (difference column):

- Operating revenues: decrease of \$113,000
- Operating expenses: decrease of \$315,000
- Nonoperating revenues: decrease of \$32,000

Income before other revenues:

- Current year increase: \$14.7 million
  - Prior year increase: \$14.5 million
- Difference: increase of \$170,000

Other revenue reflects a \$2.3 million increase, which continues to represent state capital appropriations and capital gifts for the Roy Blunt Health Science Innovation Center.

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*A motion was made by Governor Anita Oplotnik and seconded by Governor T. Mark Elliott to approve the August, 2025 financial statements as presented. Motion passed unanimously. (A copy of the financial statements for August, 2025 is attached to the minutes in the permanent record book).*

**Interim VP for University Advancement – Mrs. Michelle Wood**

*Note: Highlights of Mrs. Wood's report are as follows. Additional information can be found in a handout distributed to the Board that is attached to the minutes in the permanent record book.*

**Lions Forward Capital Campaign Update**

The Lions Forward capital campaign is currently at 94 percent of goal, with more than \$40 million raised toward the \$42.7 million objective. The campaign is a little over three years into its timeline, leaving just under two years remaining.

**Naming Opportunities**

Board members were directed to the packet for details regarding remaining naming opportunities within the Roy Blunt Health Science Innovation Center. Donor tours continue, and several areas have been secured. Multiple spaces remain available for individuals or businesses to name in honor of a family, organization, or loved one. Members were encouraged to share potential donor leads with the Advancement team.

**Upcoming Events and Milestones**

The Willcoxon Innovation and Health Science Summit is scheduled for March 27, 2026, with a keynote speaker already confirmed. MSSU will also celebrate the 100th anniversary of Mission Hills Mansion in 2026. A planning committee is meeting monthly to coordinate a series of events, including a national preservation symposium on May 14, 2026 and a special anniversary event on October 9, 2026.

**Associate VP of Admissions & Enrollment – Dr. Shellie Hewitt**

*Note: Highlights of Dr. Hewitt's report are as follows. Additional information can be found in a handout distributed to the Board that is attached to the minutes in the permanent record book.*

**Fall Enrollment Update**

Limited enrollment for fall courses continues through the end of the day, after which census reporting will begin. Early indicators suggest an increase in new transfer students and overall graduate student enrollment. Based on data reviewed this morning, headcount is projected to be up approximately 1 percent, with credit hours slightly below last fall.

**International Enrollment**

Missouri Southern continues to navigate a shifting international education landscape. The university welcomed 60 new international students this fall and retained a strong portion

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of the cohort that arrived in the spring. A total of 147 international students are currently enrolled. One of this year's recruitment focuses includes targeted visits to community colleges across the United States to recruit transfer students for bachelor's and master's programs. Recruitment strategies will continue to adapt in response to ongoing global changes.

**Registrar's Office Update**

The Registrar's Office is introducing artificial intelligence into the transcript evaluation process, a development that has been researched extensively. This enhancement will expedite transcript evaluation, provide advisors earlier access to course information and support a more efficient enrollment process across campus.

**University Relations and Marketing**

The University Relations and Marketing team continues to implement strategies that support recruitment and promote the university's mission and brand. Abby Morris and her team played a key role in launching the Joplin Heart campaign, which celebrates community and belonging; Board members received campaign t-shirts at this meeting. The team's fall priorities include enrollment-focused promotions, academic program visibility and initiatives highlighting the university's expanded statewide mission.

**TRIO Programs**

Two TRIO programs, Upward Bound and Talent Search, have secured federal funding for the upcoming year and will continue serving more than 275 students in area schools. Upward Bound also welcomed a new director, Lauri Mead, who is committed to supporting students as they explore postsecondary pathways.

**Strategic Enrollment Council**

The Strategic Enrollment Council continues to address enrollment-related issues and emerging challenges. The council maintains regular communication with university leadership to support improvements across all enrollment processes.

**Director of Athletics – Mr. Rob Mallory**

*Note: Highlights of Mr. Mallory's report are as follows. Additional information can be found in a handout distributed to the Board that is attached to the minutes in the permanent record book.*

**MOSO NIL Exchange**

Missouri Southern athletics launched the MOSO NIL Exchange this summer. The online marketplace is designed to connect businesses, donors and other interested parties with student athletes for NIL opportunities. The platform is free for both student athletes and external users and provides seamless compliance. The partnership also gives student athletes access to industry-leading technology for brand building and educational resources.

