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SPRING 2021 CLA NEWS

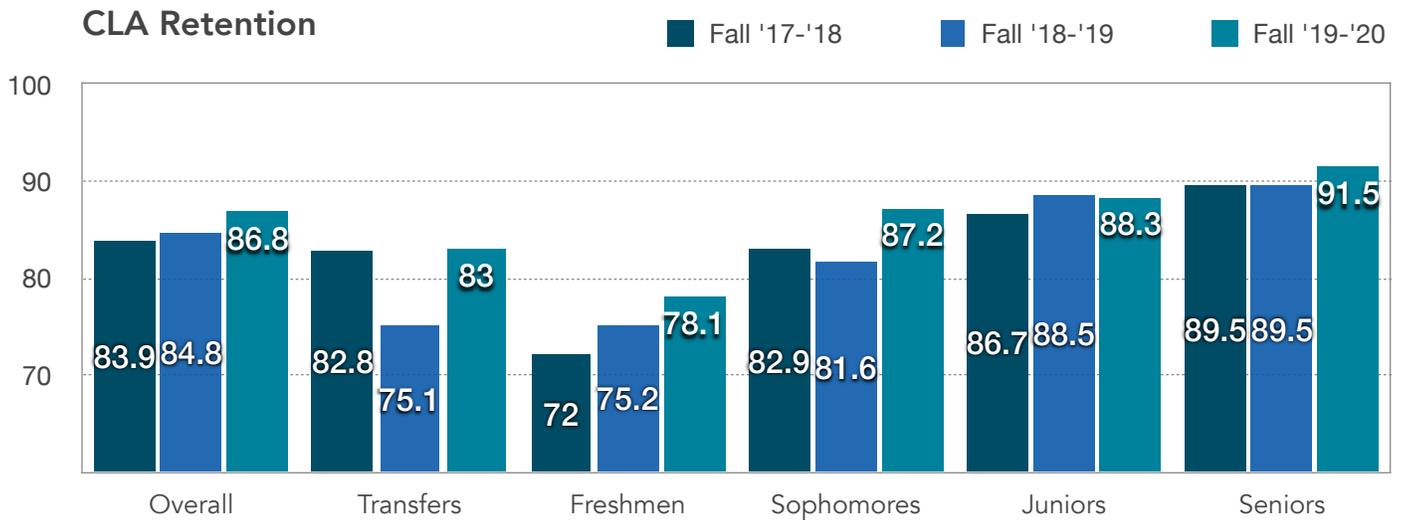
Dean's Office Update

Reflecting on my first weeks as Interim Dean for CLA, I am reminded of what I have loved about the College for nearly 20 years: our faculty, staff, and students. As I seek to support the departments, Centers, and programs of CLA, I am keenly aware that it is people who are at the heart of the College. I view my role as one that fosters student learning by advocating for the College within the university, connecting faculty, staff, and students with resources to accomplish their goals, and promoting the value of the liberal arts on campus and in the community. I am proud to serve the College of Liberal Arts.

Working together, we will continue to do great things that make a difference.



Our latest reports from the CLA Advising Center indicate that our approach to advising continues to be effective, even in the constraints of the pandemic. The College's overall retention rate of 86.8% for undergraduates surpassed the previous retention record of 85% set in Fall 2015. Six departments, Communication Studies, Global Studies & Human Geography, Philosophy & Religious Studies, Political Science & International Relations, World Languages, Literatures, & Cultures, and the School of Music, showed retention 90% or greater from Fall 2019 to Fall 2020! The chart on the next page shows our retention rates in six key categories using census data from the last three academic years.



LAMP Applications Available Soon

The Liberal Arts Mentoring Program (LAMP) is designed to provide support and guidance to first year students as they adjust to college life. Mentors share their familiarity with campus life, resources, and personal experiences in CLA. By creating connections between new and more experienced students, the program personalizes the MTSU CLA experience and creates opportunities for rewarding interpersonal relationships.



