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University Advancement

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and Chief Information Officer

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Vice President for Student Affairs
and Vice Provost for Enrollment
and Academic Services

Mr. Alan Thomas
Interim Vice President for
Business and Finance
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Introduction

MTSU AT A GLANCE

Founded September 11, 1911, at the geographic center of the state of Tennessee, MTSU is proud of its more than 100-year commitment to academic excellence and student success.

- MTSU, which began as a teacher training institution, today is a major comprehensive university accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. The University is composed of eight undergraduate colleges, which include 37 departments/schools and offer more than 140 majors/degrees. It houses a wide variety of nationally recognized academic degree programs at the baccalaureate, master’s, specialist, and doctoral levels. The College of Graduate Studies offers over 100 areas of study including nine doctoral programs.

- MTSU boasts a student enrollment of approximately 23,000 students, as well as nearly 1,000 full-time faculty members and almost 3,000 full- and part-time employees. Located on approximately 550 acres (which includes agricultural campuses and an aviation campus), MTSU is essentially the equivalent of a midsize city.

- MTSU is the No. 1 choice of undergraduates, veterans, adult learners (ages 25 and over), Pell Grant aid-eligible students, first-generation students, and transfer students in Tennessee. MTSU remains the No. 1 choice for summer school students.

- MTSU is located in Murfreesboro, the 10th fastest-growing city in the United States according to Governing.com. Murfreesboro is located just 30 miles from Nashville, a city recently ranked in the top 10 in the nation on Forbes magazine’s list of “best places for businesses and careers.”

- The Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin MSA ranks No. 8 in the nation for over-the-year change in total nonfarm employment for large metropolitan areas, according to the latest ranking from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

- MTSU is among the largest employers in the Nashville metropolitan statistical area and has an estimated regional economic impact hovering around $1 billion annually.
• Of MTSU’s approximately 123,000 current alumni, more than 50% live in the Metro-Nashville area, while more than 75% live in Tennessee. Alumni live in more than 100 countries around the world.

One in every seven college-educated individuals in the Nashville area is an MTSU graduate.

• MTSU is also the largest supplier of college-degreed workers in the midstate, providing the vibrant Music City economy and workforce with more graduates than all other local universities combined (approximately 4,000 each year). According to the Business and Economic Research Center at MTSU, one in every seven college-educated individuals in the Nashville area is an MTSU graduate.

• Some of MTSU’s most notable alumni include Sen. Albert Gore Sr. (’32), Nobel Prize–winning economist James M. Buchanan (’40), and former U.S. congressman and past chair of the House Science Committee Bart Gordon (’71). More recently, and revealing of the breadth and depth of MTSU’s alumni base, country music artists Hillary Scott (of Lady Antebellum fame) and Eric Paslay (’05) also attended the University.
MTSU BY THE NUMBERS

Those basics about the University, though, really only skim the surface when it comes to explaining what makes MTSU a great institution. The following list of other MTSU accolades, many of which are highlighted elsewhere in this biennial report, truly reinforce MTSU’s claim as Tennessee’s Best University.

- MTSU and Hangzhou (China) Normal University partnered in 2009 to open MTSU’s Confucius Institute, which works to enhance understanding of Chinese language and culture in Tennessee. Hanban Confucius Institute in March 2015 provided an additional $1 million donation to MTSU to create a Chinese Music and Cultural Center on campus.

- The U.S. State Department awarded MTSU student Dalton Lauderback a prestigious Fulbright Award to teach English in Germany for the 2016–17 academic year. In the past seven years, 14 MTSU students have been awarded Fulbright fellowships.

- Almost 20 MTSU alumni or former students and faculty have been nominated for Grammy Awards in the last five years. A total of 8 have won Grammys so far, including some repeat recipients, in categories from classical to gospel to bluegrass. The MTSU faculty boasts both a Grammy winner and an Emmy winner.

- MTSU BY THE NUMBERS

Dr. Mei Han, director of the MTSU Center for Chinese Music and Culture, speaks at the dedication ceremony in March 2016.

Alumnus and Grammy-winner Luke Laird at a February 2016 reception MTSU held in his honor in Los Angeles during Grammy weekend.
MTSU’s 2015–16 men’s basketball team grabbed the nation’s attention this past March when the 15th-seeded Blue Raiders upset the No. 2 seed Michigan State Spartans in the NCAA tournament. *Sports Illustrated* called it the biggest upset in the history of the March Madness event. It was the team’s 2nd invitation in the past 4 years to the Big Dance and came as a result of winning the 2015–16 Conference USA championship. The women’s team also made it to the NCAA tournament (for the 18th time), making MTSU 1 of 10 Division I athletic programs to have both its men’s and women’s basketball teams make the field of 64 NCAA tournament and have its football program play in a bowl game in the same season. MTSU was also one of the few universities with a 100% graduation rate for both basketball programs.

MTSU boasts 17 NCAA Division I intercollegiate sports teams, all of which met or exceeded the NCAA’s multiyear Academic Progress Rate (APR) requirements in 2015. The men’s and women’s golf teams each achieved a perfect 1,000 APR.

MTSU’s Aerospace Department, one of the nation’s finest, unveiled in 2015 a new program in Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Operations, 1 of 5 such programs in the nation.

NurseJournal.org, a social community website providing education resources for nurses and health care professionals, recently ranked MTSU’s nursing school the 15th-best in the eastern region, ahead of nearby Vanderbilt University (ranked 389th) and the University of Tennessee–Knoxville (ranked 401st).
• The Hollywood Reporter listed MTSU’s music business program among its Top 25 Music Schools for both 2014 and 2015.

• Now in its third decade, MTSU’s Concrete Industry Management Department was the nation’s 1st and served as the template for all other similar university programs that exist nationwide.

• MTSU was among just 240 colleges and universities across the country to receive the 2015 Community Engagement Classification from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

• WalletHub.com, a digital information resource for consumers and small businesses, recently ranked Murfreesboro 49th of 280 municipalities across the nation as part of its “Best and Worst College Cities and Towns in America” listing. Murfreesboro, ranked among the best, was the highest-rated college town in Tennessee.

• MTSU was listed recently as the top-ranked public university in Tennessee (and 2nd overall, behind Vanderbilt University in Nashville) by BestValueSchools.com. The 20 institutions listed were evaluated for 20-year net return on investment, net price, and graduation and acceptance rates.

• MTSU’s exercise science experts, working wonders with people who suffer from incomplete spinal cord injuries, received a $388,894 grant from the National Institutes of Health to perform a comprehensive study about such patients. The study, which could change how health professions treat patients who retain some sensation or motor function, is unusual for a university not connected to a college of medicine or a teaching hospital.
• MTSU’s Department of Physics and Astronomy was **1 of 12 universities** recently named to The 5+ Club by the American Physical Society and the American Association of Physics Teachers. The designation recognizes institutions graduating five or more physics teachers in a given year. Brigham Young University topped the list with 17. The organization described MTSU as “a national leader in physics teacher education.”

• MTSU raised **more than $105 million** in its recently concluded Centennial Campaign, representing the largest fundraising effort in University history, far surpassing a $30 million campaign mark that was set in 2001. The $105 million was the result of more than **111,000 separate gifts** from **23,276 different donors**.

• There are **3 Nobel Prize winners** associated with MTSU. The Nobel medal awarded to 1940 graduate James M. Buchanan, a pioneering economist, is on permanent loan to the University.

• MTSU’s Student Success efforts have been lauded by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *The Washington Post*. The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities named MTSU **1 of 5** national finalists for the 2015 Project Degree Completion Award.

• MTSU’s School of Journalism was named in February 2016 one of the **Top 20** programs of its kind in the U.S. (and the only one in Tennessee) by *NewsPro* magazine.
The state’s funding formula for universities has changed. With the passage of the Complete College Tennessee Act (CCTA), state appropriations are now based on retention and graduation rates, not enrollment.

MTSU is the most efficient producer of graduates for Tennessee. The University makes great use of state dollars and is a tremendous investment for the state!

### 2014–15 Bachelor’s Degrees Granted*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Degrees Granted</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MTSU</td>
<td>4,051</td>
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<tr>
<td>APSU</td>
<td>1,469</td>
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<tr>
<td>ETSU</td>
<td>2,229</td>
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<td>TSU</td>
<td>872</td>
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<tr>
<td>TTU</td>
<td>1,857</td>
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<tr>
<td>U of M</td>
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### 2014–15 State Appropriations**

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MTSU</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSU</td>
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<tr>
<td>ETSU</td>
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<td>TSU</td>
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<tr>
<td>TTU</td>
<td>$20,447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U of M</td>
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</table>

### 2014–15 Cost per Graduate to State***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Cost per Graduate</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MTSU</td>
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<td>APSU</td>
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<tr>
<td>U of M</td>
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MTSU’s Cost to the State per Graduate, the Lowest in the TBR System.
MTSU Leads the State in Adult and Low-Income Graduates

### 2014–15 Graduation Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Adult Bachelor's Degrees Granted</th>
<th>Low Income Bachelor's Degrees Granted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MTSU</td>
<td>1,551</td>
<td>2,399</td>
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<tr>
<td>APSU</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>869</td>
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<td>ETSU</td>
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<tr>
<td>TSU</td>
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<tr>
<td>TTU</td>
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<td>980</td>
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<tr>
<td>U of M</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>UT-K</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>1,747</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Data from Nov. 2015 Formula Public Display  
**Source: Data from THEC Fact Book  
***Source: Calculated (Appropriation/Degrees)

†Age 25+ at time of Graduation  
‡Pell Grant Eligible
Executive Summary

Such crow-worthy accolades speak volumes about the quality of education provided at MTSU. Even more impressive is that the University has achieved or maintained such lofty acclaim at a time of sweeping change for student access to higher education in Tennessee, as well as the governance structure for public universities statewide.

Gov. Bill Haslam’s 2014 introduction of the Tennessee Promise, which offers eligible high-school graduates two years of tuition-free community or technical college, has been rightfully celebrated by state lawmakers, higher education advocates, and even President Barack Obama for its success in attracting more high school students to enroll in college. Similar programs have subsequently been adopted by numerous other states. In all, the Promise put 16,291 students into college in Tennessee in the fall of 2015, contributing to a 10 percent surge in first-time freshman enrollment statewide. Such buy-in served as a welcome boost to the governor’s Drive to 55 education initiative, which is intended to raise the number of Tennesseans possessing secondary degrees to 55 percent in order to meet future workforce demands.

