

Enterprise **MT**

Spring 2015

Jennings A. Jones College of Business

Middle Tennessee State University

TRUE BLUE ★ **IN TEXAS** ★

Brent and
Cristina Secret:
Two grads turned
Houston business
luminaries offer
students advice.

**MIDDLE
TENNESSEE**
STATE UNIVERSITY

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I AM *true*
BLUE

I have asked hundreds of business and community leaders how to better prepare business school graduates for the workforce.



Dean David Urban visits the Dale Carnegie Hall of Fame at the University of Central Missouri.

Sharpening **SOFT** Skills

How can we better prepare graduates for the workforce? I have asked this question hundreds of times since 2007. Since becoming dean of Jennings A. Jones College of Business at MTSU in July 2013, I have participated in more than 440 individual meetings, group discussions, and speaking engagements with business, community, and government leaders.

Responses I've received from people in a wide range of professional fields from manufacturing to nonprofit services have been amazingly consistent. Occasionally someone says students need better quantitative or technological skills, but those responses are aberrations.

Business, community, and government leaders almost universally say today's graduates need more than technical knowledge. They need an array of parallel abilities, "soft skills," to complement technical competencies: the ability to write and speak effectively, think through a problem to a solution, work in teams, build and maintain personal relationships, network effectively, and maintain a positive attitude toward life and work. Leaders emphasize the importance of polished social skills and etiquette.

Another conclusion noteworthy in the era of emails, texts, tweets, and blog posts is that as efficient as electronic communication is, there is no substitute for face-to-face interaction. Business is all about relationships with customers, clients, and colleagues. Graduates must be able to humanize dealings with others and move beyond superficial connections.

Jones College's strategic plan seeks to ensure that we continue to offer solid technical business training for our students in accordance with our international accreditation. Our initial focus is a major professional development initiative to provide students soft skills.

The Dale Carnegie brand is probably the most recognizable worldwide in professional development training. The Dale Carnegie Course teaches effective personal interaction, stress management, persuasive communication, problem solving, leadership, and positive-attitude formation. Jones College has forged an exclusive arrangement with Dale Carnegie

Training of Tennessee to train college faculty to become certified Dale Carnegie instructors.

All majors in the college will be required to complete the Dale Carnegie Course. The college will have exclusivity in the service area of Dale Carnegie Training of Tennessee. This arrangement will not be

duplicated at any other university in the state. The relationship between the college and Dale Carnegie is unique in the U.S. and a key point of market differentiation between Jones College and other major business schools.

My experience communicating with hundreds of business and community leaders tells me technical skills are a necessary but not sufficient condition for workforce readiness. People making choices about higher ed should make sure the institutions they consider strive to develop soft skills as well as technical abilities in their students. ■

This article is from <http://blog.dalecarnegie.com>.

All majors in the college will be required to complete the Dale Carnegie course.

OF **FOUNDERS** AND **NAMESAKES**

AT MTSU, THESE TWO HISTORY-MAKING FIGURES MEAN BUSINESS.

Jennings A. Jones: A Man of Middle



PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI

Jennings A. Jones first came to Murfreesboro to work as an electrical engineer for the Tennessee Electric Power Company after graduating in 1931 from the University of Tennessee–Knoxville. When TVA took over the company, his wife, the former Rebecca Ransom, urged him to find a business they could buy or build.

That first entrepreneurial experience resulted in Jones Locker and Cold Storage System, a service for Rutherford County farmers. Later, Jones became part owner and president of what is now Southland Supply Co., a ready-to-mix concrete supplier, and was involved in many real estate development partnerships. He later acquired farmland adjoining his wife's family farm, making theirs one of the largest holdings in Rutherford County. He was director of Murfreesboro Bank & Trust Company and its successor for 30 years and a founder of the former National Savings Life Insurance Company.

After service as a lieutenant colonel in World War II, Jones became chair of Murfreesboro's first planning commission in 1946. He developed a road plan that was built into the major traffic routes in the city. Governor

The Jennings A. Jones plaque in the Business and Aerospace Building.

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Jennings A. Jones College of Business at MTSU has a proud history. In this inaugural edition of *Enterprise MT*, we look at two seminal figures in the development of Jones College through the years—Jennings A. Jones himself and business education pioneer Elwin W. “Wink” Midgett.

Wink Midgett: Giant of the Early Days

Elwin W. “Wink” Midgett (1911–1993) came to Middle Tennessee State Teachers College in January 1939 to start a business curriculum in the division of social sciences. An official Business Department was established in 1946, three years after the institution’s name had been shortened to Middle Tennessee State College. After a stint in the Navy from 1944 to 1946, Midgett served as head of the Business Department from 1946 to 1964. The first degree in business was awarded in 1947.

Professor Midgett’s revolutionary contributions went beyond establishing what would eventually become Jennings A. Jones College of Business. He also coached both football and basketball at the college before and after World War II, first by becoming coach of the men’s basketball program in 1939. In 1940, he began coaching the Blue Raider football team, which posted a 4–4 record in his first season. The team had won a combined three games in the two previous seasons. Midgett’s teams had records of 4–3–1 in 1941 and 4–2–1 in 1942, despite losing players to the war. Midgett ended his football-coaching career in 1946 with a 5–3–1 mark. (Football was suspended from 1943 to 1945.)

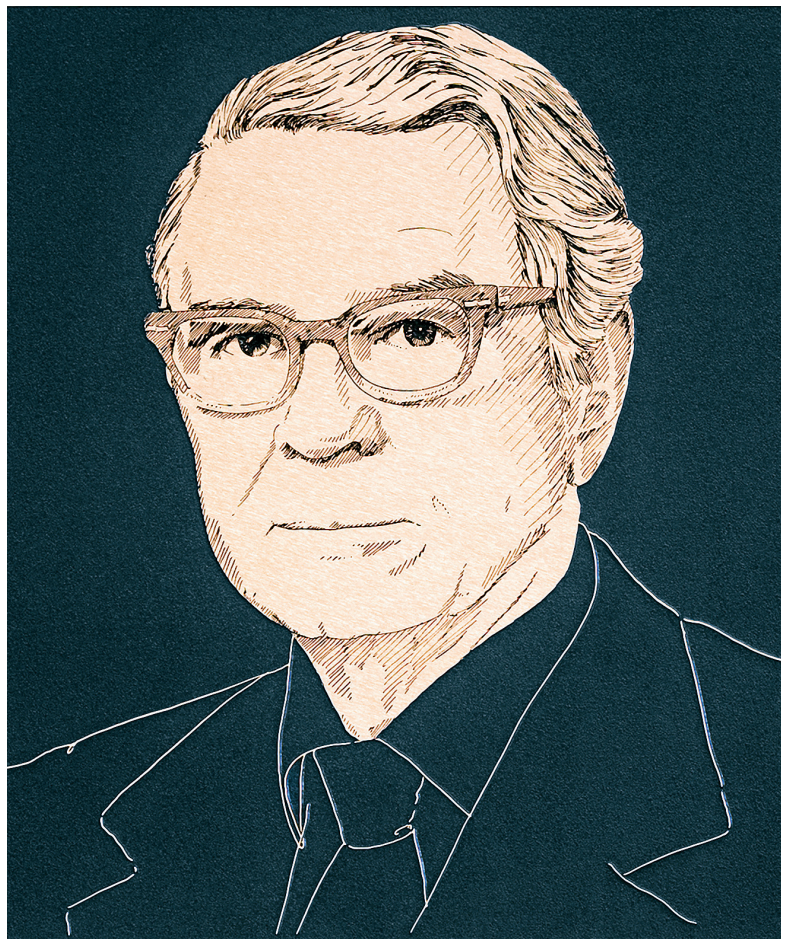


PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI

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This plaque graces the lobby of the E. W. Midgett building.

