

NEWS & information

FROM THE PRESIDENT Sidney A. McPhee



*Welcome to the
Fall 2021 Semester!*

I promise to do my best to provide frequent and transparent communication to our entire University family. Whether through weekly updates, community town halls, targeted communications, or even one-on-one communications when needed, it is my intent to keep you fully informed and abreast of our plans.

As always, I welcome your feedback and comments. Please contact me at sidney.mcphee@mtsu.edu. I also invite you to check out my blog, available at mtsu.edu/president, for updates and information from my office.

**MIDDLE
TENNESSEE**
STATE UNIVERSITY.

True Blue!

SIDNEY A. MCPHEE



BACK TOGETHER

As we begin our Fall 2021 semester, we are excited to welcome our Blue Raider family back to campus and provide everyone with a more **traditional on-campus experience**.

However, it is important to remind everyone that in order to assure the safety of our community, preventive health practices must be observed.

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MTSU SIGNS ON TO COVID-19 COLLEGE VACCINE CHALLENGE

As we begin the Fall 2021 semester, MTSU is proud to be one of the hundreds of colleges and universities throughout the country that have signed on to the White House's COVID-19 College Vaccine Challenge to raise vaccination rates across the nation.

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Masking and vaccination will help us keep the **traditional class schedule** currently in place for this fall.



Over the past few weeks, there has been a noticeable increase in the numbers of individuals testing positive for COVID-19—more specifically the Delta variant. In response, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has issued new guidance to help slow the spread of the virus.

In keeping with these recommendations, we are again requiring all members of our campus community to wear masks at all times inside University facilities. Exclusions to this include private offices, dorm rooms, and individual study rooms.

While recognizing that vaccination is a personal choice, it has been proven that this is the **most effective way to combat this virus**. We continue to strongly encourage everyone to be vaccinated and will continue to provide vaccinations through our Student Health Services.

Masking and vaccination will help us keep the traditional class schedule currently in place for this fall.

This is not how we had intended to begin the year, and it is my hope that this mask requirement will be short-lived. We will continue to monitor the

situation on our campus and make decisions as appropriate.

Currently, required masking is the only modification to our plan to return to campus.

Any future decisions, however, will be influenced by how well our community and campus respond to this latest outbreak.

Our **course offerings are primarily in-person** but with selected online options.

We will use the lessons we learned from teaching during the pandemic and the technology we installed to help us enhance our academic offerings.

Our residence halls have reopened as before, with both single- and double-occupancy options.

The faculty, administrators, and coaches in academics, athletics, and student affairs have planned a **robust return to the activities, events, and games that enrich the student experience** on our campus.

In short, despite the renewed mask mandate, we are back together again, stronger than before, with more resilience and vigor than ever!





In a way, MTSU first came “back together” for the May and August 2021 Commencement ceremonies.

In consultation with local and state health officials, and while monitoring trends regarding the pace of infections in the state and region, we took the proper steps to return to Murphy Center for the spring and summer Commencement ceremonies.

I authorized the University to schedule 10 small, **in-person Commencement ceremonies** at Murphy Center in May, with graduates assigned by the colleges of their majors. Each participant was allotted a limited number of guest tickets.

Throughout the spring and early summer, our campus mandates for the wearing of masks, social distancing, and observing posted safety capacities in our facilities remained in place. We felt this was necessary until we could fully understand potential impacts that variants of the virus might pose.

However, we felt confident enough in our containment efforts to hold the ceremonies, as well as allow groups to reserve spaces in campus buildings

for activities, including end-of-the-year events, late in the Spring 2021 semester.

During the summer, we welcomed **more than 4,000 combined freshmen and transfer students** to campus for in-person CUSTOMS orientation sessions.

So, yes, we did get a glimpse of a return to normal this spring and summer—and we hope to experience that again sooner than later this fall.

The University’s actions ultimately will be guided by the advice and recommendations of federal and state health officials, just as they have been since the beginning of this global pandemic.

While there’s light at the end of the tunnel, we must maintain our efforts to contain and control COVID-19.

As MTSU’s 10th president, I recently marked my 20th year leading the University. I have been blessed to preside over one of the most remarkable periods of growth and progress in the institution’s century-plus of service. During my tenure, the University has grown in both student

numbers and physical facilities, with today’s campus hosting more than 22,000 students, covering more than 1,000 acres, and benefitting from more than \$1 billion in construction and renovation. We have successfully raised admission standards and significantly increased enrollment of high-ability students. And we’ve added almost 50 undergraduate and graduate degree programs, two colleges (Behavioral and Health Sciences and University College), and more than a dozen institutes and centers.

As I begin my third decade as MTSU’s president, I have never been prouder of the work being accomplished by the University and the achievements of our student body. **All around I see signs of hope and renewal.** I am awed and amazed by the amazing and enormous efforts by students, faculty, and staff to protect our community during this pandemic and stay on course with our academics, research, and service progress.

I AM *true* **BLUE**

MTSU SIGNS ON TO COVID-19 COLLEGE VACCINE CHALLENGE

Getting vaccinated is the **best way to ensure we can hold regular activities** this academic year. MTSU has administered more than 10,200 total vaccines since on-campus vaccine clinics launched earlier this year, with roughly 3,500 of those shots going to students ages 17–26.

Free COVID-19 vaccines—either the two-shot Moderna or one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine—are still available at Student Health Services. You can schedule an appointment at mtsu.edu/healthservices/covid-vaccine.php.

The White House and the U.S. Department of Education invited higher education institutions nationwide to join the challenge, and I'm proud that MTSU was the first Tennessee university to sign on as a Vaccine Champion University. We've since been joined by nine other state institutions among the 350-plus colleges and universities across 49 states that have signed on thus far.



Participating colleges commit to taking three key actions to help get their campus communities vaccinated:

- **engaging every student, faculty, and staff member**
- **organizing their college communities**
- **delivering vaccine access for all**

MTSU organizations and departments such as Student Affairs, the Student Government Association, Center for Student Involvement and Leadership, Fraternity and Sorority Life, June Anderson Center for Women and Nontraditional Students, Alumni Relations, MT Athletics, and others will be using their online platforms to raise awareness about the need to get vaccinated and recruit student, faculty, and alumni “vaccine champions” to help spread the word through testimonials and social media posts.

I'm asking each member of our True Blue community to **do your part to protect yourself and others** as we return to normal operations this fall.



MORE THAN
10,200
TOTAL VACCINES
ADMINISTERED SINCE
ON-CAMPUS VACCINE
CLINICS LAUNCHED

A close-up photograph of a person's arm wearing a blue sleeve. A white sticker is affixed to the skin, featuring the MTSU logo and the text "MTSU I TOOK MY SHOT. Get vaccinated. Defend True Blue."/>

MTSU I TOOK MY SHOT.
Get vaccinated. Defend True Blue.



ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS

Each of the colleges and academic units at MTSU maintains a high level of activity and produces news worth crowing about. Here are just a few examples of the remarkable work we have recently performed on the campus of MTSU. **True Blue!**



ACROSS CAMPUS

More than a Slogan

2021 marks the 10-year anniversary of the slogan “I Am True Blue.” MTSU is a community committed to learning, growth, and service—values the University holds dear—and the simple phrase “I am True Blue” has become the mantra that conveys those values. New students at Convocation take the True Blue Pledge. It underscores MTSU’s core values of honesty and integrity; respect for diversity; engagement in the community; and committing to reason, not violence. These words express not only the ideals the University wishes to share with its students but also its devotion to student success. The True Blue Pledge was written by a task force I appointed in 2011 after the tragic death of Lady Raider basketball player Tina Stewart. The pledge encourages nonviolent conflict resolution within the student body.

Elite Company

MTSU is among 16 institutions participating in the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities’ Powered by Publics initiative to advance student-centered transformation. The cohort is engaging in an in-depth institutional needs assessment, sharing student success data, and receiving targeted professional development and



(Academic Highlights continued)

technical assistance based on needs in advising, college readiness policy and practice, and digital learning. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is funding the effort.

