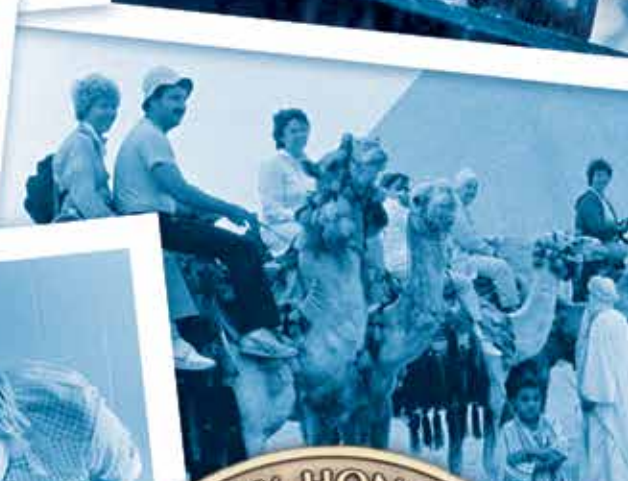


UNIVERSITY HONORS COLLEGE

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY | SPRING 2024

Areté

[excellence • virtue]



MTSU 50 years
1973-2023



MIDDLE TENNESSEE
STATE UNIVERSITY.



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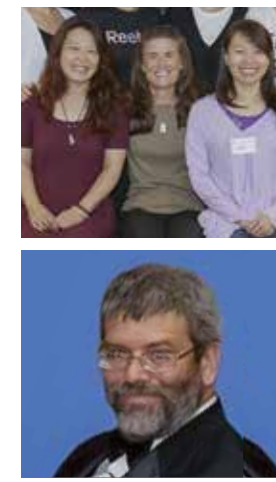
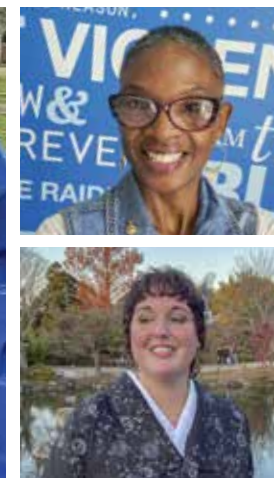
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Photo by Andy Heidt



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Married mom of five completed first Honors thesis



30 PAYING IT FORWARD

MTSU alum creates Honors program at another university



Last fall, about 30 Honors College students and I joined President Sidney A. McPhee on the football field at halftime of the home opener to rejoice over the 50th anniversary of Honors at MTSU. The following week, at the annual meeting of the

Honors Board of Visitors, the

Honors College celebrated its 50th anniversary with a banquet attended by more than 100 people. The following day, I rode in the Homecoming parade to mark the occasion.

“90 undergraduates per year are now completing Honors theses.”

I am honored to serve as the fifth director or dean since the beginning of Honors at MTSU. June Hall McCash (Foreign Languages) established the Honors Program in 1973. She was succeeded by Ron Messier (History) in 1980, followed in 1990 by J.P. Montgomery (English), who was director and then dean as the Honors Program transitioned into the Honors College. Phil Mathis (Biology) became dean in 2004, and my tenure began in 2008.

Campuswide, the last 50 years—and particularly the past 20—have witnessed the construction of new buildings, the creation of new curricula, and other major milestones. For the last five years, The Princeton Review has recognized MTSU as one of the top institutions of higher education in the nation. Diverse programs now draw students not only from Tennessee but also from throughout the nation.

In addition to achieving college status, important Honors milestones have included establishment of the Honors Lecture Series; a major gift by Paul and Lee Martin that led to construction of the Honors building; creation of the Undergraduate Fellowships Office; establishment of the Buchanan freshman scholarships, later generously endowed by alumnus and Nobel Prize

winner James Buchanan; creation of the Buchanan Transfer Fellowships; endowment of numerous other scholarships; and a succession of student fellowship firsts.

The first MTSU Honors student to win a Goldwater Award did so in 2007; now students regularly win the award. Only one MTSU student is known to have received a Fulbright award prior to 2008; now one or more students win one almost every year. An MTSU student has been a Rhodes finalist; another was listed on the *USA Today* All-Academic Team. Students regularly win Research Experiences for Undergraduate (REU) awards for summer study as well as MTSU President's and Provost's Awards and the statewide Harold Love Award for public service. Approximately 90 undergraduates per year are now completing Honors theses, and many are going directly into prestigious graduate and professional schools.

In addition to hosting a lecture series that delved into the history of the college at MTSU, I documented these and other achievements in a book titled *Celebrating 50 Years of the Honors College*, available in MTSU's Phillips Bookstore. I think many of you will find this to be a pleasant trip down memory lane.

Higher education continues to confront new social and governmental changes, but with continuing support from our alumni and MTSU administrators, we remain committed to building on our proud heritage with the belief that the best is yet to come.



John R. Vile
Dean, Honors College

areté
noun (ahr-i-tey)

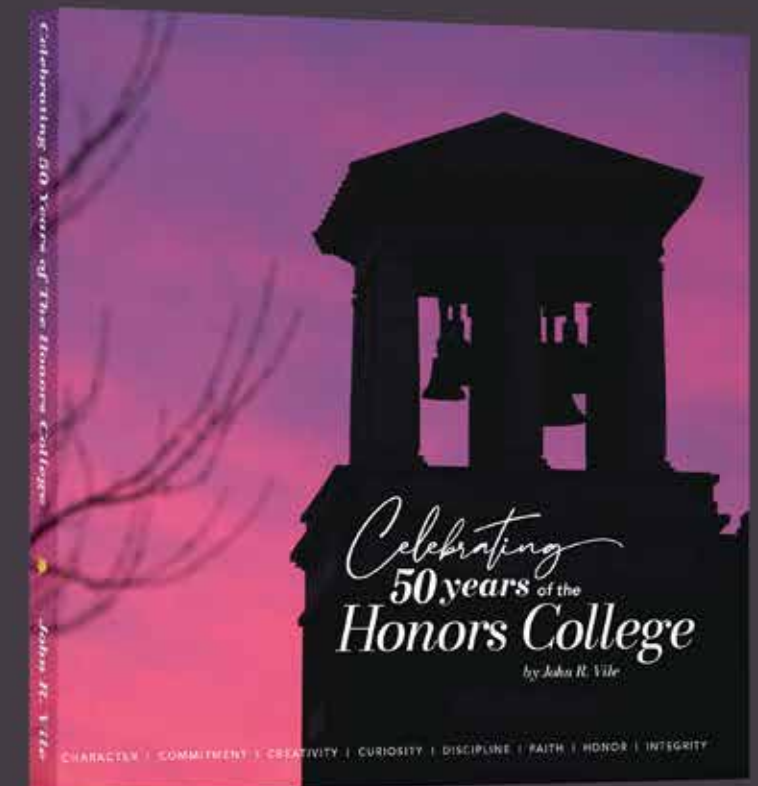
the aggregate of qualities, as valor and virtue, making up good character

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My Japanese Pilgrimage

Loving language, building bonds, and heeding history

By Rachel Booher, Foreign Languages major, minors in Honors, Global Studies, and English

When I enrolled as a transfer student at MTSU in 2019, my goal was to study Japanese language—and eventually study abroad. I love Japan, which only fueled my desires to learn more about the culture, the people, and the language. While my classes at MTSU exceeded my expectations, there were some key factors lacking within my language skills.

Natural conversations, intonation, nuances, atmospheric and social cues, and specialized language, such as medical or literary lingo, were skills that I did not feel I could improve upon without studying in Japan. Yet, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country closed its borders, and three of my applications were canceled. But in spring 2022, the borders finally reopened, and my application to Kansai Gaidai University in Hirakata City, Osaka, was accepted for fall 2022.

This opportunity afforded me life-changing experiences, new friends, language improvement, and the chance to learn about Japan, a country that I had longed to see since I was a young child. I still remember my first meal: an *oyakodon* dinner set with

miso soup, steamed rice, pickles, salad, and tofu. I stayed in a Japanese dormitory instead of the YUI international house because I wanted to immerse as much as possible.

“Did you know that there are over 13 types of kimonos and each one is for different occasions or situations?”

Our two caretakers were the sweetest, kindest Japanese couple, and they only spoke Kansai Japanese, a separate dialect. But they were our family, and we called them *Okaasan* and *Otousan*, which means Mother and Father. Here in this place, I connected with both Japanese students and students from across the world, here to do the same things that I was: live, learn, and grow.

EXPANDING MY HORIZONS

Originally, I had planned to study in Japan for only one semester. However, after arriving and attending the opening ceremony, I realized that I needed to stay longer—for the sake of my education and language learning, for my own peace of mind, and so that I would not regret going home early when I had the opportunity to stay. Therefore, I lived in Japan from Aug. 18, 2022, until July 12, 2023. During this time, I lived my life fantastically.

I traveled across the country, visiting cities like Nagoya, Kyoto, Sapporo, Fukuoka, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Beppu, Kobe, and many more. I ate so many delicious new foods, visited temples, learned about Shinto and Buddhism, partook in rituals and meditation, and collected shrine signature stamps called *goshuin*. Normal daily life involved walking to the grocery store, utilizing public transport by riding a bus to school or a train to Kyoto, attending classes, and working on homework with my friends. These are some of my most precious memories.

I also made so many incredible friends and even became a regular at my local izakaya restaurant. The owners, a married couple named Masaru and Satomi,

became my extended family, and I attended many birthday, holiday, and goodbye celebrations at this restaurant. One of the regular patrons, Kazuko, also became one of my close friends, and we often went out to dinner together.

My friends Yu and Yuma also graciously allowed me to live with them for six weeks after the spring semester. We cooked together, laughed together, suffered with no AC together, and traveled to Okinawa together. I plan to return with my husband and visit everyone as soon as I am able, so that my family from both sides of the world can finally meet.

EXPLORING THE CULTURE AND NATURE

Exploring the multiple aspects of Japanese culture included *Wa*, a traditional Japanese artform of harmony within imperfection. Tea ceremony, flower arrangement, clothing, paintings, poetry, and even gardens and food are all saturated with the concept of *Wa*.

I had previously written an Honors thesis on Japanese haiku with my director, Honors Associate Dean **Philip E. Phillips**, so having the ability to further explore the concept of *Wa* within other artforms was exciting. In this way, I expanded my knowledge regarding my love

Takoyaki party at Otsu



Thanksgiving in Japan

Rachel Booher wearing kimono at Yasaka Shrine



of kimono and traditional Japanese clothing. I was able to wear kimono on several different occasions and was even able to purchase some for myself.

