

# NEWS & information

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Sidney A. McPhee

*Welcome to the  
Fall 2020 Semester!*



With the beginning of our fall semester, I am experiencing mixed emotions. The usual excitement this season brings as we welcome our students back and begin a new year of learning and exploration has been tempered with concern and caution as we deal with the impact of this pandemic. Our normal routines have been altered, and we begin each day recognizing that there are a number of unknowns that we must be prepared to address.

As we monitor infection rates on campus and in our local community, I understand the apprehension and anxiety among some of our employees and students. I am fully sensitive to their feelings, but I am also confident and comforted with the knowledge that we take steps to proactively address the needs and concerns of our campus in this pandemic. The success of our mitigation efforts will depend, in large part, on our citizens following CDC public health guidelines, including use of face masks, washing hands, and social distancing. I assure you that we are prepared to change, adjust, and/or pivot our reopening plans should the situation require it.

Essential to that effort will be my commitment to frequent and transparent communication with our entire University family. Through weekly updates, community town halls, and targeted communications when needed, it is my intent to keep you fully informed and abreast of our plans and mitigation strategies. Our executive leadership team is diligently working to fulfill our commitment to delivering the highest-quality education to our students while working to ensure the well-being of our community.

**MIDDLE  
TENNESSEE**  
STATE UNIVERSITY.

True Blue!

SIDNEY A. MCPHEE



## STAYING ON COURSE

With thousands of students, faculty, and staff members, MTSU is really the equivalent of a midsize city on a beautiful 550-acre campus. That all changed in early March as the COVID-19 pandemic struck, and we made the difficult but necessary decision to close the campus and move all instruction temporarily online after an extended spring break.

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## THE NEW NORMAL



Resuming on-ground instruction this fall will hinge on how well our MTSU community of students, faculty, and staff follows recommended health practices to deter the spread of COVID-19.

If you want to be on campus, if you want the University to continue to stay open, you need to do these things: wear a mask, wash your hands, and do the things that the CDC and our local and state health officials ask you to do.

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Overnight, the MTSU campus was a virtual ghost town.

On the first weekend that the campus was shuttered, I found myself thinking back to the incredible challenges this campus has faced in its past. In its more than 108 years, our community has experienced two world wars, the Great Depression, conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, desegregation, and the modern recession. Each time this campus and our Blue Raider family have emerged stronger, with an even greater sense of purpose and resolve. That history gives me confidence in the future of the University. I have no doubt that we will prove that once again, as we move beyond the health and financial challenges our world is facing.

Although our University was still during the pandemic, it did not sit still. Faculty quickly turned more than 3,000 courses into creative, challenging, (and according to some reports, even fun) remote learning opportunities. Meanwhile, students handled the major disruption in their lives with maturity and optimism, making a difficult situation manageable. I am truly amazed at how much we have been able to accomplish—much of which was achieved in record time. I am appreciative of our students, faculty, and staff, who were confronted with a crisis that upended their studies, plans, and lives, yet have persisted. I am particularly grateful for our faculty, who were

confronted with perhaps the greatest challenge of their careers and responded with resolve and innovation.

In the end, I feel as optimistic as ever about the future of MTSU. I know the character and values of our faculty, students, and staff. They have great capabilities and an amazing ability to handle challenges, no matter what they are. In the very near future, we will thrive, and that is directly attributable to each of them. Each of them is vital to our campus' success—no matter what role they play. The many examples of the positive ways the MTSU family handled the crisis gave new meaning to the phrase “True Blue,” which has come to reflect the identity of the MTSU community over the past decade.

Because of all this, I choose to be confident in our abilities to adapt to the changing and fluid dynamics of this pandemic. The task before me as president, working closely with our MTSU leadership team and University medical staff, is to chart a course that will allow us to welcome our incoming freshman class, new transfers, and returning students, as well as faculty and staff, to a safe and healthy campus for the new academic year. Please know that our actions ultimately will be guided by the advice and recommendations of the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and state public health officials concerning the coronavirus.



To assist the University in planning for the return of students and employees to campus, I appointed a diverse team of faculty, staff, and community leaders, led by Provost Mark Byrnes, to develop options and scenarios and submit recommendations on how we proceed as we reopen for the fall.

### Highlights of the report include the following:

- **The fall semester will be adjusted,** and students will not return to campus after the Thanksgiving break to reduce the potential for spreading the virus. All finals will be taken remotely, and the three in-person class days that will be lost will be made up by eliminating Fall Break and holding class on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.
- **We will implement stringent social distancing protocols while classes are in session on campus.** Students returning to campus will be welcomed by a host of signage and instructions related to social distancing, hand-washing, face coverings, and other public health precautions.





and its impact on our state and region.

Again, I want to emphasize that we will consider the health and welfare of our community with every decision we make. We will be prepared to adapt should public health guidelines or orders dictate that we alter our plans.

Please know that movement in one or more indicators will not necessarily trigger a change in our plans, as such a decision would be made upon the whole, rather than an individual statistic. However, while we remain committed to resuming on-campus operations for the fall term, we will move to an entirely remote and online instruction if the COVID-19 outbreak requires it.

We hope students, faculty, and staff will work together in taking every possible step to help mitigate the spread of the virus on our campus and in the community.

We appreciate the recent [decision by Rutherford County officials to mandate the use of face masks and coverings](#), and we hope that greater community awareness and participation in safe health practices will have a positive effect upon our area's COVID-19 statistics. [MTSU requires the wearing of face masks or coverings in all campus buildings.](#)

The University's [web page for COVID-19 information](#) will include a weekly updated count on the number of active COVID-19 cases among students and employees, based upon information reported to Student Health Services.

Rick Chapman, our director of Student Health Services, has been identified as the MTSU point of contact for COVID-19 questions. The University has a dedicated phone number and email address to which you may direct COVID-19 questions not addressed in our other resource information. This will allow the current Student Health Services phone number and email address to continue to serve the medical needs of our students.

- **Faculty will prepare a multi-platform mix of instructional delivery to students** (some courses will occur on ground with social distancing, some remain online, and some will be delivered in a hybrid format) to ensure that we as a campus community remain ready to pivot on a dime should the need to quarantine arise again.
- **MTSU invested \$3.5 million in video/audio upgrades to our classrooms** so that all class meetings can be captured electronically. MTSU devoted another \$3.4 million toward faculty laptops, online exam proctoring, and other software and equipment needs. This technology will enable faculty to make sure that all students, including those unable to come to class because of the virus, continue to receive the same high-quality education they enjoy during normal times. Much of this money comes from the CARES Act, but the University is putting in considerable dollars as well. We are determined to persevere in our educational mission, and this effort is central to doing so.

- **Space capacity limits will be implemented across the board.** Many classrooms will only hold one-third to one-half as many students as before, while some building spaces not traditionally used for classes will be opened up for instructional use to comply with distancing guidelines. In addition, changes to housing, on-campus events, and student services will be implemented to reduce population density on campus. Last, the University also will develop COVID-19 testing, isolation, and personal protective equipment protocols upon student return, and a temporary attendance policy has been established that encourages sick students to stay home while providing access to course materials for those who cannot come to campus.
- **This modified reopening seeks to minimize risk** while we continue to pursue our educational mission as best we can.
- **We will act quickly, but carefully, keeping the safety of our community at the forefront of our planning.** While we cannot predict the future, we can prepare for the possibilities that lie ahead. Will everything be just like it once was? Unlikely. But we will be prepared to adapt and evolve so that we remain efficient, effective, and even more relevant as our nation emerges from this crisis. We are aware that people have questions about our plans for this semester and that some will not be happy or pleased with the precautions we are taking. Please be assured that we will continue to address them as we learn more about the status of the virus





# THE NEW NORMAL

The following is a brief but comprehensive guide that we all must follow if we are to achieve our collective goal of on-campus instruction.

I also have included a list of improvements to cleaning protocols, residence and dining operations, and information technology and online access to address the new landscape for higher education delivery that we now face.



## Mask Requirement

(for students, faculty, and staff)

### 1. Do I have to wear a mask?

Masks or face coverings are required inside all campus buildings, including classrooms, labs, offices, and common areas such as hallways, stairways, elevators, restrooms, and other shared spaces. Masks and social distancing also are highly recommended when outdoors. Students who fail to follow all social distancing protocols, including wearing masks and maintaining 6 feet of distance, may be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. Faculty and staff who fail to follow all social distancing protocols may be reported to Human Resources Services.

### 2. How are we defining “mask”?

A mask is a face covering that fits snugly against the side of the face; completely covers the nose and mouth; is secured with ties or ear loops; includes multiple layers of fabric; allows for breathing without restriction; and can be laundered and machine-dried without damaging or changing its shape. Appropriate masks include disposable single-use paper masks with ear loops or ties, gaiters, balaclavas, and bandanas.

### 3. What happens if I forget my mask? Where will I be able to obtain one?

Academic departments will have a limited number of disposable masks for students who forget their masks. Administrative departments will have disposable masks

for visitors. Masks also can be purchased at MTSU’s Phillips Bookstore in the Student Union.

### 4. Will personal protective equipment (PPE) be provided to staff and students?

The University is providing reusable masks to all employees and students, along with reusable microfiber cloths, spray disinfectant, and no-touch thermometers to campus departments.

### 5. What should I do if I feel sick or if someone in my home is exhibiting symptoms?

- Do not go to campus.
- Separate yourself from other people.
- Monitor your symptoms.
- If you are a student, contact the Nurse Triage Line at Student Health Services at 615-494-7745 to report your symptoms and receive instructions about what to do next.
- If you are a faculty/staff member, contact your supervisor.

### 6. What happens if someone in my class is diagnosed with COVID-19?

- In a socially distanced classroom setting with all participants being 6 feet apart and wearing face coverings, the current Tennessee Department of Health view is contagion risk is low and no quarantine of classroom participants is necessary.
- However, in a non-socially distanced classroom without face coverings, Tennessee Department of Health officials will work to quarantine close contacts.

### 7. What if students decide that it is too risky to be on campus and want to move their classes to online or remote options, will they be allowed to do so?

Students wishing to move their classes from on ground to online or remote after the semester begins and after the Drop/Add period will need to consult with their instructors and advisor. Students who anticipate this possibility should enroll in online/remote options.

### 8. How will students know what’s going on in a class that they missed because they were sick or isolated? Will we video all in-person classes?

Classrooms are being equipped to stream classes live as well as record for later viewing. For classes where recording may not be appropriate, instructors will provide alternate materials. A **Videos** link appearing in the navigation bar for every course in D2L will provide recordings of all class meetings. Students diagnosed with COVID-19 will be able to make up missed assignments/have accommodations made so that they can finish their classes, either on ground or online.

### 9. What arrangements are being made for students who need internships or student-teaching assignments to complete their degrees?

Students whose degree plans require internships, teaching residencies, or clinicals should discuss plans for these courses with their instructor/advisor/program director.







## Faculty and Staff

### 10. What if a student refuses to wear a mask?

- Faculty should attempt to de-escalate the situation by inviting the student to pick up their things and to meet them outside the classroom. The faculty member should ask the student to put on a mask. If the student does, both may return to the classroom. If the student refuses, they should be asked to leave the building.
- Faculty should report the student to the Office of Student Conduct ([mtsu.edu/student-conduct](https://mtsu.edu/student-conduct) or 615-898-2750).
- If the student refuses to wear a mask and will not leave the building, faculty may either dismiss the class or call University Police (615-898-2424 from any phone or 911 from a campus phone).

