

# NEWS & information

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dr. Sidney A. McPhee

*Welcome to the  
Spring 2020  
Semester!*

As always, I appreciate all you do to support the goals and objectives 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](mailto:Sidney.McPhee@mtsu.edu).

I also invite you to check out my blog, available at [mtsu.edu/President](http://mtsu.edu/President), for updates and information from my office.



# QUEST 20 25

By any measure, together we've achieved a tremendous level of success in the last year. We can, and should, take great pride in our achievements.

At the same time, we understand the dynamic nature of higher education. To be relevant, our strategic plans and our goals must change with the times. To remain on the cutting edge, we must do even more. We must project ahead. We must **think boldly and act boldly**. We must be our own architects for the future.

Our original Quest for Student Success, implemented in 2013, set ambitious goals that led to significant improvements in student retention and graduation rates over the past five years. These achievements have set the stage for us to bolster our Quest for years to come and further define our Academic Master Plan.

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## RAIDER RELIEF

Raider Relief, a humanitarian drive I revived when Hurricane Dorian devastated the Bahamas in 2019, flew—in multiple separate trips piloted by MTSU Board of Trustees vice chair **Darrell S. Freeman Sr.** ('87, '90) in his private plane—tens of thousands of pounds of emergency supplies, medicines, and necessities to help people who were affected.

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**MIDDLE  
TENNESSEE**  
STATE UNIVERSITY.

True Blue!

DR. SIDNEY A. MCPHEE

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# QUEST 2025



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Over the past two years, I convened several members of our faculty and staff, under the leadership of Provost Mark Byrnes, to expand, refine, and strengthen our efforts to facilitate the success of students. An important product of this initiative was the creation of the *Quest for Student Success 2025*, a crucial document that will serve as MTSU's guidebook for future student success initiatives.

Quest 2025 focuses on student success marked by a deeper and broader academic and student life experience that **extends learning beyond graduation**. Quest 2025 deepens our commitment to develop lifelong learners by engaging students in the learning process, creating distinctive and effective student experiences, enabling students to build self-confidence, and preparing them for successes in their careers and civic lives.

Students will learn:

- how to learn
- how to ask the right questions
- how to take risks and learn from their mistakes
- how to succeed personally and professionally

**Here are a few key components of our updated Quest plan.**

The ultimate goal is to graduate students who are:

- prepared to thrive professionally
- committed to lifelong learning
- actively engaged as citizens of their communities and the world

The committee has developed three areas of focus:

1. Enhance the quality of the academic experience by helping faculty engage with students.
2. Enhance the quality of the student-life experience.
3. Build an academic and student support network that facilitates learning.

The plan will include specific measurable metrics.

As a beginning point to operationalize Quest 2025, Provost Byrnes has convened the Implementation Work Group, led by Rick Sluder, vice provost for student success. Look for more information in the near future, but the work group is focused on identifying a handful of primary strategic initiatives. For more information on Quest 2025, please visit the provost's website at [mtsu.edu/provost](https://mtsu.edu/provost).

In summary, the new *Quest for Student Success 2025* underscores the University's core mission: **to produce graduates who are prepared to thrive professionally, are committed to critical inquiry and lifelong learning, and are engaged as civically, globally responsible citizens.** [MTSU](https://mtsu.edu)



# RAIDER RELIEF

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The hurricane hit home for numerous MTSU students. In all, MTSU has 51 students enrolled from the Bahamas, and the families of seven of our students were among those enduring the aftermath of the storm in the most affected areas of Grand Bahama and Abaco islands. Freeman, myself, and Terry Dorris, an associate professor and pilot in the Department of Aerospace, flew to the Bahamas on various days last fall.

Freeman donated use of his personal aircraft and fuel for the trips, while Dorris' flight expenses aboard MTSU's aircraft came from the approximately \$123,000 in donations from community members. Those cash contributions also covered cost of the goods for the families and were further distributed to affected Bahamian students on campus to assist them as their families tried to recover.

I simply cannot put into words the tremendous feelings of gratitude I feel for our close-knit Raider community, which once again banded together in a True Blue spirit of giving to provide for those less fortunate than we are.

When *Sidelines*, MTSU's student-run news source, asked what one thing I wished to explain to students, I responded that this situation could happen to anyone.

I have never been prouder of this University community than in its repeated generous responses to the devastation occurring around the world, which, in the case of Dorian, was my own birthplace of the Bahamas.

Dorian, a Category 5 hurricane, hit and lingered over the island commonwealth of the Bahamas on Sept. 1, killing many and leaving 70,000 homeless from the storm. I lost a grand-niece after the hurricane made landfall on Grand Bahama Island. Our entire family was devastated. Once again, let me emphasize my deepest thanks to the Blue Raider community for your thoughts, prayers, and actions resulting from this terrible event. I am truly touched.

On our third mission to the Bahamas, **Tiara Ashley Brown**, president of MTSU's Bahamian Student Organization, accompanied myself, Freeman, and Chip Crunk, CEO of R.J. Young Co. in Nashville. The Raider Relief trip also delivered donations gathered by Brown's student group.

I would be remiss if I did not single out Trustee Freeman for his exceptional level of humanitarianism in this instance. Freeman also piloted his plane for the first Raider Relief mission to Puerto Rico in 2017, which came to the aid of the family of former MTSU basketball player Raymond Cintron after landfall there by Category 4 Hurricane Maria.

Freeman said he was honored and humbled by the opportunity to donate his services as a pilot—and the use of his aircraft—to the various relief missions. "If you own a plane," he said, "I can't think of a better way as to how you should use it."

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**I simply cannot put into words the tremendous feelings of gratitude I feel for our close-knit Raider community.**

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As commencement speaker at a recent graduation ceremony, Freeman urged his audience of newly minted degree holders to "take over the world."

"But when you do go take over the world, do it with compassion," Freeman added. "Because the world needs more compassion . . . and do it with the sole purpose of helping people who are less fortunate than you are.

"If you do these things, you will have represented MTSU very well."

Freeman has proven that those are words he lives by. [MTSU](http://mtsu.com)

# ADMISSIONS

## Positive Signs

The Fall 2019 entering freshman class was the largest that MTSU has enjoyed since 2011, setting new records for ACT scores and high school grade point averages. Enrollment highlights included:

New freshmen were up **14.51%**, totaling 3,259.

Total new undergraduates increased **9.9%**.

New transfers rose **4.12%** over last year.

Total transfer students enrolled (10,474) now represent **53.82%** of the total undergraduate population.

This year's class of dual enrollment students (**1,221**) is the largest in MTSU's history.

The ACT average for the Fall 2019 freshman class was **23.34**, surpassing last year's record-setting freshman ACT average of 22.87.

The average high school GPA for the entering freshman class was **3.54**, surpassing last year's freshman class average GPA of 3.49.



Last semester our undergraduate recruitment efforts set out to capitalize on the remarkable 14% growth in the size of the 2019 entering freshman class. This growth was largely fueled by our bold increase in the dollar amount of the **Presidential Scholarship** to \$18,000 in total value, paid out to eligible incoming freshmen at \$4,500 a year for four years. Students must have a 3.5 high school GPA and an ACT score of 25–29 to qualify for the expanded award. With these enhancements, the Presidential Scholarship became the largest guaranteed academic award given by any public university in Tennessee to students with these credentials.

As the Admissions staff recruits in high schools throughout the state this year, we have instituted a new **True Blue Scholarship**—a \$2,000 per year award—to attract students who have earned at least a 3.5 high school GPA and have ACT scores in the 23–24 range. We hope the promise of this award will encourage more students to “take a closer look” at MTSU.

We know that if we can get students to come to campus and see our outstanding facilities and beautiful grounds, we have an excellent chance to enroll them. Therefore, we concentrate our efforts on making sure guests have an excellent experience and see us at our best.