Textbook Response

An interdisciplinary team from MTSU launched a pilot project to promote widespread faculty use of free or low-cost open digital course content that could result in significant savings for students who sometimes struggle to afford necessary textbooks. Open educational resources (OER) are materials for teaching or learning that are either in the public domain or have been released under a license that allows them to be freely used, changed, or shared with others. Accessible online, these resources also typically provide downloading options for students who prefer a hard copy of the course materials. MTSU secured a one-year, \$100,000 grant from the Tennessee Board of Regents to support the adaptation, adoption, and creation of open educational resources.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

- **Greg Van Patten** became interim dean of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences on July 1.
- MTSU recently named co-directors to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. **Dawn McCormack**, who is also the associate dean of the College of Graduate Studies, has been involved with research since she first arrived at MTSU more than a decade ago. **Greg Rushton** has worked as the University's Tennessee STEM Education Center director since 2018.
- **Jim Rust** is retiring after more than three decades heading MTSU's School Psychology graduate program. The program achieved the highest-level accreditation from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and has over 300 graduates.
- **Tiffany Dellard** was hired as the executive director for the Office of Professional Laboratory Experiences following the retirement of Bobbi Lussier.
- **Tiffany Trent** joined MTSU Aug. 1 as chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance. Former chair **Jeff Gibson** was appointed associate dean in the College of Liberal Arts on Feb. 1.

- **Christy Groves** was named associate dean of James E. Walker Library effective July 1.
- **Chaminda S. Prelis** is the new chair of MTSU's nationally recognized Department of Aerospace. Prelis comes from the University of Dubuque in Iowa, where he was most recently the director of aviation programs after also having served as the program's head of academics. Prelis takes over for former chair Wendy Beckman, who is returning to teaching full time.

NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

- **B.S., Media Management** (elevation of concentration to free-standing degree)
- **B.S., Photography** (elevation of concentration to free-standing degree)
- **B.S., Supply Chain Management** (elevation of concentration to free-standing degree)

COLLEGE OF BASIC AND APPLIED SCIENCES

- MTSU's involvement in the **Big Machine Music City Grand Prix IndyCar race**, a three-day festival of speed and sound that had its inaugural run in downtown Nashville Aug. 6–8, marks the latest and greatest example of the University's continued impact on the region. Cushioned concrete barriers made of environmentally conscious mixes along the 2.17-mile course were developed in partnership with MTSU's first-of-its-kind Concrete Industry Management (CIM) program—its students, faculty, and alumni. The event's **"Freedom Friday"** concert also raised



money for MTSU's Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center and other veterans causes.

- **Denise Ortega**, studying Organismal Biology and Ecology, earned the prestigious Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship. The 22-year-old senior from Madison, a first-generation student who formerly lived in Ecuador, has already completed two National Science Foundation Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REUs) at the University of New Mexico and in Costa Rica.
- MTSU **Stock Horse Team** members finished fourth overall but brought home a combined 10 championship/runner-up awards at this year's American Stock Horse Association National Show Division 2 championship, held in Sweetwater, Texas. MTSU, the 2019 champion, also earned the 2016 championship.
- MTSU and the **118th Wing of the Tennessee Army National Guard** signed an agreement in November 2020 to collaborate in research of unmanned aircraft systems operations and computer science. The mission of the 118th Wing, based in Nashville, is to provide the U.S. Air Force with persistent intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and combat capability, as well as support in Tennessee during times of emergency.

COLLEGE OF BEHAVIORAL AND HEALTH SCIENCES

- The **M.S. in Physician Assistant Studies** proposed program hosted a virtual accreditation site visit in May by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA). The program is on the ARC-PA meeting agenda for September and will receive notice of accreditation status in November. MTSU expects its application to soon go live in the Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants national admissions portal, where hundreds of applicants are anticipated.
- Faculty members **Sam Johnson** and **Jennifer Caputo** (Exercise Science) assisted in creating a new open-access, peer-reviewed journal. Both are founding editors of *Educational Practices in Kinesiology* (EPIK), which will serve as a peer-reviewed collection of teaching and learning resources for faculty in the subdisciplines of kinesiology.
- MTSU **Exercise Science** researchers concluded a preliminary study of PENDL, a device that could help ease lower back pain. Users are tethered to the apparatus, which is suspended from a ceiling or other elevated





Chris Young with “Famous Friends” mural outside the Chris Young Café

(Academic Highlights continued)

point, and use muscles to spin and swing. The clinical trial showed a 76% reduction in low back pain, a 28% improvement in back power, a 14% increase in back strength, and a 21% improvement in back flexibility.

JONES COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

- AACSB International’s board of directors voted to extend the Jones College accreditations in business and accounting for another five years. Jones College is one of only 189 collegiate business schools to hold **AACSB accreditation** in both business and accounting. We estimate that this distinction puts Jones College in the top 1.4% of collegiate business schools worldwide. Most gratifying was the following statement in the report of the AACSB reviewers: “The college and MTSU have made excellent progress since the last review (2016), and that upward trajectory is noticeable and commendable.”

Jones College programs continue to draw national attention. Among the 2021 rankings: **Best 15 Master’s in Management Information Systems Programs (No. 4) from Best Value Schools; Best Master’s Programs in Supply Chain Management (No. 9) from Intelligent.com; and Best Online Master’s in Finance Programs (No. 26) from Intelligent.com.**

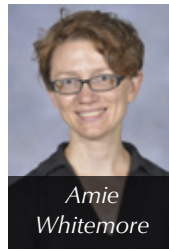
- The John A. “Jack” Spann III Risk Management Lab (via donation from Louise Spann) and the “I’m In!” Accounting Success Lab (via donation from Sandy Benson, professor of Business Law) opened in the Business and Aerospace Building.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

- The College of Education was awarded two Grow Your Own Grants to fund nonteaching staff currently working in our partnership school districts to go to college and obtain their teaching certificates.
- The Ed.D. in Assessment, Learning, and Student Success was approved by an independent review to join the **Carnegie Project on the Educational Doctorate** (CPED) for a three-year renewable term. CPED is a respected, prestigious organization for Ed.D. programs. The convening ceremony will be hosted virtually in October by Arizona State University.
- According to the 2020 State Educator Preparation Report Card, MTSU’s College of Education ranked **first in Tennessee** in the number of graduate completers, classroom observation, student growth, level of effect, TEAM scores, Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System scores, and Level of Effectiveness scores. MTSU was second in the state in the number of high-demand teachers and third in those identifying as racially diverse.

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

- CLA faculty members **Amie Whittemore** and **Meg Brooker** are serving as Murfreesboro's poet laureate and dance laureate, respectively.
- The Center for Historic Preservation has relocated to Peck Hall. It will still operate the Heritage Center downtown.
- **African American History** was added as an option for students in the General Education history block.



COLLEGE OF MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT

- Dean **Beverly Keel** was named to *Billboard's* national list of Change Agents who are working for racial equality in the music industry.
- The college celebrated the official grand opening of the **Chris Young Café** on Jan. 27 as a practice lab by day and an entertainment venue by night. The facility features an eye-catching "Famous Friends" outdoor mural (by professors Leslie Haines and Jonathan Coulter Trundle) honoring influential MTSU graduates, former students, and faculty, plus a new Tennessee Music Pathways marker.
- As it completes its second year of operation, the **Free Speech Center** has emerged as a national authority on the First Amendment, cited by more than 200 news organizations, including the *Washington Post*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *USA Today*, *Boston Globe*, and *Chicago Tribune*.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

- McDonald's eligible employees at 20 locations in five counties can attend MTSU tuition-free starting this fall under the new **McGuire True**



Blue Educational Partnership between the University and Murfreesboro-based McGuire Management Group. McDonald's franchise owner Jonathon McGuire

employees about 1,200 people at 10 franchises in Murfreesboro, seven in Nashville/Antioch, and others in Columbia, Centerville, and White Bluff. University College Assistant Dean **Peggy Carpenter** will manage the program. Danielle Fowler, Adult Degree Completion Program corporate partner coordinator, also has played a vital role.