### 11. What happens if my supervisor does not wear a mask or tells me to take mine off?

- ALL employees, including supervisors, MUST WEAR a mask inside any campus building, except in private offices.
- Failure to do so could result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

### 12. What should I do if someone contacts me about MTSU's safe return policies?

You may refer them to the MTSU COVID-19 Infoline at [mtsucovid19@mtsu.edu](mailto:mtsucovid19@mtsu.edu) or 615-396-9355.

### 13. Will I be allowed to work remotely?

Please see Policy 825-A COVID-19 Illness ([mtsu.edu/policies/personnel/825-A.php](https://mtsu.edu/policies/personnel/825-A.php)).

### 14. What happens if my student

### misses a class due to illness?

MTSU Policy 311 Class Attendance has been amended to account for face-to-face/on-campus absences due to COVID-19. If a student is ill and cannot be present for a synchronous remote class, they should contact their instructor.



## Technology and Facilities

### 15. Will computer labs be available?

MTSU's large computer labs—BAS S137, KOM 350/351/360, the Adaptive Technology Center (Walker Library Room 174), and the Walker Library computer lab—as well as other smaller labs scattered throughout campus will be available. They will have reduced capacity because of required social distancing. Assistants in larger labs will clean computers in high-use areas every hour. For departmental labs with no assistants, computers will be cleaned daily.

### 16. If my classes are online, will MTSU provide computer and internet access if I don't already have it?

Yes, MTSU has a limited number of Chromebooks, laptops, and hot spots available for checkout. Contact ITD.

### 17. Will there be workspaces on campus for students to use when they aren't in class or between classes?

- Campus computer labs will be open for students, along with various locations in Keathley University Center and the Student Union. Students will need to check the schedule of availability for spaces that also are being used as classrooms.
- In addition, wireless connectivity is being installed in some parking lots for students to use while in their cars.
- Walker Library will be open with limited occupancy. You can see the live occupancy numbers and library operating hours at [library.mtsu.edu/reopening](https://library.mtsu.edu/reopening).

### 18. What facilities on campus will be open?

- The campus moved to Phase 3 operations on Aug. 3, which means all offices are open and services are available. However, there may be modifications for safety reasons.
- All operating hours will be posted at building entrances and on their websites. For lab hours, students should consult their instructor or the lab manager.
- MTSU's Phillips Bookstore is open and applying safe practices for staff and customers. They also will order materials for you online with free shipping and curbside pickup.

### 19. How will Raider Xpress operate?

- Occupancy will be reduced to 50% capacity.
- Shields have been installed to protect drivers and passengers during loading and unloading.
- All occupants, including drivers, are required to wear masks.
- All buses will be completely wiped down/sanitized at the end of each shift.



## MTSU COVID Cleaning Protocols

For institutions of higher education, the CDC recommends normal routine cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces and objects (doorknobs, light switches, desks, tables, sink handles, countertops, etc.), using EPA-approved disinfectants against COVID-19.

In addition, the CDC has issued guidance for cleaning and disinfecting after a person suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 has been in a facility. These recommendations and guidance have been reviewed and incorporated in the cleaning and disinfecting standards for the campus as summarized below.



## Routine Cleaning/Disinfecting

Occupied facilities are being cleaned on a daily/routine basis with enhanced standards for cleaning/disinfecting high-touch surfaces or shared objects. These enhanced standards include:

- Adding disinfecting services to high-touch surfaces for all spaces currently being cleaned by Custodial Services. These services are performed:
  - \* Daily (in some cases overnight) for building spaces, classrooms, and labs
  - \* Multiple times a day for public areas, restrooms, gathering areas, elevators, etc.
  - \* Weekly for offices
- Providing supplemental disinfecting products to departments for their use on surfaces and shared objects on an intermittent, as-needed basis. These space categories include:
  - \* academic labs
  - \* computer labs
  - \* departmental office suites
  - \* others upon request and approval

In addition to the increased cleaning and disinfecting standards, it is anticipated, though not required, that faculty, staff, students, and visitors could and would use personal disinfecting products, such as wipes, as they would in other public venues.

## Cleaning and Disinfection after Persons Suspected/Confirmed to Have COVID-19 Have Been in a Facility

Once a person suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 is known to have been in a facility, cleaning/disinfecting of the facility, area, or space is required in accordance with CDC guidelines. This process begins with a requirement to notify Health Services of the person's health status. Health Services will confirm the health status of the individual and review the circumstances, such as timing of symptoms/confirmed diagnosis, social contacts, and facilities and spaces visited. During and immediately following the review:

- Health Services will notify the department to close off space(s),



if necessary, to meet the CDC time requirement before cleaning and disinfecting.

- The department will notify Facilities Services and coordinate/schedule the required cleaning and disinfecting services. Special requirements, such as sensitive equipment, are to be considered in the coordination.
- Facilities Services will perform the cleaning and disinfecting services and notify the department when the space(s) is available to be re-opened for regular use.
- Only authorized cleaning personnel should enter a space closed for cleaning.
- Other departments affected by the space closure (Maintenance, University Police, academics, etc.) will be notified to prevent a possible exposure.

## COVID Changes in Residence Halls

- Residence hall occupancy has been reduced, and every student is assigned to a private or single bedroom.
- Move-in was extended from three to five days prior to the start of classes.
- Residents will be expected to wear face coverings when outside of their individual rooms.
- Outside visitors are restricted from entering residence halls and student apartments.

- Overnight visitation is suspended indefinitely.
- Many community gathering areas, like lounges, practice rooms, and study rooms, are closed.
- Isolation and quarantine space has been set aside for residents who become ill.

## COVID Changes in MT Dining

- Dining area seating has been reduced to allow for 6 feet of distance between tables and chairs.
- Self-service and buffet-style dining has been eliminated.
- Contactless payment options will be implemented.
- To-go options and online pre-order with in-person pickup will be offered.

## COVID-Related IT Work

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted many new unexpected projects this year, some of which are listed below:

- Implemented Zoom enterprise collaboration software, conducted intensive week-long D2L and Zoom workshops with over 1,000 participants, supported on average 400+ Zoom meetings per day, helped move all spring and summer courses to remote delivery, transferred course materials into D2L for thousands of classes, and developed and implemented a system so that tutoring Zoom sessions can be scheduled automatically daily no matter how many students (or tutors) have signed up.
- Implemented new course delivery technology that has enabled utilization of a course delivery model referred to as HyFlex, where the course is delivered both in person and online at the same time by the same faculty member. Students can then choose for each class meeting whether to attend in person or online. The underlying concept is flexibility and student choice. An additional benefit of the HyFlex model is that the course material is available as a study aid and can be reviewed multiple times



to gain better clarity. After working with faculty focus groups, the new classroom setup now includes Panopto, Zoom, and classroom capture hardware and equipment. Panopto is being installed in more than 400 classrooms across campus. Recordings are automated for the faculty and integrated with class scheduling to automatically start and stop the recording according to the schedule of the class.

- Worked with University College to finalize selection of Examity as MTSU's online proctoring system. After finalizing procurement, it was installed in D2L. Training sessions are being held in August and September, with full availability for Fall 2020.
- Doubled VPN capacity in response to increased remote work demand.
- Developed a portal application for employees to accept the University's Return to Work Agreement.
- Developed a portal application for students to choose Pass/Fail grading for one or more of their classes in lieu of standard letter grading for the Spring 2020 semester.
- Purchased equipment to loan out, including webcams and headsets for faculty use, and gathered all available laptops from campus labs and classroom carts and prepared them with local administrative accounts for loaner distribution to students, faculty, and staff; loaned 1,468 devices to faculty, staff, and students during the spring semester; and created an automated checkout

system ([mtsu.edu/itd/equipment-request](https://mtsu.edu/itd/equipment-request)) for various devices to be loaned through the ITD Help Desk.

- Imported and provisioned all students in the Adobe admin console to take advantage of Adobe's temporary free Creative Cloud access for students during the pandemic.
- Implemented BlueID Online to enable the submission of online photos for an ID card.
- Virtualized some computer labs for students to use remotely.
- Developed a static MTSU website ribbon that directs readers of any MTSU web page to the latest COVID-related updates.
- Modified the CUSTOMS freshman and transfer student orientation system to accommodate students registering for virtual orientations.
- Configured remote access to College of Media and Entertainment Digital Animation Lab workstations.
- Implemented telehealth services with Microsoft Teams for Counseling Services and Early Learning programs.



## MTSU Online

With a distinguished 20-year history of quality distance education, MTSU Online continues to support our world-class faculty in serving students through online, hybrid, and remote delivery

courses. MTSU Online staff and faculty mentors have reviewed nearly 300 remote course sections in support of faculty and students this summer. This is in addition to 79 active online/hybrid course developments and 45 course redesigns, and on top of 40 completed developments or redesigns thus far during the 2020–21 academic year. MTSU Online also has provided dozens of hours of faculty consultation, support, and outreach in advance of Fall 2020 classes, and this unit's all-star instructional design staff has played a significant front-line role in this work. Despite remote work and other recent disruptions, MTSU Online business continues to advance at a brisk pace, with accelerated design timelines and a flexible, adaptable approach to supporting quality distance learning as a key strategic initiative at MTSU.

Specifically, enrollments in online and hybrid course sections have increased more than 70% between Fall 2019 and Fall 2020, on the heels of fall-to-fall and spring-to-spring enrollment increases of over 40% from 2016 to 2019. Importantly, the recent surge in growth does not include remote delivery courses, which are a direct result of COVID-19 disruption. Instead, these impressive numbers are a reflection of the extensive portfolio of over 700 (and growing!) online and hybrid courses at MTSU. As the recent *CHLOE 5 Special Report* notes, institutions that are heavily invested in online learning and extensive pre-pandemic distance learning infrastructures exhibit significantly better outcomes in response to the pandemic shutdown and the pivot to remote teaching. Such institutions, like MTSU, remain better prepared to meet the ongoing distance education challenges associated with the current pandemic. Still, there is much work to do, and MTSU Online leadership is diligently planning and collaborating with our campus partners to keep our institution well-positioned to navigate through and out of COVID-19 and to capitalize on the shifting landscape of distance education.





# ADMISSIONS

The Admissions and Recruitment staff has a whole new set of challenges for Fall 2020, as our partners in the high schools and community colleges either moved to online learning or dramatically reduced outside recruiters' access to their schools.

This undergraduate recruiting season, out of respect and concern for our prospective students, guests, and the MTSU family, we will not travel across the state and region for the True Blue Tour for the first time in decades.

Instead, we're developing a new program focused on our 70 highest priority feeder schools, which will be conducted remotely. Our highly successful True Blue Tour scholarship giveaways will still exist, but they will become school-based as part of a greater effort to encourage close partnerships between high school guidance counselors, many of whom are our graduates, and our recruiters. We're also working with our colleagues in Marketing and Communications to create a series of True Blue Tour-branded virtual get-to-know-us sessions geared to students in many of the cities we visited in past years. Stay tuned for more details.

Instead of our recruiters visiting schools, hosting information sessions, and staffing tables at college fairs, we'll be creating signature True Blue recruitment boxes to get information and promotional materials into the hands of our high school recruiting partners—who will, in turn, help share those with students.

