

A SPECIAL MINI-PUBLICATION SPECIFICALLY FOR OUR DIGITAL AUDIENCE

MTSU iMAGAZINE

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

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Homecoming 2013

Blue Raider Football kicks off the **Conference USA** era, highlighting the Oct. 5 celebrations. See page 8.





The Digital Down Low

by Drew Ruble

MTSU iMagazine is a twice-annual condensed version of *MTSU Magazine*, produced in an effort to keep our growing web and app audiences “in the know” about all things MTSU. We hope you enjoy this latest digital issue!

But to really stay in the know about MTSU—and to see the latest and greatest digital efforts of MTSU’s marketing and communications team—alumni and friends are strongly encouraged to check out the University’s recently revitalized and relaunched website, www.mtsu.edu.

The new site represents a bold step forward in design, functionality, and audience focus. It’s streamlined, with less clutter and text, and features a consistent page-navigation strategy.

The enhancements include the creation of special pages devoted to our 100-plus programs of study. These new pages are simple, easy to read, and written with a focus on providing prospective students browsing our site with information about our Uni-

versity’s attributes and points of pride. You’ll find embedded videos on the program-of-study pages, which allow us to offer even more information about our majors and colleges.

As you explore the new site, please understand that our work isn’t finished yet. For the time being, you will see a blend of page designs, both new and old, depending on where you look. Eventually, the entire site will have a design similar to what you can now see on the home page and the program-of-study pages. Our technical teams are working with each college, department, and University office to ensure that digital information is properly migrated to the new platform. The older pages on the site will remain up as we meet with community members to map an orderly transition.

True Blue!

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Development Office



Hardly Academic

DEFENDING the value of a liberal arts education in a workforce development-obsessed culture

by Gina K. Logue

IT SEEMS COUNTERINTUITIVE TO question the relevancy of academic disciplines that date back to humanity's earliest civilizations. Nevertheless, people steeped in the liberal arts disciplines are accustomed to debates about the viability and relevancy of their work. In stagnant economic climates, those debates have a tendency to grow louder.

At its least intellectual level, the discussion is whether philosophy and sociology can prepare the workers of the future to make more and better widgets. This type of discussion is filled with stereotypes about tweedy professors in ivory towers operating in their own mental zip codes, oblivious to anything remotely resembling “real life.” On a higher rhetorical plane, the discussion is whether liberal arts should adopt new technologies in innovative ways or even consider altering its mission in some sense, including adding other disciplines, to better

meet the needs of the modern workforce. Related to the issue is how academia should promote liberal arts education to the general public. Some explanations seem to have more currency than others in clarifying the value of the liberal arts degree for taxpayers and voters who don't have a college education.

It's a debate unlikely to subside, but there's no shortage of those eager to defend the value and relevance of a liberal arts education in today's job-obsessed environment. And one doesn't need to go to an ivory tower to find them—plenty of MTSU alumni, now established business leaders in their own right, consider the liberal arts degree a crucial tool for workplace success.

There's no shortage of those eager to defend the value and relevance of a liberal arts education in today's job-obsessed environment.

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WITNESSES FOR THE DEFENSE

MTSU alumnus Doug Young ('71) owns City Tile and Floor Covering in Murfreesboro. His business sells and installs flooring including tile, stone, wood, laminate, and carpeting. With only seven employees including him, he's in competition with Home Depot, Lowe's, and every big-box store with a franchise in the area. He says he would hire liberal arts majors at his business "in a heartbeat."

"Anybody will tell you that generally the best salespeople don't have business degrees," Young says. "Liberal arts majors would be my first choice because they're well-rounded. They're not tunnel-visioned."

According to Young, his double major in urban sociology and urban planning prepared him for his other job—city councilman, a position he has held for 11 years.

The assumption that a liberal arts education is a loser in at least one area of the job market is disputed by Col. Darrell D. Darnbush, commander of the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment of the Tennessee National Guard, the largest unit in the state. Darnbush earned a bachelor's degree in political science from MTSU in 1986 and is enrolled in the master's program in strategic studies at the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pa. After a period in which the military focused on attracting and recruiting people from the

hard sciences, Darnbush says the armed forces are now tending to recruit from the social sciences.

"This is because, in the past five years, there has been a constant review of policy and doctrine," Darnbush says. "There is great demand for strategic thinkers who can identify the problem and develop approaches that require critical thinking."

MTSU alumnus Jim Burkard ('82, '85) earned a bachelor's degree in English and a master's in economics, a combination that upsets stereotypes some people have of college majors and their purposes. As an organizational coach at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Burkard finds that communication is the key to confronting and overcoming operational challenges.

"The foundational skills and experiences provided within a liberal arts education never go out of style," Burkard says.

Another MTSU alumnus, Gordon DeFries ('63), echoes the view that the diversity of a liberal arts education serves as a foundation for future learning in any profession.

"It enables you to function fluidly and effectively and to use various pieces of knowledge from different areas in different ways," says DeFries, professor emeritus of social medicine and epidemiology in the Schools of Medicine and Public Health at the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill.

DeFries majored in sociology and political science at MTSU but turned to medical behavioral science and medical sociology for his doctorate at the University of Kentucky.

"Our medical school [at UNC] wouldn't want its doctors to have only a science background," DeFries says. "They

wouldn't make very good doctors. And the same is true for our law school."