To that end, the signature visit event for prospective students—our **True Blue Preview**—has been restructured. Students and families now build their own schedules for the day, selecting special presentations from a wide variety of resources and departments, enabling them to optimize their time on campus.

In addition to the more comprehensive **True Blue Preview**, the undergraduate recruitment office offers daily tours at 10 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Monday–Friday, plus two very popular Saturday tours per semester. More than 500 guests visited us at a Saturday tour last semester. Our next Saturday tour is Jan. 25.

In addition, this year our first class of **True Blue 100** members will graduate from high school. Since 2017, this initiative has asked high school teachers and guidance counselors to identify and nominate high school freshmen who would make great potential Blue Raiders and who live out the values of our True Blue Pledge. Each year we recognize 100 high school freshmen in a ceremony on campus. We look forward to many of these students fulfilling the promise we saw in them and matriculating at MTSU this fall. [MTSU](https://www.mtsu.edu)

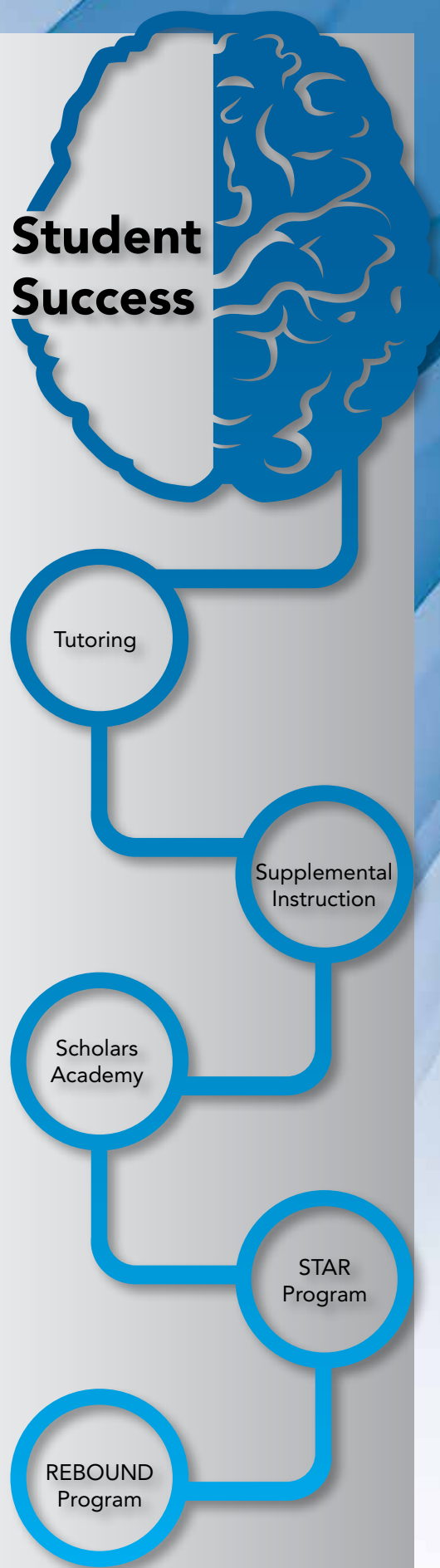
## STUDENT SUCCESS

**Student success is at the heart of everything we do at MTSU.**

Here are some recent updates on our ongoing efforts to ensure every student who attends MTSU gets the individual attention and support they need to achieve and graduate.

- Our **campus-wide tutoring initiative**, led by Cornelia Wills, MTSU's director of student success, continues its outreach by raising awareness and elevating its profile among various constituents throughout the University. A new initiative involved conducting presentations last summer for the Scholars Academy and Student Transition and Academic Readiness (STAR) programs in order to introduce incoming students to this free University resource. Other targeted populations include adult learners—where tutoring now has a presence in the Adult Connect Webinar Series—and African-American men.
- There was tremendous growth in our **study skills tutoring** initiative. Usage more than doubled over the past year and increased by 138% in Fall 2019 (338) compared to Fall 2018 (142). Based on feedback from students, this initiative was launched in Fall 2016 and has proven to be a great foundational resource for students.
- In addition to tutoring, Wills now leads the **supplemental instruction (SI)** component of learner support. These areas—tutoring and SI—employ a talented group of 200-plus students. The programs are expected to produce more than 12,000 combined student contacts during the 2019–20 academic year. This new strategy also will provide our learner support area a greater deal of synergy.
- The success of the **Scholars Academy** program continued this past summer. Redesigned by Breilinda Johnson to provide greater intensive coaching and hands-on leadership, the program welcomed 182 incoming freshmen for a two-week program that strategically readied them for the first year at MTSU and beyond. In advance of priority registration for Spring 2020, all members of the cohort met with the Office of Student Success staff for individualized coaching sessions. By the end of last semester, 93% of the Fall 2019 cohort had registered for Spring 2020.
- Also under Johnson's leadership, the **STAR program** was established last summer as an additional early-arrival program that incorporates many of the features of the Scholars Academy but in a conference-style format. The inaugural Fall 2019 cohort of STAR drew 190 incoming freshmen as participants.
- Letters and emails were sent to 613 new freshmen over the holidays encouraging those students to participate in our national award-winning **REBOUND program**. Since REBOUND's inception in 2015, the students who qualify (earning lower than a 2.0 GPA their first semester) and participate in the program stand a 50% better chance of returning to MTSU for their second year than do students who qualify for the program but do not participate. To benefit this year's participants, four strategically placed student success workshops will be hosted during the spring semester by Vincent Windrow, associate vice provost for student success.
- Travis Stratton, a **new addition to our staff**, recently was honored by the Tennessee Association for Student Success and Retention for his professional success after having entered MTSU as a prescribed student. [MTSU](#)

## Student Success



## FALL COMMENCEMENT

Nearly eight out of 10 MTSU graduates remain in Tennessee to put their new degrees to work, creating an economic impact of billions of dollars annually. This institution and our graduates fuel much of the prosperity we enjoy in our region and state. As proud as I am of all that we represent at this University, I am even more proud to shake the hands of these exceptional students and confer the degrees that they have earned.

The 1,759 new graduates in MTSU's Class of 2019 reached a momentous life goal Dec. 14, triumphantly accepting their hard-earned degrees cheered by family, friends, professors, colleagues, and two guests who praised their grit and perseverance.

"Today's the day I'm sure some of you thought would never get here; others of you have been planning for it for a lifetime, no matter how long it took you to get here. Whether you're graduating summa cum laude, magna cum laude, cum laude, or 'thank you laude (Lord),' we are proud of each and every one of you today," said Belle Wheelan, president and chief executive officer of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), speaking to the newly minted MTSU alumni during the afternoon commencement ceremony.

"There will be days you will wake up and say, 'Oh, no, I cannot face this another day.' Then when you look in the mirror, you say, 'Yes, I can do this. I have proven it, because

I've gotten through Middle Tennessee State University, and there is nothing and nobody who's going to keep me back. It may slow me down, but it is not going to stop me from reaching my goal.' Each of you has proven that you've got what it takes to get ahead or you would not have succeeded to be at today's ceremony."

Country music entertainer and former MTSU student Chris Young told graduates at the morning commencement event that the skills and effort they used to earn their degrees will be useful again and again.

"On the hard nights where you operated on little to no sleep, getting things done, putting in the work that no one is aware of? That's all on you. And you should be incredibly proud of that. All of the work that you did that no one sees? That's the thing that will separate you from everyone who didn't do it," he said.

"It's easy to talk about the hard work you want to do. It's much more difficult to put that time in. To really dig deep on the days that you don't want to—that's the perseverance that will make the difference."

