

NEWS & information

FROM THE PRESIDENT Sidney A. McPhee



Welcome to the
Fall 2022 Semester!

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

As I embark on my 22nd year as president of this great University, I am very fortunate to be part of a community that places its value on its people. The progress this institution has made over the years is due to the commitment and dedication of our employees.

I welcome your feedback! Email me at sidney.mcphee@mtsu.edu. I invite you to check out "President's Post" at mtsu.edu/president for updates and information from my office or look for them on the MTSU home page. You can also follow me on Twitter: @PresidentMcPhee.

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

**MIDDLE
TENNESSEE**
STATE UNIVERSITY.

True Blue!

SIDNEY A. MCPHEE

FREE TUITION

Can students attend MTSU tuition free?
For many students, the answer is yes!

On July 1, MTSU launched an effort to help students navigate several scenarios and options that could eliminate, or greatly reduce, the cost of tuition.



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FUNDRAISING SETS NEW MTSU RECORD

Although the financial books for fiscal year 2022 are not officially closed, I am delighted to share that with more than \$17.2 million in giving, we had a record-breaking year for fundraising. This represents a 50% increase over 2021!

Here are some highlights:

- Donor participation was up 20%.
- 7,600 donors gave.
- Almost every academic college saw an increase in giving.
- The College of Liberal Arts more than doubled donations in the last year.
- MT Athletics and its Build Blue campaign experienced a historic year with a whopping \$4 million in growth.

We are incredibly grateful for the support and for the ever-growing sense of shared purpose and the palpable momentum that moves this great University forward.

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FREE TUITION *CONT.*

MTSU's tuition was already the lowest of the state's three major universities. Our decision to hold it flat for the coming academic year, plus recent increases in the state's HOPE Lottery Scholarship, means many can attend our University at no tuition cost.

Admissions recruiters and academic advisors are encouraging students to go to a new website, mtsu.edu/mtfree, and engage with an enrollment coordinator via a Zoom virtual portal. Coordinators will review various scenarios with students to determine eligibility.

A TEAM EFFORT

MTSU's Board of Trustees voted June 14 to keep tuition and program services fees flat for the coming academic year this fall. A full-time, in-state undergraduate student taking 15 credit hours in both the fall and spring semesters will pay \$7,704 in tuition and \$1,888 in program service fees, for a total of \$9,592 for the academic year.

Also, the state recently increased the amount of its Tennessee Education Lottery (HOPE) Scholarship, raising what it pays eligible freshmen and sophomores to \$4,500 a year from \$3,500, while juniors and seniors will receive \$5,700 a year instead of \$4,500. Students need a 21 on the ACT or must graduate high school with a 3.0 GPA, while meeting other state requirements, to qualify for these awards.

For HOPE-eligible students, the difference (less than \$5,100) between MTSU's tuition cost and the scholarship payout could be mitigated by a variety and combination of means—including federal Pell Grant monies, academic scholarships from MTSU, and tuition discounts afforded to teachers and state employees.

The scenarios outlined on the MTFree website apply only to first-time freshmen who are Tennessee residents and would be attending as full-time students. Although MTSU's highest value **guaranteed scholarships have a deadline of Dec. 1**, the MTFree website shows a range of scenarios including last-chance academic scholarships for first-time freshmen. These scholarships are still available for late applicants and require a minimum of 23 on the ACT and a 3.5 GPA in high school.

True Blue!



ADMISSIONS AND RECRUITMENT

Our work in 2021–22 to recruit incoming freshmen for the Class of 2026 was remarkable in many ways.

Recruiting in high schools with ever-changing COVID restrictions last fall was a challenge, but our recruiters managed to deliver the **largest number of freshman applications (>12,000) and admitted students (>8,000) in the history of the University.**

With those records set, the challenge becomes converting those applicants and admits to enrolled students. Universities all over the country are experiencing this challenge as students both apply to more institutions and have the additional options of entering a booming workforce or taking a gap year to work, travel, or learn on their own. This means we must continue to recruit the students we've admitted through orientation and even up to the day classes start. While the recruiters in the Admissions Office can bring them to the door, **our whole campus must welcome and usher them in.**

Our freshman numbers are promising, but transfer student recruitment is more than challenging. Many of our feeder community colleges didn't completely return to on-ground instruction, making visits to campuses less fruitful than in the past. Coupled with several years of declines in enrollment at the community colleges, this resulted in a smaller pool from which to recruit. That said, **we remain the most popular destination for transfer students in the state.**

While the campus attends to the start of the Fall 2022 semester, our recruiters have already been on the road for several weeks to recruit for next year. The undergraduate recruitment staff is fully engaged in visiting schools and communicating with the students who will be our incoming class for the Fall 2023 semester—the MTSU Class of 2027. Our annual **True Blue Tour begins in August** with the Rutherford County event on our own campus, the first of 14 stops across Tennessee, Alabama, Kentucky, and Georgia. In the fall we will have two extended tour opportunities—our True Blue Preview events—where we invite students and their families to take a closer look at campus and meet some of our faculty and college advising staff. Through these events and hundreds of school visits, college fairs, and our campus tour program, we are doing everything in our power to bring you the best and brightest students to become part of the True Blue family.



STUDENT LIFE

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 to develop a sense of belonging and connection to the MTSU campus.**

During the 16 CUSTOMS freshman orientation sessions that have happened this summer, staff from the Division of Student Affairs have been talking with students about the Connection Point program and the importance of attending at least four Connection Point events during their first semester 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 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 each event. This allows the staff to monitor our students' involvement to ensure they are connecting with our community. Students who are not connecting with the community will be contacted by staff to determine how we can assist them to become more involved.

Connection Point activities include the Commons Kickoff (a fair featuring campus departments and karaoke) and the Back to School Bash, both on the Student Union Commons. **Sunday, Aug. 21, marks MTSU's 21st University Convocation** at Murphy Center, featuring the author of this year's summer reading selection, Andrew Forsthoefel. *Walking to Listen: 4,000 Miles Across America, One Story at a Time* is a memoir of Forsthoefel's year spent walking across the highways of the United States, meeting and listening to people of all ages, races, and walks of life. Middle Tennessee Fan Day is also back on Sunday, August 21, as the Blue Raider football team welcomes fans to Floyd Stadium to kick off the 2022 season. The free and open to the public event runs from 3–5 p.m., with activities including inflatables, giveaways, free concessions, live music, and autograph sessions with the 2022 football team.

Family Weekend is scheduled for Sept. 16–17. MTSU will host Tennessee State University on Saturday, Sept. 17, at 6 p.m. The annual Freshman Walk will take place at halftime.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Commons Kickoff

Student Union Commons, Friday, Aug. 19

Back to School Bash

Student Union Commons, Saturday, Aug. 20

University Convocation

Murphy Center, Sunday, Aug. 21

and MT Fan Day

Floyd Stadium, Sunday, Aug. 21

Family Weekend

Sept. 16–17

Football: MTSU vs TSU

(Freshman Walk at halftime)

Saturday, Sept. 17

connection
point



There are many campus construction projects and capital improvements that are ongoing or were recently completed. Here is a brief update on our two largest construction projects:

APPLIED ENGINEERING BUILDING

- The 89,000-square-foot building will serve as the home for the Engineering Technology and Mechatronics Engineering programs as well as provide space for future engineering programs. Construction is estimated to start in mid-March.
- Project scope includes construction of the Applied Engineering Building, site improvements and utilities, and demolition of the Voorhies Engineering Technology Building.
- Preliminary estimated construction completion is spring 2025.

SCHOOL OF CONCRETE AND CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

- The 54,000-square-foot building construction continues with the final touches: polishing the concrete; installing the reclaimed wood on the learning stairs; finishing windowsills, sidewalks, and irrigation; along with test and balance of the HVAC system.
- Estimated completion date is fall 2022.
- Hoar Construction is the construction manager/general contractor for the project.
- Flexible instructional spaces and discipline-specific labs will be included, and the building will incorporate exposed structural and other building systems to be used as teaching tools for students and visitors.
- Construction cost is \$40.1 million.



