

NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENT AND INFORMATION



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MTSU August 26, 2024 | mtsu.edu

Welcome to the Fall 2024 Semester!

As always, I appreciate all you do to support the goals of our great University.

In this newsletter, I want to highlight just a few achievements from this past year and provide some information on some of our plans for the future.

I welcome your feedback and comments.

Please contact me at sidney.mcphee@mtsu.edu.

I also invite you to visit my blog at mtsu.edu/president for updates and information from my office.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Last year, I appointed a Strategic Planning Committee to craft a new roadmap for the University, uniting elements from three existing plans—the Academic Master Plan, the Quest for Student Success, and the Strategic Plan.

This new 2025–2035 Strategic Plan is being created through the work of four pillar committees: academic quality, student success, engagement, and innovation.

The committee includes faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community leaders. The foundation for their efforts was the articulation of a new mission

statement, approved by the Board of Trustees in April of this year.

MTSU community members also provided significant input through participation in multiple listening sessions as well as surveys and online response forms. This feedback was instrumental to the work of committee members during their May retreat and to the leaders who have been drafting a plan this summer to share with the University community during the upcoming fall semester.

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TRUE BLUE CORE

Summer 2024 marks the official launch of MTSU’s new general education curriculum, the True Blue Core.

Highlights of the new curriculum include:

Enhanced Learning Outcomes and Flexibility: The True Blue Core introduces eight Student Learning Outcomes, providing students with more choices and greater flexibility in their educational journeys.

Course Approvals: Over the past two years, the True Blue Core Committee has approved more than 90 courses for the new Core, including all the courses from the previous general education lineup, creating an innovative yet transfer friendly program.

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RECRUITMENT

We continue to work extremely hard to ensure that we are attracting the best and the brightest new undergraduate students from across the state of Tennessee and the region. And when I get a chance to personally meet these prospective students, I am confident in telling them that if they come to MTSU, they will get the attention of faculty and staff that they will need to be successful in college.

In last fall's newsletter, we celebrated that we had achieved a remarkable near 12% increase in our freshman class. It's common with an increase like that to see the next year bring decreases in a return to the mean. I am delighted to report that **we have been able to hold onto that 12% increase and even deliver a few more freshmen** over the remarkable increase last year. A result like this doesn't happen by sitting back and waiting for the students to come, or even by just doing what we have done in the past. Our recruitment team, MT One Stop, advising staff, academic department chairs, deans, and faculty have worked for a year to deliver these results. I am both pleased and proud.

We will not rest on these laurels. The enrollment management team, led by University Provost Mark Byrnes, has **engaged EAB's Enroll 360 program as a bold initiative** designed to introduce MTSU to more students and increase our freshman enrollment in the coming years when the nation hits an expected enrollment cliff. Recruiting efforts will face immense challenges due to the decrease in the number of eligible high school graduates and the number of those graduates delaying or forgoing higher education.

The recruitment staff is already out in the high schools working with the incoming class for 2025. Our most fertile recruitment soil is right here in middle Tennessee. **Our 12-stop True Blue Tour will begin at home on Sept. 11** in the Student Union Ballroom with the Rutherford County tour stop. We follow that event with a new feature on the tour, **a student reception at the Nashville Zoo on Sept. 18**. This is one of two Nashville tour stops this year as we increase our efforts to identify True Blue students close to home.



Another advancement in our recruitment events is the addition this academic year of an **Admitted Student Day on Saturday, Feb. 22**. At this event, admitted students will get a more thorough introduction to their academic college and major with a focus on understanding their academic program and class scheduling before they come to orientation.

And speaking of orientation, there are exciting developments in that area as well. I am pleased to announce that **we are reimagining the orientation program**, focusing on what students should learn before coming to campus to meet with academic

advisors. A committee of faculty, administrators, instructional designers, and orientation staff led by Gina Poff will work through this fall semester to deliver an online first step of orientation in D2L, so that students learn both about the campus and about this important learning platform. We hope this will also be a “win” for instructors who will welcome students who are ready on Day 1 to use D2L.

In summary, because of our proactive efforts and ongoing strategic planning, I believe our future is bright and our enrollment will remain strong.

True Blue Tour and True Blue Preview

Sept. 4	Rutherford County College Night	Sept. 28	True Blue Preview	Oct. 28	TBT @ Memphis
Sept. 11	TBT @ MTSU	Oct. 1	TBT @ Johnson City	Oct. 29	TBT @ Jackson
Sept. 18	TBT @ Nashville Zoo	Oct. 2	TBT @ Knoxville	Nov. 2	True Blue Preview
Sept. 23	TBT @ Clarksville	Oct. 17	TBT @ Huntsville	Nov. 7	TBT @ Nashville
Sept. 25	TBT @ Williamson County	Oct. 21	TBT @ Atlanta	Feb. 8	True Blue Preview
		Oct. 22	TBT @ Chattanooga	March 22	True Blue Preview



TECHNOLOGY

Our Information Technology Division (ITD) works tirelessly to provide students, faculty, and staff the resources needed to deliver and receive instruction and to do our jobs on a day-to-day basis.

Here are some recent highlights:

- ITD technician **Aaron Dill accepted the Best Campuswide Integration award** at the InfoComm conference in Las Vegas in June. InfoComm touts itself as the largest professional audiovisual trade show in North America.
- **Grammarly is now available to all students, faculty, and staff!** Grammarly is a productivity app that reviews and offers suggestions for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and clarity of writing. The app was previously only available free to College of Business students.
- The new **admissions software Slate went live** on July 12. The implementation effort was a 14-month project and included a team composed of members from ITD, Enrollment Services, Graduate Studies, International Affairs, and the Adult Degree Completion Program. This solution provides a modern, comprehensive admissions system for the MTSU application process.
- MTSU's Center for Technologies and Training and the Learning, Teaching, and Innovative Technologies Center will **continue to host a variety of workshops** to kick off the fall semester. Please watch for emails of upcoming workshop schedules.
- The migration to the **new campus phone system, RingCentral, started** this past June with Phase One. The project prioritized the migration of

academic building systems prior to the start of the fall semester.

Athletics, Housing and Residential Life, and other buildings will migrate after the start of the fall semester. ITD communications explaining the migration process are sent one week in advance of the scheduled migration. An ITD representative also will be on-site in buildings to assist with the migration.

- Aug. 1 marked the **one-year anniversary of ITD's release of the technology service portal** powered by ServiceNow. In that time, the ITD Service Desk (formerly Help Desk) has:
 - resolved 9,452 incidents
 - completed 7,300+ new service requests
 - created more than 280 self-help and how-to articles for its Knowledge Base

STRATEGIC PLAN, cont.

I encourage our faculty, staff, and students to look for opportunities to provide their feedback on the draft plan and to offer ideas for how we can effectively implement the plan beginning in the summer of 2025. You will be able to do so through additional surveys and listening sessions that will occur throughout the fall. More details will be sent to you in the coming weeks.

Thank you for your participation in and contributions to the development of the 2025–2035 Strategic Plan. I look forward to our continued work together as we seek to strengthen this already outstanding institution and readily proceed to our True Blue future.

Accreditation Update

The 2024–25 academic year is the year of record for MTSU's reaffirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

As part of our reaffirmation, the University is developing its third Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) to improve student

learning and student success, following in the footsteps of Experiential Learning (EXL) and MT Engage.

In fall 2023, the QEP Leadership Team worked with the QEP Topic Selection Committee to identify potential topics. The topic selection committee included students, faculty members, and Student Affairs representatives. In spring 2024, the committee, along with QEP leadership, worked diligently to review institutional data and consider emergent information from the University strategic planning process. Based on the committee's findings, program topics for consideration are Digital Fluency, Career Readiness, Belonging, and Mental Wellness.

During summer 2024, QEP leadership completed literature reviews on the proposed topics, which will be presented to stakeholders, including faculty, students, and administration, during fall 2024. One topic will be selected in the fall, after gathering feedback from the University community.

I invite and appreciate your participation in this process to promote student learning and success. You may view QEP progress at mtsu.edu/qep.

TRUE BLUE CORE, cont.

On May 13, 2024, the University also established the Center for the True Blue Core (CTBC). Led by Susan Myers-Shirk, True Blue Core director, and Christina Cobb, assistant director, the CTBC will spearhead several key initiatives:

Program Marketing and Recruitment: Engaging True Blue Core faculty, staff, and students in marketing efforts through the True Blue Tour, True Blue Preview Days, and CUSTOMS to attract new students.

Assessment Plan Execution: Completing and implementing an assessment plan to ensure program quality and enhance the Core classroom experience through reflective practices and microgrants.

Communication and Advocacy: Promoting the value of a Core education at MTSU to potential, incoming, and current students. Highlighting how the Core supports students in their majors, careers, and personal growth.

I anticipate several exciting True Blue Core developments in the upcoming year. They include:

Course Expansion: Adding new courses that align with Core values.

Blueprints Implementation: Developing an implementation plan for Blueprints, which are collections of thematically related Core courses to help students navigate their Core requirements.

Study Abroad Integration: Creating an implementation plan for incorporating study abroad experiences into the Core.

Assessment Cycle: Initiating the first cycle of the new assessment plan to evaluate and improve the program.

The upcoming year promises to be an exciting and transformative period for the True Blue Core, fostering an enriched educational experience for all MTSU students.



BUDGET AND SALARY

The 2024–25 General Appropriations Act passed by the General Assembly included a **\$7.2 million state appropriation increase** for MTSU. The final budget included net operating funds of \$2.4 million, partial funding for a salary pool of \$3.8 million to be distributed at the discretion of the University, and \$1 million to cover increases in employee benefits.

