

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Regents  
Murray State University  
January 7, 2022**

**Call to Order/Roll Call**

The Murray State University (MSU) Board of Regents met in Special Session on Friday, January 7, 2022, in Room 118 Wells Hall on the Murray State University main campus. Chair Eric Crigler called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m. and welcomed those joining in person and via videoconference. Regents joining the meeting by videoconference included Sam Aguiar, Virginia Gray, Ian Puckett and Vice Chair Don Tharpe (due to inclement weather).

Others participating in the meeting were: Robert L (Bob) Jackson, President; Jill Hunt, Senior Executive Coordinator for the President, Coordinator for Board Relations and Secretary to the Board; Tim Todd, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Jackie Dudley, Vice President for Finance and Administrative Services and Treasurer to the Board; Don Robertson, Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management; Robert Miller, General Counsel; Director of Athletics Kevin Saal; Jordan Smith, Executive Director of Governmental and Institutional Relations; Shawn Touney, Executive Director of Marketing and Communication; Information Technology staff and members of the general public and news media.

**AGENDA**

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| <b>1. <u>Call to Order</u></b>                                       | <b>Chair Crigler</b>  |
| <b>2. <u>Roll Call</u></b>   | <b>Secretary Hunt</b> |
| <b>3. <u>Committee Reports/Recommendations</u></b>                   |                       |
| <b>A. Athletics Committee</b>  | <b>Chair Crigler</b>  |
| <b>1) <u>Intercollegiate Athletics – Conference Affiliation*</u></b> |                       |
| <b>4. <u>Intercollegiate Athletics – Conference Affiliation*</u></b> | <b>Chair Crigler</b>  |
| <b>5. <u>Adjournment</u></b>   |                       |

(\*Requires Committee/Board of Regents Action)

Chair Crigler indicated this represents the first time the Board has met since the tornadoes outbreak in Mayfield, Dawson Springs, Bowling Green and throughout the Commonwealth and surrounding states. Three members of this Board are either from Mayfield or currently live there. Most, if not all, on this Board have been impacted to one degree or another through family and friends. The student body has been impacted as many are from Graves County/Mayfield and alumni, faculty and staff have ties to that area. The Board was asked to continue to keep all those affected in their prayers because they have a long road ahead to rebuild their lives and homes.

Regent Waldrop lives in Mayfield and thanked Board members who have reached out to him. He also expressed appreciation to the University for its response to this disaster. FEMA personnel indicated to him how wonderful it was they could live and sleep in accommodations provided by Murray State. This made a huge difference for these individuals and it was a game changer as they were accustomed to sleeping in tents. He appreciates not only Murray State's response but that of the entire world. All the idiosyncrasies about a tornado are true and damage happens in absolutely random ways. Chair Crigler added that Murray State was ground zero for the emergency response to this disaster after the storms passed through the area.

President Jackson reported that a number of individuals from Murray State have spent a great deal of time assisting with efforts related to the disaster. The University should respond in this manner because it has a tremendous responsibility to this region, the state and multi-state region. Many individuals in this room went above and beyond and worked 24/7 for several days. Recognition was expressed to MSU Police Chief Jeff Gentry who served as the University's

point person for this event; Vice Presidents Dudley, Robertson and Todd; Executive Director of Auxiliary Services David Looney; Mr. Smith and many others. The University offered the assistance it did because it was the right thing to do. At one time there were approximately 700 National Guard and FEMA personnel and first-responders housed on campus and these individuals were fed and taken care of and many very emotionally expressed that they had never been treated the way they were by Murray State University. This was the most devastating natural disaster to reach the region and state ever and a great deal of work remains to be done. The University will continue to provide assistance and support in the months ahead. The Center for Economic and Entrepreneurial Development will assist businesses in the community and the University will continue to provide housing to impacted faculty, staff and students. All should keep these individuals in their thoughts and prayers because there are many hard days ahead. Chair Crigler expressed appreciation to all who have helped with this event. He appreciates the University's response to support this area of the region.

