

A SPECIAL MINI-PUBLICATION SPECIFICALLY FOR OUR DIGITAL AUDIENCE

MTSU iMAGAZINE

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

BIG BLUE EASY

2015 HOMECOMING



TABLE of CONTENTS

Editor's Letter	2
Homecoming 2015	4
A+ Science Project	6
A Proper Burial	10
Ready, Set, Teach!	12
The Uncommon Thread	17
Filling the Gap	20
A Lasting Tune	22
From Raider to Stampeder ...	25
From Grass to Glass	27
Sky High Artistry	29
A Walk on the Wild Side	30

**MIDDLE
TENNESSEE**
STATE UNIVERSITY

trueBLUE STORIES

So many stories, so few pages. . . . Given the treasure trove of stories of achievement found all over MTSU, there are simply not enough pages in the twice-annual print version of *MTSU Magazine* to adequately spotlight all the significant work and accomplishments occurring on campus.

In addition, though many MTSU stories do get told digitally at mtsunews.com or in the publications produced by different colleges and departments, those don't necessarily reach the audience they could and should be reaching.

Therefore, in addition to posting electronic versions (alongside new interactive elements) of *MTSU Magazine*, these special digital-only "mini-versions" of the magazine are also produced twice annually in an effort to keep our growing Web and app audiences in the know about all things MTSU from a student's research on the clouded leopard population at Nashville Zoo to a glimpse of the \$20 million in renovations now underway on two historic science buildings.

Available through the *MTSU Magazine* app for iPads, iPhones, and Android devices, this electronic version includes several stories with multimedia content that aren't available in print.

This edition also includes

- a visual look at the recent Homecoming weekend in October,
- the story of a computer science graduate's effort to secure a \$1 million gift of technology to her alma mater,
- Interviews with two first-year teachers in middle Tennessee grade schools to gauge the value of the teacher training they received at MTSU's College of Education, and
- much more!

The next print edition of *MTSU Magazine* will reach alumni and friends by mail in winter 2015.

We hope you enjoy this digital edition!

—Drew Ruble MTSU



MTSU iMagazine

University Editor

Drew Ruble

Assistant Editors

Darby Campbell, Bill Fisher

Art Director

Kara Hooper

Contributing Writers

Keith Ryan Cartwright, Allison Gorman, Diane Hughes,
Gina K. Logue, Katie Porterfield, Vicky Travis, Patsy
Weiler, Randy Weiler

Videographers

Darby Campbell, Rob Janson

Design Assistance

Kathy Bowlin, David Lowry, Darrell Callis Burks, Brian
Evans, Sherry Wisner-George, Sally Govan, Micah Lloyd

University Photographers

J. Intintoli, Andy Heidt

Special thanks to

Mark Byrnes, Jimmy Hart, Connie Huddleston,
Bud Fischer, Mark Owens and the MT Athletics
administration, Marsha Powers, Lana Seivers, David
Urban, John Vile

University President

Sidney A. McPhee

University Provost

Brad Bartel

Vice President for University Advancement

Joe Bales

Vice President for Marketing and Communications

Andrew Oppmann

MTSU iMagazine is produced periodically.

Correspondence should be sent to

MTSU Editor Drew Ruble, FAIR 130,

1301 E. Main St., Murfreesboro, TN 37132.

MTSU is a Tennessee Board of Regents Institution.



**MIDDLE
TENNESSEE**

STATE UNIVERSITY.

0915-2311 / Middle Tennessee State University does not discriminate against students, employees, or applicants for admission or employment on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, disability, age, status as a protected veteran, genetic information, or against any other legally protected class with respect to all employment, programs, and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries related to nondiscrimination policies for MTSU: Assistant to the President for Institutional Equity and Compliance. For additional information about these policies and the procedures for resolution, please contact Marian Y. Wilson, assistant to the president and Title IX Coordinator, Institutional Equity and Compliance, Middle Tennessee State University, Cope Administration Building 116, 1301 East Main Street, Murfreesboro, TN 37132, Marian.Wilson@mtsu.edu, or call (615) 898-2185. MTSU's policy on nondiscrimination can be found at <http://www.mtsu.edu/titleix/>.

BIG BLUE EASY

MTSU's 2015 Homecoming celebration was a New Orleans-style affair

2015 HOMECOMING

from staff reports



MTSU students, staff and alumni enjoyed a New Orleans-style homecoming on Saturday, October 3.

“Big Blue Easy” was the theme. Students, staff and alumni transformed the campus leading up to the evening Homecoming football game against Vanderbilt, complete with Mardi Gras beads and masks and the party atmosphere of Bourbon Street.

Despite rain Saturday morning, several hundred Blue Raider fans lined East Main Street for the annual Homecoming Parade, which traveled a new route this year.

“Homecoming is a celebration of what MTSU means to its students, alumni and community,” Alumni Relations Assistant Director Rhonda King said. “It’s important to reflect and appreciate our past, while reveling in the present. Homecoming gives everyone a chance to enjoy themselves as part of the Blue Raider family and get their True Blue on.”

Student-related homecoming activities took place throughout the week leading up to the parade and game day. For instance, Swedish duo Icona Pop performed Thursday, Oct. 1, in Murphy Center, as part of the festivities.

MTSU senior Amanda Pierce of Murfreesboro, the Student Government Association homecoming director, said “I literally get the chills when I think about homecoming. It’s my favorite time of year, and I am blessed to have this chance to share my love and passion with the MTSU community.”

MTSU’s newest class of Distinguished Alums also took center stage during Homecoming activities. They included: Jeffrey Bonner, Britnee Kinard, Richard Key, Charles Massey Jr., Derek Frisby, and Eric Paslay. [MTSU](#)



2015 Distinguished Alumni and True Blue Citations of Distinction Awards. Britnee Kinard, True Blue Citations of Distinction Service to the Community, left, Richard Key, David Cullum Award for Service to the University, Col. (Ret.) Jeffery Bonner, Distinguished Alumni, Charles Massey, Jr., True Blue Citations of Distinction Achievement in Education, and Dr. Derek Frisby, True Blue Citations of Distinction Achievement in Education (MTSU faculty).

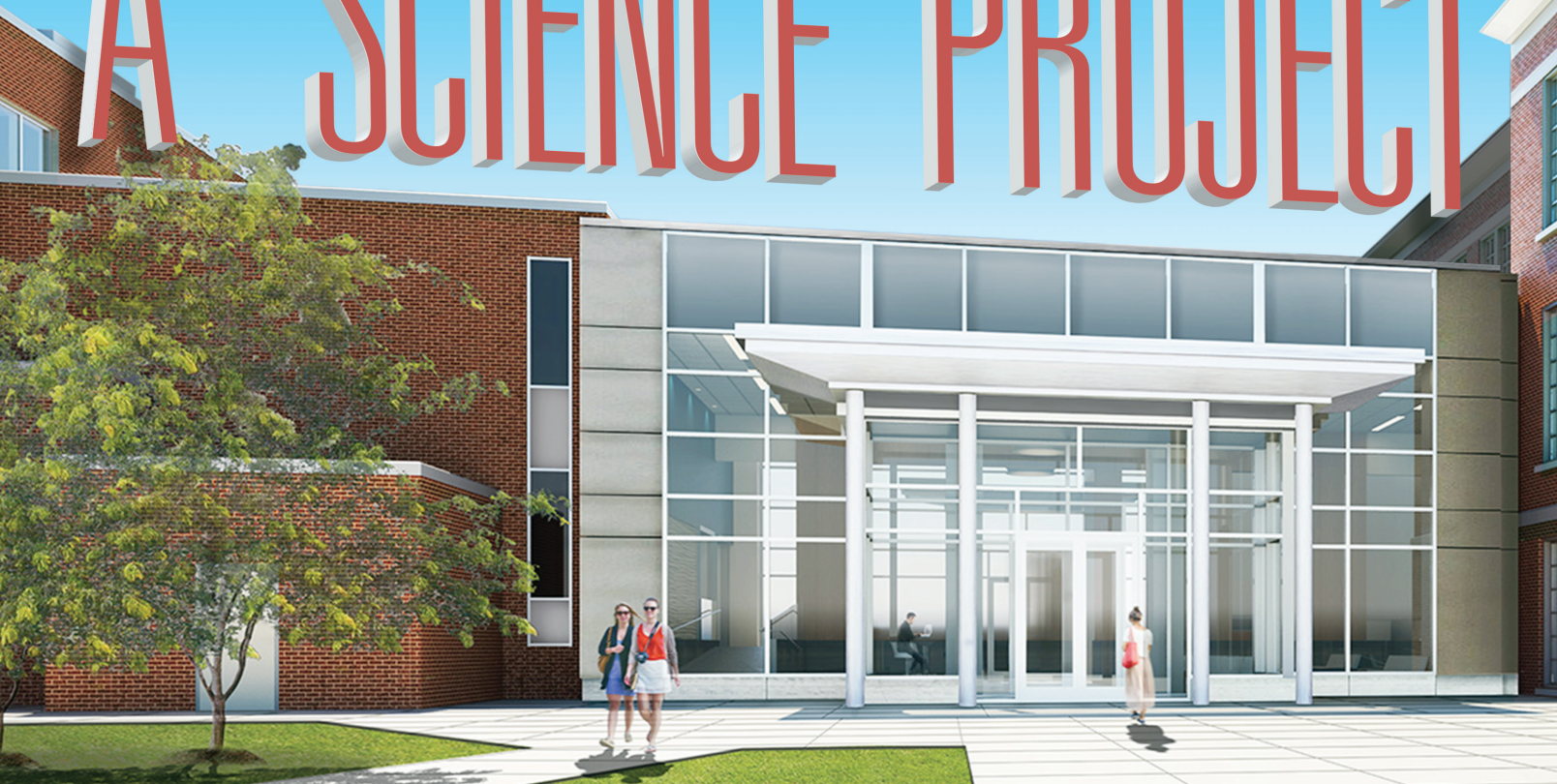




EFFORT TOUGHNESS TURNOVER
WIN THE SNAP



A+ SCIENCE PROJECT



Architect's rendering of the renovated science buildings.

