

NEWS & information

FROM THE PRESIDENT Sidney A. McPhee



Welcome to the Spring 2022 Semester!

The beginning of each semester is a good time to reflect on recent accomplishments at MTSU and to look ahead to the many opportunities in our future. I hope you continue to find this newsletter informative and useful.

I also welcome your feedback! Please send comments to Sidney.McPhee@mtsu.edu. I invite you to check out "The President's Post" at mtsu.edu/president for updates and information from my office, or look for them on the MTSU home page. You can also follow me on Twitter: [@PresidentMcPhee](https://twitter.com/PresidentMcPhee).

Thank you for all you do to support the goals and objectives of this great University.

**MIDDLE
TENNESSEE**
STATE UNIVERSITY.

True Blue!

SIDNEY A. MCPHEE

MAJOR RESEARCH ANNOUNCEMENT

As a publicly supported institution of higher learning, we take very seriously our role to serve the state of Tennessee, which includes educating undergraduate and graduate students to enter the workforce well educated and skilled. This role also involves conducting research and creative activities that produce knowledge,

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REMAINING VIGILANT

Tuesday marked the beginning of yet another semester impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. These continue to be trying times for us all, and I deeply appreciate everything you've done, and continue to do, to help us stay on course in teaching, learning, and service.

As I said in my recent note to campus, the virus is not going away any time soon. Early observation of data on the omicron variant shows an increased spread, but it generally produces less-severe illness, especially in immunized individuals. According to the CDC and other medical officials, the omicron variant is expected to peak at the end of the month and slowly fall through February.

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MTSU'S ECONOMIC IMPACT IS BOOMING

MTSU is a powerful economic engine for the region and the entire state of Tennessee, a role underscored by a new study from the Business and Economic Research Center (BERC) in the Jones College of Business.

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REMAINING VIGILANT

State law prevents public institutions such as MTSU from mandating the wearing of face masks (except under severe and specific conditions, which include a declaration by the governor of a COVID-specific state of emergency). **However, we strongly recommend their use while inside campus buildings or when social distancing is impractical.** Masking, coupled with booster vaccination, can reduce infections.

In these first few days of classes, I'm heartened to see so many students returning to campus wearing masks as they move through classrooms and other buildings. I also ask that our faculty and staff lead by example. If we want to encourage students to be masked on campus, we each need to do our part as well. I hope to see all of you wearing masks in the classrooms, at face-to-face meetings, and in public.

My thanks to Vice President Alan Thomas and his team in our Division of Business and Finance, who were able to provide a supply of N95 or KN95 masks for all academic departments on the Thursday before spring classes began.

Alan reports that the supply chains for these masks have eased, which allows us to maintain a good inventory for future needs. Any campus department can place an order for these masks from our campus warehouse at no charge. Departments may also place orders for additional disposable masks like those we have provided in the past.

If you have not been vaccinated, we strongly recommend getting the vaccine, and the booster shot as appropriate. It is your best defense against this virus, as public health data overwhelmingly shows it is your most effective protection against hospitalization or serious illness. Students, faculty, and staff can schedule either a vaccine or booster shot, free of charge, from MTSU Student Health Services.

Please go to our website, mtsu.edu/coronavirus, for the most updated information. We recently made changes to our isolation and quarantine protocols as recommended by state and federal public health officials. And we've updated the information in our frequently asked questions.

The dynamics of this global health crisis are constantly shifting. However, please know we have not, and will not, cease in our ongoing efforts to monitor, modify, and adapt as conditions change.

Your patience and perseverance are the reasons why we continue to fulfill mission to our students. I am grateful for your hard work under difficult conditions. Take care of yourself, and I look forward to a great semester ahead.



QUICK HITS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Public health experts expect coronavirus to continue to circulate through the winter and spring of 2022, and omicron is proving to be capable of both new and repeat infections.

Vaccination, including the booster dose, continues to be the best strategy to reduce risk of infection and to prevent severe disease.

Masking and social distancing also offer significant protection and are particularly important for individuals with medical conditions that weaken their immunity.

MTSU continues to provide COVID-19 vaccination for the University community, and free antigen and PCR testing is available for symptomatic MTSU students.

Visit mtsu.edu/healthservices for more information or to make an appointment.

We know COVID measures evoke strong personal feelings and have become increasingly divisive, but as a community, we need to continue to work together for the good of all. As the pandemic has evolved, an emphasis on personal responsibility rather than institutional control has become favored. MTSU asks that you protect others by testing for COVID-19 when you are ill, and if positive, that you isolate as directed and notify your close contacts of potential exposure. If you are a close contact, please follow MTSU quarantine guidelines.

Despite considerable pandemic fatigue, we will continue to be faced with a fluid COVID-19 situation; however, MTSU remains committed to keeping our community informed of current best practices to reduce risk.

Major Research Announcement *cont.*

information, data, technologies, know-how, and other outcomes that are disseminated from MTSU to the whole state to help improve the economy, services, and quality of life for all Tennesseans.

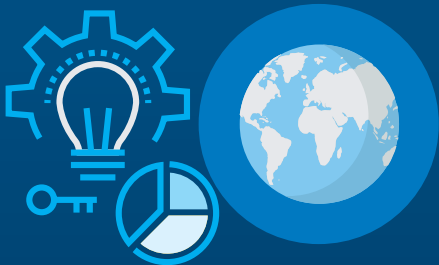
The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education releases classifications for more than 4,500 schools every three years. Based on a measure of research activity, doctoral universities like MTSU are assigned a category: R1 Doctoral University: Very High Research Activity, R2 Doctoral University: High Research Activity, and R3 Doctoral/Professional University (D/PU).

Today I am announcing that at the end of this month, **MTSU will officially be elevated to R2 status**—doctoral university with high research activity—in the newly revised Carnegie Classification, joining a select group of just a few hundred institutions to carry the R1 or R2 designation nationwide.

This is an exciting development years in the making and made possible through the research efforts of our faculty, chairs, and deans; staff in the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs; Vice Provost for Research David Butler; and partnerships with various vice presidents.

It raises the profile of the University, for sure. But importantly, it also enhances the value of the University to students who get to work with faculty researchers at MTSU on important research and discoveries.

I am very proud of the efforts that have enabled this increased ranking and recognition and appreciate everyone who has contributed to this great achievement.



CAMPUS PLANNING

Year after year, I tell people that MTSU is an exciting place to work due to all of the campus construction projects and capital improvements that are ongoing or were recently completed. Here is a brief update on those recent and current projects.

APPLIED ENGINEERING BUILDING 1

The 92,000-square-foot Applied Engineering Building will serve as the home for the Mechatronics Engineering and Engineering Technology programs, as well as provide space for future engineering programs.

The total project cost is \$54,900,000, including the cost for the building, demolition of Voorhies, infrastructure, site improvements, and surrounding pedestrian and vehicular circulation.

The Applied Engineering Building will be a companion to the School of Concrete and Construction Management Building that is currently under construction on the southeast corner of campus.

This location groups the new Concrete and Construction Management Building with the upcoming Applied Engineering Building and the existing Science Building to further develop the MTSU Science Corridor of Innovation, an academic neighborhood focused on STEM disciplines.

HFR Inc. (Nashville) and Cooper Carry (Atlanta) are the designers for the Applied Engineering project. Design continues through December. We will begin construction in January 2023, with construction completion planned for July 2024.



SCHOOL OF CONCRETE AND CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT 2

Phase 1 of the expansion to the Satellite Chiller Plant continues with cooling tower chiller set and chiller piped up.

Phase 2 of the 54,000-square-foot Concrete and Construction Management Building construction continues with window installation, wall framing, drywall, and mechanical, plumbing, and electrical.

Completion is expected by fall 2022. Hoar Construction is the construction manager/general contractor for the project. Flexible instructional spaces and discipline-specific labs will be included, and the building will incorporate exposed structural and other building systems to be used as a teaching tool for students and visitors.

The total construction cost is \$40.1 million.

ADMISSIONS AND 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 across the region. 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.

The recruitment life cycle in Undergraduate Admissions means that our great Admissions staff works to a slightly different rhythm than the rest of the University. While most of the campus has just finished fall 2021, they are now wrapping up their busiest period of recruiting for fall 2022—which is when the class of 2026 will start with us as freshmen.

This fall we polished our pandemic recruitment strategies and were grateful to be able to get access into some high schools to meet with students and counselors face-to-face. Flexibility was our watchword in this recruitment cycle as the rules for high school and community college visits changed from week to week. We continued to use an increased online presence on social media platforms and reached out to students and high school counselors through email and text messaging. Throughout the fall term, we maintained a robust calendar of both online and socially distanced student recruiting events.



Eager for an in-person experience, more than 8,500 students and family members joined us to tour the campus with one of the Blue Elite guides, a more than 550% increase over the previous pandemic year. Almost 1,300 met us in their own communities when we traveled for the 14 True Blue Tour events that had been suspended for fall 2020. **The results of this work are borne out in the numbers of applications and admitted for potential new freshmen. Both applications received and students admitted show growth over where we were a year ago and two years ago. For fall 2022, freshman applications are up by 1,469 students (17.6%) compared with this time last year. Admitted freshmen are up 34% over last year at this time and up 12% over two years ago at this time.**

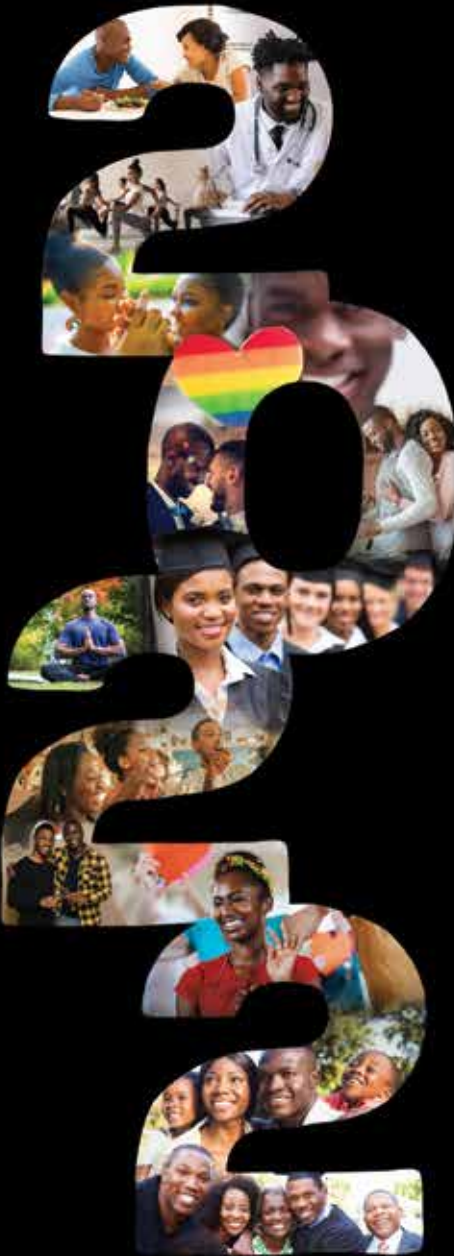
The numbers of transfer students paint a far different picture. Hit especially hard by the pandemic over the past two years, our partner community colleges didn't fare as well as we did and saw significant enrollment declines. Their decreasing enrollments will mean far fewer transfer students for us in the coming year or two. Currently we're looking at transfer applications for fall 2022 being down 17.9% compared with this time last year. New transfer admits are down 7.2% compared with last year at this time and down 2.6% over two years ago at this juncture.