BUDGET UPDATE

The 2022–23 General Appropriations Act passed by the General Assembly included an \$8.1 million state appropriation increase for MTSU. Although there was a reduction in state funding for MTSU under the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) Outcomes Based Funding Formula, the budget included enhancement funds and partial funding for a 4% salary pool to be distributed at the discretion of the University.

At its June meeting, the Board of Trustees approved the president's salary recommendation, which consists of the following components:

- Increasing salaries for employees below the 2022 federally prescribed salary minimums
- Providing a 2% cost of living allowance (COLA) increase, with a \$1,000 minimum
- Updating current salary ranges from 2014–15 College and University Professional Association (CUPA) data to 2020–21 CUPA data and providing market adjustments. This includes increasing salary ranges by 15.56% to reflect the new market levels for advertised positions. For current employees, new market salaries were calculated, and 23.5% of the difference between current salary and market salary was provided. Raises were effective July 1 for administrative and classified staff and Aug. 1 for faculty.

In addition, the University received funding for two nonrecurring projects in the 2022–23 budget:

- Funding of \$2 million will provide continued financial aid for the Medical Education Program jointly administered

by MTSU and Meharry Medical College.

- MTSU will receive \$5 million to be used for expenses for relocating the MTSU flight operations to the Shelbyville Municipal Airport.

The state's budget included funding for the renovation of Kirksey Old Main and Rutledge Hall. The total project budget is \$54.3 million, which includes \$2.4 million in required matching funds.

MTSU also received funding for an Aerospace campus totaling \$62.2 million, which includes \$5 million in University matching funds.

In total, this will be an investment of \$116.5 million in new capital projects.

The state budget also includes \$7.6 million in capital maintenance funds for five of the University's capital maintenance projects submitted for funding. These projects include lighting and lighting control updates, building mechanical and controls updates, campuswide access control and security updates, elevator modernization, and building exterior updates.

The General Assembly provided funding to double the match to the 401(k) plan for employee contributions between \$20 and \$50 per month. That is a maximum match of \$100 per month for contributions of \$50 or more. This increase in the match is for only one year, which runs from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023. In addition, longevity payments were funded at \$100 per year of creditable service up to a maximum number of 30 years.

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

The **Enterprise Digital Media Management** project is in full swing. ITD is partnering with the Division of Marketing and Communications, MT Athletics, James E. Walker Library, and the Albert Gore Research Center to establish a common digital asset management service. The project implementation will finish in the fall semester, allowing departments to control and manage their digital assets. In addition, the service will provide a common search functionality allowing students, faculty, staff, and the public access to the images, videos, and other files the University creates.

The implementation of the **AI chatbot “Lightning”** went live on the website in April and continues to progress. Lightning uses artificial intelligence to provide an always accessible on-demand platform to answer students’ questions, ranging from admissions to financial aid and advising. It is live on key areas within the MTSU website, and ITD continues to meet and work with other departments to add their information to the chatbot. The project implementation is scheduled to finish by the end of the fall semester.

The Center for Technologies and Training (formerly Faculty Instructional Technology Center) will be **expanding its workshop offerings** to students, staff, and faculty this fall, focusing on several applications including Office 365 (such as Teams, Planner, and Bookings, etc.), LinkedIn Learning, and ServiceNow. There also will be workshops on topics like making your documents and media accessible and secure.

As MTSU continues enterprise resource planning modernization efforts, the implementation of **Ellucian Ethos** integration is laying the foundation. This platform will be the cornerstone of cloud technologies such as ILP (Intelligent Learning Platform), Experience, and integrations with many of our existing third-party applications. Ellucian ILP will provide real-time integration between Banner and Desire2Learn. Ellucian Experience will empower students, faculty, and staff with its centralized, user-friendly dashboard. Users will discover efficiency by being able to customize their own Experience with workflows and less time logging into multiple applications.

DegreeWorks is a comprehensive academic advising and degree audit tool that facilitates real-time monitoring of the student’s academic progress toward degree completion. As well as taking advantage of new technologies and security improvements, this upgrade will feature an enhanced responsive dashboard that will provide ease of use and additional capabilities to students and advisors. This upgrade is scheduled for the weekend before fall break.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Here is but a small snapshot of the kinds of transformative efforts occurring in our colleges and academic units across campus.

UNIVERSITY-WIDE

The University successfully passed its fifth-year review by the **Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)**. MTSU has been accredited by SACSCOC since 1928. The commission requires a Fifth-Year Interim Report halfway through each accreditation cycle. MTSU submitted its Fifth-Year Report in March, together with an impact report on MT Engage, the University's Quality Enhancement Plan. In June, the commission's review concluded with no findings for additional compliance reporting. MTSU will apply for reaffirmation of accreditation, including a new Quality Enhancement Plan, in 2026.

For a fourth consecutive year, the high quality of our programs and overall institutional excellence were affirmed by **The Princeton Review** in its list of the best colleges in the U.S. We remain the only locally governed institution in Tennessee included in this prestigious ranking.

MT Engage concluded its fifth year as MTSU's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) in the spring and will continue as a permanent program at the University. MT Engage is continuing to build on the lessons learned during our QEP implementation process by setting strategic priorities to advance faculty adoption of high impact practices and to support students' growth as integrative, reflective thinkers. The robust involvement of faculty is essential to the program's success, and faculty development offerings, such as workshops and Summer Institutes, will remain a key feature of the program. This fall, MT Engage is extending the work begun in the spring when Peter Felten, co-author of *Relationship-Rich Education*, visited campus by sponsoring both an **LT&ITC** book group and a Faculty Learning Community exploring the role relationships and mentoring play in students' sense of belonging and academic engagement.

Congratulations to the University General Education Committee. In spring 2022, the committee approved a new program for General Education—the **True Blue Core**. We've kept the best of our current curriculum, while creating new and exciting opportunities for student exploration and faculty innovation. The True Blue Core features **Blueprints**, which offer guided pathways through the core curriculum. Implementation begins in fall 2022, with an **official launch scheduled for fall 2024**.

Our nation and its communities—including universities—have grappled with finding ways to ensure liberty, equal justice, and inclusivity for all. At this time last year, I shared news of the launch of a campuswide Social Justice and Equality Initiative led by Professors Louis Woods and Lynda Williams. Earlier this year, **Monica Smith** joined the University in the role of assistant to the president for community engagement and inclusion. Smith is now serving alongside the faculty, staff, administrators, and students who constitute our **Social Justice and Equality Task Force**. This group of leaders is fulfilling a charge to research and gather information about the initiative's four areas of focus—curriculum, workforce development and inclusion, campus climate, and community outreach. We are deeply grateful to these University leaders who are laying the groundwork to create meaningful and lasting change on these vital aspects of our community.

NEW APPOINTMENTS:

- **Leah Tolbert Lyons** as dean of the College of Liberal Arts, February 2022
- **Greg Van Patten** as dean of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences, February 2022
- **Barbara Turnage** as interim dean of the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences, July 2022
- **Jarett “Jerry” Decker** as holder of the Joey Jacobs Chair of Excellence in Accounting
- **Amy Aldridge Sanford** as vice provost for academic programs, February 2022.