We will be creating a new, one-year-only scholarship plan to draw back any student who was offered one of our guaranteed scholarships for Fall 2020 but decided to take a gap semester or year. Those students will be able to roll over their initial awards to Spring, Summer, or Fall 2021.

With the expectation that we won't meet as many of our students face-to-face, either in their high schools or on campus visits, Admissions is working with Marketing and Communications to improve our use of virtual recruiting tools and our social media presence.

One of our best sales tools is this beautiful campus, and we do want



students to be able to visit us. We will be offering campus tours a little differently this year. To allow for social distancing, we will offer tours hourly from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday–Saturday, hosting a smaller number of guests on each tour. The tours will not enter buildings but will rely on the virtual tour and video suite to show off our excellent academic and student-life spaces.

## ENROLLMENT

As always, the Division of Student Affairs and our Admissions team have worked throughout the year to recruit students and provide a vibrant learning and social environment.

When the coronavirus demanded changes, they quickly pivoted to address the challenges.

Seemingly, without missing a beat, they converted on-campus tours to virtual experiences—which mitigated much of the negative impacts we could have experienced.

Colleges and universities across the country are bracing for significant enrollment declines in the wake of the pandemic. Indeed, predictably, our new freshmen and new transfer numbers are down.

However, when coupled with the work by Academic Affairs to bolster graduate enrollment and improve student retention, we had 21,897 students registered for fall as compared to 21,500 students registered last year at this time which is 397 more students or **an increase of 1.85%**.

**Enrollments of new graduate students have more than doubled!** We have more than 1,000 new graduate students

enrolled for the fall term, as opposed to 492 at this same point last summer.

You can read more about the efforts by the College of Graduate Studies elsewhere in this newsletter. Many thanks to David Butler, our vice provost for research and dean, and the new associate dean, Dawn McCormack, for their leadership and results.

Avoiding a significant enrollment decline would be an impressive accomplishment in light of the unprecedented impact of the coronavirus on higher education across the country.

Meanwhile, **retention projections for last year's first-time and new transfer students are at their highest level in more than a decade!**

- Continuing undergraduates are up almost 3%!
- And continuing graduate students are up more than 1%!
- In fact, they're at the highest level since we began tracking such data in 2007.

These world-class retention numbers are a result of the leadership by Academic Affairs under Provost Byrnes, as well as:

- Rick Sluder, vice provost and University College dean
- Our deans and academic advising managers in each college
- And, of course, our wonderful academic advisors, whose hard work allows student success to be at the heart of everything we do at this University.

I AM *true* **BLUE**



# QUEST 2025

By any measure,  
MTSU has achieved  
tremendous success  
over the past few years.  
So what's next?

Especially today, operating in the midst of a pandemic, we at MTSU understand the dynamic nature of higher education. To be relevant, our strategic plans and our goals must change with the times. To remain on the cutting edge, we must do even more. We must project ahead. We must think boldly and act boldly. We must be our own architects for the future.

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

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

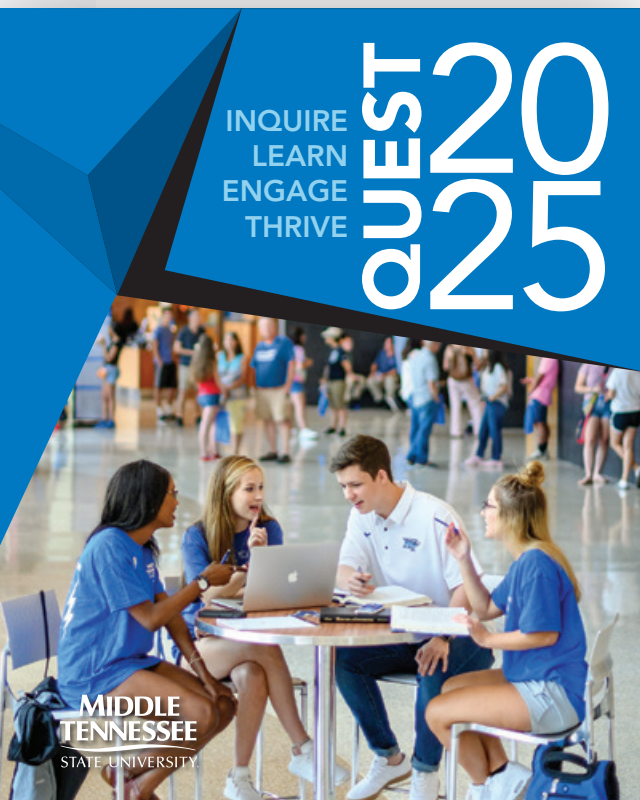
Quest 2025 focuses on student success marked by a deeper and broader academic and student life experience that extends learning beyond graduation. Quest 2025 deepens our commitment to develop lifelong learners by engaging students in the learning process, creating distinctive and effective student experiences, enabling students to build self-confidence, and preparing them for success in their careers and civic lives. Students will learn how to learn, how to ask the right questions, how to take risks and learn from their mistakes, and how to succeed personally and professionally. The ultimate goal is to graduate students who are prepared to thrive professionally, committed to lifelong learning, and actively engaged as citizens of their communities and the world.

The committee has developed three areas of focus. First, enhance the quality of the academic experience by helping faculty engage with students. Next, enhance the quality of the student life experience. And last, build an academic and student support network that facilitates learning.

The plan will include measurable goals. As a beginning point for Quest 2025, Provost Byrnes has convened the Implementation Work Group, led by Rick Sluder, vice provost for student success. Look for more information in the near future from this work group, which is focused on identifying a handful of primary strategic initiatives.

In summary, the Quest for Student Success 2025 underscores the University's core mission: to produce graduates who are prepared to thrive professionally, are committed to critical inquiry and lifelong learning, and are engaged as civically, globally responsible citizens. Such traits are especially relevant now.

For more information on Quest 2025, visit [mtsu.edu/quest](https://mtsu.edu/quest).







## STUDENT SUCCESS

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

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

#### Office of the Provost

The **Academic Performance Solutions** (APS) platform is a timely arrival at MTSU, given recent disruptions related to COVID-19. This comprehensive decision-support tool was adopted to provide University, college, and departmental leadership with important strategic planning and evaluation data. APS is designed to inform leadership, decision-making, and all of the other great work unfolding in our academic programs. Campus leaders can expect to see and hear much more about APS as we integrate this important resource into our work during and following pandemic disruptions at MTSU and as we work to enhance this platform in coming months. For more information about APS and/or how to access this powerful tool, contact **Brian Hinote** ([brian.hinote@mtsu.edu](mailto:brian.hinote@mtsu.edu)) in the Office of Student Success and MTSU Online, or **Becky Cole** ([becky.cole@mtsu.edu](mailto:becky.cole@mtsu.edu)) in the Office of the Provost.

#### Office of Student Success

Our early arrival programs, particularly the long-standing Scholars Academy, have for years been staples of summer learning and activity. Led by **Brelinda Johnson**, Scholars Academy manager, first-year retention rate projections have exceeded 80% for participants in both programs (Scholars Academy and STAR program) for the Fall 2020 semester. Although the STAR program was cancelled this summer due to COVID-19 concerns, the Scholars Academy hosted a virtual assimilation program for over 100 incoming freshmen to help them get off to a great

start at the University. In addition to her early arrival program leadership, Johnson directed the team's effort that was awarded a \$50,000 TBR SERS grant for RECOVER, an initiative aimed at supporting students who are on academic probation. Following the Spring 2020 semester's extended spring break and then the pivoting of all courses to remote formats, **Cornelia Wills**, director of Student Success, led the effort to deliver our learner support programming (tutoring and supplemental instruction) in remote formats. Astonishingly, tutoring utilization for Spring 2020 (4,959) far exceeded utilization for Spring 2019 (3,561) even with the COVID-19 disruption. Find more





on this successful effort at [mtsunews.com/free-mtsu-remote-tutoring-available](https://mtsunews.com/free-mtsu-remote-tutoring-available). Our major learner support initiatives will be in remote format for the Fall 2020 semester.

As a way to support and boost student success, **Vincent Windrow**, associate vice provost for student success, orchestrated the creation and distribution of the Ready Reference Resource to help faculty connect students to the many and appropriate campus resources. The resource, in an interactive PDF format, was also made accessible to sight-challenged faculty and students by the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance.

**Brian Hinote**, associate vice provost for data analytics and student success and interim chief online learning officer at MTSU, is one of only 12 higher education leaders nationwide to receive an invitation to join the EAB Academic Performance Solutions (APS) Product Advisory Council. This group is composed of the most progressive, respected, and experienced professionals and institutions with significant expertise in data and analytics technology. Hinote will play a pivotal role in this group and will network with experts at EAB and other institutions to collaboratively shape the direction of next-generation data and technology tools in higher education.

After years of technology and workflow development, the Navigate platform remains a key element of MTSU's strategic approach to student success, advising, and student support. Under the leadership of **Brelinda Johnson**, who

also serves as the assistant application administrator, the ongoing evolution of this powerful technology continues with the rollout of new features, improvements to existing functionality, and always ensuring that this platform meets the needs of our students and all of the campus colleagues working to support and enable student success at MTSU. As evidence of the impressive success associated with Navigate at MTSU, there were over 74,000 student appointments created, over 95,000 pieces of documentation logged, and more than 17,000 unique users over the past academic year. For more information about Navigate, contact Johnson ([brelinda.johnson@mtsu.edu](mailto:brelinda.johnson@mtsu.edu)) in the MTSU Office of Student Success.

### Advisor Mastery Program (AMP) 2019–20 Year in Review

This year marked the third successful year for the **Advisor Mastery Program (AMP)**. MTSU's advising team has dedicated time and effort not only to the success of our students, but also to the development of themselves as professional advisors. The AMP planning committee hosted and developed 24 on-campus professional development opportunities that included workshops, keynote speakers, iShares, and webinars. Advisors also had opportunities for professional development at conferences or through other learning tools such as teaching or taking classes, mentoring, or publication submissions that could apply to their AMP certification. Forty-six percent

of our advising community earned their Advisor Mastery Certification this year, and 85% of all advisors participated in professional development through AMP. Advisors receiving AMP certification increased over 10% from the previous academic year. It is important for MTSU advisors to be innovative and aware of best practices in advising. The AMP program is a valuable resource on campus for advisors to learn and develop to their fullest potential.

### Adult Degree Completion

Adult students have benefited from an increase in the availability of alternative class formats that allows them to choose from online and remote options to continue their education from home while working. This included the Applied Leadership Program intensive classes, which were offered remotely for the first time with great success. The experience now allows us to offer these classes to students in other areas of the country.

University College's online recruiting was expanded and conducted virtually using Facebook Live events. Sessions were held twice each week for four weeks with topics such as how to apply, programs presentations, prior learning assessment presentations, and more.

The Corporate Outreach team conducted several Zoom recruiting/Q&A sessions for prospective students at local companies. Employees were working remotely, so they were able to log on, view the presentations, and ask questions. The team also used Zoom meetings to make presentations to company Human Resource/Training personnel on UC programs.

## Congratulations

to the following advisors on their 2019–20 AMP Certification!