Jones

made many gifts of seed money to help improve education and economic progress.

Jones *continued from page 6*

Gordon Browning appointed him to the Tennessee State Planning Commission, and he was later elected chair.

While Jones was mayor of Murfreesboro from 1950 to 1954, the city council established the Murfreesboro Housing Authority to build low-cost housing. It quickly turned 55 sorely neglected acres into valuable real estate. Jones became the director of the Tennessee Municipal League and later was asked to chair the newly formed Murfreesboro Water and Sewer Commission. He also served on the boards of Rutherford Hospital (as chair), the Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce, and Middle Tennessee Medical Center Development Foundation.

Jones made many gifts of seed money to help improve education and economic progress in the Murfreesboro area. A partial list includes Jones College's Jennings A. Jones Chair of Excellence in Free Enterprise and Jennings and Rebecca Jones Chair of Excellence in Urban and Regional Planning, the MTSU Landsat teaching and mapping program, and computers and mini-grants for area schools. The Jennings and Rebecca Jones Foundation has funded the training of teachers for the gifted, provided economic education for thousands of students, launched the EXCEL card program and Crime Stoppers of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County, and advanced the development of the Discovery Center at Murfree Springs.

Jones died in 2005 at 95. Below are a few of the honors he received during his lifetime.

- In 1992, Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce named him a Business Legend.
- In 1998, he received honorary lifetime membership in Phi Kappa Phi, a national collegiate honor society.
- In 1999, Jones received the MTSU President's Award.
- In 2000, MTSU named its College of Business for Jennings A. Jones.
- In 2002, he received the American Planning Association's Distinguished Leadership Award for a Citizen Planner. ■

Rebecca and Jennings A. Jones, left, in 2004.



MTSU PHOTO

PHOTO COURTESY DON MIDGETT



Wink Midgett shows his textbook to Caroline Scarlett, wife of 1968–78 MTSU president Melvin Scarlett. Below left, Wink Midgett’s son Don recently made a donation to Jones College of Business for faculty and staff awards. Below right, the former business building was named for Wink Midgett.

PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT



PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI

Midgett taught accounting at MTSU.

Midgett *continued from page 7*

Perhaps Midgett’s greatest accomplishment of enduring athletic success was forming and coaching the first Middle Tennessee golf team in 1939. Blue Raider golf won the 1965 Division II National Championship (and the individual medal for Larry Gilbert, who later turned pro) and has won many conference titles and made many NCAA tournament appearances.

Midgett taught accounting at MTSU for many years. He wrote a definitive introductory textbook on the subject, and there is an annual scholarship given in his name in the Department of Accounting. He retired in 1977.

Midgett wrote a collection of anecdotes, *Corkus*, mostly about Middle Tennessee sports. He and his wife, Nell, were among the cofounders of Stones River Country Club following World War II, and Wink served on the City of Murfreesboro Golf Commission. Active in civic organizations, he was president of the Tennessee Business Education Association. The Midgetts had twin sons, Don and Dan. (The latter, now deceased, was on the 1965 National Champion golf squad.)

On the MTSU campus the former business building, a room in Paul W. Martin Sr. Honors Building, and the conference room in the Rose and Emmett Kennon Sports Hall of Fame all have been named for Midgett. ■

Two grads turned Houston business luminaries offer students advice.

Common wisdom says the leader of a basketball team can usually be found on the court. But as a freshman on the Blue Raiders' 1995–96 team, Kent Ayer ('99) found its leader sitting beside him on the bench. Brent Secrest ('96), a senior, had been a starting center and power forward. Former MTSU coach David Farrar recalls Secrest once had 17 rebounds against Texas Christian University. But he was overshadowed by superstar Aylton Tesch ('98), who later went pro. Still, Ayer recalls, it was Secrest who mentored younger players and ran practices in Farrar's absence.

Secrest shrugs it off, saying Tesch was clearly the better player. "At the end of the day, I want the team to win, and I want to be a part of that. There are other ways besides playing 40 minutes a game."

Ayer, president of TDK Construction in Murfreesboro, says Secrest's authority off the court was a testament to his character. "Usually a team's leader is the best player. That tells you how strong Brent's leadership skills were," he says. "What always impressed me, and impresses me to this day, are his leadership skills and take-charge attitude. I'm sure that's why he's been so successful in his career."

Secrest is married to the former Cristina Scola ('95). The two found each other at MTSU and then found lucrative careers in Houston's energy industry—he in oil and gas infrastructure and transportation and she in industry consulting. They live in the city's prestigious River Oaks neighborhood, whose residents include former NBA star Clyde "The Glide" Drexler and evangelist Joel Osteen.

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TRUE ★ BLUE ★ IN ★ TEXAS ★





By any measure, the Secretsts are at the top of their game. Yet they display the same selfless leadership Brent showed from the bench in his playing days. Their world revolves around Houston, but they talk about visiting MTSU to mentor business students (and perhaps lure a few to Texas). “The University has afforded us some pretty awesome opportunities,” Brent says. “I feel I still owe the school. I want to see it do well, and I’ll cheer for the team.”

In a sense, that team is all Blue Raiders, and the Secretsts are happy to offer advice to students. In short, their advice is to break with common wisdom. Opportunities, like leaders, can be found in unexpected places.

Winning Attitude

With their high-profile jobs, the Secretsts admit balancing life and work can be a challenge, especially now that they have seven-year-old son Jack and five-year-old daughter Sloane. But David Farrar, who has kept up with the Secretsts since his MTSU days, says the couple’s success hasn’t changed them a bit. Farrar recalls visiting Brent at work and noticing “every worker in the building, especially the people that worked by the hour, made an effort to come and greet him. And he knew all of them by name.”

Brent says when he’s hiring, he looks for people who played team sports because they understand the importance of accepting their roles for the greater good. “At the end of the day, with the groups—or with the teams—that do very well, there will be opportunities created for everybody involved with that success.”

The Secretsts are eager to see other MTSU alumni succeed as they have. For them, it’s still about the team. ■

The Secretsts are eager to see other MTSU alumni succeed as they have.



Brent and Cristina Secrett relax in their Houston home.

PHOTO BY JOHN EVERETT

★ TIPS FROM THE TOP ★

Brent and Cristina offer advice to students seeking employment.