As positive as the Tennessee Promise has been for statewide workforce efforts, and, certainly, for our friends in the Tennessee community college system, its creation presented an equally tremendous challenge for MTSU and other four-year institutions like it. MTSU embraced the challenges the Promise presented and has emerged, I believe, as a stronger and more focused institution.

CHANGING TIMES

With Charles Farmer, assistant superintendent of secondary schools for Williamson County Schools, signing an agreement to create dual enrollment and other academic enrichment opportunities for high school students.
We moved forward with bold initiatives on many fronts—many of which focus on attracting higher-ability students—that have not just sustained our ongoing operations, but fueled our plans for growth (all the while still maintaining strong support of the governor’s Drive to 55). As a result of our efforts, MTSU’s 2015–16 freshman enrollment held steady in the first year of full implementation of the Promise program.

Among those initiatives, many of which are explored in greater detail later in this report:

- We renewed and expanded our efforts in dual enrollment, which allows high school students to take college courses while still enrolled in a secondary school—and earn credit from both institutions. For example, our partnership with nearby Blackman High School’s new Collegiate Academy in Rutherford County allows eligible juniors and seniors to take up to six hours of MTSU courses at no cost. MTSU and Williamson County Schools (WCS), a district consistently ranking among the best school districts in Tennessee and which has outpaced national rankings on a number of measures, signed a special partnership agreement in November 2015 encouraging the development of dual enrollment courses emphasizing some of the University’s signature programs, including UAS, Aerospace, and Mechatronics Engineering. The agreement is the first of its kind between the University and an entire district.

- We expanded our True Blue Tour, a student recruitment initiative, which in 2015–16 included taking academic deans and top administrators off campus to visit with prospective students in three out-of-state venues, as well as a first-ever stop in Williamson County.
Executive Summary

- We firmly reinforced our standing as the No. 1 choice of Tennessee’s transfer students. In the past few years, MTSU has forged numerous agreements with community colleges statewide that provide pathways for students to seamlessly transfer to our four-year institution. Partners include Chattanooga State, Cleveland State, Columbia State, Dyersburg State, Jackson State, Motlow State, Nashville State, Northeast State, Roane State, Southwest Tennessee, and Walters State community colleges. Our success in attracting transfer students more than made up for any enrollment losses we experienced due to potential first-time freshmen embracing the Promise. In fact, MTSU’s transfer population in 2015 was nearly as large as our incoming freshman class! We expect that positive trend to continue for years to come.

- We successfully lobbied state policymakers to allow us to expand our Regional Scholars Program, which is focused on attracting higher-ability students from nearby states (within 250 miles of our Murfreesboro campus) by reducing MTSU’s out-of-state tuition by 48 percent to students with an ACT composite of 25 and above.

As a result of these new and proactive agreements, MTSU held steady with regard to overall student enrollment in 2015. This is important because MTSU is still the key cog in middle Tennessee’s workforce development apparatus. Boasting approximately 4,000 new graduates each year, MTSU is without peer the largest contributor toward the governor’s Drive to 55 in the midstate. At a recent graduation ceremony, one highlighted by a commencement speech delivered by U.S. Sen. Bob Corker, more than 1,800 students graduated—including state Rep. Mike Sparks. No other institution like it in the state graduates more future midstate workers than MTSU, and no other university in the state does it for less per-pupil in-state dollars than MTSU.

MTSU is without peer the largest contributor toward the governor’s Drive to 55 in the midstate.

Rep. Mike Sparks graduates at the Fall 2015 MTSU Commencement ceremony.
A NEW LANDSCAPE

I see a bright future ahead for our University, in large part due to the progress we achieved through our hard work to navigate certain aspects of the Promise. Many of those same efforts, I believe, will also pay dividends in light of a more recent announcement about significant change coming to higher education in Tennessee—namely, Gov. Haslam’s decision in December 2015 to remove the state’s six Tennessee Board of Regents universities (including MTSU) out from under the direct control of the TBR, which has governed them for decades.

In the TBR’s place, new local governing boards will be fashioned that will have decision-making power over such crucial university operations as tuition rates, program enhancements, presidential appointments, and budget control. According to the governor, this major structural change was engineered, in part, to better allow the TBR to focus on the state’s community colleges and colleges of applied technology, which have experienced dramatic enrollment increases as a result of the Tennessee Promise scholarship and which are keys to the Drive to 55.

At the time of the writing of this report, there was still much unknown and undecided about the new higher education landscape created under this new governance structure. The governor appointed a task force to fine-tune his plan to create individual governing boards for the six affected Tennessee universities, and I was selected (along with the other presidents of universities formerly governed by the TBR) to serve on that committee. This new governing structure, I believe, has great potential to enable MTSU to tackle its present and future challenges in an even more laser-focused manner. It can do so by granting the University both greater local autonomy in its decision-making, as well as greater freedom to think entrepreneurially and even outside-the-box as it regards the need for program enhancements and new initiatives. With the work MTSU has already been accomplishing over the past few years—specifically as it relates to attracting more college-ready students (including transfer students) to campus—I am confident that the governor’s truly bold and potentially transformational plan will lead to an even brighter future for MTSU. I look forward to learning and exploring the opportunities it could provide toward our mission of ensuring student success and providing even more graduates for the state’s workforce.
THE MODERN-DAY MTSU

As wonderful as high rankings and major accolades are, and as proud as I am of our response to the challenges presently facing higher education in Tennessee, none of that, in my estimation, tells MTSU’s real story of success.

Our real success lies in the often unglamorous work being performed on a day-by-day basis by our faculty and staff to ensure that every MTSU student gets the attention they deserve on their path to earning a degree. Our real success during the past two years, I believe, has been our unwavering focus on individual student success every day regardless of the larger issues swirling around us. That is our real story. Because, regardless of the external factors around us, focusing on the success (meaning retention and graduation) of every one of our students is what will make us a successful institution today, tomorrow, and in the future.

Frankly speaking, such a searing focus on student success wasn’t always the case at MTSU or at other institutions like it across the state. That’s because for most of the nearly 15 years of my presidency at MTSU, student enrollment was the primary metric used to make the case for state appropriations in Tennessee. That was how colleges and universities were supposed to be funded by the state, how we were compared with our sister schools and out-of-state peers, and how we defined ourselves in our marketing and advertising.

But times change, as do expectations of institutional performance by state and federal policymakers. In 2010, the Tennessee state legislature enacted major reform to higher education, emphasizing degree completion as the primary metric for institutional funding. Gov. Bill Haslam’s Drive to 55 also led MTSU to a renewed focus on student retention and graduation instead of sheer enrollment, a mission we have fully accepted and embraced, and indeed which we have since been recognized nationally for doing. (More on that later . . .)

As a result, nothing is more important than ensuring our students’ academic success. Our focus every single day is to shepherd University-wide efforts to improve student retention and to provide support to keep students enrolled and on track to graduation.

Developing a retention program was the right thing to do for both incoming and existing students. From this point onward, then, this biennial president’s report details MTSU’s plan for student success, our results to date, the methods we have employed to achieve greater student success, and our vision for future success.

Let me state on the front end that the explanation of this student success plan may not be as glitzy as Grammy wins and unmanned flight studies, or as dramatic as institutional decision-making aimed at remaining relevant amidst sea change in Tennessee’s higher education realm. However, it is at the core of what makes MTSU a place where student dreams are being realized every day.
Nothing is more important than ensuring our students’ academic success.
Even with statewide and national accolades for our efficiency in creating college graduates, MTSU’s continued success depends on our ability to help students overcome obstacles, stay enrolled in classes, and earn college degrees. These students are our responsibility, and we must discover new and innovative ways to help them be successful. At MTSU, from a staff and faculty perspective, we focus every day on maintaining and growing our student-centered culture. At MTSU, students are not an interruption in our day!

Research shows that the first two years are critical to a university student. A bump in the road, especially at the beginning, can derail the progress of those struggling to stay enrolled. In 2013, I announced a major initiative—the MTSU Quest for Student Success—with broad support from the University’s faculty, staff, and central administrative team. The Quest is now led by Rick Sluder, MTSU’s new vice provost for student success, with the support of the academic deans, department chairs, and faculty.

This Quest is designed to ensure that every student who comes to MTSU with the drive to achieve will be met with the best instruction from excellent professors who care for their success. As part of the Quest, University faculty and staff members are making a concerted effort to provide extra support and assistance when our
students encounter unexpected difficulties or when roadblocks arise that negatively affect their persistence toward graduation. By doing so, we have created a culture of high expectations coupled with personal attention when students struggle inside or outside the classroom.

We see this as our time for transformation—our time to seize the opportunity to innovate and lead the way in creating a new model for higher education. Instead of spinning our wheels focusing on the many external factors affecting higher education that are beyond our capacity to control, MTSU has, instead, turned its energies and talents toward tackling the internal factors over which we have direct influence and which we know can positively affect student learning. That’s our Quest.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Higher education is just the latest arena facing a series of disruptive forces that could, on the one hand, lead to great innovation and transformation or, on the other, lead to significant losses in enrollment, funding, and cultural influence.

The MTSU Quest for Student Success—our vision for innovation—integrates our collective efforts into a single coherent approach for the future, leading to increases in student success in three key areas:

- Recruiting students who value academic success;
- Enhancing the academic experience for students by implementing innovation in curriculum across all disciplines and underscoring the role of quality advising in student success, and:
- Championing enhancements in administrative processes and eliminating barriers to student success.
Since launching the Quest, we have made tremendous strides in helping students stay enrolled and on a clear path to earning a degree. It’s no small feat that MTSU has achieved increases in retention in three successive semesters with regards to both new freshmen and for all students, whether undergraduate or graduate. For all our colleges within the University, persistence rates are at their highest levels in five years!

Within the first six months of implementing just two key components of the Quest—a new advising model and use of a predictive analytics software system to better monitor student progress—we saw the following significant increases in persistence:

- Persistence rates rose by 2.2 percentage points for new freshmen.
- Rates increased 4.5 percentage points for transfers.
- Rates went up 2.1 percentage points for sophomores.
- These improvements resulted in approximately $1.5 million in additional Spring 2015 tuition and fees.

This wasn’t a one-time occurrence. For instance, in the Fall 2015 semester, MTSU achieved record or near-record retention increases for first-time freshmen, new transfer students, and sophomore students.