Alicia Abney  
Judy Albakry  
Jennifer Austin  
Karen Austin  
Brad Baumgardner  
Heather Boyett  
Paula Calahan  
Laura Clippard  
Ja'Net Davis

Amanda Doss  
Crystal Ellis  
Sarah Fossett  
Amy Foster  
Brandie Freeman  
Kerri French-Nelson  
April Goers  
Christina-Ann Graves  
Sarah Gregory

Kristen Janson  
Stacey Jones  
Dauthan Keener  
Jessica Lance  
Bryanna Licciardi  
Bonnie McCarty  
Tamika Mitchell  
Sarah Morris  
Nichole Poe

Rodney Robbins  
Megan Russell  
Lauren Solina  
Emily Straker-Barak  
Danielle Swartz-Koufman  
Mariahn Watkins  
James Wicks  
Megan Williams





# ACADEMIC MASTER PLAN

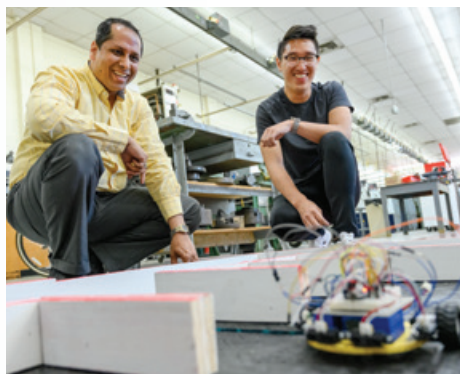
## The Reach to Distinction: Academic Master Plan at Midpoint

This fall, MTSU marks the midpoint of our Reach to Distinction Academic Master Plan for 2015–25.

Reach to Distinction is the University’s roadmap for setting academic goals and allocating resources. Philip Phillips, associate dean of University Honors College, chaired the University-wide effort to lay out this roadmap. Now serving as the plan’s implementation coordinator, Phillips leads a select team to chart progress on the plan’s three strategic directions.

### Promote engagement:

Our engaged academic community produces students and graduates who love learning; commit themselves to ethical and responsible practices; think critically; communicate effectively; adapt technology appropriately to learning, research, and problem-solving; and contribute meaningfully to and thrive in collaborative working environments. Steps taken include development and launch of the Quest for Student Success



2025 and successful implementation beyond expectations for the MT Engage Quality Enhancement Plan.

### Foster academic community:

MTSU continues to embrace diversity in its academic community because diversity and the free exchange of ideas are necessary to create knowledge; advance excellence in academic programs, scholarship, and the arts; and promote meaningful academic, civic, and professional engagement. Drawing upon current program strengths, our faculty have developed new programs in emerging and interdisciplinary fields. Steps taken include continued support for the Diversity Dissertation Fellows program and enhanced Disability and Access services, plus increased and sustained research, scholarship, and creative activity by faculty and students.

### Innovate for effectiveness and efficiency:

A fully engaged academic community calls for enhanced communication processes, informational resources, and infrastructure as well as ongoing assessment of the University’s strengths and receptiveness to opportunities that arise in the public and private sectors. Steps taken include new electronic platforms for curriculum review and approval, undergraduate and graduate catalogs, advising, and institutional effectiveness, and revised procedures that increased efficiencies in MT One Stop.

You can follow the University’s progress on the Reach to Distinction website



[mtsu.edu/amp](https://mtsu.edu/amp), which spotlights the achievements of students, faculty, and staff in moving the University forward. The complete Reach to Distinction plan and a midpoint highlights booklet are also available for viewing and download.

### Institutional Accreditation

2020–21 is the year of record for MTSU’s next review by our institutional accreditor, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

The University will submit its Fifth-year Interim Report in March 2022 to demonstrate continuing compliance with SACSCOC standards and to report on the impact of our Quality Enhancement Plan, MT Engage. I’ve charged a Fifth-Year Report Committee under the leadership of University Provost Mark Byrnes that includes representatives from across the University.

MTSU has been accredited by SACSCOC since 1928, and our last full reaffirmation of accreditation was in 2016. For more information, see [mtsu.edu/sacscoc](https://mtsu.edu/sacscoc).



# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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

The Office of International Affairs' mission is to create opportunities for faculty and students for global engagement and also to attract international students to our campus.

Despite the significant obstacles to international recruitment and travel stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, MTSU's international relations efforts and outreach continue at a high pace.

Here are some of highlights:

## Study Abroad

Study abroad is an integral component of any contemporary institution of higher education. MTSU strongly believes that to be prepared for the 21st century, our students must have an international perspective. To that end, I am pleased to report:

- MTSU offers more than 500 study abroad programs in locations such as Israel, Japan, the United Kingdom, and Costa Rica.
- In the previous academic year, we awarded 151 students \$129,775 in scholarships to fund study abroad.
- Three of our students have recently been awarded the prestigious Gilman Award, which will support their study abroad experiences with \$13,500.

- Two of our students have recently been awarded the Freeman-Asia Award, which will support their study abroad experiences with \$12,000.
- One of our former study abroad students has recently been awarded the Fulbright for teaching in Spain.

## International Enrollment

Given the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges imposed by it, we expect an overall decrease in the number of international students on campus. Despite these challenges, we firmly believe that MTSU is well positioned to be a leader in internationalization for the state of Tennessee. This is illustrated by the fact that we expect 109 new international students for Fall 2020. They represent 26 countries, with the greatest number of students coming from Saudi Arabia (39), the Bahamas (15), China (7), and India (7).

## Confucius Institute

Over the past 10 years, the Confucius Institute at Middle Tennessee State University (CIMTSU) has built a bridge to international opportunities for Tennessee students and the community. The Tennessee Department of Education, at the request of local school systems, utilized the consulting services of the CIMTSU to bring rare opportunities to learn Chinese language and culture to tens of thousands of Tennessee students.

China is constantly ranked as one of Tennessee's top three trade partners, and MTSU has made sure Tennessee students are able to participate in this global endeavor. While deeply appreciative of past success, the process to wind down programming at the CIMTSU has begun. In January, amendments to the current CIMTSU contract were ratified to ensure that the University has complete control of all programming and is in compliance with the proposed CONFUCIUS ACT that passed the United States Senate on June 10. In a proactive manner, MTSU's Center for Asian Studies (CAS), with the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, will continue to monitor the remainder of the Confucius Institute grant. The goal will be to continue to serve the MTSU community in not-credit-bearing work through cultural activities directed by MTSU faculty and staff.

CAS will begin the removal of Confucius Institute branding and conduct programming through direct university-to-university partnerships that are mutually beneficial. In the future, CAS will continue support for the MTSU Academic Master Plan, the Reach to Distinction, in the areas of focus on the internationalization of programs and partnerships, commitment to access and diversity, and creation of a welcoming, inclusive campus that is healthy and safe for all University publics, as well as continue support for special concerts and programming with guest artists from all over the world directed by MTSU faculty and staff.

# ACADEMIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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

## New Appointments

- **Beverly Keel**, dean, College of Media and Entertainment
- **Rick Vanosdall**, interim dean, College of Education
- **Robert Summers**, vice provost for international affairs
- **Nita Brooks**, interim vice provost for academic programs



## New Academic Programs

- Bachelor of Arts in Music
- Bachelor of Science in Horse Science

## Student Achievement

- **Jared Frazier**, a Chemistry and Computer Science student, was a recipient of the prestigious



Goldwater Award, which is awarded to the nation's most outstanding students in the natural sciences.

- Three MTSU students have received Fulbright Fellowships to teach abroad next year. **Brittany Johnson**, a Global Studies, Human Geography, and Foreign Languages major, will be teaching in Spain; **Joan Shock**, an Anthropology major, will be teaching in Romania; and **Demin Zawity**, a Psychology major, will be teaching in Malaysia.

- Two MTSU graduates, **Jessica Shotwell** and **Samuel Remedios**, who are now in



## Career Achievement

MTSU faculty members **Seth Jones** and **Hanna Terletska** hold a distinction no other MTSU professors have ever obtained—National Science Foundation Early Career Development (CAREER) grant recipients. The NSF CAREER awards support junior faculty who exemplify the role of teacher-scholars through research, education, and the integration of education and research within the context of the mission of their organization.

Given annually, the award comes with a federal grant for research and education activities for five consecutive years. Combined, their grants total nearly \$1.2 million. The recognition is considered NSF's most prestigious award for early-career faculty. NSF receives more than 50,000 competitive proposals for funding each year and makes about 12,000 new funding awards.

NSF awarded \$499,879 to Terletska, an assistant professor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy, for her "Beyond Ideal Quantum Materials: Understanding the Critical Role of Disorder and Electron-Electron Interactions" proposal. The development plan is a fundamental research, education, and outreach program that focuses on theoretical and computational study of functional quantum materials with strong electron-electron interactions and disorder. Terletska's award began May 1 and ends April 30, 2025.



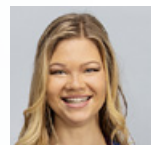
Jones, an assistant professor in the Womack Educational Leadership Department, earned a five-year, \$700,000 NSF grant for his "Supporting Statistical Model-Based Inference as an Integrated Effort Between Mathematics and Science" proposal. His research project seeks to design opportunities for middle school math and science teachers to coordinate their instruction to support a more coherent approach to teaching statistical model-based inference. Jones' award began Feb. 1 and runs until Jan. 31, 2025.

Both awards will include student involvement. David Butler, MTSU's vice provost for research and dean of the College of Graduate Studies, said NSF CAREER awards "are very rare and difficult to obtain as they are for the top junior scholars in their fields." Their success is a symbol of how MTSU is transforming into a research university, producing valuable research and development for the state of Tennessee and its citizens, fulfilling the role of a publicly supported state institution.

graduate school at other universities, have received National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships.



- **Gabriella Morin**, who is majoring in Biology and Foreign Languages, has received a statewide Harold Love Award Community Service Award, marking the third consecutive year that an MTSU student has won one of these awards.



## New Scholarships

MTSU unveiled three new guaranteed academic scholarships for qualified freshmen entering this fall, marking the first time such awards have been made available beyond the University's traditional Dec. 1 deadline. Applications for these four-year awards were accepted through Aug. 14:

- **Lightning Scholarship** (\$3,000 a year, 30–36 ACT, 3.5 GPA)
- **Blue Raider Scholarship** (\$2,000 a year, 25–29 ACT, 3.5 GPA)
- **Future Alumni Scholarship** (\$1,000 a year, 23–24 ACT, 3.5 GPA)



## Day on the Hill

MTSU trustees, administrators, and faculty turned the State Capitol in Nashville “True Blue” during its annual legislative outreach Feb. 25. The delegation included Board of Trustees Chair Stephen B. Smith, Trustee J.B. Baker, former House Speaker Beth Harwell, and myself. Harwell now serves as an MTSU Distinguished Visiting Professor. The group met with Gov. Bill Lee, Lt. Gov. Randy McNally, and House Speaker Cameron Sexton, along with other legislators. Several lawmakers and key aides attended a lunch hosted by the University to recognize students serving as legislative interns through the College of Liberal Arts and student journalists covering the General Assembly for a College of Media and Entertainment class. Among other topics, MTSU reported on the progress of its many ready-to-work programs and success in producing college graduates for the state’s economy.