As a finance major at MTSU, Brent Secretst knew he wanted to get back to his hometown of Houston. He kept his foot in the door by interning at the Houston offices of Merrill Lynch during his last two summers of college. Through a Merrill Lynch connection, he landed a job in the energy industry at Houston oil and gas company Phibro.

★ Look beyond your résumé

“In Houston, a degree that says Middle Tennessee State doesn’t go that far,” Secretst says. “Ultimately, you need to have somebody sponsor you or steward you to help you get that job. Once you apply what you learned in college and they see you’re a hard worker, you’re driven and have high integrity and all those things people look for in employees, you’ll start getting opportunities. Then it won’t matter whether you went to Middle Tennessee or Texas A&M.”

For Secretst, opportunities came quickly. He rose through the ranks at Enterprise Products, 56th on the Fortune 500 List. As a vice president, he oversees the commercialization of Enterprise’s crude-oil assets, which annually generate more than \$1 billion in profits.

“It’s a business development and optimization role,” he says, “There’s a lot of [profit and loss] responsibility, just because a lot of money is generated from these assets.”

He has been involved with some of the company’s biggest projects: its ECHO terminal, which links midwestern oil with Gulf Coast refineries; its recent acquisition of Oiltanking Partners; and its pipeline project to transport crude from the Permian Basin in West Texas to Houston. Recently, he was part of a team called to the White House to discuss the nation’s strategy to gain energy independence.

Even with the unpredictability of oil and natural gas prices, Secretst foresees the United States becoming a net exporter of those commodities, which will mean more high-paying jobs. That makes Houston—where, as he puts it, there’s a “big delta” between educated human capital and the city’s share of gross domestic product—a land of opportunity.

★ Look beyond Tennessee

“Tennessee doesn’t have a whole lot of exposure to the oil and gas story,” Secretst says. “But there’s a lot of opportunity for young people in general in this industry, and I think it’s going to be around for a long time.”

He says he would tell MTSU students what he told his nephew, a recent graduate of the University of Iowa: “If your goal is to make as much money as fast as you can, head straight to Houston.”

Cristina Secretst might not have ended up in Houston had she not met Brent at MTSU. A highly regarded consultant for some of the biggest names in the oil industry, she is a Michigan native who majored in biology, a subject completely unrelated to her line of work.

Cristina moved to Texas with Brent to work and to get her master’s in microbiology at Baylor. After Baylor, Cristina weighed the choice of getting a Ph.D. or going to medical school and realized she was suffering serious academic burnout. So she decided to look for work instead.

With some help from Brent, she found a consulting job even though she was intimidated by the word “consulting.” She recalls thinking, “How can you consult about something you don’t know?” Her worries proved groundless.

★ Look beyond your major

“Consulting is a great place to start your career,” Cristina says. “No one expects you to walk into a consulting company out of college knowing much. You just have to be hard-working and have a great attitude.”

Beginning consultants are essentially apprentices, she says. They listen and learn as senior consultants immerse themselves in a corporate culture, deconstruct problems, and build internal systems that address those problems.

By 2010, when a BP oil rig exploded, killing 11 and spilling 200 million gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico, Cristina had spent years observing best practices in the energy industry. It became her job to roll out new processes and procedures at BP facilities throughout the world.

After 16 years with Andersen Consulting (now Accenture), she left to become a partner at Ernst & Young. ■

Pull Up a Chair

THESE TENNESSEE TITANS OF INDUSTRY MAKE THEIR MARK



Pamela Wright and Joey Jacobs each grew up on a middle Tennessee farm, graduated from MTSU in the 1970s, and made a generous donation for an endowed chair in Jones College. Wright ('73) is considered Nashville's most successful businesswoman. She owns Wright Travel, Tennessee's largest travel agency.

The Wright Stuff

Pamela Wright grew up on a farm about halfway between Lebanon and Murfreesboro. At 16, she discovered what would become her lifelong fascination with travel. As a Lebanon High School student, she convinced her parents to let her go to Europe with 11 other girls and an English teacher to study for the summer.

"It was the first time that I had gotten on an airplane," Wright says. "It was the first point of realizing that travel was going to be a passion and a love in my life."

Wright studied social work at MTSU and went to work in that field after graduating. Her business savvy led her into larger leadership roles. As she was building that career, though, Wright continued to travel and even began looking for the opportunity to work in the travel business. She eventually opened a small agency with a partner, later sold her half, and then started Wright Travel.

"Just jump in all the way."

What propelled her from the relative safety of social work into the world of entrepreneurship? "My parents instilled in me the drive to be successful and always strive for more," she says. "I think entrepreneurship was the natural transition into that—just jump in all the way and do it on my own. I think a lot of that just came from personality

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Pamela Wright

Of Excellence

BOTH IN THE BUSINESS WORLD AND ON THEIR ALMA MATER.

In healthcare, Nashville's preeminent industry, Joey Jacobs ('75) is considered the city's most successful businessman. (*Nashville Post* business magazine named him CEO of the Year in 2014.) Jacobs is CEO of Acadia Healthcare, one of the world's largest providers of behavioral health services.

Jacobs Ladder

Joey Jacobs grew up on a farm in Morrison, Tenn. When he followed his older brother to MTSU, he knew he wanted to study business and accounting. His family had a small orchard, and the 12-year-old Joey sold apple cider at a roadside stand one summer.

"I made like \$24," Jacobs says. "So in 1965, I found out that, other than mowing yards, there was another way to make some money. That was the bug that led me down the road of wanting to be in business."

He was drawn to the technical aspect of accounting, how the money flows, profit and loss, balance sheets, how companies keep up with their money. Jacobs knew a couple of accountants in Warren County who seemed to be doing very well. After Jacobs graduated with an accounting degree, MTSU's placement office found him a position at an HCA hospital in Smithville.

"Right place, right time, right skill."

"Right place, right time, right skill," he says, describing landing a job in the 1970s with a company that would become the largest hospital operator in the country. Jacobs started in August 1975, and by December HCA offered Jacobs the CFO position in Smithville. Jacobs was also making his own luck.

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Joey Jacobs



PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT

An MTSU student who graduates and becomes an accountant “with a personality and the right work ethic could be [another] Joey Jacobs.”

Jacobs *continued from page 15*

“Well, I think I worked hard. And at HCA, if you did a good job, about every three years a promotion would present itself to you,” he says.

Jacobs moved many times over two decades, taking on greater responsibilities for hospital operations, bearing responsibility for 29 hospitals throughout the Southeast (including several psychiatric hospitals), 13,000 employees, and \$1.2 billion in revenue.

But 21 years into his successful HCA career, Jacobs was bitten by the entrepreneurial bug. He quit HCA in 1996, raised \$10.5 million in private venture funds, and launched Psychiatric Solutions (PSI). Over the next few years, he acquired 95 independent facilities, making PSI a \$2 billion publicly traded company and the largest U.S. psychiatric services provider. In a decade, he became a success in a fragmented industry and consolidated the market. PSI became the undisputed inpatient behavioral health leader.

