



NEWS & information

FROM THE PRESIDENT

A snowy start to the Spring 2024 semester

A late welcome, thanks to the snow and ice! I look forward to sharing with you our goals and objectives. I want to highlight just a few achievements from this past year and provide information on some of our future plans. I welcome your feedback and comments. Please reach out at sidney.mcphee@mtsu.edu.

Check out The President's Post for updates from me at mtsu.edu/president. You can also follow me on X (formerly Twitter): @PresidentMcPhee.

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MTSU.edu gets a fresh new look

Through a robust partnership between Academic Affairs, ITD, and Marketing and Communications, the MTSU homepage and the majors and concentrations pages for mtsu.edu have successfully transitioned from one content management system to another.



This would not have been possible without the active participation of all our deans, department chairs, school directors, and faculty.

They helped revamp these pages as an essential part of our recruitment and yield strategies.

By adopting WordPress as our new content management system, we now will have much better ability to raise the University's profile via search engine optimization (SEO).

Also, MTSU webpages will load faster, and information will display dynamically across electronic devices.

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MTSU leads state in freshman growth

Freshmen who entered the MTSU community in the Fall 2023 semester numbered 3,088, reflecting more than an 11% increase over the previous fall. This remarkable achievement established MTSU as the leading institution in Tennessee for the percentage growth of the freshman class.

With a goal of matching that success, the Admissions recruitment team hit the road at the start of this school year to visit hundreds of high schools and scores of college fairs. In addition to encouraging students to apply by the Dec. 1 scholarship deadline, the secondary call to action by the recruiters is to get students to visit the campus.

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FOUR THE FUTURE

MTSU joined nine other state universities to launch a campaign to increase public awareness about the value of a four-year college degree from a Tennessee public university.

The Four the Future campaign is a multiyear, coordinated effort that will engage community and business leaders, prospective students, and Tennesseans in all 95 counties.

A bachelor's degree increases the life trajectory of not only those who earn them, but also their families. That is why we are proud to be part of this unprecedented message, delivered loud and clear by our state's leading public universities, of the great value, tremendous worth, and tangible benefits of a four-year college degree.

The Four the Future campaign will include a mix of advertising, digital media, earned media, and community meetings throughout the state.

Among the key messages is that a four-year degree at a public university in Tennessee isn't just good for prospective students—it's good for **all** Tennesseans:

- **Workforce development:** Public universities educate students in areas of need in Tennessee, including nurses, doctors, engineers, educators, and other professionals. (Association of Public and Land-grant Universities)
- **Training:** More than 70% of Tennessee business leaders agree there is an insufficient supply of appropriately trained workers. (Boyd Center)
- **Economic growth:** If the U.S. had increased its bachelor's degree attainment during the 2010s by just 1 percentage point, this would have added \$130.5 billion to the nation's economic growth. (American Action Forum)
- **Investing in all of us:** People with a bachelor's degree contribute \$381,000 more in taxes than they use in

government services and programs. (Association of Public and Land-grant Universities)

Our goal at MTSU is to prepare our students not only for their first jobs, but for careers that might not yet exist. We produce career-ready graduates who also can reflect, analyze, compare, and understand much more and, in doing so, become engaged citizens of our state. We offer unique academic programs that align well with our state's workforce needs.

Among the key messages to prospective students is that graduates of four-year public universities in Tennessee typically earn higher salaries and enjoy better health outcomes:

Wealthier: On an annual basis, median earnings for bachelor's degree holders are \$36,000 (or 84%) higher than those whose highest degree is a high school diploma. (Association of Public and Land-grant Universities) A bachelor's degree recipient is expected to earn \$1.4 million more than a high school graduate over their career. (Boyd Center)

Healthier: Public college graduates enjoy better-paying jobs, with fewer safety hazards, increased ability to accrue material resources, and higher social status. They are more likely to exercise and less likely to report heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, anxiety, and depression. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

Connected: More than any other postsecondary path, college delivers connections—connections to career paths, but also connections to each other. It's about the network you build and the people you meet, not just the degree you earn. Public universities bring people together through campus life, clubs, intramurals, sporting events, volunteer opportunities, and many other connection points.

Economic mobility: All the four-year public universities in Tennessee rank among the top two tiers of the five-tier economic mobility scale for graduates, with the exception of UT Southern, which only joined the UT System two years ago. (Third Way)

Financial aid: Tennessee offers a statewide scholarship program through Tennessee HOPE. Nearly half of Tennessee public university students graduate without debt.

In addition to MTSU, participating schools include:

- Austin Peay State University (Clarksville)
- East Tennessee State University (Johnson City)
- Tennessee State University (Nashville)
- Tennessee Technological University (Cookeville)
- University of Tennessee–Chattanooga
- University of Tennessee Health Science Center (Memphis)
- University of Tennessee (Knoxville)
- University of Tennessee–Martin
- University of Tennessee–Southern (Pulaski)

It was appropriate for MTSU to help lead this awareness campaign, since in so many ways, MTSU is Tennessee’s university, providing life-changing opportunities to a student body that best reflects the diversity of our state’s population.

We are proud to be Greater Nashville’s No. 1 choice for undergraduates, as well a leading choice for adult learners, military-connected students, and first-generation college students. More than 70% of our graduates remain in Tennessee, building our state’s economy and communities.

Four the Future launches amid declining college enrollment throughout the country; however, Tennessee’s college-going rate (54.3%) for the class of ‘22 improved by 1.5% over the previous year, according to Tennessee Higher Education Commission data released in June. Fall 2023 enrollment at Tennessee’s public universities increased 1.8%, THEC announced in September. THEC has set a goal to increase the college-going rate for the high school class of 2023 to at least 60%.

“Nearly half of Tennessee public university students graduate without debt.”



FRESH LOOK FOR MTSU.EDU, CONT.

There are several exciting features of the new majors and concentrations pages that will help keep them fresh:

- When a news release or story is posted about an academic program on [mtsunews.com](https://www.mtsunews.com), those articles will automatically flow into the corresponding majors and concentrations pages.
- Editors within each department or school will be able to directly edit content in the Information and Careers sections and update the top banner image.
- Importantly, the new design allows us to insert banners to promote University-wide endeavors, such as True Blue Preview Days, and program-level messages such as special events.

While the number of people involved in the project is extensive, much deserved special recognition goes to Provost Mark Byrnes, Vice Provost Amy Aldridge Sanford, Matthew Hibdon, Vice President Yvette Clark, Alecia Heidt, Charlie Cantrell, Isaac Callison, Albert Whittenberg, Vice President Andrew Oppmann, Betsy Allgood, David Foster, DeAnn Hays, and Kara Hooper for their dedication, collaboration, and hard work in launching this initiative.

ITD partnered with HelixSEO Inc. staff Jim Pepe and Zaid Helix to achieve the design and implementation of the new site. Over the next few months, the rest of the MTSU website will also be moving to the new WordPress system, and we anticipate seeing significant improvements along the way.

Keep in mind:

- If departments or schools have photography needs for the top banner image or these specialized banners, email photorequest@mtsu.edu to schedule a photographer.
- When there are program-level events or deadlines that need to be promoted via the banners, please reach out to Marketing and Communications (maccs@mtsu.edu) to discuss designing the graphic for this area.
- To submit content update requests for the new majors and concentrations pages, please visit the ITD Service Portal at help.mtsu.edu. Log in with your FSA credentials, then go to Request Something/Website Services/Website Change or Request.

MTSU ONLINE

MTSU Online supports our faculty and serves students through the creation, design, and delivery of effective and engaging online and blended learning environments.

MTSU Online continues to grow. Enrollment in online courses is at an all-time high. Here are some recent highlights:

- **MTSU offers 55 fully online programs, up from 29 online programs in 2020.**
- 52% of MTSU students took at least one online course this fall, which represents 10,493 students.
- 2,720 MTSU students were fully online, which is over 13% of the total student headcount.
- 26% of all MTSU student credit hours in fall 2023 came from online courses.
- 61% of summer credit hours for 2023 came from online courses.