by Randy Weiler

\$20 million in renovations promises to restore the life and usefulness of MTSU's two older science facilities

There's a definitive gleam in Bud Fischer's blue eyes these days, and it's because the good news just keeps coming for MTSU's College of Basic and Applied Sciences (CBAS).

Fischer, hired as dean of the CBAS in 2012, celebrated the opening of MTSU's much-needed \$147-million new Science Building in the summer of 2014. Now he eagerly awaits completion of \$20 million worth of renovations to rejuvenate MTSU's two older science buildings.

"This has been an incredibly exciting time for the College of Basic and Applied Sciences," Fischer said. "We've opened a new Science Building. And immediately after opening that, we've pretty much gone straight to renovations involving the Wisner-Patten and Davis Science Buildings."



PROJECT



Campus planning officials anticipate the two buildings will reopen before the start of spring semester in 2017. When they do, Fischer said, MTSU's combined science facilities will rank among the finest in the nation.

IN WITH THE OLD... AND THE NEW

The oldest of the science buildings, Wisner-Patten Science Hall opened in 1932 and cost \$225,000. Over the next three decades, MTSU's student population grew so much the state invested \$1.7 million to construct Davis Science Building in 1967. Combined, the two buildings have a total of 117,000 gross square feet of space.

MTSU's enrollment almost quadrupled over the next 45 years, but with no increase in physical space for science education. That all changed in 2014, when MTSU's new, 250,000-gross-square-foot Science Building opened.

The space and renovations are much needed. The College of Basic and Applied Sciences boasted more than 5,100 majors in fall 2015. It has approximately 215 faculty members. In total, science courses produce about 60,000 credit hours annually at MTSU. More than 10,000 students, both majors and nonmajors, enroll in biology, chemistry, and physical science courses each year.

In recent years, MTSU has annually granted as many as 700 degrees in biology, chemistry, and related fields. That number is expected to rise in the future as a result of new and renovated science facilities.

So, while Fischer is excited about occupying the new Science Building, which serves as primary home to the Biology and Chemistry departments, he said “recouping” the two older buildings is equally thrilling.

“With these renovations, we will now have what I consider some of the best science facilities in the Southeast, and maybe the country, offering students a wide variety of innovative programs and innovative research spaces as well as what I think are innovative learning environments,” Fischer said.

GAINING MOMENTUM

State funds from the original Science Building project have already been allocated for the renovation project, which will benefit, directly or indirectly, all of the CBAS’s 11 departments in addition to some departments from other campus academic units.

A longtime member of the CBAS, the Department of Physics and Astronomy will see great gains from the renovations, significantly expanding its footprint across multiple floors of both buildings. Geosciences—the newest department in the college—will gain a new home. Formerly part of the College of Liberal Arts, it will relocate from its current home in Kirksey Old Main (KOM) to the second floor of Davis Science.

Warner Cribb, chair of Geosciences, describes MTSU’s oldest building as “solid,” but said KOM “does not offer the space or infrastructure” the department needs. “Moving to Davis will enable the department to assign discipline-specific teaching and research spaces to the faculty and students.”

Among the academic programs slated for space are some from outside the College of Basic and Applied Sciences, including three from the College of Liberal Arts. The Public History Ph.D. program will share lab space with the Sociology and Anthropology Department, whose faculty members are eagerly awaiting the upgrade.

“With new lab space, we’ll have an opportunity to show off more of the great things we already do and to improve

our visibility within the community and across middle Tennessee and the rest of our state,” said Shannon Hodge, an associate professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

“We have a good record of placing our students in jobs within our profession and in top-notch graduate schools, and we feel this is a direct result of the student research opportunities those students have taken on,” Hodge said. “Having this new lab space will give our students better facilities and more room to pursue their independent projects, and we expect even better outcomes for our future graduates because of it.”

The Forensic Science program will relocate from Todd Hall to the first floor of Wiser-Patten. With it comes FIRE—the Forensic Institute for Research and Education—comprising an elite squadron of students interested in forensic science careers. Noted forensics expert Dr. Hugh Berryman directs the FIRE operation, which is commonly called on to provide assistance at crime scenes across Tennessee.

“FIRE is totally out of space, and I have no lab at this time,” said Berryman, who frequently travels to Nashville to use the Davidson County Medical Examiner’s lab for the analysis of forensic skeletal cases. “This move will provide both. Lab space on this campus will greatly facilitate forensic work and student training.”

The remaining space in the renovated buildings includes spots for two of MTSU’s most recognized research centers. The Center for Environmental Education and Center for Cedar Glade Studies, now in the Fairview Building off Greenland Drive, will occupy a portion of the first floor of Davis Science.

ENHANCING STUDENT SUCCESS

The renovations are being made with students in mind.

The nearly 20 academic advisors working for the College of Basic and Applied Sciences now operate in cramped quarters inside Keathley University Center. As part of the renovations, the first floor of Davis Science will house a new student advising suite to provide easier student

BY THE NUMBERS: THE COLLEGE OF BASIC AND APPLIED SCIENCES



CBAS had more than 5,100 majors in fall 2015.



Science courses produce about 60,000 credit hours annually at MTSU.



It has approximately 215 faculty members.



More than 10,000 students, both majors and nonmajors, enroll in biology, chemistry, and physical science courses each year.

access and offer greater privacy during meetings between advisors, students, and their parents.

Collaborative learning is also key, and the updated buildings will offer a more student-friendly environment than what now exists. One of the “cool parts” of the renovation, according to Fischer, is the “soft space” available “where students can have discussions, work together, and hang out.”

Rising senior Lindsey Blankenship, a Physics and Mathematics double major from Lexington, Tennessee, is excited to see the University make significant upgrades.

“WITH THESE RENOVATIONS, WE WILL NOW HAVE WHAT I CONSIDER SOME OF THE BEST SCIENCE FACILITIES IN THE SOUTHEAST, AND MAYBE THE COUNTRY . . .”

“While I am a little disappointed that I won’t be around to experience the renovated buildings myself,” she said, “I hope to swing by to have a look around in the future.”

Geosciences alumnus Richard Anderson (’08), now a mine geologist for the Doe Run Company, spent virtually all his class time in Kirksey Old Main.

“Geosciences getting more space and lab space is great,” Anderson said. “It’s great to see the department grow. KOM is a beautiful old building. I enjoyed my time there. But Geosciences is crunched for space. KOM is crowded with [geological] samples. That department can grow, and that is a good thing.”

Anderson’s wife and fellow alum Samantha (’07, ’09), an environmental programs manager at the Doe Run Company, spent lots of time in Davis Science as a Chemistry major and also in and around Wisner-Patten for physics classes and use of the observatory.

“I’m glad to see MTSU preserve the old buildings,” she said. “A lot of us have a lot of great memories. Many of us took physics classes, and we used the observatory. For a lot of us, we called it home.”

Fischer, who credits President Sidney A. McPhee for doing “an amazing job” with the overall science facilities enhancement initiative, said the historical aspect of the older buildings will be maintained despite renovations.

“We’re still keeping parts of those buildings that will remind the alumni of the history, their time spent in those buildings,”



The largest classroom in Davis Science during renovation.

he said, specifically citing plans for the front steps of Wisner-Patten to remain as they are.

That said, significant changes and modern design approaches are coming that will be eye-catching to say the least. Upgrades will allow compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act within both buildings and include installation of new elevators in both. A largely glass walking connector between the two buildings will create a new central entrance and a fresh new look.