## Presidential Visit

MTSU officials, myself included, were invited to the White House earlier this summer as part of a panel of education leaders who shared plans to reopen the nation’s schools and universities this fall while combatting COVID-19 concerns. Traveling with me to confer with President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence at the event were Board of Trustees Chair Stephen B. Smith and newly appointed Student Trustee **Delanie**



**McDonald.** McDonald, a Buchanan Fellow, told President Trump that MTSU had done an exceptional job of updating students and

reassuring them that we are working tirelessly for a safe return to campus. I emphasized to the president that during the COVID crisis, we kept our residence halls open, we kept our cafeteria open, and we provided the same services to our on-campus students who had nowhere else to go, obviously taking in consideration the virus.

## MT Tuition Free

MTSU is spreading the message to prospective students and families about MT Tuition Free.



With the lowest tuition and greatest value of the state’s three major comprehensive universities, tuition and fees at MTSU can be covered by federal aid and other scholarships, such as the HOPE scholarship, for students who fall within the income and academic criteria set by state and federal governments.

## Virtual Commencement

Two virtual commencement ceremonies livestreamed via Facebook Live celebrated our May and August graduates. Each graduate also received a True Blue Graduation Box in the mail. On April 29, and again in August, the University hosted a virtual stole ceremony for graduating student veterans.



## True Blue Volunteerism

At the behest of Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee, MTSU used 3D printers to help health care workers guard against COVID-19. Participants included Walker Library, the Department of Art and Design (Sculpture), and Mechatronics Engineering.

## Top Rank

MTSU’s Jennings A. Jones College of Business continues to rack up impressive rankings in national lists. The Risk Management and Insurance program achieved the No. 1 national ranking in the latest *Best’s Review* survey of leading college insurance and risk management programs. The program transitioned from a concentration to a full major four years ago.

In addition, the MTSU Master of Professional Studies concentration in Training and Development was nationally ranked No. 2 for most affordable and No. 5 as best online program by OnlineMasters.com.

## Global Recognition

The Casualty Actuarial Society (CAS) recently announced that MTSU’s Actuarial Science program in the College of Basic and Applied Sciences was one of four recipients of its international 2020 CAS University Award Program. The society praised the innovative and exemplary ways our program is preparing students for a career in the property and casualty insurance industry. A part of MTSU’s Mathematical Sciences, Actuarial Science trains students to apply math skills and statistical techniques to manage risks and solve problems in insurance and pension programs. Combining math and business courses, the program allows graduates to pursue newly emerging careers with well-paying jobs that are in high demand.



## Friend of the Educator



MTSU College of Education Dean **Lana Seivers**, a former state commissioner of education under then-Gov. Phil Bredesen, retired June 30. During her tenure working at her alma mater, Seivers led the development of MTSU's one-of-a-kind Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree, reorganized and improved the student teaching program, improved relationships with school districts statewide, and dealt adroitly with the seemingly unending challenges facing public education and those who prepare our future teachers.

## Constructing the Outbreak



**Katherine A. Foss**, professor of Journalism and Strategic Media, provided national expertise on the portrayal of the novel coronavirus in the media and in political commentary during the spring crisis. Foss' latest book, *Constructing the Outbreak*, demonstrates how news reporting on epidemics communicates more than just information about pathogens—how prejudices, political agendas, religious beliefs, and theories of disease also shape the message. Analyzing seven epidemics spanning more than 200 years—from Boston's smallpox epidemic and Philadelphia's yellow fever epidemic in the 18th century to outbreaks of diphtheria, influenza, and typhoid in the early 20th century—her book covers how shifts in journalism and medicine influenced the coverage, preservation, and fictionalization of different disease outbreaks. Through this investigation into what has been preserved and forgotten in the collective memory of disease, Foss sheds light on current health care debates, like vaccine hesitancy.

## A Civics Center



**Ken Paulson**, former dean of the College of Media and Entertainment, has created and helms MTSU's new Free Speech Center—a First Amendment advocacy hub that aims to provoke thoughtful discussion and discourse at college campuses across the nation. Nonpartisan and nonprofit, the



## More Grammy Gold

MTSU alumni gave Grammy gold a "True Blue" tint on Jan. 26 when two graduates' talents took them straight to the Staples Center stage in Los Angeles to accept Grammy Awards as the year's best in music engineering and songwriting. Recording Industry graduate **F. Reid Shippen** ('94) hauled home his fifth career Grammy, this time for engineering Gloria Gaynor's Best Roots Gospel Album, *Testimony*. And **Aaron Raitiere**, a 2009 M.F.A. alumnus, won his first Grammy for co-writing "I'll Never Love Again" for *A Star is Born* in the Best Song for Visual Media category. Nine MTSU graduates

in all were nominated for their work at the 62nd annual Grammy Awards. MTSU now has 11 winners with a total of 32 Grammys since 2001 in multiple categories and genres. Alumni, former or current students, and faculty from across the University have been a part of more than 75 Grammy Award nominations in the last decade. Nominees were honored during MTSU's seventh annual Grammy weekend gatherings, where alumni and former students are saluted and current students travel with faculty and staff to learn firsthand about the awards in backstage and pre-show events.

## A Life in Pictures

MTSU Photography Professor Emeritus **Harold L. Baldwin**, who guided and encouraged the vision of thousands of students and who assembled a million-dollar-plus photographic collection for the University during a 32-year college teaching career, died March 19 at age 93. Baldwin's permanent campus collection includes works by such artists as Ansel Adams.



Free Speech Center is dedicated to building awareness and support for the First Amendment through education and information. Paulson served as president of the Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center on Vanderbilt University's campus in nearby Nashville for more than a decade. Paulson's lifetime crusade to protect the freedom of the press and his accompanying new venture at MTSU arguably could not be happening at a more relevant or critical time. One of the first major initiatives of the Free Speech Center at MTSU is a national campaign featuring a diverse group of American celebrities—ranging from

Kane Brown to Loretta Lynn—with a much-needed message about the value of journalism in the COVID-19 age and in these times of social unrest stemming from racial inequalities.

## Music U.

MTSU's Department of Recording Industry landed on *Billboard's* annual list of America's top music business schools for a seventh year in 2020, recognized again for its longevity and its reputation for producing ready-to-work music industry professionals. Now in its 46th academic year, the department boasts more than 1,200 students.



## Ready for Takeoff

MTSU's Department of Aerospace recently received delivery of six new Diamond Aircraft 2020 DA 40 XLT airplanes to its student training fleet, and the Austria-based manufacturer also refurbished 13 aircraft in the University's existing fleet. The final two new planes arrived June 19. Diamond imported them to the U.S./Canadian border, and University officials picked them up near Detroit. MTSU received the first four planes from Diamond in April. MTSU Aerospace has grown into one of the most respected aerospace programs in the nation. Seventeen full-time faculty members, 75 flight instructors, and around 1,000 majors place it among the largest of the nation's collegiate aviation programs. It now has a fleet of 27 Diamond aircraft.

## Growing Fast

MTSU launched the new concentration in Higher Education for the Assessment, Learning, and Student Success Ed.D. program, including the addition of 31 students into that concentration this summer and fall.

## National Runner-Up

The Blue Raider Debate Team finished second in the nation as a squad in the International Public Debate Association (IPDA), which had almost 100 schools participating in the 2019–20 tournament season. Sophomore **Anastasia Ortiz** was the No. 2 speaker in the country in IPDA competition. Ortiz and her debate partner, sophomore **Graham Christophel**, also were the No. 2 team in the U.S.

## Real-World Experience

Thirteen students from MTSU's Department of Media Arts honed their skills by working as pre-show or telecast crew members for the 53rd annual Country Music Association (CMA) Awards. The students, who are studying multi-camera television production, were selected from the crew that did ESPN+ telecasts of Blue Raider volleyball and soccer games last fall. Eight students worked the CMA Awards show on ABC at Bridgestone Arena last November as talent production assistants. Five others helped on the red carpet show, produced by WKRN-Channel 2 in Nashville using MTSU's mobile production truck and shared with 30 ABC affiliate stations.

## New Concentration

A new academic concentration at MTSU will help students promote greater understanding of health and health care. Beginning in the Fall 2020 semester, Communication majors have the option of pursuing a special concentration in Health Communication. In addition to taking the core communication classes, students will learn about such issues as patient-provider communication, internal hospital communication, and influencing behavior change for optimal health outcomes. While the curriculum was in the works long before the coronavirus began to dominate the headlines, the timing of the new concentration is beneficial in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## We Salute You

Jones College Dean **David Urban** was awarded the honorary title of "Colonel, Aide de Camp," the highest honor for a citizen of Tennessee, by Gov. Bill Lee, in recognition of Urban's outstanding service to the state. State Rep. Mike Sparks nominated Urban for the award.



## National Scope

**Richard Pace** (Sociology and Anthropology), **Paul Chilsen** (Media Arts), and MTSU students traveled to the Amazon in Brazil to help local filmmakers utilize a \$70,000 grant from *National Geographic* to produce a film entitled *Indigenous Filmmaker Warriors in Defense of Biocultural Conservation*.

## Supplying the Fourth Estate

MTSU student journalists won 10 first-place awards and numerous seconds and thirds in the annual Associated Press news competition. In Best of Show category, MTSU students won awards in two of the four categories. **Leon Alligood** and **Christine Eschenfelder** were the faculty mentors for these students.

## Military-Concentrated

University Studies faculty member **Ryan Korstange** was awarded a Tennessee Veteran Reconnect Grant for \$61,951. This grant is sponsored by the Tennessee Board of Regents and seeks to fund a small team of researchers to spend 18 months working to understand key aspects of student veteran transition during the first year of enrollment at the state's four-year universities.

## A Teaching Library

**Karen Dearing** was named the 2020 recipient of the Tennessee Library Association's James E. Ward Library Instruction Award. This honor is given to a member of TLA who "participates in the planning, execution, or evaluation of a continuing program or special project of library instruction for an academic, school, public, or special library."

## MT Engage

The past year saw our first MT Engage major pathway students graduate. The program has now awarded scholarships to students from every college, and it will continue to support student learning for years to come thanks to a recently established endowed scholarship. Year five finds MT Engage faculty committed to fostering beyond-the-classroom experiences and integrative thinking even in virtual settings, and Liberal Arts M.A. faculty led by **Janet McCormick** are exploring the possibilities for MT Engage offerings at the graduate level.





# DANIELS CENTER

MTSU's Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center (Daniels Center) is the largest and most comprehensive veterans center on any Tennessee higher education campus. It enables the more than 1,000 military-connected students on campus (and remote) to have a one-stop shop to meet a variety of academic needs.

It is a place for our military-connected students to study, to gather, and to get help from fellow veterans, who will serve as peer advisors and sponsors.

Perhaps what is significant about this time for us is the partnerships—on and off campus—that are helping us give the highest level of service. For instance:

- We received a **\$10,000** grant from United Way of Rutherford and Cannon Counties and **\$4,000** from the Middle Tennessee Electric Sharing Change and TVA to assist military-connected individuals impacted financially by COVID-19.
- MT Engage provided a **\$1,000** grant, which we will use to promote participation and engagement among our military-connected students in the virtual

Rutherford County Heart Walk (American Heart Walk event).

- We had about **30** of our community partners attend the virtual Graduating Veteran Stole Ceremony on **Aug. 5**.

These are isolating times, so these partnerships are even more appreciated.

Sadly, earlier this summer, the center's namesake, Hall of Fame recording artist Charlie Daniels, died at the age of 83.