But did you know that there are over 13 types of kimonos and each one is for different occasions or situations? There are even distinctive kimonos for single and married women! Whether going to a wedding, a festival, or simply walking to the market, the type of kimono was meticulously chosen with specific colors and patterns, and then donned elegantly.

As a married woman, I wanted to be respectful of such an ancient artform and learn which kimonos were appropriate for me. Mostly, I wore *tomesode*, *tsukesage*, or *homongi*. These kimonos are all appropriate for married women to wear and can be identified because of their shorter sleeves. This was one of the ways I was able to develop more knowledge of Japanese culture.

I also delved into the world of religion and pilgrimage, to gain new perspectives and insight. One little known fact is that Japan's various religions are so integrated into their culture that they have become more ritual than belief. If you were to visit a Shinto shrine and see a Japanese person praying, and you asked them if they have a strong faith in the god of the shrine, most will say no, it is tradition. There are thousands of gods, or *kami*, that exist in different forms and locations across Japan.

While there, I visited some of the holiest places in Japan, including the Ise Grand Shrine, home to Amaterasu, the sun goddess. I also climbed Mount Hiei in Kyoto, visited Sensoji Temple in Tokyo, traveled to Fushimi Inari Taisha, took a ferry to Itsukushima Shrine in Hiroshima, and scaled Mount Fuji, one of Japan's Three Holy Mountains. I felt a spiritual presence within the nature of Japan that I had not felt since traveling down the Trail of Tears or wandering among the marble pillars

of the Roman forum. A natural, ancient presence in the form of living history, of voices long past, saturated within the soil of everywhere we tread.

FALLOUT FROM ATOMIC ATTACK

These feelings will always make me recall my experiences at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the two cities that suffered the atomic bombings. These are places where my worldview truly broadened and I developed a greater ability to see situations and issues from more than one perspective.

During the spring semester, when I took a class on religious pilgrimage, one of our assignments was a semester-long project where we needed to choose a topic and create our own pilgrimage journey. I decided to travel from Hiroshima to Nagasaki, learning as much as I could about the details of the events that ended WWII.

“ Visiting the peace memorials in Japan has helped me to empathize with what we called ‘the enemy.’ ”

I read a book called *Hiroshima* by John Hersey over the course of this journey. I learned many things: the names of the bombs; that the heat at the hypocenter reached over 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit; that glass, steel, and brick vaporized at those temperatures; that people disintegrated into dust leaving nothing but their shadows behind; that the people not at the center had



At Kinkaku-ji, the Golden Pavilion



Kansai Gaidai Volunteer Club at Kofuku-ji Temple in Nara



With caretakers at dorm

their skin falling off of them or their clothing melted onto their bodies; or that Wikipedia has the death count completely wrong. Many do not know that Nagasaki was not originally on the list of cities to be struck or that the pilot nearly turned around and went home because the clouds were not clearing.

I had only ever learned about Pearl Harbor and the terrible things that had been done to America during WWII—visiting the peace memorials in Japan has helped me to empathize with what we called “the enemy,” accepting the truth that war destroys lives on both sides.

I remember a chance encounter in Hiroshima with an older Japanese couple who approached me, interested in where I was from and expressing how excited they were to hear me speak Japanese. I had a wonderful conversation with Mayako and her husband about many things, eventually leading to why I was in Hiroshima. I told them why, and as I began to cry, I asked her a question that weighed heavy on my heart: “Why do the Japanese not hate Americans, for the suffering or destruction that the bombs caused?” Thousands of people still suffer to this day with disabilities, keloids, cancer, immune disorders, and radiation.

She told me something that left me in awe, and I recorded a rough translation so that I would never forget: “Everyone, of course, felt hate in the beginning. But after a while, Japanese took responsibility for all the wrong they did. They caused a lot of pain to others too. After admitting wrongdoings, their hearts

started to heal. People started to find peace inside. Peace isn't something we can give; it's created. But we all want it, so we all feel the same. We are the same, all human, and peace looks different to everyone. So, what does your peace look like?” I am still searching for that answer.

Living in Japan for 11 months enabled me to integrate completely into the Japanese lifestyle and adapt to drastically different circumstances. I used the language repeatedly in many diverse settings and learned how to communicate effectively and efficiently.

My Japanese language skills improved immensely, and my view of the world widened significantly in ways that I didn't expect. Thanks to the plethora of scholarships that I was awarded, I was given the ability to study in Japan for a full academic year. I am grateful to Laura Clippard, for her assistance with my Freeman-ASIA application, for the generosity of both the Honors College and the Office of Education Abroad, and the encouragement of my Japanese instructors, Priya Ananth and Fusae Ekida. I will be forever thankful and indebted to MTSU for helping me achieve my academic goals while building relationships that I hope will last a lifetime. Through this journey, I know I can not only be accomplished with Japanese, but I can be a responsible, empathetic global citizen. お陰様で、最高経験があるし、本当にありがとうございました！ (Thanks to all of the help [I received], I had the best experience so I am truly grateful.) **A**



Wearing kimono in Arashiyama Bamboo Forest



Booher's Otsu family and friends

Reflections

Experiences studying abroad in Israel

By Johari Hamilton, Media and Communication graduate student



Jezreel Valley

THE BACKDROP

I can hardly believe I stood on Tel Megiddo overlooking the Jezreel Valley (otherwise called the "Plain of Armageddon") last July. The trip was filled with breathtaking views, from watching the sunrise over the Sea of Galilee to peering over a cliff at hues of earth uncovered by the Ramon Crater.

Besides its fascinating views, Israel is home to ancient sites like Masada, Herodium, and Beit She'an. Excavations retell the stories of nations, peoples, cultures, and wars.

Israel was known as a land bridge for Asia, Africa, and Europe, crossing between the desert and the Mediterranean Sea. For instance, Jaffa was the first major port city that connected people to Jerusalem. The sea also made Israel attractive to ancient global powers like Rome and Greece because of its ports.



Johari Hamilton

Prior to the recent surge of fighting in the region, then-undergraduate Johari Hamilton studied abroad in July 2023 as part of MTSU's 10th faculty-led educational experience in Israel.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

An alarm reverberated throughout the building following an announcement in Hebrew. Israeli diplomat Asaf Segev assured us that all was well and that the alarm was part of a routine drill to help staff respond in case of an emergency at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

According to its website, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs "implements and presents the foreign policy of the Government of Israel and endeavors to promote its economic, cultural, and scientific relations, and fosters cooperation with developing countries."

Segev was very positive and hopeful. Most of the discussion focused on Israel's relationship with the U.S. and the role the U.S. has played in the Middle East in recent years.

"The value of the U.S. to promote peace in the Middle East is critical," Segev said. "Today, more and more Arab countries recognize Israel as a country."




Eitan

A KIBBUTZ AND THE IDF

Most of the wars have been over water and land, which were significant to Israel's past and its future. Agricultural communities called kibbutzim (plural of kibbutz) were part of the early foundation of the state of Israel when the communities purchased land during the time of the Ottoman Empire. On a traditional kibbutz, people lived, worked, and shared everything in common through farming. Many modern kibbutzim still have agriculture as their central industry but have expanded to high-tech products as well.

During our visit to the Kibbutz Malkiya in northern Israel, we had the opportunity to meet Eitan, a resident and kibbutz veteran. Eitan was very passionate about his role and work in Israel's agriculture. He left home at 16 to devote his life to a kibbutz and loves every moment. Eitan explained how everyone depends on each other for the community's success.

While visiting Malkiya, we met four young men on duty with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The youngest, Benjamin, was 19. Most Israeli men and women have three years of national service when they turn 18, with most serving in the IDF.

Kibbutzim like Malkiya were attacked by Hamas in southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. Many kibbutzim had smaller security forces on hand that day due to Shabbat and the observance of the Jewish holiday Simchat Torah, and their communities were massacred. I cannot help but think about Benjamin, who shared his experience growing up in Israel and how proud he was to serve his country. 

Background photo: Roman ruins in Beit She'an

WHODUNNIT? SHE DID IT!

Forensic Science grad grabs prestigious Goldwater award

By Randy Weiler



Recent MTSU Honors graduate **Elizabeth Kowalczyk** has a passion for forensic science, and she's spent time in the lab and in the field honing her skills. Now, her research and professional pursuits have paid off, earning her recognition and further opportunity as a 2023 Goldwater Scholar.

Kowalczyk interned at the municipal Department of Forensic Science in Washington, D.C., in 2022, and she serves as an active member of MTSU's Forensic Anthropology Search and Recovery (FASR) team. FASR team members receive hands-on experience assisting law enforcement with recovery and documentation of human remains from actual crime scenes.

“With forensic science, I can bring a form of closure by solving the mystery of ‘Who done it?’”

The prestigious Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship is the premier undergraduate scholarship in mathematics, natural sciences, and engineering in the U.S. The scholarship provides up to \$7,500 per year to cover the cost of tuition after other scholarships.

Elizabeth Kowalczyk

As one of only 400 college students selected from more than 5,000 Goldwater applicants, the MTSU Forensic Science major plans to conduct forensic microbiology research while earning her Ph.D.

“I have always had a passion for biology and crime scenes, so choosing Forensic Science just made sense at the time,” Kowalczyk said about deciding on her major. “With forensic science, I can bring a form of closure by solving the mystery of ‘Who done it?’ Ultimately, I decided to go with a major I knew would be flexible and something I enjoyed.”

A December 2023 graduate, she is one of only eight students from Tennessee institutions to receive the Goldwater award last year and the only one from MTSU.

“Receiving Goldwater validates all the hours I have dedicated to my research endeavors and other academic accomplishments. I have always flown under the radar, working in the lab,” Kowalczyk said. “It is incredible knowing my contributions to this University have not gone unrecognized.”

Also named the MTSU Provost's Award recipient for academic excellence in 2022–23, Kowalczyk further landed a National Science Foundation Research Experiences for Undergraduates international placement in Mexico this past summer through the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.

“Elizabeth has been very proactive about obtaining practical research experience to supplement her formal university training. For someone at her stage of education, she has compiled an impressive list of research involvement in a variety of fields: genetics, anthropology, law, and biology,” said **Thomas Holland**, director of MTSU's Forensic Institute for Research and Education.



Holland also has more than 30 years' experience running a large, accredited crime laboratory for the Department of Defense.