Now we must, as a campus, turn our attention to yielding these admitted students. The work on this front has only begun. We need to convince these students who have applied and been admitted that **MTSU is the best place for them to be for the next four years** as they lay the foundations of their futures. In this new spring semester, academic colleges and departments will offer opportunities for both in-person and virtual visits with faculty and advisors, and Admissions will host the True Blue Preview, an expanded tour and academic exploration opportunity, on Feb. 12 and again on March 26. We look forward to working with faculty and staff across campus to bring these potential new students across the finish line for fall 2022 enrollment!

BLACK LOVE:

HEALTH,
WELLNESS,
RELATIONSHIPS



Keynote:
"Dr. Jackie" Walters

Cast member of Bravo's
"Married to Medicine"
Monday, Feb. 28, 7-9 p.m.
Student Union Building,
2nd Floor Ballroom

Dr. Jacqueline Walters is a philanthropist, health expert, women's advocate, award-winning OB-GYN and cast member on the hit TV show *Married to Medicine*.

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I AM **true**
BLUE

0122-0237 / Middle Tennessee State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, status as a protected veteran, or any other category protected by law. See our full policy at mtsu.edu/nc.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

FEATURED EVENTS

Use QR code below to access full calendar and details

Black History Month (BHM) Kickoff

Tuesday, February 1, 11 a.m.–1 p.m.
Student Union Building, Room 330, Intercultural and Diversity Affairs Center
The MTSU Black History Month Committee will be cutting a cake today to begin the month of celebration. Come out to mingle, grab a slice of cake, and learn about the events planned for the month!

Reading the Black Experience

Wednesday, February 2, 6–8 p.m., COE 164
Thursday, February 10, 6–8 p.m., STU 330
Wednesday, February 16, 6–8 p.m., COE 164
Friday, February 25, 6–8 p.m., COE 164

The BHM Committee invites you to join our monthlong community reading project. The committee has selected four books and will send specific excerpts out via email each week. Read the excerpts, then join the discussions at the designated locations and times above.

BHM Movie Night Series "RESPECT"

Thursday, February 3, 6–11:30 p.m.
Friday, February 4, 6–11:30 p.m.
Saturday, February 5, 6–11:30 p.m.
Student Union Building, 2nd Floor, Movie Theater
Sponsors: SPARE and MTSU Films Council

MTSU Black History Month Health Expo

Monday, February 7, 5–6 p.m.
Student Union Building, 1st Floor, Atrium
Join us for an exciting expo promoting Black health and wellness. Community businesses will provide promotional information, offer samples, and engage participants. This event prohibits the selling of items.

Panel Discussion: Black Health and Wellness "Racial Health Disparities in the Age of COVID-19"

Monday, February 7, 6–8 p.m.
Student Union Building, 2nd Floor, Parliamentary Room
Join us for a keynote panel with expert medical professionals who will answer questions on important health topics, including disparities that exist within the Black community.

Beauty Shop and Barbershop Talks

Wednesday, February 9, 6:30–9:30 p.m., Tom Jackson Building
Barbershop Talk will consist of things that typically happen in barbershops, such as haircuts, music, some food, and conversations. Beauty Shop Talk will consist of hair, nails, makeup, and skin talk, as well as food and music. Sponsored by Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.

26th Annual Unity Luncheon featuring Dr. Sekou Franklin

Thursday, February 10, 11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.
Student Union Building, 2nd Floor, Ballroom
Join us for our 26th Annual Unity Luncheon. Established in 1996, the Unity Luncheon pays homage to "unsung heroes" in the community. Dr. Sekou Franklin is a professor in the Department of Political Science and International Relations and an expert on Black politics and voting rights. For more information, contact Daniel Green, director of the Intercultural and Diversity Affairs Center, at 615-898-2831 or daniel.green@mtsu.edu.

MTSU Symphonic Band and MTSU Wind Ensemble

Thursday, February 10, 7:30 p.m.
T. Earl Hinton Music Hall, Wright Music Building
The MTSU Symphonic Band and MTSU Wind Ensemble present their first concert of the semester. This event is co-sponsored by the MTSU Intercultural and Diversity Affairs Center and will feature works by living African American composers who are leading voices throughout various genres of music.

Color the Runway Fashion Show

Friday, February 11, 7–9 p.m.
Student Union Building, 2nd Floor, Ballroom
This show began in 2017 as a campuswide event to showcase Black culture, fashion, and music and has become bigger and better! Students from all over campus participate as models. For more information, contact Deven Salazar at deven.salazar@mtsu.edu.

BHM Movie Night Series "Judas and the Black Messiah"

Thursday, February 17, 6–11:30 p.m.
Friday, February 18, 6–11:30 p.m.
Saturday, February 19, 6–11:30 p.m.
Student Union Building, 2nd Floor, Movie Theater
Sponsors: SPARE and MTSU Films Council

BHM Sneaker Ball

Thursday, February 17, 7–10 p.m., James Union Building
Join us for a night of elegance, fun, and laughter all while comfortable in your favorite kicks! The Sneaker Ball promises to be an evening to remember, so put on your sneakers, suits and/or dresses and come out and have a Ball

"Why Do Men ___? Why Do Women ___?"

Monday, February 21, 7–9 p.m., James Union Building
Ever wondered "Why Do Men ___? Why Do Women ___?" (you fill in the blank)? Well here's your chance to discuss the complicated issues that occur throughout dating and relationships. Join us as we talk about love, healthy relationships, and more!

John Pleas Faculty Award Ceremony

Wednesday, February 23, 5–6:30 p.m., James Union Building
The award is presented annually to a Black faculty member who has demonstrated excellence in teaching, research, and service. The award was established in 1997 to honor Dr. John Pleas, MTSU professor emeritus of Psychology.

"Showtime at the Apollo"

Thursday, February 24, 5–6:30 p.m., Tucker Theatre
Join us for a night of talented acts and entertainment as we re-create the hit TV show *Showtime at the Apollo*.

Patterson Park Community Center Presents

Created Equal: TN Legacy Film Series
Saturday, February 12, noon–3 p.m.
Saturday, February 26, noon–3 p.m.
Patterson Park Community Center, Washington Family Theater, 521 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
February 12: *The Green Book* film and moderated discussion
February 26: *Freedom Riders* documentary and moderated discussion

Use this QR Code to access the FULL CALENDAR OF EVENTS



MTSU Arts continues to put on wonderful dance concerts, musical performances, theater productions, and visual arts exhibits.

Here are some of the outstanding events on the near horizon:

- Feb. 16, 7:30 p.m., Hinton Music Hall
Korean Music and Beyond
- Feb. 17, 1:30 p.m., Academic Classroom Building 102
Lecture: Jason Riley, author of *Maverick: A Biography of Thomas Sowell*
- March 28, 8 p.m., Hinton Music Hall
Stones River Chamber Players, "Journey"
- April 7–10, Tucker Theatre
Fun Home musical
- April 21–23
Tucker Theatre Spring Dance Concert

MTSU Arts

ART • DANCE • MUSIC • THEATRE



For the latest information on the 2021–22 MTSU Arts season or to become a member of the MTSU Arts Patron Society, visit mtsu.edu/mtsuartrts.

And thank you to Ascend Federal Credit Union for supporting 10 seasons of MTSU Arts!



ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS

There are so many wonderful and impactful developments occurring in our academic community that I could not possibly cover them all in the pages of this newsletter. The following, then, offers but a small snapshot of the kinds of transformative efforts occurring in our colleges and academic units across campus.

CAMPUSWIDE

- MTSU returned to The Princeton Review's annual list of the **nation's best colleges** for a third consecutive year. MTSU remains the only locally governed institution in Tennessee recognized by the organization, having first achieved its spot in 2019. Only five higher education entities in the state—two public and three private—were included in the recently released 30th edition of *The Best 387 Colleges*. The honor by the highly regarded educational services company is extended only to about 13% of the nation's roughly 3,000 four-year institutions.
- Low-income MTSU students needing **help with child care costs** can apply for about 40 grants of around \$1,000 each semester beginning fall 2022. The program, put into place with the closing in December 2021 of the Child Care Lab at Womack Lane Apartments, will allow MTSU to greatly expand the number of students receiving assistance. The Child Care Lab, which opened in August 1981, daily served about 24 children ages 3 to 5 each semester prior to COVID-19. However, in recent months, it was restricted to serving only 13 children a day due to COVID-19 safety measures. The new grant program will give us the opportunity to provide a greater number of students access to funding for child care since it will be a need-based award available to our lower-income students to use in supporting child care for children of any age.



- **A trio of Commencement ceremonies** took place inside Murphy Center on Dec. 11, concluding a fall semester that marked the start of the University's 111th academic year. The 1,373 undergraduates and 299 graduate students of the fall Class of 2021 included 271 master's degree recipients, 13 education specialist degree recipients, and 15 doctoral recipients, along with 10 graduate students who earned certificates for their advanced study. Two undergraduate students also received certificates. Since its 1911 inception, MTSU now has awarded over 173,400 degrees, including associate, bachelor's, master's, educational specialist, and doctoral degrees.

COLLEGE OF BASIC AND APPLIED SCIENCES



- MTSU's School of Agriculture seeks to develop the first Digital Agriculture Center in Tennessee after landing a three-year, nearly \$750,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The center will feature a series of projects involving students and non-formal educators—those outside the regular school system—as well as community outreach events that will ultimately forge a strong Digital Agriculture/Data Science education program focused on youth across Tennessee. The USDA recently announced the Food and Agricultural Non-formal Education awards. Non-formal education occurs under the guidance of after-school educators, scout leaders, 4-H youth development agents, FFA advisors, parent groups, and others.