HONORS COLLEGE

- Two MTSU students received **Fulbright Fellowships** to teach in Spain this year. A new award went to Kelsey Keith (English/Spanish), and Brittany Johnson (Global Studies/Foreign Languages) had her Fulbright renewed.
- Miura Remphis, who is majoring in History and Political Science, received a statewide **Harold Love Outstanding Community Service Award**, marking the fourth consecutive year that an MTSU student has won one of these awards.
- Keith also was one of only about 50 national **Phi Kappa Phi Award** winners.

WALKER LIBRARY

- Walker Library has offered laptop checkout and access to all types of equipment in the MakerSpace. Now, it is expanding this access and offering more multimedia equipment checkout for students, along with three-day laptop loans.
- **Dale Clifford**, a Psychology major with minors in Social Welfare and Musical Theatre Performance, is the inaugural recipient of the Hanna Romans Witherspoon Endowed Scholarship, created for undergraduate students who are involved with the University Honors College and work as library student assistants. The endowment is funded through a \$25,000 gift from longtime MTSU supporter Don Witherspoon and is named for his wife. Both are MTSU alumni.

In the last six months: **6,245 books** were checked out; **students reserved study rooms 3,400 times**; users **logged into library computers 30,434 times**; library staff and faculty **answered 2,249 research and chat questions**; and users **accessed the library website 194,867 times**.

ADMISSIONS

At MTSU, we have long prided ourselves on our personal approach to the recruitment of new students and the one-to-one care we bring to supporting students and their families throughout the enrollment cycle.

Although we had to cancel in-person campus tours during the early part of the pandemic, we were delighted to resume our tour program last September. Our recruiting team has hosted **4,000 prospective students and their guests** on our campus since then, **an increase of 7%** compared to the previous two years.

For the current academic year, **regularly scheduled tours will begin daily** at 9 a.m., 11 a.m., and 1 p.m. Saturday tours are regularly scheduled, as well as our True Blue Preview events. Special group tours are arranged by request through the Admissions campus tours office.

In addition, more than 550 virtual recruitment events were presented, including special events to highlight academic colleges and programs. Five in-person **Science Saturdays** were hosted by the College of Basic and Applied Sciences. And four **Magical Media** livestream shows introduced potential students to the many opportunities available in our Media Arts programs.

Nationally, projections are that freshman enrollment will be down slightly this fall at most regional public universities. It appears that MTSU undergraduate enrollment will follow that trend, with both our new freshman class and incoming transfer class showing some decreases. The pandemic also has taken a toll on our returning students, with retention numbers showing a decrease. The bright spot in the enrollment picture is in the continuation of our extraordinary graduate-level numbers from last fall. Our combined new and returning graduate enrollments are on pace to result in a healthy increase in this important population.

Looking forward, our annual **True Blue Tour** will resume, with nine locations throughout Tennessee and five more stops in Alabama, Georgia, and Kentucky. This is a prime opportunity to share the unique educational experience and signature programs offered by MTSU, and we're delighted to be back on the road this fall.

MTSU TBT 2021 TRUE BLUE TOUR

TUESDAY, AUG. 17: RUTHERFORD COUNTY

TUESDAY, SEPT. 21: BIRMINGHAM

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 22: HUNTSVILLE

TUESDAY, SEPT. 28: CLARKSVILLE

MONDAY, OCT. 4: WILLIAMSON COUNTY

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 6: NASHVILLE

TUESDAY, OCT. 19: ATLANTA

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 20: CHATTANOOGA

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 27: JOHNSON CITY

THURSDAY, OCT. 28: KNOXVILLE

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 3: MEMPHIS

THURSDAY, NOV. 4: JACKSON

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 10: LOUISVILLE

THURSDAY, NOV. 11: LEXINGTON



MTSU'S SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUALITY INITIATIVE

Issues surrounding social justice continue to reverberate in public discussions and debates throughout our community and country, which is why University Provost Mark Byrnes and I appointed Louis Woods, an associate professor of history and former Africana Studies director, as the first Presidential Fellow for Social Justice and Equality last year.



Louis Woods

As part of this fellowship, Woods has been leading a campuswide initiative that provides an opportunity for the University and wider community to build a foundation for **racial reconciliation, honest and open dialogue, and impactful change.**

MTSU's Social Justice and Equality Initiative aims to directly address four areas: curriculum, workforce development and inclusion, campus climate, and community outreach. In addition to systemic racism, the initiative also looks to **address the concerns of marginalized groups** such as the LGBTQ community and other underrepresented groups.

To facilitate the process, Provost Byrnes and I also **appointed a Social Justice and Equality Task Force**, an advisory group chaired by Woods that is made up of faculty, staff, administrators, and students. This group will research and gather information about the four areas of focus and then present me with recommendations on how the University can address these areas in meaningful ways.

Woods, an associate professor of African American history and former Africana Studies program director, has taught at MTSU since 2007 and previously served as president of the MTSU Black Faculty and Staff Association. His research in areas such as systemic discrimination in housing and home lending has appeared in a number of academic journals.

I'm also pleased to have Professor **Lynda Williams** from the Department of Criminal Justice Administration serving as vice chair of the task force. She possesses more than three decades of law enforcement experience and recently served as president of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, better known as NOBLE. In May, she testified virtually before the U.S. House Administration Committee in its investigation of the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.



Lynda Williams

My sincere thanks to all task force members for their ongoing contributions, and I look forward to reviewing their recommendations on how we can make our True Blue community more equitable and inviting for all.

MTSU's Social Justice and Equality Initiative aims to directly address four areas:

- **curriculum,**
- **workforce development and inclusion,**
- **campus climate,** and
- **community outreach.**





ATHLETICS

Here are top recent athletic highlights achieved by our MTSU student-athletes.

Blue Raiders Excel in the Classroom

In the Spring 2021 semester:

- 213 of 335 (64%) of all student-athletes had a 3.0 or higher GPA
- 134 (40.0%) of all student-athletes made the Dean's List with a 3.5 or higher GPA
- 57 (17%) of all student-athletes earned a perfect 4.0 GPA
- 12 of 15 teams recorded a 3.0 or higher GPA semester average
- Highest men's team GPA average: tennis, 3.90
- Highest women's team GPA average: golf, 3.78
- Semester GPA for all student-athletes: 3.095
- Cumulative GPA for all student-athletes: 3.152

Our student-athletes were well represented when Conference USA announced the Commissioner's Honor Roll (3.0 GPA or better) and the Commissioner's Academic

Medal (3.75 GPA or better) in May. **MTSU placed 209 student-athletes on the honor roll**, with 49 coming from football, 31 from baseball, and 26 from soccer to lead the way. **The Blue Raiders garnered 67 total medals**, led by 13 from football, 12 from soccer, and eight each from volleyball and softball.

Our athletics department inducted **61** student-athletes into the Chi Alpha Sigma National College Athlete Honor Society in April—a **new record** for most inductees in a year for the Blue Raiders. Chi Alpha Sigma is a nonprofit organization established to recognize college students who earn a varsity letter in at least one sport while maintaining a 3.4 or higher cumulative GPA throughout their junior and senior years.

Blue Raiders Lead C-USA with Titles in 2020–21

Blue Raider teams captured **C-USA titles** in women's cross country, women's basketball, women's outdoor track and field, men's tennis, and men's golf, and a women's basketball division championship. Additionally, MTSU won several individual titles in men's and women's indoor and outdoor track and field.





And a National Champion as Well

Senior **Kigen Chemadi** capped off an illustrious career with an NCAA championship in the men's 3,000-meter steeplechase at the NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships. The event was televised nationally on ESPN2. Chemadi ran an 8:28.20 to capture the title and set a new outdoor school record in the event. The win also earned him a First Team All-American selection for the second straight time in the 3,000-meter steeplechase after he finished third overall in 2019 (NCAA spring championships were canceled in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic). This is the Blue Raiders' first national title in the event and just the second overall in meet history.

Hayes, Chemadi Named C-USA Athletes of the Year

Chemadi and **Anastasia Hayes** were selected as the Michael L. Slive Conference USA Athletes of the Year. Chemadi was named co-male athlete of the year along with Marshall soccer star Vitor Dias, while Hayes was the selection for top female athlete after her sterling season on the hardwood for the C-USA champion Lady Raiders. MTSU was just the second C-USA member school to have two athletes win the honors, joining TCU which swept the awards for the 2004–05 season.