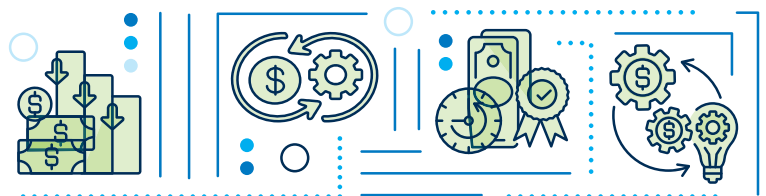
At the MTSU Board of Trustees meeting in June, the board approved the president’s salary recommendation to provide a **2% cost of living allowance increase, with a \$750 minimum**. Raises were effective July 1 for administrative and classified staff and Aug. 1 for faculty. The president may recommend additional salary increases based on the availability of funding from additional resources this fall.

The University received nonrecurring funding of **\$2.1 million** to provide **continued financial aid for the Medical School Early Acceptance Program** jointly administered by MTSU and Meharry Medical College.

In addition, the state budget included \$2.5 million in capital maintenance funds for one of the 13 capital maintenance projects submitted for funding. The approved project is for **campus fire and life safety systems updates**.

The state legislature provided funding for the 401(k) plan for employees who contribute between \$20 and \$50 per month. That is a maximum match of \$50 per month for contributions of \$50 or more. In addition, longevity payments were again funded at \$100 per year of creditable service up to a maximum number of 30 years.

At the June quarterly meeting, the MTSU Board of Trustees also approved a more than 5% increase in tuition and mandatory fees for the 2024–25 academic year.



STUDENT LIFE

College is about more than academics. It's about broadening horizons, exploring cultures, and gaining perspective.

Research tells us that the first six weeks of the semester are critically important in setting up the conditions for student success. Students need to connect academically in the classroom, but they also need to connect socially through out-of-classroom activities.

Our goal is to help all new students develop a sense of belonging and connection to the MTSU campus.

During the 14 CUSTOMS freshman orientation sessions that took place this summer, staff from the Division of Student Affairs have highlighted our Connection Point program and the importance of attending at least four Connection Point events during a student's first semester on campus.

Connection Point is the connecting theme for a variety of welcome activities for our newest students. In addition to meeting new people and having a great time, students receive an event inspired button designed especially for each event.

Students download an electronic event pass and bring their mobile devices to each activity so Student Affairs can record their attendance. This allows staff to see how students are connecting with our community. Students who are not connecting are contacted by staff to determine how we can assist them to become more involved.

Connection Point activities began **Thursday, Aug. 22, with the Move-In Movie, Kung Fu Panda 4**, under the stars on the Student Union Commons.

On **Friday, Aug. 23, the President's Party** took place on the KUC Knoll. There were lots of fun activities and food for all to enjoy. The summer reading author, **Firoozeh Dumas**, signed copies of her book *Laughing Without an Accent: Adventures of a Global Citizen*.

Saturday, Aug. 24, marked MTSU's 23rd University Convocation.

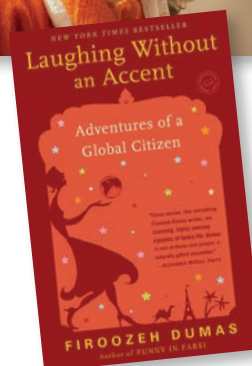
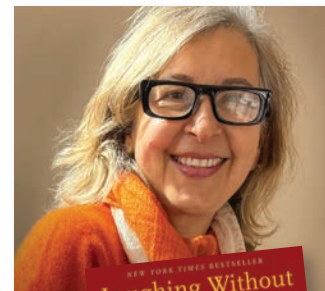
The annual event in Murphy Center featured our summer reading author.

You can learn more about the Connection Point program and events at mtsu.edu/connection.

Two more notes about Student Life:

Family Weekend is scheduled for Sept. 13–14. MTSU football will host Western Kentucky University on Saturday, Sept. 14, at 6 p.m.

Additionally, we want to extend a special welcome to **Khalilah T. Doss**, who was named vice president of student affairs this summer, replacing Sarah Sudak. Doss comes to MTSU from a similar role at the University of Southern Indiana in Evansville, with previous service at McPherson College in Kansas and Lincoln University of Missouri.



WEBSITE

An interdisciplinary team from ITD, Marketing and Communications, and Academic Affairs launched the newly designed MTSU homepage and webpages showcasing our more than 300 majors and concentrations in January.

Shortly after that, the team started moving all other MTSU webpages to the new design. Currently, **over 64% of the webpages have been updated to the new design** with the remainder projected to be completed in early fall.

Prospective students rely heavily on university websites to learn about all the opportunities that exist for them at a particular school.

Especially for out-of-state and international prospects, visiting our beautiful campus in person isn't always feasible during their college search process. A web search and positive online experience is often the initial gateway to eventual enrollment. That means standing out in the virtual space is vital for every university.

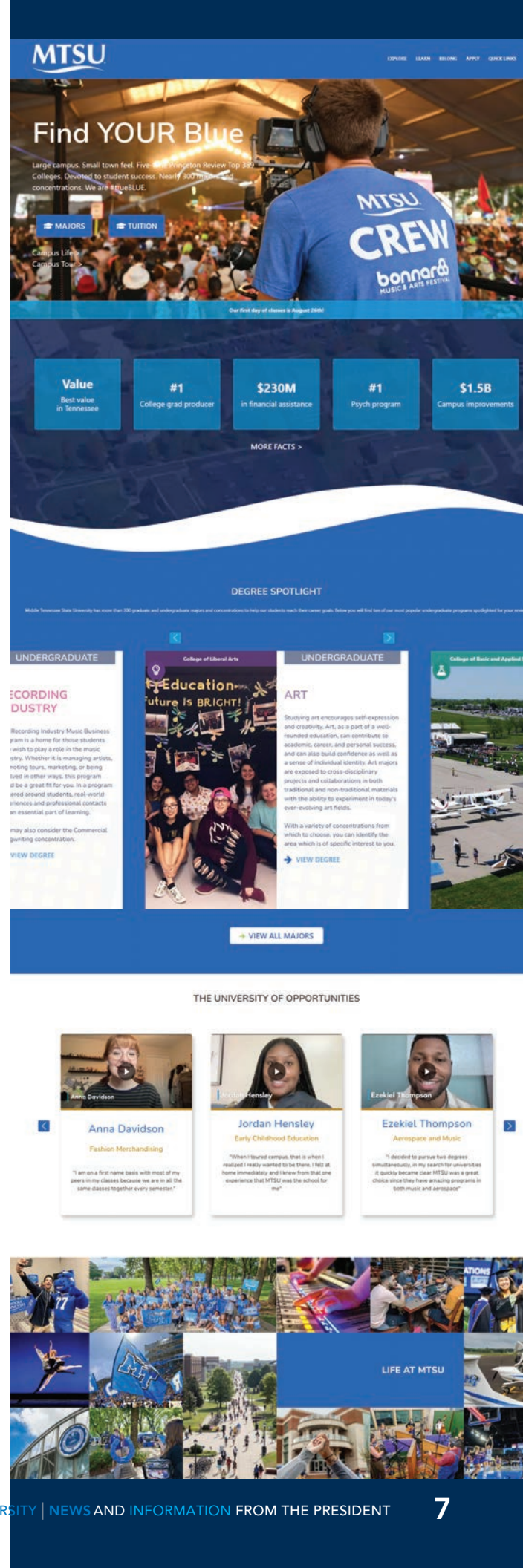
By adopting WordPress as our new content management system, we now have much better ability to raise the University's profile via search engine optimization (SEO). Also, MTSU webpages load faster, and information displays dynamically across electronic devices.

There are **several exciting features of the new majors and concentrations pages** that will help keep them fresh:

- When a news release or story is posted about an academic program on mtsunews.com, those articles will automatically flow into the corresponding majors and concentrations pages.
- Editors within each department or school will be able to directly edit content in the Information and Careers sections and update the top banner image.
- Importantly, the new design allows us to insert banners to promote University-wide endeavors, such as True Blue Preview Days, and program-level messages such as special events.

This mighty task would not have been possible without the active participation of all our deans, department chairs, school directors, and faculty who helped revamp these pages as **an essential part of our recruitment and yield strategies**. While the number of people involved in the project is extensive, much deserved special recognition goes to Provost Mark Byrnes, Vice Provost Amy Aldridge Sanford, Matthew Hibdon, Vice President Yvette Clark, Alecia Heidt, Charlie Cantrell, Isaac Callison, Albert Whittenberg, Vice President Andrew Oppmann, Betsy Allgood, David Foster, DeAnn Hays, and Kara Hooper for their dedication, collaboration, and hard work in launching this initiative.

ITD partnered with HelixSEO Inc. staff Jim Pepe and Zaid Helix to achieve the design and implementation of the new site.



CAMPUS PLANNING

Adding and expanding facilities on a college campus is about more than just growth—it represents expansion in areas of study in which MTSU particularly excels. Expansion to solve complex problems that improve the social good. And expansion to develop the cutting-edge knowledge needed to supply a skilled regional workforce.

Numerous improvements to our campus buildings are underway or have been recently completed. Here is a brief update.

Applied Engineering Building **Currently in construction**

- Estimated completion: summer 2025
- Total project cost: \$74.8 million including cost for the building, demolition of Voorhies, infrastructure, site improvements, and surrounding pedestrian and vehicular circulation
- Companion piece to the School of Concrete and Construction Management Building, with shared common working yard for student projects
- 89,000-square-foot building to serve as new home for the Engineering Technology and Mechatronics Engineering programs and provide space for future engineering programs
- Designer: Wold Architects and Engineers (Brentwood)
- Contractor: Denark Construction Inc.