Driving these increases were a number of specific initiatives related to the Quest. Three primary initiatives in particular, though, have made the most immediate impact on our student success efforts: our increased student advising and the use of predictive software analytics, coupled with course redesign. The next few pages provide a closer look at those three initiatives.
Our Crown JEWL

The James E. Walker Library (pictured) sees the equivalent of the entire student body every three or four days, with an additional 1.1 million uses of the website. Each year, the Library’s instruction program teaches more than 300 classes to better prepare students for college-level research and use of information. The Library continues to make MTSU scholarship more visible through its digital initiatives. Since the launch of JEWLScholar, the library’s institutional repository, more than 4,300 articles and reports—including all MTSU dissertations—have been collected.
Even in a time of reduced state budgets for higher education, MTSU made a major investment in student success by reallocating $3 million to hire 47 new college-based academic advisors (more than doubling the pre-existing number).

This enhanced advising team works tirelessly every day to help students maximize their investment and to provide students the support, guidance, and encouragement they need to stay on track to graduate on time. Coupled with improved performance monitoring, including midterm grades, enhanced tutoring, and more “intrusive” (read: aggressive) advising, our advisors are also now better equipped to identify at-risk students and develop individualized programs to enable these students to stay on track.

Here is just one quick story of “intrusive” advising that I believe exemplifies the work our advisors are doing to keep students from falling through holes in the academic safety net.

Kristen Janson, an advisor for the Computer Science Department, was meeting with a student when he shared that he had decided not to enroll in the Spring 2015 semester. This student was doing quite well academically but for some reason was unhappy at MTSU. Janson took the time to listen and ask the right questions. She found out that the student wasn’t unhappy with his coursework at MTSU but instead was unhappy with his roommate and couldn’t bear the thought of living with him another semester. Janson promptly escorted the student to the Housing Office and helped him change rooms. The student enrolled for Spring 2015 classes and now stays in touch with Janson to plan for future enrollment periods.
Investing in Technology

HIGH TOUCH AND HIGH TECH

MTSU’s October 2014 adoption of a sophisticated new software package allows for more proactive methods of advising. This use of predictive analytics software has helped us sharpen our focus on areas that have the greatest opportunity to positively affect academic needs and achieve measurable, sustainable results.

College advisors are able to reach out to students who might be having trouble academically as identified through instructors’ alerts or the predictive analytics function of the software.

Importantly, the data also helps advisors pick out students in the “murky middle,” with grade point averages between 2.0 and 3.0 and whose overall performance has not raised any red flags, directing them to more-focused advising sessions. On average, about 390 students in each year’s MTSU freshman class will fall into the murky middle. These students, even though they are academically qualified, are unlikely to graduate without additional attention. By focusing on this group and making sure they remain on track, substantial gains are being made in success rates.

MTSU’s use of this new software system, accomplished through our partnership with the Educational Advisory Board (EAB), rightfully caught the attention of The Washington Post. In an article published on June 14, 2015, the newspaper reported that advisors at MTSU, as a result of the new software, “can pull together weekly reports of the percentage of students who have re-enrolled for the next semester, giving them a shot at reaching students who are on the fence before they drop out.”

During just the first six months of the new system’s use, academic advisors:

- Met in person with 19,464 students;
- Conducted 5,727 advising sessions by email or online;
- Advised 772 students by phone;
- Reviewed the files of 12,627 students and reached out to assist them;
- And altogether made 40,206 contacts with students!
BETTER BY REDESIGN

The redesign of more than 20 academic courses campus-wide in which too many students were not successful in their studies has also greatly enhanced the learning environment for students at MTSU, enabling them to better master the material and offering a greater chance for success.

Course redesign is where universities implement information technology to make entire courses—not just single classes—more effective and improve student results. By the close of the Fall 2015 semester, 28 undergraduate courses had been through some form of redesign. Student success rates have increased markedly in courses that have undergone the redesign process. This is not grade inflation. It’s taking a look in the mirror and doing what’s right by MTSU’s hardworking students. Here are some examples of the work we’ve done.

Student success rates have increased markedly in courses that have undergone the redesign process.

Physics is Our Business

MTSU’s Department of Physics and Astronomy was recently one of just three programs nationally (along with Indiana University–Purdue University Fort Wayne and Rochester Institute of Technology) honored by the American Physical Society for improving undergraduate physics education for our students, partly as a result of course redesign. MTSU received the honor, in part, for “consciously adopting a mission to provide exceptional classroom experiences, career-focused courses, and pathways and intensive research opportunities to prepare students for targeted careers.”

A Helping Hand

A student enrolled in a public-speaking course taught by lecturer Stephen Decker was the victim of a serious assault during a recent semester. He ended up missing three weeks of class. Fortunately, Decker had videotaped his lectures and placed many of the assignments online. The student was able to complete the online assignments and successfully deliver the last major required speech of the course. Had Decker not redesigned his traditional, in-class lecture approach, the student would have been hopelessly behind. Instead, he was able to complete the course and move forward.
These outstanding student success efforts are not going unnoticed. In addition to The Washington Post news story, an article in the March 13, 2015 issue of the highly regarded Chronicle of Higher Education stated that MTSU is at the forefront nationally of efforts to improve retention and graduation and added that many of the programs we are implementing are being adopted by institutions around the country.

More recently, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities named MTSU one of five national finalists for its 2015 Project Degree Completion Award recognizing institutions that employ innovative approaches to improve retention and degree completion.

The Education Advisory Board, a higher education consulting firm, honored MTSU with its Data-Driven Impact Award for quantifiable improvements in student retention in its Student Success Collaborative, composed of about 170 schools, in October 2015.

Lastly, MTSU was among just 25 colleges and universities nationwide (and the only one in Tennessee) to receive a $225,000 national grant in 2015 called the Integrated Planning and Advising for Student Success (or iPASS) to support its more targeted efforts to help students stay on track to earn their degrees.
AN ACTIVE DUTY

There is no better way to start this more in-depth look at MTSU’s focus on student success than by placing some extra attention on a special group of adult learners, a student population we all admire and respect—student veterans.

Veterans face unusual and daunting challenges as they move into college life. The bureaucracy surrounding admissions and registration can vex today’s veterans, who are used to the modern military’s streamlined processes. Such bureaucratic burdens are compounded by the psychological stress of military service and sometimes even a sense of alienation on campus.

MTSU has a long and proud tradition of aiding veterans in their transition from the battlefield to civilian life. I am extremely proud that MTSU has been recognized year after year by national publications such as Military Times and G.I. Jobs magazines as being one of the top universities in the U.S. for veteran education. (Military Times separately named the Jennings A. Jones College of Business among its 64 Best for Vets Business Schools 2014.)

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 Veterans Administration’s new VetSuccess on Campus program. The creation in November 2015 of the Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center on campus represents, in my mind, the next step in MTSU becoming the most military-friendly university in America.
This new 2,600-square-foot center constitutes the largest and most comprehensive veterans and military family center at a university in Tennessee. The center provides one-stop service and support for the more than 1,000 student veterans and their family members at MTSU. Everything our student veterans need to succeed is available in this single location, from scheduling courses and completing government paperwork to getting questions answered about benefits and employment opportunities.

Student veterans working in the new Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center in the Keathley University Center.
MTSU’s support of student veterans has touched the hearts of many wishing to do their part to support this student population. Gov. Haslam recently announced that MTSU would receive a $91,000 state grant to support its vet-success efforts. The Journey Home Project, co-founded by Hall of Fame country music performer Charlie Daniels, has committed $120,000 to help equip the new center, which was recently named for Daniels and his wife, Hazel.

Taking Command
MTSU’s new senior advisor for Veterans and Leadership Initiatives, Keith M. Huber, now leads MTSU’s ongoing push to help student veterans be successful at college. Huber joined MTSU in February 2015 after retiring as a lieutenant general from the U.S. Army following nearly 40 years on active duty as an infantry and Special Forces officer.
A WIDER NET

The Veterans Center is by no means the only campus initiative aimed at helping adult learners complete their degrees, which is a key component to reaching the Drive to 55. According to the governor’s office, there are approximately 940,000 adult Tennesseans who have some college credit but haven’t earned an associate or four-year degree.

MTSU is the state’s clear leader in the education of adult students.

Other key MTSU initiatives related to adult degree-seekers include:

• The Adult Degree Completion Program: This flexible, customizable program was created for working adults who need to finish a bachelor’s degree to get ahead in their career. It offers college credit for prior knowledge and experience.

• Graduate MT program: MTSU actively seeks out former students who possess 90 or more credit hours, contacts them personally, and then works with them to create a plan to finish college.

• Workforce education initiatives: MTSU has carved out dozens of partnerships with industry aimed at improving the education level of our state’s workforce. Two examples are partnerships with the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation to supply more skilled workers in water-related industries primed for growth, as well as with the Metro-Nashville police force to aid current officers in their quest to obtain a college degree.

The result is that MTSU is the state’s clear leader in the education of adult students. That’s a pivotal role MTSU plays for the state given that the governor’s plan to have 55 percent of all Tennesseans possess a postsecondary degree or certification simply will not happen unless we engage the adult population.
High-Ability Students

It’s not just student veterans and adult learners, though, who are receiving the support they need to thrive at MTSU. Every student who comes to MTSU with the desire to work and learn will be greeted with the support they need to achieve great results and earn a college degree.

The brightest young minds at MTSU—destined to become the next generation of doctors, lawyers, politicians, scientists, and teachers—were sought after by universities around the world. They chose to study at Tennessee’s Best University, MTSU!

MTSU’s student success efforts target good students, committed to their own personal success and who are, therefore, more likely to persist and graduate. We do this because we recognize that achieving a college degree is a shared responsibility between a university and the student. By understanding the factors that impact persistence, we have taken advantage of the opportunity to focus our recruitment and retention strategies on students with the greatest chance to graduate and develop the tools they will require to be successful. Here are just a few of the student success stories that abound at MTSU.

The Future’s So Fulbright

A total of 14 MTSU students have been awarded Fulbright Scholarships—the U.S. government’s flagship international educational exchange program. In 2015, Tandra Martin received a Fulbright to travel to South Africa (Martin was also recently a Rhodes finalist).
Fellow 2015 recipient Davis Thompson, who previously interned for first lady Michelle Obama, went to the Slovak Republic. In 2016, Dalton Lauderback was awarded a Fulbright Award—an English teaching assistant position in Germany. MTSU was one of just 108 colleges and universities recognized by the highly respected Chronicle of Higher Education for producing Fulbright international scholars in 2013, ranked alongside Duke, Harvard, and Yale. (No other Tennessee institution made the list.)