In 2010, Jacobs tried to take PSI private. Instead, his competition swooped in and bought the company for \$3 billion. Jacobs and his tightly knit corporate team joined Atlanta-based Acadia Healthcare, a smaller provider with just six locations. Jacobs and his team poured \$20 million of their own money into Acadia, relocated it to middle Tennessee, and went to work making it bigger. By the start of 2014, Acadia had 55 facilities. By early 2015, purchases in the United Kingdom and Wisconsin had nearly doubled

that total. Jacobs says future acquisitions promise to increase the company’s size to close to 200 facilities and \$2 billion in revenue.

Having already built two companies into major players in behavioral health, what’s next for Jacobs? “I have no intention of selling Acadia. Hopefully, 20 years from now, if someone wants to know about behavioral health, they’ll think of Acadia like they thought of HCA in the hospital space,” he says. “That’s what I’d like to leave behind.”

Jacobs says that with his executive team in place and a healthy pipeline for partnerships and acquisitions nationally and internationally, he believes he can take the company’s revenue to \$4 billion over the next several years.

Jacobs’s success enabled him to make a generous gift to establish an accounting chair in Jones College. The Jacobs Chair of Excellence in Accounting is scheduled to begin its work in 2016. Through research, teaching, and scholarly activity, the chairholder will be charged with attracting national attention to MTSU.

“I would like the accounting program at MTSU to be the best in the state and the best in the Southeast. I realize to get there you’ve got to have the best faculty we can attract,” Jacobs says. He believes an MTSU student who graduates and becomes an accountant “with a personality and the right work ethic could be [another] Joey Jacobs. The business school and accounting program have a good chance of producing graduates who will do well for themselves and can later give back to the University.” ■

PRESENT AND ACCOUNTED FOR

Joey Jacobs is not the only Nashville healthcare executive who’s invested in MTSU’s Accounting Department. Andrew Woodfin “Woody” Miller (’66) gave MTSU \$10 million in 2012, the largest-ever alumni gift to MTSU. Part of this gift was used to purchase the former Middle Tennessee Medical Center site and Bell Street Building, whose occupants after renovation will include Jones College of Business executive education.

He started out with an international accounting firm as a CPA, then joined HCA and served as a senior officer. As Federation of American Hospitals president and chair, he represented the for-profit healthcare industry in Washington, D.C. He cofounded Surgical Care Affiliates, founded two other publicly traded healthcare companies plus Women’s Health Partners, and owns investment company HealthMark Partners. ■



MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee, right, greets alumnus Woody Miller.

PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT

Wright *continued from page 14*

and pride and ambition and wanting to have my own impact, the right impact, on my life.”

Wright’s rise in the travel business was meteoric. Wright Travel is now one of the largest U.S. travel management companies. With a focus on business travel, it boasts about 250 corporate clients (including MTSU) that range from small accounts to millions of dollars annually. Her company generates over \$60 million in annual revenue.

Such success as a female entrepreneur in Tennessee is impressive. Few women lead, much less own, large companies in the state. A 2012 CABLE study found women represented 47 percent of the state’s workforce but held only 8 percent of 566 public company board seats.

Wright sees the struggle for entrepreneurs as less a gender issue and more a part of national competitiveness. She says her decision to endow a Jones College chair in entrepreneurship came from her desire to engage in America’s competition with the rest of the world. She also believes exceptional students deserve exceptional faculty. Her gift enables MTSU to attract prestigious scholars whose teaching and research should attract national attention to MTSU’s academic and research programs.

Wright praises the work Jones College is doing.

“Education is so important. It’s tied into my whole life,” Wright says. “The entrepreneurship chair impacts the community we live in and the world as a whole.”

Wright praises the work Jones College is doing to prepare the workforce in Nashville, considered one of the most vibrant business and entrepreneurial cultures in America. “I see good things ahead,” she says. “The University has such an impact. I feel there’s a lot of opportunity for MTSU to have more recognition and involvement in the greater Nashville and middle Tennessee community. The more the community sees the students MTSU produces and the curriculum that comes from the University, the more positive the community response and support for MTSU.”

Wright well remembers her time as a student at MTSU. “It’s where you grow up—in college life,” she says. “Especially if you’re from a small town or a protected environment. When you first move away, it really molds you into who you are. And that’s what happened with me at MTSU. It molded me into the path of wanting to be successful, of wanting to contribute to the community, and of wanting to have an impact on the world.” ■



PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI

Dr. Bill McDowell is the new chairholder of the Wright Travel Chair in Entrepreneurship.

BIG IDEAS

Dr. Bill McDowell holds the Wright Travel Chair in Entrepreneurship. McDowell, who recently joined MTSU after launching several successful businesses (and churches), formerly taught entrepreneurship at East Carolina University.

McDowell believes college creates opportunities for future entrepreneurs to get experience without risk. “We work with people to organize their ideas and build a structure: a marketing plan, a production plan, financing options. Jones College can really help idea people launch their ideas.”

McDowell has already made a name for himself by launching the 2015 Business Plan Competition, open to all MTSU students and alumni. Prominent area early-stage company investors, entrepreneurs, and business leaders judged student presentations.

The winner of this year’s \$7,500 first prize was Matthew Wright, Ph.D. candidate in molecular bio-sciences, for his business plan for Salomon’s House, a life-science startup that focuses on the conservation of endangered plant species and explores the plants’ chemical profiles for potential use in the development of pharmaceuticals. ■

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," says 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 says 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 says. "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.

Alumna Lorelei Samuelson's hard work leads to a generous donation and a new graduate concentration.

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, says students will have 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 says.

MicroStrategy's applications allow companies in almost every industry to pull in multiple areas of data for a "single source of truth," Samuelson says. "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.

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“We had the statistics class, and 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.”



Lorelei Samuelson resolved to give back.





“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.”



PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT

Lorelei Samuelson at HCA’s Nashville headquarters.

Filling the Gap *continued from page 18*

“We can see anomalies in data or things that are tied together in ways that we haven’t seen before,” Samuelson says. “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 says 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 says.

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 says, 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) says 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 says. “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 says. “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.” ■

CIS

ALL SYSTEMS GO

A gift to Jones College of Business from Steve and Kathy Anderson will create an endowed chair in computer information systems and give students the benefit of a nationally prominent faculty member who understands the important challenges and opportunities in information systems and technology.

Steve Anderson ('77) majored in Marketing with a minor in Information Technology. While studying for his M.B.A. in 1978, Anderson worked as a graduate teaching assistant in the Information Technology Department.

During his 25 years with Andersen Consulting (now Accenture)—15 as a partner—his client work focused on large-scale manufacturing, supply chain, and information technology strategy for Fortune 500 industrial and consumer products companies. His work included teams in Europe and the Far East. Anderson directed major restructuring for several companies and led lean manufacturing programs in over 20 different facilities in the U.S. and Europe. His work got national recognition in publications including *BusinessWeek* and *CEO* magazine.

“ We are pleased to be able to help through the endowed chair.”

Anderson's vision for the CIS chair is to hire someone who embodies the qualities possessed by Dr. Richard Callahan, a dedicated and much-loved former professor in the then School of Business. According to Anderson, the chair will (among other objectives) expose students to creative, value-added uses of technology and conduct “innovation fairs,” where student teams will develop original ideas judged by their peers and business leaders.