A BETTER PLACE FOR ALL

Fischer is eager to share the good news about the program, and said that for top high school and transfer science students in Tennessee, it simply makes sense to come to MTSU. “The programs are growing and getting better and better. The quality of education is better,” he said. “It’s not just a building for middle Tennessee. It’s a building for all of Tennessee.”

In concert with the new \$147-million Science Building, the renovations of the older buildings set the stage for a modern student learning experience that builds upon and surpasses what MTSU science students experienced in past decades.

The improvements are sure to help MTSU prepare more teachers for math and science in K–12 schools, create additional science graduates to fill high-technology jobs, and enhance the economy of our region and state. They will also make MTSU more competitive for research projects, science scholarship, and entrepreneurial efforts.

It’s little wonder that Fischer is so eager to see it all come to pass. [MTSU](#)

A PROPER BURIAL

by Gina K. Logue

Dr. Shannon Hodge and her archaeology students help the Nashville Zoo reinter the human remains of its plantation past



HERE LIE 20 UNKNOWN INDIVIDUALS
WHO LIVED AND WORKED ON THIS PROPERTY,
REINTERRED WITH REVERENCE AT THIS SITE ON THE
12TH DAY OF JUNE, 2014

In the preindustrial South, cotton was king and Africans brought here against their will labored long hours to pick it. Now, because of what expert bio-archaeologist and MTSU associate professor of anthropology Dr. Shannon Hodge and her crew recently accomplished at a Nashville construction site, 20 slaves whose eternal slumber was to be disrupted by modern commercial development have new resting places.

The bodies of nine adults and 11 children were recently reinterred on the site of Grassmere Historic Farm at the Nashville Zoo in preparation for the construction of an entrance kiosk near the original burial grounds. A plaque at the site of the new cemetery

reads, "Here lie 20 unknown individuals who lived and worked on this property, reinterred with reverence at this site on the 12th day of June 2014."

Hodge's colleague at MTSU, Dr. Kevin Smith, first took interest in the cemetery when he was a graduate student at Vanderbilt. The zoo, however, did not begin making plans to relocate the cemetery until 2013. That's when Hodge was called in to handle the delicate work. She performed DNA analysis on the remains, and her work offered remarkable experiences for her student researchers, who were involved in every aspect of the process, from excavating to washing to inventorying and DNA testing.

continued on next page

In the preindustrial South, cotton was king and Africans brought here against their will labored long hours to pick it. Now, because of what expert bio-archaeologist and MTSU associate professor of anthropology Dr. Shannon Hodge and her crew recently accomplished at a Nashville construction site, 20 slaves whose eternal slumber was to be disrupted by modern commercial development have new resting places.

“It was like having it laid out there in technicolor. When the remains are historical as opposed to ancient, they feel closer in time.”

—Sophie Plant-Moran
(pictured at right with Dr. Hodge)

The bodies of nine adults and 11 children were recently reinterred on the site of Grassmere Historic Farm at the Nashville Zoo in preparation for the construction of an entrance kiosk near the original burial grounds. A plaque at the site of the new cemetery reads, “Here lie 20 unknown individuals who lived and worked on this property, reinterred with reverence at this site on the 12th day of June 2014.”

Hodge’s colleague at MTSU, Dr. Kevin Smith, first took interest in the cemetery when he was a graduate student at Vanderbilt. The zoo, however, did not begin making plans to relocate the cemetery until 2013. That’s when Hodge was called in to handle the delicate work. She performed DNA analysis on the remains, and her work offered remarkable experiences for her student researchers, who were involved in every aspect of the process, from excavating to washing to inventorying and DNA testing.

“It was a real beginning-to-end experience for the students,” Hodge said.

Sophie Plant-Moran, a senior from Yellville, Arkansas, did the skeletal inventory, laying out the bones in their correct anatomical positions. “It was like having it laid out there in technicolor,” Plant-Moran said. “When the remains are historical as opposed to ancient, they feel closer in time.”

JoBeth Sorensen, who has graduated and now lives in Clarksville, also helped with the inventory, which included flat underground stones that might have been used to mark the original graves. The stones were placed with the remains at graves in the new cemetery.

“This project gave me a self-pride that no other project has before,” Sorensen said. “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.”

The bodies of infants and children were not suitable for testing, but much data was gleaned from the remains of the adults. Hodge said the crew was able to determine age, gender, and, to a degree, the injuries and illnesses the slaves had suffered.



Dr. Hodge with anthropology student Sophie Plant-Moran in the lab.

“We don’t have a cause of death in particular for any of these individuals,” Hodge said. “Most likely they would have died of some infectious disease that doesn’t leave its trace on your skeleton.”

After analysis, the bodies were reinterred with the greatest of care.

“We’re working under the assumption that they were buried in family groups,” Hodge said. “So we wanted to make sure they were back in their original arrangement so that families were still buried together. It would be inexcusable, personally and professionally, not to uphold that degree of respect.”

The Grassmere Farm, which originally was willed to the Children’s Museum of Nashville to educate people about animals, was passed down through five generations of family ownership. It includes a house built in 1810, a livestock barn, gardens, outbuildings, and cemeteries. Census records dating between 1830 and 1860 show that there was an average of 30 to 35 slaves living and working on the property.

While this was the zoo’s first foray into collaboration on an archaeological project, Tori Mason, the zoo’s historic site manager, certainly doesn’t rule out the possibility of future similar partnerships with MTSU.

“We tend to find shards of pottery and buttons and things like that,” Mason said. “We know that there was a lot of activity, especially up around the historic farm with different structures that were here.” The site once had a barn for sheep and lambs and other buildings. Mason believes there may have also been a blacksmith’s forge.

Nashville Zoo officials received a Commissioner’s Award from the Nashville Metropolitan Historic Commission in May for its role in the cemetery relocation project that MTSU steered.

“It brings tears to my eyes every time I think of the project,” said JoBeth Sorensen. “A piece of me and my heart will always rest with those people.” **MTSU**

“It brings tears to my eyes every time I think of the project. A piece of me and my heart will always rest with those people.”

—JoBeth Sorensen

READY, SET, TEACH!



The stories of two first-year teachers reveal the essential preparation provided by MTSU's College of Education

by ALLISON GORMAN



photos: J. Intintoli

Ashley Fuqua

"I can't do this."

"You can do it!"

It's a familiar refrain in Ashley Fuqua's third-grade classroom at Westside Elementary in Robertson County. Westside's a Title I school, which means that at least 40 percent of its students come from low-income households. Almost a third of Fuqua's students also come from non-English-speaking families. Combine those economic and cultural factors with the stepped-up pressures of the third-grade curriculum (more independent work and complex reading and math skills), and you have a classroom full of students for whom every day is a fresh obstacle course.

So every day, Fuqua nudges, coaxes, and praises: "You've got this. You know this. You can do it."

Not long ago, Fuqua was navigating an obstacle course of her own. In spring 2014, she was a senior in the College of Education, preparing to graduate under the first full year of the Ready2Teach (R2T) curriculum. Designed with significant input from MTSU and PreK-12 faculty and mandated by all Tennessee Board of Regents institutions, R2T addresses the main challenges faced by teacher-training programs, whose graduates cannot afford to fail in the classroom. The cost to communities and, on a larger scale, the economy, is far too high.

Ready2Teach aims to produce good teachers by focusing less on education theory and more on practical experience. Among its challenging requirements are a second semester of classroom teaching—a five-day-a-week Residency II semester following the part-time (Residency I) semester of student teaching—and the completion of the edTPA, an exhaustive, nationally-assessed written and video portfolio developed at Stanford University.

The requirements make for a grueling senior year. When R2T was unveiled, Fuqua wasn't happy because it pushed back her graduation by a semester. And when edTPA time came, she said, "Most [students] were downright negative. It was kind of like Job—oh, woe is me."

Her salvation was Dr. Cheryl Hitchcock, who guided Fuqua and her fellow seniors through the daunting edTPA submission process. "She was incredible," Fuqua said. "She had such



Gerald Jones

.....
continued on next page

LEADING THE QUEST

MTSU's [Quest for Student Success](#) is a series of reforms launched in 2014 aimed at increasing retention and graduation. At its core, the [Quest](#) is a promise that every student who comes to MTSU with the drive to achieve will be met with the best instruction from excellent professors who care about their success and offer personal attention if students struggle inside or outside the classroom.

From new student data-tracking software to the hiring of 47 new academic advisors, the [Quest](#) has had a tremendous impact. MTSU achieved increases in retention in fall 2014 and spring 2015 with regard to both new freshmen and all students, undergraduate and graduate. For all colleges, persistence rates are at their highest level in five years.

The stories of Ashley Fuqua and Gerald Jones show that the College of Education is serious about its mission. Graduates must be ready to go immediately into the profession and effectively teach children. The college's quest is to make sure its graduates are successful so that they can, in turn, help K-12 students succeed.

Here are some of the ways the College of Education ensures that students are well prepared:

Faculty in the college focus on staying current in their knowledge of what teacher candidates will need to be fully equipped in schools now.