Student-Athlete Performance Center **Currently in construction**

- Estimated completion: summer 2025
- Total project cost: \$66 million
- Comprises the first stage of development to the northwest corner of the MTSU campus envisioned in the MTSU Athletics Master Plan
- Small section of outdoor loge seating to be added to the north end of Floyd Stadium
- 75,000-square-foot facility to include training spaces, strength and conditioning rooms, locker rooms, meeting space, and offices that serve MTSU Athletics and student-athletes
- Design: GMC
- Contractor: The Parent Company



Renovations to Kirksey Old Main and Rutledge Hall Currently renovating

- Completed E.W. Midgett Building demolition to make way for a new back entry into KOM
 - Estimated completion: summer 2026
 - Total project cost: \$54.3 million, including cost for demolition of Midgett Building, renovations to both KOM and Rutledge Hall, infrastructure, site improvements, and pedestrian and vehicular parking
 - Rutledge to be converted from a residence hall into an office/classroom building to house University College/University Studies
- Math, Computer Science, Data Science, and Actuarial Science to return to KOM
 - Renovations to include major changes to HVAC, plumbing, data/IT, and electrical systems; re-planning of building layouts to accommodate future use; accessibility improvements; window replacement; and exterior building improvement
 - Small additions on both buildings to allow for new entries and vertical circulation
 - Designer: Anecdote Architectural Experiences
 - Contractor: Messer Construction

New accessible lobby on the back of KOM



Rutledge Hall renovation rendering



Aerospace Project–Shelbyville

Design phase completed winter 2024

- Estimated completion: fall 2027
- Total project cost: \$62.2 million
- Estimated construction cost: \$50.2 million
- Includes facilities for the Professional Pilot concentration
 - 50,000-square-foot net space for main academic building(s), including classroom, dispatch, faculty and staff offices, flight briefing
 - 28,000-square-foot hangar to maintain Professional Pilot aircraft fleet
 - Site and utility improvements for 16-acre parcel
- Site located along Highway 231 and just west of the Shelbyville Municipal Airport
- Designer: TMPartners PLLC
- Construction Contractor: Hoar Construction LLC

EMPLOYEE CHARITABLE GIVING CAMPAIGN

MTSU's annual Charitable Giving Campaign is a monthlong effort by faculty and staff to support worthy causes. The campaign is fueled largely by monthly payroll deductions from employees over the next year but also allows one-time, lump-sum gifts at the donor's discretion.

MTSU employees again showed their True Blue spirit with a record \$158,278.74 pledged during the 2023 Employee Charitable Giving Campaign. The pledge total easily surpassed the \$147,500 goal, with 755 participants taking part in the annual tradition.

This incredible amount reveals the caring nature of our faculty and staff and reflects a collective acknowledgment that it's important to give back to this great community.

During the upcoming Oct. 1–Nov. 1 campaign, we hope to break last year's record giving amount and, in fact, to reach \$160,000 in giving.

Participants can designate gifts to organizations from a list of 10 independent charities and three federated groups of charities, including Community Health Charities, Community Shares, and local United Way organizations.

This campuswide effort shows what it really means to be True Blue.

#MTSUcares

DON'T LEAVE MONEY ON THE TABLE

Use your employment benefit to take a class or earn a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree.

Campus representatives are available to help employees explore degree options and enrichment opportunities so there is "no money left on the table."

All full-time employees can take one course per semester and up to four courses per year free of charge using their fee waiver.

All courses and programs are available, including bachelor's and graduate programs, such as the highly popular and online Assessment, Learning, and Student Success Ed.D. program in the College of Education.



UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT

Making a monetary gift to MTSU doesn't just pay the bills or maintain the status quo. It builds dreams.

Private donor support for public higher education institutions has grown in importance as state funds have tightened over the years. Our alumni base and friends always answer the rallying call for our Blue Raider family to invest in the people and programs that define the character of MTSU.

I continue to be amazed and greatly appreciative of the continued financial support for our institution from our thousands of alumni around the world, our host of community and industry partners, and the many friends of the University who value our contributions to this great community. They epitomize what it means to be True Blue, and their generosity is critical to the success of the generations of Blue Raider scholars to come.

Some highlights from the past year.

- We raised more than **\$14 million from 7,600+ donors**. The College of Basic and Applied Sciences had the largest dollar increase, generating more than \$1.6 million. The College of Behavioral and Health Sciences nearly doubled its FY 2024 totals.
- Athletics and its Build Blue Campaign generated more than **\$4 million for various programs and facility needs**.
- We received about **\$1 million in new planned giving commitments**.
- Our **True Blue Give program set a new record** for this three-day campaign in February.
- We received a **unique gift from the family of Trevor Hornsby**, who honored his memory with a scholarship dedicated to students who have lost a parent(s).



ACADEMIC UPDATES

Each of the colleges and academic units at MTSU maintains a high level of activity and produces news worth crowing about. It is very difficult to select just a few highlights from across the colleges! Here are just a few examples of the remarkable work we have recently performed on the campus of MTSU.



University Wide

The Princeton Review—one of the nation’s leading education services companies—included MTSU in its 33rd annual **Best Colleges rankings for 2025, the sixth consecutive year** that the institution has been recognized. Unlike college rankings derived solely from institutional data and college administrator peer reviews, the Princeton Review rankings, tallied in multiple categories, are derived from student reports of their experiences at the schools.

MTSU’s Board of Trustees identified the **pursuit of a professional school as the first of four objectives** that it feels should be the institution’s top priorities. During the board’s March meeting, trustees put MTSU’s continued inclusion in the Princeton Review’s top colleges list, movement toward designation as a top research institution, and securing more funding to renovate the 51-year-old Murphy Center among other top priorities. The board was tasked with ranking the top four among 20-plus goals put forward in a survey as the University’s priorities for 2024.

Three faculty members have an opportunity to take their research and teaching passions overseas after being selected as Fulbright Scholar Program recipients for the 2024–25 academic year. Social Work professor **Sylvester Lamin** will head to Sierra Leone in West Africa; the transcontinental country of Georgia in Eastern Europe and West Asia is the destination for Journalism professor **Gregory Pitts**; and Center for Asian Studies Director **Guanping Zheng** will travel to Taiwan in East Asia. The Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program offers U.S. faculty, administrators, and professionals grants to lecture and/or conduct research in a wide variety of academic and professional fields, or to participate in seminars. The program awards more than 1,700 fellowships each year, enabling 800 U.S. scholars to go abroad and 900 visiting scholars to come to the United States.

A cohort of MTSU faculty recently landed a \$3 million National Science Foundation grant to develop local

middle school teachers in the subject areas of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) into data science instruction experts and leaders who will go on to develop educators in their communities.

Gregory Rushton, director of MTSU's Tennessee STEM Education Center, leads the five-year grant project in collaboration with faculty across the University's colleges:

Ryan "Seth" Jones, associate professor with an expert research background in data science education from the College of Education; **Kevin Krahenbuhl**, director of a College of Education Ed.D. program that works heavily on research and training with local school districts; and **Keith Gamble**, director of MTSU's interdisciplinary Data Science Institute and an Economics and Finance professor in the Jennings A. Jones College of Business. Rushton said their hope is to further the burgeoning field of data science education in the community through equipping these local educators with high-quality, research-backed data science instruction tools.

Work on behalf of telling the stories of numerous colleges and units of our University were recognized in the 2024 Tennessee College Public Relations Association. **MTSU was the most-honored institution in the competition** among the state's private and public universities, as well as the Tennessee Board of Regents and University of Tennessee system offices and the community colleges, receiving 16 awards (eight of them Gold, the highest honor). Notable wins included: MTSU magazines took the top two honors (Gold, for *MTSU Research* magazine; Silver for *Innovations*, the College of Basic and Applied Sciences magazine); the president's two primary communications products (his newsletter and annual report) received Gold awards; our digital advertising for Admissions received Gold Awards in two different categories.

MTSU alumni captured several Grammys during the 66th annual Grammy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles.

Julien Baker (above, right), a 2019 English graduate, captured three Grammys out of six nominations as a member of boygenius, an indie supergroup with Phoebe Bridgers and Lucy Dacus. Two-time winner and alumnus **Lecrae** (right) won two more Grammys for Best Contemporary Christian Music Performance/Song for "Your Power" and also for Best Contemporary Christian Music Album for *Church Clothes 4*. Joining Lecrae in the album Grammy win is first-time winner **Connor Back**, a 2018 Audio Production graduate who earned a Grammy for his mixing engineering work on *Church Clothes 4* and



Getty Image for the Recording Academy

earned a certificate for his engineering work on the song "Your Power." Back works for Reach Records, Lecrae's independent record label. **Jason Hall**, a 2000 Recording Industry graduate, and **Jimmy Mansfield**, a 2014 Audio Production graduate, won Grammys for engineering, mixing, and vocals work for Lainey Wilson's *Bell Bottom Country*, which won Best Country Album. While not singled out for a nomination, **Josh Kear**, a 1996 History graduate with a Recording Industry minor, co-wrote the song "Watermelon Moonshine" on *Bell Bottom Country*. Seven students from MTSU's College of Media and Entertainment represented the University's ninth trip to the music industry's biggest awards weekend. In addition to working at the pre-Grammy MusiCares event, students toured recording studios and iconic music venues and met with recording industry professionals.