Leah Tolbert Lyons



Greg Van Patten



Barbara Turnage



Jarett Decker



Amy Aldridge Sanford



IN MEMORIAM

Alumnus and MTSU Board of Trustees member **Darrell S. Freeman Sr.** ('87, '90) died June 28. Among his many accomplishments, Freeman was a first-generation college graduate and a trailblazing businessman. He created his own IT company, Zycron, that, over 25 years, became a multimillion-dollar business; he sold it and used those resources to help

aspiring Black entrepreneurs overcome obstacles and find success in business. Freeman also was a private pilot who

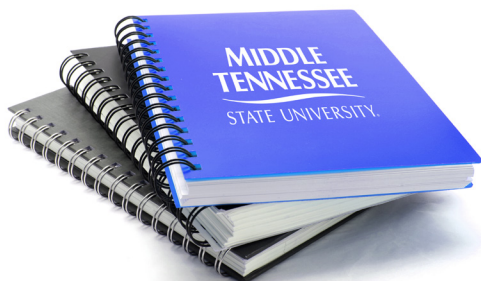
lent his services and aircraft for international relief missions.

His energy and devotion to helping disadvantaged and underserved students find a path forward, in education and in business, was front and center in his work as the first vice chair of MTSU's Board of Trustees, as well as his two terms as chair of the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce. His service to MTSU—as a role model, donor, volunteer, and leader—leaves a legacy that will inspire students for generations to come. Freeman once urged graduates in a Commencement ceremony to “take over the world” but to do it “with compassion. . . . Because the world needs more compassion . . . and do it with the sole purpose of helping people who are less fortunate than you are. If you do these things, you will have represented MTSU very well.”

COLLEGE OF BASIC AND APPLIED SCIENCES

The Department of Aerospace will be the first MTSU unit to have a permanent presence outside of Rutherford County when it moves two of its concentrations to Shelbyville. The governor signed a budget this year that includes \$62 million to construct a new airport campus at the Shelbyville Municipal Airport, known as Bomar Field. Over the next three years, MTSU expects to relocate its Professional Pilot and Maintenance Management concentrations from the Murfreesboro Airport to Shelbyville. Last fall, those two concentrations accounted for 986 students, roughly 80% of the total undergraduate Aerospace majors.

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NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAMS:

1. B.S., Public Writing and Rhetoric
2. M.S., Data Science
3. M.S., Supply Chain Management (elevation of concentration to free-standing degree)

In addition, a B.S. in Cybersecurity is under consideration.

Colton Gray, a 2018 graduate of MTSU, was the first pilot to advance all the way through **Delta Airlines' Propel** program for collegiate aviators to become pilots for Delta. The airline currently partners with 15 of the top aviation programs in the country, including MTSU, to recruit and prepare pilots. Gray advanced through the program faster than any candidate from any of those other university programs.

The **MTSU Stock Horse Team** traveled to the American Stock Horse Association Collegiate and National Show in Sweetwater, Texas, and as it competed for the first time in Division I, the team defeated Texas Tech University to win

the **Division I Stock Horse National Championship**. Earlier the same week, MTSU riders also topped a field of 10 teams from around the country to win the **Division 2 Reserve National Championship** at the Hughes Ranch Traders National Intercollegiate Ranch and Stock Horse National Championship in Amarillo.

An interdisciplinary team of CBAS faculty pioneering the field of digital agriculture are seeking to establish the first Digital Agriculture Center in Tennessee. The project combines MTSU strengths in Unmanned Aircraft Systems Operations, Agriculture, STEM education, and Data Science to optimize crop yields. The team is partnering under a \$750,000 U.S. Department of Agriculture grant to bring the

cutting-edge approach to high school students through a multiweek residential summer camp on the MTSU campus.

COLLEGE OF BEHAVIORAL AND HEALTH SCIENCES

Nancy Stone is the new chair of the Department of Psychology. Stone comes from Missouri University of Science and Technology, where she was special assistant to the provost for analytics, planning, and assessment.

In the **Child Development and Family Studies** course CDFS 4140 Violence in the Family, students were involved throughout the semester with various local nonprofits who support families at risk of violence or economic insecurity. Some examples of their collective impact in the community include:

- 375 goods purchased at silent auction
- \$270 raised via bake sale for The Family Center of Murfreesboro
- 403 children's clothes and supply items donated to Mother to Mother, Nashville
- 2,689 diapers and 61 packs of wipes donated to Nurture the Next, Rutherford County
- 40 children's books donated to Safe Haven Family Shelter

The MTSU **Dietetics** program has established a solid reputation for quality, as evident in the following student statistics.

- MTSU Dietetics students achieved for the fourth year in a row an unprecedented **100% match** for the required post-bachelor's dietetic internship (the national match is around 70–72%).

- Graduates have achieved a three-year rolling average of **91% on the Dietitian Registration Exam** to become dietitians (well above the national scores).

The **Community and Public Health** program in the Health and Human Performance Department is working with the





LISTED IN U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT RANKING OF TOP U.S. GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN ECONOMICS



JONES COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

Several Jones College programs continue to draw national attention. Among the latest rankings, the Economics graduate program made the *U.S. News and World Report* ranking of **top U.S. graduate programs in Economics** for the first time.

The Small Business Institute named the **Business Innovation and Entrepreneurship** program the recipient of the 2022 Showcase Award. This award signifies the top Entrepreneurship program of the year.

A Nashville education alliance has named longtime MTSU Management faculty member **Millicent Nelson** as its top higher education professional for 2022. The Greater Nashville Alliance of Black School Educators (GNABSE) formally recognized Nelson, an 18-year veteran and currently an associate professor, as the recipient of its 2022 Outstanding Higher Educator of the Year Award.

Tennessee Department of Health to create courses such as Health Literacy and Smoking Cessation for their learning management system.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

MTSU's College of Education recently partnered with Murfreesboro City Schools (MCS) to train the system's teachers in math literacy with the **Project Optimal** professional development. MCS teachers completed 10 days of training, the final five of which wrapped up this summer on campus.

MTSU created a new center in its College of Education to focus on recruiting and retaining diverse teacher candidates, graduate students, and faculty in an effort to better serve and encourage students from underserved communities—particularly Black males. Professor Michelle Stevens was named director of the new **Fairness, Justice, and Equity Center**.

MTSU's Center for Educational Media recently launched a new professional development initiative for special education teachers: the **SPED Collaborative**. The initiative connects educators and stakeholders across the state for training and professional networking—its first event was held this spring—and is part of the center's larger PK–12 Collaborative, which includes two other professional development series serving preschool through 12th-grade school counselors and teachers of English language learners.





COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

The **Jason Max Ferdinand Singers**, featuring Cedric Dent, performed a free concert as part of MTSU Arts' 10th Anniversary Season.

Assistant Professor **Tiffany Saul** has led an international team of scholars two summers in a row for a partnership with the Department of Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) for archaeological excavation and remains recovery work in France. In March, Saul took students to Arizona to see one of the few functional B-17 bombers to better understand the work they would be doing in the field.



The virtual SPED event had 245 viewers, and the total number of virtual participants in the center's three initiatives totaled more than 4,300 at the end of May.

COLLEGE OF MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT

Classes will begin in the **new extended reality (XR) stage** in the University's Bragg Media and Entertainment Building this fall. The XR stage will prepare students from the department's Animation and Video and Film Production programs in virtual production. The facility is a roughly \$1 million investment that's the only one at a Tennessee university and among only a few such facilities at any university anywhere. The students will be able to produce work that looks like it was shot anywhere—real or imagined—just like the creators and crews of films like *Dune* and TV shows like *The Mandalorian* that rely on XR technology to create vast worlds on a soundstage.

Starting in Fall 2022 semester, the Department of Recording Industry's **Music Business degree** will be available online.

In April, five students flew to Las Vegas for **Grammy** weekend, where they met with industry professionals and alumni as well as worked as volunteers for the Grammy benefit MusiCares.

Mike Forbes' Video Display Technology class supplied the video wall and ran it for the **Jack Harlow** concert at Murphy Center in April. The students were entrusted by Harlow's management team to execute the show for the 7,000 people in attendance. The project represents a long-standing partnership between the Department of Media Arts and MTSU's Student Programming and Raider Entertainment (SPARE).