While the need for college graduates to fill jobs in the STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) like medicine has been documented, some

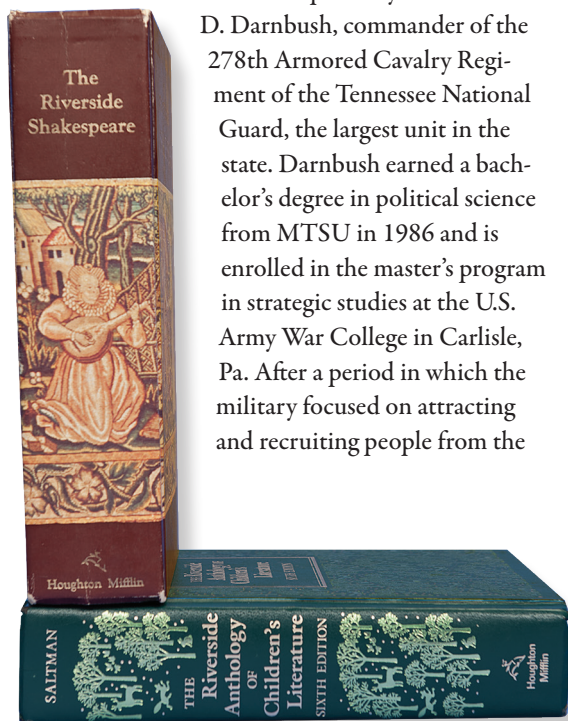
Eisner wrote, "I would much rather hire an executive who has taken courses in history and philosophy and language and art and English and Russian literature than somebody who has only studied a single element of one subject."

observers seem to want to pit the sciences against the humanities. Kira Hamman, who teaches mathematics at Pennsylvania State University—Mont Alto, makes a compelling case for STEM educators to support their liberal arts colleagues. In an April 12, 2013, article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, she asserts that the two areas are not as different as some think they are.

"Both the sciences and the humanities require deep creativity and intellectualism, an ability and desire to use reason, and a willingness to change your mind," Hamman writes.

GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS

Even with plenty of business leaders making the case for the value of a liberal arts education, are the general populace and the legislators who represent them convinced? And have academics made their case adequately to the populace as a whole? Nannerl O. Keohane, a



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Hardly Academic

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former president of Wellesley College and Duke University, puts a large part of the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of college presidents and other top university leaders.

“First and most obvious, they should use the bully pulpit of the college presidency deliberately and effectively—at convocations, commencements, [and] ground-breakings for new buildings; in speeches to the local Rotary Club or the state 4-H Club convention; and [in] addresses to alumni clubs,” Keohane wrote in a Jan. 29, 2012, *Chronicle of Higher Education* piece.

Keohane says university leaders should cite examples from literature, history, and the arts in both formal and informal discourse, making a subtle endorsement of the disciplines by working them into conversation.

In an interview, Keohane urges her colleagues to point out that the acquisition of a broad-based education, instead of specializing in one skill that could become less important in a decade or two, actually prepares students to handle the serpentine twists of the job market over the course of a lifetime.

“Remind people that our counterparts in other countries, including most of the fast-developing economies of the second tier, are now promoting the liberal arts as the best way to prepare professionals for future accomplishment,” Keohane says.

Perhaps one way to change public perception of the value of a liberal arts degree—and salary surveys like the one cited below—is to highlight nationally and internationally noteworthy liberal arts majors who have succeeded in the marketplace. Michael Eisner, the former Disney CEO, who majored in English and theatre at Denison University, paved



“Remind people that **our counterparts** in other countries, including most of the fast-developing economies of the second tier, are now **promoting the liberal arts** as the best way to prepare professionals for future accomplishment.”

the way with an article he penned for the Dec. 2, 2010, issue of the *Wall Street Journal Magazine*.

Eisner wrote, “I would much rather hire an executive who has taken courses in history and philosophy and language and art and English and Russian literature than somebody who has only studied a single element of one subject.”

The December 2012 issue of *Business Insider* listed 30 liberal arts majors who have ascended to the heights of major businesses. Such individuals include Gannett CEO Gracia Martore, American Express CEO Ken Chenault, Delta Airlines CEO Richard Anderson, Bank of America CEO Brian Moynihan, Sprint Nextel CEO Dan Hesse, and Sherwin-Williams CEO Christopher Connor.

What did these titans of industry glean from their liberal arts educations that helped propel them to their current positions? Jim Burkard says it’s necessary for an economist to have a good working knowledge of history as well as an

understanding of classic human decision making often reflected in great works of literature.

“There are some great contemporary American economists, such as Steven Levitt, who use their understanding of human nature and likely behavior patterns within their economic models. That ability comes from a well-rounded education, which includes an awareness of history, literature, philosophy, business, etc.”

IN GOOD COMPANY

Is it even appropriate to talk about “selling” liberal arts to the public as a stepping stone to promotable skill sets for the workplace? This also raises the question of whether to state the case in purely economic terms.

The U.S. Census Bureau’s most recent analysis of work-life earnings by major, measured in millions of dollars, shows engineering, computers, and math leading the way; with political science and social science in the middle; literature and

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liberal arts toward the end; and education bringing up the rear. Similarly, a salary survey released in April 2013 by the National Association of Colleges and Employers shows that none of the top 10 highest-paid jobs for new college graduates pertains to liberal arts. In this survey, business tops the list of highest paying disciplines, followed by communications, computer science, education, engineering, health sciences, humanities and social sciences, and math and sciences.