Getty Image for the Recording Academy



MTSU's College of Behavioral and Health Sciences welcomed **Peter W. Grandjean** as the new dean beginning July 1. Grandjean has spent more than 30 years in education, most recently as dean of the School of Applied Sciences and professor of Exercise Science at the University of Mississippi. Other appointments of note:

- **Laurie Witherow**, vice provost for enrollment management
- **Samuel Haruna**, associate dean of academic programs, College of Basic and Applied Sciences
- **Sarah Bleiler-Baxter**, associate dean of faculty affairs, College of Basic and Applied Sciences
- **Chaney Mosley**, director of the School of Agriculture
- **Richard Nagorski**, chair of the Department of Chemistry
- **Todd Moore**, chair of the Department of Geosciences
- **Richard Tarpey**, director of the newly established Center for Supply Chain Management and Sustainability housed in the Department of Management
- **Carly Escue**, director of the Center for Executive Education in the Jones College of Business
- **Shannon Hodge**, chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology
- **Kristi Shamburger**, chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance

Media and Entertainment

The College of Media and Entertainment has achieved **significant recognition for its student and faculty-created commercial spot, "We Do It All."** This commercial was a collaboration with students from all departments in the college, who wrote the content, composed the iconic song, and performed in the spot. This year the ad earned numerous accolades, including a Regional Emmy for Single Spot Commercial, Gold for Best Video Advertisement at the 2024 Tennessee College Public Relations Association awards, and multiple Telly Awards (Silver in Best Music & Jingle/Regional TV, Educational Institution Commercial/Regional TV, and Direction/Regional TV).



The College of Media and Entertainment students and faculty had their **most successful Bonnaroo experience to date**. The student and faculty teams completed 40% of the livestreaming video and audio production work for two stages, which aired worldwide on Hulu. Students from the School of Journalism and Strategic Media had 21 published stories, with 18 featuring original images from Photography students. Their Bonnaroo coverage was picked up by major news outlets in Nashville and Knoxville and appeared in the *Nashville Scene* and *Sidelines*. Two *Sidelines* stories were included in Bonnaroo's daily press briefing alongside outlets like *Rolling Stone* and *USA Today* with statewide distribution through the Tennessee Press Association. The experience was part of summer coursework for EXL classes.

MTSU's Animation undergraduate program was ranked tops in Tennessee for 2024 by Animation Career Review, an online national and international ranking resource for animation schools. MTSU also rated No. 8 in the Top 25 Animation B.S. Degree Programs in the U.S., No. 9 in the Top 25 Animation Schools and Colleges in the South, and No. 22 for the Top 40 Public Animation Schools and Colleges in the U.S. in categories comparing animation programs of 199 schools across the country. In addition, six Animation students won the Best Animation Comedy awards at the International Student Media Arts Festival in Seoul, South Korea. **Dani Oliver, Ashten Royse, Olivia Armstrong, Star Akhom, Allen Marin, and Emily Mishoe** worked on the animation film *Bubbles* over the spring semester with the guidance of Department of Media Arts Associate Professor Kevin McNulty. The film, set in the near future, tells the story of a social media influencer living in her own bubble. The team drew inspiration for the film from various types of streamers, including gamers and makeup artists, while staying true to the climate change theme.

Basic and Applied Sciences

Mathematical Sciences professor **Don Hong** has been waiting years for this news: MTSU was recently **recognized as a Society of Actuaries Center of Actuarial Excellence**. MTSU also served as host of the international 2024 Actuarial Research Conference. Actuarial science is the discipline that applies mathematical and statistical methods to assess risk in insurance, pension, finance, investment, and other industries and professions.

MTSU recently **launched the STEM with Ukraine initiative**, partnering with Ukrainian and American universities and institutions to bring and sustain quantum computing education for an international population under the burden of an ongoing war with Russia.

For the second consecutive year, MTSU's equestrian team earned the national Western Team Championship of the Intercollegiate Horse Shows Association. **Jordan Martin** of Murfreesboro, after finishing second in 2023, won the coveted Back on Track USA-sponsored Western High Point honor in the May 3–5 competition in North Carolina. Martin also captured the American Paint Horse Association-sponsored Horse and Rider Team Open Horsemanship. Along with the team, Blue Raider riders had an individual qualified in all seven Western divisions, a Western high point rider, and one hunter seat rider. Team members also included **Mackenzie Latimer, Simone Allen, Sadio Barnes, Monica Braunwalder, Kenlee West, Louann Braunwalder, Regan Black, Shelby Amanns, and Alyssa Davis**.



Jones College of Business

With electronic data being so foundational to modern commerce and industry, MTSU's Jennings A. Jones College of Business is now offering a **new bachelor's degree in Cybersecurity Management**—a profession that is expected to grow exponentially over the next decade and beyond. MTSU's new program provides students with the foundational knowledge and focused expertise necessary to excel in this high-demand field. The MTSU Board of Trustees approved the program in June 2023, and it launched in January 2024. MTSU is the only university in Tennessee with a degree related explicitly to cybersecurity management, where the curriculum is designed to support students interested in pursuing careers such as security analysts and information security managers. The Bachelor of Science degree covers various areas, including development and programming for cybersecurity, cloud computing, digital forensics, infrastructure design and management, database design, and systems analysis and design—all from a cybersecurity perspective. It also consists of 120 hours of coursework and has on-ground and online course options. A Business Administration minor is built into the degree.

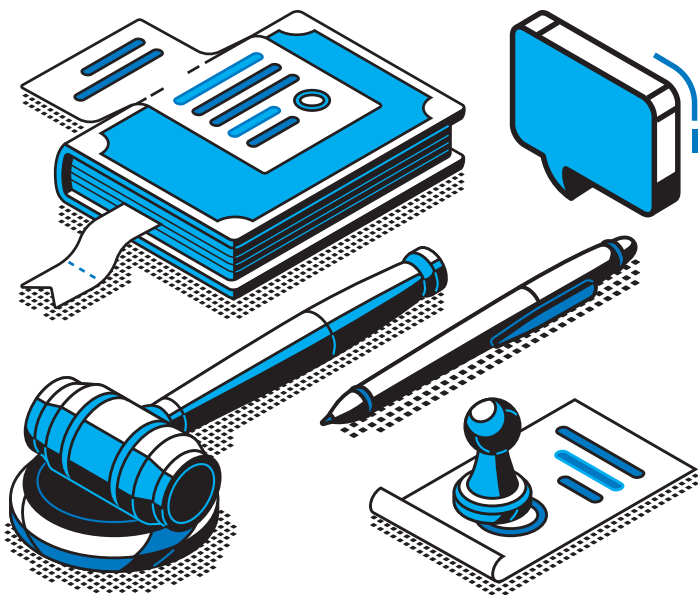


The **M.B.A. program launched three new concentrations:** Legal and Ethical Governance, Risk Management, and Human Resource Management.

MTSU's Business and Economic Research Center was recently **awarded the Community, Economic, and Workforce Research Award** for its 2023 Wage and Benefit Survey at the annual Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER) Conference in Norfolk, Virginia. Held in mid-June, the C2ER Conference presents awards in six categories, with MTSU's BERC receiving an award in the category for projects supporting collaborative and community research initiatives that have brought together different groups or organizations to achieve a common goal. BERC was awarded for the project's response to a demonstrated need, quality, and collaborative approach. In cooperation with the Middle Tennessee Industrial Development Association, BERC's study surveyed human resource professionals to provide region-specific reports on the human resource practices and compensation structures of manufacturing and industrial companies across middle Tennessee.



Liberal Arts



A simple classroom assignment laid the groundwork for Political Science major **Yusuf Dogan** to contribute to a nonbinding resolution later passed by Metropolitan Council of Nashville and Davidson County. During the spring semester of his freshman year at MTSU, Dogan was required to write a mock piece of legislation for a project. That experience would translate from the classroom to the real world as part of his internship with Metro Councilwoman Delishia Porterfield. In May, he worked on a rough draft of a resolution condemning white supremacy that was adopted by Metro Council. The resolution was a response to flyers promoting racist, xenophobic, antisemitic, and anti-LGBTQ+ ideas that were distributed in early May in historically Black areas of North Nashville.

Professor **Sisavanh Houghton** recently received MTSU's inaugural Conference USA Faculty Achievement Award. MTSU has been a member of CUSA, among the nation's best athletic conferences in student-athlete academic performance, since 2014. University officials said Houghton, a professor of painting in the Department of Art and Design, was selected from many competitive applications by a committee of faculty colleagues. College of Liberal Arts Dean **Leah Tolbert Lyons** called Houghton "a gifted artist who shares her expertise with students as an engaging instructor—whether in the classroom or across the globe through study abroad. Her dedication to her students and their success exemplifies what a professor should be; Sisavanh represents the college well both on and off campus." Houghton has taught at MTSU for the past 20 years.

The College of Liberal Arts' contributions to the arts community have paid off, with a study detailing how the arts and culture sector generated a staggering \$52.4 million in economic activity for Rutherford County in 2022–23. Aided by MTSU's School of Music, Department of Theatre and Dance, and Center for Chinese Music and Culture, the Rutherford Arts Alliance collected data showing MTSU and community art events supported 915 jobs and yielded almost \$9.5 million in tax revenue.

Education

The College of Education and its Center for Fairness, Justice, and Equity held a signing ceremony for three of the 25 students in **MTSU's first group of Tennessee Teach Back Initiative Scholars**, entering this fall. Launched with support of the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE), the initiative recruits high school and transfer students from within high needs, rural areas and covers costs and provides extra supports in exchange for their returning to teach in their local communities.