MTSU teacher training candidates, although attending one of the largest undergraduate schools in Tennessee, get personal attention from teachers and essentially get a small-college experience in terms of the guidance they receive.

From the time they are admitted to the college to the time they graduate, teacher candidates are provided extensive advising every step of the way. There are layers of advising and checkpoints to ensure that students stay on track and learn what needs to be learned to join the profession and be prepared. [MTSU](#)

grace in the midst of everyone going crazy.”

That's the tenor of teacher training at MTSU, where faculty, staff, and administrators collectively shepherd students through the process, particularly during that last challenging year.

As Fuqua puts it, “They're there to hold your hand when you need it, and they're there to kick you in the butt when you need it as well.” (In her case, the boot was on the foot of the generally beloved Dr. Willis Means, who gently but firmly pushed Fuqua to take an Honors class to fulfill a course requirement. “He told me, ‘Ashley, quit whining and do the work,’” Fuqua said. “I've had you in my class—you can do it.”)

Helping Future Teachers Cross the Finish Line

The goal in the College of Education is to coach students through the rigors of teacher training so that they're prepared for the variety of challenges they'll face in the classroom.

For example, Bobbi Lussier, executive director of the college's Office of Professional Laboratory Experience, works with faculty, University supervisors, master clinicians, and PreK-12 schools to help students who are struggling in Residency II. She offers advising, intervention, remediation, schedule adjustments, changes in school assignments, seminars, edTPA training, and even “boot camps.” As a result of new seminars led by Hitchcock and Dr. Andra Helton, the college saw a “significant increase” in edTPA scores this spring, Lussier said.

For Fuqua's fellow graduate Gerald Jones, now a fifth-grade teacher at Lascassas Elementary School in Rutherford County, his major struggle was financial. The long hours required by Residency II—five days a week in the classroom—cut into his job at Publix.

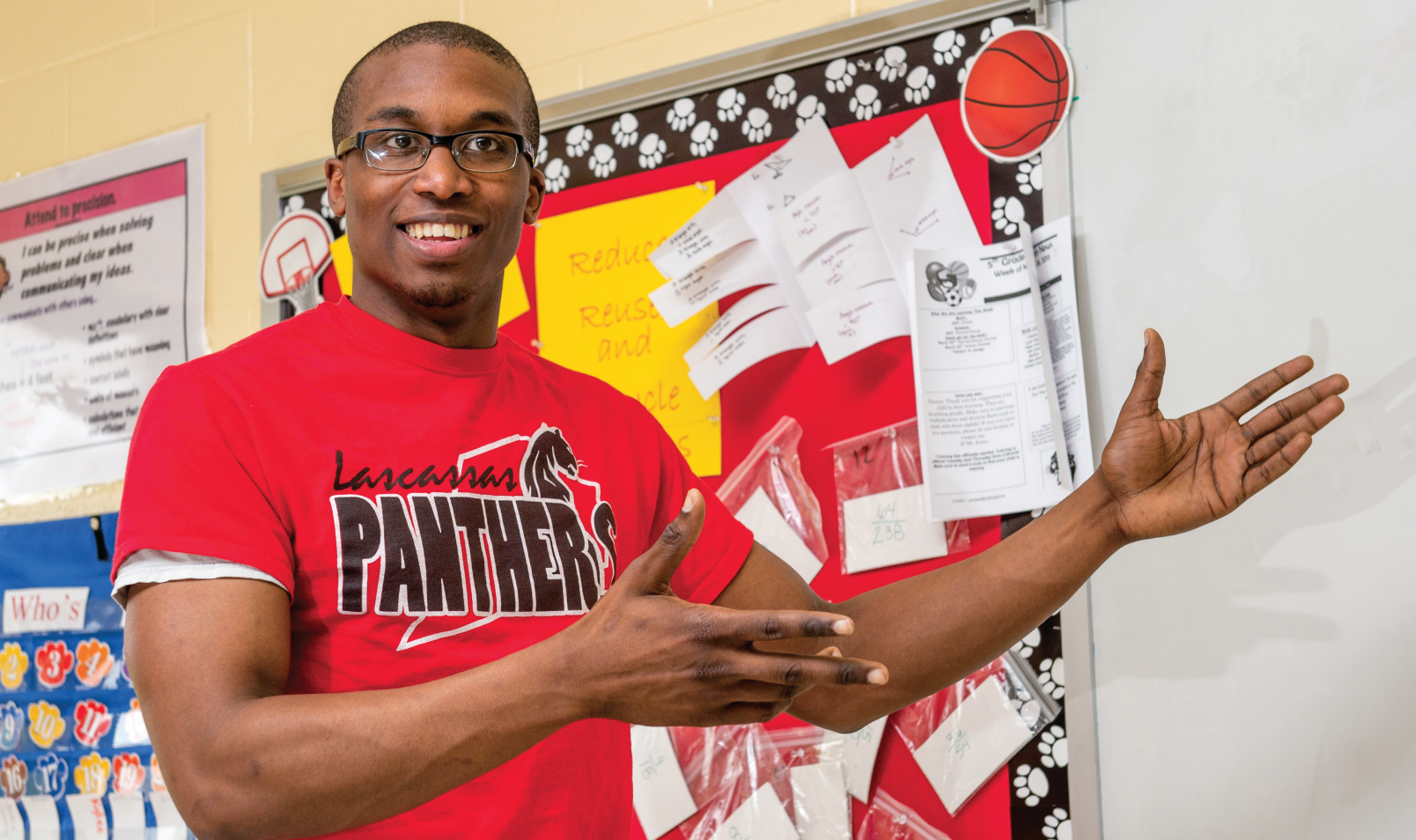
“I felt like I was drowning,” Jones said. “My mind was focused on teaching—this is basically like a job—and then I'd go to my second job after leaving student teaching and I'd think, ‘There's no way I can do this.’ So I worked only on Saturdays, and even then I couldn't devote my full mind to my other job because I was so focused on teaching and the tasks I needed to get done.”

Dean Lana Seivers put Jones in touch with Lussier, who helped him secure an ASPIRE to Teach grant to lighten his financial burden (see related article on page 26). Funded through the MTSU Foundation, the program was launched in late 2013 to help College of Education students, especially those in their residency semesters, pay for basics like food and rent and academic expenses like the required \$200 to \$600 in certification exams while they work toward becoming professional educators. “It's catastrophic when a candidate completes the teacher education program but cannot apply for licensure because they cannot afford to pay for the Praxis exams,” Lussier said.

Other help Jones received was less tangible but longer lasting. He credits Dr. Terri Sharp with being extraordinarily accessible as an advisor and even going beyond that official capacity to help him polish his classroom skills.

Advising is a critical component of what the college offers, especially since R2T has added even more moving parts to an already complex curriculum (part classwork, part fieldwork). Despite tough budgetary times, the college

The goal in the College of Education is to coach students through the rigors of teacher training so that they're prepared for the variety of challenges they'll face in the classroom.



has added more advisors even since Fuqua and Jones graduated last year. (See the “Ensuring Student Success” sidebar on page 8.)

“Advisors need to always have the best interests of their students at heart,” Tharp said. “Our goal is for them to be independent learners, but it is vital that we support and encourage them along the way.”

Seivers said that attitude reflects the perspective of College of Education faculty and staff—who are, after all, teachers teaching teachers.

“They are educators first and foremost,” she said. “They know their students and work hard to help them through whatever challenges they face. Whether financially, in the MTSU classroom, or in their school placements, we all try to model what is expected of effective, caring educators. I think our teacher candidates have a firsthand example of what good teachers do, and hopefully they will pay it forward with their own students.”

Jones said he quickly established good working relationships with faculty members like Dr. Alyson Bass, who helped him with his reading instruction, which he considered his weakest area.

Bass, a specialist in literacy education, said she’s adamant about “scaffolding” students in the skills they need to have before they leave her class. “The process can be different for each student since they all come with varying prior knowledge,” she said. “It’s an arduous yet thoroughly gratifying task when I observe a student move from not knowing to knowing.”

Jones said Bass showed him techniques he later used to great effect with his fifth-graders at Lascassas, and he regularly uses

many of the materials he received from her as a student—although he didn’t realize just how handy they would be until he became a teacher himself.

The same thing happened with certain teaching applications he learned about at MTSU. “I didn’t actually see them in action until I got to Lascassas,” he said. “Then it made sense why my teachers had recommended them.”

But Dr. Becky Alexander’s classroom management course was the one Jones drew on most as a new teacher—or, more accurately, as a new hire. He began poring over his old notes as soon as he received his teaching assignment and realized he had to be prepared to manage his first classroom. As he’d been taught to do, he tackled any problems proactively—arranging his classroom to minimize distractions for students, and then developing a plan to deal with disruptions calmly and effectively. “It’s worked pretty well,” he said.