Hamman says not all measurements of the value of a liberal arts degree should be financial in scope. "I don't think we want to live in a world where the dollar value and not the intellectual value of a discipline is what matters," she says.

But if the paycheck is indeed the preferred yardstick for measuring liberal arts relevance, then a survey by the Association of American Colleges and Universities might prove interesting. The organization surveyed 318 U.S. employers in January 2012 and found that 74 percent of business and nonprofit leaders recommend that college students get a liberal arts education "in order to prepare for long-term professional success in today's global economy."

Liberal arts advocates, however, would argue that basing any assessment of the humanities solely on students' preparation for getting a job is inaccurate and shallow.

"It's important to make a living, of course, but we should want more than that," Hamman says. "Real success is in living a good life—that is, a happy life that contributes to making the world a better place in some respect . . . There are many ways to do this, but people who are engaged in the world around them, who are intellectually curious and understand nuance, have a much better chance of achieving it than people who lack those things."

Said another way, in an age of constantly transforming and shifting work environments, the ability to keep one's eyes open and to see the big picture—the picture that serves the community, the state, and the nation best—may be the most valuable workforce skill of all. **MTSU**

WISH YOU WERE HERE



Jamia Richmond and Brandon Brown



OCT. 5,
2013

Vanishing GIANTS

Dr. Brian Miller investigates the disappearance of one of the region's strangest looking animals

by Candace Moonshower



DEVIL DOG. GROUND PUPPY. SNOT OTTER. TWEEG. Hellbender. These are just a few of the nicknames associated with *Cryptobranchus alleganiensis* (the Eastern Hellbender) and *Cryptobranchus alleganiensis bishopi* (the Ozark Hellbender), two subspecies of North American giant salamander, one of the largest amphibians in the world and the specialty of Dr. Brian Miller, MTSU professor of biology.

Miller, who grew up north of St. Louis, has always been a big fan of amphibians and reptiles. Although he was working with snakes at the time, Miller began working with hellbenders in a herpetology class at the University of Missouri, where he was

pursuing his bachelor's degree in wildlife. After receiving his master's in biology from the University of Missouri and a Ph.D. in zoology from Washington State University in 1989, Miller came to MTSU to work specifically with hellbenders. "The habitat looked promising for hellbenders," he says as he recounts how he had no trouble finding the creatures in 1991 in the Duck, Little Duck, Collins, Buffalo, and Calfkiller Rivers.

Now, after researching almost every foot of water from the Duck River to the Normandy Reservoir, Miller hasn't been able to find the creatures. "Almost all of the individual hellbenders we collected, marked, and released were older, larger, and sexually

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Vanishing GIANTS

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mature,” Miller says. “We think that in areas where we cannot find young individuals, it is because they aren’t reproducing well.” The die-off has happened quickly, and alterations in the water quality and stream habitat may account for the changing population. “Pollution, agricultural run-off, or disease may all account for the decreasing populations,” Miller says, “and we’re just trying to get a better feel about what might be happening.”

According to Miller, hellbenders used to be easy to find, and in the past, people harvested the creatures for pets or for science class dissections. “I had snakes, lizards, and salamanders as pets,” Miller admits. “But it’s a different time now. Since I began my work at MTSU, my views on owning wildlife as pets have changed.” He says if a previously easy-to-find group of animals is disappearing, it should be a cautionary tale. “These are the largest salamanders we have that live in the clear, clean water of streams,” Miller says. “If they’re dying out, there is some kind of environmental problem that we need to investigate.” Miller concedes that when something becomes rare, people automatically want it, and that we might see hellbenders now on the black market. But he doesn’t think that is as big an issue as water quality.

For its size, MTSU has a strong group of students working with everything from plants to salamanders in the area of field biology. “I’ve hired more than 40 students off the grants I’ve obtained,” Miller says. “Within the state of Tennessee, you’re not going to find as large a group working with herps and other diverse animals.” In the 1990s, funding for the hellbender studies came from the University. Recently, the money has come from the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) and State Wildlife and Tribal Land Grants.

Several different entities—Lee University, the Nashville Zoo, and MTSU—were each separately awarded money to research and work on species that are in jeopardy of being listed as rare, threatened, or endangered. While each entity was given separate grants, they have worked in a partnership that makes sure activities don’t overlap and that maximizes the use of the money each group was awarded. Michael Freak at Lee University has conducted genetic analyses of hellbenders from as many watersheds in Tennessee as possible to better determine the genetic relationships of the remaining populations. Dale McGinnity at the Nashville Zoo is primarily interested in the husbandry of hellbenders and refining techniques that will allow the use of frozen sperm on fresh eggs. Miller’s work has been entirely field-oriented—searching streams that he worked 20 years ago and other streams in watersheds with past records of hellbender occurrence.

The partnership stems from the State Wildlife Action Plan Partnership Award that was presented at a “Teaming with Wildlife” convention in Washington, D.C. It is a competitive award given to those groups receiving State Wildlife and Tribal Grants money that exhibit collaborative success. It was presented to Miller, Freak, McGinnity, Bill Reeves (TWRA chief of biodiversity), and Stephen Spear of the Orianna Society, a group dedicated to protecting imperiled snake species.