- MTSU Online supports 29 full-time temporary (FTT) instructors in 18 academic departments who focus on high-quality online teaching.
- MTSU Online employs four instructional designers to ensure our students are receiving high-quality instruction.
- MTSU Online offers faculty development, training workshops, and peer mentoring to increase teaching effectiveness.
- MTSU Online courses feature engagement and interaction with faculty, which is proven to increase student retention and degree completion.
- MTSU Online supports key student services such as counseling, tutoring, library services, and writing center tutors.

MTSU  **online**



This approach aligns with our belief that once students set foot on our campus and witness our outstanding facilities and picturesque surroundings, their likelihood of enrollment significantly improves. Therefore, we concentrate our efforts on making sure guests have an excellent experience and see us at our best.

Since August 2023, we've hosted almost 10,000 students and guests on campus tours led by our incredible Blue Elite tour guides. These students represent majors in every college and show prospective students what life at MTSU is like through the eyes of a peer. We offer regularly scheduled tours every weekday and additional group tours for schools and civic organizations. Tours are designed to provide a general overview of campus and the resources available to students.

As a part of the campus tour, prospective students and guests are given an exclusive MTSU T-shirt and campus bag of literature during check-in. An MTSU representative welcomes prospective students and shows a short introductory video before students head off to explore campus with their Blue Elite tour guide. During the tour, prospective students and guests see inside many buildings including academic spaces, the Student Union, and residence halls so they can visualize what their experience may be like as a Blue Raider. The tour ends back at the Student Services and Admissions Center, where tour attendees are encouraged to ask questions and meet with their recruiter and representatives at MT One Stop.

In a strategic extension of our recruitment efforts, MTSU takes its presence beyond our campus, reaching out to communities across Tennessee and select locations in Kentucky, Alabama, and Georgia on our annual True Blue Tour. For this signature program, we take along banners, brochures, University swag, Lightning, and most importantly, advisors, faculty members, and deans. Spanning 14 cities in four states, this year's tour attracted more than 1,000 prospects, up slightly over last year's total.

Tour stops typically include a luncheon for local high school and community college counselors, many of whom are our own alumni thanks to our world-class College of Education. Some counselors who attend have done so for many years, coming back each time to hear about what's new that's happening on campus.

For many years, a highlight at the counselor luncheon was a drawing for MTSU swag or a coveted scholarship for a counselor to award to a deserving student of their choice. High school counselors care deeply about the students in

their care. They know their students well. They know where their abilities lie and where their aspirations can take them, and they also know what needs they may have that are potential barriers to that journey. Much more than any gift we could give them personally, what drew the most excitement and gratitude from them were the scholarships we provided through the years to help their students succeed.

This year, with that knowledge in mind, we took the scholarship award program to a new level, expanding the counselor-to-student scholarship initiative to award \$2,500 in scholarships to every high school and community college sending a representative to a True Blue Tour counselor luncheon! This strategic addition to the tour was planned not only to increase enrolled students in 2024, but also as a longer-term initiative by opening new high schools and communities to MTSU.

And it worked like a charm! Our marketing efforts and invitations drew 543 high school and community college counselors (**63% more than last year's 331**) representing 305 different institutions. That's great news! The additional reach we now have through these newly engaged counselors to spread the message that MTSU is an excellent place to build a future is incalculable.

Of those 305 institutions, 99 are high schools from which MTSU currently does not have a single student enrolled. By awarding these modest scholarships for students handpicked by counselors who really know them and their personal stories, we have significantly increased access for our recruitment staff to dozens of new high schools.

By converting those students to Blue Raiders, then having them receive an exceptional experience and education, we hope they will carry news back to their areas—their high schools, friends, and families—which in turn will lead to future attention and students.

Early results of these fall 2023 recruitment efforts are evidenced in application and admit numbers, which are encouragingly strong. As of Dec. 1, the freshman guaranteed scholarship deadline (a primary indicator of progress toward our enrollment goals), **freshman applications were up 4.1% while freshman admits from that applicant pool were up 10.3% over the same point last year** (above our very good numbers from last year). Transfer applications are up 3.3% over last year, and we have admitted 14.8% more transfer students, with the Feb. 15 transfer guaranteed scholarship deadline approaching.

CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Facilities on a college campus are about more than just growth. They represent expansion. Expansion into areas of study in which MTSU particularly excels. Expansion to solve complex problems that improve the social good. Expansion to develop the cutting edge knowledge needed to supply a skilled regional workforce.

As middle Tennessee grows and expands, so too does MTSU—as the greater Nashville area’s only major comprehensive university. Here are just a few of the latest capital project updates in development.

APPLIED ENGINEERING BUILDING

Currently under construction

Estimated completion: summer 2025

- 89,000-square-foot building to house Engineering Technology and Mechatronics Engineering programs, as well as provide space for future engineering programs
- Total project cost: \$74.8 million, including the building, demolition of Voorhies, infrastructure, site improvements, and surrounding pedestrian and vehicular circulation
- Will serve as a companion piece to the recently opened School of Concrete and Construction Management Building, sharing a common working yard to be used for student projects
- Project designer: Wold/HFR Inc. (Nashville)
- Construction contractor: Denark Construction Inc.

AEROSPACE PROJECT—SHELBYVILLE

Currently in the design phase until fall 2024

Estimated construction completion: fall 2026

- Includes facilities for the Professional Pilot and Maintenance Management Aerospace concentrations that will be relocated from Murfreesboro Municipal Airport
- Main academic buildings: 87,000 net square feet, including classrooms, labs, faculty and staff offices, and flight briefing space
- Hangar: 27,000 square feet to maintain Professional Pilot aircraft fleet
- Site and utility improvements for 16-acre parcel located along Highway 231 and just west of the Shelbyville Municipal Airport
- Total project cost: \$62.2 million
- Estimated construction cost: \$50.2 million
- Designer: TMP
- Construction contractor: TBD



Applied Engineering



Shelbyville Municipal Airport



Kirksey Old Main



Rutledge Hall

RENOVATIONS TO KIRKSEY OLD MAIN AND RUTLEDGE HALL

Currently in the design phase

Construction startup: summer 2024

Estimated construction completion: summer 2026

- Total project cost: \$54.3 million, including demolition of E.W. Midgett building, renovations to both Kirksey Old Main and Rutledge Hall, infrastructure, site improvements, and pedestrian and vehicular parking
- Kirksey Old Main to house Mathematical Sciences, Computer Science, and Data Science
- Rutledge to be converted from a residence hall into an office/classroom building to house University College/ University Studies
- Major renovations to both structures include HVAC, plumbing, data/IT, and electrical systems; replanning of building layouts to accommodate future use; accessibility improvements; window replacement; and exterior building improvements
- Small additions provided on both buildings to allow for new entries and vertical circulation
- Project designer: Anecdote PLC
- Construction contractor: Messer Construction



Student-Athlete Performance Center

STUDENT-ATHLETE PERFORMANCE CENTER

Currently in construction

Estimated completion: summer 2025

- Constitutes the first stage of development to the northwest corner of the MTSU campus envisioned in the MTSU Athletics Master Plan
- Primary component: 75,500-square-foot center to include training spaces, strength and conditioning rooms, locker rooms, meeting space, and athletics offices that serve MTSU Athletics and student-athletes
- Small section of outdoor loge seating to be added to the north end of Floyd Stadium
- Total project cost: \$66 million
- Design architect: GMC
- Construction contractor: The Parent Company



Tennis Facility

NEW TENNIS FACILITY

Ribbon cutting February 1, 2024

- Includes eight new tennis courts, spectator seating, site improvements, and a small support building with restrooms, storage, locker rooms, and coaches' offices
- Project designer: WBA Architecture
- Construction contractor: FTM Contracting

THEC RECOMMENDATIONS

Looking toward fiscal year 2024–25, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) is recommending operating state appropriations of \$140.7 million for MTSU. This will be a \$2.4 million increase, or 1.7%, over 2023–24 appropriations. This net increase is a combination of \$700,000 in outcomes formula adjustments and \$1.7 million in proposed new funding for the University.

Funding for any 2024–25 salary increases is not included in these figures and will not be known until the release of the governor’s budget in early February.