“As much of a leader as Elizabeth is in the classroom and the laboratory, and in field recoveries, she is even more of an active leader on the outside, where she tutors and mentors fellow students as an Honors Ambassador,” Holland added. “I have witnessed her interaction with her peers, and it is clear to me that she is a born leader.”

Students from MTSU have been awarded Goldwater Scholarships nearly every year since 2007, when Taylor Barnes became the University's first Goldwater recipient. MTSU Honors student Yaseen Ginnab, who graduated last May, received the prestigious award in 2022. Most Goldwater recipients have continued their studies in the sciences at prestigious colleges and universities throughout the country.

Kowalczyk is very active in the community. Her roles outside of the classroom have helped her achieve this scholarship.

“I have fostered a community through the swim team, the Honors Ambassador program, poster presentations, and the Forensic Anthropology Search and Recovery team,” she said. “Bringing people together brings me much happiness.”

Undergraduate fellowships

MTSU students interested in applying for the Goldwater Scholarship or other national and international awards, should email Laura Clippard, director of the Undergraduate Fellowships Office, at laura.clippard@mtsu.edu.



IN SEARCH OF A CURE

PKP Fellowship will help cancer cell research



Catheryn Bolick is driven to study cancer because her life, like many others, has been affected by it. The 2023 Honors graduate, chosen recently for an \$8,500 Phi Kappa Phi Fellowship, is pursuing a Ph.D. in cancer cell biology at Washington University in St. Louis.

“Through graduate study and my future career, I hope to help create more successful and more accessible treatments for cancer, and I want to inspire others to love learning and to pursue their goals, no matter what obstacles may stand in their way,” Bolick said.

Raised by a single mother who suffered for years with recurring pituitary tumors, Bolick said she was terrified while growing up that it would be cancerous. She often worried about who would take care of her if her mother died.

Later in life, Bolick’s mother, Kelly, remarried. Sadly, her stepdad developed skin cancer. Then, in December 2020, the family learned he had stage three colorectal cancer. Because of this, he would endure several rounds of chemotherapy and radiation.

“This has permanently altered our lives. While I know he is grateful to be cancer-free, living with an ostomy bag has made life harder for him,” Bolick said. “By going into research, I hope that I can reduce the fear surrounding a cancer diagnosis, as well as the financial

and emotional toll treatment can take on a patient and their family. I want to be part of the movement to make cancer as treatable as a bone fracture.”

A double-major in Biology and Music, with minors in Honors, French, and Chemistry, Bolick is one of 62 recipients nationwide to receive a Phi Kappa Phi Fellowship. She is the 19th MTSU student since 1999 to win a PKP Fellowship.

“It is a great honor to be recognized for my academic and extracurricular achievements, as a first-generation student and a woman of Indigenous descent,” Bolick said. “Phi Kappa Phi and the MTSU Honors College have been invaluable thus far in my academic career by making resources accessible to aid me in reaching my full potential, when I otherwise could’ve fallen under the radar.”

HER HONORS JOURNEY

Bolick graduated magna cum laude last May and earned several scholarships along the way, including the Honors College’s prestigious four-year Buchanan Fellowship. Limited to only 20 students per year, this is the highest award given to an entering freshman at MTSU. She went on to earn the Kathryn Hay Memorial Scholarship; Michael Martinelli Memorial Scholarship; Freeman P. Jordan Jr. Biology Scholarship; Robert

B. Cook Memorial Scholarship; Maria de los Reyes Scholarship; Gordon and Sara Bell Honors Scholarship for Native American Studies; and the Albert and Ethel Smith Pre-Medical Student Scholarship.

“ I want to be part of the movement to make cancer as treatable as a bone fracture. ”

Bolick was recognized as the Honors College Outstanding Second-Year Student for 2019–20, was selected to participate in the Institute of Leadership Excellence in 2021, and was chosen for a study abroad experience in Normandy, France, in 2022. In addition to Phi Kappa Phi, she was a member of Omicron Delta Kappa, where she served in several positions including as president her senior year.

She thanked the Honors College staff and faculty—particularly Honors College Dean **John R. Vile** and **Laura Clippard** of the Undergraduate Fellowships Office—“for their endless support, encouragement, and wisdom. I would not be where I am today without them,” Bolick said.

“Catheryn’s award is especially extraordinary because my wife, Linda, taught her when she was in kindergarten, and I have had the pleasure of watching her progress through the Honors College,” Vile said.

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Bolick won the Peter I. Karl Outstanding Senior in Biology Award in 2021 and received several Undergraduate Research Experience and Creative Activity grants at varying levels during her time at MTSU.

Additionally, she was part of the Student Organization for Advancement of Research, participated in the Student Government Association, performed with the Symphonic Band and Wind Ensemble, and volunteered with the Contest of Champions marching band competition with the Band of Blue.

Outside of school, Bolick stayed busy working as a patient care technician for the pediatric department at Murfreesboro Medical Clinic and as a lifeguard at Nashville Shores and for MTSU Campus Recreation. She conducted private clarinet and swim lessons. Bolick also worked at the Brentwood Family Care Center and at the Dance Store in Murfreesboro. And she volunteered with the children’s church at Redeemer Presbyterian and as a vocalist for the music team at the Reformed University Fellowship campus ministry.

“I am so proud of the woman she has become,” her mom, Kelly, said. “Catheryn has worked hard to achieve all the honors she has earned over these years, and the recent Fellowship awards show that. A truly gifted young lady from the day she was born, she amazes me every day.

“Like so many families, cancer has affected us personally. Loved ones that have survived the fight, continue to battle the fight, and sadly who have lost the fight. I pray like so many that one day there will be a cure and feel blessed that she has joined the quest to find one.”

About PKP

Since its creation in 1932, the Fellowship Program has become one of Phi Kappa Phi’s most visible and financially well-supported endeavors, allocating \$649,000 annually to outstanding students for first-year graduate or professional study.

The selection process for a fellowship is based on the applicant’s evidence of graduate potential, undergraduate academic achievement, service and leadership experience, letters of recommendation, personal statement of educational perspective and career goals, and acceptance in an approved graduate or professional program.

Phi Kappa Phi Fellowships are part of the honor society’s robust portfolio of award and grant programs. To see the complete list of 2023 Phi Kappa Phi Fellows, visit PhikappaPhi.org/2023Fellowships.

Learn more about MTSU’s chapter of Phi Kappa Phi at mtsu.edu/pkp. MTSU’s Fellowships are coordinated through the Undergraduate Fellowships Office (UFO) in the Honors College. Students interested in applying for this or other national and international awards should contact UFO Coordinator **Laura Clippard** at 615-898-5464 or laura.clippard@mtsu.edu.



SPRING/SUMMER 2023 THESES DEFENDED



Mina Abdulkareem
"Interactions of Melamine with
Physiological Constituents"
Biochemistry
Beng Ooi, thesis director



Benjamin Adams
"Drilling Down into Property Rights"
Political Science
Lara Daniel, thesis director



Marzea Akter
"Acute Oxytocin Administration
Avoid Anxiety-Like Behavior in Male
and Female Mice"
Psychology
Tiffany Rogers, thesis director



Carolyn Alderson
"Geothermal: An Environmentally
Friendly Alternative to Fossil Fuel"
Accounting
Anthon Eff, thesis director



Emma Beard
" 'I came, I saw, I tasted': A Literary
Travel Journal of Culinary Tourism
and Cultural Acclimation"
Foreign Languages
Joan McRae, thesis director



Angela Benninghoff
"I Am Helen: A Feminist Retelling
of the Woman Who Launched a
Thousand Ships"
English
Philip E. Phillips, thesis director



Sarah Bom-Crocker
"Method Development of Low Level
Ammonia and Methane Analysis
Using FTIR"
Biochemistry
Ngee Chong, thesis director



Hunter Brady
"Chlorine Dioxide Gas:
Development, Optimization, and
Application, of an Antiviral Assay
Based on the MS2 Bacteriophage"
Biochemistry
Anthony Newsome, thesis director



Andrew Clark
"The Impact of the Change in
Accounting for Equity Securities
on Large Companies' Investment
Portfolios"
Accounting
Terry Ward, thesis director



Paula Collette
"Variable Play Enriches Children's
Development: An Investigation
of Variability in Play Behavior in
Children Diagnosed with ASD and
Neurotypical Controls"
Psychology/Biology
Ann Galizio, thesis director



Sidney Creter
"2D versus 3D"
Animation
Richard Lewis, thesis director



Savanna Cucchiara
"A Visual Study on the Evolution
of Currency"
Management
Ennio Piano, thesis director



Charlotte Daigle
"Through a Different Eye: An Honors
Creative Thesis"
English
Rhonda McDaniel, thesis director



Maxwell Douglas
"Physician assistants' perception
of care given to pediatric patients
without access to adequate medical
resources"
Biochemistry
Amanda Flagg, thesis director



Silas Freeze
"Macroeconomic Welfare
versus Microeconomic Inertia:
a Survey of Prison Privatization
and Punitive Policy"
Economics
Steven Sprick Schuster, thesis director



Daniel Gagliardi
"The Threats Posed to Freedom of
Speech by Use of Deplatforming on
College Campuses"
Political Science
David Trowbridge, thesis director



Ashlee Gauda
"The Influence of Generational
Menstrual Shame on
Menstruating Females"
Nursing
Amanda Flagg, thesis director



Yaseen Ginnab
"Analyzing the Ability of
Astragalus tennesseensis to
Accumulate Selenium"
Biology/Psychology
Frank Bailey, thesis director



Charese Harrison
"Recording Drums in Modern
Rhythm and Blues"
Audio Production
John Merchant, thesis director



Kelsi Heck
"Building Characters: Using Shapes
to Communicate Emotion and Story
in Narrative Art"
Art
Douglas Dabbs, thesis director



Casey Hester
"Geulah"
English
Jennifer Kates, thesis director



Lillian Hickman
"Music as Oppression and
Resistance: Prisoners of WWII
Concentration Camps and their
Daily Encounters with Music"
Recording Industry
Kristine McCusker, thesis director



Morgan Hutchins
"The Paperwork Tells All: How
Proficient Stage Management
Serves Theatrical Productions"
Theatre
Kate Goodwin, thesis director



Aaron Jollay
"New Skills in Auditing: Embracing
Emerging Technology in the Audit
Profession"
Accounting
Andrea Kelton, thesis director



Dimend Little
"The Great Flight: Political
Corruption as a Trigger for
Mexican Emigration"
International Relations
Stephen Morris, thesis director