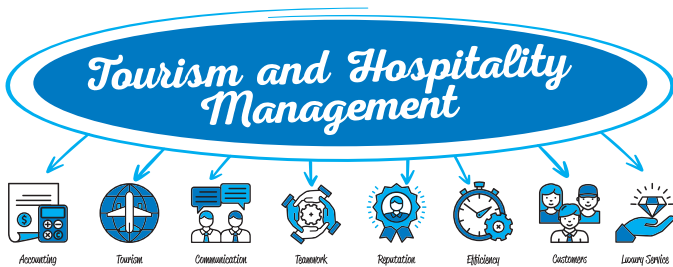
The College of Education at MTSU kicked off a new partnership with Nissan Workforce Development in June. Over the summer, two COE faculty members, **Kim Evert** and **Everett Singleton**, worked with Nissan subject matter experts on becoming effective classroom teachers. This fall those experts will be in four local high schools as full-time instructors.



MTSU's Early Learning Programs, supported by the College of Education, recently received over **\$8.5 million in state funds over the next five years to provide early intervention services** to families of children from birth to age 5 with identified special needs. MTSU's Home and Community-Based Early Intervention Program (HCBEI) previously received three years of funding from the same grant in 2021, administered through the Tennessee

Department of Disabilities and Aging (formerly known as the Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities). The new grant cycle began this month and will continue for five years to support staff and services provided by the HCBEI, which is a part of the Tennessee Early Intervention System. In 2022, Tennessee became the first state to extend early intervention services to children beyond age 3, allowing eligible families to continue receiving services for their children to age 5.

Behavioral and Health Sciences



MTSU announced the accreditation of the Tourism and Hospitality Management program—making it the first and **only accredited hospitality degree program in the state**. This program is also uniquely positioned close to tourism centers such as Nashville, Memphis, and Atlanta. Our students are already leaders and working within the industry as part of their coursework. We plan to continue onward and upward to grow and develop this program, which is led by faculty members who are passionate about what they are doing and teaching.

Industrial-Organizational Psychology students are getting **real-world experience collaborating with the Tennessee Highway Patrol** to identify future leaders for the agency. This summer, more than 200 THP troopers and sergeants vying for promotions underwent a multifaceted examination process designed by students and faculty in MTSU's Center for Organizational and Human Resource Effectiveness (COHRE). During a daylong assessment process, applicants for THP sergeant and lieutenant positions were evaluated in three tests: job knowledge, situational judgment, and administrative tasks in the form of email inbox. To develop the assessments, students worked one-on-one with THP sergeants, lieutenants, and captains to discern what skills and abilities are needed to perform those positions.

MTSU Athletic Training Program Director **Helen Binkley** has received two career-topping recognitions this year. Binkley, a Department of Health and Human Performance professor, was inducted into the Tennessee Athletic Trainers' Society Hall of Fame, the highest honor for a member of the organization, at the annual meeting and symposium held in May at Embassy Suites in Murfreesboro. In June, the

National Strength and Conditioning Association named Binkley the recipient of the Sports Medicine/Rehabilitation Specialist Award, which is given to a sports medicine professional whose work and contributions have significantly impacted the field.

Honors

MTSU presented **Judy Albakry**, University Honors College advisor, with its 2024 Outstanding Academic Advisor Award, a collaboration of the Advisor Mastery Program (AMP) and the Office of Student Success. AMP is MTSU's professional learning community created, implemented, and sustained by advisors to help foster a more cohesive and collaborative advising culture for the University. This award includes funding for professional development or items and equipment to support her future advising endeavors. Albakry completed her doctorate in Assessment, Learning, and Student Success through MTSU's College of Education in 2023.

Sophomore and Honors Buchanan Fellow **Ariel Nicastro** was recently named as a 2024 Goldwater Scholar—one of only 10 students from Tennessee institutions to receive the award this year. The Goldwater Scholarship, one of the oldest and most prestigious national scholarships in the natural sciences, engineering, and mathematics in the United States, seeks to identify, encourage, and financially support college sophomores and juniors who show exceptional promise of becoming this nation's next generation of research leaders in these fields. A Physics major, Nicastro was among more than 430 college students selected from more than 5,000 applicants to receive the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship this year. The scholarships are awarded by the Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation **to encourage outstanding undergraduate students to pursue research careers in STEM fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.**



University College

The launch of the True Blue Core general education program this fall will include UNIV 1010 – University Seminar. Previously an elective, this course **now counts toward general education credit**, making it more accessible to students. By enrolling, students will enhance their education and transition to college by critically analyzing higher education and their own learning processes.

University College is awaiting THEC approval of a **proposed Master of Science in Occupational Innovation and Effectiveness** program. This interdisciplinary program would target working professionals seeking additional skills for career advancement.

Christina Cobb, mathematics associate professor in University Studies, was named the 2024 ATHENA Young Professional Leadership Award winner. ATHENA, an organization dedicated to developing diverse, transformative leaders worldwide, recognized Cobb for her exemplary leadership and role as a model for young women. She's the founder of EducatHER, a professional mentorship program for young women, and serves as assistant director for True Blue Core, MTSU's general education program. Two other MTSU faculty were recognized with nominations for the ATHENA International Leadership Award: **Lucy Langworthy**, assistant to the dean in the College of Liberal Arts, and **Sam Zaza**, associate professor in the MTSU Department of Information Systems and Analytics in the Jones College of Business.



James E. Walker Library

Walker Library recently received two library marketing **awards from the PR Xchange with the American Library Association**; 334 entries were evaluated by a panel of 25 judges. The library won for a "born digital" submission in the Virtual Exhibits category for a Wellness Guide created by the Digital Scholarship Initiatives team. It also won for its most recent issue of *JEWL* magazine in the fundraising and annual reports category.



MTSU is helping ensure student success with free digital access to scholastic materials through Walker Library's Open Educational Resources (OER), with approximately **\$1.4 million in textbook savings since the program was implemented** in 2021. More than 14,200 students have benefitted from at least one of the 78 OER courses, which have more than quadrupled in number over the past two years, according to data collected since 2022 by the MTSU Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Planning, and Research. College textbooks have nearly doubled in cost over the past decade, with hard-copy versions ranging from \$150 to \$400 each and annual spending on materials as high as \$1,200, according to the nonprofit Education Data Initiative. Open educational resources are materials for teaching or learning that are either in the public domain or have been released under a license that allows them to be freely used, changed, or shared with others, according to EdWeek.org. Accessible online, these resources also typically provide downloading options for students who prefer a hard copy of the course materials. A study by the U.S. Public Interest Research Group showed 65% of college students nationwide forgo buying textbooks despite concerns about grades, putting them at a disadvantage.

GRADUATE STUDIES AND UNIVERSITY RESEARCH UPDATES

Over the past decade, MTSU has aggressively transitioned from a primarily undergraduate institution to a doctoral research university with significant research activity.

MTSU's College of Graduate Studies is one of the fastest-growing graduate schools in Tennessee. We offer 100-plus diverse graduate programs at the certificate, master's, specialist, and doctoral levels so that almost anyone can find their right fit. Our programs are designed to help students develop the skills and knowledge to be successful in their careers.

Meanwhile, buoyed by graduate students' working hand in hand with top faculty, MTSU is producing relevant, measurable research on a daily basis on the campus.

Graduate Studies:

- MTSU graduate student **Rachel Booher** was selected as a 2024 Marcus L. Urann Fellow by the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi. Booher is one of only six students nationwide who will be awarded \$20,000 to use toward a graduate degree, and she is the first student from MTSU to receive this award.
- A new application portal is now available for future MTSU graduate students. Applying to graduate programs just got easier with this streamlined process.



COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs:

- More than 200 new proposals were submitted this year—more than a 75% increase from last year.
- This represents more than \$22 million in sponsored project funding—also more than a 75% increase from last year (and a total of 128 unique principal investigators submitting proposals).
- The Undergraduate Research Center (URC) will launch in fall 2024. By offering opportunities for engagement to students and faculty, the URC will provide leadership for innovation, demonstration, and transfer of knowledge and methods in both research and development.



Spotlight on the Center for Health and Human Services (CHHS)

The CHHS has had a productive spring and summer and continues to grow as we work to shape a healthier future and advance the health and well-being of Tennesseans through innovation and collaboration on evidence-based research and projects addressing Tennessee's most pressing public health priorities.

Highlights include:

- CHHS has received \$13,559,340 from federal and state sources to address opioid and substance use disorder throughout all 95 Tennessee counties over the last four years, facilitating nine individual research and outreach projects.
- After 4½ years, CHHS is nearing the completion of two Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP) grants totaling \$1.2 million. Research on stigma and substance use disorder facilitated through these grants, and in partnership with Health and Human Performance faculty, has been selected for presentation at the upcoming annual meetings of the American Public Health Association, the Tennessee Public Health Association, and the Rural Health Association of Tennessee, along with webinar presentations for multiple community organizations and partners. A manuscript has also been submitted to peer-review journals and is awaiting review.
- CHHS is currently in the second year of a four-year mental health awareness training grant funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Through this grant, the center offers Mental Health First Aid training, which teaches individuals how to identify, understand, and respond to someone who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use problem or who is in crisis. This training is offered to members of our campus community and other higher education institutions.

INTERNATIONAL ENROLLMENT

We strive to make MTSU a welcoming, safe place for international students and visitors. We do so by offering various programming to encourage student involvement in campus activities, enhance cultural experiences, and support academic success. Activities include student success workshops, cultural excursions to national parks, and international seminars and presentations.

Aside from the **academic and social benefits of increasing the presence of international students on our campus**, there is also an economic benefit to the MTSU community. International students studying at U.S. colleges and universities contribute billions of dollars to our national economy and support hundreds of thousands of jobs.