New and Improved Softball Field Unveiled

The Blue Raider Softball Field officially became one of the best softball diamonds in the region, with MTSU and athletic department officials holding a ribbon cutting at the updated stadium Feb.8. The latest project, which began in the late summer of 2020 and concluded in early 2021, had a total cost of \$500,000. The old bleachers were removed and replaced with a total of 470 bench backs, 86 chair backs, and seven ADA seating placements to make up a seating capacity of 563. Also in the newest project was an

installment of new walkways behind both dugouts and a fan-friendly brick entryway. Donors **Bill Marbet** and **Jim and Beth O'Brien** made the latest set of renovations possible.

McEntire, Owens, Jegers, Stamper Honored

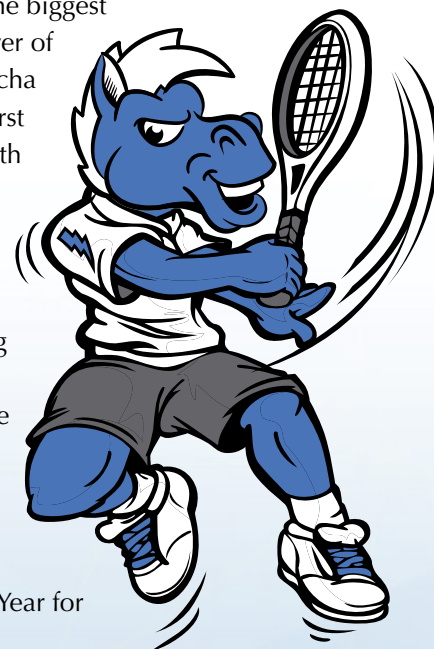
After claiming its third consecutive Conference USA title, the Blue Raiders men's golf team was well represented once again in the 2021 Conference USA postseason awards. **Mark McEntire** headlined the honorees as the 2021 Phillip Hatchett Co-Coach of the Year. Senior **Tanner Owens** claimed his third consecutive All-Conference USA honor as a member of the third team and was joined by rookie teammate **Kevin Jegers**. Jegers and freshman classmate Owen Stamper also claimed two of the five spots on C-USA's All-Freshman Team.

Rocha Earns NCAA Championships Singles Bid

Junior **Francisco Rocha** reached the NCAA Tennis Singles Championship as the highest-ranked Conference USA player in the ITA rankings. Rocha had a breakout season in 2021, boasting a 13-5 overall record in the spring with wins against multiple ranked opponents, including No. 45 Chase Ferguson of South Florida and Daniel Rodrigues of South Carolina, the second seed in the national singles competition.

Men's Tennis Collects Multiple C-USA Honors

The MTSU men's tennis team was the dominant team in Conference USA this season, and it showed as the Blue Raiders picked up numerous honors and awards from the conference. **Rocha** collected the biggest award as Conference USA Player of the Year. **Chris Edge** joined Rocha on the all-conference singles first team and was chosen along with **Tom Moonen** as Outstanding Doubles Team of the C-USA championships and on the doubles second team. **Stijn Slump** was named Outstanding Singles Player in the C-USA tournament and selected on the singles first team, while he and **Pavel Motl** made the doubles first team. Additionally, **Jimmy Borendame** was honored as Conference USA Coach of the Year for the third straight season.



BUDGET AND SALARY

MTSU received a \$5.5 million state appropriation increase in the 2021–22 General Appropriations Act passed by the 112th General Assembly.

Although there was a reduction in state funding for MTSU under the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's outcomes-based funding formula, the budget included enhancement funds and partial funding for a **salary pool** to be distributed at the discretion of the University.

The salary pool was composed of 2% effective Jan. 1, 2021, and 2% percent effective July 1, 2021.

The salary boost covering the period from Jan. 1–June 30 was paid in June as a bonus.

A recommendation will be made to the Board of Trustees in the upcoming Finance and Personnel Committee meetings on a plan for distributing the remainder of the salary pool.

MTSU received **funding for two nonrecurring projects** in the 2021–22 budget. Funding of \$1.2 million will provide continued financial aid for the **accelerated early acceptance medical school program** jointly administered by MTSU and Meharry Medical College. In addition, our new **Data Science Pipeline initiative** will receive \$2.6 million to enable partnerships with K–12 schools, higher education, government, and industry to identify needs in data science education.

The state legislature 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 **\$10 million in capital maintenance** for all seven of the University's capital maintenance projects submitted for funding.

The state's budget did include funding for the **Applied Engineering Building** at \$50.5 million. (See related story in "Construction" on page 10)

At the June quarterly meeting, the MTSU Board of Trustees approved the University's recommendation of a **1.78% increase in tuition and fees** for the 2021–22 academic year.

Revenue from this increase will be used to fund inflationary cost increases for various software packages and operations of our auxiliary units, as well as scholarships, new academic programs, and student success initiatives.

ADVANCEMENT

Our ongoing fundraising is having a transformative effect on programs and students across campus.

Last year we were successful in **generating more than \$11 million in private gifts**. As part of that success, in the middle of an ice storm and a pandemic, we raised more than **\$465,000 in our fourth True Blue Give campaign**. That total is the highest sum raised to date, and more than 850 alumni, faculty, staff, and friends made it possible.

In fiscal year 2021, some of the year's highlights include:

- Private donors established **50 new scholarships**, 32 of which are permanent endowments.
- Additionally, five donors joined our 1911 Society by making planned **gift commitments totaling \$2.2 million**.
- Giving increased to our athletics department, which received strong support for **new facilities for our tennis and golf programs**.
- Total funds invested for the benefit of MTSU now **exceed \$125 million in value**.

CONSTRUCTION

I often say that MTSU is an exciting place to study and work because of all of the campus construction projects and improvements that are ongoing or were recently completed. Here is a brief update on recent and current projects.



Applied Engineering Building

With the passage of the 2021–22 General Appropriations Act by both chambers of the 112th General Assembly earlier this year, following the recommended budget and administration amendment presented by Gov. Bill Lee, MTSU will receive \$50.5 million in state capital outlay funding for the construction of a brand-new Applied Engineering

Building. The total project cost is \$54.9 million, which includes a match requirement of \$4.4 million. This is the University's **third new academic building in four years**.

Degree programs in the Department of Engineering Technology help prepare students for a broad range of technical and industrial management positions. This is accomplished through nationally accredited programs, a project-based learning environment, and extensive collaboration with industry. Numerous opportunities are available for students to participate in nationally competitive projects in such areas as **space robotics and solar-powered vehicles**. Students may study an array of the latest breakthroughs in topic areas such as constructions, rapid prototyping of electrical and mechanical systems, safety, engineering systems, and environmental science. The combination of these programs

and activities offers preparation for graduates entering the **fast-paced technology sector**.

Our roots trace back to vocational training established at MTSU in 1912. Today, the department continues its mission to prepare students for a new world of engineering, technology, design, automation, and manufacturing. Explosive growth in our programs, especially in Mechatronics Engineering, has placed extraordinary strains on our limited, aging classroom and lab spaces at the Voorhies Engineering Technology Building and beyond.

Our vision for the modern applied engineering center includes:

- modular, easily retrofitted learning spaces to meet evolving technologies
- state-of-the-art design and fabrication labs
- enhanced student opportunities for faculty-led research



Artist's rendering of the new \$40.1M School of Concrete and Construction Management building coming in 2022.

(Construction continued)

- labs for student teams, such as for Experimental Vehicle Program and Robotics competitions
- infrastructure for new learning experiences in engineering, automation, and design
- a spacious, comfortable environment to foster collaborative learning

The new, 92,000-square-foot Applied Engineering Building will be a companion piece to the **School of Concrete and Construction Management Building** that is currently under construction. The location will group the two buildings and a proposed new Computer Science facility along with the existing Science Building to further develop MTSU's Science Corridor of Innovation academic neighborhood focused on STEM disciplines.

Designer selection for the engineering project is underway, with design kickoff to start in September and continue through December 2022. We will begin construction in January 2023, with construction completion anticipated for June 2024.