More information about how students can apply to serve as a mentor will be available soon. Interested students may [**submit contact information**](#) to be notified when applications are available. Faculty and staff may nominate outstanding CLA students to serve as mentors by sending their names and MTSU email addresses to [**Ella Weaver**](#). Students will receive notification of their nomination and an invitation to complete an application.

Scholars Week

Students and faculty are invited to join us for CLA Scholars Day 2021. The event will feature scholarly and creative presentations as part of MTSU Scholars Week. Participation from all disciplines within the college is encouraged, as are interdisciplinary proposals. To participate, please complete the online form: [**CLA Scholars Day Presentations**](#). Submissions must be received by Sunday, March 14.

College of Liberal Arts Day for Scholars Week 2021

Wednesday, April 14

11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. (tentative)

All events will be presented virtually

Presentations will be made virtually (by Zoom or pre-recorded) in the following categories:

- *Individual Research Presentations* by students and faculty (approx. 10 minutes)
- *Panel Presentations* (30-60 minutes)
- *MTSU Arts Projects* – creative performances by students and/or faculty

CLA Scholars Day will also feature the MTSU Scholars Week Annual Speech Contest, hosted by the Department of Communication Studies. The event, co-hosted by the College of Liberal Arts, is open to any current MTSU student who has completed or is enrolled in COMM 2200 through the University. Additional information and applications are online at www.mtsu.edu/speechcontest.

Patron Society

The MTSU Arts Patron Society enhances the opportunities for our students in the performing and fine arts programs. Join the Patron Society online at mtsu.edu/mtsuarts.



Thanks to the continued support of our Patrons this academic year, our fine and performing arts students and faculty have been able to reach new audiences through streaming. Information on upcoming performances is linked on the [**MTSU Arts Calendar**](#) page.

Associate Dean Jeff Gibson's CLA Story

In 2020, we started collecting faculty, staff, student, and alumni stories about how the liberal arts changed their lives. Jeff Gibson became CLA Associate Dean on February 1 and knows first hand how the liberal arts impact students. Enjoy Jeff's liberal arts story:



"Since high school, I have been captivated by theatre and its power to transform. As a performer in my first show, I was 'bitten by the theatre bug.' Soon afterwards, I had set my sights on finding a way to make a career in this incredible art. I sought any opportunity to be involved—as an actor, painting sets, hanging lights, working backstage—and it became a full-time obsession.

There were many things that attracted me to a life in the theatre. It was a place of belonging—a family. It allowed me the opportunity to discover myself, the world, and my place in it.

It challenged me to think from other perspectives and to walk in another's shoes. And, it opened my mind to learning about culture, history, literature, and many other facets of existing and imagined life.

In college, my passion only broadened and so did my options. I was able to study theatre intensively through an incredible program at MTSU, and I soon directed my career goals toward design, technology, and management. This disciplinary study was augmented by coursework from across CLA: the history of western civilization, children's literature, literature from the Victorian era, communication theory, and French. I also enjoyed the opportunity to explore beyond the confines of campus through attending my first professional conference (United States Institute of Theatre Technology) and being connected to work with Nashville-based dance and theatre companies and the live country music scene in Branson, Missouri.

After further study and professional work, I was fortunate to return to MTSU as a member of the faculty where I have taught arts management courses and career seminars and served as a department chair. In all of my leadership roles—as a teacher, mentor, university administrator, and nonprofit board member—I am reminded often of the value of my liberal arts training, and I lean on it daily. My education taught me to think critically, creatively, and

collaboratively and to approach decision-making thoughtfully and with empathy for those who would be impacted by my choices. I also acknowledge the many transferrable skills gained and used routinely, especially listening, communicating clearly, coordinating with others, negotiating, and organizing.

I discuss this idea of transferrable skills with students in seminar courses, during advising sessions, and when meeting with prospective students and their families. I believe those skills are an important part of one's development and preparation for a broad array of careers and for their lives. Frankly, I can think of no better way to develop them than through training and study within the liberal arts."