Resting Her Case
Leigh Stanfield, who is concentrating on Communications Studies, won a national title in the novice division at the International Public Debate Association’s National Championship Tournament at Boise State University in Idaho in March 2015. Her MTSU Debate teammate Abigail Barnes, an English major, took third place in the same category. That’s my kind of national championship!
Outstanding Faculty

THOSE WHO CAN, TEACH

Exceptional students, regardless of whether they are veterans, athletes, adult learners, or traditional students, deserve exceptional faculty. As part of our commitment to quality—and our commitment to student success—MTSU provides students the opportunity to interact with and be guided by some of the nation’s leading educators and practitioners. Here are some examples of faculty members at MTSU achieving great works.

The Fourth "R"
Those who think they know reggae music are likely in for an education when they read *The Encyclopedia of Reggae*. Written by professor Mike Alleyne, the book provides a colorful, 352-page study of the reggae genre, covering it from A to Z and from the late 1960s up to the mid-1980s. Alleyne, who was born in London to parents who were natives of Barbados, wanted his book to be authoritative enough to satisfy knowledgeable lovers of the genre but accessible enough to entice casual fans to want to know more. “It’s very difficult to get most audiences to look beyond Bob Marley,” Alleyne said. His compilation, though, is designed to help readers do just that. Thanks to Alleyne, Music Business majors can now add a fourth “R” to their college education—reggae.

The Pop Candy Pioneer
As a journalist for USA Today.com, Whitney Matheson had the kind of passionate readership few journalists cultivate in a lifetime. Drawn by Matheson’s lively observations of pop culture and their shared love of the same, those who made up the national audience of her USA Today blog, Pop Candy, coalesced into a virtual community.

When downsizing at USA Today ended Pop Candy’s 15-year run, Ken Paulson, the paper’s former editor and senior vice president of news who is now dean of the College of Media and Entertainment at MTSU, hired Matheson as MTSU’s professional journalist-in-residence. For her students, she represents the new face of journalism and how to succeed outside traditional
Outstanding Faculty

print media. The most powerful tool an aspiring journalist can have, Matheson said, is initiative.

“One lesson I’m constantly trying to get across is that it’s important not only to make your own work but also to take risks,” she said. “Every success I’ve had has been me going out and just doing something on my own.”

The Spill Doctor

Biology professor Ryan Otter, an environmental toxicologist, was part of a multiagency response team that assessed the impact of the 2009 ash spill near the Tennessee Valley Authority’s Kingston Fossil Plant, described as one of the state’s worst environmental disasters. Dubbed “MTSU’s Spiderman,” Otter used long-jawed orb weaver spiders to measure and gauge the contamination of the Kingston spill by measuring the toxins absorbed in the fat levels within hundreds of insects he collected at the site. Otter also works as part of the management team for MTSU’s Quest for Student Success. He has even written a book on the subject of student success titled How to Win at the Game of College.
TRUE STUDENT-ATHLETES

MTSU competes in 17 NCAA sports and is a proud member of Conference USA (C-USA), an established, nationally recognized conference that has made nearly 700 NCAA championship appearances since the league’s inception in 1995.

The Blue Raider men’s basketball team shocked the athletic world by upsetting the Michigan State Spartans in the first round of the 2016 NCAA tournament. The victory represented only the eighth time in modern history that a 15th-seeded team upset a No. 2 seeded team in the first round of the tournament. *Sports Illustrated* described the outcome as the biggest upset in the history of the March Madness tournament. The men earned their invitation to the so-called Big Dance (their second invite in the past four years) as a result of winning the Conference USA Championship.

The 2015–16 MTSU men’s basketball team made national headlines after upsetting the Michigan State Spartans in the NCAA tournament.

Forward Darnell Harris shows some on-court emotion as the Blue Raiders closed in on the upset of the Spartans.
Athletic Achievement

The women’s basketball team also earned a berth in the NCAA basketball tournament this past spring. The Lady Raiders headed back to the NCAA Tournament for the 18th time after capturing their second C-USA championship in just their third season in C-USA. As a result, MTSU became only the second school in C-USA history to have its men’s and women’s teams win the championship in the same year. MTSU was also one of the few universities with a 100% graduation rate for both basketball programs. In addition, MTSU was one of just 10 Division I programs nationally to have both its men’s and women’s basketball team selected for the NCAA tournament and have its football program play in a bowl game in the 2015–16 athletic season.

On Christmas Eve 2015, MTSU’s football team capped off another strong season with a trip to Nassau, Bahamas, for the Popeyes Bahamas Bowl (the only college football bowl game played internationally). It marked the seventh time in the last 10 years that MTSU has been bowl-eligible. The game against Western Michigan was broadcast nationally from my native Bahamas on ESPN. On top of that, the Blue Raiders had 20 student-athletes compete in the bowl game that had already received their degree—which ranked fifth-highest in the country.
There are far too many other outstanding athletic accomplishments to outline them all here, but here are a few more I am quite proud of:

Former Middle Tennessee golf standouts Rick Cochran, Chase Narramore, Kent Bulle, and Jason Millard earned status on the Web.com Tour, the minor leagues of professional golf, for the 2015–16 season (Bulle also recently qualified for the U.S. Open.) Former women’s golfer Allie Knight qualified for the Symetra Tour.

Former MTSU outfielder Ronnie Jebavy became the fifth-highest Blue Raider baseball player ever drafted when he was selected in the fifth round of the major league baseball draft by the San Francisco Giants in 2015.
Importantly, MTSU Athletics is also committed to the highest level of performance both on the field and in the classroom. During the Fall 2015 semester, 12 of 15 teams had a semester team grade point average of 3.0 or higher; 102 student athletes made the Dean’s List (3.5+ GPA); and 31 had a perfect 4.0. Overall, 175 of 330 student athletes had a 3.0 or higher (53%).

For the sixth consecutive year in 2015, all 17 Blue Raider athletic teams earned a multiyear Academic Progress Rate (APR) of more than 930, as announced by the NCAA. The MTSU men’s and women’s golf teams had perfect grades of 1,000. Football had an impressive multiyear score of 973. Its 2013–14 score of 992 tied for seventh-highest in the country with Army, trailing only Alabama, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Northwestern, and Minnesota.

When the NCAA’s Academic Progress Report (APR) first came out about a decade ago, MTSU was almost dead last on the list in terms of student-athletes staying eligible and moving toward graduation. However, by employing many of the methods now being used campus-wide at MTSU to improve student success (such as more proactive advising), MTSU Athletics climbed from worst in the nation to the model program it is today.

These days, when the APR ratings come out, the top 10 programs in the nation include names like Stanford, Notre Dame, Vanderbilt, and, yes, MTSU. Even the NCAA’s in-house magazine has profiled MTSU for its academic turnaround.

Here are some statistics achieved by our student-athletes in the classroom that are truly worth crowing about! During the Fall 2015 semester:

- 12 of 15 teams had a semester team grade point average of 3.0 or higher.
- 102 student athletes made the Dean’s List (3.5+ GPA), and 31 had a perfect 4.0.
- Overall, 175 of 330 student-athletes had a 3.0 or higher (53%).
GETTING WITH THE PROGRAMS

Several academic programs give MTSU national name recognition, either due to the quality of the faculty and/or the nature of the program. Such programs are at the heart of student success, providing a world-class education that in many cases cannot be achieved anywhere else in the nation or world other than right here at MTSU.

Better by Design
Mobile robots that can move traffic safety barrels for road repairs, freeing workers from a dangerous task. Surgical robots that let doctors perform operations through small incisions or get enhanced views of an abdominal cavities. Specialized robots for planetary exploration. All are examples of mechatronics systems. In 2013, MTSU launched a Mechatronics Engineering program. People trained and certified in Mechatronics Engineering can expect high-growth opportunities and wages. The new major received in April 2015 a three-year, $614,172 grant from the National Science Foundation for scholarships to help expand the program, which combines mechanical, computer, and electrical engineering with systems integration and project management. At least 15 incoming freshmen for each of the next three years will receive scholarships of up to $10,000 as a result of the grant.

School of Rock
The Hollywood Reporter listed MTSU’s music business program among its Top 25 Music Schools for both 2014 and 2015, ranking it ahead of nearby Belmont University in both years. Almost 20 MTSU alumni or former students and faculty have been nominated for Grammy Awards in the last five years. Eight have won Grammys so far, including some repeat recipients, in categories from classical to gospel to bluegrass.
Healthy Ranking
NurseJournal.org, a social community website providing education resources for nurses and health care professionals, recently ranked the best nursing schools in each region of the United States. A total of 1,189 schools were measured according to 20 metrics in five categories: quality, affordability, convenience, satisfaction, and value. MTSU ranked 15th overall in the eastern region. Nearby Vanderbilt University was listed at 389th, while the University of Tennessee–Knoxville ranked 401st.

Cementing a Reputation
MTSU’s Concrete Industry Management (CIM) Department, the first of its kind, enjoys an international reputation that keeps its grads in the mix. The concrete industry helped fashion the program at MTSU nearly two decades ago. From cutting-edge research to almost guaranteeing student success and job placement, the CIM program represents one of the University’s biggest success stories. The department served as the template for all other similar university programs that exist nationwide.
Reaffirming its Roots

Founded in 1911 as a teacher training school, MTSU continues to be one of the finest teacher-preparation institutions in the Southeast. The College of Education’s newest doctoral program, the first of its kind in Tennessee, is the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Assessment, Learning, and School Improvement.

Moon Shot

The MTSU Experimental Vehicles lunar rover team in May 2015 regained its status as best in the nation during the NASA Human Exploration Rover Challenge at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama. The student-built rover, nicknamed “The Beast,” placed third overall behind Russia and runner-up Germany.

Not So Run of the Mill

MTSU’s exercise science experts have worked wonders with people who suffer from incomplete spinal cord injuries. The National Institutes of Health provided in late summer 2014 a $388,894 grant to perform a comprehensive study that could change how health professions treat these patients, who retain some sensation or motor function at the lowest segment of the spinal cord. Since the time of the gift, University scientists have been studying the impact of underwater treadmill training on the lives of partially paralyzed individuals. The study is unusual for a university not connected to a medical college or teaching hospital.
The Sky’s the Limit
MTSU students who earn bachelor’s degrees in the Department of Aerospace’s new Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Operations concentration will be a part of a growing business sector expected to produce 70,000 new jobs, starting salaries of $50,000 or more, and $13.6 billion for the U.S. economy in the next three to five years. MTSU is one of just five colleges or universities in the U.S. to offer UAS studies leading to a degree.
Hands-on Learning

The most important mission we have as an institution is providing our students with the educational tools and practical experiences required to enter and succeed in the workforce.

Experiential learning (EXL) gives students practical experience in real-world environments related to their fields of study. The idea is to engage students directly in public service and offer them experience beyond textbooks and lectures. That equates to student success. At MTSU, more than 200 courses are now approved as EXL courses University-wide. The six-year graduation rate for students taking EXL courses is 86 percent—well above average. Examples abound.