Chair Crigler reported that 2021 was a year of instability in many ways with the continuing pandemic. The collegiate athletics world experienced a lot of conference realignments as many schools tried to leverage and maximize their regional exposure. With regard to academics, many were trying to align with other schools, regions and geographies. Murray State started 2021 in an athletic conference with 12 members, nine of which also played collegiate football. Over the course of the year a number of changes occurred. The conference lost a member in January, another member in February and two additional members in September. Of those schools remaining in the conference, six played football. In order to get an automatic qualifying bid, there must be six schools in the conference. The Athletic Department issued a statement in September indicating the University would look at various options to determine what might be feasible. In conference realignment there must be two willing parties and many factors go into any decision to make changes, including the academics of the institution, athletic program competitiveness, geographic location and whether the conference being considered is looking to expand with your type of institution. Over the course of the last month there have been many discussions about opportunities, including remaining in the University's current conference. Today is historic as a result of all those conversations which have taken place and the diligent work that has been undertaken. Murray State University has received a bid from the Missouri Valley Conference (MVC) – one of the premiere conferences in the country. If the decision is made by the Board to join the MVC, the University would participate in all sports in that conference, except football and rifle. The Missouri Valley Football Conference (MVFC) is a separate entity and the University would have to apply for membership in that conference and would be vetted separately. That process is already underway. The Missouri Valley Conference bid would start July 1, 2022. Discussions with the MVFC involve Murray State joining the conference beginning July 1, 2023. The Rifle team has a storied tradition here at Murray State and would remain within the current conference affiliation. Not all conferences have Rifle as a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) sport and maintaining this presence is essential to the team and the University.

### **Committee Reports/Recommendations**

#### **Athletics Committee**

Eric Crigler – Chair  
Robbie Fitch  
Lisa Rudolph  
Don Tharpe  
Tom Waldrop

### **Athletics Committee**

#### **Intercollegiate Athletics – Conference Affiliation, discussed**

Chair Crigler called the Athletics Committee to order at 8:50 a.m. and reported all other members were present.

President Jackson reported that all are excited about the possibilities associated with the recommendation being made to the Board today. Appreciation was expressed to several individuals who have spent a lot of time over the last many months in regard to this topic. First

is Chair Crigler who has been extremely helpful with his guidance, advice and counsel. Second is Athletics Director Saal. He and his staff have spent hundreds of hours over the past months working on this unexpected topic. Appreciation was expressed to Vice President Dudley and her staff who have undertaken a careful analysis of the financial component associated with changing athletic conferences. General Counsel Miller has reviewed Constitutions, Bylaws and Memorandums of Understanding. He has been through this at other institutions and provided invaluable counsel and advice and his work in this regard is very much appreciated. Appreciation was expressed to Vice Chair Tharpe, Regent Owens in his capacity as Finance Committee Chair and the Athletics Committee, as well as the entire Board, for their work. All have had an opportunity to discuss what making an athletic conference change would mean to this institution and he appreciates their counsel and honesty. Appreciation was expressed to the Coaches of approximately 350 student-athletes that this decision will impact. They all bring pride to Murray State University.

A statement was issued by the University regarding its intention to review any and all (or nearly all) options inside and outside of the current athletic conference. The recommendation is being made for Murray State University to enter into the Missouri Valley Conference and work to finalize all conversations with the Missouri Valley Football Conference. This will greatly change Murray State University and Racer Athletics and is one of three monumental moments that have occurred within athletics. The first was the University becoming one of the founding members of the Ohio Valley Conference (OVC) almost 75 years ago and the second was the decision to move to Division I football. Appreciation was expressed to Regent Puckett for his input throughout this process. This change will be good for campus life, student activities, fans, supporters, alumni, donors and others. Also key to this work is the footprint of the MVC compared to Murray State's footprint. The footprint of the Missouri Valley Conference is where 91 percent of Murray State students come from and 80 percent of alumni live within that same geographical area. This makes the MVC a perfect fit from that standpoint. President Jackson expressed appreciation to the Ohio Valley Conference that has served the University well. Murray State would not have enjoyed success over many years without participation and support from the OVC. The PowerPoint being shown to the Board was also presented to the Missouri Valley Conference.