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- **Rhonda Hoffman**, director of MTSU's Horse Science program, won a national award as the Equine Science Society's Outstanding Educator. Hoffman has served on the faculty at MTSU since 2003 and won MTSU's Outstanding Teacher Award in 2013. She recently teamed with Warren Evans, Jessica Petersen, and Dale Van Vleck to co-author a revised edition of *The Horse*, a textbook relating scientific principles to practical applications for experienced horse owners, students, extension agents, and horse enthusiasts.
- **Keying Ding** of the Department of Chemistry has secured two new, highly competitive research grants to support her research in green chemistry. These grants, from the National Science Foundation and the American Chemical Society Petroleum Research Fund, support her investigations into the production of high-value chemical catalysts from inexpensive, nontoxic, and earth-abundant metals.
- MTSU and officials with the U.S. Army's **101st Airborne Division** in Fort Campbell on the Tennessee-Kentucky border and the **XVIII Airborne Corps** at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, recently formed a partnership to expand opportunities for collaboration between the airborne corps professionals and MTSU-based researchers and students in the research, design, development, and application of solutions that enhance the nation's security, economy, and general welfare. In November



2020, MTSU and the **118th Wing of the Tennessee Air National Guard** signed an agreement to collaborate in several areas, notably in research of unmanned aircraft systems operations and computer science.



- The **International Ginseng Institute** at MTSU has received a \$455,000 grant award from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to investigate organic methods of protecting growers' ginseng investments. In addition to the USDA/NIFA award, the University has provided almost \$300,000 more as a match. The highly competitive three-year grant involves a partnership with other institutions to investigate organic solutions for rural farmers to address such problems as root rot and other fungal diseases. The grant, which started Sept. 1, is led by Iris Gao and involves researchers from several other institutions.

MTSU's **Data Science Institute** and its associated academic programs partnered with Amazon Web Services (AWS) to host the first annual MTSU DeepRacer event in November. The goal of the competition was to build devices that will collect real-world data and use that data for rapid decision-making. Held in the Science Building, the event's competitions tested teams from MTSU and local high schools to program autonomous cars to quickly and safely navigate an indoor track.



COLLEGE OF BEHAVIORAL AND HEALTH SCIENCES

- The **Physician Assistant Studies** master's program was successful in achieving provisional accreditation with the ARC-PA and opened in the online national PA admissions portal, where hundreds of applications have been received for the first cohort set to begin in May.
- Two Exercise Science faculty members are co-founders of a new addition to academia's canon of knowledge about their discipline. **Jennifer Caputo** (l), a professor, and **Samantha Johnson** (r), assistant professor, launched the new journal, *Educational Practices in Kinesiology* (EPIK), which is housed at Western Kentucky University. Caputo and Johnson started the journal along with three fellow academics at other institutions.
- MTSU's **Sports Management** master's program was ranked No. 32 in the country by Best Accredited Colleges.



- **Helen Binkley** received funding from the National Athletic Trainers Ethnic Diversity Advisory Council for her proposal "Ethnic Diversity Recruitment: Acceptance and Retention in MTSU Athletic Training MSAT."
- **Jessica Gaby** (Psychology) planned and hosted a virtual symposium titled "Diversity, Inclusion, and Student Success: Paths to Graduate School and Beyond." The panel presentation discussed how to get to graduate school, why a prospective student might want to, and how to deal with challenges in ensuring you're a strong candidate, applying, and navigating graduate school once you're in. About 90 students attended via Zoom.
- **Ben Stickle** (Criminal Justice Administration) appeared on the national television program *Good Morning America* a second time. He also appeared on numerous podcasts regarding "porch piracy," or package theft, as well as security regarding supply chain.
- The new **Master of Science in Athletic Training** was approved by THEC to begin in summer 2023 pending SACSCOC approval.

JENNINGS A. JONES COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

- With supply chain disruptions and resulting product shortages and delivery delays in the headlines, MTSU's Jones College is looking to address current and future challenges in this area through a new stand-alone major in **Supply Chain Management**, which it launched in late 2021. Housed within the Department of Management, the degree program is additionally relevant because of MTSU's location. Tennessee is within a day's drive of 60% of the U.S. population, a fact that has attracted numerous logistics-related companies and industries.



Jones College of Business alumnus Tim Fallon ('11), vice president of manufacturing, Nissan Canton Vehicle Assembly, is an MBA graduate who works in the Supply Chain Management industry. He has been active with the MTSU supply chain management program as a visiting speaker. (Submitted photo)

- A Marketing professor whose regular teamwork with his students and colleagues provides consumer insights into Tennessee's economy chose to focus on those students and colleagues, and his family, after receiving MTSU's top teaching honor. **Timothy Graeff**, a professor in Jones College since 1992 and founder of MTSU's Office of Consumer Research, was the deserving 2021 recipient of the MTSU Foundation's Career Achievement Award. The consumer research center conducts quarterly surveys of Tennessee residents and business leaders, measuring their outlook on the economy and gauging their impact on key economic indicators such as inflation, interest rates, and consumer spending.
- Associate Professor **Amy Harris** (Department of Information Systems and Analytics) becomes president of Women in Technology Tennessee this month. She joined the WITT board in 2017 as the director of scholarships and previously served as vice president.
- The Computing Accreditation Commission of ABET (formerly the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology) has formally approved initial accreditation for the **B.B.A. in Information Systems**. This accreditation is retroactive to Oct. 1, 2019, and extends to Sept. 30, 2025. ABET has been in existence for over 80 years and accredits

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Computing
Accreditation
Commission

college and university programs in the disciplines of applied and natural science, computing,

engineering, and engineering technology at the associate, bachelor's, and master's degree levels. ABET standards have become the gold standard of quality for STEM disciplines all over the world. Students, employers, and society can be confident that a program with ABET accreditation meets the quality standards that produce graduates prepared to enter a global workforce.

- Accounting students **Melissa Barrett, Judd Sparks**, and **Adam Plaza**, as a 2021 Best Practice Team, placed third in the global competition sponsored by honor society Beta Alpha Psi. The society honored the Jones College chapter as a "Superior Chapter"—the society's highest distinction—for the ninth consecutive year.
- The MTSU Board of Trustees approved the appointment of **Murat Arik**, director of the Business and Economic Research Center (BERC), as the holder of the **Jennings and**

Rebecca Jones Chair of Excellence in Urban and Regional Planning. Established in 1997, this Chair of Excellence aims to produce and disseminate information relevant to the planning needs and issues in the midstate region. Arik's role as BERC director has engaged him in work aligning very closely with the objectives of the chair.

- MTSU's **Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) investment portfolio**, managed by students in the Department of Economics and Finance under the tutelage of Associate Professor **Kevin Zhao**, delivered a very strong performance in 2021. As of November, the value of the portfolio was up to \$794,000 from its value of \$623,000 on Jan. 1. The YTD (year to date) return of the portfolio was 27.6%, compared to the S&P 500 total return of 23.8%. For the first 10 months of 2021, the portfolio beat the market benchmark by a sizeable margin of 3.7%, making MTSU the second-best performing university among all participating universities in the TVA challenge. The Department of Economics and Finance will receive a \$5,000 performance reward in spring 2022.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

- MTSU is creating a new center in its College of Education to focus on recruiting and retaining diverse teacher candidates, graduate students, and faculty. The announcement was part of a broader discussion at a recent quarterly MTSU Board of Trustees meeting on the need to better serve and encourage students from underserved communities—particularly Black males. Professor **Michelle Stevens**, introduced as director of the new Fairness, Justice, and Equity Center in the College of Education, said the center will offer educational opportunities, support, and advocacy for community partners. It will also partner with Memphis-

based Man Up Teacher Fellowship, a nonprofit working to provide students in high-poverty areas access to "high-quality male teachers." MTSU invests more than \$2.6 million in University funds and external grants each year into efforts and programs to support underrepresented populations. MTSU is second only to Tennessee State University, a historically Black institution, in the total number of Black graduates produced by all public institutions in the state, based on THEC's most recent statewide cohort data.



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- Intelligent.com ranked the **Master of Library Science** program No. 13 on its best online program list for 2021.

- The advising manager for MTSU's College of Education is proving that the University's massive 2014 investment in advising is paying off. Women in Higher Education in Tennessee has bestowed its Woman of Achievement Award on **Alicia Abney** (pictured), the second consecutive MTSU employee to receive this recognition.



Judith Iriarte-Gross, an MTSU Chemistry professor, won the honor in 2020. A former secondary school teacher from Kokomo, Indiana, Abney and her family moved to middle Tennessee in 2014. She began her MTSU career as a tutor for redshirt freshman football players. When an academic advisor position opened in the College of Education in 2015, she applied and got the job. Now she is the college's advising manager. Abney earned her bachelor's degree in English from Indiana University in 2007, her master's degree in Student Development

Counseling and Administration from Indiana Wesleyan University in 2015, and her Ed.S. in Higher Education Administration and Supervision from MTSU in 2019. She is on track to graduate from East Tennessee State University with a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis this spring.

- In November, the College of Education and teacher licensure programs across campus completed the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) joint visit, with final accreditation results coming in June. The preliminary reports from the site visit team were complimentary and support the good work going on in educator preparation and development at MTSU.
- Six Murfreesboro City Schools educational assistants began the **M.Ed. in Special Education** program as part of a TDOE Grow Your Own-funded program. Each student received full funding to complete the initial licensure graduate degree and add-on elementary education endorsement.

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

- **Thomas D. Holland**, an accomplished forensic anthropologist, joined MTSU on Jan. 1 as director of the Forensic Institute for Research and Education (FIRE). FIRE was launched in 2006 under the leadership of its first director, Hugh Berryman. Like Berryman, Holland is among the mere 120 board-certified forensic anthropologists in the world. Formerly the scientific director of the Department of Defense's Central Identification Laboratory, the largest skeletal identification laboratory in the world, Holland has led forensic recoveries around the world, from the barren deserts of Iraq to the steamy jungles of Vietnam to the snow-covered mountains of North Korea. Holland and his DOD laboratory were frequently featured on such programs as *Nightline*, *60 Minutes*, and *Nova*. In addition, Holland is the author of numerous published novels set in the realm of crime and forensics science.
- CLA received a \$499,997 National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant as part of the American Rescue Plan. Interim Dean **Leah Lyons** serves as the principal investigator, and the funding will support five projects that encompass digitization of archives and special collections, collecting oral histories of African American communities in the civil rights movement, a women's suffrage project, and a global literatures program that will benefit the entire campus.

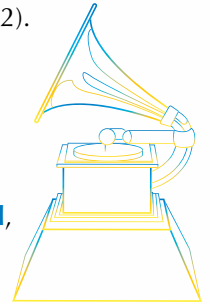


Once again in 2021, MTSU was a major player in the Tennessee Intercollegiate State Legislature (TISL), which annually provides interested college students from across the state with a hands-on taste of the ins and outs of crafting public policy. While MTSU's eight-member delegation joined students from other schools in the same Senate and House chambers on Capitol Hill in Nashville where the Tennessee General Assembly meets, this mock session of college students conducted four days of business—some serious in nature and others more fun (such as declaring banana pudding to be the official state dessert). The MTSU delegation was mentored by **Beth Harwell**, former Tennessee House speaker, who is now a Distinguished Visiting Professor at the University.