Last June, the MTSU Board of Trustees approved one fiscal year 2024–25 capital outlay project to be submitted to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. The request for a new **College of Liberal Arts, archives, and museum building was included in THEC’s request to the governor as the No. 2 project**. Total cost is \$99.5 million, with \$91.6 million requested from the state and the University required to match the remaining \$7.9 million.

THEC also voted to recommend \$17.4 million in capital maintenance funds for 13 MTSU projects, including central plant and campus utilities updates, roof repairs and replacement, structural and exterior envelope repairs, campuswide access control and security updates, elevator modernization, lighting and electrical updates, and HVAC and controls updates.

In addition, for 2024–25, the commission proposed two separate funding requests for special initiatives for ADA improvements and safety and security. MTSU’s portion would be \$8 million for ADA improvements and \$1.9 million for safety and security, if funded in the governor’s budget.

THEC’s recommendations have been submitted to the Department of Finance and Administration for consideration in the proposed state budget that Gov. Bill Lee will submit to the state legislature. At that point, we will have more information regarding our likely 2024–25 state and capital appropriations.

SALARY ADJUSTMENTS

On Dec. 6, 2023, our Board of Trustees took formal action on my salary enhancement recommendations, which then went into effect Jan. 1.

Their approval allowed the University to utilize a total of \$3 million to continue to address the gap between actual employee salaries and market salaries as reported by the College and University Professional Association (CUPA) for 2020–21, along with covering any benefits associated with these salary increases.

These adjustments will apply to employees on the payroll as of Dec. 31, 2023, and will be reflected in the Jan. 31, 2024, payroll.

This funding allows the University to provide an increase to all full-time employees with an actual salary below the 2020–21 CUPA reported salary as outlined in the University’s approved compensation plan. **This adjustment is designed to provide an increase of 46.7% of an employee’s calculated difference between their actual salary and the CUPA reported salary.** Not all employees will receive a market adjustment as there may be no difference between the actual and CUPA reported salary. Market adjustments, along with the new salary for each employee, will be provided to all department chairs, as well as vice presidents and academic deans, in mid-January once all calculations have been completed and verified for accuracy.

This action is another major step to addressing this long-standing priority for the University. Please know how much I value each of you and appreciate your good work. I am pleased that our board was in agreement and that we are able to give these salary increases to our employees.



Alumnus **Stephen B. Smith** was unanimously reelected by trustees to a fourth consecutive two-year term as chair of the institution's governing body. Smith, who has held the top trustee role since the board was created in 2017, has been a vocal advocate of the University's adult degree completion program, having earned his bachelor's degree in 2011, about 30 years after he left the campus as a student-athlete. Chair of Haury and Smith Contractors, Smith has served on a number of boards, including the Federal Home Loan Bank of Cincinnati, the Nashville Planning Commission, the Nashville Park Board, CapStar Bank, and the Williamson County Sports Authority.

The board also reelected **Christine Karbowski Vanek**, another inaugural trustee, for a second straight two-year term as vice chair. Vanek recently retired from her roles as chief administrative officer, chief risk officer, executive vice president, and vice chair of the board of directors of Bridgestone Americas, the Nashville-based subsidiary of Bridgestone Corp., a global leader in tires and rubber. She also served as the corporation's executive vice president. Vanek has been active in community organizations and served on numerous boards, including the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Japan America Society of Tennessee, Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Franklin American Music City Bowl (now known as the Transperfect Music City Bowl). She also received the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette by the government of Japan for her work to strengthen Tennessee-Japan relations over the past nearly three decades. She holds bachelor's and law degrees from the University of Illinois.

The board also recently welcomed two new trustees, appointed by the governor. **William S. "Bill" Jones**, a nearly lifelong resident of Murfreesboro, has been in the financial services industry since graduation from MTSU in 1982. He is area executive for Pinnacle Financial Partners with responsibilities for Rutherford and Bedford counties. Jones has more than 30 years of experience with Pinnacle and its predecessor.

Michael J. Wade, a 1990 alumnus and agency sales leader with State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance, has more than 20 years of experience in insurance and financial services. He lives in Chesterfield, Missouri, where he has responsibility for 50 independent locations in the St. Louis metro area. A Murfreesboro native, he is also a small business owner in Tennessee.

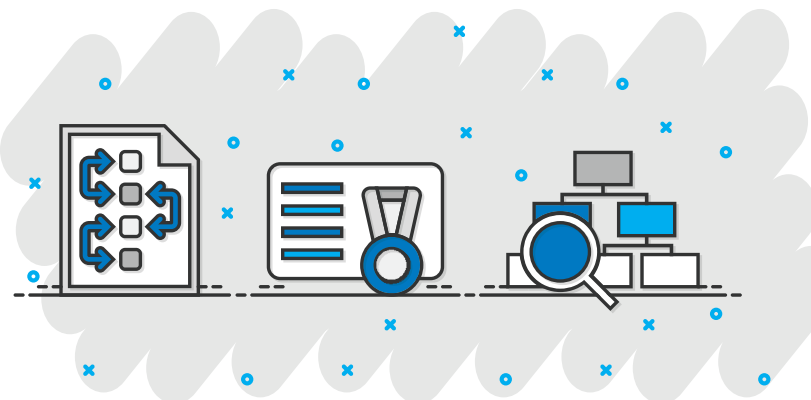
NEW STRATEGIC PLAN AND MISSION STATEMENT UPDATES

All members of the 2025–2035 Strategic Planning Committee met for the first time in November. Strategic planning leaders include:

- Committee chair: **Jeff Gibson**, College of Liberal Arts
- Committee co-chair: **Layne Bryant**, Academic Affairs
- Academic Quality Pillar chair: **Jennifer Vannatta-Hall**, School of Music
- Academic Quality Pillar co-chair: **Racha El Kadiri**, Department of Geosciences
- Student Success Pillar chair: **Robyn Ridgley**, College of Education
- Student Success Pillar co-chair: **Danielle Rochelle**, Intercultural and Diversity Affairs
- Engagement Pillar chair: **Sam Zaza**, Department of Information Systems and Analytics
- Engagement Pillar co-chair: **Joe Whitefield**, Facilities Services
- Innovation Pillar chair: **Lisa Green**, Department of Mathematical Sciences
- Innovation Pillar co-chair: **Trey Martindale**, MTSU Online

You can follow the planning process, including updates on spring 2024 listening sessions and focus groups, on the new strategic plan website at mtsu.edu/strategicplan.

Almost 2,000 people responded to the mission review survey, including alumni, students, faculty, staff, and trustees. Members of the committee's Mission Review subcommittee used survey responses in drafting revised mission and vision statements, which went out to the MTSU community for additional feedback. Look for a final call for feedback on the next round of drafts this month.





SACSCOC REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITATION

Work is already underway on reaffirmation of the University's accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The commission has approved MTSU for its Differentiated Review Process, for which we will demonstrate compliance with selected accreditation standards and develop a new Quality Enhancement Plan.

MTSU's Reaffirmation Leadership Team participated in a reaffirmation orientation at the SACSCOC annual meeting in December. Key individuals from each of the University's divisions are writing narratives and collecting evidence for the compliance certification report that MTSU must submit in September 2025 as the first step toward a site visit in Spring 2026 and the commission's reaffirmation decision in December 2026.

GRADUATION



More than 1,760 graduates transferred the tassels on their mortarboards to the left following fall Commencement ceremonies Dec. 16 to celebrate the final graduating class of 2023. Of the 1,767 graduates, 1,463 were undergraduates and 304 were graduate students, including 261 master's candidates, 23 education specialist recipients, and 20 doctoral candidates. In addition, seven graduate students earned certificates, and eight undergraduate students received certificates. Providing words of encouragement as keynote speaker was Ralph Schulz, president and CEO of the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, one of middle Tennessee's oldest and largest business federations.

Nearly 80 MTSU student veterans garnered degrees at the fall ceremonies, with 41 graduating veterans attended the Graduating Veterans Stole Ceremony a few days earlier in Miller Education Center. Amazon Military was presenting sponsor for the stole ceremony, which has become a tradition for the host Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center. The MTSU center serves 1,200-plus military connected students and their families with a one-stop shop of academic and support services and is one of the largest and most comprehensive facilities of its kind on an academic campus in the nation.