A team of around 25 Recording Industry, Media Arts, and Journalism students helped produce content at this year's **Bonnaroo** Music and Arts Festival under the guidance of MTSU faculty and staff. Students in Media Arts and Recording Industry were scheduled to do only two concerts for Bonnaroo's Other Stage for Hulu, one of the world's



largest streaming services. But **Bonnaroo and Hulu executives were so impressed by MTSU's work that they upped it to 11 concerts from the Other Stage, in addition to the 10 recorded performances at the Who Stage.**

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

The University College manages the online programs for MTSU as well as the adult degree completion program and other services. Here are some recent highlights from the college:

Christina Sintic was appointed director of summer and winter sessions in May, after having served as academic advisor in University College since 2020. Sintic brings 16 years' experience in roles including teaching, research, advising, online course development, and program coordination at Governors State University. Since its strong beginning in 2020–21, winter session continues to grow, providing students with the opportunity to catch up, keep up, or get ahead. In winter 2020–21, 762 students were enrolled in 41 courses. In winter 2021–22, 870 students were enrolled in 59 courses. Planning is already underway for winter 2022–23 as we prepare to serve even more students in this important initiative.

MTSU continues to be a university of choice to serve corporate entities. In the past year, **corporate partnerships** have been signed with McGuire Management Group, owner of 20 McDonald's restaurants in the region; Rich Foods; Chick-fil-A Murfreesboro; and Chick-fil-A Melrose Place, Nashville. MTSU also has been identified as a partner in the Amazon Career Choice program.



Since launching in the Fall 2015 semester, the University College's **Dual Enrollment** program has enrolled thousands of high school students, providing them with an opportunity to earn college credit and connecting them to MTSU's campus early. The program has continued to grow over the last several years, and opportunities exist to push further and deeper to connect with academically talented high school students. There is more to MTSU's Dual Enrollment than being enrolled in courses, and the hope is that, by making them part of the MTSU community, they will have a sense of belonging that extends after graduation from high school.

The new **Public Safety concentration** in the B.S. in Integrated Studies is scheduled to start this fall. Scholarship funds have been made available. The major had the largest number of undergraduate degrees conferred in 2020–21;



HONORS COLLEGE

Yaseen Ginnab, a Biology and Psychology double major, won a 2022 **Goldwater Scholarship**.

A Fulbright Research Scholarship was awarded to **Madeline Artibee** to study in Croatia, and a Fulbright Teaching Scholarship was awarded to **Darrika Morklithavong** to study in Laos.

A record number of **20 Gilman Scholarships** were awarded to MTSU Honors students to study abroad.

WALKER LIBRARY

Special Collections presented as part of the Summer Alumni College on the new **Distilling, Fermenting, and Brewing Collection** to more 66 attendees. Additionally, Special Collections presented on the collection to the Tennessee Distillers Guide in Lynchburg on Aug. 10.



26% of University Studies degrees were conferred to nonwhite students compared with 22% University-wide; and 63% of University Studies students are over 25 compared with 28% University-wide.

COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND SPONSORED PROGRAMS

As a publicly supported institution of higher learning, we take our role to serve the state of Tennessee very seriously, which includes educating undergraduate and graduate students to enter the workforce well educated and skilled. This role also involves conducting research and creative activities that produce knowledge, information, data, technologies, know-how, and other outcomes that are disseminated from MTSU to the whole state to help improve the economy, services, and quality of life for all Tennesseans.

Here are some updates from the College of Graduate Studies:

- Launched the **Physician Assistant Studies** master's program this summer. This program includes an inaugural cohort of 30 diverse students, 19 of whom are from Tennessee. Some of these students aim to serve rural communities where high-quality health care is not currently available. Their impact on the middle Tennessee region and beyond will be significant. The program—the **first public PA program in the Midstate**—is unique in Tennessee, offering the lowest tuition, an innovative curriculum, and a commitment to admitting 30% of students from diverse backgrounds.

- Launching the **M.S. in Data Science** this fall. The success of our Data Science graduate certificate program has led us to offer a graduate program in this important field that is in high demand across the state. Students who have already received certificates may take the remaining courses to obtain their M.S. degrees.
- **Increasing graduate assistantship stipends** by \$500 per year. This increase aims to help students with the increase in living expenses in our area. It also helps us to be more competitive in bringing high-quality applicants to MTSU for their graduate education.

And here are some highlights from the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP):

- In March, we celebrated our advancement to an **R2-high research activity doctoral university** designation by Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. This elite status places us among a select group of only 3% of institutions nationwide to earn the R2 designation. The ORSP is now building the foundation for expanding the research enterprise at MTSU, including supporting wider participation and increased dollar amounts in grants brought to the University. These activities continue to provide our students with ever-expanding opportunities to participate in research projects, and many of these projects impact our community in significant ways.
- The Information Technology Division and ORSP have teamed up this year to obtain and implement a top-ranked

eRA (electronic research administration) suite called **Cayuse**. This significant project has involved faculty and staff from across the University, bringing MTSU grant administration and research compliance to the forefront. With MTSU's new elevation to the R2 Carnegie status, Cayuse is a tool that will provide the foundation for increased participation and grant awards, bringing further resources and national and international recognition to the University. ORSP will introduce Cayuse to the MTSU community this fall.

- Top grants this year included:

- ◊ **\$2,589,493**, Small Business Administration, Pat Geho, "TSBDC Lead Center 2022"

- ◊ **\$870,000**, National Science Foundation, Donald Walker, "Collaborative Research: MIM: Gut-inhabiting fungi influence structure and function of herptile microbiomes through horizontal gene transfer and novel metabolic function"

- ◊ **\$499,997**, National Endowment for the Humanities, Leah Lyons, "Global Cultures, Political Communication, and Women's Suffrage: Five Humanities Teaching, and Learning Initiatives at Middle Tennessee State University"

- ◊ **\$263,712**, National Science Foundation, Jessica Arbour, "Testing for the stages of vertebrate radiation using freshwater fishes of the family Percidae"

- ◊ **\$184,800**, Department of Health and Human Services via the Tennessee Department of Health, Cynthia Chafin, "Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and Death Scene Investigation"

- Two MTSU faculty were granted prestigious **U.S. Scholar Fulbright** awards. **Mary Ellen Sloane**, user services librarian in James E. Walker Library for the College of Basic and Applied Sciences, will be going to Rwanda to work with the Ellen DeGeneres Campus of the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund to assess the research fields covered by the organization and plan for the development of the library. **Gregory Reish**, director of MTSU's Center for Popular Music within the College of Media and Entertainment, will be going to Mexico to teach classes in the North American Studies Program at the University of Veracruz.



ADULT LEARNERS



We've built one of the largest adult degree programs in Tennessee. At MTSU, we provide access to undergraduate and graduate programs for students who might not be able to pursue traditional attendance paths.

I want to stress here that as part of our adult learner emphasis, we are offering all full-time faculty and staff the opportunity to take a class per semester with no tuition cost. This can be applied toward a degree or simply to learn more about a program that interests you.

All courses and programs are available, including bachelor's and graduate programs and the highly popular and online Assessment, Learning, and Student Success Ed.D. program in the College of Education, which does not require a master's degree.

I encourage everyone to take advantage of this opportunity to upskill or broaden your interests. **Don't leave this money on the table!**

QUEST 2025

Through Quest 2025, we are building on the significant gains of academic advising, student retention, graduation rates, and the creation of customized graduation maps that we achieved in the original Quest initiative, which we launched almost a decade ago.

In this current stage, we are taking a deeper and broader focus on an academic and student life experience that extends learning beyond graduation.