President Jackson indicated that everyone knows the importance of athletics and what these programs mean to Murray State. Athletics represents an extension of the University's academic mission and Strategic Plan. Athletic programs enhance rankings and academic reputation from a recruiting and retention standpoint. The past year has been a period of great change with national conference realignments occurring all over the country. Options that have been evaluated included a review of both overall and student-athlete recruitment and retention. There must be a minimum of six sports to receive an NCAA Automatic Qualifier. Many conferences now have only five or six Football Championship Series (FCS) football programs. As options were evaluated, the strength, reputation, stability, program development, recruiting, footprint and future potential of the conferences were taken into consideration. Protecting the University's image and national brand, its long history of success, asset preservation and investment in Murray State's future were factors also taken into consideration. Racer Athletics is a vital asset to this institution and must also be protected from a preservation perspective.

As conference review work was undertaken, the University looked for opportunities for multiple bids. Consideration was given to enhancing campus and student activities in all areas; conference assistance with institutional fundraising, support and sponsorships (earned media); regional rivalries important to the University community, students, fans, alumni, donors and sponsors; recruiting in all areas and any associated risks with each decision made. In 2019, an outside firm evaluated the earned media value – what it would cost the institution to purchase advertising – from Ja Morant leading the Murray State Men's Basketball team in the NCAA Tournament. The value of this amounted to \$277 million. Every year earned media value was evaluated, it amounted to a six-figure, \$100 million plus impact from Racer Athletics. Conferences matter because they are a point of institutional differentiation and create new and maintain old rivalries. For many constituents, athletic teams represent the primary contact and ongoing relationship with Murray State.

The Missouri Valley Conference/Missouri Valley Football Conference was founded in 1907 and is the second oldest of 32 members. In terms of strength of conference, it is ranked 11<sup>th</sup>. In the 2021 FCS football playoffs, six of 24 teams were from the MVFC. If the recommendation being

made today is approved, Murray State would be the only Kentucky program in this particular conference.

Fundraising, sponsorships and other support is important to Murray State. As conversations have been held with staunch donors and supporters, one made a \$250,000 pledge not even knowing the new conference but confident the administration is taking the right steps to make good decisions for Racer Athletics moving forward. The MVC basketball conference tournament – Arch Madness – is held in St. Louis, Missouri, and conversations with stakeholders were all positive. Murray State fans travel with the team and this is crucial to its success. A graphic showing Murray State’s current footprint and that of the Missouri Valley Conference was presented and revealed they are almost identical to where the University already operates with 91 percent of students coming from these areas. A graphic showing the Missouri Valley Football Conference footprint was also presented. All MVC football-playing schools also play in the MVFC, plus four teams in the Dakotas. This was taken into consideration in terms of associated travel costs.

The Saturday and Sunday before Christmas President Jackson and Athletics Director Saal made a presentation to the Missouri Valley Conference which included the associated Presidents, MVC Commissioner Jeff Jackson and others. The University’s history and information about Murray State was presented and included several key facts about the institution. These included colleges and schools, the University’s academic reputation, how proud all are of this institution, accolades that have been achieved over many years (Points of Pride), the operating budget and the MSU Foundation endowment. Murray State has enjoyed a committed history to athletics, starting out as the Thoroughbreds. This discussion included how Murray State is moving forward with a new Strategic Plan; Master Plans for campus, athletics and housing; public-private partnerships; centennial celebration; comprehensive campaign and a commitment to the fact that athletics is the “front porch” for any institution. It is not the most important room in the house but it is the most visible.