COLLEGE OF MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT

- The Department of Recording Industry opened **Main Street Studios** in December in the building previously occupied by Parking and Transportation Services on East Main Street. The facilities, known as Studios D and E, are nearly 5,000 square feet of customized, expandable, “world class” space, complete with control rooms, equipment rooms, and an open gathering/reception area. Grammy-nominated producer and MTSU alumnus **BryTavious “Tay Keith” Chambers** (top left) returned to campus Sept. 29 for a “sneak peek” of the new studios, while the official ribbon-cutting took place Dec. 6. Of note, Tay Keith, who is known for his work with Drake and Travis Scott, was named one of *Billboard’s* top producers of the 21st century (he was listed at No. 42).
- Six alumni from the College of Media and Entertainment have received Grammy nominations this year from the Recording Academy: **Maria Elisa Ayerbe**, **Tony Castle**, **Billy Hickey**, **F. Reid Shippen**, **Jason A. Hall**, and **Jimmy Mansfield**.



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Faculty and staff at MTSU’s University College are making it easier and more affordable for students to succeed in the classroom. **Kim Godwin**, **Meredith “MA” Higgs**, and **Mike Boyle** recently collaborated in publishing a textbook that will be used for two MTSU courses at no cost to students. The book, *Using Teams to Facilitate Organizational Development*, can be accessed for free at any time thanks to the James E. Walker Library’s licensing of Pressbooks, an online platform that allows self-publishing of textbooks, articles, and other documents that could be used in the classroom. The book uses open educational resources (OER) as the source material. Through a \$100,000 TBR grant, MTSU faculty and staff are creating OER to increase student success and equity by assisting underrepresented student populations with staying on track toward earning their degrees. Some students were spending upward of \$200 on the book that this resource replaces. Several other University College faculty are in the process of developing their own textbooks using Pressbooks and hope to have them published in the coming months.



UNIVERSITY HONORS COLLEGE

- **Collage**, the Honors journal of creative expression, has won another Crown Award from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association.
- A record seven MTSU students received **Gilman Awards** for the study of foreign languages abroad. In a related development, **Laura Clippard**, the head of the Undergraduate Fellowships Office, was named a member of the National Inaugural Cohort of Gilman Advisor Ambassadors.
- The Honors College accepted its first Buchanan Fellows through a **new early admissions** program.



- For the second year, the Honors College hosted two fall **lecture series** instead of only one: “Rewriting the U.S. Constitution” and “The Press.” Both highlighted on- and off-campus speakers.
- The Phi Kappa Phi and Omicron Delta Kappa honor societies combined forces to create two new **Little Free Libraries** for campus child-care centers.



JAMES E. WALKER LIBRARY

- MTSU has been recognized globally by *Newsweek* magazine as among the **Best Maker Schools in Higher Education 2021**. *Newsweek* partnered with Make, publisher of the *Make* magazine and books, to develop the list, which highlights institutions with innovative programs that demonstrate the ingenuity and community engagement that are hallmarks of the maker movement. Only three Tennessee schools—MTSU, Tennessee Tech, and Vanderbilt University—are on the non-ranked list, which also includes universities such as Brown, Princeton, Yale, and UCLA. MTSU’s Walker Library is home to the Makerspace, a one-stop shop on the second floor that provides students and faculty with access to robotics, electronics, sewing, computers, software, laser etchers, button-making, virtual reality technology, and 3D printing, among other resources.
- In August, Walker Library kicked off a year-long **strategic planning process** that invited the entire MTSU community to participate. A student survey yielded more than 500 responses. Faculty and college leadership also participated in the process. A completed plan is expected by July 1.
- Walker Library implemented **FOLIO**, a new open source, community-driven library services platform. This platform provides for electronic resource management, inventory control of the library’s collections, acquisitions, and circulation management of the library’s collections and equipment.



Special Collections continued building a new collection in support of the Fermentation Science program. The **Distilling, Fermenting, and Brewing Collection** is garnering interest from local distilleries and has the potential to serve as the archive for their business documents.



ADULT LEARNERS/MTSU ONLINE

We've built one of the largest adult degree programs in the state of Tennessee. In addition, our online and distance learning programs at MTSU provide access to undergraduate and graduate degree programs for students who might not be able to pursue traditional attendance paths. Each of these important initiatives is handled by our wonderful University College. Here are some highlights and updates on these offerings:

ADULT LEARNERS



Well before MTSU and McDonald's franchise owner McGuire Management Group publicly announced a new partnership, word was spreading about how current and future employees there could earn a degree more affordably. Dozens of the 1,200 total McGuire Management workers had already discovered they could attend MTSU tuition-free starting last fall. Hundreds of others became aware after the **McGuire True Blue Education** deal was signed and sealed in early August 2021. Owner Jonathon McGuire operates 20 McDonald's restaurants in five counties—10 locations in Murfreesboro, seven in Nashville/Antioch, and others in Columbia, Centerville, and White Bluff. The McDonald's franchise group had already reached half of its first-year enrollment goal even before the official announcement. The management group will fund 100% of tuition costs for qualifying employees. A discounted tuition rate is offered for additional hours beyond what the program provides per semester.



MTSU and fast-food chain Chick-fil-A signed a similar agreement in January that

provides tuition assistance to qualifying local Chick-fil-A employees. Beau Noblitt, restaurant operator for Chick-fil-A Murfreesboro, revealed details during a signing ceremony at the Chick-fil-A restaurant at 2216 Memorial Blvd. in Murfreesboro. Under the **Noblitt True Blue Education Partnership**, eligible employees at the two restaurants in Murfreesboro will be able to take up to six credit hours of MTSU classes each year with 100% of their tuition costs fully funded beginning in the Spring 2022 semester. This partnership is designed to empower employees to learn and advance their careers no matter where they are on their journey. With the benefit of an MTSU education, we will be excited to see these students create their own unique stories of growth. . . . We know that when we invest in people, we strengthen our entire community. The restaurant chain will fund tuition costs for two semesters per calendar year, up to three credit hours per semester. Students who are qualified and who want to pay for additional hours or semesters will be allowed to do so at a reduced corporate tuition rate.

MTSU Online

MTSU was recently recognized by *Newsweek* as one of the top online universities in America. The prestigious recognition is compiled by *Newsweek* and Statista Inc., the world-leading statistics portal and industry ranking provider. MTSU ranked 40th among the 150 higher-ed institutions highlighted and was the only Tennessee university that made the list. The ranking highlights the nation's top colleges with online degrees, based on an online survey earlier this year with over 12,000 assessments from more than 9,000 respondents. Respondents shared their experiences by rating the institutions on several criteria: organization and accessibility, support and service, the cost of the program, its perceived organizational reputation, their expected success, and the practical relevance of the program's contents.

Additionally, **Louanne Bergman** joined MTSU Online as the new director, coming to us from Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She previously served as director of online operations at Louisiana State University and Austin Peay State University.

We also are proud to announce the MTSU Online instructional designers who accomplished new certifications this past year:

- **Kim Godwin**—Creative Commons Certificate, and Online Learning Consortium ID Mastery
- **Karen Hein**—ID Certificate from Online Learning Consortium
- **Tara Perrin**—Quality Matters Certified Higher Ed Peer Reviewer

The instructional designers also have been hard at work creating quality training and resources for our faculty. They have led a campuswide introduction to H5P (a tool for creating engaging online interaction) and established an ongoing H5P Workshop Presentation series. They also delivered eight presentations to MTSU faculty about being effective as online instructors.

The instructional designers updated the **Synchronous Instructions Standards Course** (SISC) to make it more interactive and engaging for faculty and to reflect best practices in synchronous online teaching and learning.

MTSU'S ECONOMIC IMPACT IS BOOMING

Among the findings:

- MTSU was responsible for more than **\$1.42 billion** in economic impact in 2021. That's up 26.8% from 2017, when BERC conducted a similar study.
- The University was responsible for almost **11,500 jobs** statewide, up 36.8% from 2017.
- As Murfreesboro's second-largest employer (2,270 jobs), MTSU generated **\$143.6 million** in local, state, and federal tax revenue—a significant rise from \$88 million reported in 2017.

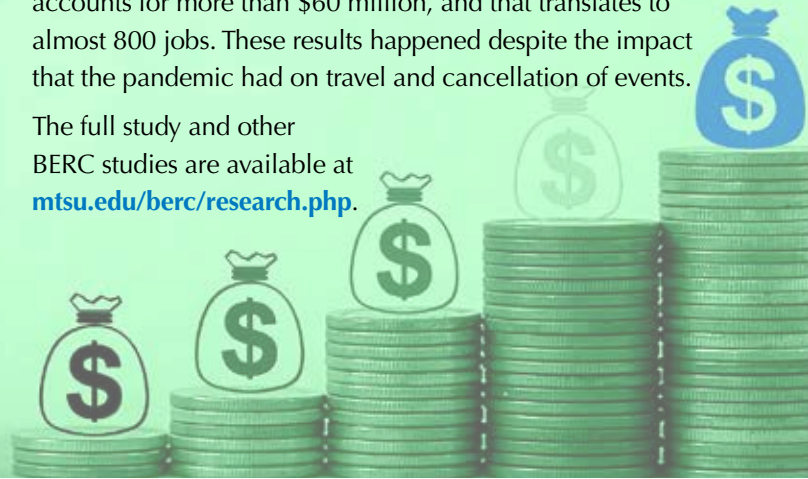
MTSU takes great pride in our institution's economic impact on this community, region, and state as we fulfill our mission of preparing the next generations of community leaders, entrepreneurs, and highly skilled professionals across the workforce.

In 2021, MTSU graduates accounted for nearly 2 in every 5 adults with bachelor's or above educational attainment in

Rutherford County, and 1 in every 6 adults with bachelor's or above educational attainment in the Nashville MSA. Ninety percent of the almost 21,000 students at the University were from Tennessee; 79% of MTSU alumni live in Tennessee.

The BERC study also shows MTSU brings nearly 300,000 people to Rutherford County each year. Spending by visitors accounts for more than \$60 million, and that translates to almost 800 jobs. These results happened despite the impact that the pandemic had on travel and cancellation of events.

The full study and other BERC studies are available at mtsu.edu/berc/research.php.



Private support continues to provide valuable resources for our campus.

Please consider giving during the True Blue Give campaign next month.

*true***BLUE GIVE** 2022

February 14, 15, and 16

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



ADVANCEMENT

GIVE TO ANYTHING YOU LOVE ON CAMPUS, INCLUDING:

- U A DEPARTMENT OR PROGRAM**
- U BAND OF BLUE**
- U A STUDENT ORGANIZATION**
- U ATHLETICS**

OR GIVE TO SUPPORT STUDENTS IN NEED:

- U SCHOLARSHIPS**
- U STUDENT SAFETY NET FUND**
- U STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING**

**FEELING THE LOVE RIGHT NOW?
MTSU.EDU/TRUEBLUEGIVE
MAKE YOUR IMPACT TODAY!**

Spring 2022 CONNECTION



MLK Celebration and Candlelight Vigil

Monday, January 17, 2022
6–8 p.m.
Student Union Ballroom
Event Sponsor: Intercultural and Diversity Affairs

This event honors the work, legacy, and life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., as well as his commitment to social activism and a legacy that has inspired generations.