Work continues across campus to put into action objectives identified in Quest 2025. Each of the five strategic priority work groups completed significant tasks during the 2021–22 academic year. **More than 60 colleagues have collaborated under the leadership of 11 work group co-chairs.**

What is in store for the future? First, continued advancement of initiatives by each of the five strategic priority work groups. Second, look for a refresh of work groups to replace members who have retired or no longer serve. The goal is to make sure work groups have the exact composition needed to further this work.

These are the strategic priorities of Quest 2025:

1. Invest in a comprehensive **faculty development program** that includes the integration of high impact practices in key curricula.
2. Eliminate achievement gaps by using **analytics**; refining and expanding **student support programs**; and increasing faculty **diversity**.
3. Increase **online, hybrid, and off-site offerings**; adaptive scheduling; and curricular flexibility.
4. Creating a **culture of service** across campus.
5. Invest in a campuswide environment that fosters **living-learning opportunities**.



MTSU ARTS

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

Here are some of the outstanding events happening during the fall semester:

- **Sept. 17–Oct. 11**, Todd Art Gallery Exhibit, Building Bridges: Women Artists of the Middle East
- **Sept. 29–Oct. 7**, Tucker Theatre, Sense and Sensibility
- **Oct. 6, 7:30 p.m.**, Hinton Music Hall, MTSU SOAL and TEBA Chorale and Schola Cantorum
- **Nov. 3–6**, Tucker Theatre, Peter and the Starcatcher
- **Nov. 17–19**, Tucker Theatre, Fall Dance Concert

For the latest information on the 2022–23 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 11 seasons of MTSU Arts!





MTSU ONLINE



With a distinguished 20-year history of high-quality distance education, MTSU Online continues to support our faculty and to serve students through the creation, design, and delivery of effective and engaging online and blended learning environments.

This past year has been a time of significant growth for MTSU Online. **Online enrollment is at an all-time high**, with more than 2,700 completely online students, and more than 7,400 partially online students.

Eighteen months ago, in response to student demand, MTSU Online began an initiative to increase the number of completely online degrees. Thanks to the hard work of our faculty, staff, and administrators, **we have increased from 16 to (currently) 31 completely online degrees**. Our goal is to ensure MTSU is ready and available to provide an education for every student who is seeking to learn, regardless of their geographic location.

This year MTSU Online funded 29 full-time temporary instructors for 18 departments across campus. These instructors are trained in online teaching and give

significant help to departments that are serving online students.

We support faculty through a range of services including course design help, faculty training workshops, individual consultations, and extensive web-based resources. Our **three instructional designers (IDs)** are key resources for faculty as they develop and deliver engaging learning environments. This year our IDs helped design 102 new online courses and redesign an additional 70 courses. MTSU now has a portfolio of more than 700 well-designed online courses to contribute to student access and success.

In terms of **student support**, MTSU Online provides personal assistance to hundreds of students via phone, email, and videoconference meetings. Live and online tutoring is a popular service we offer, as well as advising help, counseling services, and help navigating the online course environment.

MTSU Online is a key contributor to the Quest 2025 initiative—specifically the mandate to increase online, hybrid, and off-site program offerings and to increase curricular flexibility. **Trey Martindale, Brian Hinote, and Tyler Henson** have led this team to ensure that MTSU is at the forefront of making educational resources available to students managing multiple roles and responsibilities.

For 2022, **Newsweek named MTSU to its “Top Online Colleges” list**, and we were the only institution in Tennessee recognized. While we appreciate the recognition, our goal is to continue to provide effective instruction in a way that meets our students’ educational and career aspirations.

MT ATHLETICS

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

Here are some important updates:

BUILD BLUE

It was with great excitement that we announced last fall our success in securing funds for a \$66 million project to build a new student-athlete performance center as well as make stadium improvements. These advancements represent the first of a three-phase, \$100 million-plus plan to upgrade our athletics facilities. The three-story structure will house training, strength and conditioning, and equipment centers. Design of the new facility began immediately after the announcement. And the State Building Commission has approved construction plans. **This first stage of the project is expected to be completed before the start of the 2024 Blue Raider football season.** In addition, we're expanding our outdoor tennis facilities.

We also are preserving and updating our iconic Murphy Center, which marks its 50th birthday this year. The Glass House is undergoing a makeover and has recently been renovated with a new glass exterior. To celebrate, we are throwing a year-long party complete with a full slate of activities. **You will want to be a part of the festivities!**

In related news, MT Athletics raised a record \$8.9 million in cash gifts and saw a 300% year-over-year growth during the



2022 fiscal year, directly jumpstarting a plethora of facility projects with groundbreakings scheduled within the next year. Led by the tremendous success of the Build Blue campaign, **it was the largest fundraising year ever for the department**, eclipsing the \$3.5 million raised in 2011. This is a great achievement for our Blue Raider athletic program and our fans. The success of our NCAA Division I programs depend, in large part, on the support and investments from our fans and supporters.

BLUE RAIDERS EXCEL IN THE CLASSROOM

Spring 2022

- 210 of 328 (64%) of all student-athletes had a 3.0 or higher GPA.
- 135 (41%) of all student-athletes made the Dean's List by earning a 3.5 or higher GPA.
- 53 (16%) of all student-athletes had a perfect 4.0 GPA.
- 11 of 15 teams had a semester GPA of 3.0 or higher.
- Tennis had the highest men's team GPA, with 3.85.
- Golf had the highest women's team GPA, with 3.89.
- Semester GPA for all student-athletes: 3.067
- Cumulative GPA for all student-athletes: 3.130

BLUE RAIDERS LAND 189 ON C-USA COMMISSIONER'S HONOR ROLL

MTSU placed 189 student-athletes on the Commissioner's Honor Roll (3.0 GPA or better) for 2021–22. Broken down by sport, the Blue Raider honorees included nine student-athletes from the men's tennis team, 19 from softball, six from women's tennis, two from men's basketball, eight from women's basketball, 22 from baseball, 36 from football, 31 from soccer, 12 from men's golf, eight from women's golf, 13 from volleyball, 12 from men's track and field and cross country, and 11 from women's track and field and cross country.



BLUE RAIDERS FINISH IN TOP 100 OF DIRECTORS' CUP

MTSU capped off another outstanding academic and athletic year with its sixth-best finish of all time in the 2021–22 Learfield Sports Directors' Cup. The Blue Raiders placed 98th out of 358 Division I schools, with 189.50 total points, which led all Conference USA schools.

It marked the fourth time in the last seven years the Blue Raiders have finished in the top 100 and the sixth time in school history.

MTSU received 50 points from men's tennis, 47 points from women's track, 45 points from football, 31.5 points from women's indoor track, and 16 points from men's indoor track.



BLUE RAIDERS SCORE HIGH ON APR ONCE AGAIN

Each of MTSU's 17 athletic teams earned a multiyear Academic Progress Rate (APR) of over 945 from 2017–18 to 2020–21 as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) released its annual report on June 14.

The Blue Raiders sports teams have now had at least a **930 for all its sports 12 years running**, with each team coming in at over 945 (out of 1,000) in the most recent multiyear APR report. There was not an APR report last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the transfer portal.

The most recent APR scores are based on a multiyear rate that averages scores from the 2017–18, 2018–19, 2019–20, and 2020–21 academic years. MTSU had 11 of 15 sports (indoor and outdoor track count as one) with at least 970 on the multiyear report, with women's cross country and women's golf posting a perfect grade of 1,000.



LADY RAIDERS MAKE VALIANT RUN IN WNIT

Making postseason play for the 18th consecutive season, the Lady Raiders went on a historic run in the Women's National Invitation Tournament (WNIT). Following an opening-round win at home over Wofford, the Lady Raiders took down the Atlantic Coast Conference's Wake Forest Demon Deacons at the Glass House before defeating Vanderbilt of the Southeastern Conference three nights later at home.