MTSU's final graduating class of the decade included 1,502 undergraduates and 257 graduate students accepting their degrees. The College of Graduate Studies presented 235 master's degrees, eight education specialist degrees, and 14 doctorates. Three graduate students and 12 undergraduates also received certificates for their advanced study. [MTSU](https://www.mtsu.edu)



## ACADEMIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Too many stories, too few pages! Each of the colleges and academic units at MTSU maintains a high level of activity and produces news worth crowing about. I simply do not have enough space in the pages of this newsletter to write about all the accolades and achievements occurring on a daily basis at our University. Here then I offer up just a few examples of the remarkable work we are performing on the campus of MTSU. **True Blue!**

### New Appointments

- **Beverly Keel**, dean of the College of Media and Entertainment
- **Brian Hinote**, interim chief online learning officer, in addition to his current duties as associate vice provost for data analytics and student success
- **John Merchant**, interim chair for the Department of Recording Industry



### New Academic Programs

- Received unanimous approval from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission to offer an interdisciplinary Bachelor of Science in Data Science degree effective Summer 2020, along with a minor in Data Science
- Successfully implemented the new Bachelor of Science in Tourism and Hospitality Management and reached the projected fourth-year enrollment in the first semester of operation
- Implemented the new M.S. in Geosciences, converting the Geosciences concentration in the successful Master of Science in Professional Sciences program to a free-standing degree
- Added a new Leadership in Nutrition concentration under the Master of Professional Studies degree
- Created new concentrations in Food Industry and in Nutrition and Wellness within our Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science degree
- Added a new Health Communication concentration within our B.S. in Communication degree
- Created new concentrations in Criminology, Social Justice, and Work and Family within our Bachelor of Science in Sociology degree
- Added a new undergraduate certificate in Professional Selling within the Marketing Department
- Launched a new Sports Media concentration and minor within MTSU's College of Media and Entertainment last fall to help fill the increasing need for sports media professionals throughout the country
- Submitted proposals to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission to create new bachelor's and master's degrees in Art Therapy
- Established a process for review and approval of up to 6 hours of prior learning credit for students enrolling in the Master of Professional Studies program
- Enrolled six freshmen at MTSU this fall as part of the Medical School Early Acceptance Program, a partnership with Meharry Medical College in Nashville

### Improving Higher Ed

This coming May, MTSU will expand its offerings when we begin accepting applications for our new doctorate in higher education. This new Higher Education: Leadership and Student Success concentration will be one of the two possibilities within the renamed Assessment, Learning, and Student Success Doctor of Education degree from MTSU's College of Education. This exciting new doctorate specifically addresses the needs of individuals already working at Tennessee's colleges and universities, as well as students who plan to make higher education their career field. One of the most exciting aspects of this concentration is the option to earn the College and University Teaching Certificate. This certificate can be earned by choosing specific optional courses which prepare students to design, teach, and evaluate college level courses. In addition, students in this certificate program will participate in a practicum where they work one-on-one with a faculty member to get hands-on classroom experience.



### Distinguished Professor

**Former state Rep. Beth Harwell**, the state's first female speaker of the House of Representatives, was introduced as a Distinguished Visiting Professor in Political Science

last September. Harwell, who holds a doctorate in Social Science Education, also will contribute to other programs such as working with MTSU's chapter of the American Democracy Project and our new Free Speech Center on ways to help extend and refine dialogue and discourse in politics; mentoring student interns who will be traveling to Nashville for the General Assembly's upcoming session; mentoring MTSU's delegation to the Tennessee Intercollegiate State Legislature; and working with the School of Journalism and Strategic Media class that focuses on coverage of the state legislature.

### Good Works

Our Bachelor of Social Work program ranked No. 5 out of 12 Council on Social Work Education accredited programs in the State of Tennessee for Best B.S.W. (based on salaries of graduates) by SocialWorkDegree.org. The programs receiving the first four rankings are all private institutions (Lipscomb, Southern Adventist, Belmont, and Union). Our M.S.W. program ranked second out of five accredited programs based on most affordable colleges for students seeking a master's degree in social work.



### A Global Ambassador

Former U.S. Vice President Al Gore's passion for environmental issues rose to the fore at a tribute to his late father, MTSU alumnus and former Sen. Albert Gore Sr., before a capacity audience Sept. 16 at Tucker Theatre. Gore, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007, participated in "Albert Gore Sr. and the Creation of the Modern South," a panel discussion



with three MTSU professors and his father's biographer, Anthony J. Badger, that highlighted Badger's new book *Albert Gore Sr.: A Political Life*. The former vice president joined MTSU's faculty in 2001, not long after I became president of this University. We at MTSU are honored that his influential work on climate change was done while he taught and did research as a member of our community of scholars. Faculty members **Louis Kyriakouides** (Albert Gore Research Center director), **Kent Syler** (Political Science), and **Mary Evins** (History) conducted a discussion with Gore after Badger's address. Earlier in the day, Gore viewed a collection of political memorabilia and an exhibit about Albert Gore Sr. at the Gore Center and a larger exhibit about his father at James E. Walker Library.

### From MTSU to the Nobel Prize

MTSU's Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) hosted an academic conference this past October to celebrate the centennial birthday of late alumnus **James Buchanan** ('40), who was awarded the 1986 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for his leadership in developing the public choice theory of economics. He died in 2013 at age 93. PERI, led by Director **Daniel Smith**, an associate professor of Economics, was established with initial seed money from the Charles Koch Foundation in late 2016 as a joint venture between the Jennings A. Jones College of Business and the University Honors College. The institute's mission is to engage students with faculty in research that will further the understanding of business and economic principles, as well as their impact on regional, national, and international financial conditions and the well-being of society. The papers presented at the conference are under consideration



for a special issue of the prestigious academic journal *Public Choice*. MTSU's hope is that events such as this, along with PERI's fellowship and faculty support, will solidify MTSU's Ph.D. in Economics program as a premiere place for studying public choice, which applies economic reasoning to the public's understanding of political outcomes and the political institutions that influence those outcomes. Buchanan's gifts to our Honors College support the prestigious Buchanan Fellowship program, MTSU's top scholarship awarded to 20 incoming freshman scholars each year.

### Model University

MTSU will present its program to help homeless students to other colleges and universities in Tennessee in an effort to serve this underserved student population. A new state law that took effect last summer requires each post-secondary educational institution funded by the state to designate a liaison to homeless students and to develop a program to provide them access to housing. MTSU's program, which has been in effect since 2008, was chosen to serve as the model.



### Community Hallmark

For years known locally as "Bridge Over Broad," Murfreesboro's \$22.8 million urban interchange took on a distinctly MTSU flavor when it officially became Blue Raider Bridge last September during a dedication ceremony. Rutherford County Mayor **Bill Ketron**, an MTSU alumnus, pushed to name the bridge to honor MTSU due to the University's community impact and because the bridge is one of the gateways to reach the Blue Raider campus.







### A Crown JEWEL

After 20 years of providing resources for students to take out, MTSU's James E. Walker Library is offering the community a chance to give back. In celebration of its 20th anniversary, the library has launched its "20 for 20" campaign to raise funds to continue current services and launch some new ones. Visited by 25,000 people each week, Walker Library provides a vast array of services, including reference, circulation, digital collections, open access publishing, library instruction, and access to special collections of rare and old books. Walker Library's 20-year celebration began with the Fall 2019 semester; the building opened in Spring 1999. Special events are in the works, including a fundraising event this March.