NEW APPOINTMENTS AND TITLE CHANGES

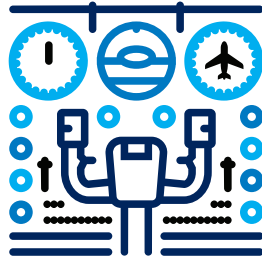
- **Brian Hinote**, vice provost for faculty and strategic initiatives
- **Becky Cole**, vice provost for academic administration and resources
- **Mary Hoffschwelle**, vice provost for planning and effectiveness
- **Laurie Witherow**, interim vice provost for enrollment services
- **Layne Bryant**, assistant vice provost for institutional accreditation
- **Trey Martindale**, associate vice provost for online learning



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

COLLEGE OF BASIC AND APPLIED SCIENCES

On Sept. 21, Gov. Bill Lee announced that the MTSU **Department of Aerospace will relocate its Flight Operations Center and Maintenance Management program to the Shelbyville Airport as part of**

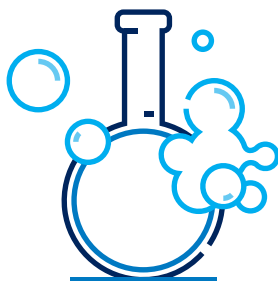


that promises significant economic benefit for Shelbyville and Bedford County. MTSU will build on roughly 16 acres of land at the Shelbyville airport. “We’ve been advocating for this, and MTSU and Shelbyville have created an environment for this to work,” Lee said. “This is money well spent. This is one of the leading aviation programs in the nation, and we need to invest in it.” A combined \$62.2 million in funding—\$57.2 million from the state and \$5 million from the University—paved the way for the move from Murfreesboro’s airport. Groundbreaking is set for later this year, with full relocation to Shelbyville by fall 2026. Established in 1942, Aerospace is a signature department at MTSU and has grown into one of the most respected aerospace programs in the nation. Twenty full-time faculty members, 100-plus flight instructors, and more than 1,000 students place it among the largest of the nation’s collegiate aviation programs.



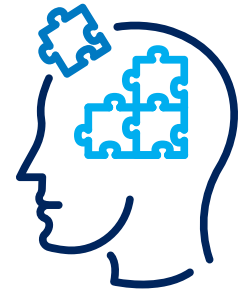
MTSU’s **Actuarial Science program** is one of 12 in the United States to receive Gold Level recognition in 2023 from the Casualty Actuarial Society. Two schools in Canada and one in India also made the Gold Level list.

Two assistant professors in MTSU’s **Department of Biology** have been awarded National Science Foundation CAREER Awards. **Liz Barnes** and **Donny Walker** each started from humble beginnings to become highly successful scientists. These prestigious grants for early career research faculty provide approximately \$1 million over a five-year project period. Getting two such awards in a single year is a feat that is typical only for top-tier research institutions.



COLLEGE OF BEHAVIORAL AND HEALTH SCIENCES

An MTSU graduate program that ultimately has impacted thousands of students across the nation turned 50 last year. To celebrate its founding—and its founder—the **MTSU School Psychology program** hosted an open house in September to honor **Professor Emeritus James “Jim” O. Rust**, who spent 48 years at the helm before retiring in 2021. The three-year accredited graduate degree offers a combined Master of Arts and Educational Specialist degree that leads to licensure as a nationally certified school psychologist who works in collaboration with families, schools, and community to meet behavioral, social, and academic needs of students. About 10 students are accepted annually. Over the past 50 years, the program has graduated nearly 350 students.



The **Tourism and Hospitality Management program**

expects to become the first and only accredited hospitality program in the state of Tennessee.

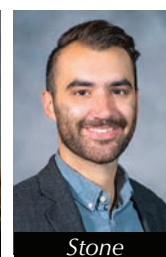
Official notice will come after the February council meeting for the Accreditation Commission for Programs in Hospitality Administration.



Among many other impressive professorial accomplishments in CBHS, Community and Public Health faculty members **Bethany Wrye**, **Kahler Stone**, **Chandra Story**, and **Casie Higginbotham** received \$38,000 in Tennessee Department of Health grant funding to develop online workforce development modules. Wrye also recently was appointed president of the Middle Tennessee Fund for Women and Girls, the charitable arm of the American Association of University Women, which provides annual scholarships to students.



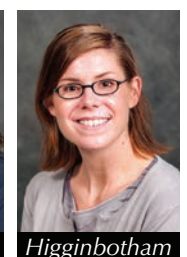
Wrye



Stone



Story



Higginbotham

JONES COLLEGE OF BUSINESS



Jones College announced a new **Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity Management**. It is a significant addition to its academic offerings, furthering our commitment to academic excellence and creating market-driven programs. Cybersecurity is an ever-growing and high-demand field, with remarkable opportunities

for excellent salary potential and numerous growth opportunities for individuals across Tennessee and beyond. Current projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics reveal a 35% growth rate in demand for information security analysts through 2031, accompanied by a median annual income of \$102,600. In the middle Tennessee area, which includes Davidson, Rutherford, and Williamson counties, there were 651 unique job postings in cybersecurity between mid-2021 and mid-2022. While MTSU's Information Systems and Analytics Department has successfully prepared graduate students for advanced positions in information systems security since 2007, this new degree fills a need in the workforce for roles focused on managing, creating, and maintaining secure systems. The undergraduate program in Cybersecurity Management plans to equip students with knowledge and skills required to assess security needs, recommend safeguard solutions, and manage the implementation and maintenance of security devices, systems, and procedures. The curriculum encompasses a comprehensive range of subjects, including computer architecture, programming, systems analysis, networking, cryptography, security system design, risk assessment, policy analysis, and much more.

New top rankings for Jones College include No. 3 in Best Tennessee M.B.A. Schools and Programs (2023) and Top 50 Best Affordable Entrepreneurship Programs (2024).

Team Wastewise, consisting of B.B.A. students Havjin Barkhan, Alberto Melchor, Syd Panak, and Avery Wriedt (all Information Systems majors) and Gabriel Kapu (Finance), captured first place in the **2023 AIS Student**

Chapters Software Innovation Challenge for their development of a product called Wise-X. Their innovative solution is a waste management tracker complemented by



an IoT sensor system integrated within a trash can. Their solution included a working Arduino-based sensor prototype encased in a 3D-printed shell, a web application, a marketing website, a data portal, and a compelling business case that tied all elements together.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Elementary and Special Education Chair **Eric Oslund** served as the evaluator for a recent \$2 million grant award to MTSU from the **National Science Foundation**. The last-dollar scholarship program, commonly known as the S-STEM grant, intends to increase student persistence in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.



The College of Education has enjoyed partnering with WKRN for the **Take a Titan 2 School** campaign throughout the fall. At each school, a representative from the college was able to share about MTSU's award-winning teacher preparation program. MTSU alumni now serving as difference makers in the schools also were honored.

The incredibly successful **Ed.D. program in Assessment, Learning, and Student Success, School Improvement concentration**, celebrated its 10th anniversary.



COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

Albert Gore

ALBERT GORE RESEARCH CENTER

MTSU's **Albert Gore Research Center** has been awarded a \$213,000 federal grant to fund the Brown v. Board of Education Oral History Project. Funded by the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Park in Topeka, Kansas, the 30-month research project will allow Gore Center staff to conduct extensive oral history interviews documenting the impact of the 1954 Supreme Court decision to end school segregation.

The Fall 2023 **Strickland Lecture** featured Ukrainian historian **Serhy Yekelchyk**, who provided context for the current Russian war against Ukraine. The lecture date fell on Indigenous Peoples Day, which led to a unique opportunity for a partnership with Nashville Public Television (NPT). NPT President and CEO Becky Magura treated the Strickland audience to a special sneak preview of Ken Burns' latest documentary, *The American Buffalo*, ahead of its Oct. 16 premiere on NPT.



COLLEGE OF MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT



MTSU's Animation program created the **MT Imagine Animation Studio**, which offers students opportunities to receive paid internships working on projects for regional clients. The studio employs the best student talent to create 2D animated cartoons, 3D animated projects, motion design for broadcast television, virtual reality applications, visual effects for film, digital content for virtual production, and more. Associate Professor Rodrigo Gomez developed and launched the studio.