He was a dear friend and great patriot. Daniels' devotion to the men and women in our armed forces helped create and sustain our campus Veterans and Military Family Center that bears his name. We will miss our dinners together, his visits to campus, hearing him sing, and his tireless advocacy and hard work on behalf of our student veterans. Charlie's love of life and country was radiant and inspiring. We at MTSU shall work every day to sustain and extend his legacy through the good works of the Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center. Charlie will live on, not only through his music, but also through the lives lifted through his generosity.

# ADVANCEMENT

Private support continues to provide valuable resources for our campus.

2019–20 fundraising exceeded 2018–19 totals by more than **\$700,000**, ending the year at **\$10,797,629** (despite losing four months of donor interactions and formal solicitations).

Our colleges of Basic and Applied Sciences and Liberal Arts, in particular, showed significant increases in private support.

Our annual True Blue Give fund efforts set a record with over **\$420,000** in contributions from 1,284 donors toward scholarships, student emergency funds, academics, and athletics during the 72-hour online donor drive Feb. 12–14. Three out of every four MTSU students receive some sort of financial aid.

As just one example of the exciting partnerships MTSU continues to create, the University, through its Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Family Military Center, partnered with the Nashville Predators professional hockey club in launching the General's Fund initiative.

Through the new fund, the Predators and the Daniels Center will come together to support the local population of military-connected students who struggle financially to reach their higher education and career goals.

Predators fans, Bridgestone Arena patrons, or anyone in the community who is interested in getting involved can text "PREDS4MTVets" to 41444 on their mobile phone. They can also visit the MTSU Foundation website at [mtsu.edu/give](https://mtsu.edu/give).

The Nashville Predators and Bridgestone Arena will help raise money for the General's Fund for the upcoming season and beyond.





# CMS-PRINTING SERVICES

CMS-Printing Services has been working behind the scenes—from the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic to print and install a wide range of signage across campus, in advance of students' return for the fall semester.

The array of signs covers the spectrum from posters to window clings to floor graphics and more.

Even in these challenging times of workplace social distancing, the CMS-Printing Services staff has adapted extraordinarily well and has met all of its production deadlines.

All of this follows a nationwide trend among in-house collegiate printing operations from the early days of the pandemic as they were called into action to "get the word out." MTSU's CMS-Printing Services, like its peers across the U.S., rose to the occasion and excelled.



# CREATIVE MARKETING SOLUTIONS PHOTOGRAPHY



## YOU ASKED, WE LISTENED!

You said you wanted a simpler, faster, more understandable photography charge process. We get it.

**Photo assignments are now a flat fee for up to one hour.**

# \$50

Fee includes MTSU photographer's time up to one hour at the assignment, editing, inserting metadata, archiving, and an electronic contact sheet. **PLUS up to 12 images (up to 4 of print quality)** may be requested without an additional charge.

Images can be provided immediately (photographer will select) after the event, or you may send a request for specific images upon receiving the contact sheet. Please specify if you want images provided to you immediately for an online gallery.

Respond with your image requests within 2 weeks upon receipt of contact sheet, based on date of photographer's email. Indicate which images are for print as opposed to online, or we will send all online-resolution images.

Images requested after the 2-week period or additional images beyond this quantity will be charged on a per-image basis.

### OLD WAY

Assignment 1hr.:	\$20
Archiving: (20 images from shoot)	\$24
Images: (3 social media images)	\$15
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$59</b>
on two different invoices	

### NEW WAY

Assignment 1 hr.:	\$50
Includes photoshoot, archiving, and up to 12 images	
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$50</b>
on one invoice	

### Let's Get Started!

- Fill out forms at [mtsu.edu/creativesolutions](https://mtsu.edu/creativesolutions)
- Call our office at **615-898-2744**
- Email [photorequests@mtsu.edu](mailto:photorequests@mtsu.edu)



## GRADUATE STUDIES/ RESEARCH



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

### The College of Graduate Studies

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

We are experiencing pronounced increases in enrollments of new graduate students. They actually were double what they were last year in late summer: We have more than 1,000 new graduate students currently enrolled for the fall term, as opposed to 492 at this same point last summer.



Once again, many thanks to **David Butler**, our vice provost for research and dean of the College of Graduate Studies, and the new associate dean, **Dawn McCormack**, for their leadership in this area.



MTSU Graduate Studies temporarily offered a \$1 application fee (normally

\$35) to help support prospective students during the COVID-19 crisis. It also waived admission tests (GRE, GMAT, etc.) for many of its programs. This applied to Summer 2020 and Fall 2020 terms.

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

- We trended toward record fall enrollment (currently more than 30% over last year's enrollment).
- The new Data Science certificate program is in high demand and setting the model for future online/hybrid programs.
- The Faculty Fellows program is working on making the creation of high-quality, online graduate programs easier with a "Blue Print" outlining the process and providing helpful resources for faculty.
- A newly created online orientation not only will introduce new students to MTSU but will follow up with helpful information for them throughout their time on campus.
- Enhanced customer service and efficiency will more effectively connect potential students to graduate programs in our region and beyond.

- A focus on graduate student success/retention issues and support for graduate students will build on the undergraduate initiatives that have been so successful at MTSU.
- A strategic communications manager was hired and works with Marketing and Communications to make sure that we get information about our programs out to potential students. She is also maintaining our social media presence and is working with programs in their recruiting efforts.
- Working with Marketing and Communications to develop targeted campaigns with incentives (\$1 application campaign; waiving GRE and other test scores) has brought in applications. We also rolled this into our COVID-19 response to make applying to our graduate school more affordable in these difficult economic times.
- Also, our Information Technology Division performed process reviews for the college, redesigned these processes, and put forward a new system to automate the graduate application process, which helped resolve our application backlog. Simply put, more applications will not help if you cannot process them and enroll the students.
- **Nailah Herbert** (Sociology) won the Tennessee Conference of Graduate Schools Graduate Student Master's Thesis Award with her thesis, "I Do Not Weep at the World: Examining Black Women's Expressions of Selfhood and the Revolutionary Act of Claiming Experience and Identity" (chaired by **Ashleigh McKinzie**). This competition includes public and private universities across Tennessee.

### Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP)

During fiscal year 2019–20, the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs assisted 103 faculty, staff, and administrators representing 40 academic departments, research centers, and administrative departments to submit 148 proposals for external funding, requesting a total of \$31,380,087. Fifty-three principal investigators, representing 36 departments and centers at MTSU, were awarded 75 new grants and contracts during the year, with a total award value of





**\$14,293,800.** The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs administered 265 active grants and contracts during the year, with a lifetime portfolio value of **\$58,547,729**, to support the scholarship and service of 103 principal investigators in 40 departments and centers across campus.

### The Center for Health and Human Services

The Center for Health and Human Services (CHHS) has had a busy spring and summer in continuing its work to promote better health and well-being for Tennesseans. Since March:

The center has written and submitted several grants totaling \$1,942,588. Several funding opportunities were halted or delayed during the early days of the pandemic. CHHS has written several grants and submitted applications, including one for federal funding to address substance abuse and prevention in rural Trousdale County and another addressing the opioid epidemic in Wilson County. The COVID pandemic has only worsened the ongoing national issue of substance abuse, particularly opioids, as people turn to substances as a coping mechanism. Some Tennessee counties have reported increased opioid deaths since the pandemic began as compared with earlier years, with some counties having more deaths this year due to opioid overdoses than due to COVID-19.

CHHS quickly pivoted its existing research, projects, and programs to remain functional during the pandemic restrictions and continues to meet or exceed goals for all externally funded work. Campus-based grant activities, such as those with the MTSU Mental Health First Aid program and Blue Raiders Drink Up: Healthy Choices for Healthy Students, have been modified and continue to serve our campus community.

In an effort to begin seeking external funding opportunities outside of grant awards, CHHS successfully raised the minimum required dollars to establish its own foundation account and now has a dedicated CHHS account ready to accept donations.

## MTSU Arts

ART • DANCE • MUSIC • THEATRE

MTSU Arts was established to provide a singular brand through which we, as a University community, deliver our many outstanding art offerings to Murfreesboro and the surrounding area. Historically, hundreds of performances and shows are put on annually through MTSU Arts in our Music, Theatre, Art, and Dance programs. Our performing and fine arts programs contribute each year to the University's remarkable progress and success, and our students' artistic work demonstrates the great things that happen when gifted teachers engage with enthusiastic students.

Becoming a member of the MTSU Arts Patron Society is more important now than ever for our students. As they say, "The show must go on!"

Even though many students will be taking classes in different ways this year, our Art, Dance, Music, and Theatre faculty are planning hands-on learning activities for our students. They will still perform concerts, stage performances, and create amazing art—and you help make that possible with your support!

For the benefit of public health and safety, this season will have more virtual workshops, concerts, and productions for you to enjoy from home.

For the latest information on the 2020–21 MTSU Arts season, or to become a member of the MTSU Arts Patron Society, visit [mtsu.edu/mtsuarts](https://mtsu.edu/mtsuarts).

## EMPLOYEE CHARITABLE GIVING CAMPAIGN

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

The pledge total surpassed the \$130,000 goal, with 908 participants taking part in the annual tradition.

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

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

During the upcoming Oct. 1–Nov. 1 campaign, in which we hope to break last year's record giving amount, participants can designate gifts to organizations from a list of 10 independent charities and three federated groups of charities, including Community Health Charities, Community Shares, and local United Way organizations.



#trueGIVER



# MTS ATHLETICS



At the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, MTSU Athletics Director **Chris Massaro** penned a heartfelt note to student-athletes. In it, he expressed his condolences for the

cancellation of the season for many of them. He said he knew how hard they had worked but emphasized that the decisions to postpone or cancel seasons were made with their health, and the health of those vulnerable to complications of COVID-19, in mind. Now that's True Blue.

The pandemic may have stopped Blue Raider athletes from excelling on the field of play, but it did not stop them from continuing to excel in the (virtual) classroom. Here are some exciting Spring 2020 classroom statistics.

- 258 of 336 (77%) student-athletes had a grade point average of 3.0 or higher.
- 172 (51%) of all student-athletes made the Dean's List by earning a grade point average of 3.5 or higher.
- 95 (28%) of all student-athletes had a perfect 4.0 grade point average.
- **14 of 15** teams had a semester grade point average of 3.0 or higher.
- Tennis had the highest men's team grade point average of **3.94**.
- Women's golf had the highest women's team grade point average of **3.914**.
- Semester GPA for all student-athletes: **3.36**
- Cumulative GPA for all student-athletes: **3.18**

\* For the third consecutive year, the **MTSU volleyball team** was selected by the United States Marine Corps and the American Volleyball Coaches Association as a 2019–20 Team



Academic Award recipient on July 21. Seven Blue Raiders finished the spring semester with a 4.0 GPA, and four others earned a 3.5–3.9 to round off the year with a team cumulative GPA of 3.73.