“Kathy and I are strong believers in the importance of a college education for young people, not just from a career

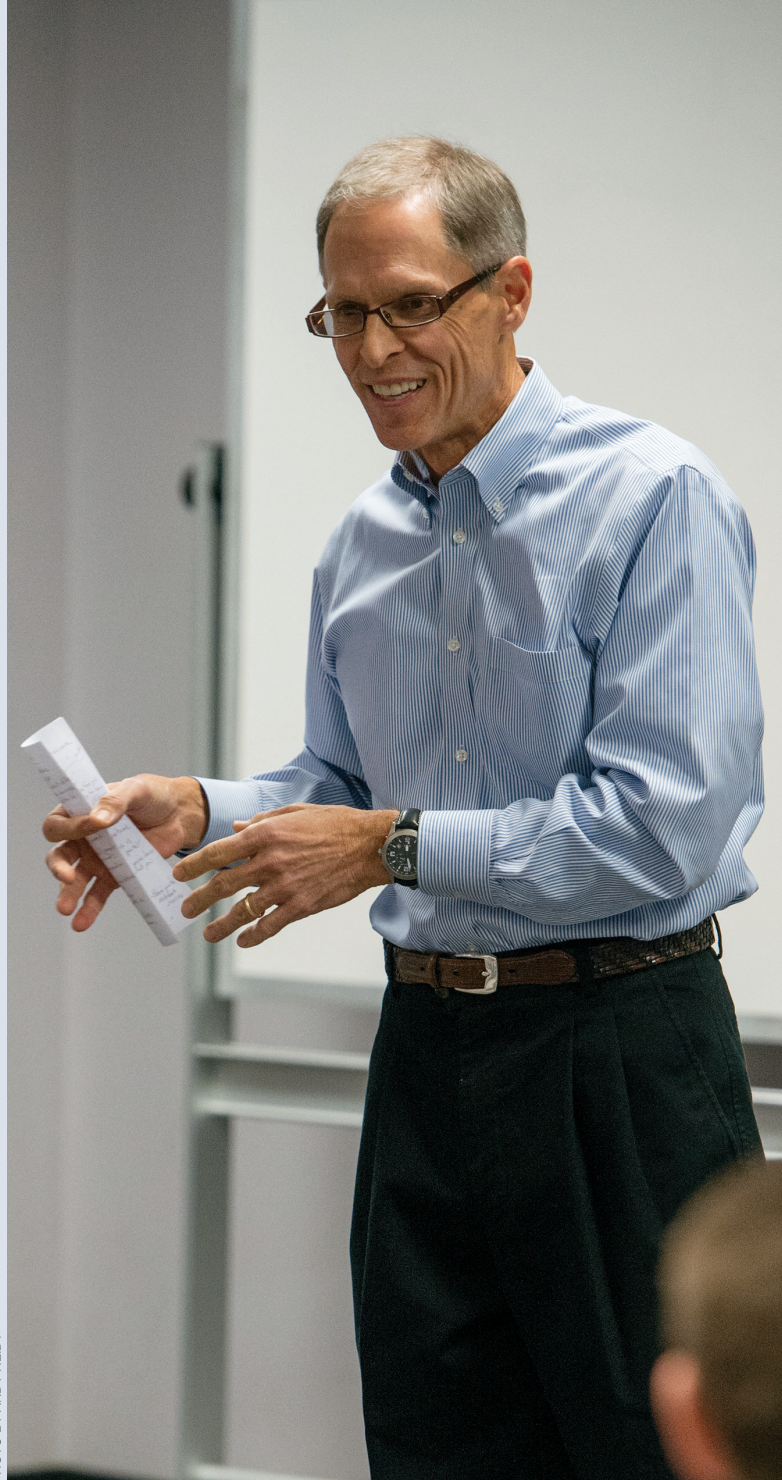


PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT

Steve Anderson spoke to MTSU CIS students in 2014.

perspective but also in their understanding of the world in which they live,” said Anderson. “Technology will continue to grow in importance, and we are pleased to be able to help through the endowed chair.”

In 2014 Jones College honored Anderson with its annual Exemplar Award, given to graduates whose personal and professional accomplishments make them worthy role models. Because these alumni have backgrounds much in common with current students, they can inspire future Jones College graduates to also achieve great things. ■

BEYOND JUST

For these three Accounting majors, beating the odds was just the beginning.



Patrick Amans has faced many struggles in his 27 years. He battled leukemia as a child and was essentially homeless for a time. His father was absent, and his mother had addiction problems.

One might expect Amans to have his own issues, but this MTSU graduate student is thriving. “My past is just a reminder of where I’ve come from,” he says.

A student in the M.Acc. program, Amans earned his undergraduate degree from MTSU in 2013 and is set to earn his master’s in accountancy in summer 2015. He is a graduate assistant working with Professor Rebecca Foote.

“He is not impeded by what has happened,” Foote says. “He doesn’t use it as a crutch or an excuse.”

No stranger to hard times or hard work, Amans worked full time in high school and graduated with honors—impressive for someone whose family life was not exactly stable. “I lived with my guidance counselor senior year,” he says.

Amans started at MTSU in 2008 but was sent to Iraq as a member of the Army National Guard. He resumed studies, was deployed to Kuwait, and finally completed his degree.

continued on page 25

THE NUMBERS

All have overcome adversity, demonstrated an altruistic spirit, and excelled.