Miller views hellbenders as part of our natural heritage. “Just as we try to protect our cultural heritage—Stones River Battlefield, Oaklands Mansion—I think it is also important to preserve our natural heritage. Future generations deserve the opportunity to visit local streams and see a diversity of wildlife and not just those species tolerant of more polluted or disturbed waters.” **MTSU**

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According to Miller, hellbenders used to be easy to find, and in the past, people harvested the creatures for pets or for science class dissections.

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You're Just Agreeing With Me

Nixon



WAYNE WHITE IS ONE OF THOSE increasingly rare beings: an artist who makes a living by turning his wildest ideas into tangible, talked-about pieces that others want to see, hear, feel, and share.

He also may be the embodiment of a liberal arts education: a person well-versed in enough fields to connect with almost anyone in his audience. Art is more than just a theory; it's a fusion of many disciplines—the physics of building a sculpture, the chemistry of mixing colors, the psychology of self- and other-awareness, the wordsmithing that plays with meanings.

Sometimes it's a funny story and a flailing buck dance across a stage, too.

The MTSU alumnus repeatedly brought a full house in Keathley University Center Theater to laughter and applause last March during an ongoing nationwide series of screenings of the 2012 documentary about his life and work, *Beauty Is Embarrassing*.

Dancing a jig in front of the screen as the credits rolled, White unexpectedly pulled his longtime friend and partner in puppetry, fellow alumnus P. Michael "Mike" Quinn ('81, '87) onstage for an audience Q-and-A session.

The pair met in an MTSU drawing class, did puppet shows at parties, and got their first serious creative jobs on a Nashville public television children's show. Calling students "the real treasure" in a "shared society of ideas," they encouraged the crowd to "do what you love; it's going to lead you to where you want to go."

"How do you resist the temptation to go for the straight-ahead life, though?" one earnest young man asked. "I'm finding I can't resist the allure of the white picket fence and the regular paycheck."

"I got the white picket fence *and* the paycheck by following what I love," White answered, just as earnestly. "This documentary makes it look like it was easy, like I've solved all the problems and answered all the questions. I most certainly have not. But . . . you have to commit to what you want to do. Don't hedge your bets.

"The world is dying for stuff that's done out of love. Most everything in the world now is done out of fear: fear of losing your job, fear of making someone angry. Art is one thing that's done out of love. That's what the world needs."

White, a native of Hixson, earned his bachelor of fine arts degree from MTSU in 1979 and went to New York City. He worked as an illustrator for several publications there, including the *New York Times* and the *Village Voice*, and in 1986 became a designer and puppeteer for *Pee-wee's Playhouse*, earning three Emmy Awards in the process.

He and his wife, artist and author Mimi Pond, then moved to California, where he continued his TV work with sets and characters for *Shining Time Station*, *Beakman's World*, *Riders in the Sky*, and *Bill & Willis* and the couple welcomed two children, Woodrow and Lulu. White also worked with music videos, winning Billboard and MTV Music Video Awards as an art director for his work on "Tonight, Tonight" by the Smashing Pumpkins and Peter Gabriel's "Big Time."

After a long struggle with Hollywood hierarchy led White to work himself nearly to a frazzle, he embarked on a "second act" in the new century, creating paintings, sculptures, and public works exhibited worldwide. White's most recognized works now are his word paintings, which use thrift-shop

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by Gina E. Fann

WAYNE'S WORLD



Failed
Seventies
Paintings



Beauty Is
Embarrassing

“sofa painting” landscapes as backdrops for detailed, deadpan words and phrases like “He Acts All Weird for No Good Reason,” “Awopbopalubop,” “You’re Just Agreeing with Me So I’ll Shut Up,” “I Took Off Work and Came All the Way Down Here,” and “Hoozy Thinky Iz?”

“I’m a real oddball because I’m a middle-aged man living out a five-year-old’s fantasy,” White remarks at one point in *Beauty Is Embarrassing* before dancing a jig wearing a giant cardboard puppet head of Lyndon B. Johnson. He happily describes himself as a “painter, sculptor, cartoonist, puppeteer, set designer, illustrator, and animator.”

How does someone travel from a Tennessee childhood filled with unexpected artistic influences and gentle family encouragement to a drawing class in MTSU’s old Art Barn to working under Art Spiegelman and Red Grooms in New York? Where does the route twist from preparing puppets with friend Quinn for a show called *Mrs. Cabobble’s Caboose* onto a road of winning Emmys, exhibiting sculpture at Rockefeller Center, seeing designer Todd Oldham edit a book of your artwork, and being called “one of the

founding fathers of American Pop Art” by the lead singer of Devo?

“It’s not easy, and I’m not quite sure how I’ve pulled it off, but I am in a unique position. I think people are fascinated by that,” White said in a recent telephone interview from his Los Angeles home, an interview sandwiched between artist’s residencies, new art installations, family celebrations, and cross-country publicity trips.

“I like to have as many options as possible; I don’t want to be tied down to a gallery or one kind of marketplace. I like to be able to show my work in as many venues as possible. I try to keep my integrity too, but I’m so used to showbiz that it doesn’t bother me anymore.