Sorority Meet and Greet

Monday, January 24, 2022
10:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.
Student Union Atrium
Event Sponsors: Fraternity and Sorority Life, College Panhellenic, National Panhellenic Council
Come out and meet members from NPHC and College Panhellenic sororities! Female students will have an opportunity to learn more about how to join one of our 10 sororities at MTSU.

Fraternity Meet and Greet

Tuesday, January 25, 2022
10:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.
Student Union Atrium
Event Sponsors: Fraternity and Sorority Life, Interfraternity Council, National Panhellenic Council
Come out and meet members from the NPHC and IFC fraternities! Male students will have an opportunity to learn more about how to join one of our 15 fraternities at MTSU.

Spring Student Organization Fair

Wednesday, January 26, 2022
1–4 p.m.
Student Union Ballroom
Event Sponsor: Student Organizations and Service
The Spring Student Organization Fair is a meet and greet with various clubs and organizations. Come learn more about clubs and how to join.

MT After Dark: Welcome Back Movies

Thursday, January 27, 2022
Doors open at 7 p.m. • Movies start at 8 p.m.
Premiere 6 Theatre
Event Sponsors: SPARE, Campus Recreation, New Student and Family Programs
All movies at Premiere 6 Theatre playing that night will be shown free to MTSU students only with MyMT Event Pass. Limited seating is available on first come, first served basis. Transportation is not provided.

Greek Night/Mardi Gras: Men's Basketball vs. Old Dominion

Thursday, February 10, 2022
6–8 p.m.
Murphy Center
Event Sponsors: Fraternity and Sorority Life, Athletics
Middle Tennessee's Mardi Gras celebration is back in Murphy Center. Join us for this special event. Halftime is full of jazz and celebration, featuring a Mardi Gras parade. Cheer and dance teams will distribute beads to all fans.

Pink Game: Women's Basketball vs. Florida International

Thursday, February 17, 2022
6–8 p.m.
Murphy Center
Event Sponsor: Athletics
Cheer on the Lady Raiders as they take on the FIU Panthers. Wear pink for the annual Play4Kay Power of Pink Game!

Black History Month/Women's History Month Keynote Speaker Event

Monday, February 28, 2022
7–8 p.m.
Student Union Ballroom
Event Sponsors: Intercultural and Diversity Affairs, June Anderson Center For Women and Nontraditional Students
This year, Black History Month and National Women's History Month have similar themes. The committees have joined together to bring an excellent speaker to speak to all women's health, healing, and hope. Speaker name will be revealed soon.

Alternative Spring Break

March 7–10, 2022 (Monday–Thursday)
9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Greater Murfreesboro Area
Event Sponsors: Student Organizations and Service, Student Government Association
Alternative Spring Break (ASB) gives students the opportunity to make a difference in the community on a local, national, and global level. ASB is life-changing and is hosted at many colleges and universities across the country. Students participate in intensive service experiences that make a true difference in the lives of others. By providing needed services, team members learn from the people and organizations they encounter and gain a better understanding of the world.

Signature Events Concert

April 2022
(exact date and time tba)
Murphy Center
Event Sponsors: Student Government Association, SPARE
Students are sure to enjoy this concert with a big-name national act. Stay tuned for more information.

Student Appreciation Week Tailgate and MTSU vs. Memphis Baseball

Wednesday, April 6, 2022
Tailgate at 3 p.m. • Game at 4 p.m.
Reese Smith Jr. Field
Event Sponsors: Student Government Association, Athletics
Come enjoy FREE burgers, hotdogs, desserts, and giveaways, and then cheer on your Blue Raiders as they take on the Tigers.

Game of Life

Thursday, April 7, 2022
11 a.m.–2 p.m.
Rec Center Gymnasium
Event Sponsor: MT One Stop, Campus Recreation
Game of Life is a financial literacy event that allows students to see how their future salaries and monthly expenses would compare. Students go from one station to the next exploring different basic monthly expenses while trying to balance a budget and stay within their means as they build the life they would like to have after graduation.

Relay For Life

Friday, April 8, 2022 (tentative)
5–8:30 p.m.
Student Union Commons
Event Sponsor: Colleges Against Cancer
Come learn how Relay for Life positively impacts the lives of those living with cancer and help us raise funds to support the American Cancer Society. We will kick off at 5 p.m. with the opening ceremony. The remainder of the event, including activities such as a basketball shootout, team activities and tables, and a luminaria memorial ceremony, goes until 8:30 p.m. Lead a team or just come to support the fight against cancer. An entry fee donation of \$5 is suggested but not required.
relayforlife.org/mtsu

Walk a Mile in Their Shoes

Tuesday, April 12, 2022
4–6 p.m.
MTSU Rec Center
Event Sponsors: June Anderson Center for Women and Nontraditional Students, Fraternity and Sorority Life
Join individuals from across campus as we raise awareness about sexual assault and other instances of power-based violence. Food and event t-shirts will be available (while supplies last).

Color the Commons

Wednesday, April 20, 2022
10 a.m.–2 p.m.
Student Union Commons
Event Sponsors: MTSU Power of ONE, June Anderson Center for Women and Nontraditional Students
This chalk art contest is open to all students, student organizations, and departments to design and color a square in recognition of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Preregistration information will be available at mtsu.edu/powerof1 or by emailing powerof1@mtsu.edu.



Events begin on January 17.
For a complete list of event details,
including updated dates and times,
go to mtsu.edu/campuslife/events.php

FIND YOUR
*true*BLUE
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BUDGET AND SALARY OVERVIEW



Looking toward the 2022–23 fiscal year, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) is recommending operating state appropriations of **\$120.4 million** for MTSU. This is a **\$7.5 million increase**, or 6.6%, over 2021–22 appropriations. This net increase is a combination of a decrease of \$607,300 in the outcomes formula adjustments and an \$8.1 million increase in proposed new funding for the University. Funding for any 2022–23 salary increases is not included in these figures and will not be known until the release of the governor’s budget in early February.

In September, the MTSU Board of Trustees approved two 2022–23 capital outlay projects to be submitted to THEC. The first is to **renovate Kirksey Old Main (KOM) and Rutledge Hall**. This project will carry out extensive renovations to these buildings, including replacement of major building systems, exterior repairs, window replacement, and re-planning to ensure these buildings will provide modern space for academic instruction for many years to come. This project is **No. 2 on THEC’s ranked priority list** sent to the governor.

In addition, THEC allowed higher education institutions to propose a second project for funding. MTSU submitted a comprehensive capital project for the **Aerospace Department**. This project includes site development and academic facilities, including an 83,000-square-foot academic building with classroom, class lab, faculty and staff office, and support spaces, along with three hangar structures to serve as laboratory and lab support spaces. The site development includes site utilities, earthwork, auto parking, aircraft apron, taxiway, and all associated work. This Aerospace capital outlay project is ranked **No. 1 on THEC’s second priority list**.

The commission also voted to recommend \$11.8 million in capital maintenance funds for eight MTSU projects: campuswide lighting and lighting control upgrades, building mechanical and controls updates, access control and security updates, building exterior envelope updates, roof replacements, elevator modernization, repair and replacement of campus utility systems, and sidewalk repair and replacements.

THEC’s recommendations have been submitted to the Department of Finance and Administration for consideration in the proposed state budget that Gov. Bill Lee will submit to the state legislature. At that point, we will have more information regarding our likely 2022–23 state and capital appropriations.

ATHLETICS

Blue Raider sports teams experienced another exciting and productive fall and winter in 2021. Since our University accepted an invitation to join Conference USA in November 2012, Blue Raider squads have consistently attended postseason play, won championships, and achieved C-USA All-Academic team status. Here are just some of the many recent athletic and academic highlights achieved by MTSU student-athletes.

MTSU POSTS IMPRESSIVE GSR SCORES

The NCAA Graduation Success Rate at MTSU equaled the school record at 93%, as announced by the NCAA national office on Dec. 2. It's the eighth straight year MTSU has either equaled or set a new school record.

The Graduation Success Rate (GSR) is a four-year measure of freshmen and athletic transfers who entered the University as freshmen in 2014–15. This marks the ninth straight year that MTSU has scored above 80%. The last nine GSR scores for MTSU have been 93%, 93%, 92%, 89%, 88%, 87%, 87%, 87%, and 82%.

The Blue Raiders also ranked third out of the 14 teams in Conference USA, trailing only Rice (95%) and the University of Texas–San Antonio (94%).

Seven programs scored a perfect 100% GSR score: men's and women's basketball, men's and women's golf, men's tennis, soccer, and volleyball. Baseball (96%) and football (95%) were next in line with impressive scores of 95% or higher.

MTSU SECURES \$66M FOR ATHLETIC UPGRADES

We announced Nov. 15 that the University has secured funds for a \$66 million project to build a new **student-athlete performance center** behind the north end zone of Floyd Stadium as well as make stadium improvements—the first of a three-phase, \$100 million-plus plan to upgrade athletics facilities.

To be built on the site of the current weight and gameday rooms adjacent to Murphy Center, the three-story structure will house training, strength and conditioning, and equipment centers. Football's locker and meeting rooms and personnel offices will be moved from Murphy Center into the new facility.

Design of the new facility is underway, with project completion expected before the start of the Blue Raiders' 2024 football season. GMC+HOK, which helped build similar projects at Vanderbilt, Auburn, Georgia, and other universities, will oversee design of the project. The State Building Commission recently approved MTSU's plans for the project. Design continues through September, and we will begin construction in November with completion anticipated for April 2024.

BLUE RAIDERS EXCEL IN THE CLASSROOM

Fall 2021



- 197 of 350 (56%) of all student-athletes had a 3.0 grade point average or higher
- 125 (36%) of all student-athletes made the Dean's List by earning a 3.5 or higher GPA
- 46 (13%) of all student-athletes had a perfect 4.0 GPA
- 10 of 15 teams had a semester GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Tennis had the highest men's team GPA: 3.902
- Golf had the highest women's team GPA: 3.521
- Semester GPA for all student-athletes: 2.947
- Cumulative GPA for all student-athletes: 3.109

MTSU's seven perfect scores tied for second-most among C-USA members, with Rice leading the way with eight.

The Blue Raiders' score of 95% in football tied for fifth nationally with Vanderbilt, behind only Northwestern (97%), Duke (96%), Michigan (96%), and Minnesota (96%). It easily led the way in Conference USA, ahead of Rice's second-place 91%. Among all Division I Football Bowl Subdivision schools in Tennessee, the Blue Raiders matched Vanderbilt for the best mark as the University of Memphis recorded a 90% and the University of Tennessee had an 84%.