MTSU, playing on the road for the first time in the tournament, advanced into the semifinals of a national postseason tournament **for the first time in program history** with a thrilling 73-71 overtime win against Toledo. The Lady Raiders answered all challenges amid an electric atmosphere to escape against a Toledo (29-6) team that entered the game 14-1 at Savage Arena, which had 4,063 partisan fans fill the arena for the quarterfinal matchup.

The Lady Raiders drew Seton Hall at home for the semifinals in what turned out to be another nail-biter in front of an energetic crowd of 4,022 at Murphy Center. And while MTSU battled back from 22 points down to take a four-point lead with 23 seconds to play, the home team would fall on its home court for the first time in 2022, losing the WNIT semifinal to Seton Hall, 74-73.

ROCHA, WHITSON BRING HOME TOP HONORS AT RCA AWARDS

Basketball's **Courtney Whitson** and tennis star **Francisco Rocha** were the big winners at the 11th Annual Raiders' Choice Awards on April 28. The year-end Academy Awards-style show highlighted all the academic and athletic accomplishments of the Blue Raider student-athletes for the 2021–22 academic year, and the event returned to Tucker Theatre after a two-year absence due to COVID-19.

Whitson and Rocha 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.

Both excelled in the classroom, in the community, and on the court. Whitson carried an impressive 3.7 GPA in English and is fresh off leading MTSU to one of the best seasons in program history. An all-conference performer, Whitson averaged nearly a double-double with 12.4 points and 7.3 rebounds. Rocha, who also won the award last year, owns a perfect 4.0 GPA while majoring in Business Administration. He was instrumental in the Blue Raiders' winning their third straight C-USA Championship.



MTSU SNAGS FOUR ALL-AMERICAN HONORS AT NCAA INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

The Blue Raiders ended the indoor season with four All-American honorees, along with a top-50 finish in the nation for the women's side and a top-60 finish on the men's side, as they finished things out at the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships.

Freshman **Alaba Akintola** was the first Blue Raider to compete, running a 21.49-second 200-meter dash. Akintola earned Second Team All-American honors for his top-16 finish in the nation, taking 14th at the indoor championships.

Sophomore **Omamuyowwi Erhire** took seventh in the men's high jump with a final height of 2.20 meters, the third-best height reached of the meet. Erhire earned First Team All-American honors.

Graduate student **Esther Isa** earned Second Team All-American honors for her top-15 finish in triple jump. Isa hit a mark of 12.43 meters at the meet, short of her season-best mark of 13.48 meters she set at the C-USA Championships, which ended the indoor season as the 12th-best mark in the country.

Senior **Eusila Chepkemei** was an automatic qualifier after placing in the top four of her heat during the one-mile prelims with a time of 4:36.33. Chepkemei went on to take sixth place in the finals with a time of 4:37.21. The record-breaking senior earned First Team All-American honors.



MTSU WOMEN TAKE 25TH AT NCAA OUTDOOR CHAMPIONSHIP

The MTSU men's and women's track and field teams showed out on the national stage for the NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships. Interim Coach Keith Vroman led the women to a 25th-place finish at the meet, **the first time the women's team has placed in the top 25** at the outdoor meet and just the second time they've ever placed at nationals.

Graduate student **Abigail Kwarteng** closed out her one season of eligibility with the Blue Raiders with a second-place finish in the women's high jump. Kwarteng tied her Ghana national record and program record height of 1.92 meters to earn First Team All-American honors.

Graduate student **Esther Isa** also earned a First Team All-American nod for her top-eight finish in the women's triple jump, months after earning Second Team All-American for her indoor performance.

Graduate student **Eusila Chepkemei** continued to show why she was the best coming out of the C-USA Championships, earning First Team All-American in the 1,500 meters and All-American Honorable Mention in the 5,000 meters. Chepkemei started the day with an eighth-place finish in

the women's 1,500-meter run with a program-record time of 4:11.44. In the 5,000-meter race, she took 19th with a time of 16:01.65, which is around 10 seconds shy of her program record set earlier this season. Chepkemei ends the year with **three All-American nods**, which is the most a Blue Raider has earned since 2007.

Sophomore **Omamuyovwi Erhire** finished the season with a 14th-place finish and Second Team All-American honors in the men's high jump. Erhire is **the first Blue Raider to earn All-American honors in the high jump**, doing so a day before Kwarteng also earned her nod. The Delta, Nigeria, native finished with a mark of 2.15 meters, .03 meters off his season best of 2.18 meters.

Junior **Alaba Akintola** was unable to make it to the finals for the men's 100-meter and 200-meter dashes but finished the season with Second Team All-American nods in both events. All together his three All-American nods tie Chepkemei's as the most this season and also the most a Blue Raider has had since 2007.

THREE-PEAT FOR MEN'S TENNIS

The No. 18 MTSU men's tennis program (27-4) captured its **third-straight Conference USA Championship**, defeating third-seeded Charlotte 4-3 on April 24.

The win marked Coach Jimmy Borendame's 200th at the helm of the Blue Raiders, the second coach in MTSU history to reach that milestone.

With the win, the Blue Raiders became the third team in C-USA men's tennis history to win the conference title three times in a row (Tulane 2003-05 and Tulsa 2006-09).

MEN'S TENNIS GETS 16TH OVERALL SEED IN NCAA

The MTSU men's tennis (27-4) earned the overall No. 16 seed in the NCAA Men's Tennis Tournament and traveled to the Raleigh regional as the top seed there.

The Blue Raiders have qualified for the NCAA Tournament in each of the last three seasons as the automatic bid from winning the Conference USA Championship. With an ITA rank of No. 18 and an automatic bid, the Raiders earned a **region No. 1 seed** for the first time in the 21st century.

The Blue Raiders opened with a 4-0 win over UNC-Wilmington before falling to host N.C. State, 4-3.



VROMAN TO LEAD TRACK PROGRAM

MTSU track and field's long legacy of success found its new leader with the promotion of **Keith Vroman** to head coach of the Blue Raider track and field program.

Vroman will take on a new title for his 20th season as a member of the MTSU staff in 2022–23, after serving as the top assistant coach and head cross country coach for the late Dean A. Hayes. During his 19 years with the program, Vroman has recruited and coached 17 First-Team All-Americans to MTSU, winning 17 conference titles while a member of the Blue Raider coaching staff.

MEN'S BASKETBALL MAKES CBI CHAMPIONSHIP

After winning a C-USA East Division title, the men's basketball team advanced to postseason play in the College Basketball Invitational. The Blue Raiders opened with wins over California Baptist, Boston, and Abilene Christian to advance to the championship game in Daytona.

The team that was picked last in the Conference USA preseason poll turned out to be the last team standing in the 2021–22 season. MTSU's bid for a third trophy on the year came up short in a 96-90 loss to UNC–Wilmington in double overtime.

MTSU finished the season with a record of 26-11, improving upon its 2020–21 win total by 21 games, tied with Towson for the largest increase both in 2021–22 and in Division I history.

MTSU retiring Byard's No. 20

Middle Tennessee legend and NFL All-Pro **Kevin Byard** will have his No. 20 jersey number retired on Sept. 30 during a ceremony at the Blue Raiders' home game versus UTSA. Byard will be only the second player in MTSU football history to have his number retired. Teddy Morris' No. 14 was retired in 1965. Byard, a four-year starter for the Blue Raiders from 2012–15, ended his career as the program's all-time leader in interceptions (19), interception return yards (377), and interception return touchdowns (4) and is one of just nine players in school history with 300 or more tackles.



BARNARD WINS C-USA INDIVIDUAL TITLE

Golfer Michael Barnard won the Conference USA individual title. The redshirt junior carded identical scores of 70 (-2) in each of the three rounds of stroke play to finish at 210 (-6), edging out Florida Atlantic's Max Sturdza by one stroke.

Barnard is the first Blue Raider to win an individual conference title since Craig Smith was the Sun Belt Conference individual medalist in 2007. Barnard earned C-USA All-Tournament honors for his performance in Texarkana.