In regard to development, discussions included how much money the University raised in Fiscal Year 2021 – its best in ten years. Also discussed was overall University commitment and the \$12.3 million bond issue approved in 2021 for investments in deferred maintenance, asset preservation and facility enhancements; teaching and learning and campus/student life and improvements in key buildings on campus, including Lovett Auditorium, Curris Center, Wrather Museum Auditorium, Carr Health, Racer Arena, Wilson and Wells halls and others. The 30-second institutional video used for advertising purposes was also shared with the MVC.

The MVC was particularly interested in academic achievements. The University’s 81 percent retention rate fits within the 69 – 87 percent retention rate in the Missouri Valley Conference. Information was also shared on enrollment, ACT scores and value with greatly enhanced quality and enriched education at the best net price for students. A data chart was shared with the MVC which compared Murray State with actual peers within that conference. An enrollment comparison chart was also shared with the MVC utilizing the University’s peers in that conference. MSU is in the middle in terms of enrollment with five schools being smaller and five peers being larger. A comparison chart relative to ACT scores was also provided and Murray State is again in the middle with not a lot of difference separating this key data point.

Information regarding the MSU Foundation was shared with the Missouri Valley Conference, including that it is a completely independent 501(c)3 organization existing solely to benefit Murray State students; surpassed \$180 million in total assets; has a history of generous trustees who guide that entity in its mission and contributed millions annually in support of the University and students.

Athletics Director Saal expressed appreciation to Dr. Renee Fister, Executive Director for Strategic Enrollment Management, for providing the data and preparing charts being utilized today. He has learned a tremendous amount about Murray State University over the past several months. Most importantly, he learned that the tradition and excellence that has been part of this institution over the last 100 years is revered nationally and garners a great deal of respect. All should keep in mind that Murray State has a great story to tell.

The five-year plan for Murray State athletics was discussed with the MVC in terms of rosters, investment in facilities, the Campus Master Plan and the Athletics Facility Master Plan.

Potential future gifts to the program were also discussed. Data on fundraising in athletics resource development and progress between Fiscal Years 2019 and 2021 was shared with the MVC and key data points, dollar amounts and percentages were shared with the Board. Appreciation was expressed to Dr. Tina Bernot, Executive Director of Development, for producing very impressive productivity in terms of fundraising, particularly in a COVID year.

The footprint as it relates to institutions within the Missouri Valley Conference represents a 350-mile radius and a graphic to provide additional perspective was provided. Conversations occurred about the media market which is ranked 84<sup>th</sup> in the country (out of 210) in terms of size. This represents 380,000 homes and a population of 826,000. Murray State shares this same market with Southern Illinois University, Southeast Missouri State University and the University of Tennessee-Martin. The second aspect related to market is the University's broadcast assets. The Racer Sports Network provides play-by-play coverage of MSU Football, Men's Basketball, Women's Basketball and Baseball competitions. The 100,000-watt FM signal connects 68 counties and reaches a population of 700,000. ESPN and ESPN+ coverage was outlined in the presentation to the MVC. In 2019-20, Men's Basketball averaged 6,934 unique viewers per game, Women's Basketball averaged 2,341 and in 2019 Football averaged 4,987. The GoRacers.com website hosted over 30 million visitors in 2018-19. In terms of exposure due to in-person attendance, Murray State sells more basketball season tickets and post-season OVC Tournament tickets than all Ohio Valley Conference peers combined. In terms of football, average attendance per home game in 2018-19 was 5,442 and in 2019-20 was 4,887. Season ticket holders increased 22 percent between 2019 and 2021 fall seasons. In 2019, aggregate football in-person attendance was 43,042 (40 percent increase over the 2018 season) and in September 2019 the University recorded the largest single-game attendance since 1998. In 2021, the University enjoyed the largest average home game attendance since 1998. These increases can be attributed to the new coaching staff that was hired in December 2019. Investments will continue to be made in the Football program to enable it to continue to grow as results have been remarkable. In the 2019 season there were four different top-five attendance marks and the program had back-to-back winning seasons for the second time in 20 years. The trajectory is upward and onward. Athletics has demonstrated the ability to generate more revenue in Football from 2018 to 2019. Mileage grids were reviewed and the MVFC certainly has a more diverse geography from a travel perspective. In the Southland Conference, there are six institutions over 400 miles away from Murray. There are also six institutions over 400 miles away from Murray in the Missouri Valley Football Conference.