For the ninth year, MTSU's **Department of Recording Industry** has been named in *Billboard's* Top Music Business Schools. *Billboard's* nod is also a testament to the longevity and success of the department, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary. The program was founded in 1973, opened its first campus recording studio in 1980, and was the first program in the country to release a fully student-created CD, in 1985.



The College of Media and Entertainment had a big night at this year's **CMA Awards**. **Media Arts students worked WKRN-TV's red carpet**, which was broadcast live to 34 ABC affiliates. CME students also were backstage at the awards, assisting with the live ceremony and working side by side with CMA production staff. Media and Entertainment alumnus **Hardy** brought home two awards, former MTSU student **Chris Young** honored his high school music teacher, and alumna **Hillary Scott** graced the stage as a presenter.



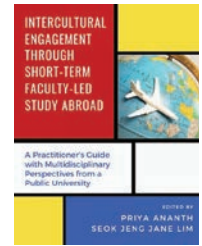
Political Science and International Relations Chair **Amy Atchison** and students in her Humanitarian Aid and Crisis course educated over 500 participants last fall as part of the American Red Cross' International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Youth Action Campaign. This marked the first implantation of the program at a Tennessee university.

HONORS COLLEGE

The 2023–24 academic year marks the **50-year anniversary of the University Honors College**. Founded as an Honors program in 1973, the Honors College fosters the academic excellence and nurturing environment of a small, select liberal arts college within the setting and with the resources of a major university. Since 2008, Honors students at MTSU have won numerous Fulbright and Goldwater scholarships. The college especially supports students who want to study abroad, as well as those who want to present their scholarly research. Last year, more than 80 students wrote theses and graduated with honors.



Multidisciplinary Perspectives from a Public University was edited by MTSU faculty members **Priya Ananth** and **Seok Jeng Jane Lim**. The book offers readers a framework to understand short-term, faculty-led study abroad programs through 11 case studies and recommendations. Find the open access (free) version through MT Open Press or order a print-on-demand version via lulu.com/spotlight/mtop.



Ginelle Baskin, open education and student success librarian, is actively engaged in advancing open educational resources (OER) and open access at MTSU. A new guide is live and available at library.mtsu.edu/oer to learn more about OER and how it is being used at MTSU along with available support. Collection Development and Management has been finding ways to contribute to open access initiatives and worldwide access to scholarly information. For example, Walker Library has read-and-publish subscription agreements for 2023–25 with two publishers: Cambridge University Press and Company of Biologists. Because of the library's subscriptions, MTSU authors have the choice to make their articles open without paying article processing charges.



The **Center for Accelerated Language Acquisition**, the language program offered through the Honors College, has **reached its 20th year** of helping participants achieve new language skills through fun and interactive classes offered throughout the year.

Two Honors students, **Alexander Hamilton** and **Lily Beth Woods**, were named Homecoming king and queen in September when the Blue Raiders took on the Colorado State University Rams at Floyd Stadium. Hamilton is a senior Organizational Communication major, while Woods is a senior Finance major.



Since January 2023, **visits to the library building have increased 5%**. Study spaces remain extremely popular with more than 15,000 unique reservations to date. During a one-week period this past fall, students were surveyed about why they come to the library. Nearly 700 responses were recorded, with the most popular reasons being to study and to find journal articles. Nearly 40,000 library materials have circulated this year, and Walker Library personnel have answered nearly 6,500 reference inquiries. Additionally, students borrowed laptops from the library 1,450 times, and there were nearly 150,000 logins to library computers.

WALKER LIBRARY

The **MT Open Press**, an imprint of the James E. Walker Library, published its second book in October. *Intercultural Engagement Through Short-Term Faculty-Led Study Abroad: A Practitioner's Guide with*

QUEST 20 QUEST 25

MTSU'S COMMITMENT IS MAKING SURE OUR STUDENTS SUCCEED.

The University's Quest for Student Success initiative, launched in 2013, set in motion numerous novel ways to provide even more support systems to students.

The increases in retention and graduation since then have been significant and have drawn a great deal of attention to our University. But there is always more that can be done.

No matter who you are on the MTSU campus, or what you do, whether as a member of the faculty, staff, or administration, all of us have a responsibility for student success.

Students will remember those faculty and staff members who challenged them the most, not the least. They will remember the people who reached out and who connected with them.

Critical to students' future successes—and thus the University's—is continuing and expanding our commitment to students.

To that end, our updated Quest for Student Success 2025 plan is designed to help students learn to succeed personally and professionally while making sure they graduate workforce ready.

Here are some recent updates on our University-wide Student Success efforts.

Continuing the Quest

The original Quest was designed to improve retention and graduation rates.

The results of these efforts are clearly reflected in recent outcome measures. Retention rates for first-time freshmen have grown from 74.1% in fall 2021 to 77.29% percent in fall 2023—a significant increase. The six-year graduation rate is 58.4%, representing a continued increase over the past several years. These are significant and sustained achievements that reflect the exceptional work of everyone on campus!

Although the six-year graduation rate is the primary outcome measure at MTSU, it is worth noting that four-year graduation rates continue to increase significantly as well. More students are completing their degrees in a shorter amount of time.

Quest 2025 focuses on student success marked by a deeper and broader academic and student life experience that extends learning beyond graduation.

Quest 2025 is divided into five strategic priorities:

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

2. **Eliminate achievement gaps** by using analytics, refining and expanding student support programs, and increasing faculty diversity.
3. **Increase online, hybrid, off-site offerings**, adaptive scheduling, and curricular flexibility.
4. Create a **culture of service** across campus.
5. Invest in a campuswide environment that fosters **living-learning opportunities**.

Here are some additional updates regarding our student success efforts:

Tutoring: The persistence rate of students who go for tutoring is 91%, exceeding the University rate of 89.5%.

Adult degree completion programs: MTSU's award-winning Prior Learning Assessment program continues to serve adult learners by helping them document and earn college credits for nontraditional learning. After 16 years, the program has an outstanding 89.3% completion rate, with over 1,200 enrolled students earning an average of 24 credit hours.

Corporate partnerships: MTSU finalized a significant corporate educational partnership with Barrett Firearms, providing tuition assistance to eligible Barrett employees. Under the agreement, eligible employees at the company will be able to take MTSU classes each year in any topic at a substantial tuition discount. The company also will utilize the Applied Leadership certificate program offered by MTSU's University College as part of a program they are calling Barrett University. A cohort of selected employees who have been identified as emerging leaders will complete the program in preparation for expanded leadership opportunities. Barrett Firearms founder Ronnie Barrett and wife Donna, an MTSU alumna and former state representative, have been ardent supporters of the University for many years. The company is now a part of the Australia-based NIOA Group.

The Barrett Firearms agreement brings the total number of MTSU's corporate education partnerships to 15. For the Fall 2023 semester, there were 132 students enrolled through these partnerships, and 26 corporate students have earned degrees since the creation of the initiative. These educational partnerships create opportunities for the companies to enhance their benefits programs, increasing employee retention and recruitment of quality employees.

Dual enrollment program: In fall 2023, a record 1,452 high school students participated in MTSU dual enrollment (DE) courses. Students were served in 127 course sections at 15 partner schools. Most DE course sections (65%) were instructed by MTSU faculty. DE students now account for more than **8% of MTSU's total undergraduate population!** MTSU dual enrollment students can complete a full year or more of University credits leading to a degree, at minimal cost and while finishing high school. The savings are significant—as much as \$10,000 compared to current undergraduate tuition rates—and a student's first four courses are tuition-free, thanks to a state of Tennessee grant.

Most importantly, the dual enrollment program seeks to emphasize participants' status as full-fledged MTSU students and the opportunities that result. There is more to MTSU's dual enrollment than taking courses, and the hope is that by making the students part of the MTSU community, they will have a sense of belonging that extends after graduation from high school. The success of this program would not be possible without the excellent instruction provided by our faculty, and the coordination and support of department chairs and others on campus.