CAUDILL NAMED C-USA MOST IMPROVED, THIRD TEAM ALL-CONFERENCE

MTSU's **Caroline Caudill** was named the Conference USA Most Improved Golfer of the Year and to the All-C-USA Third Team, as announced by the league office on May 2.

Caudill recorded a stroke average of 74.76 in 2021–22 to lead the Blue Raiders after averaging 76.22 in 2020–21. She finishes her career seventh in program history with a stroke average of 75.65.

The graduate student from Clarksville also led MTSU with 77 birdies and three eagles on the year. Her three top-10 finishes doubled her career total entering the season.

Did you know that MTSU has what amounts to a full-service advertising firm right here on campus devoted to promoting your programs and activities?

While Creative Marketing Solutions provides design, photography, and printing services, the **Division of Marketing and Communications** also offers social media, website, radio, video, broadcast, news and media relations, event production, and premium publications and editing services specifically designed to help you with your outreach.

Check out what we can do for you at mtsu.edu/mac/services.php.

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 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.

Many of our longer-term faculty and staff are familiar with **Kristy O'Neal** from her work with Creative Marketing Solutions organizing design and photography projects for the University. O'Neal recently accepted a new role leading the CMS-Printing team as printing manager for Blue Print Solutions and the Greenland Drive facility. You may reach her at kristy.oneal@mtsu.edu, mtsu.edu/order, and [615-898-2734](tel:615-898-2734).

O'Neal's role as marketing coordinator in CMS is now filled by **Cindy Williams**. Please continue to place your orders at mtsu.edu/creativesolutions/order, and email creativesolutions@mtsu.edu or photorequest@mtsu.edu.

Meanwhile, **Ed Arning** continues his work to help clients with special projects and initiatives, partnership events, and high-level service needs. If you want him to pay you a visit to discuss how the division can assist, give him a call ([615-898-5381](tel:615-898-5381)) or drop him an email at ed.arning@mtsu.edu.

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.

Check out what Marketing
and Communications
can do for you at
mtsu.edu/mac/services.php.

INTERNATIONAL ENROLLMENT

The Office of International Affairs continues its mission to provide leadership for the comprehensive internationalization of MTSU by fostering growth and development of our international programs and services. 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.

Education Abroad

International Affairs is excited to announce that **study abroad is back**. As guidance for social distancing and masking has been relaxed, and international travel has opened back up, we are elated to be sending cohorts abroad during every upcoming term. During the last academic year, we sent 265 students overseas. Thirty MTSU faculty-led programs took 221 students to 22 countries. And we have offered a **record level of scholarships and funding**: more than \$400,000 in 2022–23 alone! On average, each student received a \$2,000 MTSU scholarship to support education abroad.

Prestigious International Scholarships and Fellowships

We are very proud that 19 students were awarded \$88,000 in **Gilman International Scholarships**, with individual amounts between \$4,000 and \$5,000. In addition, four students were awarded **Fulbright scholarships**; three **Critical Language Scholarships**; three **Phi Kappa Phi Study Abroad Scholarships**; two **Fund for Education Abroad (FEA)**

Scholarships; one **Boren Scholarship**; and one **Freeman Asia Scholarship**. The prestigious awards speak to the strength of our students and the international mindedness of the campus. We appreciate the partnership with the Honors College in helping students on the application process.

International Recruitment

The Office of International Affairs continues its international enrollment strategy of building an effective recruitment network and participating in recruitment strategies throughout the world. During the Fall 2021 and Summer 2022 semesters, MTSU International Affairs engaged in 73 virtual and 72 on-site recruitment fairs that reached more than 50,000 prospective students. We hosted training webinars and content specific academic sessions and participated in virtual meetings with recruitment agents, government entities, and school counselors to promote MTSU programs. Such recruitment efforts added new leads to our communication targets, for a total of **85,000 prospective international students**. Through this comprehensive communication plan and webinar sessions, we managed to attract international applications from diverse and varied regions throughout the world.

For the Fall 2022 semester, international applications reached 1,157, a 27.5% increase compared with Fall 2021 and a 28.5% jump compared with the average of the last five fall semesters. A total of 571 new students are admitted for this semester, a 41.6% increase over last fall and a 48% increase over the last five fall semesters average. These



efforts put MTSU in the forefront of international recruitment and international enrollment management in the state, region, and nation. Currently, MTSU international students come from 61 countries. Saudi Arabia, China, Bahamas, India, and Nigeria are the top countries of origin for our students.

Cultural and Academic Impact of International Students

Many studies have found evidence to show how international students benefit from their time on American campuses and how they also contribute financially to the schools and the U.S. economy. Other studies have found statistically significant data showing how they also enhance the intellectual and cultural environment for domestic students who interact with them, many of whom go on to graduate with a richer world view and set of life skills. Understanding these benefits is a strong and supportive rationale to invest in the recruitment of international students.

Possibly one of the most valuable, yet most difficult to quantify, contributions for international enrollments are the long-term bonds developed between U.S. students and students from around the globe, along with invaluable

campus diversity enrichment. The greatest benefit, however, of our higher education system is the American value system that it inculcates, embracing the open exchange of ideas, critical inquiry, and freedom of expression. International students who come here for their educations take these values back to their countries, and the world is a better place for it.

Economic Impact of International Students

Another reason for many universities within the U.S. to invest in international student recruitment is the positive economic impact. According to a recent report released by NAFSA, the world's largest and most diverse nonprofit association dedicated to international education and exchange, findings show that the nearly 1 million international students at U.S. colleges and universities contributed \$28.4 billion to the U.S. economy during the 2020–21 academic year.

The state of Tennessee directly benefits from international students' enrollment in colleges and universities. In 2020 alone, the financial contributions of this group totaled \$216.9 million while supporting or creating over 2,500 jobs within the state.

CONNECTION POINT

FALL 2022

MTSU IS YOUR HOME BASE:
PREPARE TO CLIMB

MIDDLE
TENNESSEE
STATE UNIVERSITY

I AM *true*
BLUE



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

MTSU has a long tradition of aiding veterans in their transitions from military to civilian life. The MTSU Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center constitutes the largest and most comprehensive veterans and military family center at a university in Tennessee. Here are a few updates from this important center involving relationships the Daniels Center has been building with some of Tennessee's most visible brands:

- Once again in 2022, the **Big Machine Music City Grand Prix** joined three other iconic Nashville institutions in support of MTSU's Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center. Earlier this month, the race joined the Grand Ole Opry, the Nashville Predators, and the Nashville Sounds for the second straight year to help the about 1,100 military-connected students at MTSU seeking academic success and quality employment.
- The **Grand Ole Opry** again in 2022 hosted the Opry Salute the Troops show. This year the Opry brought to the stage MTSU guest Command Sgt. Maj. Andrew Lombardo, the Army Reserve's top enlisted soldier, who advises the commanding general and other senior Army leaders on regulations, policies, and quality of life issues related to nearly 200,000 Army Reserve soldiers serving around the world. The Opry presented Lombardo with a commemorative plaque as a guest announcer and in acknowledgement of his visit. Performer and former MTSU student Craig Morgan closed out the show. During last year's Salute show, MTSU alum Chris Young gave a shout out to MTSU from the stage.
- The **Nashville Sounds** baseball club held an online auction of game-used Military Appreciation Jerseys to benefit the Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center. The Sounds wore the camouflage military jerseys three times in 2021.
- The MTSU Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center took center stage—or center ice, if you will—during the **Nashville Predators** Military Appreciation Night earlier this year. Fifty student veterans attended the NHL game between the Predators and visiting Dallas Stars in Bridgestone Arena. As part of the Predators' Military Appreciation Week, another 75 student veterans received tickets for a future Preds-Anaheim Ducks game. Since 2017, the partnership between the Daniels Center and the Predators has blossomed.
- The Daniels Center made its presence known at the **Nashville Superspeedway** on June 24 as the NASCAR world turned its attention to Nashville. The Daniels Center has formed a partnership with the superspeedway in Gladeville and with Rackley Roofing, the sponsor of that night's truck race.
- The Daniels Center has additional partnerships with **Nashville Soccer Club**.