Facts regarding the sport portfolio, annual operating budget and quantity of student-athletes was provided to the MVC. With regard to the academic profile for student-athletes, December 19 marked the 35<sup>th</sup> consecutive semester of a department-wide 3.0 grade point average (GPA) or better. The 35-semester average GPA is 3.08 and 17 of the individual team Academic Progress Rate (APR) scores have been a perfect 1,000 over the last four years. In relation to the MVC, relative to the University's APR and Graduation Success Rate (GSR), based on a three-year average, Murray State ranks fourth in terms of APR and seventh in GSR. In the data presented, APR scores are all above the minimum standard to obtain NCAA financial unit share on the academic side. This represents an important program resource.

A report was provided to the MVC on comprehensive athletics excellence at Murray State, including being named 2018-19 Commissioner's Cup recipients with the highest points total in the history of that award. In 2018-19 Racers placed 100<sup>th</sup> in the country out of 352 Division I institutions in terms of comprehensive excellence in athletics and received the Learfield Director's Cup which represents a joint effort between the National Association of Directors of Athletics and USA Today.

All 15 sports create one team in the Athletics Department and highlights were presented for each.

- Women's Soccer has seven league championships, six league Players of the Year, three league Coaches of the Year and three NCAA Tournament appearances since 2015.
- Volleyball has six league championships, four league Players of the Year, two league Coaches of the Year and three NCAA Tournament appearances since 2014. The 2018-19 match winning streak tied the school record.
- Rifle has two NCAA Team and seven Individual National Championships, five league championships, 12 league Most Valuable Players, four league Coaches of the Year and five consecutive NCAA Tournament appearances (2015-20) and placed fourth nationally in 2019. The program is currently ranked in the Top 8 nationally and 6<sup>th</sup> in the country.

- For the 2021-22 season, Women's Basketball had its best start since 1988-89 and is 93<sup>rd</sup> in the NCAA Evaluation Tool (NET) rankings which represents a good start for the program. The winning percentage has increased four consecutive seasons under the direction of Coach Rechelle Turner and her staff. The team has had four consecutive league tournament appearances and two league Players of the Year since 2018. Academics are strong in this program and all are proud of what they are accomplishing.
- Women's Golf, under the direction of 29-year Head Coach Velvet Milkman who started the program, has won 12 league championships, including a three-peat, the most league championships of any Coach in Murray State history. Linette Holmslykke, the first-ever woman to represent the league in the terminal final of the NCAA Golf championships, finished 2<sup>nd</sup> at regionals and 54<sup>th</sup> nationally in a field of 132 players. The program has had four league Players of the Year since 2014 and Coach Milkman was awarded the Gladys Palmer Meritorious Service Award, Women's Golf Coaching Association's top honor.
- Baseball finished second in the league in 2021, competing in a post-season league championship game. In 2019, the team finished 5<sup>th</sup> in the league, compared to the pre-season 9<sup>th</sup> selection and there have been two league Players of the Year since 2014. Baseball has also been recognized in the Top 50 ranked this year.
- Men's Golf had two Coaches in the history of the program before hiring Daniel Deluca in May 2021. Coach Deluca is doing an excellent job from a recruitment perspective and has signed several Top 5 players from the Commonwealth of Kentucky.
- Softball is a relatively young program at Murray State and began in 2010. The team qualified for post-season league tournament play all but two years and has nine post-season league tournament wins. In 2019, Softball finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in the league after a pre-season 9<sup>th</sup> selection.
- Track and Field/Cross Country, under the direction of Coach Adam Kiesler, won the outdoor league championship in 2019 for the first time in 27 years. Tamdra Lawrence was the first woman in league history to win the 100-meter four consecutive years (2016-19). She is the fastest woman in the OVC and she is a Racer. There have been four Most Valuable Players since 2019 (both indoor and outdoor).
- Women's Tennis has three league championships, one Coach of the Year and two NCAA Tournament appearances since 2014.
- Football program revenue has increased by 40 percent between 2018 and 2019 seasons. Season ticket sales increased over 22 percent between 2019 and 2021 and the program had back-to-back winning seasons for the second time in 21 years.