Kate Matthews
"The Decision-Making Process
involved in Degree Selection
by Students"
Marketing
Diane Edmondson, thesis director



Marian Medley
"The Relationship Between
Carpenter Bees and Pyne's Ground
Plum (*Astragalus bibullatus*)"
Global Studies and
Human Geography
Jeffrey Walck, thesis director

**Everett Merian**

"Archéologie et Patrimoine: Telling the story of a B-17 crash in France through visual display"
Anthropology
 Tiffany Saul, thesis director

**MaKayla Sloop**

"The Perception of Caregiver Parenting Styles and its Association with Mental Health Functioning in College Students"
Psychology
 Ciera Schoonover, thesis director

**Suzy Ni**

"A Method for Healthier Social Media Usage: Cognitive Reappraisal Application"
Biochemistry/International Relations
 Tricia Farwell, thesis director

**Alexandra Spadafino**

"The Power of Positive Conversations: A Study of College Students' Reactions to Romantic Partners' Instagram Dependence"
Management
 Xiaowei Shi, thesis director

**Foram Patel**

"Scaling GPA* for complex protein folding pathway simulations"
Marketing
 Joshua Phillips, thesis director

**Maya Swaminathan**

"Developing an Application as a Learning Supplement for Key Concepts in x86_64 Assembly Language Programming using NASM"
Computer Science
 Suk Seo, thesis director

**Olivia Peters**

"Influence of No-Till Cover Crops on In Situ Soil Water Matrix Potential"
Plant and Soil Science
 Samuel Haruna, thesis director

**Luz Tellez-Lopez**

"Invisible Communication: A Play Inspired by the Scientist Lydia Villa-Kiomaroff"
Biology
 Claudia Barnett, thesis director

**Brooklyn Pickle**

"Discrimination Against Black Women in Reproductive Healthcare"
Biochemistry
 Chandra Story, thesis director

**Margaret Warren**

"The A-Z Twitter Guide for Sports Journalists"
Journalism
 Chris Bacon, thesis director

**Cayson Seipel**

"Modeling Battery Electric Vehicle Disaster Evacuations Utilizing a Design Science Approach"
Data Science
 Michael Erskine, thesis director

**Yordanos Williams**

"Studying Enzyme Activity to Explore the Biodegradation Potential of PahZ1 Enzyme Variants and Homologs"
Biochemistry
 Justin Miller, thesis director

**Emma Shillington**

"Assessing Ecdysone Levels in Atorvastatin Treated *Procambarus clarkia*"
Biology
 Frank Bailey, thesis director

**Clark Wilson**

"IN FLUX: A Study in Cross-Cultural Composition"
Audio Production
 Joseph Akins, thesis director



Reaching Majeska by Cadee Havard

CREATIVE HONORS

Collage: A Journal of Creative Expression, an MTSU outlet since 1968 that moved under Honors auspices in 2005, publishes about 60 pieces of work every semester from around 350 blind submissions. Creative Expression Awards are given each edition to top-ranked poetry and prose (named in honor of Martha Hixon), photography and artwork (in memory of Lon Nuell), and sometimes audio, video, and/or song lyrics.

View issues at mtsu.edu/collage

Spring 2023

Prose

Jai Wilson
 "The Marsh"

Song Lyrics

Gloria Newton
 "Why in the Night"

Poetry

Abigail Wells
 "love is a sushi bake shared among friends"

Video

Morgan Ruth
 Antidote Paint Co.

**Photography**

Angela Hollingsworth
 Freedom

Fall 2023

Prose

Rachel Booher
 "Atomic Requiem"

Photography

Cadee Havard
 Reaching Majeska

Art

Ansleigh Britain
 Nitpicking

Audio

Cassie Sistoso
 "No Surprises"

Poetry

Brynlee Wolfe
 "Swan Song"



Nitpicking by Ansleigh Britain

Le Festival de Cannes

Vive le cinéma at long-delayed internship in France

By Beatriz Dedicatoria

Four years ago, after several rounds of interviews, I received an email saying I was awarded an internship with the American Pavilion Worldwide Student Program at the Cannes International Film Festival, the most prestigious film festival in the world. Then, the COVID-19 pandemic happened.

It was tough, and although the American Pavilion gave all 2020 participants the option to push back our participation to either 2021, '22, or '23, I still felt hopeless. I was a college senior, and my next steps were clear—graduate and get a job.

Since COVID-19 was still prevalent and I just started a job at TikTok, when 2021 arrived I asked to push back my participation. Then, when 2022 came knocking at my door within what felt like seconds, I asked to push it back again since I was just starting my writing career at a new company. Just as quickly, 2023 crept in and it was as if God and the whole world were telling me it was time.

Everything lined up perfectly for me. My current company offers unlimited paid time off, I got my tourist Schengen visa quickly, and deep down, I felt that it was time. So, when the American Pavilion called to confirm my participation last year, I said, "Yes, I'm going."



Beatriz Dedicatoria

“ All I remembered during my last leg of the flight was waking up to the rising sound of French chatter, blinding sunlight, colorful houses overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, and men in suits. ”

CUE OPENING SCENE

Getting to France was another adventure in itself. The flight from Nashville to Atlanta was smooth, but Atlanta to France? Not so much. Disembarking took longer than expected. Not only did I barely make it to my connecting flight, but that flight ended up getting canceled, which caused me to miss both the welcome party and the internship orientation. The silver lining in all the chaos was that there were 30 other interns on that flight, and we all became close friends through that shared experience.

The rebooking process and everything after was a blur. All I remembered during my last leg of the flight to Cannes was waking up to the rising sound of French chatter, blinding sunlight, colorful houses overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, and men in suits. Lots and lots of them. It was only then that I realized that I had finally arrived in Cannes.

The festival ran for two weeks. As a social media intern, I spent four hours each day covering various events inside the American Pavilion and the rest of the Cannes Film Festival. I created sponsored and engaging posts on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. After my shift, I watched screenings of global films, attended different film events, and networked with people at the Marché du Film, where more than 14,000 film industry professionals from 121 countries gathered to present and discover thousands of films and projects in development.



LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

I also experienced what it was like to attend a premiere—wearing an evening gown, walking on the red carpet with celebrities, getting my photo taken by the paparazzi, and watching the premiere at the Grand Théâtre Lumière, the largest theater in Cannes. Watching a premiere is one thing, but watching a premiere with fellow film lovers and the cast and crew in the same room is a whole other experience that I can only describe as magical.

When I needed a break from the festival, I explored the city of Cannes, a lovely and quaint tourist town full of hospitable people. Another highlight of my trip was everything I ate. A few dozen restaurants, boulangeries, and patisseries line the crowded streets of Cannes. They were great, but the restaurants lining the uphill path toward the top of Cannes were the ones that stole my heart. I did my best to only eat at a place once so I could try everything, but there was one, Le 22, that I went back to twice because it served the best steak I'd ever had in my life.

To say it was an amazing experience is a complete understatement. The people I've met, the memories I've created, the films I've seen, and everything I've experienced changed me and the way I see life. I'm extremely grateful to **Dean John R. Vile**, **Sandra Campbell**, the MTSU Honors College, professors **Zeny Sarabia-Panol** and **Billy Pittard**, **Lisa McCann**, and the MTSU College of Media and Entertainment for believing in me enough to award me scholarships that helped pay for the program. I'll forever feel blessed and honored to have been the first MTSU student to have attended the Cannes Film Festival.

Here's to more MTSU students going to Cannes in the following years. That's a wrap! **A**

Dedicatoria graduated summa cum laude in December 2020 with a double major in English and in Video and Film Production with minors in Journalism and Honors.



At the American Pavilion Student Lounge



At Marché du Film



Dedicatoria (r) at screening with fellow interns Shelby Geter (l) and Heidi Lee



1976 Honors graduates



1975 Honors high school day



1976 Honors donation



Our Proud Heritage



From humble beginnings, Honors lights the candles for a happy 50th birthday

By June Hall McCash, first Honors director

June Hall McCash

Happy birthday, Honors College! I can hardly believe it's been 50 years since the Honors Program, as it was first known, opened its doors in a storage room on the third floor of the Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building, with only myself as director and a half-time secretary. But, despite our humble beginnings, we had high hopes and aspirations.

While students and many faculty members were excited about the program, only a limited number of department chairs shared their enthusiasm. Funding in those early days was based primarily on head count, and we were offering courses limited to an absolute maximum of 20 students for lower-division classes and 15 for upper-division courses. We also were asking those chairs for their very best professors. While many departments were reluctant to participate on such terms, several were all in—most notably English and History.

Those of us who were involved in that early program—Honors director, Honors Council (which included two students), a dedicated faculty, and the undergraduates who participated—all believed strongly in it. Fortunately, over time, the program demonstrated its worth and earned its promotion to a college. Today departments participate University-wide.

It was not always an easy path. Although then-University President M.G. "Mel" Scarlett was supportive, funds were limited at the founding. While presidential enthusiasm varied through the years, current MTSU President Sidney McPhee has clearly recognized the college's value. It is under his leadership and with his help that the Honors building was constructed and the Buchanan scholarships were founded. And, certainly, the creative stewardship of the various directors and deans has played a major role.

Little by little, the Honors Program edged its way up on the University's agenda, growing and gathering enthusiasm along the way. Over the first seven years, we moved from the storage room (which we occupied only briefly) to successive offices in what is now known as the Tom H. Jackson Building, Keathley University Center, and then one of Peck Hall's first-floor wings, where we finally had a small but true Honors Center with a classroom, offices, a student common area (doubling as a second classroom), and a student workroom.

Today's Honors College was only a distant dream, with its own building, healthy funding, a dean and associate dean, faculty offices, an extensive staff, an Undergraduate Fellowships Office (UFO), classrooms, a student common area, study carrels, and a library.

I like to think it stands as evidence of what the program meant to students even in those early days, for the Paul Martin Sr. Honors Building is the result of a \$2 million challenge grant from our very first Honors Program graduate and his brother.

Several aspects that characterize the current MTSU Honors experience were there from the beginning. The inaugural Honors Council established a program that incorporated many features remaining today, including a thesis requirement, interdisciplinary courses, limited class size, and strong admission requirements, which have changed only a little. The lecture series was added in 1978. Even then, we promised students academic advantages similar to those of a small private college as well as the benefit of resources found in a larger university.

“Today's Honors College was only a distant dream.”