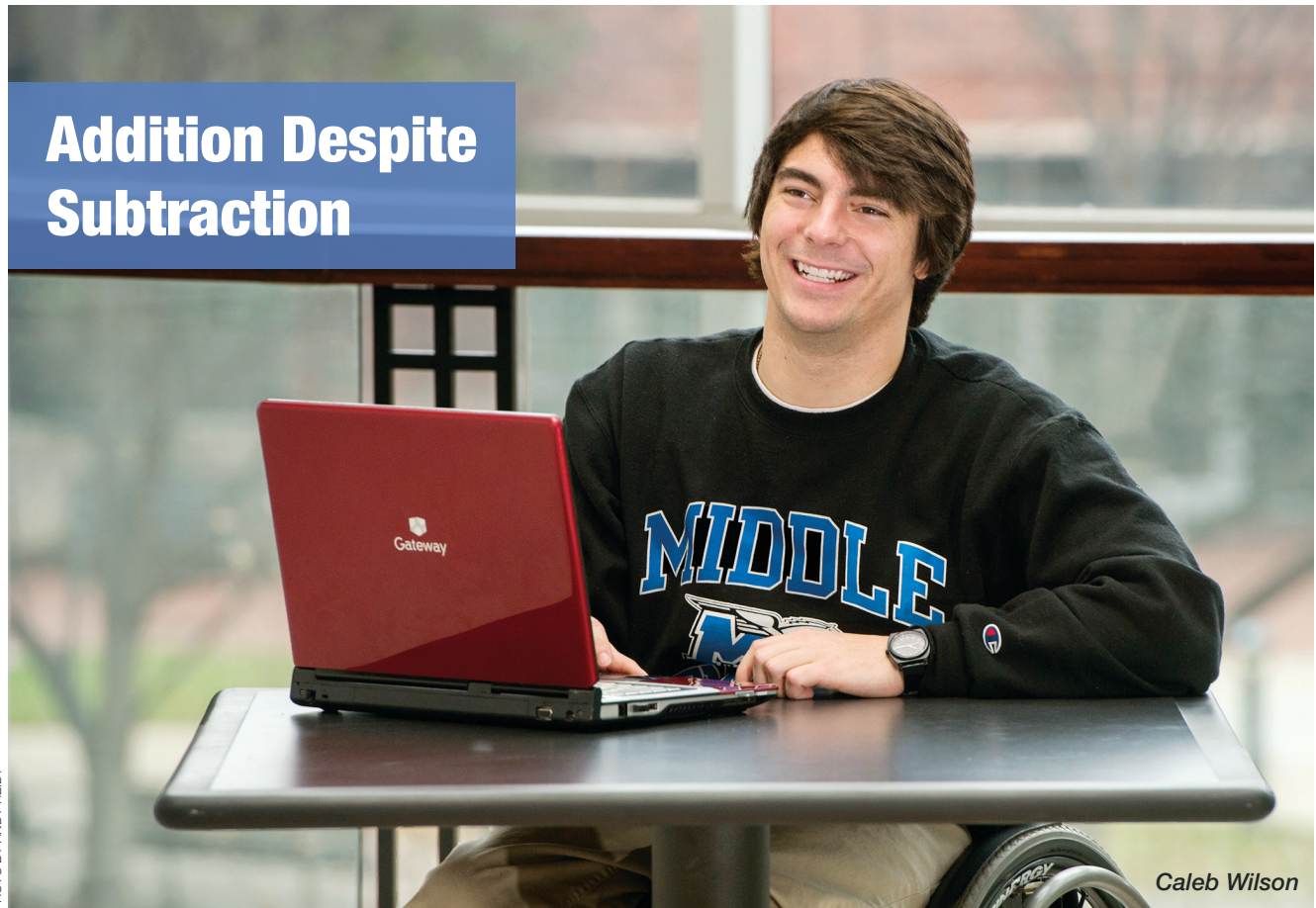


PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT

Nineteen-year-old Caleb Wilson is much like any other college freshman: enjoying living on his own for the first time, making new friends, planning his future. Wilson wants people to know that he's not that different from everyone else. He wants the same things in life most of us do: a home, a family, friends, a good job.

"I want the same thing as everyone else," says Wilson, who is from Old Hickory. "The basic American dream." And he's determined to chase that dream from his wheelchair.

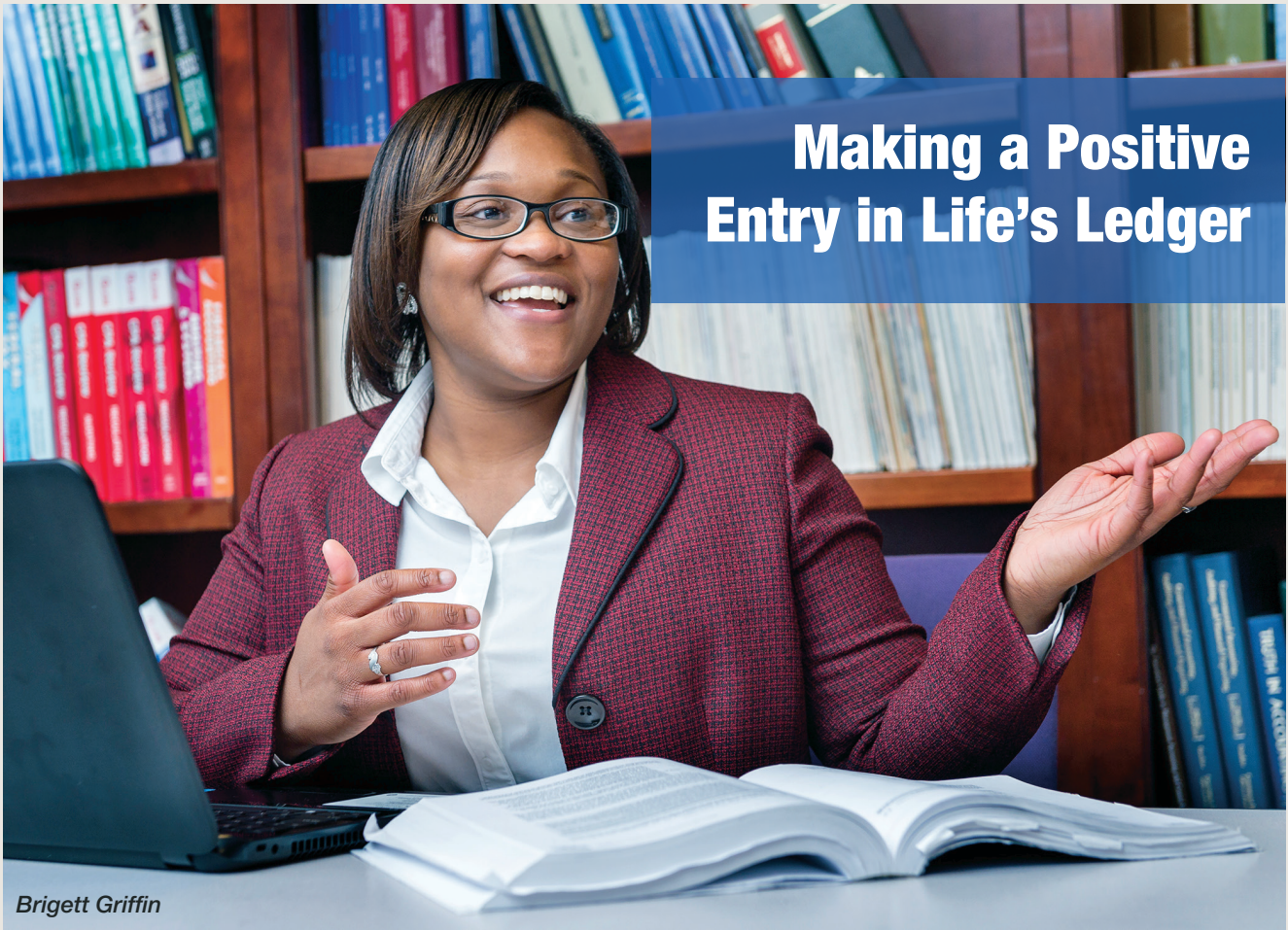
Wilson is totally independent, takes care of himself, and lives on his own despite not being able to walk.

He thinks he's blessed and believes others have much bigger battles than the one he fights. "I just got hit by a truck," he says matter-of-factly.

When he was about to begin his senior year at Goodpasture High School in 2013, the baseball all-star was hanging out with friends at the lake, sitting near a steep boat ramp. Wilson's life changed when a friend accidentally put his truck in the wrong gear while driving off the ramp.