University Studies Department: Our Master of Professional Studies program experienced a more than 8% increase in enrollment compared to fall 2022. Our B.S. in Integrated Studies has completed its partnership with the Air University Associate to Baccalaureate Cooperative. This partnership facilitated a seamless transition for service members to convert their associate degrees to MTSU qualifications.



trueBLUE GIVE



UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT

As we plan for a prosperous new year in 2024, MTSU eagerly anticipates the seventh annual **True Blue Give** campaign. Slated to take place **February 13–15**, this event is more than a tradition—it's a rallying call for our Blue Raider family to invest in the people and programs that define the character of MTSU.

Over three days, the University and community will unite to encourage individuals to make online or text-based donations. These contributions will be directed toward their favorite colleges, departments, or programs, showcasing a commitment to the growth and success of our great University.

This year's True Blue Give focuses on specific areas that could benefit from additional support. The campaign shines a spotlight on initiatives like the Student Food Pantry, scholarships for future teachers, the June Anderson Center for Women and Nontraditional Students, and the Honors College. Donors are invited to align their contributions with these causes, allowing them to support the aspects of MTSU that resonate most with them.

In the first six years of the True Blue Give, 4,697 alumni, faculty, staff, and friends have rallied to contribute over \$2.9 million to the campaign, demonstrating a True Blue

dedication to MTSU. Looking back on last year's successful campaign, nearly 860 generous supporters invested in the University.

In 2023, our Athletics program enjoyed its most successful True Blue Give yet, with almost \$200,000 in support for student-athletes. Additional gifts over \$29,000 were donated to student emergency needs and support for various student-centric programs, including the library, veterans center, Band of Blue, and the LGBT+ community. We're excited to meet and exceed last year's performance with additional generosity.

As the True Blue Give unfolds, every dollar raised will constitute a direct investment in the University's people and programs. The transformative impact of these contributions will elevate programs, support students, and propel the MTSU community toward new heights.

We urge our alumni and community supporters to visit mtsu.edu/truebluegive. This platform will serve as a convenient hub for expressing love and support for MTSU in a tangible and impactful way, ensuring that the University's future remains bright and promising.



STUDENT LIFE

connection point

Students need to connect academically in the classroom, but they also need to connect socially through out-of-the-classroom activities. Our goal is to help all new students develop a sense of belonging and connection to the MTSU campus.

During the Fall 2023 semester, our long-standing **Connection Point** program once again offered an eclectic slate of exciting programs to involve our students with their campus community. While this effort is designed to

engage our first semester freshman students, returning students attended many of the events (and in large numbers!). Some of the events included: Fight Song Competition, Crash the Commons, Rep Your Roots, Blue Zoo Bash, Habitat for Humanity Panel Build, Student Organization Fair, and MTSU (weeknight) football games.

Upcoming Connection Point events will include: Winter Wonderland; Fraternity and Sorority meet and greets; Lanes, Trains, and Automobiles bowling and arcade games; Black History Month and Women's History Month keynote speakers; Student Appreciation Week tailgate; a rodeo-themed women's basketball game; a Mardi Gras-themed men's basketball game; a Signature Events concert; and more. For a detailed calendar, go to mtsu.edu/campuslife/connectionpoint.php#connectionpoint.

TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

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

- ITD's **Classroom Technology team** continues to be recognized for creating one of the world's most advanced audiovisual control systems implemented in higher education classrooms.

The team received the **"Best Classroom Installation" Gold Award** from *Higher Ed AV*, the Higher Education Technology Managers Alliance publication.

The **new classroom AV system** has been featured in *EdTech Magazine* with case studies by Extron, Epiphan, and Sennheiser.

- **Technology Access Fees** funding permitted us to hire several new student workers, giving them experience working with these advanced technologies while augmenting our Classroom Technology team.
- **Enterprise Application Services** is implementing several new initiatives, including a new admissions application platform, a more modern single-point-of-entry dashboard for the entire campus, and a new housing and residential life management system.
- The **Infrastructure Services team** completed a major server upgrade that offers significant performance improvements to academic and administrative systems used by the campus community.
- **MerlinX**, our enterprise digital media management solution, will be available this spring. It will provide access to digital assets from our partners, such as the Division of Marketing and Communications, MT Athletics, and others who received training on the new system last fall.
- The **Center for Technologies and Training** and the **Learning, Teaching, and Innovative Technologies Center** will continue offering a variety of workshops this spring. Please watch for emails about upcoming workshop topics.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The Open Doors Report for 2023, published by the Institute of International Education, revealed that the United States hosted more than 1 million international students in the 2022–23 academic year. The numbers mark an almost 12% jump from the previous year—the fastest growth rate in more than 40 years. MTSU is determined to capitalize on such increased interest in studying in the U.S.

NAFSA, the Association of International Educators, in its latest analysis found that international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities contributed \$40.1 billion to the U.S. economy and supported 368,333 jobs during the 2022–23 academic year. Tennessee attracted 9,206 international students who contributed \$332.7 million to the state economy and supported 3,190 jobs. This data confirms that international students don't just provide social and cultural benefits to our campus; they also help our University economy remain healthy and sound.

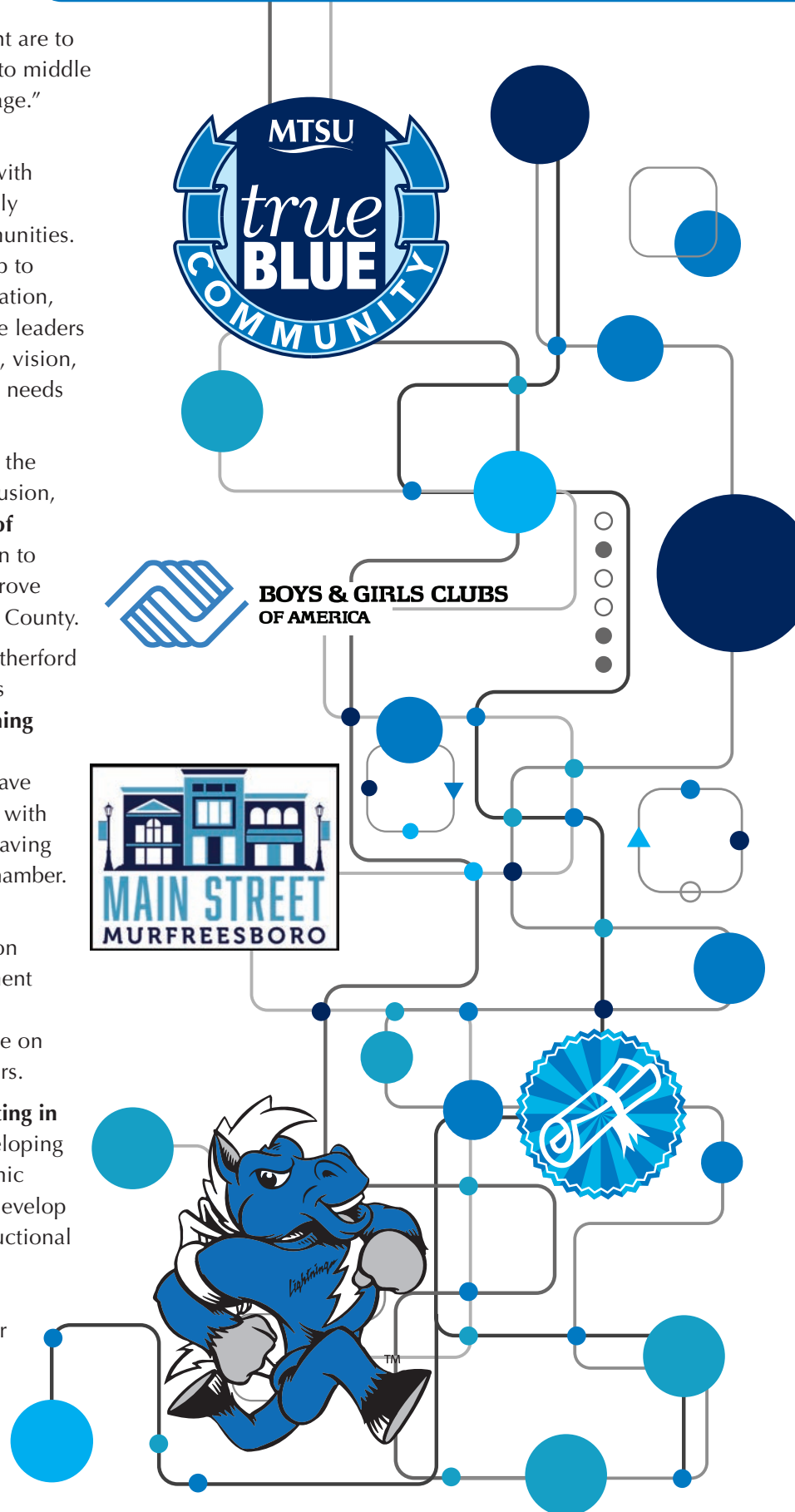
For fall 2023, MTSU had approximately 449 undergraduates and another 185 graduate students, for a total of **634 international students**. These students came from 73 different countries. This is an increase of more than 100 students since the Fall 2022 semester. Chinese student numbers have decreased, but Indian, sub-Saharan African, and Southeast Asian enrollment is increasing.