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**Staffing Updates**

Mallory noted that it was a busy summer for the athletic department, particularly within the administrative staff. His written report includes one promotion and several new hires. These changes have allowed the department to add outstanding new team members and to restructure responsibilities in ways that will better serve coaches and student athletes, as well as strengthen engagement with the local business community, donors, alumni and fans.

**Academic Achievement Awards**

Eighty-six Missouri Southern student athletes earned the Division II Athletic Directors Association Academic Achievement Award this summer. To qualify, students must have a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or better after a minimum of two years of full-time enrollment. The 86 honorees represent the largest number of awardees from Missouri Southern recognized in the 18-year history of the program.

**Faculty Senate President – Dr. Nicole Shoaf**

*Note: Highlights of Dr. Shoaf's report are as follows. Additional information can be found in a handout distributed to the Board that is attached to the minutes in the permanent record book.*

**Strategic Priorities for Faculty Senate**

Dr. Nicole Shoaf reported that Faculty Senate is focusing on three procedural strategic priorities this year aimed at making the Senate more effective and efficient. In addition to the substantive issues the Senate will address this year, these procedural efforts will support smoother operations and wider faculty involvement.

**Faculty Engagement**

Faculty Senate plans to encourage broader engagement among faculty. Dr. Shoaf noted that there are times when the Senate experiences difficulty recruiting members, and increasing participation will be a focus moving forward.

**Communication Improvements**

Dr. Shoaf emphasized the need to improve communication between faculty leadership and the broader faculty. Although Faculty Senate and its committees are active, accomplish substantial work and maintain strong relationships with both administration and the board, this work has not always been clearly communicated to faculty across campus. Strengthening communication will be a priority this year.

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**Staff Senate President – Dr. Stephanie Goad**

*Note: Highlights of Dr. Goad's report are as follows. Additional information can be found in a handout distributed to the Board that is attached to the minutes in the permanent record book.*

**Bylaws Update**

Staff Senate completed an update to its bylaws, which has been approved by the President's Cabinet.

**Service Champ Awards**

The Second Quarter Service Champ Awards were officially presented this past Wednesday.

**Policy Review Partnerships**

Staff Senate is partnering with the Office of Human Resources to review the staff dress code. A small ad hoc group of staff members is providing input on the policy.

**Staff Welfare Committee**

The Staff Welfare Committee has also formed an ad hoc committee to examine staff compensation, including the structure of the compensation model and potential cost savings across departments and campus.

**Student Senate – Miss. Morgan Robinson**

*Note: Highlights of Miss. Robinson report are as follows. Additional information can be found in a handout distributed to the Board that is attached to the minutes in the permanent record book.*

Miss Robinson reported on student engagement, Student Senate membership, campus construction excitement, parking pass appreciation, and upcoming initiatives.

**BOARD COMMITTEES**

**Personnel/Compensation (T. Mark Elliott, Chair):**

*The committee did not meet.*

**Academic Affairs (Mariann Morgan, Chair):**

*Motion made by Governor Morgan and seconded by Governor Oplotnik to approve Faculty Handbook changes. Motion passed unanimously.*

**Budget & Audit (Mike Seibert, Chair):**

*Committee met; no votes taken.*

**OLD BUSINESS**

None.

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**NEW BUSINESS**

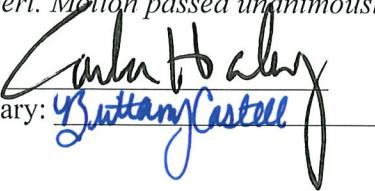
Chairman Haley recognized Ms. Jeanie Nice for her years of dedication to the Board of Governors as Board Secretary.

*A motion was made by Governor Haley to appoint Brittany Castell as Interim Board Secretary, seconded by Governor Oplotnik. Motion passed unanimously.*

*A motion to adjourn was made by Governor T. Mark Elliott and seconded by Governor Michael Seibert. Motion passed unanimously.*

Board Chair:

Board Secretary:



Handwritten signatures of Chairman Haley and Board Secretary Brittany Castell. The signature of Chairman Haley is in black ink and the signature of Board Secretary Brittany Castell is in blue ink. Both signatures are cursive and written over a horizontal line.