



Introduction

Welcome! I am delighted to greet each of you as we kick off the 2008 fall semester. I sincerely hope that you enjoyed a pleasant and productive summer, and you are as excited as I am about the start of this new academic year.

I want to extend special greetings to our new faculty, staff and administrators. I am pleased that you have joined our campus community, and I firmly believe that you will find Murfreesboro and Rutherford County among the best places in the world to live and work.

I continue to be proud of our accomplishments as a University, and I am excited about our future. You are at the heart of MTSU's success, and your dedication and commitment to quality is why we are "Tennessee's Best". I am truly grateful for your service and all that you do in the name of Middle Tennessee State University.

Sidney A. McPhee

Fall 2008 Enrollment

MTSU's enrollment for Fall 2008 is projected to be slightly above last year's headcount of 23,000. The Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment and Academic Services continue to do a very good job managing our enrollment. We have maintained our status as the institution of choice for Tennesseans attending college in the midstate area.

University Convocation

The seventh annual University Convocation took place Sunday, August 24, in Murphy Center. This event, which was created to formally introduce new freshmen to the MTSU academic community, featured speaker Greg Mortenson.

Mortenson is executive director of nonprofit Central Asia Institute and Pennies for Peace as well as the author of the book "*Three Cups of Tea*"—this year's summer reading selection. Written with David Oliver Relin, the book is Mortenson's memoir of his quest to build schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Dr. Gloria Bonner, recently appointed Assistant to the President for Community Engagement and Support, and her staff are working with area schools, churches and other organizations throughout the community to support the Pennies for Peace effort. Their goal, which they hope to have completed by the end of the 2008-09 academic year, is to secure enough funds to build a school and support the hiring of a teacher for one year.

Appreciation and recognition go to the faculty members, administrators, and student leaders who participated in the event and to Dr. Deb Sells, Dr. Laurie Witherow, and staff from the Division of Student Affairs for their planning success. During Mortenson's time in Murfreesboro, he also spoke at Linebaugh Public Library, a local elementary school and interacted with students in classes on campus.



Budget Update

Following a 6.1 percent, or \$6.156 million, reduction in state appropriations, MTSU had to implement budget cuts for the 2008-09 fiscal year. The reductions were made as best as possible to protect the university core mission of academics and instruction. This affected the entire campus. Each college, department and division was asked to make budget-trimming recommendations and did so in a spirit of cooperation. As a result of the cuts, 44 positions were eliminated campus wide, including 16 teaching positions, but no MTSU employees lost their jobs. The affected positions either had been unfilled or vacated by retirement, or the employees were transferred to other open positions on campus. The University first trimmed central campus administration budgets and pool accounts, saving \$2.25 million, and then turned to academic affairs, which comprises 68.5 percent of MTSU's total discretionary budget. Academic affairs reduced its budget by another \$2.25 million, or 2.4 percent. All other division discretionary budgets were cut by 3.5 percent, with the exceptions of business and finance, which trimmed its accounts by 3.7 percent, and facilities services operating and maintenance, which were reduced by 5 percent.

Tuition Increase

The Tennessee Board of Regents approved a six percent tuition increase for students at its June 26 meeting. The increase will not be used to replace the lost state funds. It must first pay the increased cost directly tied to tuition, fees and fixed-cost increases. Those increased costs include required graduate-assistant fee waivers, athletic scholarships, state employee and teacher tuition discount programs, employee fee

waivers and dependent discounts, as well as fixed-cost expenses such as library acquisitions, faculty promotions, utility increases, software maintenance increases, benefits costs for previous-year salary increases and some scholarship increases. The remaining tuition increase funds will be used for some limited new dollars for each division, with academic affairs receiving the largest portion. Some money also has been set aside in case of additional state funding reductions or impoundments.

Capital Maintenance Funding



Only capital maintenance funding for renovations at the Homer J. Pittard Campus School was appropriated this year. Therefore, several capital maintenance projects that we had anticipated for this year will not occur unless funds had already been made available. We are hopeful that the state legislature will again appropriate capital maintenance funds during the next legislative session. MTSU has been receiving an average of \$4 million over the last four fiscal years.