School of Concrete and Construction Management

Construction is ongoing on MTSU's new 54,000-square-foot building to house our world-renowned School of Concrete and Construction Management.

The estimated completion date is fall 2022. Hoar Construction is the construction manager and general contractor for this project. Flexible instructional spaces and discipline-specific labs will be included, and the building **will incorporate exposed**



structural and other building systems to be used as teaching tools for students and visitors. Total construction cost is \$31.6 million.

Recording Studios



Construction activity for the College of Media and Entertainment's relocated recording studios is wrapping up, with plans to

occupy the new spaces this fall at 2111 E. Main St., in the former Parking Services facility.

Parking and Transportation Services



Last, we recently opened the newly constructed Parking and Transportation Services Building, which moved operations in January to 205 City View Drive.

The new, 12,000-square-foot facility now serves as the modern administrative office, as well as the transportation and maintenance hub for the MTSU Raider Xpress shuttle service.

The new structure is designed to meet the needs of our growing campus and also provide the necessary support for MTSU's expanding transportation system, which now consists of **18 shuttle buses**.

And even though the Parking Services **automated permit renewal** system allows students, faculty, and staff the convenience of securing their parking passes remotely, we welcome your visit to our new contemporary facility. Its functional design will enable Parking and Transportation the capability to continue to provide the professional services required by our expanding University!



MTSU *Arts*
ART • DANCE • MUSIC • THEATRE

10
TH
season

MTSU ARTS

Celebrating its 10th anniversary of branding under one banner this year, MTSU Arts continued to put on dance concerts, musical performances, theater productions, and visual arts exhibits.

Livestreaming video was utilized for most events during the 2020–21 season, along with some limited in-person attendance for select shows. Advanced multicamera TV production students from the Department of Media Arts helped audiences enjoy MTSU’s fall 2020 theater season online. The Department of Theatre and Dance handled video and streaming this spring.

Via technology, fine arts students at MTSU never really stopped sharing their craft during the pandemic. But now they are ready to **return to a full calendar of shows** and bigger, in-person audiences this fall.

The students and faculty in Art, Dance, Music, and Theatre cannot wait to welcome you back in person for our 10th season of MTSU Arts. Here are some of the outstanding events on the near horizon.

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

Abstracted Representation of Jered Sprecher,
professor of Painting at the University of Tennessee

Aug. 23–Sept. 11

Todd Art Gallery (Room 224A), Todd Hall

School of Music presents:

Schola Contorum

Sept. 2, 7 p.m.

Hinton Music Hall, Wright Music Building

Department of Theatre and Dance presents:

Sweeney Todd

Nov. 4–7

Tucker Theatre, Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building

MTSU Dance program presents:

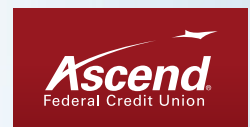
Fall Dance Concert

Nov. 18–20

Tucker Theatre, Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building

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

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



INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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

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

The pandemic caused a decrease in F-1 visa international student enrollment numbers across the United States. International students had to face restrictive public health mandates, lockdowns, closed U.S. consulates and embassies, unavailability of international flights, and the added expense of quarantines upon arrival in the United States. MTSU was not alone in this challenging situation.

International Affairs responded to the pandemic challenge by using new and innovative methods to recruit F-1 international students: joining online recruitment platforms, engaging new global agents from countries based on our newly developed international recruitment strategy, stepping up social media campaigns, and participating in virtual recruitment fairs throughout the world.

International Affairs participated in **82 virtual fairs in more than 25 countries**, increased the number of approved agents from 30 to 72, joined seven online recruitment platforms, and subsequently **touched almost 25,000 prospective new MTSU students throughout the world.**

Through these new efforts, we managed to minimize the pandemic impact and attracted over 900 applicants and over 400 international admissions for the Fall 2021 semester.

Currently, MTSU international students come from 62 countries. Saudi Arabia, China, Bahamas, India, and Nigeria are the top countries of origin for our students.

I am proud to say that MTSU is a **welcoming, safe place** for international students and visitors. International Affairs offers various programming to encourage involvement in campus activities, enhance cultural experiences, and help academic success. Activities include Student Success workshops, cultural and natural excursions, and international seminars and presentations.

The impact of international students both culturally and economically is undeniable. NAFSA statistics indicate that for every eight international students, three U.S. jobs are created and supported by spending occurring in the higher education, accommodation, dining, retail, transportation, telecommunications, and health insurance sectors.

According to NAFSA, international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities contributed \$38.7 billion within the U.S. in the 2019–20 academic year, while supporting or creating almost 416,000 jobs. In Tennessee, that impact was \$284.1 million and over **3,300 jobs within the state.**



In other news:

- Several MTSU students were recipients of outside scholarships, including the Gilman Scholarship (six students), Fund for Education Abroad Scholarship (two students), Freeman-ASIA Scholarship (four students), and the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant Program (two students). International Affairs collaborates with the Undergraduate Fellowship Office within the Honors College to help students through the application process. This work speaks to the strength of our students and the international mindedness of the campus.
- Working with colleges and departments, International Affairs also has established productive international partnerships with successful joint degree and pathway programs in Actuarial Science, Finance, and Business Administration. We continue seeking partnership opportunities with international institutions and support the pursuit of collaborative programs by academic units.

MILITARY CENTER

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



*Charlie and Hazel Daniels
Veterans and Military Family Center*

In 2011, MTSU became the first institution of higher education in the state (and one of the first in the country) to partner with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' new VetSuccess on Campus program. The subsequent creation of a full-blown center on campus for military-connected students—the MTSU Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center—further distinguished MTSU's veteran initiatives.

The 3,200-square-foot center constitutes the largest and most comprehensive veterans and military family center at a university in Tennessee. The Daniels Center provides service and support for the more than 1,000 student veterans and their family members at MTSU. Everything a student veteran needs to succeed is available in this single location, from scheduling courses and completing government paperwork to getting questions answered about benefits and employment opportunities.

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

During the pandemic, the center stayed open the entire time (not one day did we close the Daniels Center). Some of my favorite pandemic-specific actions included: raising and distributing **more than \$63,000 in microgrants** and launching new communication efforts, including a monthly newsletter, a monthly speaker series, "Current Truth" emails on GI Bill changes due to the pandemic, videos, and virtual events. That's not to mention attending to a lot of educational needs!

I am so proud of the Daniels Center's strength. We adapted and accomplished our stated mission despite the obstacles.

Lt. Gen. Keith M. Huber



MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

With the new academic year, our Division of Marketing and Communications (MAC) has expanded its services to the campus community, bringing many similar services together under one umbrella.



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

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

Together, with the Marketing and Communications staff of social media, video, and still photography specialists, we can now serve all these needs with a streamlined, coordinated effort.

Creative Marketing Solutions (CMS) offers print and digital design, photography, and content creation services to our University community. Our CMS-Printing works with state-of-the-art equipment in producing the University's wide array of publications. Its retail shop in the Student Union,



Blue Print Solutions, is also the home to our popular **wide-format** printing service that produces banners, posters, signage, and the like. Students, faculty, and staff have found the retail counter at Blue Print the "go-to" place for those quick printing needs.

Let our award-winning marketing and communications team communicate your message. Our staff offers skilled, professional assistance from event production to branding, from design and content to the finished product . . . print, video, and more! Visit mtsu.edu/mac/services.php for more.

EMPLOYEE CHARITABLE GIVING CAMPAIGN

MTSU's annual Charitable Giving Campaign is a monthlong effort by faculty and staff to support worthy causes.

The campaign is fueled largely by monthly payroll deductions from employees over the next year but also allows one-time, lump-sum gifts at the donor's discretion.

MTSU employees again showed their True Blue spirit with a **record \$136,558.81 pledged** during the 2020 Employee Charitable Giving Campaign.

The pledge total surpassed the \$135,000 goal, with **843 participants** taking part in the annual tradition.

This incredible amount was raised while in the midst of a pandemic, truly revealing the caring nature of our faculty and staff and reflecting a collective acknowledgment that

it's important to give back to this great community.