And although the edTPA process was daunting, Jones said building the portfolio turned out to be vital preparation for the classroom. “I can’t just make up a lesson plan and teach it,” he said. “I have to do research. I have to make sure it makes sense for the students and really look at my lesson plan overall. So the edTPA was a lot of work, but it got me ready for teaching.”

Work in Progress

Still, that first year involves plenty of on-the-job training. “There’s a lot I didn’t learn until I got into my first classroom and figured things out on my own, by doing,” Jones said. His professional learning curve included progressively higher scores awarded to him

ENSURING STUDENT SUCCESS

College of Education graduates like Ashley Fuqua and Gerald Jones are quick to credit the staff and faculty at MTSU for the personal care and attention they received to prepare them for their first years as professional teachers. Since Fuqua and Jones left MTSU a year ago, there are even more levels of advising in place to help students become successful.

The Student Success and Advising Services (SSAS) unit in the college is designed to provide academic, personal, professional, and financial support to students majoring in education at MTSU. Established in spring 2014, SSAS works with staff and faculty to provide a streamlined path through precandidacy, admission to teacher education, student teaching residencies, and teacher licensure.

SSAS members contact freshmen and incoming transfers before they arrive at MTSU and help them through the admissions process.

Advisors lead all freshmen and transfer CUSTOMS orientation advising sessions and help students register for their first-semester classes.

Staff members closely monitor the academic progress of education students and provide counseling and tutorial referrals for those who are struggling.

Advisors help students complete the requirements for admission to teacher education and submit their applications for candidacy.

SSAS works to provide a smooth transition from initial candidacy to teacher licensure and offers career development, PRAXIS tutoring, interviewing skills development, and other student success programming.

SSAS processes microgrants to provide one-time financial assistance of \$250 to some support education students in need.

Said Jim Rost, SSAC director, "The College of Education is committed to providing a holistic student support approach for all of our students from orientation to graduation." [MTSU](#)



Ashley Fuqua

by administrators observing his work over the course of the school year. He got his first perfect score in the spring.

Those classroom observations are stressful for all teachers, especially new ones, and Fuqua said the many assessments MTSU requires of teacher candidates made the experience easier when she got to Westside Elementary.

"Our professors prepped us back and forth about knowing that rubric, especially in student teaching," she said. "At first I thought, 'Gosh, this is overkill.' But it helped. I mean, everyone's nervous before evaluations, but I feel like I can truly hit the target."

One of the most important lessons Fuqua learned in her first year of teaching is that some days will be better than others—particularly with so many at-risk students. She now knows it's okay if she's not perfect as long as she still feels passionate about her mission. The day she doesn't, she said, is the day she'll leave the profession.

"I don't want to be an ineffective teacher," she said. "I don't want to be the reason a kid starts hating school or thinking 'School's too hard for someone like me.' Because those kids want to succeed. As long as they feel loved and respected and safe, they'll do anything for you."

And so she tells them what her teachers told her—"You can do it!"—the message amplified by a display on her classroom wall: bold letters that say "The Tassel Is Worth the Hassle," and her cap and gown from MTSU. [MTSU](#)



by Vicky Travis

The Uncommon

By involving students like Erin Porter in Very Special Arts projects, professor Lori Kissinger strives to bring art to all



“Art Education majors don’t always have the opportunity to be with English language learners or special needs children. This was a great opportunity to work with them.”

—Erin Porter (pictured at left with Lori Kissinger)

Lori Kissinger's work as a full-time instructor in the Department of Communication Studies and Organizational Communication at MTSU dovetails nicely with her work as executive director of Very Special Arts (VSA) Tennessee, which opens the art world to special needs students. VSA, created by former U.S. ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith in 1974, has affiliates worldwide that provide arts and education opportunities for people with disabilities and increase access to the arts for all.

Kissinger's combined passions recently brought hundreds of MTSU students and faculty in various departments together to realize her vision to showcase the special relationship between art and students who are often excluded from that world. In May 2015, an international quilt and the 40 Days Around the World Digital Arts Festival was featured in Todd Art Gallery. The digital festival, which showcased 40 art programs for special needs students here and abroad, went live June 16. (Find it at www.40days.vsatn.org.) The 100-by-100-foot international quilt with panels from VSA affiliates in 36 states and 38 countries then went to Washington, D.C., for receptions at the State Department and the Capitol.

“This doesn’t happen without MTSU,” said Kissinger, who also said she was blown away by campus support for the project. “No wonder I bleed Blue,” said the Indiana native.

Turning Empathy into Effort

Kissinger's passion for artistic expression began after a serious bout of scarlet fever as a child. After being quarantined with a poor prognosis, she healed but lost some hand-eye coordination. As a result, recess at her parochial school in Indiana wasn't fun, but dreaded. A cruel teacher made playing ball a forced activity for everyone, so she regularly escaped and hid underneath a church pew. In the quiet safety of a church, she wrote songs.

In high school, a choir teacher took notice. But Kissinger froze on stage, so she learned to play piano. But it was harp lessons that awakened her love of music. She eventually learned to play 100 instruments, specializing in folk music. Shyness moved aside as she performed at festivals and parks, teaching her audiences about the music's history.

“There were no nerves then,” she said. “I had a passion for it, and I was giving it away.”

After college, Kissinger became a children's librarian in Evansville, Indiana, and planned to get a library science master's degree. She did, but a nudge from her boss to take a job with the local arts council led her in an unexpected direction.

Just 23 and still quite shy, she was asked to become the council's executive director after just six months. For the next 11 years, she learned on the job how to write a grant, how to speak at

meetings and in TV interviews, and even how to deal with the mayor. Early in her new job, her quiet persuasiveness dissolved his opposition.

“It was trial by fire,” she said of that job. Now, part of her organizational communication class includes real-world experience writing grants. “I don’t want them to go through what I went through,” said Kissinger.

Filling the Void

While in Indiana, Kissinger discovered VSA accidentally as she worked on a grant for the arts council. Once she performed with special needs children, she saw the power of art education for the disabled. “These kids, so many times, were told what they couldn’t do,” she said. “Maybe they just need to do it in a different way. It’s about empowerment.”

For instance, Kissinger once worked with a nonverbal boy and discovered just how much was inside by introducing him to the harp. He answered questions by plucking strings.

Kissinger eventually started teaching at the University of Southern Indiana. While there, she earned her second master's degree from Indiana State.

Her husband's job change brought the Kissingers and their son to Tennessee in 2001. She taught as an adjunct at MTSU, Belmont, and Volunteer State. She joined MTSU full-time in 2003. When Kissinger found out there was no VSA Tennessee chapter, she called the VSA national leadership, who said that if she'd create bylaws, they would find someone to lead a chapter. More than a decade later, Kissinger is still working hard, often seven days a week, teaching at MTSU and leading VSA Tennessee.

“Lori is hugely dedicated to serving people with disabilities through the arts and has single-handedly grown VSA Tennessee exponentially over the years,” said Stephanie Litvak, manager of VSA Affiliates. “She really brought in the community connections that are needed for success.” “This is my niche as a teacher,” Kissinger said. “I’ve thought about pulling back, working less on VSA, but to be a better teacher, I need to stay involved.”

The international quilt project and the 40 Days Around the World Festival celebrated 40 years of VSA's influence. Last year, as its leaders brainstormed ways to involve state affiliates in the anniversary, Kissinger suggested creating something for Jean Kennedy Smith: a quilt with squares from all over. The response? Great idea. Now do you want to lead it?

That wasn't her intention when she came up with the idea, but Kissinger accepted. As the project grew in scope, and the digital component came alive, her enthusiasm brought several MTSU departments on board. Textiles students from the Department of Human Sciences put the quilt together with help from visiting

The Uncommon **THREAD**

disabled students. A campaigns class worked on promotion. Students and advisors in Recording Industry, Electronic Media Communication, and WMOT also participated. Interns in Political Science, Organizational Communication, Education, and Art including Erin Porter, an MTSU senior majoring in art education, created an Americans with Disabilities Act display of information and layered artwork by middle schoolers and senior citizens, which went to Legislative Plaza in Nashville in March.

"Art education majors don't always have the opportunity to be with English language learners or special needs children," Porter said. "This was a great opportunity to work with them. Lori puts lots of care into everything," she said. "And it really shows."

At one point in the planning, Kissinger got word that a planned Washington, D.C., presentation of the quilt was no longer happening. "Then I met a little girl with special needs who was helping with the quilt who asked about it going to D.C.," she said. That was it, she thought. This had to happen. "I called (Rep.) Diane Black and sent a 'Hail Mary' email to the State Department," Kissinger recalled.

Rep. Black invited Kissinger to a Capitol reception. Meanwhile, the State Department agreed to display the quilt in its gallery and then in its Hall of Flags. The ADA exhibit was also planned to go to the Capitol reception. After its summer presentation, plans call for the quilt to travel to embassies around the world.