\* Each of MTSU's 17 athletic teams earned a multi-year Academic Progress Rate (APR) of over 950 2018–19 when the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) released its annual report May 19. The Blue Raiders sports teams have now had at least a 930 for all sports 11 years running, with each team coming in at over 950 (out of 1000) in the most

recent multi-year APR report. The most recent APR scores are based on a multi-year rate that averages scores from the 2015–16, 2016–17, 2017–18, and 2018–19 academic years. MTSU had 12 of 15 sports (indoor and outdoor track count as one) with a 980 on the multi-year report, with men's cross country, softball, women's golf, and women's tennis posting a perfect grade of 1000. Four sports were close behind—with multi-year scores exceeding 990. They were baseball (993), men's tennis (993), women's cross country (993), and soccer (990). In addition to high levels of success in the multi-year APR, 10 of 15 sports





# 2020 BLUE RAIDER HALL OF FAME CLASS



Bryce Brentz



Alysha Clark



Mike Harmon



Kendall Newson



Heather Prater Warren



Clay Snellgrove

received scores of 970 or higher in the 2018–19 single-year APR, with four teams boasting perfect marks. Programs with scores of 1000: men's tennis, women's golf, softball, and women's tennis. Every Division I sports team calculates its APR each academic year. Scholarship student-athletes each semester receive one point for remaining eligible and one point for staying in school or graduating. Teams scoring below certain thresholds can face consequences, including practice restrictions and playing season reductions. In order to compete in the 2020–21 postseason, teams must achieve either a 930 multi-year APR or a 940 average over the most recent two years.

\* MTSU had a record-tying four teams recognized by the NCAA in

Summer 2020 for earning the Public Recognition Award based on their most recent multi-year APR. Those sports, who all had perfect marks, were women's golf, women's tennis, men's cross country, and softball. These awards are given each year to teams with APRs in the top 10% in each sport. It was the seventh consecutive year women's golf was honored with the award.

### Some other important news and notes from our athletics sphere:

The 2020 Blue Raider Hall of Fame Class includes **Bryce Brentz** (baseball), **Alysha Clark** (women's basketball), **Mike Harmon** (men's golf), **Kendall Newson** (football), **Heather Prater Warren** (women's basketball), and **Clay Snellgrove** (baseball).

MTSU renamed the arena inside Murphy Center on Feb. 15 in a game against UAB to honor **Jimmy Earle**, former men's basketball coach and director of athletics. It is now the Monte Hale/Jimmy Earle Arena. For 10 years as head coach of the Blue Raiders, Earle compiled a 164-103 record, had eight winning seasons, captured two OVC championships, and led MTSU to its first two NCAA Tournament appearances. He was a two-time Coach of the Year winner (1975, '77). Earle's achievements are notable, including being honored as a Distinguished Alumnus by the University in 1979 and being enshrined into the Blue Raider Sports Hall of Fame in 1980. Not only was he one of the University's most successful men's basketball coaches, but the 1958 graduate also coached baseball and men's golf and served as athletics director for his alma mater during 1981–87.

The 2020 Conference USA Indoor Track and Field Championships wrapped up Feb. 23 with the MTSU women named runners-up and the men capturing third place. The women's team was seven points shy of champion Rice with a total 103 points, and the men's team was 33 points away from first-place Charlotte with 102. Aside from breaking the meet record in the men's





# MT ATHLETICS

5,000-meter run, **Jacob Choge** claimed the men's High Point Scorer of the Meet award after placing top three in the 800-meter, mile, and 3,000-meter events.

The 2020 Conference USA Indoor Track and Field All-Conference Teams were announced by the league on Feb. 25, and 11 Blue Raiders earned honors. The teams were determined at the conference championships in Birmingham, Alabama, with individuals placing first in their events named First Team All-Conference, those placing second in their events named Second Team All-Conference, and those placing third named Third Team All-Conference. Choge led the conference men with two first-team honors after placing first in both the mile and 5,000 meters. **Kigen Chemadi** and **Brian Rono** also earned first-team nods, Chemadi for the 3,000 meters and Rono for the 800 meters. Choge and Rono received second-team honors as well, while Chemadi and **Willington Wright** were named to the third team. The Blue Raider women had seven student-athletes receive honors; two of them were named First Team

All-Conference. **Cecilia Francis** placed first in the 60-meter dash and **Esther Isa** in the high jump, earning first-team accolades. **Eusila Chepkemei**, **Joice Jebor**, and **Pamela Kosgei** were awarded Second Team All-Conference, and **Patience Akanwogba** and **Shawkia Iddrisu** were named to the third team.

Choge, a senior standout, also was selected Conference USA Male Track Performer of the Meet for his stellar performance at the conference championships, as voted on by the league's head coaches. The Eldoret, Kenya, native competed in all four distance events at the championships—800 meters, mile, 5,000 meters, and 3,000 meters—and earned two gold medals and two silver medals.

**Anastasia Hayes** and **Charity Savage** were mainstays during MTSU's 21-win regular season in women's basketball. The dynamic duo were rewarded for their exceptional season by being named to All-Conference USA teams. **Aislynn Hayes** earned a spot on the five-member C-USA All-Freshman team after her dynamic rookie campaign.

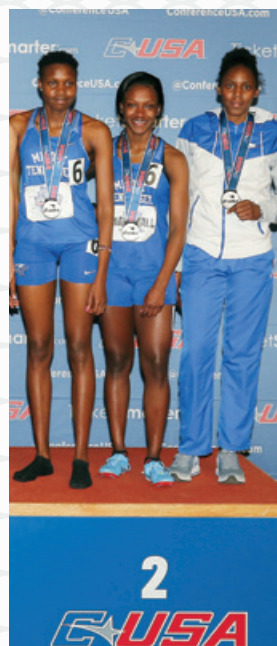


Charity Savage



Anastasia Hayes

Conference USA announced its 2020 All-Conference, All-Defensive, and All-Freshman Teams, with Middle Tennessee rookie **Tyson Jackson** representing the Blue Raiders on the All-Freshman Team. Jackson's first campaign in Murfreesboro saw him earn 22 starts and play in all 31 contests for the Blue Raiders, averaging 5.3 points and 4.7 rebounds per game in just over 20 minutes per outing while also serving as MTSU's first sub in five of his nine appearances off the bench. His team-leading 21 blocks make him the first Blue Raider freshman to lead the team in blocks since **Alex Weekes** (25)



Jacob Choge



Tyson Jackson





Aislynn Hayes

did so in 2004. He is also the first Blue Raider rookie to register 20-plus blocks since 2014 Conference USA Player of the Year Shawn Jones swatted 20 shots as a freshman in 2011. The Fairburn, Georgia, product tallied nine double-digit scoring games and collected five or more boards on 18 occasions. Jackson was perhaps at his best on the biggest stage as he went 7-for-7 for 14 points and eight rebounds—all career highs—on the road at Southeastern Conference foe Ole Miss to earn C-USA Freshman of the Week honors.

**Anastasia** and **Aislynn Hayes** burst onto the collegiate scene at MTSU and made immediate impacts within the Lady Raider basketball program. On March 10, the dynamic sisters were honored with two of Conference USA's superlative awards. **Anastasia Hayes** was named C-USA Newcomer of the Year, and **Aislynn Hayes** earned the nod for C-USA Freshman of the Year (and was later named a Freshman All-American). They were the highest-scoring sister duo in the nation last season, combining to average 32.8 points per game.

Soccer's **Peyton DePriest**, tennis' **Tom Moonen**, and golf's **Tanner Owens** were the big winners at the ninth Annual Raiders' Choice Awards on April 30. The year-end Academy Awards-style show highlighted all the academic and athletic accomplishments of Blue Raider student-athletes for the 2019–20 academic year. DePriest, Moonen, and



Tom Moonen

Owens were honored with the True Blue President's Award, which is the highest honor bestowed upon a current MTSU student-athlete who epitomizes all that is good in intercollegiate athletics. Presented annually to one male and one female student-athlete, the President's Award recognizes outstanding academic and athletic accomplishments, University/community service, and leadership. All three excelled in the classroom, community, and on the field and court. DePriest carries an impressive 3.9 GPA in Exercise Science while blasting a career-high 18 goals during her junior campaign to become the Blue Raiders' career goals leader. Moonen also owns a 3.9 GPA in Accounting and is ranked in the top 10 all-time in victories. Owens sports a 3.9 GPA in Health Care Administration and this past season put together an under-par stroke average to become just the fourth Blue Raider all-time to accomplish that feat.

MTSU's **Lidia Burrows** was named one of this season's top women's tennis players in Conference USA when the league announced its 2020 All-Conference Teams. The West Yorkshire, England, native led the Blue Raiders with an 11-2 record in dual match singles play to earn a spot on the All-Conference USA Singles First Team list. After dropping



Peyton DePriest



Lidia Burrows

her first two singles contests of the 2020 campaign, Burrows regrouped and reeled off 11 consecutive victories before the season was halted due to COVID-19 on March 12.

MTSU's men's tennis picked up numerous postseason conference accolades in a shortened season due to COVID-19 as junior **Chris Edge** was named Conference USA Co-Player of the Year and **Jimmy Borendame** was chosen Conference USA Coach of the Year. Additionally, senior **Tom Moonen** and junior **Chris Edge** made the All-Conference USA First Team, while sophomore **Pavel Motl** is listed on the All-Conference USA Second Team. **Chris Edge/Tom Moonen** and **Pavel Motl/Stijn Slump** also were selected to the All-Conference USA Doubles Second Team. MTSU's five C-USA honors were tied for the most in conference with Old Dominion. Borendame is the sixth coach to nab the postseason award for MTSU, and this marks the fourth of his tenure with the Blue Raiders. Borendame was named Coach of the Year in 2019 following the Raiders' first C-USA Tournament championship.

For the second consecutive season, Blue Raider golfer **Sophie Burks** has been named an All-Conference USA selection. A junior from Montgomery, Alabama, Burks represents MTSU on the league's third team. In the 2019–20 season, Burks led the Raiders in nearly every statistical category while boasting a 73.67 stroke average that ranks as the fourth-best single-season average ever at MTSU.





## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ENHANCEMENTS

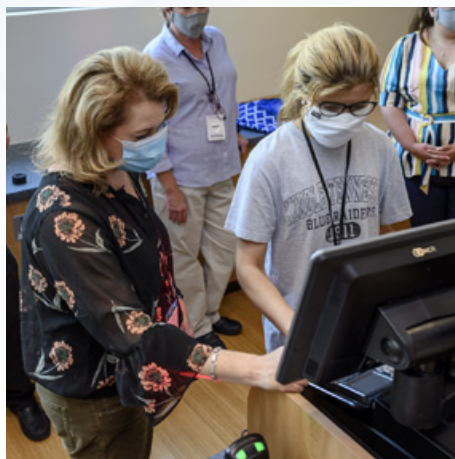
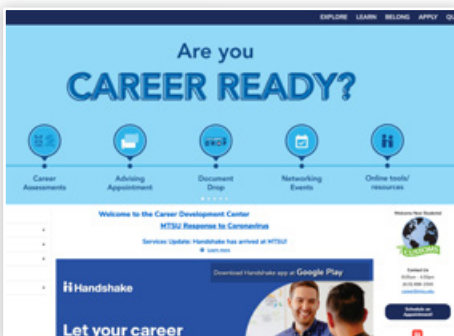
MTSU's ongoing and expanding focus on technology works to boost student achievement, keeps us on the cutting edge of higher education delivery, and prepares us for an even bolder future in the Information Age. Here are some recent technology enhancement highlights.

### Learning Management System Review

Because MTSU's D2L contract is nearing its end, ITD initiated an LMS Review Committee to gather data on LMS use and preferences. Faculty members were surveyed, and MTSU participated in the Tennessee Board of Regents request for proposal process to help determine the future of our LMS contracting.