During the **upcoming Oct. 1–Nov. 1 campaign**, we hope to break last year's record giving amount and, in fact, to reach \$140,000 in giving.

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

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

#trueGIVER

GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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

College of Graduate Studies

- Despite the pandemic, Graduate Studies was able to connect prospective students in our area and beyond to graduate program opportunities. We substantially increased enrollment for the Fall 2020 semester to 2,892 students, a **28% increase** over Fall 2019. We experienced a record Spring 2021 semester enrollment with 2,919 students, **an increase of 33%** over spring the previous year. This was also the only year enrollment numbers for spring rose above those from the previous fall.
- The college worked with Marketing and Communications to create a campaign focusing on the role of household pets in the remote graduate experience during the pandemic. This campaign was picked up by several Nashville TV stations as well as one in Georgia and won a bronze award in the media relations campaign category for the Tennessee College Public Relations Association.

- For the second year in a row, an MTSU student won the Tennessee Conference of Graduate Schools Outstanding Master's Thesis Award. This year's winner was **Ben Burnley**, author of "Social, Mediated Democracy: Modeling Effects of Social Media Use and Deliberative Behaviors on Voting." **Jason Reineke** served as thesis advisor as Burnley earned his master's in Media and Communication.

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

- In the 2020 fiscal year, MTSU had 155 proposals requesting \$39,872,000 in external funds.
- **New funding totaled \$9,569,663**, contributing to the total lifetime portfolio (total amount touched in the fiscal year from old and new grants) of \$58,666,573.
- 49 principal investigators (PIs) received new funding, representing 34 departments. Sixty-two new grants were awarded.
- There were a total of 115 unique PIs representing 55 departments with active funding in fiscal year 2020. A total of 197 grants were administered by the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.
- Samples of notable grants awarded in FY 2020 included:

Cindy Chafin (PI), Center for Health and Human Services: STEMsational Ag: The Virtual Farm, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), \$816,000 (two years)

Chaney Mosley (PI), School of Agriculture: Soil, Animal, Food, and Economic (SAFE) Research, Education, and Outreach, USDA NIFA, \$749,999 (three years)

John Wallin (PI), Department of Physics and Astronomy: Cybertechnology Development and Exploration of Learning Processes in Augmented Reality Team Environments (CyberLearnAR), National Science Foundation, \$300,000 (three years)

Tiffany Saul (PI), Department of Sociology and Anthropology: Archaeological Excavation and Remains Recovery Work in France, Department of Defense, \$275,343 (one year)

Mengliang Zhang (PI), Department of Chemistry: Detection of Ignitable Liquid Residues in Fire Debris by Using Direct Analysis in Real Time Mass Spectrometry, National Institute of Justice/Department of Justice, \$285,229 (two years)



From L-R; Cindy Chafin, Chaney Mosley, John Wallin, Tiffany Saul, and Mengliang Zhang

Research tells us that the first six weeks of the semester are critically important in setting up the conditions for student success. Students need to connect academically in the classroom, but they also need to connect socially through out-of-the-classroom activities. Our goal is to help all new students develop a sense of belonging and connection to the MTSU campus.

During the 22 freshman CUSTOMS orientation sessions this summer, the staff from the Division of Student Affairs communicated with students about the **Connection Point** program and the importance of attending at least four Connection Point events during their first weeks on campus. Connection Point is the theme for a variety of welcome activities for our newest students. In addition to meeting new people and having a great time, students will receive an event-inspired **button designed especially for each event**.

Students will need to download an electronic “event pass” and bring their mobile devices with them to the activities/events so Student Affairs staff can record their attendance at the events. This will allow the staff to identify and reach out to students who are not connecting with the community to determine how we can assist them to become more involved.



Connection Point activities began on Friday, Aug. 20, with the **Commons Kick-off!** Activities included a

DJ, karaoke, and games on the Student Union Commons. You can learn more about the Connection Point program and events at mtsu.edu/connection.



Saturday, Aug. 21, marked MTSU's **20th University Convocation**. This year's Convocation returned to Murphy Center.



The **summer reading** selection for this year was *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates*. As described by the publisher, *The Other Wes Moore* presents the true story of two young men, born just blocks from each other, who share the same name, a difficult childhood, and trouble with the law. Though they share many similarities in their early lives, one

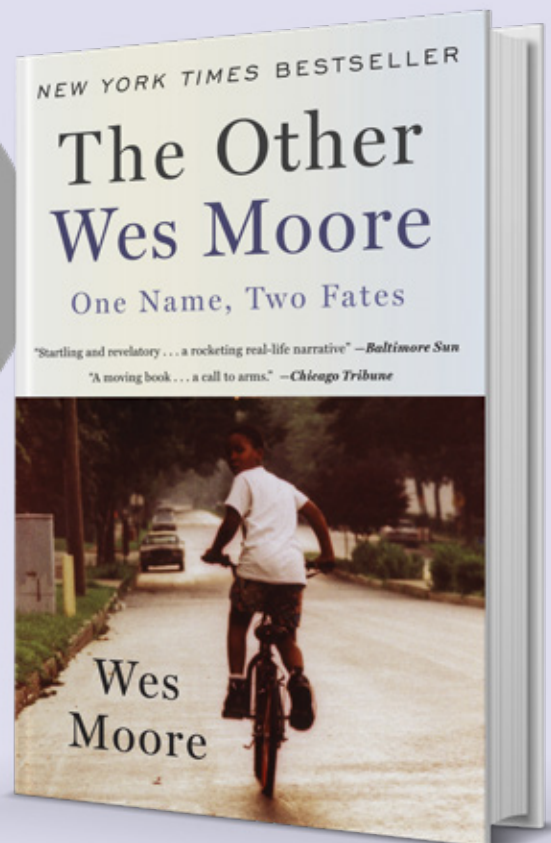
Wes Moore becomes a Rhodes Scholar, decorated veteran, and successful business leader, while the other Wes Moore is serving a life sentence for murder. Alternating between the stories of these two men, *The Other Wes Moore* explores the unique circumstances and personal decisions that culminated in two very different outcomes.



Convocation was followed by my **Welcome Back Bash** at Floyd Stadium. Wes Moore signed copies of his book at the Welcome Back Bash, a True Blue tradition that also featured music, games, and giveaways.



Wes Moore signed copies of his book at the **Welcome Back Bash**.



QUEST 2025

In October 2020, I formally launched Quest 2025, an expansive plan dedicated to graduating students who are prepared to thrive professionally, committed to critical inquiry and lifelong learning, and engaged as civically, globally responsible citizens.

Five primary strategic priorities were approved and are listed below. Work groups are recommending action steps and beginning implementation throughout campus in support of the strategic priorities.

- 1. Invest in a comprehensive faculty development program that includes the integration of high impact practices in key curricula.**
- 2. Eliminate achievement gaps and increase the diversity of faculty and staff.**
- 3. Increase online, hybrid, and off-site offerings, adaptive scheduling, and curricular flexibility.**
- 4. Create and support a culture of service through all divisions of the University.**
- 5. Invest in a campuswide environment that fosters living-learning opportunities.**

Quest 2025 is important to the future of our institution, and campuswide support is crucial. Here are some updates on our ongoing student success efforts at MTSU.

Deserved Recognition

MTSU was one of 16 institutions nationwide to be awarded a competitive Association of Public and Land-grant Universities grant funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The grant provides \$15,000 along with targeted professional development and technical assistance dependent upon institutional needs. The objectives of the grant and services provided align with primary strategic priorities contained in MTSU's Quest 2025. The 16 institutions participating in the grant will serve as models for other colleges seeking to strengthen their own student success initiatives.

National Leadership

Keeping MTSU's ongoing success and proven expertise in the national spotlight is important. Not only does this support our prominent position in broader national discussions of student success, but also disseminating field-tested strategies for promoting student success provides other colleges and universities with important frameworks to tackle their own institutional challenges. Along these lines, **Vincent Windrow** and **Brian Hinote** (both associate vice provosts in MTSU's Office of Student Success) each contributed their expertise and a piece of the MTSU story in upcoming chapters appearing in *A Radical Vision for Student Success: Reimagining Higher Education from the First Year of College Through Graduation*.