“The Rising” video highlighting all sports programs was shared with the Board. Appreciation was expressed to the video staff who worked tremendously long hours over the last several months to produce this remarkable video.

Athletics Director Saal reported that as of December 18, 2021, the Men's Basketball program had a NET ranking of 38 and currently this would be 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the OVC. The 10-1 start at that time was the best since 2011. Also at that time, the mid-major poll had the University ranked 10<sup>th</sup>. Several articles and prominent national recognitions were presented from CBS and ESPN about the Murray State Basketball program being in either the Top 30 or Top 50 historically. The departmental agreement with Nike was discussed with the Missouri Valley Conference, which included the Nike Elite agreements for the Basketball program. The Murray State effect exposure video was shared with the Board which represents highlights from the \$277 million in media exposure due to the Basketball team from various media, television, newspaper and social media exposures. Each year has been extraordinary from a Men's Basketball achievement standpoint. An outline of accomplishments during the past three years was provided. There was an almost 80 percent winning percentage over that period of time and 87 percent in the league. At home, the program had an almost 94 percent winning percentage. The program has been 14<sup>th</sup> in the country in home winning percentage since 2017-18. Data was presented on regular and post-season championships and NCAA selections, records and wins in comparison to current MVC schools. A summary of each Murray State appearance in the NCAA Tournament was provided. The Racers have won three NCAA Tournament games in their last four appearances in the last four years. This relates to exposure for the institution and program but also has positive financial implications. A comparison of matchups in the OVC against Missouri Valley Conference teams was provided. In its history, Murray State has won 141 games against current MVC teams. MSU has ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in the country among Winningest Mid-Major Programs. The team has finished in the Top 45 for three consecutive seasons in defensive efficiency and peers in this category include Cincinnati, Gonzaga, Virginia, Texas Tech, Michigan State and Houston.

The Men's Basketball program has one of the best home court records in college basketball at 292 – 50.

Player development is essential to the program and former MSU players Cam Payne and Ja Morant who are now in the NBA have represented Murray State extremely well. As of the first day of training camp, three former MSU players were under NCAA contracts. The history of NCAA All-Americans from Murray State was provided and include Joe Fulks who invented the jump shot and Marcus Brown who is currently on staff. Twenty-five players have been drafted into the NBA, with 40 years of service experience, for an average of 1.6 which ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the current Missouri Valley Conference. Undrafted players and their experience also ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the MVC.

The Basketball historical video was shared with the Board. Appreciation was expressed to staff producing the video but also to former Murray State Head Coaches Mick Cronin, Billy Kennedy, Steve Prohm, Tevester Anderson, Mark Gottfried and current Coach Matt McMahon. The aggregated statistics for these coaches was provided. This same information was compiled for the Football program with Coaches Dean Hood, Houston Nutt, Frank Beamer, Mike Gottfried, Ron Zook, Bud Foster, Ralph Friedgen and Mike O'Cain. The history of success is definitely evidenced by their associated statistics. Combined they have served 80 years as FCS Coaches.

Facilities were also discussed with the Missouri Valley Conference. The CFSB Center has a maximum capacity of 8,600 and this ranks the facility in the middle of the league. It was also important to highlight the Racer Nation incredible fan base and the family that comes with Murray State University and Racer Athletics. Attendance numbers for the semi-final and final games of the Ohio Valley Conference Tournament in 2019 were provided compared to how they related to single-game attendances in the MVC. Murray State's fan base will represent the University well in a very unique way.

