Mississippi University for Women Alumni Association

Board of Directors Summer Meeting

July 18, 2026
Welty Hall, Mississippi University for Women
Columbus, Mississippi

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

President **Bayleigh Vick** called the Summer Meeting of the Mississippi University for Women Alumni Association (MUWAA) Board of Directors to order at approximately **1:07 p.m.** A quorum was present. Members attended both in person and virtually. Seventeen (17) voting members were present.

MUWAA Board Members present in person:

- Dana Jackson
- Elysa Harvey Maclellan
- Carrie Niemet
- Bridget Pieschel
- Leta Palmiter
- Kristen Pate
- Lynn Lott Schneider
- Mary Beth Thorman
- Bayleigh Herron Vick
- Bridget Smith Ellis
- Ashley Dean
- Wesley House Garrett
- Deborah Hodges

MUWAA Board Members present via teleconference:

- Anne White Foster
- Clare Haefner
- Sydney Pittman
- Terri Stewart
- Nicole Rensink

MUWAA Board Members absent:

- Jonathan Cumberland

- Ariel Seawell

Ex-Officio Members present:

- Cathryn Vaughn Borer, Director of Alumni Relations and Donor Engagement
- Dr. Scott Tollison, University Interim President

II. Adoption of the Agenda

Bridget Smith Ellis moved that the MUWAA Board of Directors approve the agenda as presented.
Motion carried.

III. President's Welcome

President Bayleigh Vick welcomed board members, committee chairs, and guests to the first meeting of the 2026–2027 board year. She expressed appreciation for the willingness of members to serve the Association and support the mission of Mississippi University for Women.

IV. Approval of Parliamentarian

Ashley Dean moved that **Wesley House Garrett** be approved as Parliamentarian for the 2026–2027 Board year. **Motion carried.**

V. Election of Officers

Secretary

Elysa Harvey MacLellan moved that **Leta Palmiter** be elected Secretary of the MUWAA Board of Directors for the 2026–2027 Board year. **Motion carried.**

Treasurer

Carrie Niemet moved that **Dana Jackson** be elected Treasurer of the MUWAA Board of Directors for the 2026–2027 Board year. **Motion carried.**

VI. Ratification of Electronic Vote

The Board ratified the electronic vote approving the Spring 2026 Board Meeting Minutes. The Spring 2026 minutes were previously approved by electronic vote on May 19, 2026, with **19 affirmative votes**.

VII. Alumni Office Report

Director of Alumni Relations and Donor Engagement Cathryn Borer presented the Alumni Office Report. She announced that recipients had been notified for the 2026 MUWAA scholarships, including the Legacy Scholarship, Culinary Arts Advisory Scholarship, and First Generation Scholarship. No qualified applicant met the requirements for the Southern Grace Scholarship this year.

Ms. Borer reviewed upcoming alumni and university events, including the Lowndes County (LOCO) Chapter Meeting on July 23, the New Faculty Lunch on August 12, Move-In Day and Parent Welcome Picnic on August 15, Blues Week activities, the Student Alumni Association Organization Fair, the Luau on August 23, and Welty Weekend, including the Fall Board Meeting scheduled for October 24.

Board members were invited to volunteer at upcoming events, including assisting with the distribution of T-shirts during Blues Week.

VIII. Foundation Report

Foundation Board Chair Deborah Hodges presented an overview of the Mississippi University for Women Foundation and its impact on the University. She reported that the Foundation's endowment has grown from its original $6,000 to more than $80 million, reflecting decades of responsible stewardship and investment.

Ms. Hodges highlighted the Foundation's support of scholarships, the LEAP program, legislative initiatives, Career Services, and numerous campus projects that enhance the student experience and address needs not otherwise funded by the University. She encouraged board members to stay informed through Foundation communications and to participate in Capital Day in Jackson.

Board members were encouraged to support the Foundation through regular charitable giving, identify potential donors and planned giving opportunities, and promote unrestricted gifts to the W Fund, which provides the flexibility to meet the University's most immediate needs. Mrs. Hodges shared a preview of an upcoming Welty Gala’s fundraising event and encouraged board members to support and attend.