We are delighted to share promising news about the state of international education from the 2023 calendar year. The MTSU International Affairs Office is proud to report significant progress and growth.

The SEVIS By the Numbers 2023 Report highlights a remarkable recovery in international student enrollment in the U.S., rebounding from the challenges posed by the 2020 pandemic. In 2023, the United States welcomed over 1.5 million active international students, marking a 10.4% increase from the previous year and the highest number recorded since 2019. Notably, the U.S. South experienced the most substantial growth rate, 13.4%.

Moreover, the NAFSA: Association of International Educators announced that **international students contributed over \$40 billion and supported 368,333 jobs within the U.S. economy** in 2023. Tennessee saw 9,206 international students, contributing \$332.7 million and supporting 3,190 jobs. According to the SEVIS report, Tennessee was among the top three states in the Southern region, with the highest growth percentage of 13.8%. These figures affirm international students' invaluable role in enriching our academic community and bolstering our economic stability.

At MTSU, we have also experienced a significant increase in international student enrollment. Despite the challenges faced during the pandemic, our concerted efforts in leadership, active engagement, and international recruitment have yielded positive results. Last fall MTSU welcomed 449 undergraduate and 185 graduate international students, totaling **634 students from more than 73 countries**. This represents an increase of over 100 students compared with the previous fall.

The MTSU International Affairs Office is steadfast in attracting top-tier students from diverse backgrounds. While we have observed a decline in Chinese and Middle Eastern student numbers, there has been a notable **rise in students from India, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia**. Embracing students from such diverse cultures, religions, and backgrounds enriches our campus community and brings economic, cultural, and social benefits to our campus.

MTSU is on an upward trajectory, poised to meet the challenges of international education in the 21st century. We are confident that MTSU will continue to shine as a premier destination for international students.



ADULT DEGREE COMPLETION

With the largest adult degree program in Tennessee, we have developed a streamlined program designed to help nontraditional students graduate as quickly as possible.

GraduateMT

MTSU's award-winning GraduateMT program continues to change lives with its dedication in serving our adult students. With more than 5,000 students returning to take classes and 1,300 graduations since its inception in fall 2015, this program continues to grow. In 2023–24, we served 832 readmitted students and witnessed 253 graduations. By helping returning students navigate the readmission process, eliminate barriers, and provide personalized degree plans, this program continues to make graduation attainable for many who previously believed it to be out of reach.

Corporate Partnerships

Three new corporate partnerships were added during the 2023–24 academic year, bringing the total number to 20. These educational partnerships create opportunities for companies to enhance their benefits programs, increasing employee retention and recruitment of quality employees. During the Spring 2024 semester, 163 students were enrolled through these partnerships, and 19 of those students graduated in May.

Prior Learning Assessment

Serving as a model for other institutions, MTSU's Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) program continues to serve adult learners by helping them document and earn college credits for nontraditional learning. In its 17-year history, 1,125 students have completed the prior learning assessment process, earning an average of 24 credits. In 2023–24, 71 undergraduate students completed the course and earned 1,680 PLA credits. Since 2018, 29 graduate students have earned a total of 153 graduate credits. Since formation of the Motlow-MTSU PLA Partnership in 2017, 16 students have completed the program, earning an average of 37 PLA credits each.



OFFICE OF STUDENT SUCCESS

The Office of Student Success is responsible for facilitating, coordinating, and leading the implementation of MTSU's Quest for Student Success. The office works to enhance the institution's persistence, retention, and graduation rates. It does this by focusing on primary strategic initiatives that include enhancing advising, promoting and facilitating course redesign, ensuring that effective tutoring is available to students, and establishing a system to communicate student success initiatives and performance metrics.

MTSU seeks to become a national thought and practice leader in student success. This endeavor will require joint efforts of the student, faculty, and broader campus community and the integration of our student-centered support services and data-informed best practices. The goal is to facilitate degree completion while cultivating students who are committed to critical inquiry and lifelong learning in a changing global society.

Here are some recent student success updates:

Scholars Academy

The Scholars Academy welcomed 142 new MTSU students into its 2024 cohort Aug. 11–22. Assistant Director **Monique Ward** and Associate Vice Provost **Michelle Arnold** participated in extensive efforts to build this year's cohort. They attended the MTSU True Blue Tour and Preview Day events and organized several informational Zoom sessions to discuss and recruit for the Scholars Academy. Arnold made it a priority to build relationships with high school counselors and programs within local school systems. They have been working with the Nashville Chamber of Commerce and the New Skills Ready Grant to build partnerships with the community and specifically the GEAR UP program. Arnold and Jonell Hinsey were recently appointed permanent associate vice provosts for student success.

This year's Scholars Academy included an outside presenter focusing on goal setting, time management, and study skills. Scholars also got an introduction to colleges, departments, resources, and organizations on campus.

Upward Bound Program

The MTSU Upward Bound program wrapped up its six-week Summer Academy on July 11. Beginning June 3, the Upward Bound program consisted of a three-week virtual learning component in which students took core classes (math, science, reading/language arts, and foreign language) and workshops on being a successful virtual student. Upward Bound participants then had the opportunity to attend the two-week residential component, where students gained the experience of living on a college campus. MTSU Upward Bound is a grant-funded pre-college program through the Department of Education that serves first-generation and/or income-eligible students from the following high schools: Community (Unionville), LaVergne, Shelbyville Central, and Smyrna, and target areas of Rutherford County and Bedford County. The program is funded to serve 60 students each year from September to August.



Academic Advising

The Advisor Mastery Program (AMP) is MTSU's in-house certification for professional development created and sustained by academic advisors to foster communication, commitment, and continued professional growth for the benefit of students, the University, and academic advisors. The Advisor Professional Development Committee works to provide multiple opportunities each month for professional development, collaboration, and training. In the 2024–25 academic year, the committee will focus on “Developing as a Professional Academic Advisor.” We have broadened our reach to incorporate more than professional development by creating the Blue Raider Academic Advising Network to share resources and allow for more cross-college collaboration and consistency in academic advising across MTSU's campus with an updated Mission Statement for Academic Advising and the rollout of a campuswide Academic Advising Syllabus in the fall.

Year in review for May 2023–May 2024:

- Academic advisors served 15,544 students in 46,272 appointments.
- 41% of those appointments were in person; 59% virtual.
- Academic advisors met with 89% of undergraduate students.
- 47% of academic advisors earned AMP Certification for professional development.
- 88% submitted documentation of professional development.
- 82% of academic advisors participated in AMP-offered training.

This certification increase offers a greater number of MTSU advisors access to outside training and development, which provides more opportunities to learn and develop new skills and possible solutions to student success roadblocks while increasing the visibility of MTSU in the academic and advising communities.

The Advisor Professional Development Committee also offers weekly opportunities for training, collaboration, and development beginning with a Kickoff Workshop in August. Outstanding advisors were recognized with new awards and will be submitted to the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) for regional and national recognition.

These 2023–24 award winners have also been submitted for Regional Advising Awards for NACADA.

- AMP Excellence in Advising Award for Academic Advisor—**Judy Albakry** (Honors)
- AMP Excellence in Advising Award for New Advisor—**Jennifer Waite** (CBAS)



MTSU ONLINE

With more than two decades of delivering high-quality distance education, MTSU Online supports our faculty and serves students through the creation, design, and delivery of effective and engaging online and blended learning environments.

Online learning has soared in popularity. More than half of MTSU's currently enrolled students are taking one or more online courses. Almost 60% of MTSU's summer school enrollment is entirely online.

This past year has been another cycle of record growth for MTSU Online.

- Online student credit hours are at an all-time high and have increased for several consecutive years.
- More than 52% of all MTSU students took at least one online course this academic year.
- MTSU now has **68 fully online degrees, concentrations, and certificate programs**. We had 23 programs in July 2020. We added 18 new fully online programs this year. More online programs are in development.
- More than 13% of total students at MTSU were exclusively online this year.
- 26% of all MTSU student credit hours this academic year came from online courses.
- MTSU Online supports 29 instructors in 18 departments who focus on high-quality online teaching. These instructors teach exclusively online.
- More than 460 faculty members taught at least one online course this year.
- MTSU employs **four full-time instructional designers who train and coach our faculty** on effective teaching and technology use, to make sure our students are receiving high-quality online instruction. Our instructional designers continue to bring high value to our faculty via course design and consultations. MTSU Online supports the faculty with a variety of opportunities, such as training workshops, faculty peer mentoring, personal consultations, and an extensive archive of web-based resources about online teaching and learning.
- MTSU Online supports key student services for online students, all of which are significant contributors to student retention and degree completion. Our student support team offers personal direct assistance to online students. Students can access live and email support, live tutoring throughout the day (and night), career advising, mental health counseling, library support, and assistance navigating D2L and related technologies.

- MTSU Online is creating engagement opportunities for fully online students to help ensure they are part of our vibrant community, even if they are not on campus. This includes creating opportunities to participate virtually in events and student organizations.

MTSU Online's programs rank among best

UniversityHQ.org ranked MTSU ranked within the top 10 in three categories for best college for 2024, including No. 5 for Best Online Colleges in Tennessee. It also rated MTSU among the top colleges/universities in Tennessee for several online programs—Accounting, Finance, Entrepreneurship, and Business, to name a few.

MTSU Online offers fully online and hybrid undergraduate and graduate programs and concentrations. The university has 69 fully online degrees, concentrations, and certificate programs, with more online programs in development.