LEGENDARY MTSU TRACK COACH DIES

Dean Hayes, 84, MTSU's track coach of 57 years, died peacefully with his family by his side at Ascension Saint Thomas Rutherford Hospital in Murfreesboro on Jan. 7.

Hayes was a champion in so many ways: as a father, mentor, and role model, a world-class recruiter, and a winning coach at the highest echelons. Dean was a living legend. I speak for Elizabeth and my family, as well as all Blue Raiders, in expressing our deepest and heartfelt condolences to his wife, Jan, and all of his family.

Throughout the recent history of Blue Raider track and field, there were two constants—Hayes and a legacy of championship performances.

Hayes guided the programs to 29 Ohio Valley Conference titles, 19 Sun Belt championships, and 20 NCAA Top 25 finishes. Fifty-three of his student-athletes earned a total of 125 All-America honors; five became national champions six times; and a number of them went on to compete internationally in the Olympic Games, World University Games, World Championships, Goodwill Games, Pan-American Games, and African Championships.

In Conference USA, Hayes claimed seven titles, five with the women's teams and two with the men's teams (most recently, sweeping the 2021 men's and women's cross country championships). His men's teams dominated the OVC, and the women's teams duplicated that success after Hayes took over the program in 1987. Both squads continued their success in the Sun Belt Conference, capturing 19 of the 51 indoor and outdoor titles they were eligible to win.

Hayes received four Conference USA Coach of the Year accolades, 15 Sun Belt Coach of the Year awards, and 15 OVC Coach of the Year honors, which included 10 in a row from 1977 to 1986. He was inducted into the Blue Raider Hall of Fame in 1982 and the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame in 1994. In addition, Hayes became a member of the Illinois Sports Hall of Fame in 1993, the Mason-Dixon Athletic Club Hall of Fame in March 2005, the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2008, the Lake Forest College Hall of Fame in 2009, and the Naperville Hall of Fame in 2019.



Following the 1981 season, the Division I Track and Field Coaches Association (TFCA) voted Hayes the NCAA Outdoor Coach of the Year. Hayes then served as president of the TFCA in 1982–83.

Hayes' experience was not limited to the collegiate level. He also coached numerous international teams, whether sponsored by the United States Olympic Committee, USA Track and Field, or an international federation. His international experience began at the first Olympic Sports Festival in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in 1978.

Importantly, Hayes, who first stepped onto the campus in 1965, is credited with integrating MTSU athletics. His first recruit, Jerry Singleton, became the first African American varsity scholarship athlete at MTSU. Others followed as their quietly competitive coach recruited more and more Black athletes. When those athletes arrived on campus, so did their girlfriends, sisters, brothers, and friends. As such, Hayes is also rightly credited with integrating campus. He served as the first advisor for Kappa Alpha Psi, a Greek letter fraternity with predominantly African American membership, when it began a chapter at MTSU.

Hayes also deserves much of the credit for the increased presence of international students at MTSU. Under his guidance, international athletes began arriving from Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, and other places in the 1970s.

BLUE RAIDERS RALLY FOR BAHAMAS BOWL VICTORY

The Blue Raiders football team battled back after trailing at halftime, outscoring Toledo 17-7 in the second half to win the Dec. 17 Bahamas Bowl, 31-24.

Nicholas Vattiato earned offensive player of the game honors after completing 23 of 35 passes for 270 yards and two touchdowns.

D.Q. Thomas was named defensive player of the game, leading the Blue Raiders with eight tackles and 1.5 tackles for loss as the MTSU defense held Toledo to just 4-of-15 on third down.

The victory marked MTSU's first bowl win since 2017 and improved the Blue Raiders' record to 7-6, securing their first winning season since 8-6 in the 2018 C-USA East Division championship campaign.



MTSU SWEEPS CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

The Blue Raiders brought home both the men's and women's Conference USA cross country championships Oct. 30.

The men's and women's teams combined for a total of 14 awards/All-Conference nods to go along with the titles.

The men were able to rack up their third C-USA Championship in five years, beating Charlotte out in a close battle that was decided by one point. The Blue Raider men placed five of their six runners in the top 15, including the team's leader **Hillary Kimaiyo**, who placed eighth.

The women won their third conference title in a row, placing four runners in the top 10. The Blue Raider women led as a team most of the day and continued their yearly dominance in the conference. **Eusila Chepkemei** came in third overall during the race, taking home First Team All-Conference and Outstanding Senior of the Meet.

Keith Vroman took home both Coach of the Year Awards once again, last doing so in the 2019–20 season.

DEPRIEST BREAKS C-USA GOALS, POINTS RECORD

MTSU senior soccer standout **Peyton DePriest** made history Sept. 5 in a win over Houston Baptist with her 50th career goal. That made her the all-time leader in goals scored in the history of Conference USA. Later in the season in a win over Marshall, DePriest became the league's **all-time leading scorer** with 124 points. She ended her career with 58 goals, 127 total points, and 17 game-winning goals.

SOCCER TRIO HONORED BY C-USA

For the third time throughout her five-year career, **Peyton DePriest** was named the Conference USA Offensive Player of the Year. She also earned First Team All-C-USA. Senior midfielder **Sam DeBien** was selected for the Second Team, and freshman defender **Sascha Nielsen** was chosen for the All-Freshman Team.





MTSU UNVEILS NEW GOLF FACILITY

The MTSU men's and women's golf programs added a state-of-the-art practice facility to one of the area's premier golf courses. The Blue Raiders cut the ribbon on their new building, built in partnership with and located at The Grove Club, on Nov. 1.

The \$1.1 million facility, funded entirely through private donations, features three indoor hitting bays and an indoor putting green with multiple slope changes. The practice venture will help the Blue Raiders perfect their game even in unfavorable weather conditions.

Two of the indoor hitting bays include TrackMan simulator studios that will provide players with real-time feedback on the distance, speed, and rotation of their shots and can simulate play on more than 90 courses. Just steps away are a players lounge, locker rooms, training facilities, and a study area.

10 FOOTBALL PLAYERS HONORED BY C-USA

The Blue Raiders had three First Team selections, two on the Second Team, four honorable mention picks, and two freshman honorees among the Conference USA award winners, voted on by the league's head football coaches.

Safety **Reed Blankenship**, defensive back **Quincy Riley**, and punt returner **Jaylin Lane** were the three Blue Raiders on the first unit.

The Second Team was highlighted by a pair of guys who possessed First Team numbers: defensive end **Jordan Ferguson** and linebacker **D.Q. Thomas**.

Tight end **Jimmy Marshall**, defensive back **Greg Grate**, offensive lineman **Jordan Palmer**, and kick returner **Jaylin Lane** all earned honorable mention recognition.

Quarterback **Nick Vattiato** and defensive back **Deidrick Stanley** made the All-Freshman Team.



FREE SPEECH CENTER

The Free Speech Center at MTSU is a nonpartisan, nonprofit public policy center dedicated to building understanding of the five freedoms of the First Amendment through education, information, and engagement.

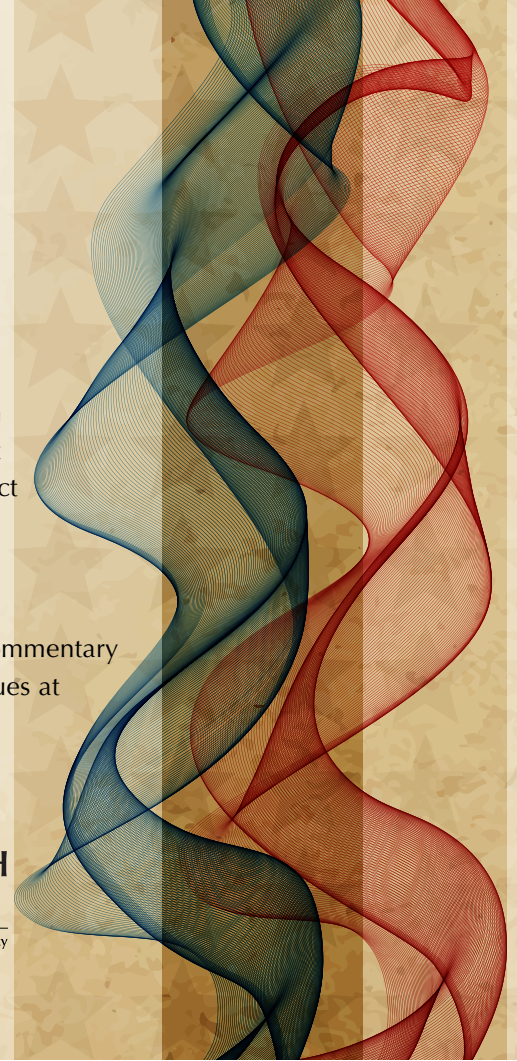
Its educational efforts include:

- The **First Amendment Encyclopedia**, an unparalleled collection of more than 1,500 articles on First Amendment topics, court cases, and history, written to be accessible by young people and the general public. About 20,000 students and educators access the site each school day.
- **Nationwide ad campaigns** featuring celebrities to raise awareness of the First Amendment among a younger generation.
- **1 for All**, a national nonpartisan and nonprofit educational effort to build understanding and respect for the five freedoms of the First Amendment in secondary and higher education.
- Frequent news, analysis, and commentary on current First Amendment issues at freespeech.center.

On Constitution Day last semester, the center published *The Bill of Rights: The First Ten Amendments*, a book written by constitutional scholar David Hudson for primary and middle school classes, and made the book available free of charge to teachers across the nation.



FREE SPEECH CENTER
at Middle Tennessee State University



INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



MTSU boasts significant international undergraduate and graduate student enrollment, robust study abroad opportunities, and numerous faculty and student exchanges. MTSU also conducts meaningful research in collaboration with our international partners.

Here are just two recent highlights related to MTSU's growing international presence.

The **Office of International Affairs (IA)** continues its international enrollment strategy of building an effective recruitment network and participating in recruitment fairs. In fall 2021, International Affairs engaged in 56 virtual and on-ground recruitment fairs that reached more than 8,400 prospective students. We hosted training webinars and participated in virtual meetings with recruitment agents and school counselors to promote MTSU programs. Such recruitment efforts added new leads to our communication targets, for a total of **51,112 prospective students**. Through this comprehensive communication plan and webinar sessions, we managed to attract international applications from diverse and varied regions of the world.

IA is excited about the productivity of our recruitment endeavors. For spring 2022, international applications reached 609, a **75% increase** compared to spring 2020 and a **61% jump** compared with the average of last five spring semesters. A total of 257 new students are admitted for this semester, a **71% increase** over last spring and an **85% increase** over the last five spring semesters average. These efforts put MTSU in the forefront of international recruitment and international enrollment management in the state, region, and nation.

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

In 2011, MTSU became the first institution of higher education in the state (and one of the first in the country) to partner with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' new VetSuccess on Campus program.