“I’ve lived out here in L.A. and Hollywood for 23 years, so the publicity part of it is kind of a way of life. It’s not that foreign to me. I’ve lived among the TV culture and people who work in TV production and movies, and I take it all in stride. I don’t see anything as off-limits. I don’t see any sort of firewall between the art world and the entertainment world. I feel free to go back and forth. I might not get the respect, and people in the art world might think that’s

suspect or lacking integrity, but I don’t really care. I think it’s all an open field to me.

“Plus, it’s a means of survival,” he continued. “I reserve the right to use either high or low culture to get my point across. I don’t have any qualms or distinctions between the two. I want as many people as possible to see my work. I want to communicate to as many people as possible. And I want to keep making a living, so I keep my options open. I can work in both commercial art and fine art.”

The publicity from the Oldham-edited *Maybe Now I’ll Get the Respect I So Richly Deserve*, a 2009 400-page monograph of White’s work, led to the *Beauty Is Embarrassing* documentary, directed by Neil Berkeley. The film was first shown at the 2012 SXSW Film Festival.

Beauty has created more opportunities for White and his work. He recently completed one of the coveted inaugural residencies on Captiva Island, Fla., sponsored by the late artist Robert

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Wayne White frolics among influences,
creating art that refuses to be pigeonholed.



Big Electric Fan to Keep Me Cool

3 or 4 of Us Sitting Around



Rauschenberg's foundation. He's opened a new exhibit, *Halo Amok*, at the Oklahoma City Museum of Art, featuring giant cubist cowboys and horses, that runs through Sept. 1. He'll make a much-anticipated return to Houston in September, this time for a one-man exhibit of his word paintings.

Beauty even helped get him a gig judging the "The Friskies" Award for Best New Internet Cat Video of 2012 and a new project on the grounds of the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival near Manchester.

"Jonathan Mayers, who's CEO of the whole Bonnaroo organization, saw the movie. That inspired him to call me," White says. "That's another example of the power of that movie; it's really opened up a lot of doors.

"I'm doing a big permanent sculpture on the Bonnaroo concert grounds that'll take a while to finish. It's going to be a 30-foot or taller tree made of steel and wood, mostly steel. It's like a big cubist abstract tree, with big square shapes instead of leaves, and a steel trunk, and at night it turns into a psychedelic light show."

White's sculptures have turned his wordplay three-dimensional, too. A treelike, almost-

humanoid wood sculpture that features the word "Soddy" was part of *Master Retrospective 2000–2009*, a collection of White's work exhibited earlier this spring at the L.A. gallery Western Project.

"Some things are a mystery, you know, that aren't completely explainable on the surface," White explains. "I really do just like the sound of it as an abstract element. The sound alone is evocative without really knowing that it's a small town near Chattanooga where I grew up.

"I think it can work on several levels: as an abstract, strange word-sound and, if you really wanted to dig, you wouldn't have to do too much to find out that's where I'm from. It's literally me using my past, which is what all artists do: they use what they have. Soddy is definitely a sound and word that's been in my life ever since I can remember. So it's a little pet sound of mine, maybe like 'rosebud,'" he adds, with a deep chuckle.

He hopes to return to MTSU very soon, perhaps to work again as a visiting artist "making prints in the printmaking studio and sculptures in the ceramic department" as he

did before *Beauty Is Embarrassing* brought him to PBS's *Independent Lens* and Netflix and Amazon.com and Tumblr and Pinterest.

White noted during his spring MTSU visit that he'd traveled all over the United States and into Canada as a result of *Beauty Is Embarrassing*, constantly hearing "I didn't know you did all *that* stuff!" from admirers.

"That's every artist's dream," he says. "Actually, it's everyone's dream. It's what everyone wants: to know that you had an impact on people somehow." [MTSU](#)