President Jackson reported that all decisions made at the University in regard to investing in the future are undertaken with the goal of maintaining existing core values such as academic quality and affordability and national value positioning. There is an exit fee to leave the Ohio Valley Conference but one-time reserve funds have been identified for this purpose. All sports except Football and Rifle would leave the OVC as of July 1, 2022, with the expectation that Football will leave the conference as of July 1, 2023. The University does not want to put the OVC in jeopardy with regard to Football. If the conference goes below six members it could put them at a disadvantage from an NCAA qualifier perspective. The action being recommended by MSU to not leave the OVC in Football until 2023 will allow this to be avoided.

Athletics Director Saal added that the Missouri Valley Conference has been forthcoming in sharing information with Murray State throughout this process. MVC truly represents a premiere athletic conference that has had multiple bids and NCAA championships for Men's Basketball, Women's Basketball, Softball and Baseball. They were one of few leagues in the country to be able to accomplish this during the 2019-20 season.

Chair Crigler indicated it is evident by the high-level presentation just provided that a great deal of work and due diligence have been part of this process. In response to a question in regard to academics and the radius of the new conference, particularly Football travel, and what changes might be implemented with student-athletes, Athletics Director Saal reported that the footprint – while not as tight as the OVC – is tighter than any of the other leagues considered. Adjustments will need to be made – such as providing laptops for students – but typically Football players are out of class less than other student-athletes. Some other sports play on different days of the week and students have to be out of class for longer periods. Providing the resources necessary for these individuals to succeed will remain a high priority. The University already has in place a very competent academic support staff led by Matt Kelly, Senior Associate Athletics Director. The group tutors and mentors 75 new student-athletes every year and the learning curve is continuous. All are encouraged by the successful 35 consecutive semesters of student-athletes maintaining a 3.0 GPA and it is expected this will continue. Regent Gray commended President Jackson and Athletics Director Saal and everyone who has worked on this conference realignment.

Clarification was requested on what will be required to leave the Ohio Valley Conference. President Jackson indicated there is a right way to handle commitments the University has made

as a founding member of the OVC. There is an exit fee to leave the OVC but negotiations will be undertaken with the Commissioner. He has communicated with the Commissioner and the Board of Presidents because the University's Rifle program will remain in the OVC and Football will be in the league for another year. He and General Counsel Miller have spent a great deal of time determining how to properly address the requirements of leaving the OVC. The exit fee is \$1 million as per the Bylaws, and that will be the ceiling for leaving the conference. Whether some consideration is feasible because Murray State is leaving other sports in the conference will also be explored.

Regent Waldrop expressed appreciation to all involved in this process over the holidays and to their families. Regent Puckett expressed appreciation to all involved in this process. The investigative work undertaken required a great deal of time and many members of the University administration were involved in this work. As Student Government Association President, he expressed appreciation to the student body as there have been several who have been involved in this process. These individuals provided wonderful feedback in regard to conference realignment. Murray State students are grateful they are able to provide opinions on matters involving the University and have those taken seriously. Vice Chair Tharpe expressed appreciation for the vast amount of information provided to the Board so it can make an informed decision. Due diligence and deliberation has been undertaken and moving forward this could have a significant impact on asset preservation. Regent Aguiar indicated he is excited about this positive move to the Missouri Valley Conference. In terms of whether one year will get the Football program to the point where it can compete with those in the MVC from a budget perspective, Athletics Director Saal reported that Football is extremely important to the University and invokes excitement from fans. The Football program has an opportunity to generate revenue and has shown the ability to do so through an increase in season ticket holders and revenue through other means. The Football program is currently in a challenging financial situation within the OVC but over the last two years has responded methodically, responsibly and progressively to work its way up the financial ladder and such efforts will continue. Joining the MVC and the MVFC provides additional opportunities for revenues in different areas and efforts will continue to strategically invest in all athletic programs to ensure Murray State is represented well. Chair Crigler added that the administration understands and has taken time to determine how this work will progress over time. Work will be needed in the future to integrate Murray State into these conferences and perform well in a higher competitive landscape. The administration is not entering into these conferences in a naïve way and has taken a sober look at what needs to be done and will develop strategies to enhance those different areas. President Jackson added that he and Mr. Saal spent time with Coach Hood relative to a plan moving forward for Football sponsorship opportunities and revenue enhancement activities which will lead to growth in this program. Coach Hood is very supportive and excited about the future. Athletics Director Saal confirmed that Coaches have been heavily engaged in this process on numerous occasions to gain their input and feedback. Every sport has its own unique brand and entertaining a decision of this magnitude has different implications for each program. Regent Owens expressed appreciation to President Jackson and Athletics Director Saal for ensuring the due diligence that the Board would need to ensure its fiduciary responsibility has been undertaken and addressed. They have done an outstanding job and first and foremost in their minds has been what is in the best interest of Murray State University.