Salary Increases

Unfortunately, because of the state budget cut, there will not be any salary increases this year by the state; and the university will not be permitted to give any increases independently as it has in the past. This is regretful, and we hope this will only be a one-year occurrence.

Bonus

Although there will be no salary increases, the state did fund a one-time, flat-rate salary bonus of \$400 for state employees and employees of public higher education with at least three (3) years of creditable service as of October 1, 2008. The bonus will be paid on October 31, 2008. Regular part time employees and post retirement service program participants will receive the one time October salary bonus based upon their pro-rated amount of service.

Master Plan / Facilities Update

A comprehensive update to our facilities master plan was approved by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and by the State Building Commission in January and February, respectively. The Master Plan defines land planning, prioritized facility

planning, and infrastructure needed to support the Academic Master Plan to a target enrollment goal of 27,000 students (headcount).

Despite recent budget cuts, we are continuing to make great strides in the development and enhancement of campus facilities. As a matter of fact, we currently have more than \$400 million in capital projects underway or in the planning stages here at MTSU.

Academic Facilities

Science Building

Due to the state legislature not funding higher education capital outlay projects for 2008-09, we did not receive the anticipated funds for our new science building. I am encouraged, however, by commitments from state officials, including the Governor's Office, that the building will be at the top of the priority list once the economy improves and higher-ed capital outlay funds become available. \$15 million has been appropriated for planning and design of the new science building, and the construction documents are now complete.

College of Education and Behavioral Science Building

A project to consolidate facilities for the College of Education and Behavioral Science was funded last summer, and the project design is well underway. Construction is anticipated to begin in fall 2009. The building will be located immediately east of the Business/Aerospace Building.



Student Recreation Center Addition

We are extremely excited that a \$20 million addition to the Student Recreation Center is now complete and operational. The new components of this facility will significantly enhance our ability to address the physical and health needs of our students and others in the MTSU community at a much higher level. The design adds space for a new Student Health Clinic, additional weight room space, cardio area, aerobics room, meeting spaces, and recreation fields. If you haven't already done so, you can see the changes for yourself during the formal opening activities of the facility on August 27, starting at 4:00 p.m.

Plans for New Student Union

The design for a new student union is in schematics, and bond funding has been approved. The project will provide a new \$63 million union facility with student activities space and meeting spaces, food court and new bookstore space. The design documents will be ready for bid in approximately a year.

Baseball Facility Enhancement

Construction of a \$6.6 million improved baseball facility is nearing completion. The facility is supported by a gift from the City of Murfreesboro and gifts from many

generous supporters. The improved design features a new press box and suites, additional seating, new dugouts for the teams, and an improved entry plaza.

New Roles / New Faces

Among the things that we pride ourselves on here at MTSU is the quality of our faculty and academic administrators. We are pleased to announce the following recent appointments for key positions here at MTSU:

- Dr. Charles Baum, Chairperson, Department of Economics and Finance
- Dr. Wayne Dornan, Chairperson, Department of Aerospace
- Dr. Alfred Lutz, 2008-09 Faculty Senate President
- Dr. Zeny Sarabia-Panol, Interim Director, School of Journalism
- Dr. Diane Miller, Vice Provost
- Dr. Roy Moore, Dean, College of Mass Communication
- Dr. Debra K. Sells, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs and Vice Provost for Enrollment and Academic Services
- Dr. Terry Whiteside, Interim Dean, College of Education and Behavioral Science
- Dr. Jim Williams, Director, Albert Gore Research Center
- Dr. John Vile, Dean, University Honors College

Blue Raider Athletics

Once again, our Blue Raider athletes have had another impressive year across the board. Additionally, our student-athletes continue to excel in the classroom as well. According to the NCAA's annual Academic Progress Report, which was released earlier this summer, MTSU had passing marks in each of its 17 Division I sports with four teams (women's golf, men's golf, men's tennis and volleyball) each turning in a perfect mark of 1,000.