### Rightful Place

MTSU's world-renowned Department of Aerospace set up base at EAA AirVenture, a massive weeklong celebration of aviation that attracts more than 500,000 visitors from 80 countries. The annual signature event of the Experimental Aircraft Association, this annual convention and fly-in for the 200,000-plus member aviation organization takes place in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, each fall. AirVenture is billed by EAA as the "world's greatest aviation celebration." A team of about 10 MTSU students, recent graduates, and flight instructors planted 'True Blue' flags and a giant tent with the Aerospace logo in a corner of the AirVenture grounds. Established in 1942, our Department of Aerospace is a signature department at the University and has grown into one of the most respected aviation programs in the nation.

### True Blue Board

MTSU alumnus **Stephen B. Smith** ('11) was unanimously reelected to a second two-year term last September as chair of the institution's Board of Trustees. Smith, who has held the top trustee role since the board was created in 2017, is chair of the board of Haury and Smith Contractors. The board also reelected fellow MTSU alumnus **Darrell S. Freeman Sr.** ('87, '90), former executive chair of Zycron Inc. and co-founder/chair of Pinnacle Construction Partners, to a second two-year term as vice chair.



### Teaching the Teachers

MTSU entered a first-of-its-kind partnership focused on bringing research-supported innovations to how the University prepares students to become K-12 teachers. MTSU and the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) signed a three-year renewable agreement last fall to develop an innovative strategy for our College of Education to continue to improve and evolve the program to ensure graduates receive excellent teacher preparation. MTSU was founded in 1911 as a normal school to train classroom teachers and remains one of the top programs in the state. We offer one of Tennessee's largest teacher preparation programs, preparing almost 10% of the state's new teachers annually. SCORE is a Tennessee education research and advocacy nonprofit working to drive transformative change in education so all students can succeed in school, college, career and life. Former U.S. Sen. Bill Frist, SCORE founder and chair, applauded the partnership's potential and MTSU's commitment to "continuous ongoing improvement" in teacher instruction."



### A Lending Hand

In an effort to help with the rising cost of textbooks, Walker Library developed a textbook affordability program that began last semester. The library identified and purchased a few copies of each textbook assigned for high-enrollment general education classes (over 500 students). The textbooks are on reserve and available to check out for in-library use for three hours.

### From Combat to Campus

The higher-ed insights firm, College Factual, ranks MTSU's liberal arts offerings among the top 50 universities in meeting the academic needs of student veterans. The website's 2019 rankings for Best Liberal Arts General Studies Programs for Veterans rated MTSU No. 41 out of 355 for veteran friendliness of all colleges and universities reviewed by College Factual. This puts MTSU in the **top 15% of all schools in the nation** when it comes to offering a quality education to veterans studying liberal arts, the website stated, noting that the University improved



its ranking position 13 slots over the previous year's ranking. Meanwhile, MTSU's liberal arts program is ranked **No. 1 out of the eight colleges and universities in Tennessee** reviewed by College Factual for veteran friendliness. MTSU operates the Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center out of its College of Liberal Arts. The Daniels Center is the largest and most comprehensive veterans center on a Tennessee higher education campus and among the best in the nation.



Other Daniels Center highlights include:

- Last October, **Charlie Daniels** was getting ready to bring down the house at the *Grand Ole Opry* with his signature song, "The Devil Went Down to Georgia," when announcer Bill Cody interrupted with a surprise for the country music icon. "Ladies and gentlemen, Charlie and his wife, Hazel, are the namesakes and patrons for a very special place on the campus of Middle Tennessee State University: The Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center. . . . Thanks to the support and generosity of Charlie, the Daniels Center has become one of the nation's top academic support centers for student veterans and the family members

of veterans, seeking to use their hard-earned benefits in pursuit of higher education." Cody then welcomed MTSU officials to the stage—retired Army **Lt. Gen. Keith Huber** and Daniels Center Director **Hilary Miller**, who presented Daniels with a Blue Raider football helmet, sporting the red, white, and True Blue MT logo that the team will wear for its annual Salute to Veterans and Armed Services game on Nov. 16.

- **Operation Song** took place for the fourth year in a row, pairing veterans with MTSU songwriting students and hit songwriters to put the veterans' stories into song.

### Behind the Scenes

MTSU students were once again behind the scenes at the 53rd annual **Country Music Association Awards** in downtown Nashville. Students worked as production assistants for talent as well as crew for News Channel 2, which produced the red-carpet special shown on 30 ABC affiliates. **Bob Gordon**, associate professor from our Department of Media Arts, also escorted students backstage during the CMA rehearsal to meet the Country Music Association's CEO as well as the show's producers and director.



### Music U.

Nominations for the 62nd annual Grammy Awards on Jan. 26 include MTSU alumni **John Baldwin, Tony Castle, Torrance "Street Symphony" Esmond, Jason Hall, Jimmy Mansfield, Billy Hickey, Aaron Raitiere, and F. Reid Shippen.**

### A Historic Trip

Professors **Leon Alligood** and **Sally Ann Cruikshank** and Journalism students selected from Advanced Reporting classes journeyed to Des Moines, Iowa, to report on the presidential candidates running in the upcoming presidential primaries and caucuses. **Christyn Allen, Savannah Meade, Amanda Smith, Zoe Haggard, Tayla Courage, and Sabrina Washington** attended the Liberty and Justice Celebration at the Wells Fargo Arena, an event that drew over 13,000 people and featured speeches by all the candidates. They also worked the Economic Freedom Presidential Town Hall at Drake University and conducted several interviews, including one of then-Democratic candidate Julian Castro. [MTSU](http://mtsu.edu)

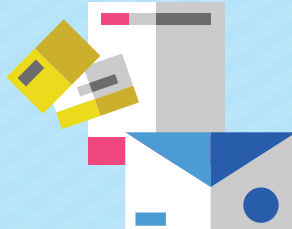


# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

MTSU has strengthened its international initiatives both on campus and around the world. Those efforts boost student success through creating opportunities for travel, exposure to culture, and research.

The Office of International Affairs continues its mission to create opportunities for faculty and students for global engagement and also to attract international students to our campus. Here are some of its highlights:

- The office is strengthening and expanding its global network of partnerships for greater exposure to international markets and to increase international enrollment. One key initiative within this effort is use of the Bachelor's-to-Master's degree pathway for international students.
- The **Education Abroad Fair** last fall was a great success. Students were attracted to numerous programs that extend to 66 countries. Thirty-five MTSU Signature faculty-led programs—an increase of 45% compared to last year—highlight the MTSU faculty's commitment to international education and reach. We expect an even greater increase in student participation in such efforts, specifically in the planned 2020 summer programs. [MTSU](#)



## MTSU Creative Marketing Solutions

### Did You Know?

MTSU's CMS printing service has launched a new print estimating and ordering system—Print Shop Pro—that will allow you to get your estimates . . . RIGHT NOW! . . . then place your order . . . RIGHT NOW!

[https://printshoppro.fsa.mtsu.edu/PSP/app/PSP\\_Start.asp](https://printshoppro.fsa.mtsu.edu/PSP/app/PSP_Start.asp)

### Question of the Day

Not sure what to select for paper? "Uncoated" is like copy paper. "Coated" is slick, like a magazine. Satin is less shiny

than gloss. The weight of the paper is its thickness—the higher the number, the thicker it is.

Have questions? We're here to help!

If you need assistance with our Print Shop Pro process, email [michael.dobrzelecki@mtsu.edu](mailto:michael.dobrzelecki@mtsu.edu) or call 615-898-2896.

### CMS Mission

Simply put, we're here to aid and assist the mission of this institution. From student to faculty, staff, academic, or athletic needs, it's all the same to us: **We're True Blue!**

[creativesolutions@mtsu.edu](mailto:creativesolutions@mtsu.edu) | 615-898-2896 | [mtsu.edu/creativesolutions](https://mtsu.edu/creativesolutions)

# GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

## Graduate Studies

MTSU has aggressively transitioned from a primarily undergraduate institution to a doctoral research university with significant research activity.