These types of events with these types of partners not only provide entertainment for our veterans and military-connected students but also bring awareness to the Daniels Center and the assistance that it provides veterans and their families, regardless of whether they attend MTSU.

In other Daniels Center news, the spring Graduating Veterans Stole Ceremony had a record 65 participants. True Red, White, and Blue!



*Charlie and Hazel Daniels
Veterans and Military Family Center*

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

The First Amendment—giving us the right to speak out, publish our thoughts, embrace our faith, and march and petition for change—is the very foundation of what makes America great.

The Free Speech Center, a nonpartisan, nonprofit public-policy center at MTSU, works to build understanding of the First Amendment and Bill of Rights through education, information, and engagement. The center’s mission is to give young people in particular the information and insights they need to be better and more aware citizens. Doing so has placed MTSU at the nation’s forefront when it comes to exploring the role of the First Amendment in our free society.

The center is led by Ken Paulson, dean emeritus of MTSU’s College of Media and Entertainment and editor and senior vice president of *USA Today* from 2004 to 2009. Here are some updates from the Free Speech Center:

- The launch of the **First Amendment Press**—the first academic press in MTSU’s history—led to the publication of insightful new books about First Amendment freedoms. The press also revives important First Amendment books that have gone out of print.
- The center offers a **hotline** for journalists reporting about First Amendment issues.
- More than 70 news organizations interviewed or quoted the center, cited its work, or published its expert commentaries in the past year.
- **Lessons in Liberty**, the center’s newest initiative in First Amendment education, features an unprecedented

aggregation of online teaching materials for all teachers from primary school through college.

- One of the pillars of the Free Speech Center is its **1 for All** campaign, which provides online materials, course content, and study guides for teachers who want better resources to teach about the First Amendment.
- The center’s one-of-a-kind **First Amendment Encyclopedia**—along with its news website that provides online daily news and insights into free expression—will draw more than **4 million visitors this year**.
- 2022 saw the launch of the center’s new **Free Speech in Music** award, and the inaugural awardee was Felix Cavaliere, a founding member of the legendary rock band The Rascals.
- Internet entrepreneur Craig Newmark and his philanthropic foundation presented a second **\$25,000 gift** to help the center expand its programs and services in 2022. Craig Newmark Philanthropies, known for funding the craigslist founder’s longtime support of journalism initiatives, said MTSU’s Free Speech Center “plays a serious role” in preserving democracy.



FREE SPEECH CENTER

at Middle Tennessee State University





STUDENT SUCCESS

MTSU's early arrival programs, **Scholars Academy** and **STAR**, have become integral components of our student success initiative. Students enrolled in Scholars Academy arrive two weeks before the start of the fall semester to participate in workshops, team-building exercises, leadership training, and service-learning projects. Students in the STAR program arrive one week early and are also involved in structured experiences to prepare them for a successful college start. Both programs serve students new to MTSU.

Students who participate in Scholars Academy and STAR have higher rates of success, including retention and graduation, than students who do not. First-year retention rate projections are at 80% for participants in the Scholars Academy. The Student Transition and Academic Readiness (STAR) program retention rate projections are 73%.

Because of COVID-19 precautions, early arrival programs had limited enrollment in 2021; however, both Scholars Academy and STAR programs returned to full capacity for 2022 by enrolling as many as **600 incoming freshmen** to help them get off to a great start at the University.

Learner support programs, including tutoring and supplemental instruction, continue to be key elements of our commitment to improve graduation rates and close

outcome gaps. Under the leadership of **Cornelia Wills**, director of Student Success, tutoring at MTSU continues to greatly benefit our students.

Three measures of success are used to assess the effectiveness of our tutoring initiative—usage, persistence/retention, and grades. Records were both broken and set during the last academic year, with **utilization increasing by as much as 200%**. The fall (2021) to spring (2022) **persistence rate** for students who went for tutoring is an impressive **90%**.

Of the students who went for tutoring during the Spring 2022 semester, **94% passed** the course. This is an impressive 4% increase from the Fall 2021 semester. Of the students who passed the course, 57% passed with grades of A and B and 29% passed with the grade of A.

We are excited to have launched summer tutoring this year for a limited number of courses,



including physics, accounting, recording industry, media arts, and computer science.

With the health and safety of our students and employees in mind, we will continue to use the **QR code scan** system, first developed last fall. This platform provides a touchless way for tutors to log in and students to check in and out of tutoring sessions without multiple touches at a kiosk. This platform also allows streamlined reporting.

We will continue to track and report usage by gender and race/ethnicity. This is an important part of Quest 2025 and will assist in the effort to identify learner support opportunities that contribute to helping eliminate achievement gaps. In addition to all students, one goal is to increase the number of Black males who go for tutoring.

With focus on the Quest 2025 goal to eliminate the achievement gap, of all males who attended tutoring during the Spring 2022 semester, 25% were Black. Of all females who attended tutoring, 21% were Black. There is a continued focus on **increasing the participation of students of color** as both tutees and tutors.

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

Supplemental instruction helps students understand difficult course material and increase their grades in the most challenging courses. Supplemental instruction is available in courses that include biology, chemistry, mathematics, history, recording industry, and exercise science.

The **EAB Navigate platform** remains a key element of MTSU's strategic approach to student success, advising, and student support. As evidence of the impressive success associated with Navigate at MTSU, there were 44,969 student appointments created, over 123,000 messages sent, and more than 15,000 unique users over the past academic year. This powerful technology continues to evolve with the rollout of new features and improvements to existing functionality, always ensuring that the platform meets the needs of our students and all the campus colleagues working to support and enable student success at MTSU.

In spring 2022, the EAB Navigate platform incorporated the College of Graduate Studies to extend services to graduate students and advisors. This is a major enhancement that allows application of this powerful technology to support and assist graduate student success.





MTSU is partnering with the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce and Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) on the **New Skills Ready Grant**. Our team recently worked closely with Nashville State Community College and four MNPS high schools to submit a mini-grant proposal that focused on a mentoring program to aid Black male students with college readiness and preparation. The proposal would pair 10 high school students at each high school with a current Black male MTSU or Nashville State Community College student.

The **Advisor Mastery Program (AMP)** is MTSU's professional learning community created and sustained by advisors to foster communication, collaboration, commitment, comradery, and continued growth for the benefit of students, the University, and advisors. MTSU's AMP initiative has a proven history in supporting advisors and enabling them to extend their professional acumen and expertise.

For the first time, AMP has advisor committee representation from every college on campus. This equal representation will allow the committee to expand its efforts to meet more professional development needs throughout the campus. As a result, another change that will take place in the upcoming academic year is providing more AMP events each month focused on growing individuals as advisors and as higher education professionals.

Every semester, the AMP committee plans and hosts events to help advisors across campus network and grow in their profession; it also provides resources and opportunities for advisors to gain professional development outside of the MTSU community. Our MTSU advisors believe that continually seeking, providing, and participating in professional development is necessary to their jobs as advisors. Growing and learning in their profession allows them to model the same expectations they have for students during their time here at MTSU as well as in their future careers.

Finally, MTSU was recently notified of the award of a **\$1.4 million Upward Bound** grant to serve students in Rutherford and Bedford counties. The grant, written by Professor **Mary Martin**, will be housed in the Office of Student Success. Grant services are funded for a five-year term beginning this fall, with a focus on the following high schools: LaVergne, Smyrna, Community (Unionville), and Shelbyville.

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