Other higher education websites recognized MTSU's online programs at the master's level. According to Online Master's Degrees, a site for students seeking the latest information and trends about advanced degrees, MTSU ranked among the following categories for online master's degrees:

- Best Online Accelerated MBA Degrees
- Best Online Master's Degrees in Criminal Justice
- Best Online Master's Degrees in Library Science
- Most Affordable Online Master's Degrees in Criminal Justice

The Jones College of Business was also recognized as offering **one of the best digital marketing degrees** by TechGuide, an online resource for students looking for the latest information about higher education and careers. According to the site, MTSU ranked No. 8 out of 33 colleges/universities offering in-person or hybrid digital marketing degrees.



DUAL ENROLLMENT

Dual enrollment allows high school students to take college classes before they finish high school, get a head start on earning college credit, save money on tuition, and get a taste of what it's like to be an MTSU student.

The MTSU Dual Enrollment program continues to expand its reach into high schools in middle Tennessee and beyond. With the addition of White House High School in Sumner County for fall 2024, the program now has **partnerships with over 20 area high schools.**

In fall 2023, Dual Enrollment reached a record enrollment of 1,540 students, a **nearly 25% increase over the previous high.** These high school students enrolled early in MTSU courses with minimal to no cost thanks to the state of Tennessee's Dual Enrollment Grant program. This resulted in a tuition and fee savings of approximately

\$2.5 million dollars for students in the program. Enrollment for fall 2024 is projected to meet or exceed the previous year's total.

Dual Enrollment course offerings have been expanded at Central Magnet School for fall 2024. Central Magnet, ranked No. 1 among high schools in Tennessee and No. 19 nationally by *U.S. News & World Report*, is MTSU's longest-standing partner in early postsecondary programming.

Students at Merrol Hyde Magnet School in Hendersonville will now be able to enroll in Chinese language courses through MTSU Dual Enrollment. The school began an exclusive partnership with MTSU in 2023 and became the second high school in the state to offer Chinese as a Dual Enrollment option.



MT ATHLETICS

We've long believed in the power of athletics to open windows and doors of opportunity, both for our student-athletes and to engage our surrounding communities. And I have often remarked that athletics serve as the "front door" of the University.

Here are some updates on our student-athletes:

Blue Raiders Excel in NCAA Academic Progress

Each of MTSU's 17 athletic teams has earned a multiyear Academic Progress Rate (APR) of over 945 from 2019–20 to 2022–23 as the NCAA released its annual report in June.

The Blue Raider sports teams have now had at least a 930 for all its sports for 14 years running, with each team coming in at over 945 (out of 1000) in the most recent multiyear APR report. There was not an APR report in 2021 due to COVID and the transfer portal.

The most recent APR scores are based on a multiyear rate that averages scores from the 2019–20, 2020–21, 2021–22, and 2022–23 academic years. MTSU had 10 of 15 sports (indoor and outdoor track count as one) with a 970 on the multiyear report, with women's cross country and women's golf posting a perfect grade of 1000.

In addition to high levels of success in the multiyear APR, 13 of 15 sports received scores of 970 or higher in the 2022–23 single-year APR, with nine teams boasting perfect marks of 1000. The programs turning in a score of 1000 were women's basketball, both men's and women's cross country, women's golf, men's tennis, both men's and women's track and field, softball, and volleyball.



Whitson, Rutter Earn Raiders' Choice Top Awards

Basketball's **Courtney Whitson** and baseball's **Briggs Rutter** were the big winners at the 13th annual Raiders' Choice Awards in April. The year-end, Academy Awards-style show at Tucker Theatre highlighted all the academic and athletic accomplishments of the Blue Raider student-athletes for the 2023–24 academic year.



Whitson and Rutter were honored with the True Blue President's Award, which is the highest honor bestowed upon a current MTSU student-athlete who epitomizes all that is good in intercollegiate athletics. Presented annually to one male and one female student-athlete, the President's Award recognizes outstanding academic and athletic accomplishments, University/community service, and leadership.

Both excelled in the classroom, community, and on the court/field. Whitson, who has won the award three years in a row, carried an impressive 3.3 GPA in her master's program in Professional Studies and was fresh off leading MTSU to a conference championship and a win in the NCAA Tournament. An all-conference performer, Whitson is the program's all-time three-point scorer while also being a member of the 1,000-point and 1,000-rebound clubs.

Rutter had a 3.3 GPA and earlier this year became just the third player in school history to hit for the cycle when he accomplished the feat against New Mexico State. After 39 games, Rutter was batting .331 with nine home runs, 35 RBIs, and 43 runs scored.



MTSU Opens \$8 Million Outdoor Tennis Facility

Officials cut the ribbon Feb. 1 to officially open MTSU's \$8 million Outdoor Tennis Complex at the corner of Middle Tennessee Boulevard and Greenland Drive on campus. The new facility later hosted the CUSA Men's Tennis Championships April 20–21.

We were adamant that to truly be a mainstay on a national stage, we needed to develop an advanced facility capable of meeting all the competition and practice needs of our teams, one that would not only be the best in the conference but would rival any programs in the region.

This state-of-the-art facility serves as the on-campus home of the men's and women's tennis programs, featuring locker rooms, spectator facilities for 250 Blue Raiders fans, eight new tennis courts, and coaches' offices, among many other amenities.

The locker rooms, offices, team lounge, and concession stand are located in the Allen Tennis Building, named for MTSU alum and entrepreneur Elizabeth Allen.



Men's Tennis Captures Fifth Straight CUSA Title

Top-seeded and No. 34-ranked MTSU hosted No. 53 Liberty in the Conference USA men's tennis championship in April, defeating the Flames 4-2 to earn its fifth straight conference title. It was the Blue Raiders' fifth win of the season over a ranked team.

Additionally, **Leo Raquin** (left) was named both the 2024 CUSA Player of the Year and Newcomer of the Year, while **Jimmy Borendame** earned his fifth CUSA Coach of the Year honor. **Jakub Kroslak** was tabbed CUSA Freshman of the Year.

Four Blue Raiders were named to the CUSA Singles First Team: Raquin, **Marcel Kamrowski**, Kroslak, and **Demis Taramonlis**.

Ondrej Horak was named to the CUSA Singles Second Team, while all three starting doubles teams earned a spot on one of the two All-Conference Doubles Teams. Horak/Raquin and **Javier Cueto Ramos/Kamrowski** made the First Team, while Kroslak and **Shu Matsuoka** were recognized on the Second Team.

Women's Basketball Star Takes Top CUSA Honors

Following a perfect 16-0 Conference USA regular season, MTSU basketball player **Savannah Wheeler** (right) was tabbed CUSA Player of the Year, while center **Anastasiia Boldyreva** (right) was named CUSA Defensive Player of the Year.

Wheeler also earned the 2023–24 Michael L. Slive Female Athlete of the Year, announced by the league office. She is the fifth player under Coach Rick Insell to receive a conference Female Athlete of the Year accolade and the fourth Blue Raider named CUSA Athlete of the Year.

Wheeler, a graduate student from Kentucky, became just the ninth Blue Raider overall tabbed as a conference player of the year and the third to be named CUSA Player of the Year. She also brought home First Team all-league honors.

Boldyreva, a junior from Russia, burst onto the scene and established herself as one of the top rim protectors in the nation. She led the league and ranked in the top five in the country in blocks. The junior also earned First Team All-Conference and All-Defensive Team honors.

Three other Lady Raiders earned All-Conference Second Team honors: **Courtney Whitson**, **Jalynn Gregory**, and **Ta'Mia Scott**.



Lady Raiders Make Noise in NCAA Tournament

The MTSU women's basketball team secured the program's first win in the NCAA Tournament since 2007 and then led defending national champion Louisiana State University at halftime in a second-round game. In the first-round 71-69 victory over the sixth-seeded University of Louisville, the Lady Raiders erased an 18-point first-half deficit to tie the fourth-largest comeback in NCAA Tournament history.

Advancing against perennial power LSU, MTSU won the second quarter 21-12 to take a 36-32 lead into the locker room before falling to the Tigers on their home court, 83-56. The Lady Raiders finished with a 30-5 record.



Left-Hander Alderman Tosses No-Hitter

Freshman left-handed pitcher **Chandler Alderman** toed the rubber on March 23 trying to limit a Liberty offense that had produced an 11-run outburst in the series opener. With already 111 pitches under his belt and two outs in the seventh, Alderman fired a fastball by Liberty first baseman Brian McClellin for his 11th strikeout of the afternoon to keep a no-hitter intact. It was the crowning moment of the afternoon for Alderman, who rode that strikeout to the fourth no-hitter in program history in a 10-0 win in eight innings.



Giesecke Named New Women's Golf Coach

Lauren Giesecke, a renowned women's golf coach with nine years of head coaching experience, becomes just the fourth head coach in the MTSU women's golf program history.

The Indiana University alumna comes to Murfreesboro from Grand Canyon University, where she served as head coach since 2015. Under Giesecke, GCU broke numerous Division I era program records in the 2022-23 season. The Lopes recorded 15 team tournament victories and 11 individual tournament titles during her tenure.

In the team's historic 2017-18 season, Giesecke earned WAC Coach of the Year honors, and the Lopes reached the NCAA Regional. In her final season with the Lopes, GCU finished third at the WAC Championship and won a D-I program-best five tournament titles.