Welcoming these students from diverse cultures, religions, and backgrounds isn't just the right thing to do. Clearly, it will also result in economic, cultural, and social benefits to our domestic students.



The goals of the Office of Community Engagement are to “bring middle Tennessee to MTSU,” “take MTSU to middle Tennessee,” and to “B.E. True Blue—Belong. Engage.” The following are a few updates on those efforts:

- **True Blue Community** was launched Oct. 10 with local faith leaders. Faith leaders shared mutually beneficial ways MTSU can support their communities. True Blue Community will expand membership to include leaders from business, nonprofit, education, and other appropriate sectors. Members will be leaders willing to assist in articulating MTSU’s mission, vision, and goals while helping MTSU better meet the needs of middle Tennessee.
- **“Reading with Dr. Monica” Smith**, assistant to the president for community engagement and inclusion, is a new initiative with the **Boys & Girls Club of Rutherford County** to introduce young children to MTSU and encourage a love of reading to improve third grade reading proficiencies in Rutherford County.
- In cooperation with **MTSU Athletics**, select Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce ribbon-cuttings included appearances by **MTSU mascot Lightning** to increase MTSU’s visible support for middle Tennessee businesses. Smith was honored to have the opportunity to further support partnerships with the business community on behalf of MTSU, having been selected as a 2023–24 Diplomat for the chamber.
- Smith also participated in the **Main Street Murfreesboro Christmas Downtown** celebration with support from the MTSU Student Government Association and MTSU’s new Gospel Choir. Smith was happy to have been selected to serve on the Main Street Murfreesboro Board of Directors.
- **Two separate faculty working groups are assisting in engagement and inclusion efforts.** One is developing a white paper to guide our institutional academic engagement efforts. The second is working to develop a pedagogical guide to assist faculty with instructional support for more engaged teaching. Engaged scholarship is the creation and dissemination of knowledge and creative expression to further the mission and goals of the University and in collaboration with the community.



MTSU Arts continues to showcase the skills of our talented students in our performing and fine arts programs. MTSU Arts Patrons experienced a magical evening in November with a reception and preview performance of MTSU Theatre and School of Music's collaborative performance of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella*. Patrons were given an inside look at the stunning production along with interaction with faculty and student performers. Families from around the middle Tennessee community enjoyed an exclusive meet and greet with cast members at an enchanted Tea Party with Cinderella and her friends before the Sunday matinee performance.

We can't wait to welcome you to our MTSU Arts performances, exhibitions, and concerts in 2023–24. The spring season begins with our annual celebration of the best of MTSU Arts. The 2024 Celebration of MTSU Arts concert will be hosted by *American Idol* and Broadway alumna Diana DeGarmo. Please join us as we celebrate students and our MTSU Arts Hall of Fame inductees at the MTSU Arts Celebration Concert on Jan. 27 in Tucker Theatre.



Diana DeGarmo

Other featured events coming this season include:



Jazz Ensemble I, March 18, Hinton Hall:

This concert will feature our most experienced student jazz artists, who frequently perform cutting-edge new works, big band classics, and original student compositions and arrangements.



Spring Dance Concert, April 18–20, Tucker Theatre:

Round out the season with this collaborative production showcasing the work of our talented Dance students and faculty!

For the latest information on the 2023–24 MTSU Arts season or to become a member of the MTSU Arts Patrons Society, visit mtsu.edu/mtsuarts or call 615-898-5223.

GRADUATE STUDIES AND UNIVERSITY RESEARCH UPDATES

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

GRADUATE STUDIES:

- Two MTSU graduate students took top honors at the Tennessee Psychological Association competition. mtsunews.com/tennessee-psychological-association-awards/
- Five MTSU graduate faculty won a \$1.25 million National Science Foundation grant to mentor postdoctoral education researchers. mtsunews.com/stem-faculty-nsf-grant-postdoc-fellowship/
- Michael McCormick, a Public History Ph.D. student, led an initiative to get millions of Maryland vital records online.
- Computer Science Associate Professor Yi Gu received a grant from the Tennessee Board of Regents to help female students, particularly female students of color, succeed in STEM fields.

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND SPONSORED PROGRAMS:

- Supported \$56,000 in funding for undergraduate research and creative projects through the Undergraduate Research Experience and Creative Activity (URECA) grant program
- Hosted a variety of workshops and trainings to support student development
- Traveled to Capitol Hill to advocate for support of undergraduate research through federal funding
- Awarded more than \$12 million in sponsored projects to date for fiscal year 2024
- Kicked off the Raiders Research Series to highlight research being done at MTSU



COLLEGE OF
GRADUATE STUDIES



Obtaining a degree from years of hard work in the classroom is impressive. But to succeed in life, MTSU students will need more than that. They will also need passion, a competitive spirit, a love of teamwork, a strong will to persevere through difficulties, and, ultimately, a willingness to give it all they have and win.

Our MTSU Athletics teams and student-athletes well represent the grit and determination we want our entire student body to possess. Here are some highlights from the past semester.

BLUE RAIDERS SET GRADUATION RECORD FOR 10TH STRAIGHT YEAR

MTSU's Graduation Success Rate for 2022–23 set a new school record at 95%, as announced by the NCAA national office. It's the 10th straight year MTSU Athletics as a whole has either equaled or set a new school record.

The Graduation Success Rate (GSR) is a measure of freshmen and athletic transfer students who entered MTSU as freshmen in 2016–17. This marks the 11th straight year that MTSU Athletics has scored above 80%. The last 11 GSR scores have been 95, 94, 93, 93, 92, 89, 88, 87, 87, 87, and 82.

The Blue Raiders also ranked No. 1 out of the nine teams in Conference USA with Liberty and Florida International University being the only other schools to reach the 90% plateau.

MTSU had eight programs score a perfect 100% GSR score: men's and women's basketball, men's tennis, men's and women's cross country and track, women's golf, softball, and soccer. Football was next in line with an impressive score of 95%.

The Blue Raiders' score of 95% in football ranked tied for eighth nationally and easily led the way in Conference USA. Among the four FBS schools in the state of Tennessee, the Blue Raiders tied for first with Vanderbilt.



MASON NAMED NEW BLUE RAIDERS FOOTBALL COACH

Derek Mason was hired to take the reins as head coach of the Blue Raiders football program. Mason became MTSU's third coach in the Football Bowl Subdivision (formerly Division I-A) era and the 15th overall in program history. Mason's vision for MTSU football fits exactly what we were looking for during our interview process. He is no stranger to the Midstate community (he spent many years as head football coach at Vanderbilt), and we expect his connections to allow him and his staff to hit the ground running.

Mason, who spent the 2023 season working as a television analyst, has 29 years of collegiate coaching experience, including seven years as a head coach. He most recently coached in 2022 at Oklahoma State as the defensive coordinator and helped the Cowboys to a spot in the Guaranteed Rate Bowl.

We selected a coach who wants to be a Blue Raider, who wants to be part of elevating our football team to the top of our conference and winning championships, and who wants to make MTSU and our Blue Raiders a nationally recognized brand. He has a great understanding of who we are and an exciting vision for what we can become.