If you would like to share your story about the transformative power of the liberal arts in your life, please email **Matthew Hibdon**. More CLA stories are available to read online at: **<https://mtsu.edu/liberalarts/stories.php>**.

True Blue Give 2021

We appreciate all the faculty, staff, alumni, and friends who supported this year's True Blue Give! Through the generosity of 142 donations, \$48,790.84 was designated for CLA programs, departments, and initiatives. Twenty percent of the donations came from faculty and staff, and over \$6,000 of the total went to our Student Emergency Microgrant Fund, which will continue to support our students as we slowly emerge on the other side of the pandemic. If you missed the True Blue Give and still want to make a contribution, please contact **Meredith Kerr**.



"Be the Missing Piece"

The Arts & Sciences Collaborative (sponsored by CLA and CBAS) created 10 pop-up murals featuring the essential skills students learn by studying the arts, sciences, and humanities. The MTSU community came together last fall to paint giant puzzle pieces designed by our Art Education students, under the guidance of Dr. Debbie Sickler-Voigt. More information about this public art project can be found on [MTSU News](#).

The artwork is on display in the Todd Art Gallery through Saturday, March 13. The exhibition, "Be the Missing Piece," will close with a free Saturdays @ Todd event—Paper Mosaic Workshop. All levels of experience are welcome; registration and face coverings are required. [Register here](#).



CLA Awards Ceremony

In mid-March last year, we proactively made the decision to cancel the 2020 CLA Awards Dinner. Instead of getting to recognize the students, faculty, and staff in that public forum, we opted to publish the award recipients in the Fall 2020 CLA Magazine. Now that we are all such Zoom professionals (and definitely not tired of it yet), the Dean's Office is proud to announce that we will be hosting a virtual ceremony on Monday, April 12, 2021 at 6 PM.



The Zoom link will be shared closer to the event date. Please join us as we honor excellence from our students, faculty, and staff in the following categories: Outstanding CLA Students (Undergraduate and Graduate), Faculty Research and Creative Activity, Faculty Teaching, Faculty Student Mentoring, and Faculty Student Success.

CLA Events & Announcements

- **Godspell:** The Department of Theatre and Dance will produce *Godspell* from April 8-11 in Tucker Theatre. [Click here](#) for more information about this show and the upcoming 10-minute play festival with Nashville Repertory Theatre and Ingram New Works Project.
- **School of Music Live Stream:** Do you miss hearing the great School of Music concerts live in Hinton Hall? Tune in to their live stream concerts all semester on [YouTube](#).
- **Strickland Visiting Scholars:** Join Drs. Maria Franklin, Kendra Field, Nedra Lee, and Martha Norkunas (History) for a conversation about “Race, Gender, Indigeneity, and the Meaning of Narrative and Excavated Pasts” on Thursday, April 8 at 7 PM. [Click here](#) for more information about the “Diverse Histories for a Diverse Nation” webinar series.

Lifelong Learning Program Returns

The Lifelong Learning Program is going virtual this May with a theme of “The Roaring Twenties.” Just as the 1920s offered opportunities for economic growth and new cultural developments, we are hopeful that the 2020s will do the same—except for Prohibition, of course. Each Tuesday in May 2021 (4th, 11th, 18th, and 25th), we will host daytime Zoom lectures (one hour each) featuring CLA faculty members discussing the “Roaring Twenties” in relation to their disciplines. For more information, contact [Matthew Hibdon](#).

In addition to the daytime lectures, a Zoom session at 5:00 PM each Tuesday will serve as both a lecture and a virtual happy hour. This new format offers greater opportunities for collaboration, and we are excited to partner with MTSU Alumni Relations and the Tennessee Distillers Guild! The evening programs will explore Prohibition’s lasting impact in both the distilling industry and the state of Tennessee. These discussions will be led by the Guild’s Executive Director, Sara Beth Urban (B.A. History, ’11; M.A. Public History, ’13), and a guest distillery from the Guild will provide participants with recipes for a signature cocktail and mocktail that can be prepared in advanced and enjoyed from the comfort and safety of home.