Hinote's work focuses on effective data and analytic strategies to support student and institutional success, while Windrow envisions not only ways to identify problems and barriers to success, but also team-building



Vincent Windrow



(Student Success continued)

approaches to effectively overcome those obstacles. This much-anticipated volume is the product of the Reimagining the First Year initiative, a multiyear collaborative effort generously supported by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. Windrow was the University's representative.

TBR-SERS Grant Awards

The Office of Student Success received two grant awards by the Tennessee Board of Regents' Student Engagement, Retention, and Success initiative. **Brelinda Johnson**, manager of our Scholars Academy, is the lead on the \$50,000 Accelerated Mentoring Program. The program hired 50 peer mentors and a success coach to help 150 freshmen navigate their first year at MTSU.

Windrow was successful in his quest to have the Write On! program receive \$47,400 in funding. Developed to help at-risk freshmen improve their writing skills, the program employs six students to serve as writing mentors for 30 students. Student success workshops and interactive writing sessions are part of the program's plan of action. Participants also will be directed to the University Writing Center for additional support.

MT Engage

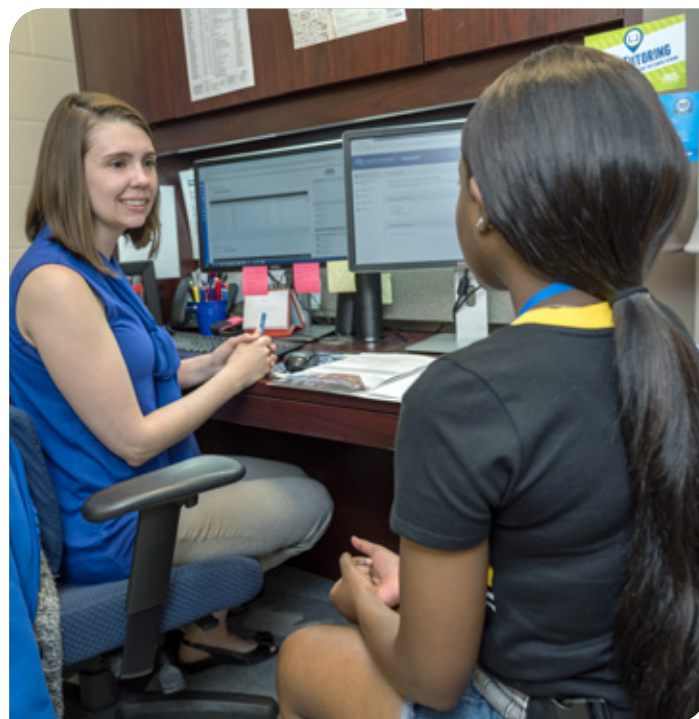
MT Engage concluded its fifth year as MTSU's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The program introduces students to high-impact practices, integrative thinking, and the value of reflecting on their learning across their college experience. With help from valued campus partners, including 205 faculty teaching certified courses at all levels, student participation soared to nearly 13,000. Students have the opportunity to participate in approximately 20 MT Engage Week events each year, and they can compete for scholarships by submitting a reflective ePortfolio.



The success of the program extends far beyond the number of student and faculty participants. Students completing the National Survey of Student Engagement report higher levels of academic engagement than did their peers prior to the QEP. Program staff

are currently assessing how MT Engage has contributed to improved student success and a culture of engaged learning on our campus. Preliminary data suggests that investing in faculty development on high-impact practices and integrative and reflective thinking paid off, as did the program's recognition of students' accomplishments.

Future initiatives will build on the lessons learned during our QEP implementation process by setting strategic priorities to advance faculty adoption of high-impact practices and students' opportunities to grow as integrative, reflective thinkers. The program is well positioned to continue supporting faculty and students well into the future.



Advising

Despite an unprecedented year, academic advisors have continued to provide a quality, student-centered culture, fostering student collaboration and mentorship. Over the past 11 months, MTSU's 70+ advisors had almost **54,000 advising interactions with students** and submitted over 71,000 pieces of documentation within EAB's Navigate system. Most of this work was done virtually. While true developmental advising requires face-to-face interactions with students, advisors were able to quickly rise to the challenge by successfully transforming advising into a virtual setting during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Advisors also have demonstrated a commitment to professional development. In the past academic year, the Advisor Mastery Program (AMP) sponsored 14 professional development events and hosted 320 participants. AMP also promoted 29 external professional development opportunities, such as conferences, webinars, and certification programs. Among advisors, 32 were awarded the 2020–21 AMP certification. Led by a committee of advisors, AMP continues to seek new and innovative ways to support all advisors. Just this year, a new mentoring program was piloted for advisors, with the goal of promoting intercollegiate collaboration across advising centers. The innovative professionalism of advisors continues to make advising a cornerstone for MTSU’s student success.

Sarah Gregory, an advisor in the College of Media and Entertainment, was recently appointed as Advising Fellow for Professional Development. In this role, Gregory will continue the tradition of excellent leadership by serving as chair of the AMP Professional Development Committee, working collaboratively with the group to provide best-in-class development opportunities for MTSU advisors.

Since fall 2020, **Bailey Schneider**, an advisor in the College of Basic and Applied Sciences, has served as

Advising Fellow for Social Media. In this role, Schneider has served as the voice of academic advising on MTSU’s Facebook pages. Her work has been instrumental in answering questions, responding to complaints, and serving as a resource to MTSU students and parents. In addition, Schneider’s work has been vital to informing others, providing updates, and shaping perceptions of the role and functions of advisors at MTSU.

Navigate

Navigate is a large and growing student success platform at MTSU that has evolved from little more than a student information tool into a comprehensive, collaborative, and coordinated care network supporting students and many colleagues and offices campuswide. This strategic expansion continued through the COVID-19 shift to remote instruction, playing a significant role in keeping students connected to their advisors and other student support professionals at MTSU. The successful use of Navigate for advising appointments is important because meaningful time and

Nearly 54,000
advising appointments
created in Navigate, with
over 71,000 pieces
of documentation uploaded

(Student Success continued)

contact with academic advisors significantly increases students' chances of success at MTSU.

Tutoring

Under the leadership of Cornelia Wills, director of student success, our Learner Support program continues to assist students with two signature initiatives: **tutoring** and **supplemental instruction** (SI).

It was an exceptionally good year given the number of students who went for tutoring. New utilization records were set in both the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters. Last fall, the number of students attending tutoring sessions was **up 67%** from the Fall 2019 semester. Moreover, tutoring usage for this spring more than doubled, **increasing by 103%** compared to the Spring 2020 semester.

SI is a peer-assisted, group study, and discussion methodology that uses regularly scheduled, informal sessions to help students develop greater understanding of challenging content, refine study skills, and better integrate course material into their work and lives. During the Spring 2020 semester, SI transitioned from an in-person to a remote form of delivery and continued through the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters because of the pandemic. During the 2020–21 academic year, it was available in 96 course sections across 21 of the most challenging courses in four colleges. A total of **3,186 students** attended SI during the 2020–21 academic year.

With a focus on outstanding delivery of our remote tutoring services, the new **Online Tutoring Essentials** training component was added last fall. This training was a two-hour, self-paced, interactive course to provide tutors confidence to create both a collaborative and engaging online tutoring experience. The training went well and received positive feedback. A similar version of the training will continue for the 2021–22 academic year.

Beginning this fall, in addition to reporting traditional tutoring utilization, data will be reported by gender and race/ethnicity. This is an effort to help eliminate the achievement gap as outlined in Quest 2025. A special outreach campaign has been developed to increase the utilization rate for students of color. Lastly, a new virtual check-in and checkout platform will be implemented for use by students.

MTSU Online

MTSU Online has continued to respond during an unprecedented period in which online learning is at the forefront of the University's operational practice. In the 2020–21 academic year, MTSU Online staff supported the development or redesign of over 210 online courses. Staff also supported the development of new online programs, including the Digital Teaching and Learning Certificate, the Master of Music (Music Education Specialization), and the Master of Education in Literacy, as well as supported the efforts of faculty in the Department of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures in the development of foreign language offerings online at the 2000 (advanced) level. This allows for several departments on campus to begin offering a Bachelor of Arts degree online.