Ready for Liftoff
An Undergraduate Research Experience and Creative Activity (URECA) grant that funded testing of unmanned aircraft systems led a group of MTSU Aerospace and Agribusiness/Agriscience students to Mendoza, Argentina, in December 2014. Led by faculty members Dr. Tony Johnson (agriculture) and Doug Campbell (aerospace), the student group used data they gathered from the trip to help with that South American country’s grape and olive production for wine and oil.

MTSU’s Aerospace Department, considered one of the nation’s finest, recently unveiled a new program in Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) operations, one of five such programs currently in the nation. MTSU also forged the first-ever educational partnership with the U.S. Army’s UAS Program Office in 2011.
New Media
Students from MTSU’s newly rebranded College of Media and Entertainment worked at the internationally acclaimed Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival in nearby Manchester in summer under the third year of MTSU’s partnership with festival organizers. Using MTSU’s $1.7 million mobile production studio, students captured video performances on the festival’s Who Stage. Other students filed stories and videos for area news media outlets. The college is preparing a new generation of students for opportunities in an ever-changing media environment, building on its strengths of teaching and research with an infusion of innovation and hands-on experiences.
A Proper Burial
Enslaved workers whose eternal slumber was to be disrupted by modern commercial development now have new resting places because of what Dr. Shannon Hodge, expert bio-archaeologist and MTSU associate professor of Anthropology, and her crew of students accomplished. The bodies of nine adults and 11 children were reinterred in the fall of 2014 on the site of the Grassmere Historic Farm at the Nashville Zoo in preparation for the construction of an entrance kiosk near the original burial grounds. Students were involved in every aspect of the process, including excavating, washing, inventorying, and DNA testing. JoBeth Sorensen, who has since graduated, helped with the inventory. “Being able to give people that were mistreated in the past a restful place to lay and to show the truth of their history to the living was astounding,” Sorensen said. “It brings tears to my eyes every time I think of the project.”

A Legend’s Legacy
Nancy Jones, the widow of country music icon George Jones, established a scholarship fund at MTSU in November 2013 as a living memorial to the late singer. MTSU’s Recording Industry Department is also working to preserve and promote Jones’s legacy through coursework, exhibits, and special projects. That includes a partnership forged between MTSU Songwriting concentration director Odie Blackmon, a hit country music songwriter himself, and Nashville record label New West Records on a new George Jones tribute album. The project will also serve as a teaching tool for accounting and music business classes.

Double Dip
MTSU’s Wind Ensemble continues to stand alone among Tennessee university bands with the summer 2014 release of its second CD, Earthrise, a collaboration with three international composers on
Naxos, one of the world’s most prestigious classical labels. Reed Thomas, director of bands and a professor of music and conducting in the School of Music, says MTSU is the only school in Tennessee that has even one CD with Naxos, let alone two. Thomas conducted the Wind Ensemble for *Earthrise* as well as its 2011 release, *Angels in the Architecture*.

**All the World’s a Stage**

MTSU Arts ended 2015 with its inaugural *Joys of the Season* holiday program, featuring performances by faculty and students from the Department of Art, School of Music, and Department of Theatre and Dance. It’s but one example of the experiential opportunities MTSU students get through MTSU Arts, which annually features a variety of great shows, exhibits, and performances. For instance, in April 2016, MTSU Theatre presented *West Side Story*. In 2013, MTSU Arts, the School of Music, and the Department of Speech and Theatre brought the award-winning *Les Misérables* to the stage.

**Concert Prep**

MTSU Electronic Media Communication students provided extensive technical support—and eye-catching entertainment for fans—at the first large music concert inside Murphy Center since 2013. A dozen students from instructor Mike Forbes’ Video Technology class added to their professional expertise as they set up a massive 30-foot-wide LED video wall in Hale Arena for use during the free Homecoming 2015 concert featuring the Swedish duo Icona Pop, singers of the hit song “I Love It.” VER Nashville, a leading national provider of video wall installations for the concert industry, loaned MTSU the large video wall components, with a stated purpose of helping to train a greater workforce pool for them to hire eventually.
STEPPING UP

MTSU is continuing to evolve into a powerhouse in graduate education and a burgeoning research institution with the promise of significant results now and in the near future.

At the Spring 2016 commencement, in a first-ever special graduation ceremony for graduate students, 349 students were presented with graduate degrees, including 316 master’s candidates, 16 education-specialist degree recipients, and 17 doctoral candidates. Four graduate students also received graduate certificates. Paired with that, we also witnessed an increase in the number of students accepted into graduate programs for Spring 2016.

The College of Graduate Studies has experienced numerous significant successes in the past year. Here are just a few highlighted examples.

• The Information Systems program maintains a near-perfect level of placement in the professional areas of data, health care management, insurance, and financial services.

• Our three new, interdisciplinary doctoral science programs (Mathematics and Science Education, Computational Sciences, and Molecular Biosciences) successfully completed their external reviews with favorable comments.

• MTSU faculty and students produced more than 150 publications in 2015, were awarded several external grant applications, and delivered a considerably larger number of presentations at a wide range of regional, national, and international conferences.

• Several students received awards or were featured presenters, including ones in the Mathematics and Science Education doctoral program (Cicely Woodard, featured speaker at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation U.S. Education Learning Forum) and Actuarial Sciences master’s program (Kim Page, honorable mention at the 50th Actuarial Research Conference held in Toronto).

John “Robert” Michael, a graduate of the Computational Sciences Ph.D. program, now works at St. Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital as a computing specialist.
Research for Answers
On the research side, as elucidated numerous times throughout this report, MTSU is a thriving, innovative research community composed of undergraduate and graduate scholars supported by faculty experts in a variety of disciplines.

MTSU has distinguished itself among Tennessee colleges and universities for the high-level research opportunities it provides its undergraduate students in particular.

MTSU's many research centers support investigation and new discoveries in areas such as forensics, historic preservation, STEM education, botanical medicine, and exercise science, just to name a few.

MTSU's leadership in research and its work in transforming students into scholars support our goal of establishing MTSU as the emerging leader in research and graduate education in Tennessee.

The following is an exemplary though not exhaustive list of just a handful of our new degree programs, undergraduate and graduate, launched during the review period.

- Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Mechatronics Engineering
- Concentration in Unmanned Aircraft Systems for a B.S. in Aerospace
- B.S. in Theatre
- Minor in Humanities
- Minor in Italian
- Concentration in Japanese for a B.A. or B.S. in Foreign Language
- Minor in Somatic Movement Education
- Concentration in Human Resources Leadership for the Master of Professional Studies (M.P.S.)
- B.S. in Global Studies and Cultural Geography
- Master of Science (M.S.) in Finance
- Master of Arts (M.A.) in Liberal Arts
- A revised Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.) with new concentrations in Music Business and Health Care Management
- Health Care Informatics concentration for the M.S. in Professional Science
- Agricultural Education Leadership concentration for the Master of Education (M.Ed.) in Administration and Supervision
- Master of Library Science (M.L.S.)
GOOD PARTNERS

Developing new partnerships with government and private-sector entities demonstrates MTSU’s ability to be responsive to the economic and educational needs of our state, further enhancing our value as a major contributor to Tennessee’s growing economy.

University partnerships and public-service initiatives also support our educational efforts and provide students with the breadth and relevance of experience needed to be successful both in college and eventually in the professional workplace. At MTSU, the concept of student success extends beyond their graduation and into their professional lives. Here are a few examples.

Water Work
The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and MTSU announced a partnership in April 2015 to expand opportunities for earning course credit and certifications in a variety of water areas. Having qualified candidates for these jobs is essential for protecting public health and the environment. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the water supply and sanitation sector is expected to experience an employment growth rate of 45 percent in coming years due to regulations, infrastructure growth, security, and customer demands. Mike Krause, director of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, and former head of Gov. Haslam’s initiative to have 55 percent of Tennesseans equipped with a college degree or certificate by 2025, described this specific collaborative effort as a perfect example of the type of innovation that Tennessee needs in order to meet the Drive to 55.

Strengthening our Skills
Jones College, which is among the largest businesses schools in America, forged an exclusive arrangement in the fall of 2014 with Dale Carnegie Training of Tennessee—the most recognizable worldwide in professional development training—to certify college faculty as Dale Carnegie instructors. Eventually, all majors in the college will be required to complete the Dale Carnegie course as part of their degree programs. This arrangement will not be duplicated at any other university in the state.
MTSU’s research collaboration with a Chinese botanical garden has great potential to yield significant dividends for Tennessee’s economy—and cure some of the world’s worst illnesses at the same time. In concert with the Guangxi Botanical Garden of Medicinal Plants in Nanning, China, MTSU has gained exclusive access to a library of traditional Chinese medicinal extracts, creating the opportunity to develop new Western medicines based on proven healing powers.

The partnership also represents a perfect marriage of institutions with different strengths. GBGMP has identified and grown 7,500 plants or herbs with the potential to treat a variety of diseases. The extracts that have been prepared represent a library of 50,000 to 250,000 individual compounds. MTSU, meanwhile, is expert in screening extracts to identify those that show promise for the treatment of cancer, AIDS, or other important diseases.

An analysis of 52 plant extracts identified 29 with promising results, including 12 with anti-cancer potential. An analysis of 52 plant extracts identified 29 with promising results, including 12 with anti-cancer potential, eight with indications of anti-inflammatory properties, and one that may be useful to treat diabetes.

The Tennessee Center for Botanical Medicine Research is led by Dr. Elliot Altman and Dr. Iris Gao, a native of China who joined MTSU’s faculty in 2011, and who was key to the Center’s launch due to her expertise in drug discovery, relationships with the top Chinese research institutes, and command of English. The Chinese scientist (pictured) serves as a key liaison between the Tennessee institution and the Guangxi Botanical Garden.

Foraging for ginseng root with Dr. Iris Gao during a visit to Cocke County in East Tennessee. Ginseng, one of the first herbs from traditional Chinese medicine to be widely used, is now growing on University property.
GLOBAL REACH

As shown by the partnership with Gaungxi botanical garden, MTSU has strengthened its international initiatives both on campus and around the world. Those efforts boost student success through creating opportunities for travel, exposure to culture, and research opportunities.

Highlighting our international efforts in the past few years was the opening in March 2016 of the first and only center of its kind in North America, the Center for Chinese Music and Culture, in the new Andrew Woodfin Miller Sr. Education Center.