While subsequent directors and deans have maintained these features, they also have introduced other important modifications, among them the H-option and Honors minor, the UFO, an emphasis on study abroad, a living-learning community, and the Visiting Artist Seminar. Our humble *Honors in Perspective* newsletter from the early years has been replaced by several publications, including *Areté* magazine, the *Collage* creative publication, and the *Scientia et Humanitas* academic journal. There is no question that the uphill battle for full University recognition of the program's value and potential has been won.

While it seemed the impossible dream 50 years ago, MTSU's University Honors College is now admired throughout the country. The entire University has come to see it as an important asset to MTSU, of which we can all be proud. Students who earn an MTSU Honors degree go on to some of the finest universities in the world for graduate or professional studies, earn prestigious academic awards, and have distinguished careers—even as many did in those early years.

In short, I am so very proud of the Honors College and all it has become. It is a dream come true for those of us who were there from the beginning. There is an old Chinese proverb that says, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." I am grateful to have been among those who took that first step 50 years ago and for where that journey has led. **A**



HISTORY PROFESSOR UNKNOWINGLY MAKES HISTORY

Married mom of five completed first Honors thesis

By Robin E. Lee

At 27, **Mary Wilgus** was married and raising five children when she started college in the early 1970s. In fact, she was at MTSU when the Honors Program was first created 50 years ago. The now-retired History professor made her own mark in history when she completed the University's first Honors thesis in 1973.

"I didn't even know I was the first," she said with a laugh. Wilgus was one of 129 students who chose to take an Honors class the first semester of the program.

Formerly Mary Hargan, she married military and commercial pilot James Wilgus in 1962.

"I had always wanted to go to college. Once all the kids were in school, I decided to give it a try," she said. She recalled sitting at a counter in her kitchen doing her homework next to her children doing their own. "I thoroughly enjoyed the challenge, and I think we helped challenge each other."

Wilgus had already started her studies at MTSU when Fred Colvin, a History professor, asked if she would be interested in the Honors Program. She completed a double major in 1974, earning her bachelor's degree in History and International Relations, along with a minor in German.

While working as a teaching assistant in MTSU's History Department, Wilgus continued her education and in 1976 earned a master's focusing on European history. She went on to finish her Ph.D. in History at Vanderbilt University, studying British imperial history, modern England, and East Asia. While completing her doctorate, she also taught history at MTSU for two years as an adjunct instructor.

Continued on page 28

Mary Wilgus



“ Don't let anyone tell you that you can't do something. ”

Wilgus with her 1973 Honors thesis

PASSION TO TEACH

In 1985, Wilgus began working full time as a history professor and chair of the Social Sciences Division at Lees-McRae College in North Carolina. There, she was able to teach many first-generation college students, who she said were very dedicated.

“I really enjoyed teaching there. I feel that you learn more while you are teaching,” she added.

Wilgus said her first job offer actually came from Time-Life, shortly before she completed her Ph.D. “The recruiter was looking for people who were able to research, write, and edit. But I didn't want to move to New York,” she said.

While in North Carolina, Wilgus became a published author with a book titled *Sir Claude MacDonal, the Open Door, and British Informal Empire in China, 1895–1900*.

In 1997, Wilgus took a job at Campbellsville University in Kentucky, then served as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences there from 1999 until retirement in 2013.

“I enjoyed the classroom and working with students,” Wilgus said. She credited her passion for teaching to her experience as an adjunct at MTSU.

BREAKING BARRIERS

Wilgus, who is of Scottish and Irish descent, said she chose her Honors thesis topic because she was already interested in that area of history. It was titled “Charles

Stuart Parnell: His Background, His Politics, His Fall, His Legacy, 1879–1891.” In fact, each of her thesis topics would focus on individuals who were part of British history.

“Charles Parnell was a troublemaker, and that fascinated me,” she quipped, admitting that she initially couldn't remember the topic until being contacted about being the first student to defend an Honors thesis at MTSU.

Attending college as a wife and a mother in the 1970s was not unheard of, but it did make her a nontraditional student. Throughout her educational journey, she remained motivated and passionate about history and teaching. However, this journey wasn't always easy. While working on her doctorate, she had a professor tell her she shouldn't be there because she was a woman who was already a wife and mother.

“I showed him!” exclaimed Wilgus, who received straight A's throughout the program. “Don't let anyone tell you that you can't do something. No matter your age, if something seems out of reach, keep reaching.”

Wilgus received numerous awards and honors during her career, beginning with the Ethel Mae Wilson Research Grant in 1981 and winning a graduate history paper competition at Vanderbilt in 1987. Later recognitions included the Humanities Scholar from the Appalachian Consortium in 1988 and the Edgar Tufts Teaching Excellence Award at Lees-McRae College in 1990.

BUILDING BRIDGES

In 2012, she received Campbellsville University's Racial Recognition Award, given to those who show “servant leadership in bringing people together across lines of race and ethnicity and who have worked as bridge builders in the community,” according to *Columbia (Ky.) Magazine*. Wilgus worked directly with the Rev. John E. Chowning to initiate the university's Dialogue on Race program, which she led and built for more than a decade and from which she retired as leader.

“ The very acts of participating in intentional discussions around race, ethnicity, nationality, and gender help in the work of bringing about better relations. ”

“I worked with first-generation Black students. The very acts of participating in intentional discussions around race, ethnicity, nationality, and gender help in the work of bringing about better relations,” she said.

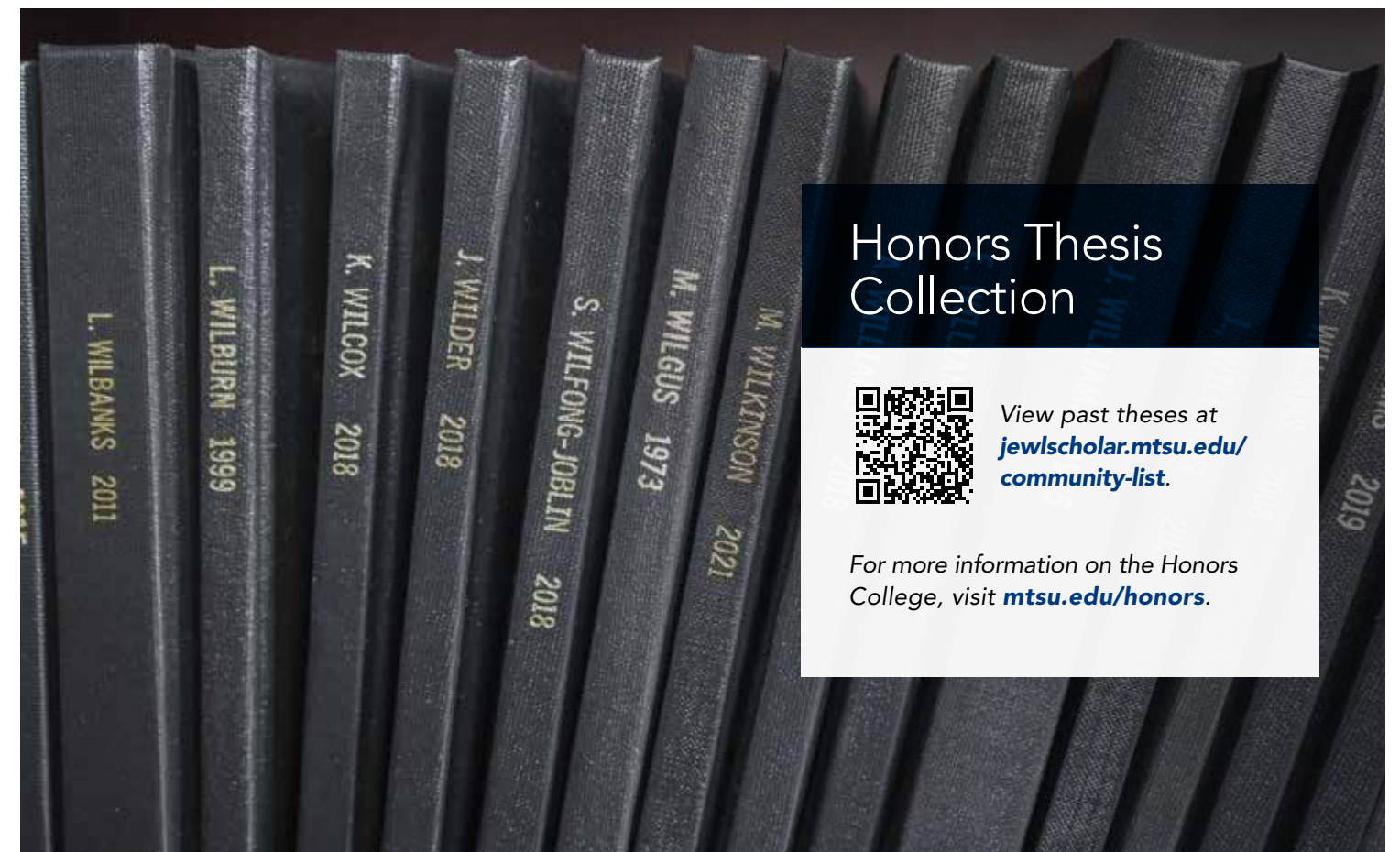
Wilgus said she enjoyed teaching African American history. She recalled a Black pastor with whom she co-taught the course: “He brought a different approach to the class. It was very interesting, and I found myself taking notes from him.”

She and her husband invited students from the program who were majoring in History to their home for dinner on several occasions.

“It was a lot of fun, and I appreciated the time I spent with the program,” she said.

Fifty years after Wilgus' inaugural undergraduate thesis at MTSU, a thesis or creative project still is required of every student who graduates from the University Honors College. The purpose is to prepare the student for graduate or professional school, offer an opportunity to complete a scholarly or creative project of significant proportions, and provide a new perspective on knowledge by contributing to recognized knowledge in a particular field of study.

“I am very proud to be a part of history,” Wilgus added. “I enjoyed every minute of my education, except for finals!” **A**



Honors Thesis Collection



View past theses at jewlscholar.mtsu.edu/community-list.

For more information on the Honors College, visit mtsu.edu/honors.



Jerome Reed

PAYING IT FORWARD

MTSU alum creates Honors program at another university

By Robin E. Lee

One good thing leads to another. A 1978 graduate of MTSU's then-Honors Program valued his experience so much that he began a similar program at Lipscomb University in 1990.

Jerome Reed, now the Patricia and Rodes Hart Professor of Piano at Lipscomb, said, "The MTSU Honors Program launched me into graduate study so well that I wanted that experience for Lipscomb students.