Increasing graduate student enrollment helps strengthen MTSU's position as a publicly funded research university; enhances MTSU's reputation as a research institution from both faculty and students' points of view; meets market need for a more educated workforce in Tennessee, within the region, and across the nation; and increases revenue from both tuition and fees and the state funding formula.

The College of Graduate Studies achieved several significant successes in the past year.

- MTSU now has an **Ed.S. in Professional Counseling**.
- The College of Graduate Studies is launching its **Online Faculty Fellows** program in Spring 2020 to explore and implement cutting-edge online teaching and programs at the graduate level.
- In collaboration with MTSU's Information Technology Division, Graduate Studies launched an **online self-service portal** for students applying to graduate school at MTSU. Additionally, there is a **faculty online portal** to review graduate application packets expeditiously. This will lead to faster processing time, more efficiencies, and an expected increase in enrollment.
- The college also is working on increasing our efficiency and customer service and will be focusing on retention and recruiting efforts for the fall.

## Research

MTSU is continuing to ramp up research efforts at a rapid pace. Creating a culture of research and inquiry is at the heart of the University's mission among faculty and students and in vital industry partnerships. This work often involves undergraduate research opportunities that are unique for non-master's and non-doctoral students at MTSU.

Here are some recent research-related highlights:

- Since last July, 39 MTSU principal investigators (PIs) have received **46 new awards with a total value of \$7,039,000**. Another 21 MTSU personnel are involved as co-PIs. The new awards involve 25 academic departments or research centers across seven colleges and three administrative units.
- Thus far in the fiscal year, the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) has managed a portfolio of **168 active awards** with a lifetime award value of **\$37,513,000**.
- During the same time, 65 PIs for 35 departments or centers in seven colleges have submitted **79 proposals**, requesting a total of \$17,242,000.
- The Faculty Research and Creative Activity Committee (FRCAC) awarded **\$69,017 to eight faculty** applicants in the Fall 2019 competition. Twenty faculty requested a total of \$175,380. Those applicants not selected for funding in the fall cycle are eligible to revise and resubmit to the Spring 2020 deadline.
- The Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity (URECA) Committee awarded **\$27,276** to 25 of the 51 applicants to its Fall 2019 competition.
- ORSP's ongoing efforts to build on MTSU's exceptional legacy of mentored undergraduate research and creative activity—a high-impact practice for student success and complement to the faculty research enterprise—include commissioning a series of video vignettes to highlight our **faculty-and-student scholar teams**.
- ORSP Program Manager **Jamie Burriss** now serves as advisor to the new **Student Organization for the Advancement of Research (SOAR)**. The student-centered organization will provide members with opportunities to improve their own research skills through conferences, workshops, and peer-to-peer activities. [MTSU](https://www.mtsu.edu)



# CONSTRUCTION UPDATE



Numerous improvements to our campus buildings are underway or were recently completed. Here is a brief update on recent and current construction projects.

## Academic Building for College of Behavioral and Health Sciences (photos below)

- Will become a new center for the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences and consolidate functional areas for Criminal Justice Administration, Psychology, and Social Work departments
- \$39.6 million project cost
- 91,000 square feet
- Completion date: Fall 2020
- Exterior:
  - Colonnade footings poured
  - Knee wall footings
  - Storm water utilities
- Interior:
  - South elevator installed
  - Installed flooring in classrooms and offices on level 1
  - Polished concrete along level 2 corridors
  - Continuing rough-in and drywall on level 3



## School of Concrete and Construction Management

- \$40.1 million project cost
- 54,000 square feet
- Estimated completion date: Fall 2022
- Schematic design underway and contractor selection taking place in February 2020
- Abernathy and Ezell Halls to be demolished for the building site
- Expansion to the Satellite Chiller plant part of the project
- Flexible instructional spaces and discipline-specific labs to be included
- Facility to incorporate exposed structural and other building systems for use as a teaching tool for students and visitors

## Parking Services Facility

- Building to serve as the new home for Parking Services, including parking permits, bus maintenance, and personnel offices
- Construction started in Fall 2019 and finishing in January 2021
- Located at the corner of Alumni Drive and City View Drive
- 13,000-square-foot building area

## Capital Maintenance Projects

- \$4,732,000 in capital maintenance projects to be funded and currently in design
- Projects include:
  - A multiple-building roof replacement project
  - Renovations to KOM mechanical/HVAC systems
  - Improvements to campus stormwater drainage systems
  - Renovations to Stark Agriculture and the University Police station, including HVAC and sprinkler system work
  - Boiler replacement at Miller Education Center [MTSU](#)

## BUDGET

The combination of \$3.8 million in state appropriations and additional funding from the 2.36% increase in tuition allowed the University to fund several initiatives this year. For the second year in a row, market adjustments based on the University's compensation plan were partially implemented effective Jan. 1. Other items funded were:

- 1% across-the-board increase (or \$500, whichever is greater) effective last July 1
- Faculty promotions
- Increased cost of software maintenance agreements
- Scholarships, tuition discounts, employee fee waivers and dependent discounts, and graduate assistant fee waivers
- Funding for new startup programs and continuing improvements on the *MTSU Quest for Student Success* initiatives

Looking toward the 2020–21 fiscal year, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) is recommending operating state appropriations of \$109.3 million for MTSU. This is a \$1.9 million increase, or 1.7%, over 2019–20 appropriations. This net increase is a combination of a decrease of \$1.6 million in the outcomes formula adjustments and a \$3.5 million increase in proposed new funding for higher education.

Funding for any 2020–21 salary increases is not included in these figures and will not be known until the release of

the governor's proposed budget in early February.

The MTSU request for a new Applied Engineering Building is No. 7 on THEC's new capital project list and proposed for funding in 2020–21. The commission also voted to recommend \$10.1 million in capital maintenance funds for MTSU projects, which includes several buildings roof replacements, Murphy Center window repair/replacement, elevator modernization Phase III, water and sewer updates Phase II, steam/condensate and manhole repair/replacement Phase III, and sidewalk repair/replacement Phase I.

THEC's recommendations have been submitted to the Department of Finance and Administration for consideration in the budget proposal that Gov. Bill Lee will be submitting to the state legislature. At that point, we will have more information regarding our likely 2020–21 state and capital appropriations. [MTSU](#)



## ADVANCEMENT

"True Blue—All You!" is the name for **True Blue Give 2020, set for Feb. 12, 13, and 14.**

The now-annual campaign will focus on securing high-impact support for students, programs, and faculty across the MTSU campus. True Blue donors in 2018 and 2019 gave nearly \$750,000 to show their love for MTSU on the giving days.

**Scholarship support, research stipends, and international education opportunities** are key priorities, along with support for athletic achievement, student wellness, and funding for other needs that will help ensure student success to graduation.

With matching gift support from friends, faculty, and

board members, this year's **\$375,000 goal** will be bolstered by at least **\$75,000 in matching support** for the first donors showing their love for MTSU by supporting the scholarship, program, or college of their choice.

If you've ever said, "I just love MTSU," February is the time to show it. True Blue gifts can be made at [mtsu.edu/truebluegive](#) or by mail to the MTSU Foundation, Box 109, 1301 E. Main St., Murfreesboro, TN 37132.