The 3,200-square-foot center was made possible through an initial $1 million grant from Hanban Confucius Institute in Beijing, an organization sponsored by China’s education ministry that oversees more than 440 institutes in 120 countries. The center perfectly complements MTSU’s own Confucius Institute.

The center will not only promote Chinese music and culture, but also language, business, and trade. At the opening of the center, state Sen. Bill Ketron read a letter from Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam, who traveled to China with Commissioner of Economic Development Randy Boyd this year to promote business opportunities from the state’s new development office there. “Facilities like this can play a tremendous role in building bridges between different and diverse cultures, fostering greater understanding, and spotlighting mutual opportunities for educational and economic growth,” Haslam wrote.
Visitors to the center will see a library, an archive, classrooms, and a musical instrument gallery. The center will establish regular public visits by local and regional public schools and other interested organizations, while also taking Chinese music education to various middle Tennessee schools. It will also collaborate with the School of Music, College of Liberal Arts, and College of Media and Entertainment, among others.
From an institutional perspective, our international presence has been nothing short of amazing, and included the following exemplary but not exhaustive list of visits and agreements:

- **China**—Additional efforts related to China included several trips abroad and new partnerships, including:
  - Launching a student-exchange program in summer 2014 with Communication University of China, that nation’s top-ranked institution for journalism, communication, film, and television.
  - Adding an international partner to our Mechatronics Engineering program by signing a memorandum of understanding in summer 2014 with Shanghai Polytechnic University, a top Chinese engineering school.
  - Hosting China’s vice minister of education, Madam Xu Lin, as a Fall 2014 commencement speaker.
  - MTSU further strengthened its relationship with Hangzhou Normal University, already partners in the operation of a Confucius Institute on the Murfreesboro campus, including sending Hangzhou graduate students to MTSU to work at the new Center for Chinese Music and Culture and attend master’s-level classes. HNU has committed more than 50 different Chinese music instruments for use and display at the center, and HNU faculty members will regularly visit Murfreesboro to perform in Chinese music ensembles organized by the center. MTSU established four full scholarships for HNU students to study at MTSU. And a true exchange program was established with HNU’s Alibaba Business College and MTSU’s Jennings A. Jones College of Business allowing students and faculty...
in business and computer sciences from both institutions to travel to each other’s campuses.

- Opening negotiations in summer 2016 with Jiangsu Aviation Technical College, which hopes to link with MTSU for expertise in air traffic control and aircraft maintenance education.

- Our research using traditional Chinese herbal remedies in modern medicine took center stage on May 16, 2016, at an international conference in China. I was among the keynote speakers at the opening session of the 16th International Congress on Ethnopharmacology in Yulin, which attracted academicians from 35 countries. Also making presentations were the MTSU faculty members who run the university’s Tennessee Center for Botanical Medicine Research, Dr. Iris Gao and Dr. Elliot Altman.

- Hosting more than 30 Chinese schoolchildren in Murfreesboro in summer 2015 as part of a reciprocal educational and cultural exchange facilitated by MTSU’s Confucius Institute. The visitors from Dongcheng Education Group of Hangzhou Normal University enjoyed many activities, and teachers and administrators from both countries also met to exchange ideas and swap classroom experiences. In summer 2014 and 2016, Rutherford County schoolchildren, parents, and teachers traveled to cities in China as part of this ongoing cultural and educational exchange between the two countries.
With Alejandro Paul Pletickosich Picon, director at Universidad Andina Del Cusco, while touring the Inca Empire ruins at Machu Picchu near Cusco, Peru.

Ye Gaoxiang, president of Zhejiang University, surprises me by wearing a tie with MTSU logos to a May 2016 ceremony.

MTSU signed a new agreement in summer 2016 with Zhejiang University of Science and Technology and with ZUST President Ye Gaoxiang to begin discussions about student exchanges, joint faculty research, and degree programs to help boost international enrollment on the Murfreesboro campus.

Guangxi University President Zhao Yanlin in 2016 agreed to send 260 students to study at MTSU, almost doubling the goal set when the ambitious program launched in 2014. The program allows selected Guangxi seniors to come to the Murfreesboro campus for two years to finish their undergraduate studies and earn a master’s degree. The academic partners had set a goal of 140 students. MTSU’s Jennings A. Jones College of Business has played a pivotal role in the partnership, with most of the Guangxi students pursuing degrees in Finance and Business Administration.

- Peru—MTSU forged an exchange agreement with the Universidad Andina Del Cusco, a private university in Peru in April 2015. The agreement represents MTSU’s 39th international partnership in 18 countries. UAC, which enrolls about 15,000 students, has a similar agreement in place with Harvard University.
In 2015 alone, 367 students traveled to 65 countries as a result of partnerships with fellow universities in Bangladesh, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Mongolia, Nigeria, the Philippines, Scotland, South Korea, Thailand, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Combined with our extensive education abroad efforts, this really makes MTSU stand out as a player on the national and international stages.

- **Bahamas**—Blue Raiders basketball coach Kermit Davis and I met with Perry G. Christie, the prime minister of the Bahamas, during the Blue Raider basketball squad’s summer 2015 visit to the island paradise (my native home) to play in three preseason exhibition games at the Commonwealth’s national gymnasium. Prime Minister Christie praised MTSU’s recent accolades for its Quest for Student Success initiative.

**From Here to Anywhere**

In addition to seeking and signing research collaborations with international partners like the one with Guangxi botanical gardens, the University has also increased its international undergraduate and graduate student enrollment, expanded its study abroad opportunities, and developed faculty and student exchanges.
FIRST-CLASS SPACES

From around the globe, all the way back to the campus of MTSU, our collective focus on student success is evident everywhere.

For instance, the very presence of MTSU’s new $65 million, nearly 211,000-square-foot Student Union, which opened in 2013 and is dedicated entirely to student activities, speaks volumes about MTSU’s student-centered focus. So too does the opening of a $16 million Student Services and Admissions Center and MT One Stop help center (both connected by a walking bridge to the Student Union in summer 2014). Everything a student needs regarding financial aid, scholarships, records and scheduling, bills, transcripts, and more, is now located in one place.

A Closer Look

The following are just a few more examples of recent facilities development and upgrades at MTSU that have created a perfect setting and atmosphere for student success. All facility planning at MTSU keeps students and student success top of mind.

The October 2014 opening of our new $147 million, 250,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art Science Building has had a tremendous impact on our delivery of science education and growing research efforts. MTSU’s two older science buildings, Wiser-Patten Science Hall and Davis Science Building, are currently receiving around $20 million in renovations that will bring their lives back to usefulness.
The purchase and ongoing renovation of Murfreesboro’s former hospital on Bell Street will enhance MTSU’s ongoing adult learner efforts, as well as the accounting program and Chinese cultural programs.

Our new, $5.8 million Adams Indoor Tennis Complex, an eight-court facility built as a partnership between the city of Murfreesboro, MTSU, and the nonprofit Christy-Houston Foundation, greatly enhances the Blue Raider tennis program, while also expanding playing and tournament opportunities for area residents.

The Aerospace Department’s expanded Flight Simulator Building at the Murfreesboro airport included construction of a new classroom, flight briefing rooms, and new and existing flight simulators.

Murphy Center underwent extensive renovations to its restrooms, lighting, and acoustics, and has a new roof and HVAC replacement equipment—a $12.64 million project.

MTSU added almost 1,000 new student parking spaces (including two new parking garages valued at $23.5 million) and upgraded our transportation system with designated shuttle bus lanes and traffic calming roundabouts. Construction of our True Blue Pedestrian Bridge connects our new $65 million Student Union building with our new $16 million Student Services building.

In all, MTSU has enjoyed $700 million in capital improvements in just the last 10 years of my presidential tenure alone.

See more of MTSU’s capital improvements in the Centennial Campaign section on pages 60–61.
The New Science Building

OUR NEW CATALYST

I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to expand on the October 2014 opening of our new $147 million, state-of-the-art Science Building, which has already had a tremendous impact on our delivery of science education, our growing research efforts, and our rising success in recruiting both great faculty and the top science students from across the Southeast to MTSU.

The new building is the biggest improvement ever for science education and research at MTSU, with more than 250,000 square feet of teaching, faculty, and student research laboratories, and collaborative learning spaces for the more than 13,000 students who enroll annually in biology, chemistry, and other science courses. This building is already helping MTSU create additional science graduates to fill high-technology jobs, prepare more teachers for math and science in K–12 schools, and enhance the economy of our region and state. It has made MTSU more competitive for research projects, science scholarship, and entrepreneurial efforts.

This building is already helping MTSU create additional science graduates to fill high-technology jobs.

We appreciate the efforts by the executive and legislative branches of Tennessee’s state government that led to the funding of the Science Building construction in the 2012 state budget. Specifically, our thanks go to Gov. Haslam, former TBR Chancellor John Morgan, Lt. Gov. Ron Ramsey, House Speaker Beth Harwell, and the entire Tennessee General Assembly, particularly our Rutherford County delegation at the time of approval—including state senators Bill Ketron and Jim Tracy, and state representatives Pat Marsh, Mike Sparks, Rick Womack, and Joe Carr (former). We also thank former Murfreesboro mayor Tommy Bragg and current Rutherford County mayor Ernest Burgess for their strong support of this effort.
MTSU’s two older science buildings, Wiser-Patten Science Hall and Davis Science Building, will still be put to good use, and they are currently receiving significant renovations that will bring them back to usefulness. Renovation schedules call for the buildings to reopen in 2016. About $20 million will be spent to get the job done.

Once final renovations of the old science buildings are completed, MTSU will boast the equivalent of a “science campus” or a three-building research triangle, which will be unmatched across the state.

MTSU’s improved science facilities serve as the portal through which MTSU has entered a new realm of science and research activity—and will compete for the rewards—for the first time in decades. It’s time to get to work. There’s a lot of science to be done!
Fundraising

FEEDING THE QUEST

MTSU’s most ambitious quest for philanthropy in its history recently concluded with the announcement that the University had raised more than $105 million to enhance student success.

The Centennial Campaign has had a transformative effect on programs and students across campus. Our original goal for the campaign, announced in 2012, was $80 million. The $105,465,308 raised during the campaign, which concluded on Dec. 31, 2016, far surpassed that figure.

We launched the campaign in the middle of one of our nation’s biggest economic downturns and set a goal that many thought we could never reach under the best of circumstances. The fact that we met—and exceeded—our goal speaks to the commitment of the campaign’s volunteer leadership, the passion of our alumni, and the vision we set forward for the future of our great University.