IX. MUWAA Officer Reports

Parliamentarian

Parliamentarian Wesley House Garrett reminded board members of key parliamentary procedures and governance expectations. She noted that motions before the Board do not require a second, encouraged members to regularly monitor their email for Association business conducted between meetings, and emphasized the importance of maintaining a quorum of at least **13 voting members** throughout board meetings. She also reminded members that the same parliamentary rules apply during committee meetings.

Secretary

Leta Palmiter had nothing to report for the Office of Secretary.

Treasurer

Treasurer **Dana Jackson** presented the financial report for the Association as of **June 30, 2026**. She reported that the Association held **$77,920.02** in restricted accounts and **$323,966.55** in endowed accounts. She reviewed the purpose of restricted and endowed funds, noting that restricted accounts provide operating funds for Association activities, while endowed funds support scholarships and awards through long-term investment.

Ms. Jackson also highlighted the giving information included in the board packet and encouraged members to support the Association through regular charitable contributions, emphasizing that consistent giving at any level strengthens the Association's ability to fulfill its mission.

X. Standing Committee Reports

Nominations and Elections Committee – Immediate Past President **Ashley Dean** reported that the committee successfully completed the election and installation of the 2026–2029 Board class at the Annual Meeting and conducted the nomination process for the 2026–2027 Nominations and Elections Committee. Six eligible candidates were presented for election later in the meeting, and she thanked the outgoing committee members for their service.

Bylaws Committee – **Annie Oeth**, Chair, reported that the committee remains committed to maintaining the Association's Bylaws and Policies and Procedures, including ensuring ADA compliance. She noted that the committee recently updated the governing documents for ADA accessibility, revised the W G.U.I.L.D. Award timeline and award procedures, and updated Appendix F to include current Association fundraising events. The committee will continue reviewing governing documents for clarity, consistency, and compliance.

Recruitment and Retention Committee – **Terri Stewart, Chair,** presented the report. She reported that the committee completed the student scholarship selection process, coordinated scholarship committee recommendations with the Alumni Office, and notified scholarship recipients. The committee will begin preparations for the next Alumni Awards cycle and continue collaborating with the Public Relations and Digital Marketing Committees to recognize scholarship, faculty award, and alumni award recipients.

Chapters and Constituency Groups Committee – Nicole Rensink, Chair, reported that she has assumed leadership of the committee for the 2026–2027 board year and expressed appreciation to outgoing Chair Ariel Seawell for her service. She reported that the committee will continue supporting existing alumni chapters and constituency groups while focusing on developing new groups, building on the interest generated through alumni outreach during the past year. The committee will begin its work with new members in August.

Special Events Committee – **Kristen Pate**, Chair, reported that the committee successfully planned and executed the **13th Annual Long Blue Line Auction**, raising approximately **$26,000**, and the **5th Annual Magnolia Mingle**, which raised approximately **$13,000**. She highlighted the successful implementation of a new digital drawdown platform for Magnolia Mingle and reported that planning is underway for the **14th Annual Long Blue Line Auction**, scheduled for **September 25–26, 2026**. Board members were encouraged to promote the event and support the auction through donations and participation. Kristen also recognized **Bridget Smith Ellis** and **Dustin Nolan** for their significant contributions to the success of the Association's fundraising events.

Finance Committee – **Dana Jackson**, Chair, reported that the committee met throughout the year to review the Association's finances, monitor budget-to-actual performance, and develop the proposed 2026–2027 budget. She expressed appreciation to the committee members for their financial expertise and noted that improvements in financial reporting will support the Association's ongoing fiscal oversight. She also highlighted the check register included in the board packet, which details expenditures approved since the March board meeting, and encouraged continued support of Association fundraising efforts and charitable giving.

Public Relations Committee- **Lynne Lott Schneider**
Chair **Lynne Lott Schneider** reported that the Public Relations Committee completed its annual records update and concluded the 2025–2026 Board year, with substantive committee work documented in previous quarterly reports. As the committee transitions to new leadership, priorities for 2026–2027 include increasing promotion of MUWAA events, award recipients, and chapter activities through print publications and press releases, while strengthening collaboration with other committees to expand alumni engagement and visibility.

Past Presidents Committee- **J.J. Price**
Chair **J.J. Price** was absent, but her report is included in the board packet.