"My buddy pressed hard on the gas," Wilson says. "I didn't feel a thing."

continued on page 25



Making a Positive Entry in Life's Ledger

PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI

Brigett Griffin

Brigett Griffin loves math, and it's no surprise that she chose to study accounting. "Growing up, I was always the kid who wanted to be the banker in Monopoly," says the 22-year-old senior.

Griffin, who is from Memphis and set to graduate in May 2015, says accounting is not easy. "But I don't want something that's easy," she says.

Getting to where she is today wasn't easy. Her mother had to retire early and go on disability due to health problems. "It was really a struggle for us," says Griffin. "We had a roof, but it was a struggle," says Griffin.

They lost that home when Griffin was in middle school. "We couldn't afford it. We stayed with my aunt until we got back on our feet," she says.

Dr. Adrian Mayse, assistant professor of accounting, credits Griffin's success to her strong family ties.

"Her grandfather instilled in her that education is the path to success," Mayse says. "And Brigett's mother continues to motivate and provide strength to her when times are difficult during her academic journey."

Griffin has worked hard to earn scholarships, including awards from the Tennessee Lottery, the Tennessee Society of CPAs, and DREAM (Diverse Representation and Educational Access at MTSU). She hopes to go into forensic accounting and has her sights set on fighting financial corruption with the FBI.

Griffin is focused on her studies, but she's also involved in professional and service groups. With I AM ME, a non-profit that empowers young women through mentoring and service, she has participated in a campus clean-up, a food drive, and Perfect PROMise, an effort to collect and distribute prom dresses to young women who can't afford them. Griffin also volunteers with Journey Home, a faith-based nonprofit in Murfreesboro that helps the homeless.

"It's important to me to make others happy, to do something good for someone else," Griffin says. "I think this would be a better world if we all helped each other."

Griffin is president of the MTSU chapter of the National Association of Black Accountants, and she works full-time. Where does she find the time? "You find time for whatever you feel is important," Griffin says. ■

Addition: Wilson *continued from page 23*

Wilson suffered a spinal cord injury that left him a paraplegic. Now he relies on his faith to get him through. “This is what God has given me. I don’t like it. I don’t understand it,” he says. “But He has a plan, and just knowing He knows the plan . . . well, I’m okay with it.”

Wilson has bad days, but he doesn’t feel sorry for himself. He feels responsible for brightening the days of those around him. “I try to always have a smile on my face and make people smile or laugh,” he says. “I feel like God has given me a different task . . . to reach out to others.”

After the accident, his friends didn’t quite know how to act around him. He says meeting new friends in college has helped. Old friends may have felt awkward, but his new friends at MTSU only know the Caleb in a wheelchair. “I love college,” he says. “I’ve made a ton of new friends.”

When he isn’t studying, Wilson is usually working on his recovery, spending a couple of days a week in therapy at H3O, an aquatic rehabilitation clinic in Murfreesboro. Wilson has progressed from only being able to move his toes to walking and running on an underwater treadmill. Therapist Jim Dolbow is amazed at his determination. “Caleb has no fear,” says Dolbow. “He’s stayed extremely zealous about the whole process.”

Dolbow often feels emotionally drained from his work but draws energy from Wilson. He’s seen Wilson interacting with other patients, including a severely disabled young girl. “Caleb will kid and make her laugh,” Dolbow says.

Whether he becomes an accountant, teacher, or motivational speaker, you can bet Wilson will be an active participant in the life he’s been given—a life he’s grateful to have. “Life goes on,” he says. “You can be a part of it, or you can be in a room by yourself.” ■

Balance: Amans *continued from page 22*

Amans and his wife, Jessica, also take care of a family member’s three small children, who were displaced when their mother went to jail. “Patrick understood there would be hardships associated with that commitment,” Foote says. “He could hardly stand the thought of those children being bounced around as he had been as a child.”

You might expect an Accounting major to have a career or life goal of making a lot of money or being successful in business. Not Amans. “My ultimate dream is to open a food truck and feed the homeless,” he says. Though his career may involve counting money, Amans will almost certainly always be one who counts his blessings. ■

FORMULA for Success

College students are often asked about their plans for life after graduation. But by any estimate, Clinton Knox III is already doing it. The 21-year-old Management major is managing his own business, Clinton Cultivates, and a nonprofit he cofounded, the Young & Educated (Y&E). With a LinkedIn profile as impressive as many career veterans, Knox isn’t wasting any time. “Why can’t I do it now?” he asks.

Whether giving a motivational speech or guiding young men through Y&E, Knox’s goal is to help others. When he saw the way many of his peers presented themselves, Knox started Y&E as a blog to share practical advice: “how to interview, dress, and speak in public.” He is a mentor to young black men through Collegiate 100 and a member of the Student Government Association and Jones College Student Advisory Board. Through INROADS, which pairs minority youth with internships, he has worked with Cintas and Wells Fargo.

Knox is blessed with people skills, says Management and Marketing instructor Ralph Williams: “Clinton is one of those young people who draws others to him.”

He plans to become a banker, a business manager, or a public speaker. His talents, though, aren’t confined to business. A singer, he won second place in BMI’s Talent Showcase in Atlanta in summer 2013 with a vocal performance of John Legend’s “Stay with You.” Whatever career he chooses, he’ll likely give it his all. ■

Management major Clinton Knox wants to give back.

PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI





PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI

From left, front row, TVA Investment Challenge team members Frank Hodges, Robert Goss, and Michael Weston work with Dr. Kevin Zhao, in back.

TVA Investment Challenge

Under the direction of Dr. Kevin Zhao, Economics and Finance, the TVA Investment Challenge team had a productive 2014. The half-million USD diversified stock portfolio managed by finance students registered a solid annual gain of 7.3%, reaching its highest level in 15 years. At the 2014 national TVA Investment Challenge conference, the MTSU team interacted with other university teams and professionals from companies that together manage \$5 trillion in financial assets. Impressed by the Jones College presentation, Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System offered employment to MBA students on the team.

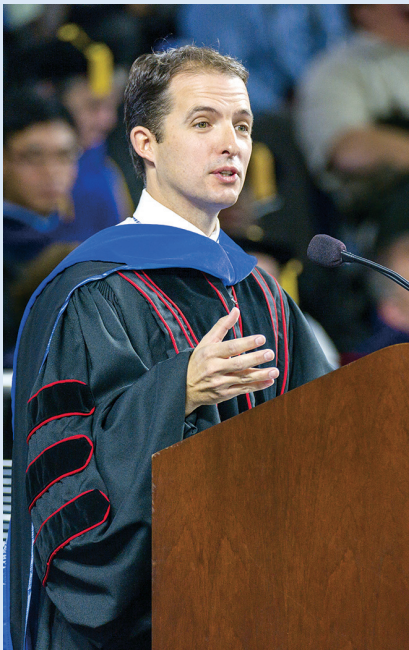


PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI

Shane McFarland, Murfreesboro's mayor and a Jones College alumnus, addresses MTSU's graduating students in December 2014.