Gov. Bill Haslam praised the University for the achievement, noting that “the momentum from this campaign will guarantee the continued growth and success for MTSU. It will help assure that MTSU will continue to prosper as a nationally acclaimed, comprehensive university.”

Haslam also lauded MTSU’s “leadership in student success initiatives, adult degree completion, creative partnerships, and outreach to veterans and military families” for helping in the Drive to 55, the state’s initiative to increase the percentage of Tennesseans with postsecondary credentials.

The Centennial Campaign was launched on Jan. 1, 2009, as MTSU prepared to mark the 100th anniversary of its 1911 founding. More than $54 million was raised during a three-year “quiet phase” of the campaign, which alone set a University record.

This campaign was about creating a vision for our University's second century and giving our friends and supporters opportunities to help bring that vision to life.

(continued on page 60)
INSIDE THE NUMBERS

A total of 23,277 alumni, friends, corporations, and foundations contributed to the success of the Centennial Campaign. In all, 364 gifts greater than $25,000 were received for a total of more than $53 million. The bulk of the gifts funded the campaign’s four priorities.

Scholarships: $27 Million
Maintaining our desired position as the institution of choice in Tennessee requires the University to remain competitive in recruiting future generations of student scholars.

- 33 new endowed scholarship funds were created totaling more than $13 million.
- 209 non-endowed scholarship funds were established totaling more than $14 million.

Faculty Enhancement and Support: $15 Million
To ensure that our students continue to have opportunities to be guided by some of the nation’s leading faculty, MTSU seeks to establish a cadre of endowed chairs and professorships.

- One new Chair of Excellence
- Two new endowed faculty chairs
- Numerous college and departmental faculty awards

Academic Program Enhancements: $19 Million
MTSU has remained committed to the education of our students, providing each and every student with access to the finest facilities, the most modern equipment, and the most innovative academic programs.

- $10 million to establish the Andrew Miller Education Center
- $6.75 million in support of the new Science Building
- More than $2.5 million in new technology and equipment

Blue Raider Athletics: $25 Million
The Blue Raider Athletics program is committed to providing the highest level of performance—on the field and in the classroom—uniting our community and promoting a sense of pride. We can only compete at the highest levels athletically by matching up against top-notch competition, improving facilities, and focusing on academic success.

- Renovated weight room and construction of the Shipp Women’s Basketball Office
- New endowed scholarships for student-athletes in football and men’s and women’s basketball

$105,465,308
MTSU went public with the campaign on April 13, 2012, declaring a goal of $80 million and unveiling a $10 million gift by alumnus Andrew Woodfin “Woody” Miller of Nashville. Miller’s gift allowed MTSU to purchase the property once occupied by then-Middle Tennessee Medical Center just west of the campus on Bell Street.

Many of MTSU’s most transformational gifts came about during the campaign’s four-year public phase, including the $7 million in private-donor support necessary to augment public funds for the $147 million, state-of-the-art Science Building that opened in October 2014.

Other successes of the Centennial Campaign include more than $27 million in new scholarship funds; a $2.5 million gift by alumnus Joey Jacobs, matched by the state of Tennessee, creating an endowed Chair of Excellence in Accounting—the first new chair of excellence in Tennessee in more than 15 years; and the establishment of $28 million in planned estate gifts to provide support for many years to come.

Centennial Campaign projects in MT Athletics included the Jeff Hendrix Stadium Club that opened in 2012 and the Adams Tennis Complex that MTSU opened in 2015, built in partnership with the city of Murfreesboro and the Christy Houston Foundation.
Campaign chair and MTSU alumna Pamela Wright, founder of Nashville-based Wright Travel and a significant donor to the campaign, said she was proud to be a part of such a transformative effort for her alma mater.

“We began this campaign as an opportunity to think about—and do something about—the future of Middle Tennessee State University,” Wright said. “Those who stepped forward in this effort have set our course for MTSU’s second century.”

Other executive committee members included Joey Jacobs, CEO of Franklin-based Acadia Healthcare; Nashville-based Zycron Inc. founder Darrell Freeman; Rutherford County Mayor Ernest Burgess; MTSU Foundation member Don Witherspoon; and Stephen B. Smith of Nashville-based Haury & Smith Contractors, Inc.

Vice President for University Advancement Joe Bales, who steered the campaign and who deserves great praise for its success, said the campaign exceeded its goal because of the work by Wright, her executive committee, and other MTSU advocates.

“This record-setting, history-making effort was a success because of the passion and commitment of our volunteer leadership,” Bales said.
Every college and university says that student success is its No. 1 priority. Not every institution, though, lives up to that claim. In addition to the many student success initiatives that have already been highlighted in this report, the following is a roundup of other more granular ways that MTSU is putting its money where its mouth is regarding retention and graduation.

**Graduate in Four and Get More**

MTSU now offers a bold new financial aid package to encourage students to graduate in four years. The Graduate in Four and Get More program, launched in September 2014, promises to supplement by $1,000 the Hope Lottery Scholarships of incoming students who stay on track to graduate in four years and to award a Finish Line Scholarship to graduating seniors that will return any tuition increases over that span.

**Student Success Advantage**

In addition to housing the Graduate in Four and Get More program, the Student Success Advantage plan provides the $1,000 supplement to the Hope scholarship for the first two years—making up for a recent state reduction in that program for freshmen and sophomores. The Student Success Advantage also scales back minimum ACT scores required to qualify for five major scholarships guaranteed to eligible students. And the University’s Transfer Academic Scholarships are now guaranteed for students from all Tennessee community colleges. The University offered 115 more freshman scholarships for the 2016–17 school year than in the previous year.
Ongoing Student Success Efforts

Expanded Scholars Academy
The Scholars Academy was developed several years ago to attract and acclimate qualified low-income, Pell-eligible students to the University and equip them for success. Originally, the program enrolled a small group of students (32 or fewer) and gave them an opportunity to earn 6 credit hours, learn success strategies, get used to college life, and develop a network of peers. By summer 2014, the number of participants had jumped to a total of 114. These students continue to meet with student-success staff to strengthen their academic and social connections and participate in workshops on topics like note-taking techniques, how to study for exams, and financial literacy.

Grants
Many MTSU students are first-generation college students who juggle academic and work demands in pursuit of a degree. For many, a relatively small financial barrier—say, an emergency room visit or unexpected car repair—can delay their studies and their progress toward a degree. Students who find themselves in a financial pinch can now apply for one-time emergency micro-grants (created in 2014 and distributed in 2015–16) aimed at keeping them in school and on track to earning a degree. These smaller sums can help with verified needs such as tuition, fees, books, housing, and transportation. Grants up to $250 are available and do not have to be repaid. To be eligible, students must be in good academic standing.
New-Student Orientation
CUSTOMS is MTSU’s new-student orientation program. It helps new undergraduates feel comfortable at the University, prepares them for MTSU’s educational opportunities, and starts their integration into the intellectual, cultural, and social environment of the institution. During CUSTOMS, students are shown how MTSU works hard to develop a community devoted to learning, growth, and service.

Office of Student Success
Not long ago, I appointed a new administrator at MTSU whose sole purpose is to improve student success. Dr. Rick Sluder is MTSU’s new vice provost for student success. He was previously vice provost for recruitment and outreach at the University of Central Missouri, where he helped increase enrollment and led an initiative to improve student retention and graduation. Sluder has one mission at MTSU: ensuring student success.

Long-Distance Learning
Distance learners comprise more than one-third of MTSU’s undergraduate population. Distance learners have access to the same core faculty that traditional students have in on-campus classroom settings.
Midterm Grades
MTSU’s midterm grading initiative ensures that students know where they stand academically when they most need to know it and can receive appropriate updates and feedback from their professors. The full participation of faculty members in this initiative shows how committed they are to the overall success of their students. The University’s academic alert system (announced in 2013 and in full implementation throughout 2015–16) also allows faculty to send electronic messages to students and their academic advisors about their progress at any time. Faculty members at MTSU believe their job is not only to teach students but also to help them succeed and graduate.

Alternative Degree Options
Many students change majors during their college careers (sometimes more than once), or they are faced with candidacy issues and are forced to make changes. Often, credit hours earned in one major can’t be applied to others, and students can lose time and money. In Fall 2013, the Bachelor of Science in Integrated Studies (formerly Bachelor of University Studies) launched with the goal of providing a valuable option to make use of these potentially lost hours.

Career Development
While great emphasis has been placed on increasing graduation and retention, MTSU has also given careful consideration to ways it can ensure that students graduate with the skills to get a job and a realistic understanding of the job market. MTSU’s University College, in particular, has distinguished itself with programs to help each incoming student identify an appropriate major and chart a path to a career.

Connection Point
Studies show that students who are involved in campus life tend to perform better academically and are more likely to graduate than those who don’t. Connection Point is a program that connects students to the University through extracurricular activities with the goal of improving retention and graduation.

An MTSU student participating in an extracurricular Connection Point activity.
Ongoing Student Success Efforts

Second-Year Experience
The freshman-year experience gets lots of attention, but research indicates that many second-year students feel a sense of abandonment, which can cause them to leave school. Increasing student involvement in campus life and academic programs during the sophomore year is a key issue MTSU addressed with the launch of a new program in spring 2015 offering second-year students more academic guidance and extracurricular opportunities.

Tutoring
At every step of the academic journey, students discover that tutoring helps understanding, recollection, and application of what is presented in class. Tutoring opportunities can be found all over campus, and an ambitious new tutoring space in Walker Library is available. Online students can take advantage of tutoring support 24 hours a day! Free tutoring was offered for more than 180 classes in Fall 2015 and provided for more than 250 classes in Spring 2016.

University College Offerings
MTSU is the only college or university in Tennessee designated an Adult Learning Focused Institution by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. Officially, half of MTSU students are classified as adults. MTSU operates the most successful summer school program in America. In terms of participation, no other U.S. university comes close. Data strongly suggest that students who attend summer school (including those still in high school or attending another college in fall and spring) graduate at a higher rate.

Focusing On Undeclared/Undecided Students
Academic advisors often meet students who begin college without a clear direction. Without the right support system in place, indecision can negatively affect commitment to academic and career goals and be a strong hindrance to graduation. At MTSU, these students now get extra advising support, in part due to the aforementioned hiring of 47 new advisors in the last two years.

