

MC announces institutional changes

By Emma Ellard

Blue & Gold Media

In an email delivered to Mississippi College students, faculty, and staff on Nov. 18, the institution's leaders announced several major changes, including a forthcoming name change, the restructuring of several academic schools, and the termination of the football program. The announcement left many students and faculty seeking answers.

On Monday morning, the MC Board of Trustees met to discuss next steps for the institution. The meeting came at a watershed moment for MC. The university is facing challenges, attributed by university leadership to the lasting economic fallout of COVID-19 and other external pressures, as well as an upcoming bicentennial in 2026, which was also cited as an impetus for the changes.

Decisions made by the Board of Trustees were announced to the public hours after the meeting. At 3:30 p.m., MC president Blake Thompson and other university leadership held a faculty and staff meeting to address concerns.

Among the decisions made by the Board of Trustees was a change to the institution's name. Mississippi College is soon to become Mississippi Christian University. The name change will not take effect until 2026, although the exact timeline of the rollout is still in the works.

"A name change to Mississippi Christian University allows us to clearly articulate who we are as an institution," Thompson said in a quote released on Monday.

The change also suits the school's existing branding. "One of

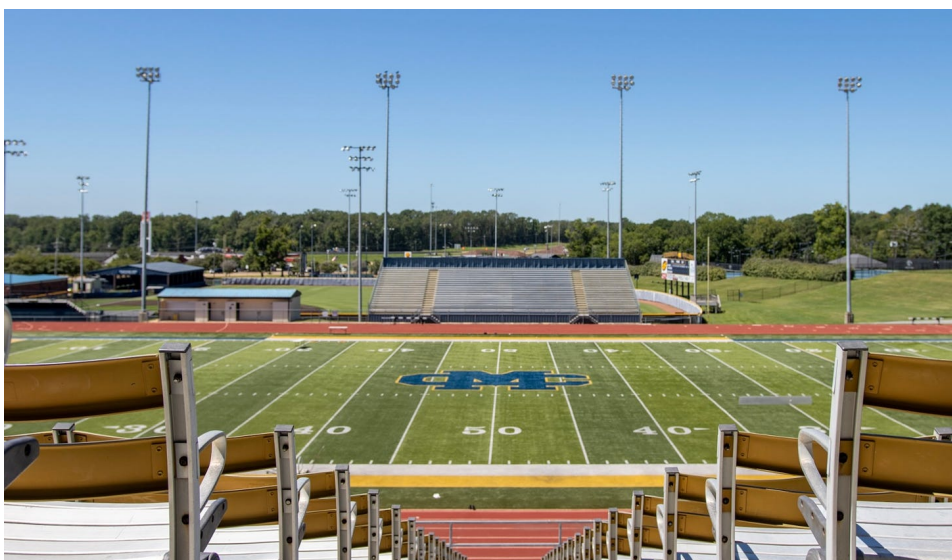
the great things about the transition to Mississippi Christian University is that it allows our students and alumni to continue to call their beloved school MC,” Thompson continued. Subscribe

Second, Monday’s announcement outlined a “preliminary plan for academic reorganization.” The plan involves the renaming of the School of Education, which will become the School of Education and Human Sciences, and the consolidation of two other academic schools, the School of Christian Studies and the Arts and the School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

“This plan aims to ensure academic programs are relevant to the marketplace while also making the university more efficient and innovative,” the announcement stated.

MC Provost and Executive Vice President Michael Highfield will preside over the restructuring. He has indicated that further departmental consolidation within the two combined schools may occur, although details are still in development. They will be finalized during the 2024-2025 academic year and will go into effect during the summer of 2025.

Perhaps most controversially, MC announced that they will be ending the football program.



Robinson-Hale Stadium sits empty. Its fate is yet to be determined. (Photo Credit: Logan Orman)

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“As we consider the changing landscape of college football, the increasing influence of the NIL and transfer portal, as well as increasing costs to operate and travel, we felt it was necessary to focus our efforts on building first-class programs that can compete for championships,” MC Athletic Director Kenny Bizot said in a quote released on Monday.

No other private institutions in the Gulf South Conference, of which Mississippi College is still a member, are continuing their football programs into the 2025-2026 academic year.

Eight coaches will lose their jobs from the closing of the program, and over 100 student athletes will be affected. However, all football scholarships will be honored through the end of the academic year. Juniors will have their athletic scholarships honored completely, Thompson assured in the faculty meeting. All other players will have to seek other financial aid options for their continued education at

Mississippi College.

The band, cheer, and dance programs will continue. Still, these teams, as well as student life at large – including beloved traditions like tailgating and homecoming – are sure to look different after the current academic year.

The decisions are already eliciting myriad responses from both current and former students. As of time of publication, a post published to Instagram by Mississippi College's official account announcing the changes has received 280 comments, most of which are negative.

Frustrations are high throughout and beyond campus, and for those most closely affected by the changes, anxieties are, too.

"It's scary as a freshman," said J.D. Madison, a first-year music major. Madison expressed fear for the fate of his department, which is part of the soon-to-be-consolidated School of Christian Studies and the Arts.

"I'd be lying if I said I was super educated on it," Madison said. "But I got the email, and just was like, 'What does that mean? What does that mean for us? Does that change anything? Do I need to be worried?'"

Others took the announcement more indifferently. "I'm slightly concerned about the changes, but also slightly indifferent to it," sophomore music major Tyler Collins said. "I don't know what's going to happen to scholarships – that's what I'm most concerned about."

Students in other programs will also face readjustments in the wake of the consolidations and the football program's discontinuation. "I'm a sports media major, and my whole thing was calling football games," freshman Joseph Peabody said. "I can't do that anymore."

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thThe MC letters, as well as the rest of Mississippi College's
e current branding, stays standing amidst a groundswell of
fa campuswide changes. (Photo Credit: Logan Orman)

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In the faculty meeting, Thompson requested patience, from those in attendance and not, as the details of these decisions are formulated.

“These transformational and necessary changes are extremely important to the future of this institution,” Thompson assured. “As we look ahead to the institution’s bicentennial in 2026, we want to ensure that MC will be a university recognized for academic excellence and commitment to the cause of Christ for another 200 years.”