If you have a special project in mind that could be supported through True Blue Give 2020, feel free to contact Kristen Keene at 615-898-2728. [MTSU](#)

[MTSU.EDU/TRUEBLUEGIVE](#)

*true* **BLUE GIVE** 2020

*February 12, 13, and 14*

*true* **BLUE**  
*true* **IMPACT**



# STUDENT LIFE

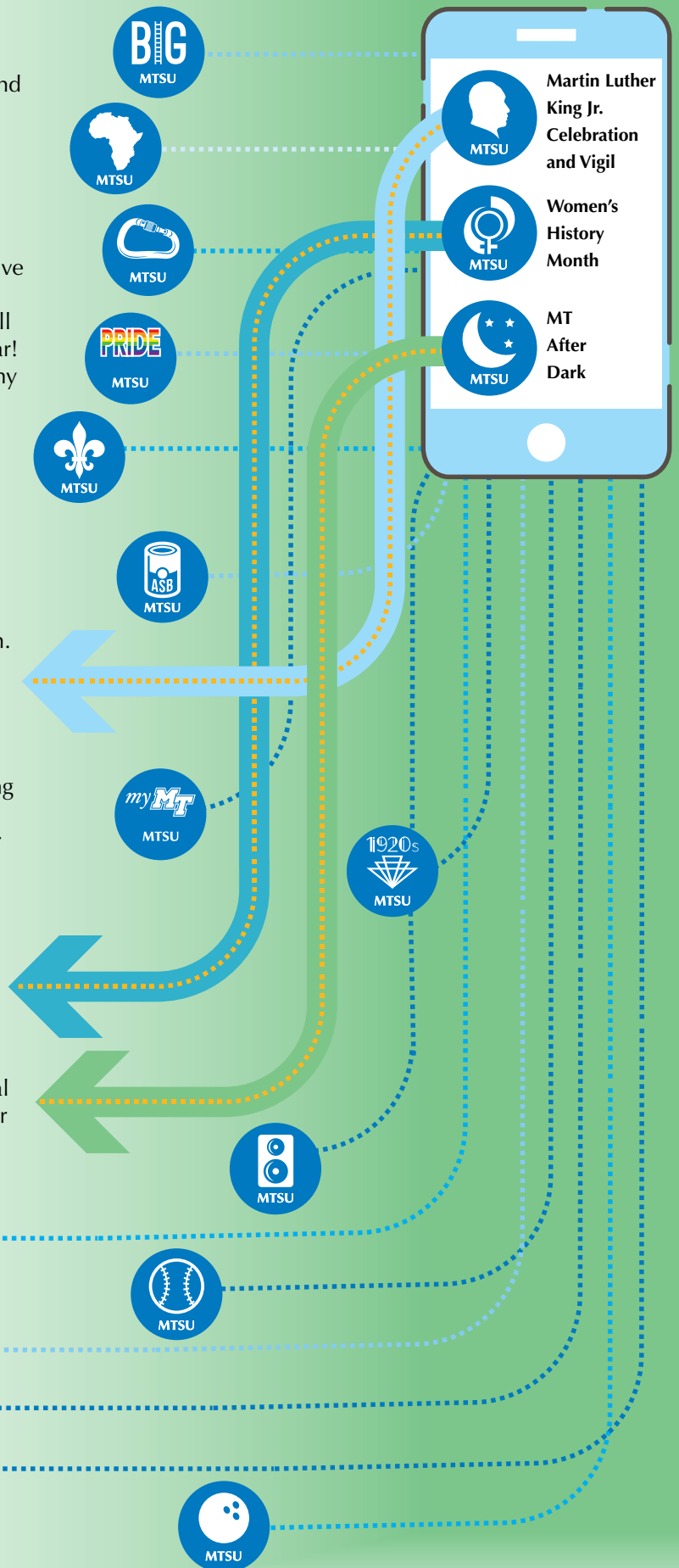
Students need to connect academically in the classroom and socially around campus to feel like they belong at MTSU. That's why all our students, especially freshmen, are being asked to attend a variety of events and activities during the first six weeks of the semester.

## Connection Point

- The Connection Point program continues to be an effective initiative to engage our first-semester freshman students with exciting out-of-classroom involvement activities. Fall 2019 marked the beginning of the program's seventh year! Large numbers of upper-class students also attended many of the events. Signature programs included our annual University Convocation and President's Picnic, Dinner and a Carnival, Fraternity and Sorority Life Meet and Greet, and Night of Comedy featuring an artist whose first standup special appeared on Comedy Central.
- More than 80% of our first-semester freshmen participated during Fall 2019, demonstrating the program's continued success.
- Connection Point Spring 2020 kicked off on Monday, Jan. 20, with a Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration and Vigil in the Student Union Ballroom, sponsored by Intercultural and Diversity Affairs.
- Upcoming events include bowling, arcade games, and Nerf Wars at Lanes, Trains, and Automobiles Depot, along with sports events, a '20s Party, a free comedy show for students, and much more! Visit [mtsu.edu/connection](https://mtsu.edu/connection) for a complete list of activities.

## Student Life

- **Women's History Month:** Activities in the month of March always include a well-known keynote speaker who inspires audience members to support worthwhile causes. An events calendar will be available by mid-February at [mtsu.edu/jac](https://mtsu.edu/jac).
- **MT After Dark:** Enjoy FREE first-run movies at this annual event, which takes place at the Premiere 6 Movie Theater in Murfreesboro on Thursday, March 26. Doors open at 11:00 p.m., and movies start at midnight. [MTSU](https://mtsu.edu)



# INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

## Advanced Email Threat Protection

ITD implemented advanced email threat protection from Proofpoint in Fall 2019 to filter out malicious email messages before they deliver to users. Unfortunately, universities are frequent targets for spammers and other malicious actors who try to take advantage of faculty, staff, and students. Whereas the previous email filtering system would block a lot of malicious email messages, it would not block all of them. Malicious messages that would still deliver included malware in the form of malicious attachments and URLs and non-malware threats such as impostor or spoofed emails (also known as business email compromise). Proofpoint now automatically rewrites all URL's embedded into emails from external senders and will block any malicious URLs if users happen to click on them. In addition, Proofpoint includes anti-spoofing technology and examines all attachments from external senders and blocks malicious attachments from such sources.

## Self Service Password Reset

Starting in Spring 2020, ITD will begin implementing the Self-Service Password Reset (SSPR) feature within Microsoft Office 365 to improve users' ability to manage their MTSU password. This means that in addition to using a recovery email address to verify your identity prior to resetting your password, you will have the option to verify your identity using security questions, a phone number to receive a call or text message, or a code generated by the Microsoft Authenticator app if you configured it for use with multi-factor authentication. This also means the Forgot My Password option on MTSU's single sign-on screen will begin working for all students, faculty, and staff.

## Alertus Desktop

As an enhancement to our Alert4U (aka Rave) critical notification system, ITD began introducing Alertus Desktop Notifications to desktop computers on campus in 2019. In emergency situations, in addition to other current modes of communication through Alert4U such as text messages, phone calls, and emails, these notifications will be sent to computers on campus and will take over their screens. Users should pay attention to any message that pops up, follow any instructions, and then click Acknowledge to remove the alert.

## Digital Assets Management

Needs for an enterprise digital assets management system have been identified and prioritized by a team of representatives from various MTSU divisions led by ITD. A request for information (RFI) is currently being written, with product exploration, procurement, and implementation to follow.

## Security Cameras / Emergency Call Boxes

ITD, working with University Police, Facility Services, and Campus Planning, facilitated the addition of over 40 new security cameras, upgrades to 86 existing cameras, the introduction of license plate recognition capabilities, and the installation of one new emergency phone during the Fall 2019 semester. Plans for the Spring 2020 semester include the addition of 64 cameras and five new emergency phones. University Police reports that the MTSU's video security infrastructure was utilized to help resolve more than 30 incidents during the fall. There are now over 850 cameras distributed around the campus, helping to maintain a safe environment for our students, faculty, and staff.





## Career Services

A request for information for an enterprise career services management system is being issued this month. A team of campus representatives led by ITD worked to create a list of needs and priorities for the system, and ITD wrote the RFI. Implementation will start this semester once a product is selected.