### Career Management System

Working with Career Services, as well as representatives from each college, career management system Handshake was selected and implemented. This system helps share employment opportunities for students after graduation, and it also can be used for student internships.



### Bookstore

The University initiated a new bookstore contract with Barnes & Noble that required several technology changes, including new data interfaces, to transition from the previous bookstore provider.

### Advanced Email Threat Protection

ITD turned on the blocking feature of quarantining in Proofpoint, which is the advanced email threat protection software that was implemented last year. Quarantining had been enabled without blocking to give faculty and staff an opportunity evaluate which senders to block or allow.

### Self -Password Reset

ITD completed implementation of the Self-Service Password Reset (SSPR) feature within Microsoft Office 365 to improve users' ability to manage their

MTSU password. In addition to using a recovery email address to verify your identity before resetting your password, you can verify your identity using security questions, a phone number to receive a call or text, or a code generated by the Microsoft Authenticator app if you configured it for use with multi-factor authentication. The "Forgot my password" option on MTSU's single sign-on screen will now work for all students, faculty, and staff.

### Exchange Online Migration for Faculty/Staff Email

ITD began migrating faculty and staff email to Exchange Online. Migration is complete for staff in ITD, the Jones College of Business, Walker Library, Business and Finance, Student Affairs, Enrollment, Academic Services, Development and University Relations, Marketing and Communications, and the President's Office.

### Digital Assets Management

An RFI for an enterprise digital assets management system was written earlier this year, and several products were explored with multiple departmental representatives across MTSU. A request for proposal is being developed.

### Computer Replacement

ITD completed an academic and administrative computer replacement for devices that were scheduled for replacement this year.



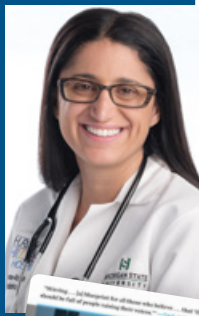
# STUDENT LIFE

Saturday, Aug. 22, marked MTSU's 19th University Convocation. This year's Convocation was not an in-person event but was broadcast live on MTSU Channel 9 (the new True Blue TV!), Facebook, and YouTube.

This year's summer reading selection was *What the Eyes Don't See: A Story of Crisis, Resistance, and Hope in an American City* by Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha. Flint, was already a troubled city in 2014 when the state of Michigan, in the name of austerity, shifted the source of its water supply from Lake Huron to the Flint River. Soon after, citizens began complaining about the water that flowed from their taps, but officials rebuffed them, insisting that the water was fine.

Hanna-Attisha, a pediatrician at the city's public hospital, took state officials at their word and encouraged the parents and children in her care to continue drinking the water—after all, it was American tap water, blessed with the state's seal of approval. But a conversation at a cookout with an old friend, leaked documents from a rogue environmental inspector, and the activism of a concerned mother raised red flags about lead, a neurotoxin whose irreversible effects fall most heavily on children. Even as circumstantial evidence mounted and protests grew, Hanna-Attisha knew that the only thing that could stop the lead poisoning was undeniable proof, and that to get it, she'd have to enter the fight of her life.

The traditional slate of Connection Point activities will take a hiatus this year in light of the current social distancing guidelines and limits on group gatherings due to COVID-19. The Student Affairs staff is currently reviewing involvement and extracurricular activities. As plans are finalized, information can be found at [mtsu.edu/connection](https://mtsu.edu/connection).



true  
BLUE  
▶ TV



We recently rebranded our educational resource cable TV channel to True Blue TV and will add more campus events to its programming schedule.

The channel, which airs on Comcast Xfinity channels 9 and 1096 in Murfreesboro, was launched in 1999 as a television lesson delivery system for primary and secondary schools across Tennessee.

That educational mission, which later expanded to include capturing MTSU academic events as well as professional development and children's programming, will continue for True Blue TV.

However, safety concerns due to the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the University to step up its video production efforts, as many campus events and academic programming will move to virtual formats.

True Blue TV will continue to be an educational resource channel, but also be another way to share our stories with audiences.

## True Blue TV broadcasts in August included:

**Aug. 5:** Virtual Veterans Stole Ceremony for graduating student veterans

**Aug. 8:** Virtual Summer Commencement for Summer 2020 graduates

**Aug. 18:** Ribbon-cutting of the Academic Classroom Building, which now houses the departments of Criminal Justice Administration, Psychology, and Social Work

**Aug. 20:** Coverage of my Fall Faculty Address, including presentation of annual faculty awards by the MTSU Foundation

**Aug. 22:** Virtual Convocation ceremonies welcomed the incoming class of freshman and transfer students. The event also featured Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, author of MTSU's summer reading book, *What The Eyes Don't See*.

True Blue TV will eventually include programming and events by MT Athletics, including some live games, replays of past games, news conferences, and other events. The station will also re-broadcast videos produced for online formats, such as social media and livestreaming platforms.

The station, which operates under a license from the Murfreesboro Cable Television Commission, will continue to broadcast from MTSU's Center for Educational Media in the College of Education.

It will be produced through a partnership between the center and the Division of Marketing and Communications, which now becomes responsible for the station's operations.

In addition to Comcast Xfinity, the channel is also available on Roku, Apple TV, and Amazon Fire TV. It airs on channel 99 on AT&T U-verse in middle Tennessee; channel 9.1 on the MTSU campus; channel 195 on DTC in Alexandria; and digital channel 206 on United Communications in Chapel Hill.

True Blue TV is also available online at [mtsu.edu/trueblueTV](https://mtsu.edu/trueblueTV).





## BUILT FOR ITS TIME

### The State of Tennessee and MTSU combine funds for a much-needed new academic building for the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences

MTSU created the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences (CBHS) as part of an academic reorganization about a decade ago. The goals were to better focus on preparing research-based service providers in the health and human sciences and to provide the best education in health, mental health, and human services in the state of Tennessee.

Graduates of the college are the caregivers who look after sick mothers and fathers in hospital beds. They are the counselors who care for brothers and sisters struggling with the transition from combat to the workplace. They are the dedicated administrators who work to prosecute and incarcerate those who wish to threaten our everyday happiness and even our lives. And they are the researchers and creators who study the ways each of us can find greater health and fulfillment out of everyday life.

At their core, CBHS students and graduates are community servants. CBHS provides the next generation of nurses, social workers, criminal justice



and correction workers, psychology counselors, human service professionals, and health-related professionals who form the foundation for preserving and caring for humanity. In training and practice, CBHS graduates address problems that truly impact communities—especially among underserved populations.

The six disciplines that make up CBHS—Criminal Justice Administration (CJA), Health and Human Performance, Human Sciences, Nursing, Psychology, and Social

Work—have long been part of MTSU's remarkable community impact, preparing the front-line professionals who are essential to ensuring that communities thrive, especially now in a time of pandemic.

Now the college is taking the next step in its evolution, opening for classes this fall a brand-new, \$39.6 million building.

The 91,000-square-foot building brings together three of the College's six departments—Criminal Justice,



Psychology, and Social Work—which offer highly related, integrative programs previously located in multiple buildings across the campus, to allow for greater collaboration. The state-of-the-art facility provides critically needed classrooms, offices, and lab space.

For instance, the new facility has a command center where CJA students can practice coordinating and mobilizing resources when disasters strike.

The building houses programs including EEG, eye tracker, and whisper rooms for neuroscience, sensation and perception, and cognitive research; dedicated labs for collecting questionnaire and other data; and computer labs specifically for teaching undergraduate and graduate stats, as well as data collection.

Former Gov. Bill Haslam included the new academic building for MTSU in his 2018–19 budget among his recommendations for capital outlay projects for the state’s public universities. The state committed \$35.1 million, and MTSU chipped in \$4.5 million, to build—at long last—a facility that combines space for these three departments.

The building, located between the Student Union Building and the Tennessee Livestock Center, was designed by Bauer Askew; Turner Construction was the construction manager/general contractor for the project.

A ribbon-cutting to officially open the building was Aug. 18.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately affected individuals along economic and racial lines, some of the work that will take place in the new building could have far-reaching positive effects on society as a whole.

Similarly, at a time of great social unrest and calls to reform the nation’s criminal justice system, MTSU’s investment in these disciplines shows our commitment to creating new and better outcomes for the society we serve.



## CAMPUS PLANNING

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

### Academic Building for College of Behavioral and Health Sciences

(see related feature story)

- **91,000** gross square feet
- Ribbon-cutting ceremony was **Aug. 18**
- A new center for the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences consolidates functional areas for Criminal Justice Administration, Psychology, and Social Work departments

### School of Concrete and Construction Management

- **\$31,600,000** construction cost
- **54,000** square feet
- Estimated completion date of **Fall 2022**
- Currently in design development
- Hoar Construction selected as the general contractor
- Abernathy and Ezell halls to be demolished for the building site
- Expansion to the Satellite Chiller plant included in the project
- Will incorporate exposed structural and other building systems and be used as a teaching tool for students and visitors

### Parking Services Facility

- Construction started in Fall 2019 and will finish in **January 2021**
- Located at the corner of Alumni and City View drives
- Building to serve as the new home for Parking Services, including parking permits, bus maintenance, and personnel offices
- **13,000-square-foot** building area
- Three maintenance bays for campus shuttles
- Will combine all campus parking and shuttle bus functions in one convenient location

### Capital Maintenance Projects

- **\$4,732,000** in capital maintenance projects to be funded and are currently under construction, including:
  - \* A multiple building roof replacement project
  - \* Renovations to Kirksey Old Main mechanical/HVAC systems
  - \* Improvements to campus stormwater drainage systems
  - \* Renovations to Stark Agriculture and Police Station to include HVAC and sprinkler system work
  - \* Boiler replacement at Miller Education Center



## BUDGET AND SALARY

Due to the unusual events surrounding the coronavirus outbreak, the 111th General Assembly passed a limited 2020–21 fiscal year budget in March before temporarily ending their legislative session early. It reconvened in June to finish up some unfinished legislation and to revisit the state's budget. A final budget was passed by the General Assembly on June 19. With the advocacy of Executive Director Mike Krause at the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and the support of Commissioner Butch Eley and the General Assembly, higher education was spared cuts in existing base appropriations. Other state departments were asked to cut departmental budgets by 12%.

Funding of **\$1.2 million** also remained in the state budget to provide continued financial aid for the Medical School Early Acceptance Program (MSEAP) jointly administered by MTSU and Meharry Medical College.

The General Assembly again provided funding to match eligible employees' deferrals in the 401(k) plan, which may be between **\$20** and **\$50** per month, and for longevity payments at **\$100** per year of creditable service up to a maximum number of 30 years.

In addition, the state budget included **\$4.6 million** in capital maintenance funds related to the Murphy Center window replacement project. The state's budget did not include any capital outlay funding for MTSU.

While this is good news, all new funding requested for higher education, including that for salary increases, was removed from the budget. This equates to approximately **\$5.2 million** the University would have received to cover the University's annual fixed costs. MTSU also had a reduction of **\$1.6 million** in the outcomes formula, resulting in reduced appropriations.

At the June quarterly meeting, the MTSU Board of Trustees approved the University's recommendation of no increase in tuition or fees for the 2020–21 academic year.

With no new funding coming into the University this year, budget reallocations will be needed to support increased scholarship levels, increases in software maintenance agreements, faculty promotions, and new academic programs. These adjustments will be made in the October budget and presented to the Board of Trustees.



## CONCLUSION

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