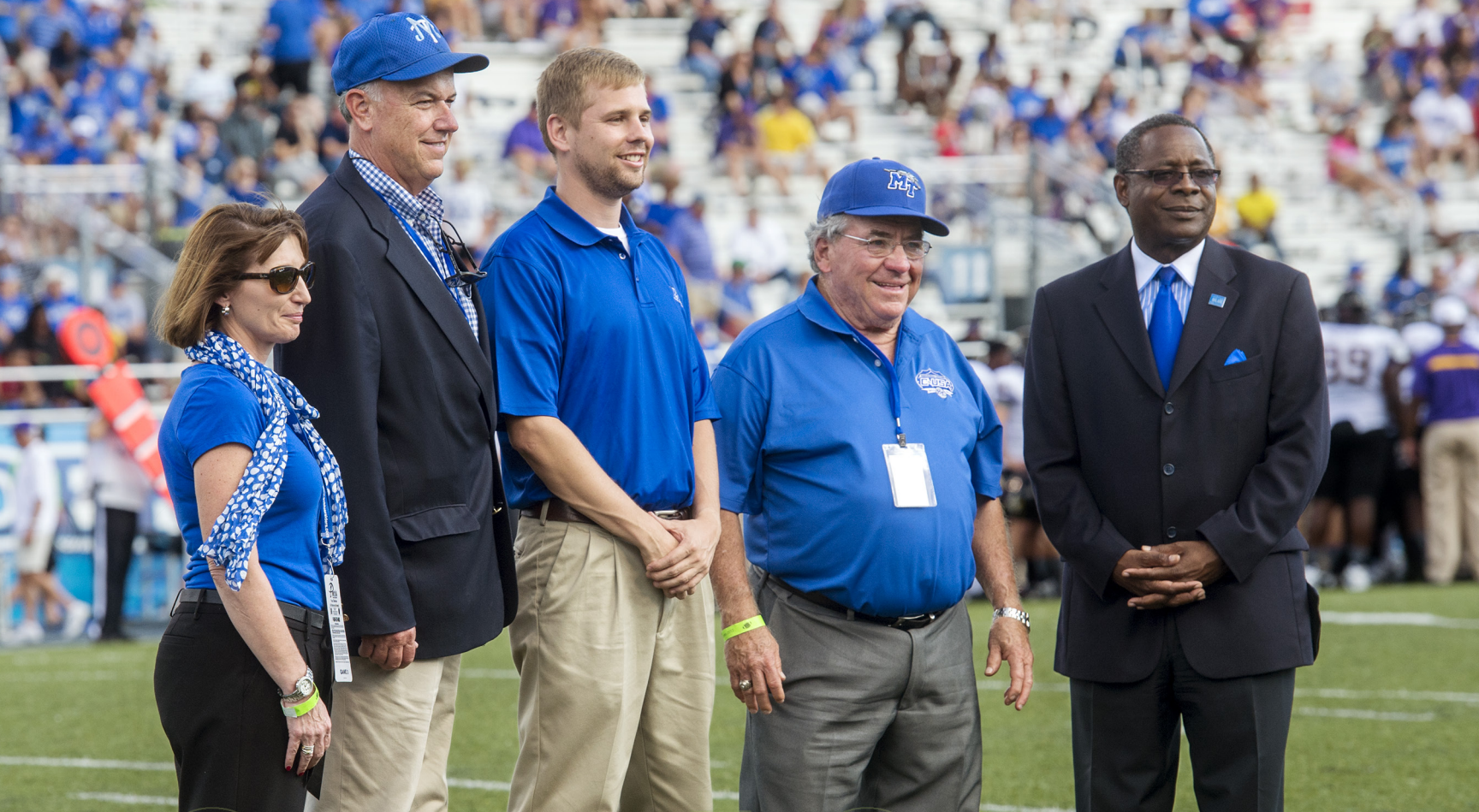
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This year's honorees include a nonprofit innovator, a couple of high-powered Tennessee businessmen, and a young expert in foreign service. Each is well deserving of the honor, and their personal stories don't make for a bad read, either.

Pictured (l to r): MTSU National Alumni Association Vice President Paula Mansfield ('89), 2013 Distinguished Alums Stephen B. Smith, Aaron Carlton, and Larry Cox, and president Sidney A. McPhee

SERVICE TO THE UNIVERSITY

Stephen B. Smith ('11)

Stephen Smith has a lengthy history of involvement with MTSU. He has served on the President's Council and the board of directors of the Blue Raider Athletic Association. A former MTSU baseball player and member of the Blue Raider Sports Hall of Fame, Smith chaired the search committee for MTSU's athletic director and spearheaded the successful effort to raise \$5 million to remodel the baseball stadium. He received the Tennessee Board of Regents Chancellor Citation for Excellence in Philanthropy. Professionally, Smith is chair of the board of Haury & Smith Contractors, a 59-year-old middle Tennessee development and home building company. He was two-term president of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association (and won 10 World Championships as a rider).

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GRADE A GRADS

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He served as national finance cochair for Senator Lamar Alexander's presidential campaigns in 1996 and 2000 and achieved Super Ranger status (one of only three in Tennessee) in President George W. Bush's 2004 presidential campaign. He was also national finance chair for Senate majority leader Bill Frist's leadership political action committee, VOLPAC. A nontraditional student, Smith received his degree from MTSU while in his late fifties. He attended MTSU to study finance in the 1970s but left college before completing his degree. "It's never too late to go back to school," he told MTSUnews.com after his graduation. "What all the Smiths have been good at is keeping up with something until it's finished."

SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

Larry Cox ('68)

Larry Cox is the owner of Homestead Egg Co. (a wholesale food distributorship), Chicken City (a retail food outlet) and Cox Family Leasing (a rental and leasing company). But despite his professional accomplishments as a businessman and entrepreneur, he is better known as a tireless volunteer, ferocious fundraiser, and community philanthropist in the Knoxville area. Also a 20-year elected member of the Knoxville City Council, his nonprofit involvement is extensive. As an example, Cox has been involved for more than two decades with the Emerald Youth Foundation, whose mission is to encourage leaders in decaying urban neighborhoods. The political science major is also a field representative for Congressman John Duncan, who said of Cox, "I do not believe there is a man in Knoxville who has done more to help young people than Larry Cox has."



PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

Keith Taylor ('89, '91)

While a faculty member at MTSU, Keith Taylor began using 10 percent (or \$350) of his monthly gross income from his job as an English professor to give small grants to low-income families to see them through unexpected financial crises. He transformed this hobby into a nationally acclaimed online nonprofit, Modest-Needs.org. Strangers visit the website, choose a grant recipient they would like to help, and donate online. The enterprise is supported primarily by \$5, \$10, and \$25 gifts made by legions of unassuming philanthropists around the world. His organization, where his employees refer to him as "Dr. Keith," has been called the "future of philanthropy" and has been covered in many press outlets such as *Forbes*, *People*, *USA Today*, the *Today* show, and the *CBS Morning Show*, among others.