Today, the 3,200-square-foot Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center is the largest and most comprehensive veterans center at a university in Tennessee.

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.

MTSU's senior advisor for Veterans and Leadership Initiatives, retired Army Lt. Gen. Keith M. Huber, leads MTSU's ongoing push to help student veterans be successful at college.

Here are a few updates from this important center:

- As the University began the Fall 2021 semester, it was important to mark the 20th anniversary of 9/11. We were fortunate to have **Alberto Gonzales**, who was sworn in as the nation's 80th and first Hispanic attorney general in 2005, as the keynote speaker for this year's 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony, to share firsthand his memories of that time. The Daniels Center hosts this event annually on the date and time of the first plane crash. In addition to the ceremony, Daniels Center, Student Government Association, and ROTC students created a field of flags and recited the names of all 2,977 people killed in that day's attacks.
- The Daniels Center served **1,103 military-connected students** last fall (5.4% of the student population). In addition to the academic mission, there is a clear focus on the employment needs of the military community, as well as health and wellness.
- There is no requirement to be an MTSU student to be assisted by the Daniels Center. The Daniels Center aids veterans, those currently serving, and military family members across the world.
- During the fall semester, the Daniels Center was able to provide **\$10,000 for emergency food funding** to MTSU military-connected students and to veterans in the community through a grant from the Bob Woodruff Foundation.
- The center recently received the **Patriot Award** from the Charlie Daniels Journey Home Project during the third annual Charlie Daniels Patriot Award Dinner at City Winery in Nashville. The criterion for the award is based on the mission of the organization: to support veterans in their return, rehabilitation, and reintegration back into civilian life. The award honors a person, persons, or group that fulfills and exemplifies the efforts and dedication of the Charlie Daniels Journey Home Project's purpose to continuously support and encourage the men, women, and families who have served the nation.



Charlie and Hazel Daniels
Veterans and Military Family Center

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Our Division of Marketing and Communications (MAC) continues to expand its services to the campus community, bringing many similar services together under one umbrella.

Our former Production Services department joins the MAC team under the new name **True Blue TV (TBT) Event Productions**. Robert Mogensen, Beth Dye, and Ronson Wolf now can easily work hand-in-hand with our other media specialists and connect you with all our services in one conversation. TBT Event Productions can turn your vision into reality for everything from conference and classroom audio-video assistance to equipment rental to live production for events (audio, lighting, staging, video recording and editing, production



EVENT PRODUCTIONS

design, etc.). One of their newfound division partners is Ty Whitaker and his team at True Blue TV. The brand True Blue TV is synonymous with live video programming that appears on our social media, the University livestream site, and our TV channels.

Together, with the Marketing and Communications staff of social media, video, and still photography specialists, we can now serve all your needs with a streamlined, coordinated effort. Creative Marketing Solutions (CMS) offers print and digital design, photography, and content creation services to our University community.

Our **CMS Printing** works with state-of-the-art equipment in producing the

University's wide array of publications. Its retail shop in the Student Union, Blue Print Solutions, is also the home to our popular wide-format printing service that produces banners, posters, signage, and the like. Students, faculty, and staff have found the retail counter at **Blue Print** the go-to place for those quick printing needs.

Let our award-winning Marketing and Communications team communicate your message. Our staff offers skilled, professional assistance from event production to branding, from design and content to the finished product . . . print, video, and more!

Visit mtsu.edu/mac/services.php



STUDENT LIFE

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

Thousands of freshmen participate in our Connection Point student involvement program each semester. Here are some past and future highlights:

- During fall 2021, the Connection Point program once again offered an eclectic slate of exciting programs to help our students engage with the campus community. While this effort is designed mainly to involve our first-semester freshman students with out-of-classroom activities, upperclassmen also attend many of the events in large numbers. Some of the events: Rep Your Roots, Fight Song competition, *Cruella* movie on the Student Union Commons, Student Organization Fair, MTSU football games, and comedy night.
- Future events will include the Student Organization Fair, Fraternity and Sorority Meet and Greets, Midnight Movies at Premier 6, Black History Month/Women's History Month keynote speaker, Student Appreciation Week tailgate, Mardi Gras men's basketball game, Wear Pink women's basketball game, and Signature Events concert.

For a detailed calendar, visit: mtsu.edu/campuslife/connectionpoint.php#connectionpoint

connection point

Building upon a strong legacy of outstanding accomplishments in student success, work continues to implement MTSU's Quest 2025.

Building upon a strong legacy of outstanding accomplishments in student success, work continues to implement MTSU's Quest 2025.

Quest 2025 is an expansive plan dedicated to graduating students who are prepared to thrive professionally, committed to critical inquiry and lifelong learning, and engaged as civically, globally responsible citizens.

Five primary strategic priorities have been identified, and work groups representing each of the areas have been engaged in several initiatives to implement Quest 2025. A sampling of the work underway is noted below.

Strategic Priority 1: Invest in a comprehensive faculty development program that includes the integration of high impact practices in key curricula.

- Approval has been granted for MTSU's Center for Organizational and Human Resource Effectiveness to assess the needs of the Learning, Teaching, and Innovative Technologies Center (LT&ITC), focusing on organizational structure, staffing, funding, budgeting, and financial processes.
- Several inclusive teaching workshops have been hosted in the LT&ITC.

Strategic Priority 2: Eliminate achievement gaps and increase the diversity of faculty and staff.

- Student Success check-ins were sent to all professors of the 421 African American freshmen.
- The Black Faculty and Staff Association is being reenergized.
- The position of assistant to the president for inclusion and community engagement has posted and closed. Initial interviews have been completed.
- Open educational resources (OER) work continues with an attribute now in Banner to let students know which courses are using no-cost OER.
- MTSU's THEC Quality Assurance Funding initiative prioritized work with underrepresented and minority students when selecting populations for the 2020–25 funding cycle.

Strategic Priority 3: Increase online, hybrid, and off-site offerings; adaptive scheduling; and curricular flexibility.

- Trey Martindale, chief online learning officer, held more than 30 meetings with department chairs and faculty to support and facilitate the creation of online degrees and certificates.
- University Studies and MTSU Online are developing an accelerated professional program in Public Safety.

- MTSU Online is reviewing all processes and forms to streamline registration, advising, and financial aid processes for students.
- MTSU Online is reviewing student support structures and is monitoring student use of the new tutoring service (TutorMe).
- MTSU Online is expanding its new web presence.
- MTSU Online is developing a marketing strategy using various social media to target potential students.

Strategic Priority 4: Create and support a culture of service through all divisions of the University.

- Student supervisor training was initiated in fall 2021 with library supervisors. This training is being refined to offer to other campus supervisors.
- A forum focused on “creating a culture of service” highlighted work by the College of Graduate Studies.
- MTSU's Ocelot chatbot initiative is in implementation with ITD

Strategic Priority 5: Invest in a campuswide environment that fosters living-learning opportunities.

- MTSU currently has a THEC-disclosed Campus Quadrangle Improvements project (\$1,700,000 total) to update the Library/Science Building quad. This project scope will include sidewalks, gathering spaces, and other site amenities along this quad.
- The proposed 2022–23 capital budget outlay project is a \$51,900,000 project to comprehensively renovate both KOM and Rutledge Hall. Scope will also include outdoor gathering spaces adjacent to these buildings. This project is contingent on MTSU board approval and capital funding. If we are awarded this funding, this project would start in July. This project is now second in line for funding at THEC.

Quest 2025 is important to the future of our institution, and campuswide engagement and support are crucial. The Quest, with its call for a distinctive and successful student college experience, is central to the goal of MTSU's academic master plan, The Reach to Distinction.

For more information about the action items each work group has underway, please contact Rick Sluder or Vincent Windrow.

STUDENT SUCCESS UPDATE



MTSU has become a national thought and practice leader in student success. The Office of Student Success, which I created almost a decade ago, is at the heart of all student success efforts at MTSU.

The office works to enhance the institution's persistence, retention, and graduation rates

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.

Here are some key updates from the Office of Student Success:

MTSU'S DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAM, AN OPPORTUNITY TO EARN EARLY COLLEGE CREDITS

Since launching in fall 2015, the University College's Dual Enrollment Program has enrolled thousands of high school students, providing them with an opportunity to earn college credit and connecting them to MTSU's campus early. The program has continued to grow over the last several years, and opportunities exist to push further and deeper to connect with academically talented high school students.

Across the nation, programs that enroll high school students in college courses are experiencing unprecedented growth. The opportunity to get ahead and save money on a degree resonates with students and parents alike, and high schools are seeking new EPSOs (early postsecondary opportunities) for their students. MTSU's program meets this demand, while immersing students in an MTSU experience at a critical point in the college selection process.

MTSU dual enrollment students can complete a full year or more of college credits leading to a degree, at minimal cost and while finishing high school. The savings are significant—as much as \$10,000 compared to current undergraduate tuition rates—and **a student's first four courses are tuition-free, thanks to a state grant.**

Perhaps most important, the program seeks to emphasize participants' status as full-fledged MTSU students and the opportunities that come with that.

There's more to MTSU's dual enrollment than taking courses, and the hope is that by making the students part of the MTSU community, we'll give them a sense of belonging that extends after graduation from high school.

ACADEMIC ADVISING, AMP, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Heather Boyett, an advisor in the College of Liberal Arts, was recently appointed as advising fellow for professional development. In this role, Boyett will continue the tradition of excellent leadership by serving as chair of the AMP Professional Development Committee, working collaboratively with the group to provide best-in-class development opportunities for MTSU advisors. She has been working in the advising role for two years and has a passion for lifelong training, professional development, and helping other advisors and students reach their full potential.

The Advisor Mastery Program (AMP) is MTSU's professional learning community created and sustained by advisors to foster communication, collaboration, commitment, comradery, and continued growth for the benefit of students,

LEARNER SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Under the leadership of **Cornelia Wills**, director of student success, tutoring at MTSU continues to greatly benefit our students. By request of the academic colleges, tutoring was once again offered in a hybrid format—on ground and via Zoom. This response to the needs of students in an ongoing health- and safety-conscious environment provided opportunities for students to receive tutoring without having to interact in person.

With the health and safety of our students and employees in mind, in collaboration with MTSU Information Technology staff, Wills led the effort to develop a QR code scan system, first used in fall 2021. This platform provides a touchless way for tutors to log in and students to check in and out of tutoring sessions without multiple touches at a kiosk. This new platform also allows streamlined reporting. The Office of Student Success can now quickly report not only aggregate tutoring usage data but also data by race/ethnicity and gender. This will assist our Quest 2025 effort to identify learner support opportunities that contribute to helping eliminate achievement gaps.

We are excited to continue enhancing our traditional tutor training with a self-paced, online tutor training component. Endorsed by the College Reading and Learning Association, the training focuses on topics that are foundational to being excellent tutors.