"I attended the National Collegiate Honors Council for a couple of years before formally opening the program and took other professors in other disciplines with me to help them understand how honors programs worked. During my 10 years as the initial director, I read many, many honors theses in psychology, biology, and chemistry that I really didn't understand, but it was a fun learning curve."

At MTSU, Reed double-majored in French and Music, specializing in piano performance.

"As we celebrate our own Honors College reaching its 50th anniversary, I am delighted that one of MTSU's Honors graduates took his experience and adapted it for students [at another university]," MTSU Honors College Dean John R. Vile said. "We love to see our students progress over the years post-graduation, and we share in the pride of their achievements."

BIG ASPIRATIONS

When first starting his college education, Reed had high aspirations. He said he was interested in attending either a conservatory or a large university with a big school of music. His visit to MTSU during his senior year of high school had him hooked.

“I read many, many honors theses in psychology, biology, and chemistry that I really didn't understand, but it was a fun learning curve.”

"An MTSU music student told me that the University has everything I would need as an undergraduate—and she was right! The scholarship money at that time was unbelievable—I received a check every month from financial aid because I had more scholarships than I needed. I saved all those checks, and when I graduated, I bought a car," he quipped.

Reed said he chose the Honors Program because he “wanted the more challenging curriculum, smaller class sizes, and professors who were chosen specifically to work with Honors students.”

During his time at MTSU, Reed attended a seminar about historical characters taught by the late Ron Messier, who would go on to direct the Honors Program during 1980–90. This assembly had a profound impact on the young scholar.

“The seminar was based on the television show *Meeting of Minds* hosted by Steve Allen. Everyone in the class assumed the persona of a historical character and had to participate in class discussions as that character,” Reed reminisced. “I was Frederic Chopin; my roommate was Sigmund Freud. We also had Saladin, Bobby Kennedy, Georges Sand, Betsy Ross, Florence Nightingale, and many others.”

“I remember meeting classes in the Honors lounge and having lively discussions about our assignments. I was always scrambling to come up with something intelligent to say because I’m quite introverted,” Reed said about his time in Honors. “I remember one incident in particular, when the Nestle company was accused of promoting formula over breastfeeding in Africa, which led to a boycott. Suddenly all the hot chocolate mix in the Honors lounge disappeared. That was a very impressive statement.”

Reed also credits two School of Music faculty members during his time at MTSU: Philip Howard, who was always curious about a lot of topics, not just music, and Jerry Perkins, for helping develop Reed as a pianist and teaching him how to network professionally.

“My experience in the MTSU Honors program helped me learn how to interact in a scholarly manner with students who were in other disciplines and honed my research and writing skills so that I had a smooth entrée into graduate study,” Reed said in 2020 when Lipscomb’s program turned 30. There are more than 350 students pursuing an Honors degree through the Lipscomb Honors College today, he said.

In 2019, Reed was inducted into the inaugural class of Steinway Teachers Hall of Fame in New York. His other accolades include the Avalon Award for Creative Excellence from Lipscomb; Outstanding Teacher Award from the Governor’s School for the Arts (held annually at MTSU); the Distinguished Service Award and Teacher of the Year Award from the Tennessee Music Teacher Association; and Outstanding Alumnus Award from MTSU’s School of Music.

“Jerry is extraordinary, even for an Honors alumnus,” McCash said. “He may be the only Honors student who ever wrote three theses. I admire his success, and he still speaks fluent French! If you ever get a chance to attend one of his concerts, don’t miss it.”

Through Reed, the reach of the MTSU Honors College will be extended to students of Lipscomb and beyond. Who knows what initiatives his students will foster in the years to come. **A**



“Astoundingly, Reed completed not one but three theses before graduation from MTSU.”

Additionally, the first Honors Program director, June Hall McCash, had a significant impact on both his educational and professional achievements. Reed says McCash helped shape who and where he is today.

“She helped guide me through the French major but was at the same time also very supportive of my Music major and attended my recitals,” Reed recalled. “When I was a senior, she asked me to be her assistant in teaching a beginning French class. I will also never forget her taking the time to have lunch with me and my parents on graduation day.”

THESIS TIMES THREE

Astoundingly, Reed completed not one but three theses before graduation from MTSU. He picked one of his thesis topics based on an author that McCash had also researched, Chrétien de Troyes. Another thesis topic also was selected based on an author—Samuel Beckett—in which another professor—Robert Sandarg—was interested. He chose his final thesis topic, Federalist piano music in America, because he entered college in 1975 and there was a wealth of research coming out on music during that time coinciding with the U.S. bicentennial.



HOMECOMING ROYALTY

Honors students Alexander Hamilton, a senior Organizational Communication major, and Lily Beth Woods, a senior studying Finance, were crowned 2023 Homecoming queen and king.

HONORS HALFTIME

MTSU’s Honors College was recognized during the Blue Raiders’ 2023 football home opener for the 50th anniversary of Honors. Buchanan Fellows and Buchanan Transfer Fellows joined the festivities on the field.



Ethan Schmidt (l-r), Victoria Grigsby, Elliot Certain, Ross Sibley, and Izzy Jacober



Ariel Nicastro (l-r), Adrienne Ward, Noah True, Erin Pitcher, Chloe Dye, Zoé Critchlow, and Colman Connolly



GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY



Honors College Dean John R. Vile



50th anniversary luncheon in the Miller Education Building

The Honors College hosted a 50th anniversary luncheon last fall as part of its annual Board of Visitors gathering on Homecoming eve. Speakers included Honors Dean **John R. Vile**, Honors Program founding director **June Hall McCash**, **Jeff Worley** (nephew of MTSU alum and Nobel Prize winner James Buchanan), benefactors **Lee Martin** and **Paul Martin Jr.** (sons of Honors building namesake, Paul Martin Sr.), and Honors student **Ross Sibley**.

Photos by J. Intintoli



Paul Martin Jr. (l), Lee Martin, and Vile



June Hall McCash



Lee Martin



Ross Sibley



Scholarship recipient Lily Beth Woods



President Sidney A. McPhee

ROOTED IN JUSTICE

Honors faculty member Chandra Story carves out her own legacy of learning through teaching and service

By Jimmy Hart

For **Chandra Russell Story**, professor and interim chair of Health and Human Performance, faith “is the cornerstone of who I am and everything that I do, and I’ll ever be.”

A minister at First Baptist Church in Murfreesboro, Story also is a deeply accomplished scholar in the field of public health.

Her areas of expertise include women’s health, health program evaluations, health equity, and social support. Her recent publications, research presentations, and lecture topics range from improving flu vaccine rates among African Americans to the diets of older rural Black Americans with Type 2 diabetes to studying food insecurity in students.

Story, who was the 2022–23 MTSU Provost’s Fellow for Faculty Development, is a member of the University Honors College faculty as well as the Women’s and Gender Studies program’s faculty.



Chandra Russell Story



Chandra Russell Story receives a proud hug from her father, Eugene H. Russell III, after receiving MTSU's John Pleas Award.

A SOLID FOUNDATION

Story's roots foreshadowed her growth into an educator and agent for social change and good. Her parents were active participants in the civil rights movement—her mother was a Freedom Rider and her father faced the water hoses of white segregationists. Both marched alongside the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in the struggle for equal rights for Black Americans.

“Her mother was a Freedom Rider and her father faced the water hoses of white segregationists.”

Both went on to become educators, too—her father also became an entrepreneur—and, as Story said, “continued their legacy of justice through education and service” in completing their master’s degrees while raising their three children.

Their example prompted Story to pursue her own career in public health, earning both her bachelor’s and doctoral degrees at the University of Tennessee and her master’s at Boise State University.

She joined the MTSU family in 2017 after teaching at Oklahoma State University and coordinating grants at Idaho State University, becoming a full MTSU professor in fall 2022.

“I turned to teaching as an act of social justice,” Story said. “I wanted to share with students the things that I had learned and the things I had seen in three or four different states.

“I wanted them to understand the patients on the South Side of Chicago who were having difficulty communicating with doctors because of issues of linguistic competency. I wanted them to understand the parents I met in Idaho that had to drive three and four hours just to get psychiatric treatment for their children.

“I wanted the students to understand that public health is real, that service is always reciprocal.

“Just like I decided to go into education as an effort to teach, I always understood that service is always about learning from the people you really want to serve. I’m always learning.”

A DESERVING RECIPIENT

In recognition of her years of teaching, research, and service to MTSU, Story was honored as the 2023 recipient of the John Pleas Faculty Award.

She received her award before a full house of family (including her father), friends, colleagues, fellow church members, and other supporters from across the University community during a special ceremony last

February. The special plaque is bestowed annually during Black History Month in honor of acclaimed Professor Emeritus of Psychology John Pleas (pronounced “Plez”)—and for the first time in 2023 included a \$3,000 cash award.

Following tradition, 2022 Pleas Award recipient Andrew Owusu, a fellow Public Health professor, presented the award to Story.

“I think collectively we can all agree that she is a unique individual, and she’s been a blessing to us, especially those of us in public health,” Owusu said of his colleague.

In introducing Story at the ceremony, Health and Human Performance former chair Sonya Sanderson applauded Story’s “remarkable career” thus far and the ongoing positive impact she has on students.

“Students really know how much you care about them,” Sanderson said to Story. “I hear it every single day as I walk through the halls.”

Emcee Barbara Turnage, former interim dean of the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences and the 2017 Pleas Award recipient, noted that the award, in addition to recognizing accomplishments in teaching, research, and service, also speaks to the recipient’s embrace of mentorship.

“And Chandra is an excellent mentor,” Turnage said.

Chanelle Haley, a postdoctoral associate at Tulane University who was mentored by Story, was among former students and colleagues featured in video tributes at the ceremony. Story served as her dissertation chair.