In service of our academic departments, MTSU Online supported the funding of **23 instructors in 15 departments** across MTSU. These instructors are hired specifically for teaching intentionally designed online courses to promote student learning.

In our ongoing mission to promote student success, MTSU Online partnered with TutorMe to provide live tutoring sessions **24 hours a day** for online students. These tutors support and coach in content areas where students sometimes struggle and need additional support outside of conventional instructional time.

MTSU Online now has **three instructional designers** supporting faculty in areas of best practices in online courses development, online teaching practices, student engagement, developing authentic learning opportunities aligned with course objectives, and student career needs.

Our instructional design team presented 17 workshops the past academic year, serving more than 700 faculty participants. Sample workshop topics included alignment of assessments with course objectives, measuring instruction hours and cognitive load, using open educational resources,

and utilizing D2L tools for student and faculty success. These faculty training efforts lead to high-quality online courses that are engaging and effective for students.





Since last fall, ITD has helped administer over **235,000 Zoom meetings** with more than **2 million participants**.

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

Academic and Instructional Technology Updates

The Lea Learning, Teaching, and Innovative Technologies Center (LT&ITC) provided over 300 consultations with faculty last academic year for technical, pedagogical, and design support. The center also hosted:

- Two faculty learning communities
- Faculty mentoring
- Faculty Fellows
- Women's Associate Professors Mentoring Group
- Book/research groups
- Teaching Effectively with Zoom (Katie Gruber)
- Teaching Effectively with Zoom (Becky McIntyre)
- Small Teaching Online (Holly Hebert)
- An Urgency of Teachers (Michelle Conceison)
- Small Teaching Online (Mary Martin)
- Teaching Effectively with Zoom (Jonelle Hinsey)
- So You Want to Talk about Race (Leah Lyons)
- Teaching Effectively with Zoom (Sandra Benson)
- White Fragility (Renee Jones and Roberta Chevrette)
- Dare to Lead (Shane McCoy)

This fall, we are excited to offer nine learning communities for faculty:

- Successfully Engaging Students in the Virtual Learning Environment (Benson)
- Integrating Practical Data Skills into the Classroom (Sally Ann Cruikshank and Kenneth Blake)
- Daring Pedagogy Faculty Learning Community (McCoy)
- Incorporating Experiential OER Badges and Certifications to Enhance Student Learning and Workforce Preparedness (Diane Edmonson and Lucy Matthews)

(Technology continued)

- Exposing Inequity and Barriers to Access in Higher Education in Virtual Classroom Environments (Claire Cook and Leggett)
- Connecting Online Graduate Students to the University Community (Dye and Bethany Wrye)
- MT Engage: Using Integrative and Reflective Thinking to Promote an Inclusive Campus Culture (Chandra Story and Cobb)
- Wikipedia for Scholars and Students (Joan McRae)
- Motivational Interviewing as Pedagogy (Lee and Smith)

During spring, the LT&ITC and Faculty Instructional Technology Center (FITC) offered countless workshops over a variety of topics, such as using Zoom, Panopto, Examity, and D2L. More than 2,700 participated, with over 78% of our faculty attending at least one workshop. On average, most faculty or staff have attended two or more workshops so far in 2021. Also, this summer, the FITC held a workshop series called LEADERS@MTSU (Lead Educator and Advanced Developer of Engaging Resources for Students). Over eight different sessions, 68 faculty participated in developing a course.

Since updating over 400 classrooms last summer to allow for automatic recording of all classes to Panopto (and D2L), we have averaged **587 class recordings a day** with well over 3,000 every week during the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters. Working hand in hand with both our Panopto and D2L representatives, ITD staff have ensured that these recordings happen on time and are available to students as soon as possible.

Since last fall, ITD has helped administer over **235,000 Zoom meetings** with more than **2 million participants**. This also includes 176 webinars with 9,736 total participants. Averages were more than **19,000 meetings a month** and roughly 655 a day (including weekends). These meetings have included classes, tutoring, student group works, and the normal business of the University when most of the people were having to work from home during the pandemic.

New Graduate Application

Developers from Custom Application Development and Enterprise Application Services worked on a new application for Graduate Studies, making it live for the Spring 2021 semester. This application provides a more

streamlined interface for potential students, allowing them to easily know where they are in the process of becoming an accepted graduate student in one of our many programs.

AI Chatbot

In partnership with the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Academic Services, ITD will implement a new chatbot featuring artificial intelligence to provide an always accessible on-demand platform to foster student engagement and answer students' questions in areas ranging from admissions to financial aid and advising.



ServiceNow IT Service Management

ITD is pleased to announce ServiceNow, the premier IT service management (ITSM) platform, will be coming to MTSU later this year to provide a one-stop solution for faculty, staff, and student technology needs. ServiceNow will replace the BMC Footprints ITSM platform currently in use and will provide additional functionality such as a self-service portal, interactive chat, and an online knowledge base where faculty, staff, and students can find answers to their technology questions at any time.

Next-Generation Firewalls

Starting later this year, ITD will replace our existing firewall infrastructure that protects MTSU's networks with the next generation firewall platform from Palo Alto Networks. This investment will provide the foundation for the next chapter in our cybersecurity strategy that emphasizes integration of our various cybersecurity systems. It also will introduce sandboxing technology, which allows us to automatically inspect any type of file attachment that comes into our campus network for malicious content. In addition, the new firewall infrastructure will provide expanded capacity for future growth as internet bandwidth demands increase.



Sophos Home Premium

Sophos began offering Sophos Home Premium cybersecurity software to enterprise customers because of the sudden increase in work-from-home arrangements that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. This means MTSU faculty and staff members are entitled to Sophos Home Premium (normally a \$44.99 annual recurring cost to consumers) and can install it on up to 10 compatible Windows or MacOS personal devices. Sophos Home Premium features the same technology as our enterprise next-generation cybersecurity software, Sophos Intercept-X, which includes machine intelligence that protects against advanced malware like ransomware. Look for communications from ITD for instructions on how to take advantage of this benefit.

Internet2

MTSU recently became a full member of the Internet2 collaborative effort to innovate and extend the leading edge of scholarship by advancing national and global research and education networking and core-supporting infrastructure, technologies, and services. Membership in this collaboration will empower MTSU to advance its academic mission by establishing a direct connection to the premier research and education network to foster high-speed connectivity to peer institutions as we continue to expand our graduate and research programs. As a result, later this year, we will implement a new internet service provider (ISP) circuit from Lumen Technologies that will allow the University to connect to Internet2 through Southern Crossroads (SoX), the regional provider of Internet2 connectivity. This new ISP circuit also will provide commodity internet services for the campus community.

Exchange Online Migration Complete for Faculty/Staff Email

ITD completed migrating all faculty/staff mailboxes to Microsoft Exchange Online in spring 2021. My thanks to everyone for their cooperation and patience as we made this transition during an especially challenging time with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teams Telephone Implementation

ITD also continues work on the second phase of the Microsoft Teams implementation, which involves enterprise voice services (telephony). We successfully migrated some

test phone numbers to date and will continue test migrations as we complete our training and implementation engagement in partnership with CDW-G. Once complete, the transition to Teams Voice will bring key improvements over Skype for Business, such as enhanced mobile device and conferencing support. Look for further communications from ITD for Teams announcements, including training and migration rollout.

New Information Security Awareness Training Platform

ITD recently completed an evaluation of information security awareness training solutions and selected a new platform from KnowBe4, which is the leader in this space. As a result, we will transition from the current solution provided by SANS (formerly known as Securing the Human and now Litmos) by the next time we reset the training in January 2022. Look for communications from ITD as we approach this date.



New Virtual Desktop Infrastructure

ITD is in the process of refreshing the server infrastructure that powers the University's virtual desktop environment used in classrooms and computer labs across campus. Of note is that the new infrastructure introduces graphics processing units (GPUs) to this environment for the first time. Therefore, once the refresh completes, the environment will feature support for 3D and other graphics-intensive applications.