YOUNG ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT

Aaron Carlton ('05)

After serving in the U.S. Army from 2000 to 2003, during which time he was deployed to Iraq with the 4th Infantry Division, Aaron Carlton attended MTSU and graduated magna cum laude with a double major in International Relations and Spanish. He eventually joined the U.S. Department of State as a foreign service officer. While serving in Uganda, he drafted the Department of State's annual reports on human rights, human trafficking, child labor, and religious freedom. He also assisted the Ugandan government in establishing a prevention of trafficking office and task force. Carlton was awarded the State Department's Meritorious Honor Award for his work combating human trafficking in Uganda. During those years, Carlton often returned to MTSU at his own expense to share career advice with students in the political science/international relations arena and to encourage them to travel abroad, embrace financial responsibility, and pursue excellence. Carlton moved on to serve as a reporting officer and advisor at the United Nations in New York City. He recently became a consular officer in Venezuela.



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SINGING PRAISES

CHRIS YOUNG

A Music Row chart topper tips his hat to MTSU

by Drew Ruble

EVEN THOUGH MURFREESBORO NATIVE Chris Young never graduated from MTSU, the 28-year-old credits much of his success as a chart-topping country music artist to his time spent as a student.

“My time there was just really, really important to me,” Young says. “I enjoyed the recording industry program there, and it did a lot for me, including making some connections that I still use—people I still write with who I met while I was at MTSU. It’s just a big part of who I am.”

Young’s career took flight in 2006 when he won the television program *Nashville Star*, a singing competition that aired on the USA Network. He later signed with RCA Records Nashville and has since released four studio albums, including his latest effort, *A.M.*, this September.

His hit songs through the years have included “Drinkin’ Me Lonely,” “You’re Gonna Love Me,” “Voices,” “Gettin’ You Home (The Black Dress Song),” “Tomorrow,” “You,” and “The Man I Want to Be.” All went to number one on the country music airplay charts.

Young paved the way for MTSU to use a snippet of one of those hit songs, “The Man I Want to Be,” in a radio advertisement in which he credited the University with helping him to become the artist he is today.

“I always point to MTSU a lot because, growing up in Murfreesboro, I met a lot of people in the recording program who are still working in the music industry and who I run into on a regular basis,” Young says. “A lot of people don’t necessarily put that connection together unless they’re from the area or know about MTSU.”

“I did a lot of things there with, of course, [former songwriting concentration director] Hal Newman, who was connected with the Nashville Songwriters Association on campus. And it just really was one of the most fun times of my life.”

MTSU ... is just a
big part
of who I am.

Such exposure to songwriting instruction while at MTSU, Young says, was critical to his growth as an artist. He says MTSU’s songwriting community also helped him break through as a storyteller.

“One of the most important aspects of the music industry is songwriting, and publishing as well. It’s definitely one of the things that people—to the outside looking in—don’t recognize. It is a little bit of the unsung side of it,” Young says. “The adage is, ‘It all begins with the song,’ and it’s true. If you don’t have the music, then it doesn’t matter what the production is or who the vocalist is. That’s step one. You’ve got to find the song.”

“When I was at MTSU, I remember going in a room and getting to listen to people speak on their experiences as writers, like James Slater, who is obviously a great, great songwriter,” Young adds. “MTSU just takes great care to hit all of those angles. They hit the recording industry process. They hit the engineering side of things. For people who want to be more into the publishing arm, they touch on that. As a student, you’re able to put your

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SINGING PRAISES

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emphasis on all those different aspects, just according to what fits you in the recording industry.”

Such solid workforce preparation fuels a Nashville music industry that approaches \$10 billion in annual economic impact, according to a recent Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce report. Young argues that MTSU’s role in producing fresh Music Row talent—from songwriters to artists to business executives—is pivotal, especially in an industry always in search of new ways of thinking about its business model and finding the entrepreneurial brainpower to get there.

“The role that MTSU plays in the music industry is a big one,” Young says. “A lot of people come up to me at shows and say they want to be near Nashville and want to get a great music education. And I recommend MTSU. For one, it’s got a great recording program, and, two, it is right there in the middle of everything. It’s close. Three, the quality of the program itself is great. There’s a lot of aspects of the music industry that MTSU really does have its hand in, and it’s really easy to make that jump from studying music education there in Murfreesboro to being in Nashville making an impact in the music industry. The program is one of the best in the country.”

Young has done more than provide MTSU access to his music while singing its praises to the people he meets on the road touring in support of his new album. He has also contributed financially to the University. The artist recently gave a significant amount of his surplus musical equipment to MTSU—soundboards, cables, lighting, video, and staging equipment—for use in on- and off-campus events.

Asked why he made the gift, Young says that the impact on students will far exceed any amount of money he could have made from selling the equipment.

“I talked for a little while about possibly selling it off. But then I was, like, no, I think I’m just going to donate it to MTSU,” he says. “The payback for me is that somebody is going to get to use some equipment that maybe he or she otherwise wouldn’t have been able to obtain.”

So what is Young’s advice for MTSU students who want to get involved in the music industry? Simple. Work hard and keep your eyes open for opportunities.

“The biggest thing for me is if you have something you want to do that’s specific in the industry, just put as much time into that as possible,” he says. “And that doesn’t mean just the requirements for your class.