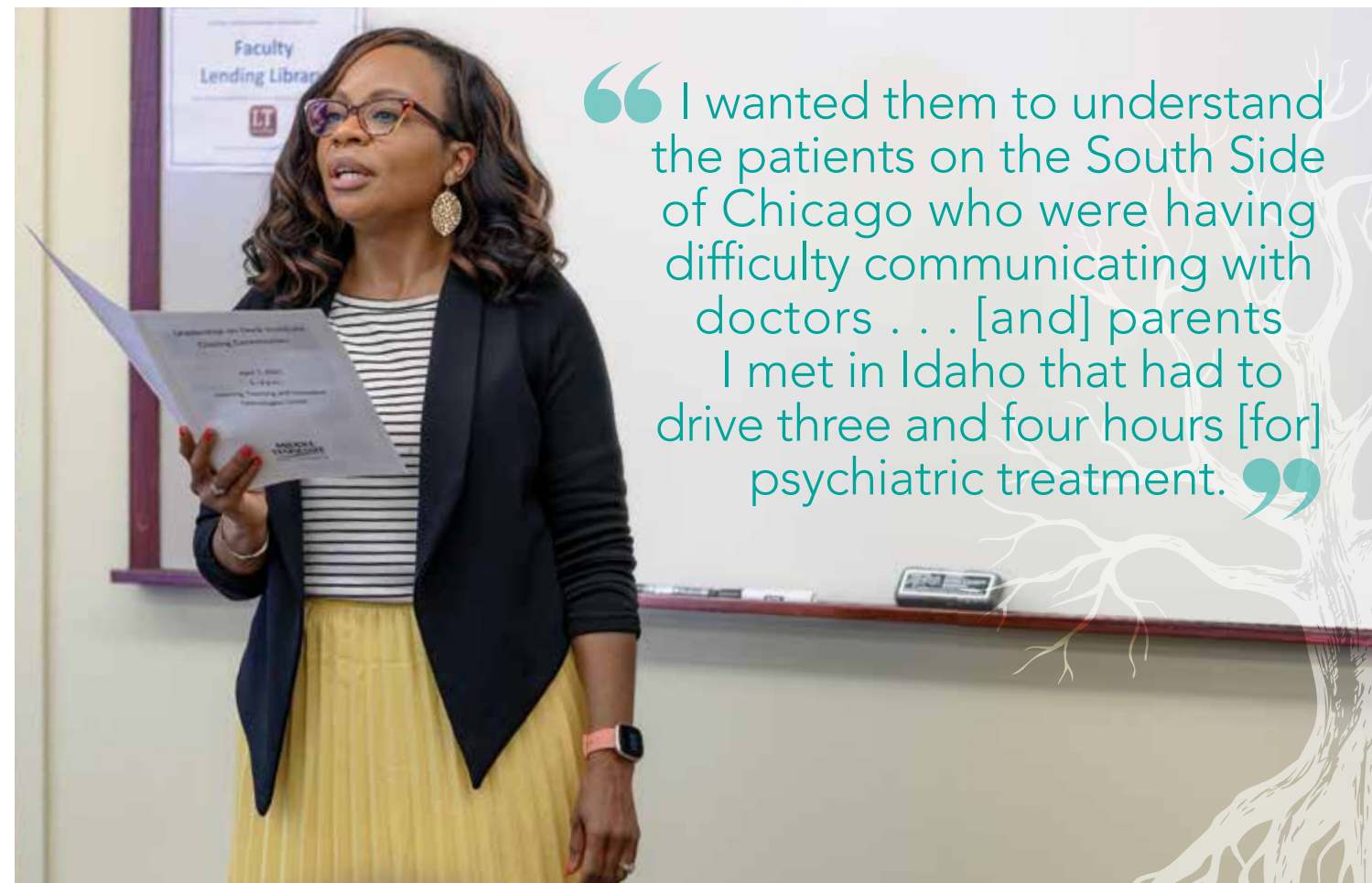
“Needless to say, I spent a lot of time in Dr. Story’s office,” Haley said. “Sometimes it would be to ask her questions about class. Other times it would really just be to vent about the struggles of being a doctoral student. All of those times, Dr. Story was always good to listen, and she never rushed me out of her office.

“She not only cared about me as a student in her classroom, she also cared about my well-being.”

Said former colleague Julie Koch, a professor of Counseling Psychology at the University of Iowa: “She is full of curiosity and has enthusiasm for learning new things and trying something different and is open to new experiences.”

In addition to thanking her college-sweetheart husband, Xaviery, for his support, Story praised her MTSU colleagues for their backing, noting that “we never move alone.”

Story used a fitting quotation from King that also served as a challenge to all in attendance: “Life’s most persistent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’ ” **A**



“I wanted them to understand the patients on the South Side of Chicago who were having difficulty communicating with doctors . . . [and] parents I met in Idaho that had to drive three and four hours [for] psychiatric treatment.”



CALA TURNS 20

Language center thrives through interactive learning

By Elizabeth Polson, 2023 Psychology graduate

CALA Arabic class

Shelley Thomas was inspired to start the Center for Accelerated Language Acquisition (CALA) after hearing from her son's teachers who were having trouble communicating with Spanish-speaking students and their parents.

Started in 2003 with the help of an MTSU Special Projects grant, the exceptional language program housed in the Honors College has now hit its 20th year. Through CALA, participants achieve new language skills through fun and interactive classes throughout the year.

"The purpose of our first CALA class was to teach Spanish to local K-12 teachers," Thomas said. "We also provided a free English class to some of the Hispanic parents at St. Rose's Church."

Since that time, various sources of financial and administrative support from MTSU, especially the deans and staff at the Honors College, have been vital to CALA's growth and development. CALA is now a self-supporting nonprofit and can provide free classes to other nonprofits, both locally and internationally.

"Getting to the point where we can give back has been an enriching experience," Thomas said.

As CALA was first beginning, Thomas traveled to Smyrna weekly to teach English to newly arrived Karen

refugees. The Karen people come from the country of Myanmar, formerly known as Burma.

As the program grew, Chinese professors of English from the University of Inner Mongolia received a grant to travel to MTSU and attended a CALA English as a Second Language (ESL) class four summers in a row.

FUN APPROACH FITTING ALL

CALA uses a method called "whole brain learning," in which both hemispheres of the brain are utilized to learn a language through physical response and storytelling. This makes the classes, open to the community, very interactive and fitting for all learning styles. This would not be possible without the teachers involved though.

"I'm grateful for the people who discovered these methods, trained me, and for those who agreed to get this unusual training to teach for CALA over the years. I admire them for what they later accomplished," Thomas said.

Many teachers went on to find success in their careers.

Ahmad Jedeeni, an Arabic teacher, and **Dylan White**, a German teacher, received their Ph.D.s. Latin teacher **Jason Simpson** became the chair of the Department of World Languages at the Webb School in Bell Buckle.

Jie Zhou, a Chinese teacher, earned her master's degree and returned to China with her family. Several years into operation, a yoga program was added to the curriculum. **Rishi Purcell**, the current CALA yoga trainer, also travels around the country for a national nonprofit. The Tamil teacher, **Tanamayi Viapuri**, also became a yoga teacher in the U.S. **Rebecca Clippard**, a Japanese teacher, is finishing her fifth year in the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program. **Haley Jensen**, an American Sign Language teacher, developed her own private business called Voice Off. **Paolo Volpe-Rinonapoli**, an Italian teacher, still teaches in MTSU's Department of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. And **Brian Roberts**, a Spanish teacher, is now associate director of CALA.

When COVID-19 hit, the program moved to online classes. Currently, telecourses in French, Spanish, Chinese, and Tamil remain available on CALA's website.

SUSTAINING GROWTH

Even though Thomas has retired from MTSU, where she began as a French professor in 1991, she still heads the CALA program.

"Part of my job is training other teachers," Thomas said. "I do that locally and have been invited to do workshops at national language conferences, at the American Councils for International Education in D.C., as well as in India, China, and Africa."

When Thomas isn't teaching new languages, she enjoys fostering ecological efforts.

"I am on the educational outreach team for Save Soil, the largest global nonprofit organization seeking to prevent rapidly advancing soil extinction," said Thomas, who is also a member of MoreTreesBoro, an organization dedicated to protecting and growing trees in Murfreesboro.

CALA continues to reach many people's lives. All of this would not be possible without the teachers within the program and the people who supported its growth. By understanding the importance of learning and communication with others, the program remains an important effort working to improve the lives of others to this day.

Learn more at mtsu.edu/cala or email CALA Director Shelley Thomas at shelley.thomas@mtsu.edu.



CALA English for Chinese professors



CALA German and Latin class

In Memoriam: Louis Haas Jr.



Louis Haas Jr., a professor of History, passed away Jan. 12, 2023, at age 67. A member of the MTSU Honors College faculty, he directed several undergraduate Honors theses and taught Honors classes at MTSU during 2001-22. Previously he was a tenured professor at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh (1990-2001).

Born Nov. 5, 1955, in Evansville, Indiana, Haas had multiple research-focused publications and dedicated his life to academia. He received B.A. degrees from both Indiana State University and the University of Southern

Indiana, his M.A. from Ohio State University, and his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois.

With a booming voice and a laugh heard around the room, the charismatic Haas was a great storyteller known for his sense of humor and sarcasm. He is survived by his wife of 45 years, Barbara, along with three daughters and two grandchildren.

CLASS NOTES

Students

Natalie Young, pictured right, a Nursing major, was selected as the recipient of the MTSU President's Award, the most prestigious award given to an MTSU student, for exemplifying superior character and honor and having made achievements that, ideally, all students should strive to meet. Additionally, she presented her study "The Nurse's Role in Neonatal Respiratory Distress Syndrome using an Individualized Family-Centered Care Approach" at the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing 47th Biennial Convention last November in San Antonio.



Ariel Nicastro, pictured above, a Physics major and Honors student, was selected to participate in the 2023 Training and Research Experiences in Nonlinear Dynamics (TREND) for undergraduates at the University of Maryland.

Biven Alexander, an Honors graduate, and **Aubrey Keller**, recent editor-in-chief of *Scientia et Humanitas*, were each awarded the Kevin J. Donovan Graduate Award for Excellence in Scholarship for the 2022-23 academic year.

Elliot Certain, majoring in Social Work and minoring in Honors, was named Best Overall Lobbyist during the Tennessee Intercollegiate State Legislature. The award recognizes the outstanding lobbyist on their effectiveness to achieve goals in an ethical manner. He also was a quarterfinalist in the International

Public Debate Association National Championships in 2023 in Boise, Idaho. There, he was awarded Second-Best Season Long and Fourth-Best Speaker. Certain also landed an internship from American University last summer.

Biology major **James Evans** and Physics majors **Thomas Freeman**, **Rachael Quinby**, and **Ethan Weiche** were selected for National Science Foundation (NSF) Research Experiences for Undergraduates.

Ethan Estes, a History major, presented at the Appalachian Policy Summit last March.

Sydney Fischer, a Political Science major, was awarded a Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship to Jordan in summer 2023.

Aura Ganster, majoring in Nutrition and Food Science, was selected for the U.S. Department of State's Critical Language Scholarship program Spark Award for summer 2023 to study Chinese.