Office of Community Engagement and Support

One of the latest and most exciting components added to the University is our new Office for Community Engagement and Support. Headed by Dr. Gloria Bonner, this office was created to expand the boundaries of scholarship to the wider community. Through partnership, research and public service opportunities, we will provide members of the local and regional community with innovative ways to draw on the intellectual capital of the University's students, faculty and staff. As part of this new office, we are also pleased to welcome MTSU alum and State Rep. John Hood as a part-time staff member. Rep. Hood is joining a very seasoned and well-connected staff in Dr. Bonner and Dr. Rosemary Owens, and he will lend significant support and credibility to our efforts with the community.

Marketing and Communications



We continue to gain positive ground with our enhanced marketing and communications efforts. Dr. Tonjanita Johnson, our new Associate Vice President for Marketing and Communications, has settled in and has already begun the work of expanding our *I'M ONE!* marketing campaign to not only include students but also faculty and alumni. Additionally, efforts are underway to implement a more integrated marketing and communications plan for the entire University, which will increase awareness of MTSU as a provider of top-quality academic programs and services.

Clean Campus Crew

In speaking of our efforts to showcase MTSU as *Tennessee's Best*, I am encouraging people across the campus to join in our quest to have the cleanest, prettiest and best campus in the state. Six MTSU students have already chosen to be part of the first I'M ONE! Clean Campus Crew. As part of the program, they will assist Grounds Services by canvassing their assigned areas twice a week, picking up litter and removing signage that is posted on lampposts, trees and other areas not approved for signage.

Alert4u

As we get this new academic year underway, I also want you to know that the safety and wellbeing of our students and personnel are always a top priority. With that in mind, I encourage you to review our University emergency plan and reporting procedures and sign up for the MTSU Emergency Text Service. You can access these items online by clicking on the Alert4u link located near the bottom of the MTSU home page.



Messaging

External Funding and Private Fundraising

We continue to see positive results in our efforts to secure external and private funding. Although we fell slightly below our record-setting mark of \$38 million in external funding that was achieved in 2006-07, we did secure some \$34 million in external funds in 2007-08. (This is compared to approximately five million dollars some six years ago.) Despite the slight drop in external funding, our efforts in private fundraising over the past year have seen positive results. During a time where we faced many challenges, both with the economy and some factors outside of our control, we were able to set a new record for the number of alumni donors and total donors to the University. We exceeded the previous year's donor totals by more than 10 percent.

Over the past year, the University and the MTSU Foundation secured more than \$5 million in gifts from nearly 8,300 alumni and friends of the University. Despite an uncertain financial market, our alumni and friends continue to provide valuable

investments to help keep us on track and moving forward. Private gifts from alumni and friends have been used to enhance the day-to-day operations of our campus and support our students and faculty in a number of ways.

Challenges for the Coming Year

As you might have already imagined, our reduced budget will be one of the primary challenges that will be at the forefront of all of our minds this year. We will remain committed to seeking new ways to make more efficient and effective use of both our human and fiscal resources.

Secondly, the challenge of improving the graduation and retention of students remains high on the radar screen. We were pleased to recently learn that, according to a report released by the Tennessee Higher Ed Commission, MTSU has moved into first place among TBR universities with the highest 6-year graduation rate (48.39%). Although this is a slight increase over last year's six-year rate (46.84%), we will continue to explore, develop and implement initiatives across the campus that will have a positive impact on addressing our graduation rate as well as the retention issues that we are currently facing.



Another important challenge involves the continued need to find innovative ways to increase access to higher education for adult and non-traditional students while also making education affordable.

Since April of this year, I have been working with academic administrators and other campus leaders in a series of brainstorming sessions to look at how we might better address key institutional needs and challenges. I look forward to continuing these collaborative sessions and to hearing your feedback regarding how we might address our issues and concerns. The active support and participation of both our internal and external stakeholders are essential to our continued success.

I hope that you will continue to find this e-newsletter informative and useful. I welcome your feedback and comments, which can be sent to smcphoe@mtsu.edu. As always, please know that I appreciate your support of Middle Tennessee State University.