BLUE RAIDERS AT HOME

**Games at Floyd Stadium for
Coach Derek Mason's
inaugural season at MTSU:**

Saturday, August 31
vs. Tennessee Tech, 6 p.m.
First Game of the Season

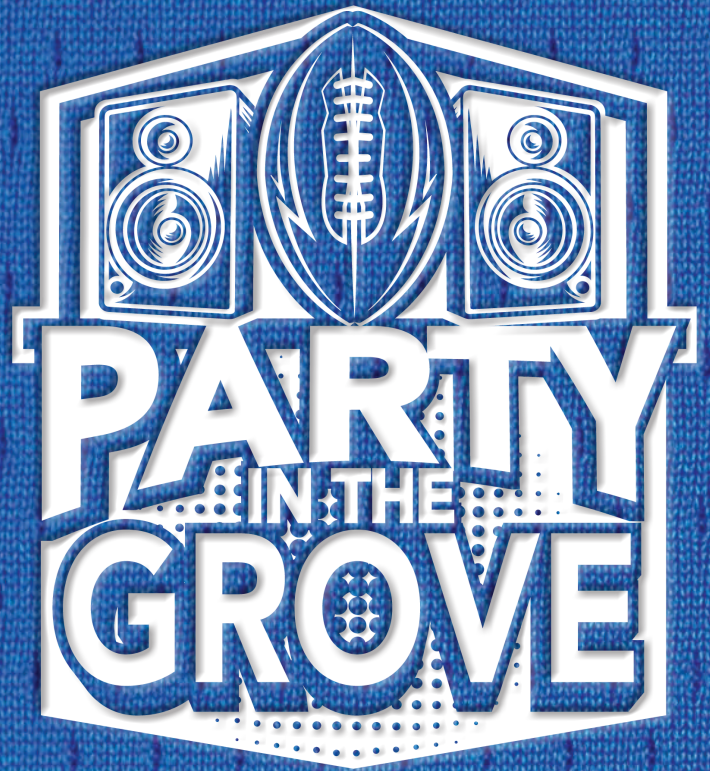
Saturday, September 14
vs. WKU, 6 p.m.
Family Weekend

Saturday, September 21
vs. Duke, 6 p.m.
HOMECOMING

Tuesday, October 15
vs. Kennesaw State, 7 p.m.
Faith and Family Night

Saturday, November 9
vs. Liberty, noon
Salute to Veterans and Armed Services

Saturday, November 23
vs. New Mexico State, 1:30 p.m.
Senior Day



MTSU ARTS

We can't wait to welcome to you to our 2024–25 MTSU Arts performances, exhibitions, and concerts, proudly presented for the 13th consecutive year by Ascend Federal Credit Union.

Join us for these featured events from the upcoming season and find more on our events calendar at mtsu.edu/mtsuarts.

ART AND DESIGN

PREY/TELL

Aug. 26–Sept. 9

Todd Art Gallery



The season begins with an exhibition featuring selections from the artwork of Melissa Vandenberg. *PREY/TELL* spans roughly a decade of work, pulled together with full acknowledgement of the election season.

THEATRE

Eurydice

Sept. 26–29

Tucker Theatre



In *Eurydice*, playwright Sarah Ruhl reimagines the classic myth of Orpheus through the eyes of its heroine. With contemporary characters, ingenious plot twists, and breathtaking visual effects, the play is a fresh look at a timeless love story.

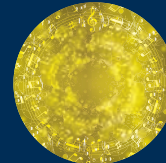
MUSIC

SOAL/TEBA Concert

Oct. 10, 7:30 p.m.

Hinton Hall,
Wright Music Building

This concert features two talented vocal ensembles—SOAL Chorale (soprano/alto) and TEBA Chorale (tenor/bass)—conducted by the School of Music's Angela Tipps.



DANCE

Fall Dance Concert

Nov. 21–23, 7:30 p.m.

Tucker Theatre

Come see original work from guest artists and our talented Dance faculty. The concert will feature collaborative work with design, technical, and stage management students from the Department of Theatre and Dance.



MTSU *Arts*
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EVENT COORDINATION

Planning an event on campus? Request a space to start the process. Facility schedulers and coordinators are here to help!

A list of schedulers and campuswide event guidelines can be found on the Event Coordination (mtsu.edu/eventcoordination) website.

All space reservations, including courses and outdoor areas, use the campuswide scheduling software 25live. Courses are scheduled in advance and take precedence over event scheduling in all classrooms. Events should not directly conflict with study day, final exams, or Connection Point activities.

All MTSU groundbreaking and ribbon-cutting ceremonies are scheduled through the Event Coordination Department and must be approved by the Office of the President.

The University master calendar (mtsu.edu/calendar) and 25live (mtsu.edu/25live) continue to grow in appeal and usage. The information in 25live not only shows room features and routes to the University master calendar, but also can route events to individual departmental calendars.



PARKING AND TRANSPORTATION

Parking and Transportation Services is excited to announce the fall implementation of its new Pay-By-Plate visitor-vehicle registration system.

This system will provide flexible parking options for visitors, vendors, and non-university contract workers through an easy-to-use online platform.

Customers will be able to purchase parking for specific days and times, either on a one-time or recurring basis, by simply scanning the QR code, selecting their needed times and dates, and quickly paying through the app . . . no download required!

MILITARY CENTER

MTSU has a long tradition of aiding veterans in their transitions from military to civilian life.

The 3,200-square-foot Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center is among the largest and most comprehensive veterans and military family centers at a university in Tennessee as well as in the nation.

The Daniels Center provides service and support for the more than 1,100 student veterans and their family members at MTSU. Everything a student veteran needs to succeed is available in this single location, from scheduling courses and completing government paperwork to getting questions answered about benefits and employment opportunities.

But you do not need to be a student or an alum to be assisted. If you are military-connected, the Daniels Center can help you!

MTSU's senior advisor for veterans and leadership initiatives, retired Army Lt. Gen. **Keith M. Huber**, leads



Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center

MTSU's ongoing push to help student veterans be successful at college.

Here are just a few recent highlights from the Daniels Center's many activities:

- Commissioner Tommy Baker has partnered with the Daniels Center to better connect veterans with their Veterans Affairs benefits. The Daniels Center is **now a field office for the Tennessee Department of Veterans Services**, which means that veterans can



come to the Daniel Center to be assisted with their VA claims. There is a **full-time Veterans Service Officer (VSO)** in the center. Veterans do not have to be affiliated with MTSU to use this valuable service. Just contact the Daniels Center for an appointment, a map, and a parking pass!

- The Nashville Sounds and the Daniels Center teamed up on the **80th anniversary of D-Day to honor one of the survivors** of the largest amphibious invasion in military history. Bill Allen of Murfreesboro was a 19-year-old Navy corpsman on June 6, 1944, referenced historically as D-Day. His World War II landing craft made three round trips to the beaches of Normandy, France, carrying tanks, troops, and trucks to the shore and bringing the dead back to the fleet. His ship hit an underwater mine on his fourth trip, killing 117 sailors, with only Allen and 27 others surviving. Allen and his family were recognized as the guests of honor for the Sounds before the start of the minor league baseball team's Military Appreciation Night on June 6 at First Horizon Park. Sounds players

wore special military-themed jerseys that were later auctioned off to benefit the Daniels Center. The Nashville Sounds' "N" logo is placed over the heart and emblazoned with the American flag, symbolizing that love for one's country is in the heart of all who serve. And yes, the rumors are true—I threw out the ceremonial first pitch at the Military Appreciation Night game!

- **Lt. Gen. Jody Daniels, commanding general of the U.S. Army Reserve, visited MTSU on May 21.** While on campus, Daniels met with Army ROTC cadets, toured the MTSU Daniels Center, and presented a full Minuteman ROTC scholarship to incoming MTSU freshman **Morgan Sheldon**, who plans to major in Exercise Science. Daniels also attended the Grand Ole Opry for the Salute the Troops event sponsored by the Daniels Center. The first female to command the Reserve component, Daniels commands more than 200,000 soldiers and civilian employees who live and work in communities across the country.



TRUE BLUE TV AND TRUE BLUE TV EVENT PRODUCTIONS

Our TV station and our Event Productions team (formerly Production Services) merged last summer into a single entity under the True Blue TV brand. The combination makes sense in many ways, most notably since Event Productions stages and records many of our most important events, meetings, and concerts—and those live broadcasts and recorded shows are shown on our television station (along with streaming services and social media, of course).

True Blue TV Event Productions, led by Director Robert Mogensen and based in the James Union Building, is the exclusive provider of event services (sound, lighting, video, staging, roof structures, and other special elements) for all of campus except the Student Unions. Working with the Event Coordination team, they bring to life special events, concerts, and activities in our biggest indoor spaces, including Murphy Center, Floyd Stadium, Alumni Memorial Gym, the MT Center in the Ingram Building, the Tom Jackson Building, and the Rec Center, and many outdoor spaces, such as Walnut Grove and the Quad. It also offers event production services for off-campus events sponsored by University groups.

True Blue TV's television operation continues to be based in the Learning Resource Center and is headed by Senior Manager Ty Whitaker. Launched in 1999, it is the premier hub for video content and live event programming. True Blue TV presents a diverse blend of programming, including campus lectures and academic activities, live and encore broadcasts of University events and ceremonies, features on our undergraduate and graduate majors, and classroom and professional resources for K–12 schools and educators provided by MTSU's Center for Educational Media in the College of Education.



*true***BLUE▶TV**
EVENT PRODUCTIONS

true
BLUE
▶TV

BLUE print

Visit Blue Print, our on-campus printing services operations, at its new storefront location inside the Student Union!

Blue Print continues to develop and offer new services to the campus community. It has evolved into an on-campus solution center for a wide range of services, from large-format mounted posters to yard signs to brochures and booklets to class projects (and, of course, they still offer black-and-white and color copies).

Recently, Blue Print became an on-campus outlet for low quantity, customized T-shirts for campus events and activities!

Learn more about Blue Print at mtsu.edu/blueprint.

Questions? Call 615-898-2100 or email blue.print@mtsu.edu.



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