Exercise Science major **Marissa Gray** was selected for a graduate assistantship for the Luckyday Scholars Program at the University

of Mississippi, where she will mentor scholarship students and teach freshman university classes. She also will study Speech and Language Pathology while there. Additionally, Gray was recognized as an alternate for the national Phi Kappa Phi Fellowship.

Kera Reynolds, an English major, was selected as the recipient of the MTSU Community Service Award for exemplifying servant leadership through her community service.



Matthew Siciliano, pictured, above, an Honors student and Political Science major, was selected for an academic internship at The Washington Center for fall 2023. Tennessee is one of only 13 states that offer state funding for the TWC Academic Internship Program experience.

Student Awards

President's Award

Natalie Young

Provost's Award

Elizabeth Kowalczyk

Community Service Award

Kera Reynolds

Ralph and Elizabeth Gwaltney Centennial Scholarship

Hailey Harrison

Paul W. Martin Sr. Scholarships

Janna Abou-Rahma
Savannah Buist
Elizabeth Counts
Yaseen Ginnab
Johari Hamilton
Priscilla Hammermeister
Gracie Johnson
Elizabeth Kowalczyk
Isabelle Legrain
Ariel Nicastro
Connor Prim
Ross Sibley

Academic Achievement Scholarships

Erika Allen
Matthew Johnson
Sevinch Kamaridinova

Lawrence R. Good Scholarship

Hannah Antrican

John and Linda Vile Award

Alaina Denton

Julia W. Powell Scholarship

Fison Bogale

Hannah/Harris Study Abroad Scholarships

Marissa Farabee
Tara Kirkpatrick

Philip and Marilyn Mathis Scholarship

Yaseen Ginnab

Michael Martinelli Memorial Scholarship

Cole Jones

June Hall McCash Founders Award Scholarship

Ruby Neu

Windrow Scholarship

Adriana Ramirez-Speis

Bart McCash Scholarship

Cai Ward

Joseph and Teresa Santiago Olmstead Scholarship

Aykut Iri

Hanna Romans Witherspoon Scholarship

Samuel Baldwin

Ingram-Montgomery Thesis/Research Scholarship

Micah Steinborn

First-Year Outstanding Students

Ariel Nicastro

Isabel Jacober

Second-Year Outstanding Students

Rand Hasan
Katrina Aguilar

Third-Year Outstanding Students

Isabelle Legrain
Connor Prim

Fourth-Year Outstanding Students

Johari Hamilton
Marzea Akter

Critical Language Scholarships

Alec Barger (Russian)
Aura Ganster (Chinese)
Nina Meer (Chinese)

Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarships

Sydney Fischer (Jordan)
Jonathan Garcia-Alamilla (Japan)
Francesca Urwin (Spain)
Patrick Wells (Japan)

Fulbright Summer Institute-Wales

Victoria Grigsby

Conservation Leadership Program

Yaseen Ginnab

PKP Fellowship

Maria Hite

Barry Goldwater Scholarship

Elizabeth Kowalczyk

Gilman Scholarship Brussels Study Tour

Dimend Little

U.S. Student Fulbright-ETA for Taiwan

Gretta Maguire

Fulbright Berlin Capital Program

Alexis Marshall

National Science Foundation REUs

Thomas Freeman

Ariel Nicastro

Rachael Quinby

Ethan Weiche

CLASS NOTES

Faculty and Staff

has been promoted to professor and was recently appointed as associate dean of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences.



Roberta Chevrette (Communication Studies), pictured above, was promoted to associate professor.

Mary Evins (American Democracy Project/History) received the Barbara Burch Award for Faculty Leadership in Civic Engagement from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

Tricia Farwell (Journalism and Strategic Media) co-authored several recent articles: "Do Better with SMART+IE Objectives: A classroom activity developing critical thinking skills in relation to DEI for communication campaigns" in *Advertising & Society Quarterly*; " 'Set your soul on fire': A feminist informed co-constructed auto-ethnography of sixteen multidisciplinary, multicultural, and multilingual globally located academic women exploring gendered academic productivity during COVID-19" in *American Journal of Qualitative Research*; "Exploring Scholarly Productivity, Supports, and Challenges of Multinational Women

Graduate Students During a Global Pandemic” in *Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education*; and “Part of something larger than myself: Lessons learned from a multidisciplinary, multicultural, and multilingual international research team of academic women” in *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*.



Tony Johnston (Agriculture), pictured above, was co-author of several recent articles, “Oral Probiotic Activities and Biosafety of *Lactobacillus gasseri* HHuMIN D” in *Microbial Cell Factories*; “Isolation, Characterization and Biosafety Evaluation of *Lactobacillus fermentum* OK with Potential Oral Probiotic Properties” in *Probiotics and Antimicrobial Proteins*; “Butyl-fructooligosaccharides modulate gut microbiota in healthy mice and ameliorate ulcerative colitis in a DSS-induced model” in *Food and Function*; “Recombinant *Bifidobacterium bifidum* BGN4 Strains Expressing the Streptococcal Superoxide Dismutase/Human Interleukin-10 Gene Ameliorate *In Vitro* and *In Vivo* Inflammatory Bowel Disease” in *Microbial Cell Factories*; and “*In vivo* Functional Effects of *Weissella confuse* VP30 Exopolysaccharides on Loperamide-Induced Constipation in Rats” in *Food Science and Biotechnology*.

Johnston also finished a two-year appointment to the Tennessee Governor’s Wine and Grape Advisory Board and took four MTSU faculty members to Argentina and Peru to establish contacts at five universities. Additionally, he served as an invited reviewer for the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) and the government of Québec, participated in the CFI’s 2023 Innovation Fund competition as a member of an expert committee, and provided detailed comments on proposals.



Rebekka King (Religious Studies), pictured above, authored a new book, *The New Heretics: Skepticism, Secularism, and Progressive Christianity*, published by New York University Press. She also was promoted to professor.

Becky McIntyre (History) was awarded the Faculty Student Success Award from the College of Liberal Arts in 2022 and was promoted to research instructor.

Ashleigh McKinzie (Sociology and Anthropology) and **Jennifer Woodward** (Political Science and International Relations) received tenure and were promoted to associate professor.



Joan McRae (World Language, Literature, and Cultures), pictured above, published the article “Medieval(ist) Pastimes, or What’s a Belle Dame Doing in a Place like Hatfield House?” in *Proceedings from the XVth Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society*. She also presented two papers at professional conferences in fall 2022: “Mentoring Success: Production and Integration of OER Intermediate Textbook” with Kathryn Murphy-Judy (Virginia Commonwealth University) and “Study Abroad and Global Learning: Changes, Opportunities, and New Directions for High Impact Practices” in SAMLA (South Atlantic Modern Language Association). She and colleagues in French, Abby Broughton and Ann McCullough, won a grant from the FACE Foundation/French Embassy

in the United States for “Empowering French and Francophone Studies” to develop an open educational resources (OER) textbook for beginner French.

Philip E. Phillips (Honors associate dean) participated in the Third International Congress of the Edgar Allan Poe Spanish Association, sponsored by the Facultad de Humanidades de Albacete and the Biblioteca de Castilla-La Mancha (Toledo), in Spain last October. Phillips is president of the Poe Studies Association.



Ennio Piano (Political Economy Research Institute/Economics), pictured above, was appointed as associate editor of *Public Choice*, a journal that publishes scholarly research that applies economics to nonmarket social phenomena, such as politics, law, religion, conflict, and family.

Suzanne Sutherland (History) brought several MTSU students to Europe in 2023 for a monthlong summer history and culture program she designed, organized, and led in Vienna and Prague called “Heart of Europe.” After completing three years on the Faculty Senate, she was elected Faculty Senate president for the 2024–25 academic year. Sutherland also was promoted to professor.

John R. Vile (Honors dean) authored a new book, *The Drama of Presidential Inaugurations and Inaugural Addresses from Washington through to Biden*, published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing.



Leland Waite, pictured above right, an aerospace simulator instructor and former Buchanan Fellow, was awarded a bid for captain on an Airbus 320 for Delta Air Lines. Waite earned a bachelor’s in Aerospace in 2013 and a master’s in Aeronautical Science (Aviation Safety and Security Management) in 2016.

Connor McDonald, who earned his bachelor’s degree in Political Science in 2017, was selected to serve as assistant general counsel for Tennessee Secretary of State Tre Hargett.

Benjamin Adams, a May 2023 graduate with a bachelor’s degree in Political Science and minors in Honors and Pre-Law, was one of 50 students selected for the Intercollegiate Studies Institute’s 2023 Honors Conference in Annapolis, Maryland, last summer.

Ivy Adams, a 2020 Buchanan Fellow and Aerospace major, completed her Master of Science in Aeronautical Science in summer 2023 and will be attending aircraft dispatch school.

Catheryn Bolick, a Biology and Music (clarinet performance) graduate, was awarded a Phi Kappa Phi Fellowship and will be attending Washington University for a Ph.D. in cancer cell biology.



Yaseen Ginnab, pictured above, who graduated in 2023 with a degree in Biology and Psychology, was selected for the 2023 Conservation Leadership Program, a yearlong fellowship.

CLASS NOTES

Alumni and Friends



Maria Hite, pictured above, who received her MTSU degree in Science in 2023, is a second-year student at Meharry Medical College. Hite is a member of the first cohort in the Medical School Early Acceptance Program and the recipient of a 2022 Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society Fellowship.

Keel Hunt, who graduated from MTSU with a bachelor’s in English in 1971 and a former member of the Honors College Board of Visitors, published *A Sense of Justice: Judge Gilbert S. Merritt and His Times* (West Margin Press).



Dimend Little, pictured above, who graduated in 2023 with a degree in International Relations, was awarded the statewide 2023 Harold Love Outstanding Community Service Award. Little was awarded a Benjamin A. Gilman scholarship to Brussels in 2023. She also attended the Carnegie Mellon Public Policy and International Affairs conference.

Alexis Marshall, a Journalism and Spanish double-major who graduated in 2019, was awarded a Fulbright scholarship with the Berlin Capital Program.

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The Honors College is raising funds to support educational enhancement opportunities for our talented students, particularly scholarships, study abroad, student research and travel to conferences, and Honors publications.

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Photo by J. Intintoli

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The Honors College deeply appreciates friends who have contributed to its success in countless ways. Philanthropic support has been integral to the college's history, most notably through the construction of our beautiful building. We are honored to recognize those who made giving to the college a priority in 2023.

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