Home Base and Launching Pad

Kissinger said that none of these accomplishments would have been possible without the support of the University and the efforts of MTSU students. Kissinger's department has roughly 300 students majoring in Organizational Communication, said Sharon Smith, interim chair. Its 500 graduates have entered to for-profit and nonprofit fields such as event planning, human resources, and fundraising.

Senior Hannah Holladay, 21, interned with Kissinger from August 2014 to May 2015, and her work included coordinating a VSA event. "It turned on a switch in my heart," she said. "I recommend her classes to everyone."

As an intern, Holladay dealt with emails from all over the world as she helped coordinate projects between countries and their U.S. partners for the digital arts festival. When she saw Japan didn't have a partner, she created and led a handweaving project with Metro Nashville schools. Overcoming nerves, she taught Antioch High School special education students how to weave.

"Words can't describe how sweet they were," Holladay said. Another VSA project showcasing art related to river life had Egyptian children learning about the Nile River while children in Memphis learned about the Mississippi River.

As evidenced by the Digital Arts project alone, Kissinger is a tireless worker and advocate. Incredibly, she still somehow finds time for other good works projects. For instance, in the last three years, she has raised more than \$50,000 for various MTSU departments to support programs that marry service learning for MTSU students with high schoolers and students with disabilities. True Blue! **MTSU**





FILLING THE GAP

When Lorelei Samuelson ('08, '13) graduated from MTSU's Computer Information Systems (CIS) master's program and found work with Nashville-based HCA, the world's largest hospital company, she noticed an important component was absent from MTSU's curriculum: data analytics and business intelligence.



"We had the statistics class, we had the coding classes, but we didn't have anything to bridge them together, to help businesses make important decisions based on their data," said Samuelson, now 29 and leading a team that develops business intelligence (BI) solutions for HCA.

Data analytics and business intelligence are terms that are sometimes used interchangeably, but Samuelson said data analytics refers to the process of extracting and categorizing data to discover patterns and other useful information, and BI refers to applications and tools that take data from the analytics process and turn it into meaningful, actionable information that helps businesses make decisions. One thing is certain: the skills associated with both are in high demand.

"It's extremely popular right now, and it's changing the way we think about doing business," Samuelson said. "I was afraid if MTSU didn't get ahead of this, they were going to fall behind."

So after about two years at HCA, Samuelson decided it was time to introduce MTSU to MicroStrategy, a BI vendor used not only by her employer but also by companies such as Facebook, Target, Netflix, and Apple.

Fourteen months later, with the help of HCA, MTSU faculty, and MicroStrategy, she'd orchestrated a \$1.48 million gift-in-kind of MicroStrategy's enterprise analytics software (licenses and programming materials included) to the CIS Department. MicroStrategy's generous donation prompted MTSU to propose a new graduate concentration in Business Intelligence and Analytics (BIA), approved this spring. Charles Apigian, CIS chair, said students will have

Lorelei Samuelson resolved to give back.



continued on next page



“I want to see change. I want to see students get jobs. So let’s give them the skill sets they need to be successful.”



Lorelei Samuelson at HCA’s Nashville headquarters.

Filling the Gap

access to MicroStrategy’s software in fall 2015. “The use of MicroStrategy will give students real-world experience on cutting-edge analytics software, a much-needed skill in Nashville’s booming IT community,” he said.

MicroStrategy’s applications allow companies in almost every industry to pull in multiple areas of data for a “single source of truth,” Samuelson said. “It’s like bringing a giant Excel spreadsheet with a thousand tabs into one view.”

Executives, for example, can get an overall view of what’s happening in each department using dashboards and visualizations. In the healthcare business, the software helps executives track company performance and adds value when it comes to something like cancer research. “We can see anomalies in data or things that are tied together in ways that we haven’t seen before,” Samuelson said. “We can pull all those different elements [together] and say, ‘This might be a leading cause of breast cancer.’”

The software permits on-the-fly analytics. A doctor in the field, for example, can find statistics on how a patient is doing using an iPad. The tools also employ authentication security and tracking to protect patients and caregivers.

Apigian said the new BIA concentration will benefit both MTSU and the workforce. “With HCA and MicroStrategy’s guidance, we are helping shape the analytics environment and providing the students to make it happen,” he said.

Apigian expects graduates in the new concentration will be in demand. Samuelson hopes some will land at HCA. She praises HCA for allowing her and other employees to volunteer time to make the program a reality.

Samuelson also helped MTSU structure the new curriculum to make sure it squares with industry perspectives. But the real credit, she said, goes to the professors who’ve thoroughly learned the new software. Several have taken many online and off-site courses. In January, four faculty members went to Las Vegas for MicroStrategy World 2015, an annual conference.

Samuelson (who also earned a B.S. in Recording Industry at MTSU) said the commitment of MTSU professors and their desire to help students succeed never ceases to amaze her. She remembers the professors who taught her—a student with no real computer information systems background—to write code.

“Their doors were always open,” she said. “They said, ‘Come on in, sit down, and we’ll get you through it.’ I always said, ‘I will be back one day, and I will find a way to give back to you guys.’”

Samuelson found that she enjoyed data analytics during her four years at Sony Music before she entered grad school. She decided to go back to school at MTSU to get a master’s degree in a field that could give her more.

After earning her M.S., she knew she wanted to be a part of an innovative company. “The recording industry was still a little behind as far as tech is concerned. There were just so many changes occurring in the industry,” she said. “HCA is one of *Data World’s* top 100 companies year after year, so I thought it was a good fit for me.”

Samuelson emphasizes that young alums just starting out can help MTSU by giving their time to do mock interviews with students or act as career coaches to help students figure out what they want to do and how to get there. But for her, working to get the MicroStrategy donation was also personal. “My mom always said, ‘If you want to see change, you need to become it.’ I want to see change. I want to see students get jobs. So let’s give them the skill sets they need to be successful.” [MTSU](#)

Lasting Tune

by Patsy B. Weiler

John and Bobbie Duke turn their lifelong love of jazz into a scholarship for the woodwind-inclined

Dr. John R. Duke and his wife, Bobbie, have composed a fascinating life together. Like a catchy melody matched to beautiful harmony, they are a perfect team.

Married for 63 years, they have raised a family, supported each other in their careers, served their community and, together, have endowed the John R. and Bobbie J. Duke Woodwind Jazz Scholarship.

Still vibrant and active in their 80s—they love to dance, take yoga classes, and worship at St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church—music has been a constant in their lives. They met at a “Teen Town” dance in East Nashville when Bobbie was a dark-haired, 14-year-old beauty. At only 16, her husband-to-be was playing in the band. And, with just a nod, and a little tweak to the title of the great jazzy hit by Frank Sinatra, “the best was yet to come.”

Both Nashville natives, Bobbie, an admitted “people lover,” was one of the top realtors in the Murfreesboro area when she retired from Bob Parks Realty. John taught for 25 years at MTSU and worked professionally as a session musician and a conductor at Opryland USA (a former music theme park associated with the Grand Ole Opry), in the stage band for the nationally televised *Johnny Cash Show*, and on the Dove, Country Music Association, and Grammy awards shows. He was also part of the committee appointed by former MTSU president M. G. Scarlett to develop the popular Recording Industry degree.

continued on next page



A Lasting Tune



John and Bobbie Duke in their home

Sitting in their comfortable home, the Dukes, whose three children are all MTSU graduates, reflected on how they combined their love of music, Murfreesboro, and MTSU when they began their estate planning.

"I received a small scholarship when I went to college, and it helped me," John said. "I know students often need some assistance, so we established something in the Music Department."

Bobbie also wanted their gift to support students who share their passion for jazz. "I saw this as a good opportunity to help an individual who is interested in jazz and wants to keep this style of music alive," she said. "I've been listening to jazz music all my life, and I want to see it continue."

The Duke legacy began in 1970 when John was hired to teach the woodwind instruments.

"Back then, the department was small, maybe 30 woodwind students total," he said. "Today, you might have 30 students specifically studying just the clarinet!"

His superiors encouraged the new faculty member to continue his working relationship with Johnny Cash. His teaching schedule was arranged so he didn't have classes on Thursdays, when show rehearsals took place in Nashville.

"Some of my students would see me on television," John said. "It was good for them to see there were opportunities for their field." He added, "It was a great experience working on the show. There was incredible talent, from Bob Dylan to Dolly Parton, coming through each week. I met all kinds of interesting people."

John also recorded with Elvis Presley, Louis Armstrong, Perry Como, Roger Miller, Al Hirt, and Doc Severinsen and did live shows with Sonny and Cher, Glen Campbell, and others.

During the summers, John interacted with young adults from around the world who were performing in Opryland musical productions.

"John wrote original scores for the *I Hear America Singing* and the *Dixieland* shows," Bobbie said. "He met kids from everywhere and recruited several of them to come to MTSU."