The Public Arena

Murfreesboro Mayor Shane McFarland was the guest speaker for the fall 2014 morning commencement ceremony. McFarland, who had served on Murfreesboro City Council and was elected mayor in mid-2014, earned his B.A. in accounting from Jones College in 1997 and was 1995–96 MTSU student body president. McFarland owns custom residential and commercial construction firm Shane McFarland Construction and serves on the Master Custom Builder Council of Tennessee. He has served on city boards and commissions including the Murfreesboro Planning Commission and the Murfreesboro Historic Zoning Commission. He is a founding member of the Murfreesboro Half Marathon and past chairman of Rutherford County Crime Stoppers.



PHOTO BY DON WRIGHT

President Sidney A. McPhee joined other Tennessee higher education leaders for a Nashville Business Journal panel on preparing students for the workforce. Discussion included Jones College's partnership with Dale Carnegie.



PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT

Matt Thornhill, pictured, and John Martin of Virginia-based marketing research company GenerationsMatter presented findings at the Millennial conference.

2014 Millennial Conference

Jones College hosted a sold-out conference with experts offering insights on how to capitalize on the Millennial Generation's unique traits. Sponsored by the Jennings A. Jones Chair of Excellence in Free Enterprise and Jones College with Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce and Southeast Business Forums, "2020 Millennial Game Plan" drew a variety of business leaders from the public and private sectors. Jones College held the conference to help business and community leaders explore what the influx of Millennials means to the economy and how to maximize the entry into the job market of this new generation of workers.



PHOTO COURTESY STATE OF TENNESSEE

Dr. Jackie Gilbert, professor of management, shown at center in red, joined other workplace civility advocates at the June 2014 signing of the Healthy Workplace Act. Seated is Governor Bill Haslam, who signed the bill into law.



Professional Development Seminars

As part of its commitment and ongoing efforts to better prepare graduates for the workforce of the future, the Jennings A. Jones College of Business is sponsoring a series of professional development seminars for all students enrolled in its graduate programs.

John Boyens, Jones College executive in residence, gives a seminar to graduate students on how to effectively conduct a job search. The Boyens Group is a sales, management, and training firm based in Nashville.



Computer Lab

The Jones College Computer Lab has been renovated with an increased focus on student convenience and customer service. The expanded 6,361-square-foot lab features an open, work-centered environment; comfortable notebook-friendly lounge furniture; additional team study rooms; wireless printing; mobile/laptop charging stations; and 40 new computers. The \$288,000 renovation includes a student ID access system and computers networked to MTSU's print management system, which allows remote printing from mobile devices. Two new group study rooms allow students to collaborate and to bring in their own laptops or mobile devices. The new computer stations also allow more workspace.

Senior Jamie Krieger works at the printing station in the renovated Jones College computer lab.



PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI

Business Plan Competition

Semifinalists in the 2015 Business Plan Competition sponsored by the Wright Travel Chair in Entrepreneurship presented their ideas in the Student Union Building to faculty, staff, and business leaders. Participants were competing for the \$7,500 first prize and \$5,000 second prize.

From left, Beth Rhoton, Jones College associate dean of graduate and executive education Kim Sokoya, and Montana Rhoton discuss the business plan for Montana Scholarship-Roatan.



PHOTO BY ANDY HEDT

Advising Center

The northeast wing of the second floor of the Business and Aerospace Building was converted into the Jones College advising center. The advising staff was increased to 11 as a part of MTSU's Quest for Student Success initiative to improve retention and graduation rates.

Advising staff from left: first row, Brandie Freeman, Meredith Young, graduation analyst Teena Young, Paula Calahan; second row, advising center secretary Debi Goodwin, Kerri French-Nelson, Travis Tipton, advising manager Gretchen Leming; third row, Jillian Jacobson, Emily Yttri, Amber Bollinger; fourth row, Amie Donahue.

Graduate Programs

Revamped M.B.A. options include a 12-month program, online or on campus, part-time or full-time, accelerated cohorts, integrated curriculum, business networking, professional development, study abroad, and concentrations in healthcare management and music business.

The 12-month M.S. in Finance program offers practical quantitative knowledge, hands-on experience, discipline-specific skills, counseling and mentoring, and CFS, CFM, CFP, and CTP preparation.

Dr. Frank Michello, director, M.S. in Finance.



PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT



PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT

National Teaching Finalist

Sandy Benson's innovative classroom teaching methods earned her a spot as one of four finalists in a national competition for business law professors, the Charles M. Hewitt Master Teacher Competition at the Academy of Legal Studies in Business. In Benson's "Legal Beagle News Show," she assigns students to pose as attorneys in court cases, including some that may be considered by the U.S. Supreme Court during the semester. Students listen to the real attorneys' arguments online and take up the case for their assigned party. Other students act as reporters covering the case for a news panel discussion or conference.

Sandy Benson, 2014–2015 interim Accounting chair.



Dr. Philip Seagraves hosts a focus group with students for leading area real estate professionals.

Real Estate Development

Dr. Philip Seagraves, new head of the real estate program, secured a \$1.1475 million gift-in-kind donation of software and licensing from Argus, provider of worldwide software services to commercial real estate developers. This product, unique in the region, will greatly enhance the Jones College real estate program.

PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI

Career Achievement Award

With over 30 years of service on the Jones College faculty molding future accountants, Paula Thomas received MTSU's Career Achievement Award. She holds the Deloitte Foundation Professorship in Accounting, previously served as department chair, has worked on accounting curriculum at the national level, and serves as adviser for MTSU's chapter of international honors organization Beta Alpha Psi, named a "Superior Chapter" last year. Her research on cash-balance pensions was a resource for IBM employees concerned about reduced pension benefits from pension plan conversions.

Dr. Paula Thomas receives MTSU's Career Achievement Award.



PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI



PHOTO BY KARA HOOPER

Spirit of America Award

In 1991, Robert F. Harper IV (B.B.A., '89) established real estate and development company Harper Properties. He developed commercial, residential, and multifamily projects in Florida and invested in land throughout the southeast. In 2002, he established Land South Group with Brian G. Philpot, acquiring over 200,000 acres. He also established Bankers South High Yield Fund, originating real estate lending opportunities, and AgAmerica Lending. He is chair and CEO of broadcast tower corporation Tall Tower Capital and a founder of Central Florida's Platinum Bank, serving on its board.

Robert F. Harper IV accepts the Joe M. Rodgers Spirit of America Award from his mentor, Dr. Katie Kemp.

Free Enterprise Champion

Jim Ayers, originally from west Tennessee, nurtured FirstBank from a single branch in Scotts Hill, Tenn., into the state's largest independently owned and operated bank, with over \$2 billion in assets and over 40 locations. After building healthcare and real estate ventures, he also established Ayers Foundation for educational programs in Henderson, Perry, and Decatur counties; Ayers Institute at Vanderbilt University for cancer research; Ayers Children's Hospital in Jackson, Tenn.; and Ayers Institute for Teacher Learning and Innovation at Lipscomb University.

FirstBank's Jim Ayers accepts the Champion of Free Enterprise Award from Jones College dean David Urban.



PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI

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