Expanding Regional Scholars
In September 2015, MTSU unveiled a Regional Scholars Program that will provide incentives for select out-of-state potential freshmen who live within 250 miles of our Murfreesboro campus. The program, which will reduce MTSU’s out-of-state tuition by 48 percent, will be offered to students with an ACT composite of 25 and above. The University is also a member of the Academic Common Market, which allows residents of participating states to qualify for in-state tuition for unique academic majors not offered in their home states.
Increasing Our Yield

As you might imagine after reading about all of these wonderful student-centered objectives, I’m quite proud of the progress we have made with student success as our guiding principle. It’s critical, though, that we not rest on our laurels. There remains much to be done. I am very fortunate and thankful that MTSU faculty and staff are on board, excited by results, and ready for more improvement.

Our positive momentum has carried into the 2015–16 academic year. As I mentioned earlier in the report, even in light of the Tennessee Promise attracting many would-be first-time MTSU freshmen to enroll, instead, at community colleges statewide, enrollment at MTSU held steady, with gains reported in undergraduate students, new transfers, and dual enrollment programs with area high schools. My thanks especially extend to my wonderful academic and student affairs staff for their incredible hard work to personally ensure MTSU’s enrollment numbers remained steady. Here are the facts:

- The University was up about one percent in new undergraduates.
- MTSU’s 10.4 percent gain in new transfers in fall 2015 offset our loss of first-time freshmen over last year.
- The University posted a 1,008-percent increase in dual enrollment students, from 37 students last year to 410, this year by reaching out to high-ability students at area high schools.

THE ROAD AHEAD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2015–16 ENROLLMENT INCREASES</th>
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<tr>
<td>New Undergraduates</td>
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<tr>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Transfer Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Dual Enrollment Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,008%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

67
Increasing Our Yield

• While MTSU’s overall headcount dipped slightly from last year by 218 students to 22,511, the institution remains the largest in the current Tennessee Board of Regents system.

• International enrollment (evidenced by the aforementioned pacts in Peru, the Bahamas, and China) saw a 6.6 percent increase in new enrollment this year, with 209 arrivals compared to 196 last year.

• MTSU was up 7.2 percent in total new graduate students over last year (571 students compared to 532). Overall graduate enrollment, however, dipped 3.8 percent to 2,371 this year.

Looking forward, in addition to the many student success efforts that are already in operation, there are a number of new activities we are launching that are intended to help all of these new students, transfer students, dual enrollment students, and graduate students achieve success, as well. Here are a few of those plans.

• A total of 28 Raider Learning Communities were offered in Fall 2015. Students in RLCs attend paired courses where instructors create collaborative learning experiences not only to magnify student learning but also allow them to build personal and professional networks.

• We initiated a new program called REBOUND in January 2015, which provides academic support and assistance to freshmen whose GPA falls below 2.0 at the end of the each semester. Historically speaking, only about 20 percent of those students usually return the following year. REBOUND stands for Retake
classes, Engage your purpose, Be intentional about attendance, Own your future, Understand what went wrong, Narrow your activities, and Determine that you are going to succeed.

• Advisors at MTSU, using what’s called the Recapture program, now call all previously enrolled students who have not registered for each upcoming semester to encourage them to stay on track and to help them deal with issues like work responsibilities and family issues that might be hindering them.

• In Fall 2014, the retention rate for first-time freshmen was 70.8 percent—a 2-percent increase over the previous year. Our goal is to increase the retention rate for our first-time freshmen to 80 percent over the next five years.

• Two additional software systems will be helpful tools in our student success efforts. Degree Works, a degree audit system, will enable students and advisors to easily track student progress toward meeting degree requirements. GradesFirst will make communication between advisors and students easier and give staff members the ability to refer students to support programs, including tutoring, and keep track of their progress.

Clearly, the University is committed to the success of every student and has committed considerable resources to making MTSU a success-oriented institution. Every day I urge professors and staff to ask themselves what they can do to make the college experience better, more meaningful, and more effective for our students. Much can be done if we all work together focused on student success.
Our Master Plan

THE REACH TO DISTINCTION

Working together is, in fact, a specialty among the faculty and staff at MTSU. The positive outcomes from such collaboration are evident in the creation and execution of MTSU’s master academic plan.

The University’s last Academic Master Plan, titled Blueprint for Excellence, 2007–2017, established a foundation for academic excellence built on a commitment to academic quality, student-centered learning, and mutually beneficial partnerships and outreach. These efforts resulted in one of the most notable eras in the University’s history, the apex of which was the celebration of MTSU’s Centennial.

The University today stands poised both to continue strengthening its academic core and developing stronger, more purposeful relationships with its public, private, and nonprofit partners via our newly minted academic master plan for the next decade, which is titled The Reach to Distinction 2016–2021.

The Reach to Distinction recommits the University to three goals:

• Enhance academic quality
• Foster student-centered learning
• Leverage resources through partnerships

The master plan also identifies three interrelated strategic directions to focus pursuit of the goals:

• Advance academic quality through excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service and the celebration of MTSU’s strengths
• Promote student success and individual responsibility for accomplishments through a community dedicated to student-centered learning
MTSU embraces its responsibility to educate students and prepare them to build their futures with confidence. Over the course of this new academic master plan, MTSU will cultivate more goodwill from the MTSU community, a highly engaged academic community that shares a clear sense of purpose and a consistent story of quality, student success, and productive partnering relationships and outreach for the common good. The University will achieve greater academic distinction through innovation, a celebration of diversity, and a heightened sense of active engagement that takes advantage of the opportunities that arise and turns challenges into opportunities. In the coming decade, MTSU will both broaden and deepen the footprint of its students and the local and global educational imprint of the institution in the Reach to Distinction.

To read the complete Academic Master Plan, visit mtsu.edu/AMP
The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities named MTSU one of five national finalists for the 2015 Project Degree Completion Award. Such an unwavering focus on student success, I believe, actually results in a University that, in turn, serves its region and humankind, resulting in positive impact.

That outcome is perhaps best expressed in the form of a recent award the University received. MTSU was among just 240 colleges and universities across the country to receive the 2015 Community Engagement Classification from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. MTSU is also among 157 of those institutions reclassified for the designation after having first achieved it in either 2006 or 2008. Selection means MTSU is involved in strong community engagement with a variety of academic disciplines. According to Carnegie documents, the classification identifies campuses that are “improving teaching and learning, producing research that makes a difference in communities, and revitalizing their civic and academic missions.”

From its humble beginnings as a normal school established to train teachers, MTSU is now broadly recognized throughout the state as Tennessee’s Best comprehensive university. As the institution has experienced significant growth and has become a key component of middle Tennessee’s education and economic engine, it has never lost sight of its commitment to students, seeking to provide a supportive learning environment, the finest faculty, and a

FULLY ENGAGED

At a recent graduation ceremony.
learning experience as personal and unique as its graduate and undergraduate student populations. MTSU has emerged as the institution of choice for the region’s top scholars and athletes. The result of those efforts is a campus that has grown in both quantity and, more importantly, quality.

Higher education, though, is facing challenges on many fronts. Some of those that are very specific to Tennessee were outlined at the introduction of this report. The institutions that emerge as the most successful, I believe, will be the ones that embrace the opportunities and creatively look to address the needs of its students regardless of external factors. I believe we have done just that at MTSU, and every day we are making even greater strides toward becoming the national leader in student success.

Grounded in outstanding tradition, MTSU faces a future that has never been brighter. This biennial presidential report is intended to celebrate the exciting advances and achievements that the University’s collective efforts have produced over the past few years. These accomplishments would not have been possible without the incredible faculty and staff in place at MTSU.

As a valued MTSU stakeholder, thank you for taking stock of the accomplishments of the past and the promise of the future at MTSU.

Dr. Sidney A. McPhee, President
### THE DOLLARS AND CENTS

**Unaudited Statement of Revenues, Expenses, and Changes in Net Assets**  
For the Year Ended June 30, 2015, with Comparative Figures for the  
Year Ended June 30, 2014

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<th>2014</th>
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<th>Expenses</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operating Expenses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries and Wages</td>
<td>$157,108,461.40</td>
<td>$159,015,786.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>$50,595,871.67</td>
<td>$55,980,709.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities, Supplies, and Other Services</td>
<td>$80,164,600.98</td>
<td>$77,000,435.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships and Fellowship</td>
<td>$34,128,720.88</td>
<td>$36,087,349.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depreciation Expense</td>
<td>$19,444,805.86</td>
<td>$22,862,779.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Operating Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$341,442,460.79</strong></td>
<td><strong>$350,947,061.69</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Expenses (Continued)

#### 2015 2014

**Total Operating Revenues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net Tuition and Fees</td>
<td>$128,423,342.20</td>
<td>$125,506,525.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Grants and Contracts</td>
<td>$12,416,146.01</td>
<td>$14,536,222.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and Services of Educational/Other Activities</td>
<td>$17,320,945.95</td>
<td>$16,060,911.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Auxiliary Enterprises</td>
<td>$26,093,259.76</td>
<td>$26,099,351.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Operating Revenues</td>
<td>$433,319.39</td>
<td>$747,566.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Operating Revenues</strong></td>
<td>$184,687,013.31</td>
<td>$182,950,576.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other Revenues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Appropriations</td>
<td>$83,799,712.50</td>
<td>$82,001,391.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Appropriations</td>
<td>$10,783,661.95</td>
<td>$49,386,936.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonoperating Grants and Contracts</td>
<td>$74,087,082.00</td>
<td>$75,912,291.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts and Capital Gifts</td>
<td>$7,834,915.37</td>
<td>$4,285,077.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Income–Net of Expense</td>
<td>$826,342.62</td>
<td>$778,381.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Capital Revenues</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenues</strong></td>
<td>$362,018,727.75</td>
<td>$395,314,654.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expenses (Continued)**

#### 2015 2014

**Total Operating Expenses**

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<thead>
<tr>
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</table>

**Other Expenses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interest on Capital Asset-Related Debt</td>
<td>$7,738,603.56</td>
<td>$9,026,879.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Nonoperating and Capital</td>
<td>$269,713.78</td>
<td>$294,438.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td>$349,450,778.13</td>
<td>$360,268,379.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Net Assets

#### 2015 2014

- Net Assets–Beginning of Year: $378,104,821.82
- Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets: $12,567,949.62
- Cumulative Effect of Change in Accounting Principle: $(29,551,852.00)
- Cumulative Effect of Change in Prior Period Adjustment: $5,496,976.43

**Net Assets–End of Year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets–End of Year</td>
<td>$361,120,919.44</td>
<td>$378,104,821.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a member of this diverse community,
I am a valuable contributor to its progress and success.
I am engaged in the life of this community.
I am a recipient and a giver.
I am a listener and a speaker.
I am honest in word and deed.
I am committed to reason, not violence.
I am a learner now and forever.
I am a BLUE RAIDER.
I AM TRUE BLUE