In the mid-1970s, Dr. Neil Wright, then head of the Music Department, asked Duke to supervise the fledgling jazz program.

"I agreed—if they would put jazz into the curriculum and develop coursework," John said. "At that time, there were only a few colleges across the country offering jazz studies. Now, they are all over and even in the high schools."

He remembers the challenges the program faced in the beginning. Not all the music teachers liked the change. "Our students voted to name their jazz group the Blues Crusade because it really was a crusade to get it going," he said. "Initially, we didn't even have our own rehearsal space."

The determined professor refused to listen to the dissonance and continued to build the program, reinforcing instruction by bringing jazz masters to MTSU to perform. Working with then student-programming director Harold Smith, artists who appeared at MTSU included trumpet players Arturo Sandoval and Dizzy Gillespie, the great jazz clarinetist Buddy DeFranco, and drummers Buddy Rich and Duffy Jackson.

Once, when rehearsals ran a little late at the Duke's home, famed Italian saxophone player Denis DiBlasio was treated to a healthy meal.

"I had been working late and didn't have any time to cook," said Bobbie. "I pulled out a Lean Cuisine and popped it in the microwave. I told Denis it was his home-cooked Italian meal! We all got a laugh out of it."

Like a proud parent, John is hesitant to single out any one accomplished student he has taught. "Oh, gosh, there have been so many outstanding ones," he said.

continued on next page

"I received a small scholarship when I went to college, and it helped me. I know students often need some assistance, so we established something in the Music Department."

—John Duke

Trumpet virtuosos Mike Haynes and John Blount and one of the top Nashville saxophonists, Mark Douthit, all passed through John's MTSU classroom and went on to national prominence.

The Duke Scholarship continues to attract high-quality players to the MTSU jazz program. The 2015–16 recipient is saxophone talent Kyle Morgan of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The influence and respect former students have for John was evident during a Blues Crusade alumni reunion in February. "We had people return to campus who had not been here in decades," said Dr. Michael Parkinson, director of the School of Music. "When we called John to the stage to direct the former Blues Crusade members, the audience erupted in applause and gave him a standing ovation. It was an amazing, amazing evening."

In his typical reserved manner, John said the most important contribution he made to the University was that he "taught students and helped develop their ability to teach and play." Stressing Bobbie's involvement through the years, he added, "It's nice to know when we're gone, our scholarship will still help somebody and give them a little boost along the way."

To find out how you can leave your legacy and help current and future College of Liberal Arts students, contact Meredith Kerr at Meredith.Kerr@mtsu.edu. [MTSU](http://mtsu.edu)



John Duke (far right) during his teaching days with members of the Blues Crusade.

background photo:
Andy Heidt

From Raider to Stampeder

photo: Calgary Stampede

One former MT defensive back turned “Man of Calgary” pursues an unlikely career in professional football north of the border

Keon Raymond never dreamed he'd be playing professional football for nearly a decade after graduating from MTSU. In fact, before his junior year with the Blue Raiders, playing the game he loved at the professional level seemed a far-fetched dream.

Today, Raymond, 32, is preparing for his eighth professional season as a defensive back with the Calgary Stampede in the Canadian Football League (CFL), where last year he contributed mightily to a team that won the league's championship, the Grey Cup.

Seasons of Change

What spurred the change that opened the doors to a career in professional athletics? Raymond said it was during his junior and senior seasons at MTSU when he finally learned the importance of studying game film to give him a competitive edge. Logging hours in the film room helped him understand that a smart and well-prepared player can often actually outperform quicker, more athletic players.



by Keith Ryan Cartwright



"If you can be a student of the game, I think you can probably play as long as you would like," Raymond said. "I knew I could play football, and I was on scholarship and had an opportunity, but to really know how important school was and how it would prepare me for life—that translated to the field, too."

Raymond said his time as an upper-classman at MTSU was the "beginning" of his life.

"You're going to get out what you put in," he said. "That's in class and that's in football. You have to be able to put in the work."

More importantly for Raymond, who was married and a father while attending MTSU, college was also about truly becoming an adult and providing for his family. He realized that Blue Raider football gave him a platform to get a chance to play professionally, but that he would have to demonstrate personal responsibility, a strong work ethic, and determination.

Due North

The St. Louis native said that playing in Canada has been fun and rewarding. Raymond likened the Canadian game-day atmosphere to college football in the U.S. But he said it took some adjusting when he first arrived north of the border.

For a start, offenses only have three downs to earn a first down, not four. The goalpost is at the front of the end zone, and the field is much bigger—65 yards wide and 110 yards long—and the end zones are 20 yards deep.

That's significant if you play defensive back. When opposing teams are on the three-yard line, for instance, Raymond has to be prepared to defend a 20-yard fade route.

"That's pretty tough," said Raymond. "But it's not bad. You just have to be able to run up here."

His path to Canada was somewhat winding. After his career ended at MTSU, he joined the Tennessee Titans as an unsigned free agent in 2006. He played one season in the Arena Football League as a member of the Nashville Kats and a second season with the New Orleans Voodoo. In 2008, he signed a player contract with the Calgary Stampeders of the CFL, and the team won the Grey Cup that year.

"I thought it was easy . . . and we would do it every year," Raymond said. The team

has since been to the conference finals five times but only won that game twice. The Stampeders won the Grey Cup again in 2014.

Thoughts of Home

Looking back, Raymond said he couldn't have imagined when he was growing up that he would be a professional football player. "Especially playing this long," he added. "It's a dream come true."

While he never played for Coach Rick Stockstill, Raymond said the two talk on occasion. He also said that after he retires from pro football he and his family do not plan to return to his hometown in Missouri, where he

led Mehlville High School to a state championship as a junior. Instead they intend to settle in Murfreesboro. And he has a new goal in mind.

"It's a huge family and I'm glad I chose Middle Tennessee," he said. He wants to coach football or work as a mentor with college athletes after he retires. "Honestly, that would be like a dream job—to coach for my alma mater." [MTSU](#)

Raymond referred to his time as an upperclassman at MTSU as "the beginning of [my] life."



By the Numbers

During the 2014 CFL season, Raymond started 16 games for the Calgary Stampeders and had 46 tackles, a special-teams tackle, four tackles for a loss of four yards, four knockdowns, a forced fumble, a blocked kick, and five interceptions for 203 return yards, including one returned for a 63-yard touchdown. On October 3, he moved into fourth place in Stampeders history with 553 career interception return yards. He also returned kickoffs for 117 yards. Raymond was named the CFL's defensive player of the week after recording seven tackles, including one tackle for loss; a forced fumble; and a 43-yard interception in the final regular season game. He started in the Western Final and had three tackles, three special-teams tackles, and a fumble recovery. He also started in the Grey Cup game and had four tackles and a special-teams tackle.

Off the field, Raymond represents the Stampeders locally and is involved in the Every Yard Counts and Timbits programs.

True Blue! [MTSU](#)

From Grass to GLASS

A CLOSER LOOK AT MTSU'S LAND OF MILK (AND HONEY)

by Darby D. Campbell

ACROSS AMERICA, there is a growing movement to “buy local.” Locavores, as they’ve branded themselves, champion the idea that when you buy local, your food is fresher and you reduce your carbon footprint and support your local infrastructure.

For MTSU students and Agribusiness/Agriscience staff, it doesn’t get much more local than MTSU’s Experiential Learning and Research Center (ELRC) at Guy James Farm, just six miles east of the main campus.

The center has 435 acres of gorgeous Tennessee farm country with a \$2.7 million state-of-the-art dairy, a registered Angus herd, a swine herd, student gardens that include horticulture hoop houses, and an apiary for beehives. There, students get hands-on experience working on a farm and caring for animals morning to night: feeding, milking, checking their health, and even playing with them. About 30 students a year are hired part-time to work at the MTSU Farm Lab.

GOT MILK?