LADY RAIDERS KNOCK OFF LADY VOLS IN ROCKET CITY

MTSU women's basketball defeated the University of Tennessee for the first time in program history, beating the Lady Vols 73-62 in December. The game between in-state rivals was played at the Von Braun Center's Probst Arena in Huntsville, Alabama, which will host the Conference USA men's and women's basketball championships this March.

Jalynn Gregory led the Lady Raiders with 22 points, buoyed by a 5-for-9 day beyond the 3-point arc.

Anastasiia Boldyreva was a force in the post, just missing a triple-double while scoring 17 points, snagging nine rebounds, and blocking seven Lady Vol shots, a new career-high in blocks. **Savannah Wheeler** posted a double-double, scoring 12 points with 10 rebounds.



GOLFER STAMPER WINS ARGENT FINANCIAL CLASSIC



Owen Stamper used a third-round score of 4-under-par 68 to claim the individual title at Louisiana Tech's Argent Financial Classic on Sept. 12. His score of 13-under 203 eclipsed his personal best by two strokes and tied for the third-lowest 54-hole score in program history. The Scottsville, Kentucky, native finished the tournament with 14 birdies as one of just three players in the field with multiple birdies.

RAQUIN TAKES HOME REGIONAL TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP

Tennis standout **Leo Raquin** won the singles draw at the ITA Ohio Valley Regional Championships in Chattanooga on Oct. 16. Raquin fought back from losing the first set to defeat Pau Fanlo of Memphis 4-6, 6-4, 6-0.

The senior from Besancon, France, did not drop a set until the first set of the finals, defeating four seeded players throughout the tournament.



FIVE BLUE RAIDERS NAMED TO ALL-CONFERENCE SOCCER TEAMS

Defender **Lauren Spaanstra** and midfielder **Manon Lebargy** were named to the All-Conference USA second team, and Sadie Sterbenz was selected to the All-Freshman Team in soccer last fall. Defender **Caroline Manley** and midfielder **Eleanor Gough** were recognized on the third team. Spaanstra finished the season tied for second in assists across C-USA and tied for first in assists in conference matches. Lebargy's eight goals were first among Blue Raiders and tied for second in the league. Manley became the first MTSU player to enter the 7,000 career minutes club, capping her time in Murfreesboro with a program-record 7,212 career minutes. The defender from Arlington did not miss a start across her five years at MTSU. Gough scored three goals this year, while Sterbenz made 11 starts as a freshman, playing the full 90 minutes four times.



CROSS COUNTRY TEAMS SWEEP C-USA CHAMPIONSHIPS

The MTSU men's and women's cross country teams captured both Conference USA championships, while senior **Purity Sanga** finished first in the women's race last October in Bowling Green, Kentucky. **Habtamu Geta**, **Vincent Yegon**, **Brian Kiptoo**, and **Hillary Kimaiyo** all earned first-team All-Conference USA honors. Freshman **Eleanor Towe** impressed with a late push in the women's competition to claim the 11th spot, earning her Freshman of the Meet honors.

EISERT SELECTED C-USA'S TOP SETTER; FIVE NAMED ALL-CONFERENCE

Senior **Taylor Eisert** was tabbed Conference USA Setter of the Year, and five MTSU volleyball players were named to the All-Conference USA teams. Eisert, **Kayla Henley**, and **Adri Rhoda** earned first team, while **Laure Jansen** and **Kaylee Oscarson** were selected to the second team.

CUSA HONORS NINE BLUE RAIDER FOOTBALL PLAYERS

Tight end/wide receiver **Holden Willis**, offensive lineman **Keylan Rutledge**, and long snapper **Brody Butler** were all named to the All-Conference USA first unit. Additionally, offensive lineman **Mateo Guevara** was selected to the All-Freshman team. MTSU had a total of nine players honored in voting by the league's football coaches, including **Elijah Metcalf**, **Quindarius Dunnigan**, **Sam Brumfield**, and **Teldrick Ross** on the all-conference second team. Senior safety **Tra Fluellen** earned honorable mention recognition after missing the final two games with a season-ending injury.

CONCRETE TITAN DONATES GENEROUSLY TO BUILD BLUE CAMPAIGN

Locally owned **SRM Concrete** donated \$3 million to MTSU's **Build Blue campaign**, the third-largest gift in MTSU Athletics history. Formerly known as Smyrna Ready Mix, the family-owned and -operated ready mix company was founded by Melissa and Mike Hollingshead in 1999. SRM provides ready mix concrete and construction materials to customers throughout 19 states. The transformational gift is the second-largest donation secured by the Blue Raider Athletic Association to Build Blue, a \$100 million-plus effort launched in November 2021 to upgrade athletics facilities. It grants SRM Concrete naming rights for the third-floor club in the \$66 million Student-Athlete Performance Center, expected to be complete by fall 2025.





A large circular graphic with a white background and a dark blue border. Inside the circle, the words 'BUILD BLUE' are written in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. Below the text are three blue stars. At the bottom of the circle is the MTSU logo, which features a stylized horse head above the letters 'MT'.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT MTSU
BUILD BLUE CAMPAIGN VISIT
MTSUBRAA.COM/BUILD-BLUE

trueBLUE TV EVENT PRODUCTIONS



TRUE BLUE TV EVENT PRODUCTIONS mtsu.edu/eventproductions/

True Blue TV Event Productions (formerly Production Services) is the exclusive provider of event services—sound, lighting, video, staging, roof structures, and other special elements—for all of campus except for the Student Unions. The team brings to life special events, concerts, and activities in our biggest indoor spaces, including Murphy Center, Floyd Stadium, Alumni Memorial Gym, the MT Center in the Ingram Building, the Tom Jackson Building, and the Campus Rec Center, as well as many outdoor spaces, such as Walnut Grove and the Quad. Off-campus events sponsored by University groups can also be handled by True Blue TV Event Productions.

The team can capture your event on video—either live or recorded. As a part of True Blue TV, they can also help your event be considered for broadcast on MTSU's social media platforms or our public access television channel, which is seen on Comcast Xfinity, AT&T U-Verse, Apple TV, Roku, Amazon Fire, and other outlets.

From a single multimedia technician supporting a lecture in a multipurpose room to a full team of professionals at a large-scale concert production, True Blue TV Event Productions can bring your creative vision to life. As a full partner with Event Coordination, they also will ensure your event is compliant with University requirements and is placed on the campus master calendar.

No event is too small or too large for True Blue TV Event Productions! They offer a range of services that will help your event reach its full potential, including:

- Free consultation to help you explore options that are within your budget
- Custom-designed audio and lighting schemes
- Staging your event to ensure it has the right look and feel
- Production design services
- Photography for social media and news media distribution
- Live broadcast or video recording options, plus after-event editing to preserve and broadcast your event to future audiences
- Academic conference and classroom audiovisual assistance, including event use of Zoom, Teams, and other virtual platforms
- Connecting you with the Division of Marketing and Communications to help advertise and promote your event—and capture images and videos for later media use

TRUE BLUE TV mtsu.edu/truebluetv/

True Blue TV, launched in 1999 as an educational resource channel, is now the premier hub for video content and live event programming from MTSU. Our channel appears on cable systems and streaming services serving the middle Tennessee area, and select programs are featured on MTSU's main social media and digital platforms.

We present a diverse blend of programming, including:

- campus lectures and academic activities
- live and encore broadcasts of University events and ceremonies
- features on our undergraduate and graduate majors
- classroom and professional resources for K–12 schools and educators

True Blue TV also shares public, educational, and governmental programming from our state and national broadcasting partners.

BLUE print

Blue Print is your on-campus solution center for a wide range of printing-related services from large-format mounted posters to yard signs to brochures and booklets to class projects, all the way to simple black-and-white and color copies.

Blue Print Student Union is the retail site of Blue Print and serves as the front door to the much larger printing operation on Greenland Drive, which encompasses a wide range of high-volume, state-of-the-art equipment that produces the vast majority of MTSU's printed materials.

Blue Print specializes in printing, laminating, binding, and assisting you with your project or printing needs. They welcome personal projects too!

Students, faculty, and staff can order through Blue Print's online portal using their FSA credentials.

Visit mtsu.edu/blueprint for more information.



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I AM *true* **BLUE**.

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