Study Skills tutoring helps develop the foundational skills needed to be a successful student. Emphasis is placed on when and where to study, time management, notetaking, and memory skills. Data consistently show that students who go for study skills tutoring (as well as other tutoring courses) at

the University, and advisors. During the 2021–22 academic year, AMP is dedicated to focusing on the theme of “invest in yourself” because we truly believe that engaging in professional development gives advisors a multitude of opportunities for growth and can reflect the investment advisors have put into their practice of serving students.

Every semester, the AMP committee plans and hosts several events to help advisors across campus network and grow in their profession. The committee also provides resources and opportunities for advisors to gain professional development outside of MTSU. We believe these efforts are an investment worth making, one that allows advisors to learn and lead so they may help our students learn and lead during their time at MTSU and beyond.

MTSU make better grades, persist, and are retained at a higher percentage. As an example, during this past fall semester, a prescribed class went for three sessions of study skills tutoring—when and where to study, notetaking, and how to prepare for tests.

Out of the 25 students in the class, nearly half (12) made the Dean's List; of the students who made the Dean's List, four did so with a 4.0 grade point average. These amazing results have been produced consistently in many prior semesters as well.

Also led by Wills, supplemental instruction (SI) helps students raise their grades in the most challenging courses. Supplemental instruction is available in courses that include biology, chemistry, mathematics, history, recording industry, and exercise science. In all, nearly 30 courses were SI-assisted in fall 2021 with 27 students serving as SI leaders. New this spring will be the addition of a management course to the SI roster.

Tutoring is available in over 180 courses such as biology, mathematics, accounting, history, psychology, and recording industry. For spring 2022, both tutoring and supplemental instruction will be delivered using a hybrid approach. Discussions have begun around extending tutoring opportunities for summer school sessions as well.



WRITE-ON! PROGRAM

Writing is fundamental to success in college and beyond. The Write On! program serves freshman students from underrepresented populations who need support in their first-year writing courses. The Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) grant-funded program (\$47,400) directs students to the University Writing Center and hosts one-on-one writing sessions. Additionally, students are encouraged to attend the Student Success Workshops hosted by the Office of Student Success throughout each semester.



ACCELERATED MENTORING

The Accelerated Mentoring Program targets underserved incoming freshmen and transfer students. A \$50,000 TBR grant funds the program through July 2022. A critical component of the program is Student Success Checks (SSC). Scholars Academy manager Brelinda Johnson developed SSC, an early alert tool, through MTSU's Navigate platform to bridge the communication gap between students, student success coaches, academic advisors, and faculty. Instructors of students in the program were asked to complete an SSC around the fourth and 12th weeks of the fall semester. The Student Success team would then meet with the students one-on-one to develop strategies for success. Ninety percent of the Accelerated Mentoring participants are registered for the spring semester. The program also disbursed microgrants that supported students financially.

INTERMEDIARIES FOR SCALE

MTSU is one of just 16 institutions nationwide selected to participate in a two-year program called Intermediaries for Scale (IFS), funded by the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Our overarching goals in this initiative center around supporting current and prospective MTSU students in their journeys to graduation. This means sharpening our abilities to support all students, with an emphasis on underrepresented, low-income, and first-generation populations. This also means eliminating equity and opportunity gaps, increasing access to educational and support resources, and much more. All of these objectives are consistent with MTSU's commitment to supporting all students, Quest 2025, and our focus on continually improving upon the work already taking place on our campus. The first phases of this work include campuswide administration of the Institutional Transformation Assessment, which will help the IFS leadership team identify opportunity areas through which to pursue these goals. As part of these planning processes, MTSU is also eligible for funded services like technical support, professional development, consultant services, and more. We are very proud to be a part of this distinguished national cohort. For more information, contact Rick Sluder (dean of University College and vice provost for student success) or Brian Hinote (associate vice provost for data analytics and student success), who are leading this important work.

REBOUND

In its seventh year, REBOUND supports freshman students who earn below a 2.0 grade point average their first fall semester at the University. For the previous six years, students who qualified for the program and participated were 50% more likely to return for their sophomore year than those students who qualified but didn't participate. Over the winter break, 533 students were contacted several times and invited to take part in the nationally recognized program led by Vincent Windrow. Academic advisors work with each participant to reposition them in the right courses for the spring semester. Over 100 students were expected to attend the early arrival program before the semester began.



Several important IT projects taking shape at MTSU truly highlight our collective focus on student success.

ACADEMIC AND INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY UPDATES

The Learning, Teaching, and Innovative Technologies Center (LT&ITC) provided 115 consultations last semester, giving technical, pedagogical, and design support.

The center also hosted:

Eight faculty learning communities:

- Connecting Online Grad Students to the University Community
- Daring Pedagogy
- Incorporating Experiential OER Badges and Certifications to Enhance Student Learning and Workforce Preparedness
- Integrating Practical Data Skills into the Classroom
- Motivational Interviewing as Pedagogy
- Successfully Engaging Students in Virtual Classrooms (2 groups)
- Using Integrative and Reflective Thinking to Promote an Inclusive Campus Culture
- Wikipedia for Scholars and Students

Three book/research groups:

- Ungrading
- ePortfolio as Curriculum
- How the Word is Passed

Faculty mentoring:

- Faculty Fellows—32 started the process this fall
- The 2021 Faculty Fair was held in November, and the LT&ITC recognized the 40+ Faculty Fellows who completed the program in 2020 and 2021. (We did not have a 2020 Faculty Fair because of COVID-19.)
- Women's Associate Professors Mentoring Group—30 participants

During the fall semester, the LT&ITC and Faculty Instructional Technology Center (FITC) also offered more than 40 workshops on a variety of topics such as Zoom, Panopto, D2L, and Microsoft Teams. Total participation was 1,281, averaging more than 30 participants per workshop. Starting Jan. 6, the FITC began a series of D2L workshops,



focusing on such popular tools as the gradebook, quizzes, question libraries, rubrics, and discussion. As always, these workshops are available to anyone working at MTSU. You can register at mtsu.edu/workshops.

AI CHATBOT “LIGHTNING”

In partnership with Academic Affairs and the Division of Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Academic Services, ITD is implementing a new chatbot this spring—appropriately called “Lightning”—featuring artificial intelligence to provide an always accessible on-demand platform to answer students’ questions ranging from admissions to financial aid and advising.



ENTERPRISE DIGITAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

In partnership with the Albert Gore Research Center, MT Athletics, James E. Walker Library, and the Division of Marketing and Communications, ITD is researching and proposing implementation of campuswide digital assets management

software. This tool will not only allow departments to control and manage their digital assets but also create a common search allowing faculty, staff, students, and the public access to the countless images, videos, and other files the University creates.

LOCAL ADMINISTRATOR RIGHTS EVALUATION

As part of our ongoing efforts to continuously improve our cybersecurity, ITD will evaluate the default level of user privileges on all MTSU devices to ensure universal and consistent compliance with University Policy 960, Access Control, which is based on industry best practices and mandates only the minimum privileges required to fulfill the user’s role. This means that local administrator rights will be reserved only for those individuals whose job duties require them. Look for communications from ITD later this year.



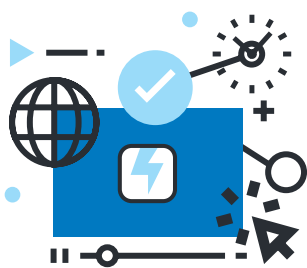
NEW WIFI INFRASTRUCTURE COMING SOON



ITD will begin implementing a new, state-of-the-art WiFi infrastructure platform powered by Cisco Meraki this year. This platform will provide an improved WiFi experience on campus, making WiFi network registration and onboarding of devices easier for users. The Meraki platform also will offer more modern and easily scalable functionality while helping to simplify administration of the campus WiFi network. Look for communications from ITD later this year.

WIRED NETWORK INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES

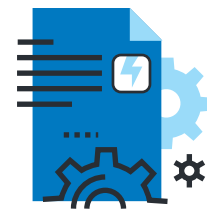
ITD will begin upgrading various major parts of the campus wired network infrastructure this year. This includes an upgrade to the network hardware that controls the campus connection to the internet, a lifecycle refresh of the campus core routing hardware and the campus data center network hardware, and a complete overhaul of the wired network supporting 30 buildings in Housing and Residential Life. These upgrades will bring key improvements in both network capacity and feature sets, helping us maintain a modern wired network infrastructure to support future growth.



ELECTRONIC RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION SOFTWARE

As the electronic research administration (eRA) solution, Cayuse will allow visibility into all our research proposals and documentation in one central place. Hence, oversight and reporting are much easier and quicker. In addition, the application will help simplify proposals and awards management from proposal creation to closeout in several important ways. Implementation will include protocol development, process management, disclosure, and compliance as needed for animal oversight, hazard safety, human ethics, outside interests, and training. Time and effort certification and reporting management will significantly reduce the administrative burden on faculty, allowing them to spend more time on what matters most: their research.

CLASSROOM SUPPORT AND DESIGN AND DESKTOP SUPPORT UPDATES



The Classroom Support and Design area is working on the following projects:

- **Digital Video Upgrade**—We are upgrading 118 classrooms with new digital video equipment to provide the best possible quality for remote teaching.
- **Control System Upgrade**—We are upgrading many outdated control systems in the classrooms to be able to remotely monitor the functionality of the equipment and remotely assist professors who are experiencing issues. These upgrades will allow the software to automatically send alert emails to ITD staff so we can make immediate adjustments from anywhere.
- **Installation of Ceiling Microphones**—We are installing ceiling microphones in 100 larger classrooms to better capture the sound for recorded classes and for remote participants to be able to hear better.

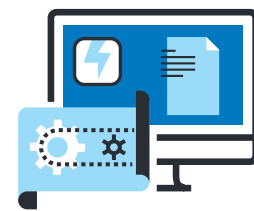
Each of these projects has been funded with HEERF money, which is helping to improve the classroom and remote experience for all students.

Classroom Support also will install approximately 400 new computers in student accessible areas and has pushed upgrades to all Pearl Mini recording devices in classrooms to enhance classroom recordings.

The Desktop Support team is working on the desktop refresh project. This includes 360 new machines for faculty and staff.

ITD continues to loan hotspots and laptops to students, faculty, and staff in need. We loaned 847 devices during the fall semester. To request a device, go to mtsu.edu/itd.

ENTERPRISE RESOURCE PLANNING CHANGE



MTSU faces a challenge as our enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, Ellucian Banner, approaches end of life. Soon, the current platform will cease to be supported by Ellucian, accelerating the need to transition to Ellucian's cloud technology or procure new systems, which would also be cloud based. The vendor transition to cloud-based environments will not allow modifications to code, which brings us to a time and place where we need to think about managing all business processes without code modification. The focus would be transitioning to a system that can modernize higher education operational platforms in finance, human resources, and student information.