A primary product at the farm is milk. MTSU is the only school in the state where students milk the cows and process the milk that on-campus students drink. They also haul the milk from the dairy, which boasts computerized equipment capable of milking as many as 350 cows, to the milk processing plant on campus. Under the supervision of manager Liz Troup, the milk is lab-tested to check for antibiotics, pasteurized and homogenized, then packaged

continued on next page



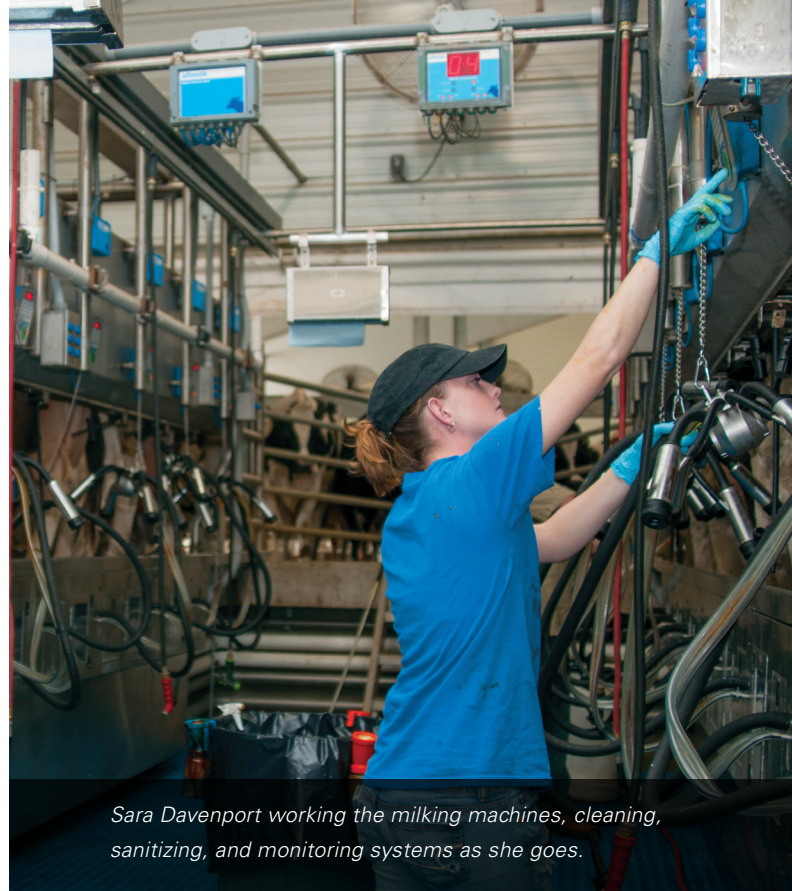


Nursing students Princesse F. Gaston and her twin sister Princesse A. Gaston are in charge of the sanitation process.

for delivery to campus cafeterias. Milk consumption on campus is about 3,800 pounds per week, or one-third of the dairy's production. The remaining milk is sold to the Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative Association, which markets milk mainly for dairy-farm families from Pennsylvania to Alabama. So the next time you sit down to drink a glass of MTSU's famous chocolate milk at McCallie dining hall (MTSU's chocolate milk has won national awards), rest assured, it doesn't get any fresher.

FARM TO TABLE

Milk isn't the only product coming off the farm. Matthew Wade, farm laboratory director, oversees students assisting with the 15 hives and the production of raw honey, which is sold year-round (or until they run out) at the Stark Agriscience and Agriculture Center and seasonally at the MTSU Student Farmers Market. The program inherited beehives started in the 1920s. Plant and soil science students, led by assistant professor of horticulture Dr. Nate Phillips,



Sara Davenport working the milking machines, cleaning, sanitizing, and monitoring systems as she goes.

grow produce for the farmers market. Open in the summer and, depending on the season, for other brief periods, the market is a great place to find local raw honey, plants, flowers, fruits, and veggies. Bounty fresh from the farm also includes cabbage, onions, tomatoes, kohlrabi, corn, okra, eggplant, beans, watermelon, cantaloupe, and peppers.

QUEST FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

The Experimental Learning and Research Center is a teaching facility, where pre-veterinary students and Animal Science majors get hands-on opportunities to learn about animal production and prepare for in-demand careers in Tennessee's large food processing industry. [True Blue! MTSU](#)



A Walk on the WILD SIDE

You could say that Logan Whiles was a bit of a wild child. Wild about animals, that is.

As a young boy, Whiles spent hours with his favorite zoo-themed video games. In high school, he developed a fascination with clouded leopards after encountering the exotic creatures at the Nashville Zoo. Today, as a college senior, Whiles has turned his childhood pursuits into a college thesis with great potential to lead him into an exciting career.

As a student in the Honors College, Whiles is conducting research on the clouded leopards that previously captivated him at the Nashville Zoo at Grassmere.

“My project is mainly focused on investigating stress in relation to rearing methods in captive clouded leopards,” said Whiles, explaining that certain hormone levels have been shown to indicate stress in the animals.

“He’s doing the type of project that lots of Biology majors hope to do, but very few ever actually get to experience,” said Dr. Drew Sieg, visiting assistant professor and resident Honors Scholar. “Particularly for students who are looking to go in to graduate school, this is the kind of excellent opportunity that prepares them for their future endeavors and gets them accustomed to ‘owning’ their research.”

continued on next page





photo by Andy Heidt

Honors student
Logan Whiles's
youthful fascination
with big cats led him
to an international
zoo research project



The Perfect Setting

Whiles, a 21-year-old from Bristol, did consider other schools, but a place in the Honors College was too good to refuse. “After looking into all of the perks offered by the Honors College and the Buchanan Fellowship, including the support in developing independent research at an undergraduate level, I decided I couldn’t pass up the opportunities MTSU had to offer,” he said.

Whiles’s collaboration with the Nashville Zoo came about when he contacted Karen Rice, the zoo’s carnivore supervisor, to ask about possible research opportunities with his “favorite furballs,” as he calls them.

“Logan came into this process very prepared and well informed,” Rice said. “He had already done so much research and knew a lot about clouded leopards and the studies and research being done with the species.”

Because the clouded leopard is at high risk of extinction in the wild, zoos in several nations have begun to breed and raise them. Those efforts have been somewhat successful, but there are challenges. With captive breeding, the leopards have exhibited stress-related behavior such as pacing, hiding, tail biting, and fur plucking.

By studying stress hormones in the captive animals, Whiles and others in the field hope to not only provide

the animals with a more comfortable environment and life experience but also to perfect breeding protocols in order to increase numbers and protect the species.

Since the Nashville Zoo is a member of the Thailand Clouded Leopard Consortium (a program focused on saving the species through breeding programs at zoos), Rice saw the research project as a win-win-win opportunity—for Whiles, the zoo, and the leopards.

“We have found that hand-rearing clouded leopards is a very successful method to reduce mortality in cubs and stress in the species and allows us to do successful introductions without male aggression toward the females,” said Rice. “I was hoping that we could somehow document what we know. If we could then present this information, maybe others would not be as hesitant or critical of the hand-rearing method and get on board.”

The collaboration with Whiles also allows the zoo to fulfill an important part of its mission: to serve as a learning resource.

“By working with students, I hope that we can pass on our passion for the work while exposing students to the opportunities that exist in the zoo field,” said Rice.

continued on next page

Producing Results

Whiles completed an internship at the zoo this past summer, performing general work in the carnivore department and developing a survey for his project. The survey went out in May 2015 to 40 zoos, asking for data on their clouded leopard populations, including hormonal measures (if available) as well as cub survival rates and information on the general health of the animals. Whiles also hopes to collaborate with and obtain additional information on clouded leopard populations at Zoo Miami; Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium in Tacoma, Wash.; and Lowry Park Zoo in Tampa, Fla.

“The more animals, the more data, the more reliable the results,” Whiles said. “I hope to present my results to the Clouded Leopard Species Survival Plan, a committee organized by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums to efficiently manage its captive clouded leopard population.”

Though he is excited to be involved in the project, Whiles admits it’s challenging. “Right now, I feel in over my head—but in a good way. It’s an experience I thought I might never have,” he said.

Whiles is on track to graduate in spring 2016. After that, he hopes to earn a year of funded research as a Fulbright Scholar.

He may well get that chance. For six consecutive years, MTSU has had two or more Fulbright winners (a total of 13) and was one of just 108 colleges and universities recognized by *the Chronicle of Higher Education* for producing Fulbright International Scholars in 2013, ranked alongside Duke, Harvard, and Yale. (No other Tennessee institution made that list.)

If selected for the Fulbright, Whiles’s goal is to go to Thailand and continue his study of clouded leopards in their native habitat.

“I hope to get realistic experience in remote fieldwork before I pursue my education any further,” said Whiles, who has his sights set on earning a master’s and perhaps even a Ph.D. in wildlife ecology.

Regarding his professional ambitions, Whiles said he simply wants to “balance being a scientist with being someone who just likes being around animals.” [MTSU](#)



TUCKER THEATRE EVENTS

Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building

Dog Sees God:

Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead

September 30–
October 9, 2015
7:30 p.m.

UNCLE VANYA

November 4–8, 2015
7:30 p.m.

COLLAGE

A COLLECTION OF DANCE

November 19–21, 2015
7:30 p.m.

alm♥st, maine

February 24–28, 2016
7:30 p.m.

COMPOSITIONS

MTSU FACULTY DANCE CONCERT

March 31–April 2, 2016
7:30 p.m.

WEST SIDE STORY

April 20–24, 2016
7:30 p.m.

For tickets, visit www.mtsu.edu/mtsuarts or call 1-888-71-TICKETS.
MTSU student tickets are FREE with student ID at the box office.


PROUDLY PRESENTS

MTSU *Arts*
ART • DANCE • MUSIC • THEATRE

MIDDLE
TENNESSEE
STATE UNIVERSITY.

I AM *true*
BLUE