#### **Intercollegiate Athletics – Conference Affiliation, accepted, approved and authorized**

On behalf of the Athletics Committee, Regent Fitch moved that the Board of Regents, upon the recommendation of the President of the University and the Director of Athletics, accepts the membership invitation from the Missouri Valley Conference (MVC) for all sports except Rifle and Football, approves the Memorandum of Understanding from the MVC, and authorizes payment of all associated fees for entry into the MVC on July 1, 2022; and that the Board of Regents further authorizes the President of the University to negotiate an agreement to join the Missouri Valley Football Conference (MVFC), effective July 1, 2023, provided an invitation from the MVFC is extended, and authorizes payment of all required fees; and that the Board of Regents further authorizes the President of the University to negotiate the University's exit from the Ohio Valley Conference (OVC) including all associated fees, effective June 30, 2022, in all sports except Football and Rifle, and authorizes the exit of the Football program from the OVC, effective June 30, 2023, with all such exit fees payable to the OVC from University reserve accounts. Regent Waldrop seconded and the motion carried.



## **Adjournment**

The Athletics Committee adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

## **Full Board Action – Intercollegiate Athletics – Conference Affiliation, accepted, approved and authorized**

On behalf of the Athletics Committee, Regent Owens moved that the Board of Regents, upon the recommendation of the President of the University and the Director of Athletics, accepts the membership invitation from the Missouri Valley Conference (MVC) for all sports except rifle and football, approves the Memorandum of Understanding from the MVC, and authorizes payment of all associated fees for entry into the MVC on July 1, 2022; and that the Board of Regents further authorizes the President of the University to negotiate an agreement to join the Missouri Valley Football Conference (MVFC), effective July 1, 2023, provided an invitation from the MVFC is extended, and authorizes payment of all required fees; and that the Board of Regents further authorizes the President of the University to negotiate the University's exit from the Ohio Valley Conference (OVC) including all associated fees, effective June 30, 2022, in all sports except football and rifle, and authorizes the exit of the football program from the OVC, effective June 30, 2023, with all such exit fees payable to the OVC from University reserve accounts. Regent Rudolph seconded and the roll was called with the following voting: Mr. Aguiar, yes; Dr. Evans, yes; Dr. Fitch, yes; Mrs. Gray, yes; Mr. Owens, yes; Mr. Puckett, yes; Mrs. Rudolph, yes; Dr. Shemberger, yes; Dr. Tharpe, yes; Mr. Waldrop, yes and Mr. Crigler, yes. The motion carried unanimously.

## **Other Business/Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chair Crigler indicated he would entertain a motion for the Special Meeting of the Board of Regents to adjourn. Regent Rudolph so moved, seconded by Regent Owens, and the motion carried unanimously. Adjournment was at 10:06 a.m.

  
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Secretary Jill Hunt

  
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Chair Eric F. Crigler

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