XI. Special Committee Reports

Membership Recruitment Committee - **Carrie Niemet**

Chair **Carrie Niemet** reported that the committee focused on growing alumni membership and increasing participation in Association and University activities, particularly among recent graduates. During the past year, the committee completed its goals of selecting graduation gifts, launching the "Each One Reach One" social media campaign, hosting the Student vs. Alumni Giving Competition during Homecoming, and supporting W Day activities. She expressed appreciation to the committee members and Alumni Office staff for their collaboration and looks forward to continuing the committee's work during the 2026–2027 board year.

Mentoring Committee - **Bridget Pieschel**

Chair **Bridget Pieschel** reported that the committee continued its mission of connecting alumni with current students through mentoring opportunities. The committee successfully hosted the annual **Blue Event**, bringing together alumni and students for networking and career mentoring, and supported mentoring activities during **Spring Fling**. Dr. Pieschel shared lessons learned from the past year and noted that the committee will begin planning earlier and strengthen coordination with campus partners to enhance mentoring opportunities.

Strategy & Support Committee - **Bridget Smith Ellis**

Chair **Bridget Smith Ellis** reported that the committee achieved its primary goals for the year by administering the annual Board Survey and successfully launching the **Whova** event platform to enhance alumni engagement and communication during Homecoming. The committee will continue evaluating and expanding the use of technology and communication tools to strengthen alumni engagement at future Association events. She expressed appreciation to the committee members, the Digital Marketing Committee, and Claire Hafner for their support in implementing the new platform.

One MUW Committee - **Kimberly Griffin**

Chair **Kimberly Griffin** had to log off prior to delivering the committee report. The ONE MUW committee report is included in the board packet.

Digital Marketing Committee - **Clare Haefner**

Chair **Clare Haefner** reported that the committee experienced strong growth in alumni engagement across the Association's digital platforms during the past year, particularly during Homecoming through the successful implementation of the **Whova** event platform. She highlighted increases in Facebook reach and Instagram engagement and outlined plans to expand alumni storytelling, increase video content, evaluate the Association's social media strategy, and continue supporting committees with digital communications throughout the 2026–2027 board year.

XII. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

XIII. New Business

A. Election of the Nominations & Elections Committee

The Board elected the following members to serve on the Nominations & Elections Committee:

- Troy Lewis
- LeAnn Alexander
- Annie Oeth
- Wilkedria Davis

Alternate:

- Courtney Murtaugh

B. Approval of Committee Chairs and Committee Members

Lynne Lott Schneider moved that the MUWAA Board of Directors approve the 2026–2027 Standing and Special Committee Chairs and Members.

Corrections and additions presented during the meeting included:

- Madeline Giancola replacing Madeline Gardner.
- Correction of Pooja Shaunak's name from Rani to Shaunak.
- Addition of Terry Coffey to the Mentoring Committee.
- Addition of Nicole Rensink, Kristopher Sullivan, and Monique Jenkins to Membership Recruitment Committee.
- Addition of Symone Bounds to the Past President’s Committee.

Motion carried.

C. Approval of the 2026–2027 Budget

Terri Stewart moved that the MUWAA Board of Directors approve the 2026–2027 Budget, including transfers of Long Blue Line Auction and Magnolia Mingle funds into the Activities Fund.

Motion carried.

XIV. Open Forum

Board members discussed upcoming Alumni Association activities and opportunities for engagement throughout the coming year.

XV. President's Closing Comments

President Vick reviewed upcoming Association and University events, including the Lowndes County Chapter Meeting, Summer Commencement, Blues Week, the Long Blue Line Auction, Welty Weekend, and the Fall Board Meeting. She reminded committee chairs that board reports are due by **October 3, 2026**, and encouraged members to actively support the Long Blue Line Auction through participation, donations, and promotion.

She also challenged each board member to strengthen alumni engagement by fostering meaningful relationships with alumni and students throughout the year. She invited members to write handwritten notes of encouragement to prospective students, which will be shared by the Admissions Office with campus visitors as a way of welcoming future members of the MUW community. President Vick thanked the Board, committee chairs, Alumni Office staff, and volunteers for their dedication and commitment to the University and Alumni Association. Members were encouraged to remain engaged throughout the year and support upcoming events and initiatives.

XVI. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately **2:21 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Leta Palmiter
Secretary
Mississippi University for Women Alumni Association Board of Directors