## Graduate Applicant Review System

A graduate applicant review system has been implemented for the College of Graduate Studies and the University's academic departments with graduate programs (see page 12). Its purpose is to expedite graduate admissions. Two newly implemented components of the already-existing Radius system allows graduate applicants to submit their required materials electronically after they apply to the University through its Self-Service Center, while the Radius AppReview component allows graduate program committees to review the application data and uploaded documents virtually. Admission decisions are made by the committee reviewers electronically, which then flow into Banner so that the new graduate student can register for their classes as soon as possible. In addition to data interfaces between Radius and Banner, ITD also developed interfaces to copy image files of applicants' uploaded documents into the University's imaging system, BDM.

## New Promotion and Tenure System

A new promotion and tenure system, Digital Measures (DM), was implemented in Fall 2019, replacing the old "notebook" paper process. Led by Joey Gray (Health and Human Performance) and Cheryl Torsney (Office of the Provost), the rollout to faculty was highly successful. ITD developed interfaces to feed appropriate data into Digital Measures, keeping data in sync with data provided to SACSCOC for accreditation.

## Computer Replacements

Work was completed on administrative computers identified for replacement this year. The next phase is academic computer replacement, with 160 computers identified that meet the academic guidelines for replacement. Verification information has been sent to academic department chairs.

## T-Mobile Hot Spots for Scholars Academy and Veterans

Working with T-Mobile, ITD is funding hot spots for use by this year's new Scholars Academy students and veterans. The hot spots provide these students high-speed internet access with unlimited data—and no speed caps or throttling. They also will be able to convert to 5G when it becomes available. ITD hopes to expand this program if it is successful. Additionally, ITD will implement a **hot spot checkout program for all faculty, staff, and students beginning this semester**. High-speed hot spots will be available to check out for up to one week at a time. Details are being worked out.

## Instructional Technology and Classroom Support

ITD plans to implement a sandbox approach for faculty to test and practice with equipment that is under review for possible classroom installation. This will be accomplished by rotating demo versions of instructional equipment in the Lucinda T. Lea Learning, Teaching, and Instructional Technologies Center (LT&ITC) for faculty to use, providing faculty a great hands-on opportunity.

## IPTV vs. Cable TV

ITD is currently reviewing IPTV options to replace the current cable TV service. IPTV offers live-streaming from laptops, desktop computers, smart phones, and tablets; over 120 live-streaming channels available; thousands of On Demand movies and shows; 20 hours of cloud DVR storage per user, with the ability to record two shows at once; 24/7 managed support portal; and much more. A new system will be in place by August. [MTSU](#)

## CHARITABLE GIVING CAMPAIGN

MTSU employees again showed their True Blue spirit with a record **\$133,266.57 pledged** during this year's Employee Charitable Giving Campaign.

The pledge total represented 102.5% of the \$130,000 goal, with 908 participants taking part in the annual tradition.

This campus-wide effort shows what it really means to be "True Blue." The fact that we set another record for giving shows the caring nature of our faculty and staff and reflects a collective acknowledgement that it's important to give back to this great community.

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.

During the Oct. 1–Nov. 1 campaign, participants designated 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.

MTSU Provost Mark Byrnes again presented the Provost Cup to Dean David Urban, whose Jennings A. Jones College of Business won the friendly competition between academic units for the seventh straight year. The cup is awarded to the college with the highest percentage of employee participation.

Urban, who currently chairs the board of directors for one of the campaign's beneficiaries, the United Way of Rutherford and Cannon Counties, said that the funds MTSU employees contribute to charitable organizations help improve the health, education, and financial stability of those served by numerous nonprofit community service agencies in the area.

This year's record campaign total surpassed last year's pledged amount of \$132,503.04. [MTSU](https://www.mtsu.edu)

# #trueGIVER

I AM *true* **BLUE**





PROUDLY PRESENTS

# MTSU *Arts*

ART • DANCE • MUSIC • THEATRE

The College of Liberal Arts invites you to join us this semester at the following MTSU Arts featured concerts, exhibits, and productions.

Department of Art and Design and the Todd Art Gallery present:

## **"Print Media Show: Sarah Smelser"**

Feb. 22–March 7

Todd Art Gallery (Room 224A), Todd Hall Building

School of Music presents:

## **Jazz Artist Series: Gary Smulyan; Baritone Saxophonist**

(part of the MTSU Illinois Jacquet Jazz Festival)

March 21, 7:30 p.m.

Hinton Music Hall, Wright Music Building

Department of Theatre and Dance presents:

## ***Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day***

April 2–4, 7:30 p.m., and April 5, 2 p.m.

Tucker Theatre, Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building

MTSU Dance Program presents:

## **Spring Dance Concert**

April 16–18, 7:30 p.m.

Tucker Theatre, Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building

For a full calendar of events or to learn how to become a member of the MTSU Arts Patron Society, please visit [mtsuararts.com](http://mtsuararts.com).

**ENRICH**  
YOUR LIFE  
*showcase your skills*

Ascend Federal Credit Union is the official credit union of MTSU Arts.

# MT ATHLETICS



## Blue Zoo

MTSU students filled sections of Floyd Stadium this football season and sections of Murphy Center this basketball season as the Blue Zoo, a revived booster group, brought more pep into Blue Raider athletics. Thanks to a strategy of targeting incoming freshmen and transfers in its first wave of memberships, the group is poised to become the largest registered student organization on campus. After the relaunch in May, organizers targeted freshmen at CUSTOMS orientation sessions, registering more than 1,000 from the new entering class.



## Lofty Position

MTSU's **Diane Turnham** (above), senior associate athletics director and senior women's administrator, has been elected as **NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Committee chair**. She will serve as the voice of the committee that promotes the growth of women's basketball and chooses the teams for the NCAA championship tournament this spring. Turnham is finishing the final year of her five-year appointment to the committee. In her 37th year at MTSU, Turnham was previously on the NCAA Division I Women's Soccer Committee during 2004–08 and joined the NCAA Division I Women's Volleyball Committee in 2009–12.

## Classroom Stats

MTSU's NCAA Graduation Success Rate (GSR) set a new school record at **92%**, the sixth straight year that MT Athletics has either equaled or set a new school record. The GSR is a four-year measure of freshmen and athletic transfers who entered MTSU between Fall 2009 and Spring 2012.

MT Athletics has now scored above 80% for the **seventh straight year**, with scores of 92, 89, 88, 87, 87, 87, and 82.

The Blue Raiders also ranked second out of the 14 teams in Conference USA and joined Rice (94) as **the only schools to top 90% percent**.

**Eight of our MTSU teams scored a perfect 100% GSR:** men's and women's basketball, men's and women's golf, men's and women's tennis, soccer, and volleyball. Baseball and football were next with scores of 97% and 95%, respectively.

Our Blue Raider football team's score of 95% was the **highest of any public institution in the nation** and tied for third with Vanderbilt behind only Northwestern and Duke.

MTSU also easily led the way among Conference USA football teams, with Rice second at 87%. Among all Football Bowl Subdivision (formerly Division I-A) schools in the state of Tennessee, the Blue Raiders matched Vanderbilt for the best mark, while Memphis recorded an 82 and Tennessee had a 74.

