

December 11, 2001

## Middle Tennessee AD Position Down to Six

MT Media Relations

**MURFREESBORO, Tenn.** - President Sidney McPhee announced today the finalists for the Athletic Director's position at Middle Tennessee State University. Baker-Parker, a search firm hired by Middle Tennessee, proposed six candidates to Dr. McPhee and the Advisory Committee for immediate consideration and all agreed on the final list.

The finalists to become the fifth full-time athletic director in Middle Tennessee history are Lawrence R. Cunningham, James F. "Boots" Donnelly, Michael E. Hamilton, Kelly L. Landry, Christopher V. May, and William J. Weidner. The six candidates will begin an on-campus interview process in early January with Dr. McPhee hoping to name an athletic director before the end of January. The Advisory Committee and Dr. McPhee will interview each candidate.

"This is an exceptional list of professionals and I am very pleased with the candidates who are finalists to be interviewed," said Dr. McPhee. "We are looking for continued growth and development of our program and these individuals, I believe, can make that happen."

McPhee added that his vision for the MTSU program of the future includes increasing fan support, building greater financial stability in the athletic department, and continuing to build a program of integrity of which all Blue Raider fans can be proud.

A total of 59 professionals were considered for the position with 31 applying by way of the University's advertisement and 28 more were recruited by Baker-Parker.

"The six final candidates we believe represent very outstanding professionals for Middle Tennessee's consideration," said Daniel Parker. "Dr. McPhee asked the search firm to identify candidates who are coming from a program of success and integrity. One of the important points in this search process is that we had terrific response to our phone calls and we believe that is a result of Middle Tennessee's current status as a major university and the success of its athletic programs. Also, the candidates were impressed that the University wanted to step to the next level of athletics."

The Advisory Committee, which is being chaired by Blue Raider Athletic Association President Charlie Myatt, consists of 19 members. The committee includes John Ellington, Ronald Roberts, Altherias Warmley, Bob Parks, Tom Clark, Steve Benefield, Diane Gower, Steve Peterson, Sharon Shaw-McEwen, Jeanne Massaquoi, Race Bergman, Dennis Oneal, Greg Pollard, Mark Pirtle, Ron Washington, Bill Jones, John Marshall, and John Major.

"I am tremendously impressed with the pool of candidates," Myatt stated. "They have all achieved a great amount of success in their careers and will all make excellent choices. As a committee, we will evaluate each individual thoroughly and send the information to Dr. McPhee for review."

Cunningham, who has been involved in athletics since 1987, is currently the Associate Director of Athletics for External Affairs at Notre Dame. A graduate of Notre Dame, Cunningham oversees the departments of sports information, marketing, promotions, ticketing, summer camps and corporate relationships for the Fighting Irish. Cunningham, who recently renegotiated a \$22 million footwear contract for Notre Dame, and his wife Jina, has four children.

Donnelly, the current interim athletic director for the Blue Raiders, took over the position in October of 2000 following the resignation of Lee Fowler. A former head football coach at Middle Tennessee for 20 years, Donnelly has already secured a \$1 million pledge for future construction of the Blue Raider Hall of Fame building and has contracted 2002 football games against Alabama and Tennessee for a combined \$1 million of revenue. The Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame inductee is married to the former Carole Holzapfel and the couple has three children.

Hamilton, who was voted the 1998 National Fundraiser of the Year by NAADD, is an Associate Athletic Director for Development and Marketing at the University of Tennessee. At UT, Hamilton has the full responsibility of all development and marketing activities associated with the men's athletic department, including the annual giving program (VASF), endowments, major gifts, capital campaigns, sponsorships and promotions. A graduate of Clemson, Hamilton, and his wife Beth have two children.

Landry is an Associate Director of Athletics and Senior Woman's Administrator at the University of Illinois. The 1986 Alabama graduate presently oversees all operations of men's basketball, volleyball, women's swimming and softball, men's and women's track and field, gymnastics, and golf. A member of the NCAA Men's Track and Field Committee and Big Ten Conference Advisory Commission, Landry is co-Chair of the Big Ten Conference Administrator's Council.

May, the co-Chair for Athletics 2010, which is a ten-year plan focusing on education, winning, facilities and culture, is the Associate Athletic Director for Marketing and Revenue Development at the University of Colorado. May, a 1985 graduate of Iowa State, and his wife Joanne have two children.

Wiedner, the lone sitting full-time athletic director of the six finalists, is Director of Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Texas-Pan American. Wiedner, a career athletic administrator, was a former assistant football coach under Frank Beamer at Murray State. Wiedner is a graduate of Springfield College in Massachusetts, while picking up his Master's at Stanford University.

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