“In addition, any opportunity you have to go do something extra or talk to someone who is already doing it in the industry, take it. Because you’re going to pick up little things here and there and, really, the only way to get better at anything—songwriting, singing, engineering, song plugging, anything—is practice.

“Trying to learn vicariously is about the best thing you can do.” **MTSU**



Alum and Nashville Star winner Chris Young sang the National Anthem at the first game at the newly renovated Reese Smith, Jr. Stadium in 2009.

“It’s **really easy** to make that jump from studying music education there in Murfreesboro to being in Nashville **making an impact** in the music industry.”

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THE (Not Quite) LOST WORLD

One MTSU professor's access to material culture—all we have left of prehistoric interactions—sheds light on early Tennessee trade

by Drew Ruble

ARCHAEOLOGISTS POSTULATE that Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto visited the Chattanooga area more than 450 years ago. Evidence suggests de Soto probably visited the chiefdom of Coosa in the Moccasin Bend area around the year 1540 in the midst of his three-year search for gold, silver, and jewels across the southeastern United States, an expedition that ended for de Soto when he died of fever in either what is now Arkansas or Louisiana.

The proof is in the soil. Metal artifacts, indicative of either Spanish contact or at least trading with people that traded with Spaniards, have long been uncovered in the area. So, too, have maritime artifacts—gastropods and whelk shells and such—that obviously came from the Gulf of Mexico and are not native to Chattanooga.

One MTSU professor was recently granted access to artifacts from a late prehistoric/early contact period site on a private residence in Chattanooga that adds to the body of evidence suggesting Spaniards traveled through the Tennessee region and traded with local Native Americans. Her analysis was time-limited, though, as the artifacts are slated to be reburied or, said another way, repatriated to the Muskogee (Creek) Nation under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

Dr. Tanya Peres, associate professor of anthropology, recently studied various

pieces of Native American craftsmanship from the Chattanooga site in her Peck Hall archeology laboratory. The pieces are important because many of the sites from the same period have long since been looted or were excavated in the 1800s by antiquarians who were not trained professional archeologists. Other sites have been destroyed by urban development, railroad construction, or road construction. This site, however, was preserved because it was on private property. When the landowner wanted to sell the property to a private corporation, Tennessee State Burial Law required human remains on the site to be relocated, which was done at the landowner's expense. But because the owner knew there was an archeological site there and that this was a potentially important area for research, he hired an archeological firm to do the burial removal instead of a funeral home. Peres first got involved when a private consulting firm contacted her about doing analysis of animal remains from the mortuary contexts before they were reburied.

Some of the items uncovered along with the remains included marine shell artifacts with Indian drawings on them. One example would be gorgets, which would have been suspended around the neck, much like a necklace or a pendant. The design on the specific ones Peres handled from this particular site is the Citco rattlesnake gorget style, which is specific to East Tennessee and the Chattanooga area. It's a highly stylized rattlesnake motif that was



central to the ideology and iconography of the Native Americans who lived in the area at the time.

Peres, with the help of student assistant Tiffany Saul, who has a B.S. in anthropology and is finishing an M.S. in biology—both from MTSU—and who started a Ph.D. in anthropology at UT-Knoxville in August, used high-tech equipment from MTSU's labs to attempt to determine from where the artifacts may have originated, information that would explain a lot about trade networks with people who lived in Chattanooga and also along the Gulf Coast during the late prehistoric period. A portable x-ray fluorescence analyzer was used to glean information about the composition of each artifact. It is a nondestructive analysis, meaning Peres and Saul didn't have to grind up the samples or destroy the artifacts in any way. That's important since the artifacts are Native American and planned for reburial. Over time, the two built a database allowing comparisons of different artifacts from different

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(Not Quite) LOST

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places to identify similarities or major differences that could point to their geographic origins.

“It doesn’t tell us where these artifacts came from but gives us trace elements that are part of their chemical composition, which helps us build a database of chemical signatures that we will then use to compare with marine shell from areas around the Gulf of Mexico,” Peres explains. “We have a small database that was constructed back in the ’90s of marine shells from around the Gulf of Mexico. Additionally, I work on sites in southwest Florida that were occupied around the same time as this site in Chattanooga. (That chiefdom was the Calusa, and they met the Spanish as well.) So I have artifacts from those sites that we can do the same analysis on and see where we have some, maybe, overlap in chemical composition that we can try to determine where these may have come from.”

Though the presence of these marine artifacts suggests they were brought to the area by explorers and used in trade, that is by no means a certainty. “That’s the question,” Peres says. “Were they going to the Gulf of Mexico themselves? Was there some kind of spiritual journey where, for instance, a shaman or religious person went to extract these? Or were they trading with them?”

Peres’s hypothesis is that they were trading for them, as opposed to directly acquiring these resources, in part “because the Gulf of Mexico, the coastline, was not an open territory for just anybody to be able to go to.”

In addition to work like this in East Tennessee, Peres continues to conduct important analysis of archeological sites in Nashville, where the flood that submerged downtown Nashville in May 2010 also swept away thousands of years of human history: prehistoric burial sites along the banks of the Cumberland River. Along with students, Peres has surveyed numerous sites and documented samples from the most endangered. The work has curtailed raids by looters who covet the sites for their black-market potential.

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Amanda Terranova ('13)
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