## Here are the Fall 2019 classroom “statistics” for MT Athletics:

- 205 of 353 (58%) of all student-athletes had a 3.0 GPA or higher.
- 121 (34%) of all student-athletes made the Dean’s List with a 3.5 GPA or higher.
- 35 (10%) of all student-athletes earned a perfect 4.0 GPA.
- 12 of 15 teams averaged a semester GPA of 3.0 or higher.
- Highest men’s team GPA: tennis, 3.813
- Highest women’s team GPA: tennis, 3.519
- Semester GPA for all student-athletes: 3.01
- Cumulative GPA for all student-athletes: 3.10

More highlights of MT Athletics both on and off the fields of play:



### DePriest Sets Goals Record, Heads Up Soccer Awards

With two goals in a home win over UAB, **Peyton DePriest** broke the Middle Tennessee goals scored record with the 39th and 40th of her career. With the win, the Blue Raiders secured a trip to the **Conference USA Championships**, where she extended her school record to 42 goals. Just a junior, DePriest will likely own the record for a while with another year to add to her total.

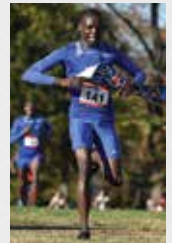
DePriest, who scored 18 goals in 16 games, also was named the **C-USA Soccer Player of the Year** and was selected **Offensive Player of the Year** for the second straight time. The Franklin native became just the second Blue Raider named Player of the Year in program history.

Sophomore midfielder **Hannah Tillett**, who was second on the team in goals with seven, joined DePriest on the **All-Conference first team**. Additionally, **MacKenzie Bonham** was selected to the **C-USA All-Freshman team** with her five goals, three coming on a hat trick against UTEP.

### Blue Raiders Sweep C-USA Cross Country

For the first time in program history, the Blue Raider men’s and women’s cross country teams both won the **Conference USA Championships** in November and earned a trip into the NCAA South Regional. Individual champions **Jacob Choge** and **Eusila Chepkemei**, both seniors, also swept **C-USA Cross Country Male and Female Athletes of the Year** honors.

Choge (top right), named Outstanding Senior of the Meet, won the C-USA men’s race for the third time, in 23:52.11. Teammate **Kigen Chemadi** took second in 23:56.35, while **Thobile Mosito** finished seventh in 24:18.34. Choge, Chemadi, and Mosito were all named All-Conference first team. **Brian Rono** (10th) and **Hillary Kimaiyo** (11th) made the conference second team, and freshman **Titus Lagat** placed 22nd. After winning his third individual title in the C-USA meet, Choge led his team to a second-place finish at the NCAA South Region Championships.



Chepkemei (at right) finished first as the **C-USA women’s individual champion** (16:55.88) and earned All-Conference first team honors with teammate **Joice Jebor**, who placed third. Sophomore **Pamela Kosgei** (8th) and freshman **Mercy Chepkurui** (11th) were named to the second team. **Faith Rono** and **Rachel Kigen** finished 19th and 20th to make the C-USA third team.





## Softball Signs Top Class in C-USA

The Blue Raider softball team is continuing to build on its recent success, announcing six signees in November that make up the best 2020 recruiting class in Conference USA. MTSU's recruiting class also is ranked 58th nationally and ninth among non-Power 5 teams.

Coach **Jeff Breeden**, recruiting coordinator **Tony Foti**, and assistant coach **Chelsea Hawkins**, continued to mine their two main recruiting bases—Tennessee and California—while also signing a pair from Georgia.

Building chemistry within this incoming group will be easy to come by. Murfreesboro natives Ashlee Jacoway and Shelby Sargent are teammates at Oakland High School, and Amaya Harris previously teamed up with Danielle Taitt on the Tennessee Mojo travel team.

## Men's Basketball Notches Wins No. 500 at Murphy Center

Since opening in 1972, the Blue Raiders have had plenty of big moments and victories in historic Murphy Center. On Nov. 13, the men's basketball team reached another milestone, securing its **500th victory all-time** at the famed arena with a 96-82 win over visiting Mars Hill.



## Volleyball Players Receive C-USA Honors

Senior outside hitter **Dora Peonia** (below left) earned a spot on the **C-USA All-Conference first team**, while **Kayla Henley** (below right) became the first volleyball Blue Raider receiving **Conference USA All-Freshman honors**.

Peonia recorded a team-high 360 kills on the year, with 13 double-doubles on the season and a career-high 23 kills against Marshall. In her first season, Henley ranked third on the team in kills (205), third in blocks (53), and fifth in digs (161), including five blocks against No. 19 Western Kentucky.



## Lee All-Time Leader in Receptions

With three receptions at Charlotte, senior **Ty Lee** (below) became the Blue Raiders' all-time leader in receptions. Lee ended his career with 260 catches and surpassed current San Francisco 49ers receiver-returner Richie James, who managed 244 receptions during his MTSU career. Lee's total ranks 11th all-time in C-USA football history.

During his final game against Western Kentucky, Lee also ran his school-record streak of at least one reception in consecutive games to 52. That ranked as tops in the country among active players. The all-time NCAA record is 54 (Bryan Anderson, Central Michigan).





### O'Hara Tops 1,000-Yard Rushing Mark

With 144 rushing yards against WKU in the season finale, quarterback **Asher O'Hara** (above) reached the 1,000-yard mark for the season. He became just the second quarterback in school history to have 1,000 yards in a single season and the first Blue Raider to pass the mark since running back I'Tavius Mathers' 1,561 yards in 2016. O'Hara ended the year with 1,058 yards—just 96 yards shy of Dwight Dasher's all-time QB record of 1,154.

### Hayes National Freshmen of the Week Twice

**Aislynn Hayes** was named the United States Basketball Writers Association (USBWA) Tamika Catchings **National Freshman of the Week** for the second time after MTSU's big win over TCU recently.

The Murfreesboro Riverdale product is the first Lady Raider ever to earn the honor twice and joins Villanova's Maddy Siegrist as the only freshmen to earn the award two times this season.



Hayes continued her outstanding breakout season with a game-high 22 points in Middle Tennessee's 82-70 win against TCU, which entered the game with a 9-1 mark and receiving votes in the Associated Press and ESPN Coaches Top 25 polls.

### Blue Raider Football Players Honored

MTSU had five players honored when the Conference USA named its postseason awards, voted on by the league's head football coaches.

Junior safety **Reed Blankenship** (No. 12 below) earned **All-Conference** recognition on the second team recognition despite missing the final five games of the season with an injury. Blankenship, who ranked tied for first nationally in blocked kicks with two, was fourth on the team in tackles with 58 to go with two interceptions, a forced fumble, and a fumble recovery.

Offensive linemen **Robert Jones** and **Will Gilchrist**, along with senior safety **Jovante Moffatt**, earned honorable mention accolades. Gilchrist and Jones anchored a line that produced the top rushing attack in the league in conference action. Moffatt led the Blue Raiders in tackles with 98 to go with a career-best three interceptions, ending his career with 313 total tackles to rank fifth all-time.

Offensive lineman **Marcus Greer**, out of St. Louis, earned a spot on the **C-USA All-Freshman team** after starting 10 games and allowing just two sacks in 510 snaps.



### Raiders Get 300th Win at Floyd Stadium

The MTSU football team defeated Old Dominion 38-17 in the final home game of the season Nov. 23, marking the **300th all-time victory at Floyd Stadium**. The Blue Raiders started playing at the stadium in 1933 and have enjoyed 21 undefeated home campaigns. [MTSU](https://www.mtsu.edu)

# CONCLUSION

With our faculty, students, and staff working together to find creative solutions, we embrace the challenges facing higher education and chart new ways of propelling ourselves to reach MTSU's potential. We are truly blessed to give back through our work and mission in so many meaningful ways! I thank each member of our faculty, staff, and administration for being a part of this important work, for choosing to make a difference in the lives of others, and for choosing MTSU as your University. I thank you for your passion and True Blue commitment as we begin a new calendar year and forge MTSU's bright path ahead! **MTSU**



**MIDDLE  
TENNESSEE**  
STATE UNIVERSITY

I AM *true* **BLUE**  
MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY