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MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

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SAVING OLD TOWN

Tennessee's ubiquitous Frist family taps MTSU professor Kevin Smith to help protect and document remains of an ancient civilization in middle Tennessee



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Animated Personalities

Video games, animated movies, special effects, motion graphics, and even architectural renderings all depend on the work of animators. MTSU's Bachelor of Science degree in Animation helps students learn how to bring their ideas to life on the screen. Students such as senior Ansley Pearson of Chattanooga, pictured here in MTSU's Video Animation Lab, begin with traditional art and animation techniques and progress through advanced digital tools, techniques, and theory used by major animation studios for films, television, video games, and more.

photo by J. Intintoli

cover illustration: Brittany Stokes; photos: Andy Heidt

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Tennessee's ubiquitous Frist family taps MTSU professor Kevin Smith to help protect and document remains of an ancient civilization in middle Tennessee

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Just Picture Yourself

fulfilling your dream of creating a scholarship or supporting an athletic team or academic program or recognizing a faculty member—using a gift through your will or retirement plan or insurance policy.

Over the past five years, MTSU has had the pleasure of recognizing many kind and generous friends as new members in the 1911 Society who have created a provision in their will or named the MTSU Foundation as a beneficiary on an insurance policy or the beneficiary on part of their retirement plan.

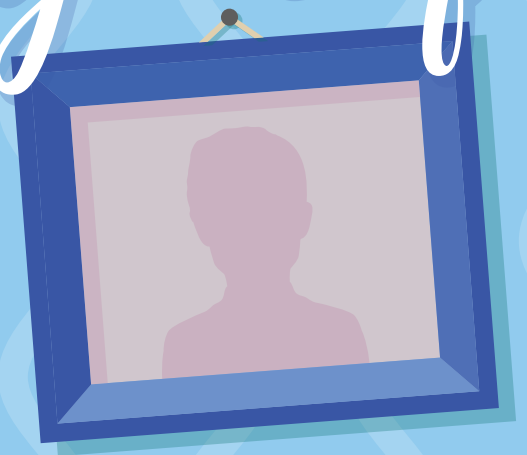
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I AM *true* **BLUE**.

Field of Dreams

A big New York Yankees fan since interning with the team years ago, Kim Page never figured her Actuarial Science background at MTSU might mix so well with her passion for baseball. But Page, who teaches full time as a math instructor at MTSU, has made that combination work professionally for the past five years. She does so by spending a good chunk of her spare time doing what thousands of hardcore baseball fans might enjoy—dissecting the statistical data of minor league pitchers and predicting their futures for SIGMA Actuarial Consulting Group Inc. of Brentwood.



Actuarial Sciences graduate Kim Page, a current MTSU math instructor and a consultant in baseball analytics, at the Nashville Sounds' First Tennessee Park

Page takes her best stab at determining which players might become major league stars and which might need more help in the minors. She presents her findings every other year at the Actuarial Research Conference and has talked with both Major League Baseball and STATS LLC about sharing her prized information with them, as well.

Page's efforts on the baseball front and as an instructor illustrate yet another success story for MTSU's Actuarial Science program, which is pumping graduates into the field at an ever-expanding rate—many with a job in hand before they leave school.

Actuarial Science students and graduates like Page use mathematical skill, statistical techniques, and computer algorithms to manage risks and solve problems, most often for insurance and pension programs. The profession is a growing one, as the U.S. Department of Labor estimated that employment of actuaries would increase 22 percent from 2016 to 2026—much faster than the average for all occupations.

That's good news for MTSU, which is the only university in Tennessee that offers Actuarial Science coursework for both undergraduate and graduate degrees.



by Drew Ruble

[Editor's Notes: John Glennon contributed mightily to this letter. The story of Kim Page's baseball analytics success first appeared in Innovations, the magazine of MTSU's College of Basic and Applied Sciences.]

When Don Hong, now the Actuarial Science coordinator, arrived at MTSU in 2005, there were only 40 students involved in the program—and just one or two graduate students studying actuarial science within the Mathematics M.S. program. But he's engineered great change since then.

In 2010, MTSU established a new concentration in Actuarial Science for the Master of Science in Professional Science. That attracted plenty of out-of-state students who had completed their bachelor's degrees in math or business but were looking to continue in the actuarial science field. Just five years later, MTSU launched a stand-alone Bachelor of Science in Actuarial Science, which provided further advertisement for the program, nationally and internationally.



MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee and Shao Qianium, vice president of Ningbo University in China, sign an extension of the Joint Mathematics and Applied Mathematics Program, established in 2012, for 10 more years.

Another factor in the program's growth has been an international collaboration with sister schools in countries like China, further boosting enrollment. Last July, MTSU renewed an academic partnership that allows actuarial science students enrolled at 25,000-student Ningbo University in China to finish their classwork and earn their degrees at the Murfreesboro campus. The program can accept up to 40 students each academic year.

The bottom line is that MTSU's Actuarial Science program featured a combined 112 undergraduate and graduate students in Spring 2018, nearly tripling the 2005 figure. Sixteen of 25 students in their final year in 2018 were accepted into graduate school, and several others received job offers.

No wonder the program is recognized nationally and even internationally for the success of the students and is quickly becoming one of the University's signature programs. **True Blue!**



A brief conversation on recent events with MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee

You announced last October that MTSU would substantially increase the value and broaden eligibility of its Presidential Scholarship, a move that will more than double the amount awarded to some high-ability freshmen who enroll for this fall. Talk more about that.

McPhee: I announced the scholarship enhancement at the University's True Blue Tour stop in Franklin. The tour is our annual recruiting road trip for high-ability students to 14 cities in four states. MTSU added the Williamson County stop in 2015 as part of a partnership with the school system to step up recruitment of its top university-bound students.

The Presidential Scholarship will increase to \$18,000 in total value, paid out to eligible incoming freshmen at \$4,500 a year for four years. Students must have a 3.5 high school GPA and score between 25 and 29 on the ACT to qualify for the expanded award. The Presidential Scholarship previously paid \$4,000 a year to students with ACT scores of 28 and 29.

MTSU guarantees the scholarship to all students who apply to the University before Dec. 1 each year and meet the eligibility criteria. Visit mtsu.edu/apply.

With these enhancements, the Presidential Scholarship becomes the largest guaranteed academic award given by any public university in Tennessee to students with these credentials.

When combined with the Hope Lottery Scholarship provided by the state, it will substantially reduce the cost of tuition for these high-ability students to attend MTSU.

MTSU will continue to offer students making an ACT score of 30 and above, along with at least a 3.5 high school GPA, our guaranteed Trustees Scholarship, which pays \$20,000 in four annual installments of \$5,000.

Students scoring at least 29 on the ACT and with a high school GPA of 3.5 and above can apply for MTSU's highest academic award, the Buchanan Fellowship, a competitive and selective full-tuition scholarship through the University Honors College.

This expanded Presidential Scholarship award will begin with freshmen entering in the Fall 2019 semester.

Above: MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee presents Independence High School senior Grant Hampton, 17, of Thompsons Station a large replica of an \$18,000 check representing the new four-year award amount, during the MTSU True Blue Tour visit to Franklin Oct. 2.



You surprised a few future Blue Raiders with these enhanced scholarships at a few of the most recent True Blue Tour events. For instance, Diana Makram, who knew she wanted to major in Biology and minor in Chemistry, walked out of the tour event at the Millennium Maxwell House Hotel in Nashville with the \$18,000 Presidential Scholarship. Makram, 17, admitted she was only in attendance to have a good time and hang out with her friends and described her reaction to being awarded \$18,000 as “speechless.” At a Franklin True Blue Tour stop, you also surprised Grant Hampton, 17, an Independence High School senior, with the news about another \$18,000 scholarship. Talk about those experiences.

McPhee: Makram said she wants to be a physician’s assistant. Walking into the hotel ballroom, she said her options were primarily between MTSU and a Nashville private university. Hampton, a Thompsons Station resident, carried a 3.9 GPA and scored a 25 on his ACT. He plans to study Computer Science. A family friend and MTSU alumnus, James Mason, testified to the type of person Hampton is—determined, focused on academics, and committed. He well represents the reason for the expanded scholarship.

We feel strongly that MTSU, as a major comprehensive university with a broad array of top-notch majors, is the best choice for these high-ability students. Enhancing this scholarship will make it even more practical and affordable for them to pursue their higher education goals on our beautiful campus.

The University reallocated existing funds in its budget to pay for the scholarship enhancements. MTSU is also exploring additional changes that could be in place as soon as the Fall 2020 semester.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Below: MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee delivers the news to Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet High School senior Diana Makram and her mother, Hanan Marcos, that the family would receive a four-year, \$18,000 Presidential Scholarship, during the True Blue Tour event in Nashville Oct. 4.





SAVING OLD TOWN

by Skip Anderson

Tennessee's ubiquitous Frist family taps MTSU professor Kevin Smith to help protect and document remains of an ancient civilization in middle Tennessee

ALONG THE TREE-LINED BANKS OF THE HARPETH RIVER IN THE heart of Williamson County, Tennessee, it's easy to fall under the charms of the agricultural patchwork and well-spaced ancestral homes. Not only does such a bucolic scene inspire a sense of serenity, it also points to our roots as a people: a continuum of culture that spans hundreds of generations and thousands of years. But on one five-acre lot in particular—one that's located where the ruddy waters of Brown Creek spill into the Harpeth River—there is literally more truth to that than an untrained eye could possibly see. And protecting what most of us can't see—clues that a great civilization that one anthropologist from MTSU knows thrived there long ago—is where Dr. William (Bill) and Tracy Frist come into this fascinating story. The heart- and lung-transplant surgeon and former majority leader of the U.S. Senate and his wife, an accomplished equestrienne and farm manager from Virginia who is one-quarter Native American, purchased the land in 2015 with the aim of preserving the site called Old Town, which contains the remains of the civilization that began some 12,000 years ago and flourished both economically and culturally for centuries.

“As a little boy, I remember going to church picnics ‘way out’ at Henry Goodpasture’s farm at Old Town and seeing the big mounds adjacent the stately home and listening to the stories about some distant culture who lived on those lands for hundreds of years and then disappeared,” Dr. Frist told *MTSU Magazine*, referring to the property that he now owns. “Mr. Goodpasture had a vast collection of pottery and relics that had been plowed up or found in the front yard along the banks of the Harpeth River.”

The Frists launched the Old Town Heritage Project shortly after purchasing the 40-acre property, located about 20 miles southwest of downtown Nashville.

“The purpose of the Old Town Heritage Project is to support academic-led new discovery of the ancient history of middle Tennessee and the broad distribution and sharing of that new knowledge with the public and future generations,” he said.

The Frists asked MTSU Anthropology Professor Kevin E. Smith to lead the scientific research component of

the preservation effort. Smith had long been familiar with the site, having first explored the property superficially some 25 years ago at the request of previous owners.

“Our hope is to garner a much richer and more complete understanding of its ancient history under the direction and leadership of MTSU,” Frist said. “Academic institutions like MTSU are at the forefront of discovery and play a vital role in uncovering that untold history for scholars, archaeologists, historians, anthropologists, and schoolchildren for generations to come.”

But what exactly are the Frists working with MTSU to preserve?

“This is a town, not just an archeological site,” Smith said. “People lived here and had great leaders. We only have about three such sites in state ownership and two in private, so this is a new addition. This is the first concerted effort by a private land owner in middle Tennessee to take it upon themselves to preserve it as the state would if they owned it.”

But picturing what may constitute a “town” from the Mississippian Period can be a challenge. And why did they settle in what would become middle Tennessee centuries later?

“We walk and drive upon a truly grand civilization every day in middle Tennessee,” Smith said, noting that a paved stretch of the Natchez Trace covers part of Old Town’s ruins. “There used to be about 40 towns like Old Town all along the Cumberland River and its tributaries. There’s also great farmland here, which supported their economy. It was one of the most densely populated areas east of the Mississippi in the prehistoric era. Geographically, it was the center of the trade routes in all directions.”

In a few small ways, Nashville has something in common with the prehistoric civilization that occupied middle Tennessee thousands of years ago: It is one of only a handful of U.S. cities to have three interstates intersect within its city limits, thus fueling economic trade in all directions. Agriculture remains the Volunteer State’s top industry. And to say it’s “densely populated” would be an understatement.

The most obvious clues that mark the site as an ancient civilization are the multiple earthen mounds ranging from 4 to 12 feet in height that are scattered on a plot of land roughly the size of a football field.

“This civilization lasted 500 years or so, with about a century and a half where there were dozens and

“Academic institutions like MTSU are at the forefront of discovery and play a vital role in uncovering that untold history.”

—Dr. Bill Frist, former Senate majority leader



dozens of towns and tens of thousands of people building some of the mounds that were some of the largest earthen constructions built in middle Tennessee until the 1950s,” Smith said. “We didn’t have the ability to build these types of structures until we got bulldozers, and they did it with baskets.”

Smith, who has studied six other mounds in the region since the 1980s, said they played important, multifaceted roles in the lives of those who lived in the community.

“Mounds like this are platforms that elevate; they are the same as Maya temples [in Guatemala] atop a pyramid,” Smith said. “These in middle Tennessee were built with earth and on top were houses for the kings of these towns and their families and temples.”

In addition to establishing vibrant trade relations throughout the region—the Natchez Trace perhaps being the most significant (and famous) prehistoric trade route for the region—the Mississippian people, as scholars know them, also cultivated a rich, highly developed artistic tradition.

“In many ways, it was the most fabulous art tradition that ever existed in North America,” Smith said. “Much of Mississippian art centers on things that took place at the time of what they viewed as creation, with depictions of supernatural heroes who cleared the earth of monsters so humans could live here—much like the hero twins associated with the Maya civilization. The other part of the Mississippian peoples’ art dealt with what happens to the soul after the body dies. Their art explored the possibility of reincarnation.”

Previous owners of the property, including the Nashville historic families of the Browns and the Goodpastures, musician Jimmy Buffet, and later, singer Kim Carnes, took measures not to impact the site in ways that might be destructive. The Cromling family, originally from Ohio, restored the dry-stacked bulwarks of the historic 1802 Old Town bridge over Brown Creek and used state-of-the-art ultrasound technology to identify more than 220 ancient stonebox burial sites in sampled areas around the mounds. And the Frists, working with MTSU, are taking giant steps toward preserving the site in perpetuity, but not without inviting other stakeholders to the table, too.

“Obviously, there are many people who should contribute to the decision-making process, including the descendants of the southeastern Native American tribes,” Smith said. “And I hope we can find some of the descendants of the slaves of the Brown family and





“If the soil chemistry cooperates, we’ll have a picture of where the houses were located, . . . where the cemetery and graves were located, and a more precise idea of where the original town wall was located . . . without turning over a spade of soil.”

—Kevin Smith, MTSU Anthropology professor

gauge their insights and perspectives on how the site should be interpreted and preserved. The Frists are certainly very cognizant of that.”

For now, Smith is overseeing non-invasive exploration using radar-type equipment that can provide clues as to what secrets the mound may contain.

“We’re currently doing non-intrusive, high-tech archeology using magnetometry and ground-penetrating radar to map this site out without disturbing it,” Smith said. “If the soil chemistry cooperates, we’ll have a picture of where the houses were located, as well as where the cemetery and graves were located, and a more precise idea of where the original town wall was located. And all of that can be done without turning over a spade of soil. Then, with the input of all the stakeholders, we can decide whether we’ll do some limited archeological work to answer specific questions without disturbing any graves or destroying anything.”

This isn’t the first initiative funded by the Frists at MTSU. Far from it, in fact. The couple has donated several times to research-related causes in recent years.

“We first contributed to MTSU about 10 years ago, working with [alumnus and MTSU Board of Trustees chair] Steve Smith to support a Center for Strategic

and International Studies Presidential Scholar from the school,” Frist said. “Second, Tracy and I two years ago established the Bill and Tracy Frist Old Town Endowed Scholarship for Native America, which matches funds raised through Kevin Smith.”

Dr. Frist’s interests in cultural and anthropological history span his lifetime and have led him to leadership roles in some of the world’s top institutions. He has served on the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., which is the governing board for all 15 individual Smithsonian museums and facilities. He currently sits on the board of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian.

“Interestingly, both the Smithsonian museums of Natural History and the American Indian, as well as the Peabody Museum at Harvard, have ancient pieces and remains dating back a thousand years that were removed from our property at Old Town years ago,” Frist said.

He also serves as a director on the global board of The Nature Conservancy, the largest land and environmental conservation group in the country. And the paternal grandmother of Tracy Frist is Native American, leading her to be a “devoted student of Native American culture,” he said.

Together, the Frists have participated in the Lakota summer solstice celebration in South Dakota near Hill City the past four years, he said. And Tracy has long participated in Lakota Sun Dance ceremonies in the same region.

“Tracy and I are passionate about conservation of land, nature, and culture,” Frist said. “History in context inspires us, and we want it to inspire others. We want to add to the limited body of knowledge of what is today known about ancient civilizations in middle Tennessee. It is largely an untold story. The preservation of Old Town and conservation of the land and legacy for generations to come is our passion and our mission.” [MTSU](#)

A CAREER WELL DONE

A tradition at MTSU's Fall Faculty Meeting is the annual presentation of the MTSU Foundation Awards, which recognize, celebrate, and reward University faculty members for their accomplishments inside and outside the classroom.

The 2017 recipient of the foundation's Career Achievement Award, considered the pinnacle of recognition for stellar MTSU professors, was Kevin E. Smith, a nationally recognized professor of Anthropology at MTSU since 1988, a full-time faculty member since 1994, and the founder and director of MTSU's Anthropology program in the College of Liberal Arts' Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

Smith's research interests lie in the archaeology of the southeastern United States, with a particular focus on the late prehistoric Native American cultures of middle Tennessee pre-1500 C.E., Tennessee's late 18th- and early 19th-century frontier period, and African-American life from slavery through Reconstruction. He's an internationally recognized scholar on middle Tennessee's archaeology and an acclaimed mentor to hundreds of students whose involvement in the more than 30 different courses he's taught at MTSU is enabling them to take their knowledge and talent around the world.

Smith said he felt MTSU's Anthropology program has been vital over the years in preserving archaeological sites around the region as the areas around Nashville experienced tremendous growth and development over the years.

In addition to his University service, Smith has organized or chaired more than 20 national, regional, and state conferences and symposia and conducted archival and collections research for the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian and the Tennessee State Museum, among others.



2018 **DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI** awards

Since 1960, the MTSU Alumni Association has recognized outstanding alumni who represent excellence and distinction through their professional careers, loyal support, and service to the broader community.



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS

This year's **Distinguished Alumnus** recipient is **Nic Dugger ('00)** of Nashville. At MTSU, he became the student TV station manager as a freshman. After graduation, he worked on milestone projects with the Discovery Channel and National Geographic, such as the first live multicamera production from an active volcano and the first underwater ocean-to-ocean broadcast. In 2004, Dugger founded his company, TNDV, and completed the construction of his first mobile television production truck. His fleet has grown to eight mobile trucks, which have been used for major television events from presidential inaugurations to awards shows, sporting events, and other live productions. Dugger's company is now the largest mobile TV production facility provider in the Southeast. National productions can be seen nightly on PBS, CMT, GAC, ABC, and other networks. The 41-time Emmy Award nominee and 12-time recipient has donated equipment to his alma mater, provided his production trucks to MTSU students, spoken to classes, and mentored and hired students and graduates.



YOUNG ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT

The **Young Alumni Achievement Award** went to **Casey Pash ('06)** of Columbia, South Carolina. Pash was chosen to manage the Governor's Residence for Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam and family, overseeing all daily operations, residence staff, and projects, along with coordinating more than 100 events per year at the residence. While there, she also served MTSU on the national alumni board, and in 2012, she became one of the youngest National Alumni Association presidents. Upon moving to South Carolina, Pash was chosen by then-Gov. Nikki Haley as executive director of The Original Six Foundation, a nonprofit focused on education, quality of life, and job readiness initiatives. Pash is now president and CEO of Junior Achievement of Greater South Carolina, providing leadership to 11,000 students and managing 500 volunteers across a 34-county region.

For the fifth consecutive year, **True Blue Citations of Distinction** were also awarded. Categories and this year's honorees include:

Achievement in Education (MTSU faculty)—**Frank Michello ('85)** of Murfreesboro, who has excelled at teaching, research, and service in a 30-plus year career at MTSU. He currently is director of the Master of Science in Finance program, which he founded and developed.



Achievement in Education (non-MTSU)—**Mark Hall ('77)** of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, who is one of the nation's leading scholars in the areas of health care, public policy, and bioethics as director of the Health Law and Policy Program at the Wake Forest University School of Law. The author or editor of 20 books, Hall regularly consults with government officials, foundations, and think tanks about health care public policy issues. He has served on the MTSU Honors Board of Visitors, consistently contributed to an undergraduate fund, and returned to campus to discuss health care.



Service to the University—**Tom ('72) and Martha ('72, '73) Boyd** of Lebanon, who established the Tom and Martha Boyd Endowed Lecture in Ethical Leadership at MTSU in 2011. In 2016, the Boyds also launched a weeklong event that involved faculty, students, alumni, and business leaders. Tom and Martha Boyd Ethical Leadership Week has grown to engage more than 30 community leaders and hundreds of students speaking candidly about ethics challenges in business. Tom Boyd was honored in 2011 with the Jones College Exemplar Award.

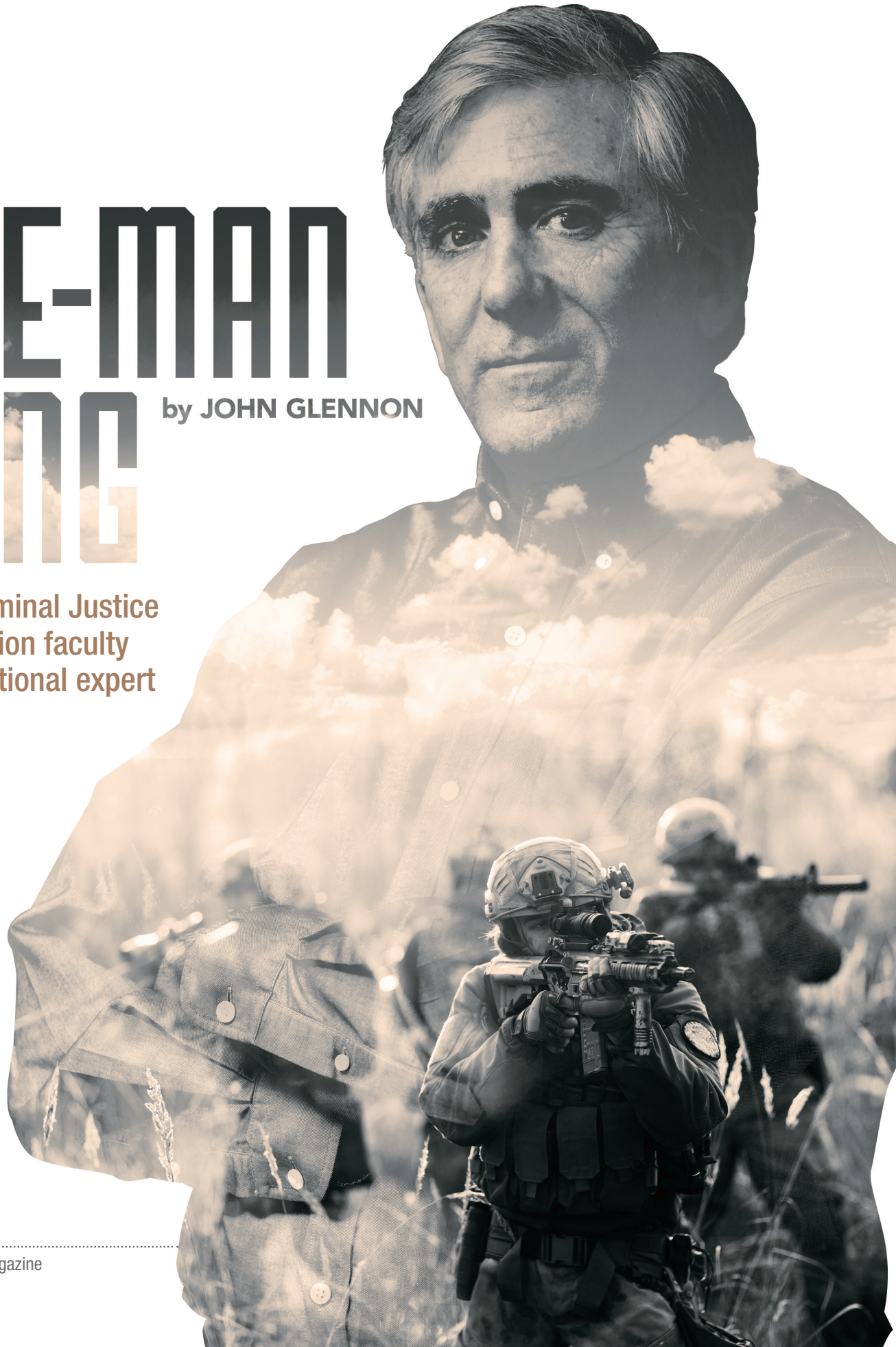
Service to the Community—**Whit Turnbow ('00)** of Murfreesboro, former MTSU senior associate athletic director and golf coach, who helped create the highly successful True Blue Turnbow Project to provide coats for local children in need. After a battle with cancer, Turnbow is now sharing his personal experiences through messages of faith, love, and family. His keynote presentations around the community offer words of hope, strength and growth. Turnbow was recently named the new president of the Tennessee Golf Foundation.



ONE-MAN GANG

by JOHN GLENNON

MTSU's Criminal Justice
Administration faculty
boasts a national expert
on gangs



MTSU LECTURER CARTER SMITH HAD BEEN A SPECIAL AGENT IN THE U.S. ARMY'S CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION COMMAND FOR SIX YEARS WHEN HE CAME ACROSS A CASE THAT WOULD TRANSFORM HIS FUTURE.

It didn't seem like much at the time—a simple parking lot larceny, more than 25 years ago, on his home base of Fort Campbell, which straddles the Tennessee-Kentucky border. But the more questions Smith asked of the military offenders, the more he became both intrigued and alarmed by their responses.

"We asked the guys involved what they'd been doing, and they told us, 'Well, we're with a gang,' and I said, 'Oh, really? Tell me more,'" Smith said. "So they did. They told us they were repping this and that, and that they were following an L.A. gang model. So we sent a report up to the Pentagon and they were like, 'Gangs? Don't use that word. That's a four-letter word.'"

Smith would spend his next eight years in the Army investigating the growing problem of street gangs and military connections, educating his superiors on its significance, and eventually starting the Army's first Gang and Extremist investigations team.

Currently teaching in MTSU's Department of Criminal Justice Administration, the 57-year-old Smith still maintains his interest in gangs, as evidenced by his 2017 book *Gangs and the Military*.

Three different times now, Smith's work in the field of gangs has earned him one of his profession's highest honors, the Frederick Milton Thrasher Award from the *Journal of Gang Research*. The award recognizes superior scholarship, leadership, accomplishments, and service contributions by individuals or programs in dealing with public safety issues like those posed by gangs.

"It's amazing how much effort he's put into that topic because most of us have never really heard or read about anything like that before," said Lance Selva, MTSU's Criminal Justice department chair. "But, because he was in the military and the military police, where he had to deal with it, he has firsthand knowledge of it. I think his No. 1 strength is a link with the real world."

Smith first began teaching at MTSU in 2006, equipped with 22 years of military experience—15 spent at Fort Campbell—and a law degree. He left MTSU in 2011 after earning his Ph.D., but returned to the University in January 2014.

Some of the many classes Smith now teaches include Introduction to Criminal Justice, Terrorism and Criminal Justice, and Special Topics—Gangs. He educates MTSU students and faculty alike through the many criminal justice

connections he brings to lecture at the University.

A Boston native who grew up in Florida, Smith joined the Army in 1978 and first began investigating gangs in the military in the early 1990s. One of his first surprises was just how much gang influence he discovered.

"Every single gang on the planet either has or could have been in the military," Smith said. "Whether that's street gangs, outlaw motorcycle gangs, or domestic terrorist extremists, they've all been in the military.

"What I would tell commanders is that nobody has ever made it go away, and you can't either. Just accept it as a problem. It's like cancer. We try to avoid it, but if we can't, we need to treat it."

Smith said gangs hurt morale in the military, with the possibility a gang member in a superior position could show favoritism to fellow members—or that a gang member might intimidate his way into getting promotions.

What's even more concerning to society at large is that gang members eventually leave the armed forces with a whole new set of skills that can benefit their gangs in civilian life.

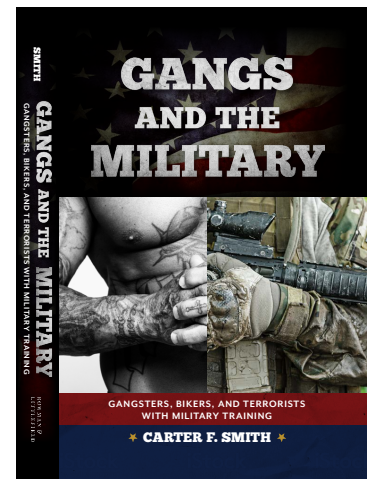
"The way the military trains people is so that they can pass on that training," Smith said. "We're not just talking 'shoot, move, and communicate' tactics either. We're talking leadership, recruiting, chemical weapons, and more."

In addition to continuing to write and research, Smith remains an executive board member of the Tennessee Gang Investigators Association (TGIA), an organization he co-founded in 1998. The TGIA monitors gang activity across the state, sharing information to help educate law enforcement officers and the public.

"The biggest problems in America with criminals are those that are organized by groups," Smith said. "Any group of people that agrees to commit ongoing criminality is dangerous to those of us who don't think that kind of thing happens.

"I take it upon myself to learn how to defeat those kinds of groups, so that I can tell others how to defeat them as well."

In that respect, Smith himself might be described as a one-man gang. [MTSU](#)





OPERATION



by Allison Gorman

A national program for veterans finds a perfect fit with MTSU's student songwriting concentration

ONE RECENT OCTOBER DAY, 30 PEOPLE—mostly strangers to each other—walked into the Bragg Media and Entertainment Building on the campus of MTSU, separated into groups of three, and subsequently pulled 10 songs out of thin air. Later that day, they performed the songs on stage. There wasn't a dry eye in the house.

That in a nutshell was Operation Song at MTSU, an annual collaboration between the University and a Nashville nonprofit that lets veterans, active military, and their families tell their stories with the help of some of Music Row's most celebrated songwriters (and some of MTSU's top student songwriting talent). Since its 2012 founding, Operation Song has traveled the country and generated hundreds of songs, usually through a weeks-long creative process.

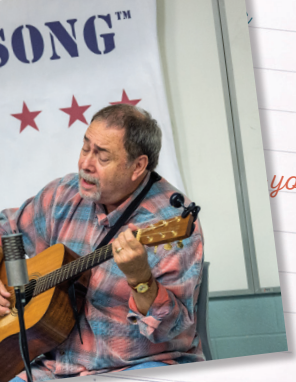
Operation Song at MTSU is a little different. This is Music City, USA, after all, the cradle of global songwriting and publishing. Paired with MTSU's nationally recognized Commercial Songwriting concentration in the University's College of Media and Entertainment, it's simply a perfect match.



*and chasing fire
nothing can get you higher
ing on the ground
an coming down*

—“Back in Baghdad”

*I'd like this song to say
akin'*



you

NO.
DATE: Oct. 30

*When decisions are life and death situations
If you never let your God and country down
Those stars on your shoulders
Someday might be stars in your crown*

—“To Serve”

*In a world that's lost and hurting
Only one thing is certain
Fear is not an option when you know
You are one of the ones who want to go*

—“One of the Ones Who Want to Go”

*In life there are problems
Brother we've all got em
Thank heaven we've got a flag to come home to*

—“Lucky Me, Lucky You”

Top: Nashville Hall of Fame songwriter Jim McBride (r) performs “22,” local veteran Ed Russell’s song about the suicide crisis among military veterans, with MTSU student songwriter Wesley Davis.

Bottom: Songwriter Roxie Dean, Alexis Huber, and Kinmslee Melhorn





Ian Wagner (r) of Goodlettsville, a Purple Heart recipient, with hit Nashville songwriter, Marc Beeson

Joined by an MTSU songwriting student, each pro songwriter-veteran team retreats into a room, where they have just hours to work their magic. Any pro will tell you there's more work than magic in songwriting. But sharing a personal story through music is transformative for veterans. Being part of that transformation is magic in itself.

*When decisions are life and death situations
If you never let your God and country down
Those stars on your shoulders
Someday might be stars in your crown*

—“To Serve”

Maybe it's the life-and-death situations that veterans can't bring themselves to talk about. Sometimes it's the unexpressed desire that led them to serve, or the hidden consequences of having served. But most soldiers have a tale to tell.

Bob Regan, a Grammy- and Dove-nominated songwriter who's worked with Music City megastars like Keith Urban and Trisha Yearwood, learned that lesson while touring war-torn countries for Armed Forces Entertainment in the early 2000s. That's when his idea for Operation Song was born.

“Whenever a guitar comes out and people learn you're a songwriter, they want to talk to you,” he said. “I thought, ‘Wouldn't it be cool if songwriters could sit down with some of these troops and tell their stories?’ Because songwriters are armchair therapists for each other. We sit in rooms and tell each other stories—the good,

the bad, and the ugly. Then we try to make them make sense.”

Maybe that's why Nashville's songwriting community feels small, even though country music is bigger than ever. Operation Song at MTSU blossomed from those community connections, Regan said.

Regan was a songwriter on Music Row with Odie Blackmon, now assistant professor and coordinator of the Commercial Songwriting concentration for MTSU's Recording Industry program. Ken Paulson, dean of the College of Media and Entertainment, also serves on the board of the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame, which partners with Operation Song.

Then there's the legendary Charlie Daniels, a staunch veterans advocate, whose Journey Home Project supports both Operation Song and MTSU's nationally recognized veterans center, which bears his name.

*With the ones who came before me
and the ones who'll come after
I know I never will be alone
Now I live my life trying to honor the memory
of the ones who didn't make it home.*

—“These Boots”

When Operation Song first came to MTSU in 2016, Blackmon incorporated it into his songwriting practicum. The number of participating veterans and pro songwriters were limited to the number of practicum students—seven—that year.

Hilary Miller, director of MTSU's Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center, helps

organize the daylong project, recruiting participants from MTSU's student body and staff. She said she'd like to keep the numbers small.

That's because it can be overwhelming for veterans, who sometimes go for years without openly discussing their military experiences, if they ever do. Miller has had veterans back out at the last minute, or leave before the final performance—and that's OK, she said.

"I like the way we offer it here," Miller said. "You can just go and watch. You can go and watch with the hope of being a participant next year. You can participate this year but maybe not all the way. It's whatever you want to do."

Trey Smith, a Finance major, had been out of the Marines eight years when he signed up to participate in Operation Song at MTSU. "I was a little hesitant to do it," he said, "but I felt like it was as good a time as any to go ahead and talk about it."

He went into the songwriting session not knowing what to say. But the intimate setting, the back and forth, put him at ease. "I wasn't having to spill my guts to anybody and everybody. I didn't feel so exposed."

His song, "These Boots," is wistful but resolute, the story of someone determined to honor his family's name and military legacy.

When he heard it performed, he says, "I sat there and cried."

*If I knew then what I know now
I'd do things differently
I'd help him be the leader that he was born to be
But he died for his country on a roadside in Iraq
And I came home to learn to live
with things I can't take back*

—"Things I Can't Take Back"

Songwriting can be uniquely liberating, Blackmon explained. "Sometimes it's easier to say something in a song than to say it in a speech or write it out on paper. Something about putting your feelings to music seems to be healing, and maybe a little more OK, if that makes sense."

It does to Shane Smith, an Army veteran. He participated in the first Operation Song at MTSU.

"That's the power of the therapy they're giving," he said. "It doesn't feel like they're dragging information out of you. They just let you talk and tell the story, but then once you hear it, the way they tell your story in the song—it's very moving."

In his songwriting session, he told hit songwriter Don Goodman things he'd only told his wife—like how he'd had lingering guilt since one young soldier under his command

in Iraq, a spirited kid who regularly challenged his patience, was killed when their truck was hit by an explosive.

Goodman is a lyricist who has written for generations of greats, from Wilson Pickett to Blake Shelton. He neatly encapsulated Smith's nuanced emotions in "Things I Can't Take Back."

"Don Goodman is phenomenal, and Cory Fisher, the student songwriter who wrote the music and sang, is incredible as well," Smith said. "Our song was done by lunchtime."

*Dodging bullets and chasing fire
In that moment nothing can get you higher
Then you're shaking on the ground
Nothing worse than coming down*

—"Back in Baghdad"

When songwriters and students have complementary talent, like Goodman and Fisher, Blackmon tries to put them together. After that, though, the role of each person in the songwriting trio develops organically.

Songwriting student Lydia MacDavid stayed quiet at first when she and pro songwriter Cindy Morgan sat down with Army veteran Nick Ferzacca. She has an uncle, a Vietnam vet, with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). She didn't want to say the wrong thing.

But when Ferzacca described seeing a buddy's legs torn apart by a bomb in Iraq, MacDavid mentioned her cousin who'd lost an arm and a leg there.

The conversation flowed from there, as Ferzacca described scene after scene of adrenaline-fueled chaos.

"What they went through was crazy, overwhelming," MacDavid said. "We really wanted to capture that."

And they did, in lyrics and tempo, with a runaway train of a song, "Back in Baghdad."

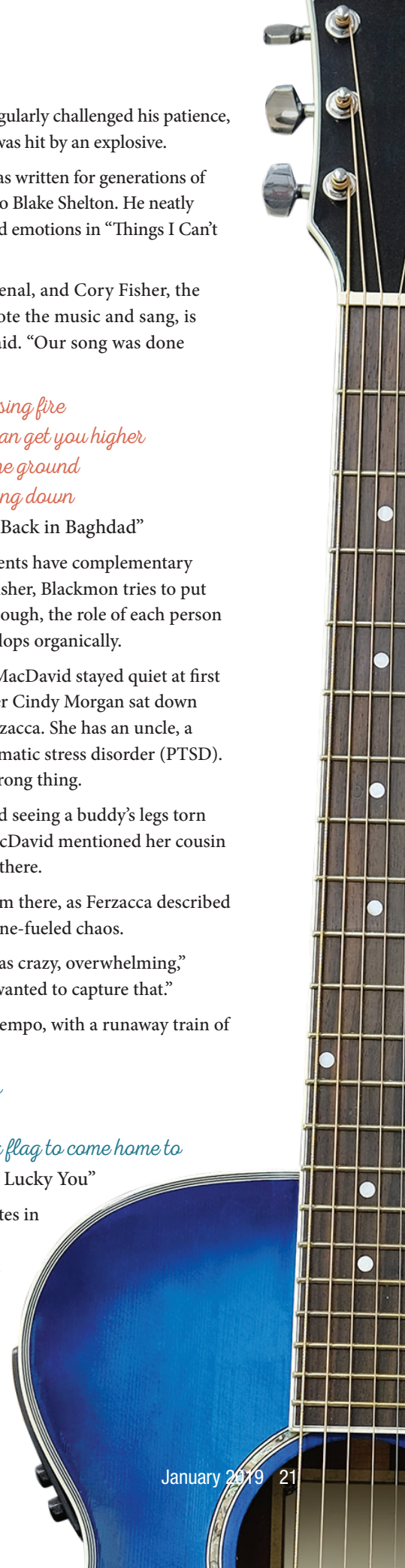
*In life there are problems
Brother we've all got em
Thank heaven we've got a flag to come home to*

—"Lucky Me, Lucky You"

Not everyone who participates in Operation Song has a battle story. Or maybe they fought a different kind of battle.

John Douglas was seriously injured on his military job far from the battlefield.

The injury led to an addiction to prescription



medication, ending his marriage as well as his career. But he came to Operation Song having beaten the addiction. He wanted his story to have an uplifting message. In Douglas's "Hope," then, Regan describes a man who rebuilt his broken life.

"As songwriters, we want these to be their songs, not ours," Regan explained. "We've got to get the best song possible using the veteran's words and emotions."

The writers also try to keep it in a musical style the veterans can relate to. So, for instance, "These Boots" takes on a Highwaymen flavor, reflecting Trey Smith's affinity for Waylon and Willie.

"Lucky Me, Lucky You" incorporates Army veteran Caleb Allen's casual comments. "The way he spoke translated into song very well," recalled Karis Bradley, a senior songwriting student.

"One of the Ones Who Want to Go," written with Teana Harle, a member of the Tennessee National Guard, concludes with "Taps," which she heard every night during basic training. "That really stuck with me, and so we incorporated it into the ending," she said.



Nick Ferzacca, Abe Jacobyansky, and Roxie Dean

*In a world that's lost and hurting
Only one thing is certain
Fear is not an option when you know
You are one of the ones who want to go*

—"One of the Ones Who Want to Go"

Harle's song, about her wish to be deployed, posed an interesting challenge, said songwriting student Lisa Zitterlund.

"Technically, Teana doesn't really have a story to tell. Not that that's bad, but she only has her training and what she wants to do. And so to see (songwriter) Jamie Floyd grasp

something out of thin air and turn it into a story was remarkable."

Zitterlund was equally impressed with Floyd's knack for phrasing. "She can fit an entire sentence anywhere, no matter the syllable count. I learned that's just practice. And practice."

It's not unusual for Blackmon's practicum students to interact with industry insiders. Thanks to his Music Row connections, they regularly get professional feedback on their work. But Operation Song lets them write with pros the way it's done in Nashville. Songwriters no longer compose a song and then pitch it; they write with artists on the spot.

"The business model has changed," Blackmon said, "so this is good preparation."

There's just one difference, he notes: In the "real world," songwriters do research before a session and edit afterward. With Operation Song, "there's a little more fairy dust and magic."

*If there's anything I'd like this song to say
When things are lookin' darkest,
look for that little ray
Of hope, sweet hope
You can't live without hope*

—"Hope"

You can feel the magic at the end of the day, when each group performs their song before family, friends, and fellow participants.

Typically the pro takes the lead, the student plays and sings backup, and the veteran sits with them or joins in. However, some sing their own songs.

When Goodman's song "To Serve" was performed on stage, he saw "tears on the faces of everyone in the room"—including the veteran with whom he wrote the song, former Green Beret and retired Army Lt. Gen. Keith Huber, who currently serves as senior advisor for veterans and leadership initiatives at MTSU.

They must have been good tears. When Operation Song returned to campus in the fall, the general wanted another songwriting session with Goodman. This one's for his wife.

*It took 38 years for me to find
That heroes are those left behind*

—"To Serve"

MTSU

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MidPoints

A look at recent awards, events, and accomplishments at MTSU

compiled by Gina E. Fann, Jimmy Hart, Gina K. Logue, Paula Morton, Drew Ruble, and Randy Weiler

Our Congressional Expert

Dean Ken Paulson of MTSU's College of Media and Entertainment joined other free-speech experts for testimony last September before a congressional committee examining how First Amendment rights are expressed on college campuses. Paulson also serves as president of the Newseum Institute's First Amendment Center in Nashville. The U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce asked Paulson and others to share thoughts on the role of college campuses as places where ideas from all quarters can be shared and debated, even if those ideas could be considered offensive or disturbing. Paulson told the committee he draws his insights from his five years as a dean at MTSU, as well as years of visiting college campuses across the nation as a speaker on First Amendment topics. While he has seen "widely distributed news stories about students shouting down speakers, or college administrators engaging in heavy-handed tactics," Paulson said he doesn't feel such tactics are prevalent at most campuses. "I honestly don't believe there's an epidemic of suppression or intolerance in the nation's universities," he said. Rather, most students are concerned about "paying for school, staying in school, and making good enough grades to get a job when they leave," Paulson said. "That's a dynamic you'll find at universities all over America." However, there are indisputably "some high-profile instances

where college administrators and students are willing to bend free speech principles to prevent hurt feelings or ideological conflict," he added. "Somewhere, over the past two decades, the land of the free has become the home of the easily offended. There are some who see free speech infractions and ask for Congress to do something. But with all due respect, this is not about legislation. It's about education. You can't shout down a speaker if you truly understand how a diversity of opinions has bolstered our democracy. You can't censor students or their media if you understand what Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and the first generation of Americans meant by freedom of the press. You can't try to zone protests off your campus if you appreciate the value of petition and assembly." But too many students do not truly understand those principles, Paulson said. He cited First Amendment Center surveys that showed a third of Americans cannot name a single freedom contained in the First Amendment and only about 2 percent can name all five freedoms—speech, religion, assembly, petition, and press. "A shared commitment to freedom of press, faith, and speech should actually unify this nation," Paulson said.



A Campus without Borders

MTSU's independent governing board voted in December to expand the Regional Scholars plan that offers qualifying out-of-state scholars with a discounted tuition rate. Previously under the "radius 250" or "R250" plan, qualifying applicants graduating from a high school in a county within 250 miles of MTSU in any direction were eligible to receive almost half off of their out-of-state tuition costs. This geography, which still applies, includes portions of Illinois, Indiana, South Carolina, and Ohio (Cincinnati). The board's recent vote expanded the out-of-state discount program to ALSO include qualifying students from anywhere in each of the eight states that share a border with Tennessee (even a small one like Missouri).



■ ACM and Regional Scholars both

■ Regional Scholars Program only

Getting Out the True Blue Vote

A last-minute push among the student population on the MTSU campus just days before the Tennessee deadline for voter registration netted impressive results. The American Democracy Project (ADP) at MTSU reported that the University's tentative student voter registration count for all of 2018 was 1,070. "Voter registration on campus this fall in this interim election year has been, in my experience, unprecedented," said Mary Evins, ADP coordinator and associate professor of History. The total does not reflect students who registered online via special links on MTSU web pages from April through Sept. 16, signed up to vote through GoVoteTN.com, or were funneled into the Tennessee online portal via websites such as CampusVoteProject, TurboVote, or ProudVoter. Last June, MTSU introduced the True Blue Voter initiative, a partnership with the Rutherford County Election Commission, to assist students with registering to vote in Rutherford County elections or by absentee ballot in any of Tennessee's 94 other counties. Alan Farley, Rutherford County administrator of elections, said 195 incoming students registered during MTSU's CUSTOMS orientation sessions. His office counted an additional 112 paper registrations during the final two days of the voter drive. According to the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement, 44.5 percent of MTSU students voted in 2016, a 0.5 percent increase from 2012. The 2016 voting rate for all institutions of higher learning participating in the study was 50.4 percent.



Athaiy Othow (l) receives assistance from Monica Haun, student president of the American Democracy Project at MTSU, Oct. 8 during the on-campus rush to register as many people as possible to vote before the Oct. 9 state deadline.

True Volunteerism

MTSU students, faculty, and staff looking for area volunteer opportunities—both on campus and off—now have a one-stop shop online thanks to a new partnership between the University and United Way of Rutherford and Cannon Counties. The United Way has operated the Volunteer Connect website at unitedwayvolunteer.org as a clearinghouse for area nonprofits to post information about their organizations, as well as their volunteer opportunities. The website has more than 90 agencies and schools registered. Jackie Victory, director of Student Organizations and Service in MTSU's Center for Student Involvement and Leadership, said her office is now directing students to Volunteer Connect for community service opportunities with a



link from her office's web page, mtsu.edu/sos/service-ops.php. Victory said the idea of partnering with United Way developed after the efficiency with which students were able to use the portal to sign up for The Big Event, an annual one-day community service effort involving hundreds of MTSU students. Volunteer Connect, sponsored by Volunteer State Bank, was launched in 2017 by the local United Way and is an interactive digital platform to connect volunteers' interests with agency needs.

MTSU and United Way of Rutherford and Cannon Counties have partnered to encourage the campus community to use the nonprofit's Volunteer Connect website to find and register for volunteer opportunities. Pictured holding True Blue signs and wearing "Live United" T-shirts at Walnut Grove are (l-r) Riley Wilson, director of Marketing and Communications, United Way of Rutherford and Cannon Counties; Kiara Chambers, MTSU alumna and part-time videographer, MTSU Marketing and Communications; David Urban, dean, Jennings A. Jones College of Business; and Meagan Flippin, president and CEO, United Way of Rutherford and Cannon Counties.

Success in Short

MTSU is on the map Down Under, thanks to a Department of Media Arts faculty member and her students. *Graham and Zeke*, a film produced and edited by assistant professor Allie Sultan, won the jury prize for best documentary short at the Perth International Queer Film Festival in Australia in 2018. Sultan, who won the grand jury prize for best short for her film *Lift Like a Girl* at the 2016 Nashville Film Festival, was quick to pass along the praise. “The film was a 100 percent MTSU student crew,” said Sultan, who spent 2016–17 producing, filming, and editing the short with the Women in Film and Television student organization. Sultan also serves as the group’s faculty advisor. The MTSU students who are now award-winning filmmakers include Kaelin Michelle Bastin, Kyra Nicole Black, Destiny Chamberlin, Kailee Morris, Nikki Annette Neeraas, Cheryl Monique Newsome, Tony Pecorini, Bridget Shike, Sonia Williams, and Mariah Woody. *Graham and Zeke* tells the story of a transgender couple from Tennessee who share their insights on love, gender, and pet snakes. With a duration of eight minutes, the documentary has enjoyed an international film festival run, with screenings at numerous festivals in 2018 including the Out & Loud Pune International Queer Film Festival in Pune, India; Visions Concordia Film Festival in Montreal, Canada; REELING, the Chicago LGBTQ Film Festival; Nashville Film Festival; and Gender Reel Film Festival in St. Paul, Minnesota.



This still from *Graham and Zeke*, an award-winning documentary short film created by MTSU Department of Media Arts assistant professor Allie Sultan and her students, shows the two leads joking during a filming break.



Future Leaders

The Tennessee Intercollegiate State Legislature (TISL) provides the top echelon of campus leaders statewide a forum to exchange ideas, express their opinions, and learn how government works. TISL’s Senate and House of Representatives, which first convened in 1966, meet in the legislative chambers of the State Capitol each November for a four-day legislative session of public debate and “votes” on public issues. MTSU sponsored the 2018 TISL session, held Nov. 15–18. True Blue!

A Haven of the Humanities

MTSU leads all other universities in Tennessee in funding by the National Humanities Alliance (NHA) for higher education humanities projects. The nonprofit foundation, which funds education, research, preservation, and public programs, recently created a new website which documents 10 years of publicly engaged humanities work in United States higher education. MTSU’s six NHA endeavors include:

- African-American Oral History Project
- The Hermitage, Andrew Jackson, and America: 1801–1861
- Travellers Rest, Occupied Nashville, and the Civil War and Emancipation in the Upper South
- Religious Pluralism in Middle Tennessee
An NEH Bridging Cultures Project
- Middle Tennessee Oral History Project
- Southern Places

The website also profiled the efforts of MTSU’s Center for Historic Preservation, which engages in teaching, research, and public service related to the preservation of historic sites.



STEM Champion

Chemistry Professor Judith Iriarte-Gross was awarded the **2018 Career Achievement Award** from the MTSU Foundation. The award is considered the pinnacle of recognition for stellar MTSU faculty. Iriarte-Gross is nationally known for her advocacy for girls and women in the sciences. She is director of the Women In STEM (WISTEM) Center at MTSU and the founder and director of Tennessee's first Expanding Your Horizons (EYH) STEM education workshop for girls. While also serving as faculty advisor for MTSU's Women In Science and Engineering (WISE) student organization, Iriarte-Gross has been a principal or co-principal investigator on six National Science Foundation (NSF) awards and received an NSF grant in 2007 to provide information for Tennessee girls, parents, teachers, and guidance counselors about STEM education and careers and to support the growth of EYH conferences across Tennessee. More than 7,200 girls from Tennessee, as well as portions of Kentucky, Alabama, and Georgia, have so far attended EYH events at MTSU, and EYH conferences have expanded into Memphis, Morristown, Maryville, Chattanooga, and Gallatin.



Judith Iriarte-Gross, MTSU Chemistry professor and nationally recognized STEM education advocate, accepts the 2018 MTSU Foundation Career Achievement Award Aug. 23 from MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee (l) and MTSU Foundation President Ron Nichols at the University's Fall Faculty Meeting inside Tucker Theatre.

Expert Representation



On Jan. 8, MTSU Economics professor Charlie Baum was sworn in as a member of the state House of Representatives serving Tennessee's 37th District. *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and the *New York Times* have recently cited Baum's research on employment trends,

wages, labor force participation rates, and employment benefits. "I am excited to serve, as we work to find innovative ways to provide education and improve health care while budgeting responsibly," Baum told MTSUNews.com.

In Process

In Process: A Creative Writing Event Series is a new initiative launched in 2018 by MTSU's creative writing faculty at MTSU (led by Claudia Barnett) as a way to foster community among writers by enabling budding writers to interact with experienced, published authors. The event series celebrates the works-in-progress that become literature, to give students and faculty the chance to experience nascent work, and perhaps even to participate in its development. Writers of various genres are being hosted along the way, so far including local and national writers as well as MTSU faculty members. The highly successful Café and Open Mic Night that MTSU Professor Fred Arroyo started in 2017 is also now a part of the In Process series. Additionally, a blog about the In Process series (and related events/issues at MTSU) has been developed. All events are free and open to the public, thanks in large part to the Virginia Peck Trust Fund. Students may earn 1 credit hour for attending the In Process series and writing a little as well. Two playwriting events featured staged readings, including MTSU actors and a professional actor from Nashville.



MIDPOINTS continued on page 42

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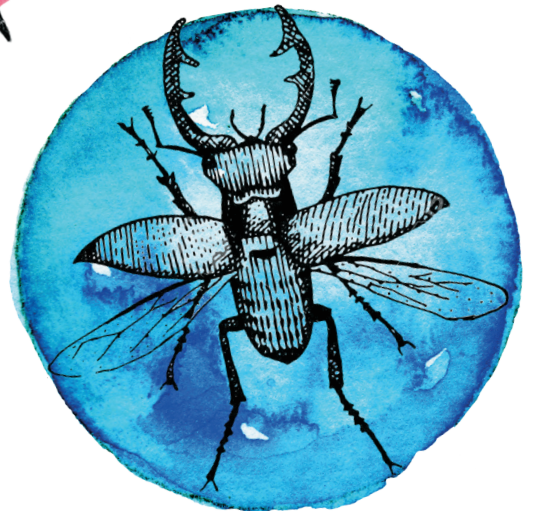
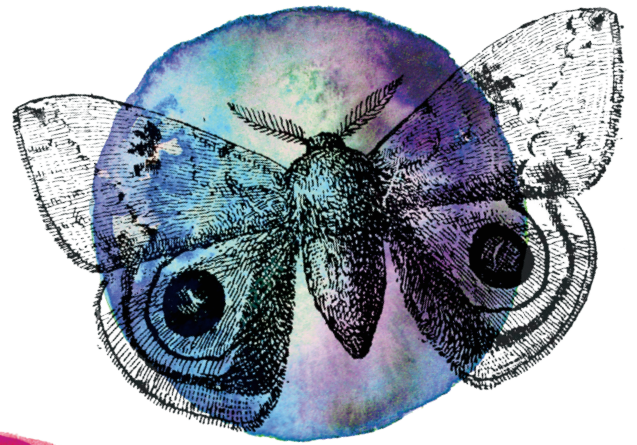
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TAKING FLIGHT

Seven researchers who are propelling MTSU to new heights

by Allison Gorman

Introduction by Darby Campbell

Women have made significant gains in educational and workplace achievements over the past 50 years. However, women's progress in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields has been slower and uneven.

According to the National Science Foundation (NSF), more men than women enter these majors in college and pursue careers as scientists and engineers. Women are underrepresented in STEM disciplines but especially so when examining higher-ranking and leadership positions. Research shows that this underrepresentation is not related to women's abilities in these fields but rather to continued gender bias.

MTSU was awarded an NSF ADVANCE grant to collect data on the recruitment, retention, and promotion of women STEM faculty. The purpose of this study was to develop a clear understanding about the climate for women STEM faculty on our campus. According to *Catalyst's Quick Take: Women in Academia*, men out-earn women at all faculty levels, women are less likely than men to achieve tenure,

58 percent of female faculty and staff in academia of all disciplines experience sexual harassment, and mothers in academia often face a "baby penalty"—in the sciences, married women with children are 35 percent less likely than married men with children to attain tenure-track positions after completing their doctorates.

MTSU raised the percentage of female faculty members from 39 percent to 48 percent from 2000 to 2016. Though women hold a lower number of tenured positions, that gap has slowly been closing as well.

Representation matters. It's been proven again and again that the best way to get young women aspiring to join a field is to see women thriving in their fields to serve as role models and mentors. This is particularly true in STEM and positions of authority.

Here are seven incredible women researchers taking MTSU to new heights.

Editor's note: This article is an edited, condensed version of the forthcoming edition of MTSU Research magazine.

PIPPA HOLLOWAY

Usually the researcher chooses the research. Sometimes it's the other way around. Pippa Holloway had her academic life all mapped out when she earned her Ph.D. in 1999. She would specialize in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender



(LGBT) history, having studied under a pioneer in the field, John D'Emilio, and written a book about the politics of sexuality. Then in 2004, when she was volunteering with a voter-registration drive at a Nashville housing project, Holloway noticed that a large number of the residents she met had prior felony convictions.

"Many were unaware that they couldn't vote because of that, or they were confused about the law," she recalled. "As a fairly dedicated voter registrar, I tried to read the law so I could explain it to people. It was incredibly complicated."

Holloway, now an MTSU professor of History, has spent much of her academic life since then unraveling the relationship between voting rights and our legal and penal systems, and documenting their combined effect on minority voters.

Her early interest in the subject might seem prescient now that voting rights are such a hot-button issue, but Holloway says she simply recognized a historical pattern.

"Many were unaware that they couldn't vote because of that, or they were confused about the law. As a fairly dedicated voter registrar, I tried to read the law so I could explain it to people. It was incredibly complicated."

"One thing you know as a historian is that when laws are really complicated, they are often unfairly or unevenly enforced," she said. "I suspected there were historical reasons for the complexity of Tennessee law, and I wanted to compare Tennessee's law and felon voting practices in other states. That led me to the book."

Holloway's *Living in Infamy: Felon Disfranchisement and the History of American Citizenship*, published in late 2013, describes how white southern Democrats in the Jim Crow era limited African-American political power by tying voting to criminal history. The parallel trends of draconian prison

sentences and high-visibility punishments, like forced labor, fed the public perception that felons couldn't be rehabilitated and shouldn't be allowed to vote.

While the Voting Rights Act of 1965 eliminated poll taxes and literacy tests, Holloway writes, it did not prevent majority-party lawmakers in the South from limiting voting through felon disfranchisement. Even today, in four Southern states including Tennessee, one in five African-Americans cannot vote due to a felony conviction, she said. And the ripple effect of disfranchisement has spread far beyond the South.

Holloway's research has been cited in court cases in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Iowa. She has become a sought-after speaker at universities and legal symposiums, although her favorite audience is the community she writes about. Holloway said she was excited to speak to inmates at the Indiana Prison for Women and to see *Living in Infamy* reviewed in *Prison Legal News*, written by and for prisoners acting as their own attorneys.

SANDY STEVENS

Sandy Stevens gives people their lives back, one step at a time. She also gives them hope—something they've often lost before they hear about the amazing things that happen in the underwater treadmill



lab at MTSU. Participants in Stevens' research come to her in wheelchairs, paralyzed by spinal cord injuries and having completed the prescribed medical treatment and physical therapy. Many have been told that they'll probably never walk unassisted again. But, with training, they routinely defy that prognosis.

Stevens, an assistant professor of Exercise Science, spends much of her time in a bathing suit, armpit-deep in a tank of water behind a research participant, propelling that person's feet forward with hers on a treadmill. It usually isn't long before participants are taking those underwater steps by themselves. Most of them go on to take independent steps on dry land, too.

Those remarkable outcomes reflect what seriously injured people can do given safe, ongoing opportunities to improve even after their conventional therapeutic options—and usually their insurance—are exhausted, Stevens said.

“The evidence is pretty consistent that if you allow someone to be chronically exposed to activity, their body adapts, regardless of the level of injury or impairment. To whatever extent they have the capacity to improve, they will. But nobody is going to get stronger if they sit in a wheelchair all day,” Stevens said.

For people suffering from chronically painful conditions like arthritis or recovering from orthopedic injury, the treadmill is a conventional rehabilitative tool. But for people who can't walk because of permanent neurological damage, treadmill therapy has always seemed inherently unsuitable. Stevens and her research team have turned that logic on its head.

“The base idea is that if you're paralyzed, the treadmill isn't appropriate for you, and I think that's where the line is drawn in a lot of facilities,” she said. “What we're doing different here is saying, ‘Those are the people who need it most.’ And as far as I know, we're the only place conducting research on underwater treadmill training.”

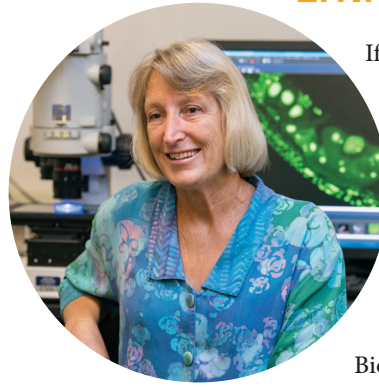
Stevens' work has put MTSU on the map for therapeutic research. Paralyzed people have traveled from places such as Chicago and Atlanta to participate in her studies, and the lab has had significant success winning competitive grant funding. The lab is highly collaborative, with both students and other key staff contributing to the success they have experienced.

The National Institutes of Health, which typically favors research in medical settings, has funded two treadmill studies at MTSU. The first involved children with cerebral palsy; the second, now wrapping up, involves people with incomplete spinal cord injuries—that is, some sensory or motor function remaining.

Every one of Stevens' participants so far has regained some ability to walk independently. She's convinced that their success is about the treadmill as much as it is about restoring people's hope that they can walk again—and giving them an opportunity to try.

“The base idea is that if you're paralyzed, the treadmill isn't appropriate for you, and I think that's where the line is drawn in a lot of facilities. “What we're doing different here is saying, ‘Those are the people who need it most.’ And as far as I know, we're the only place conducting research on underwater treadmill training.”

LYNN BOYD



If you think working in a worm lab sounds boring, Lynn Boyd will set you to rights. She started her post-doctoral research in a worm lab at Cornell University. Now, 25 later, as chair of the MTSU

Biology Department, Boyd still waxes rhapsodic about the small nematode that's the perennial subject of her research.

Caenorhabditis elegans has a set of qualities no other lab animal shares. It's quick and easy to grow, and it's entirely transparent. So by using fluorescent dyes and other special tools designed for “working in the worm,” Boyd can experiment on *Caenorhabditis elegans* and observe the internal effects in real time—while it's alive. And if it does happen to succumb . . . well, it's a worm.

Two of Boyd's discoveries could pay big rewards in the fields of genetics and reproductive medicine. Both those discoveries have to do with ubiquitin, a small protein found in almost all organisms. By watching the behavior of ubiquitin inside the worm, Boyd helped solve a genetic mystery: why we inherit mitochondria from our mothers but not our fathers. That rule doesn't just pertain to humans; it's true of anything that sexually reproduces, including *Caenorhabditis elegans*. While both sperm and oocyte contain mitochondria (known to schoolchildren everywhere as “the powerhouse of the cell”), only the mother's mitochondria are passed along to the offspring. “It wasn't clear what was happening to the mitochondria from dad,” Boyd said. Partnering with a French lab, Boyd's research team showed what's happening to it: Ubiquitin “tags” it for destruction by the cell.

Now one of Boyd's graduate students at MTSU has found a way to preserve paternal mitochondria during reproduction, and so the team is launching new research to explore a huge question: What happens if we keep our fathers' mitochondria?

That project feels more like a beginning than an end, but for another of Boyd's ubiquitin projects, the opposite is true. More precisely, it might be the beginning of the end of stress-related fertility problems—another biological phenomenon that's long been recognized but not understood.

“It's known from human and mammalian studies that stress in the adult will affect reproductive capability—that people who are exposed to oxidative stress have lower fertility, for example—but we show how cells respond to the stress,” she said. Fluorescent *Caenorhabditis elegans* gave Boyd and her

team a perfect view of the immediate effects of stress on an oocyte. Using various means (high salt, starvation, ethanol exposure), they stressed adult worms and then watched the cellular reaction. Their curiosity was rewarded: Ubiquitin in the oocyte shifted to its nucleus and began producing tiny bodies that Boyd calls “stress-induced nuclear granules” (SINGs). “This was a novel discovery,” she said.

“There’s enough to keep me going till the end of my career.”

This opens up a whole other research pathway: What are SINGs? Are they helpful? Are they harmful? Boyd suspects this phenomenon is common to cells throughout the body; she’s seen it in the intestines and muscles too. While the implications for medical science (and certainly for follow-up research) are vast, she plans to continue on the reproductive path. Her goal is to identify and remove the genes involved in the ubiquitin stress response, then study the impact on fertility.

Between that and the mitochondrial project, Boyd said “there’s enough to keep me going till the end of my career.” Just one more reason to love working in the worm.

MARY FARONE



For researchers like Mary Farone, the big payoff can be decades in the making. She still derives satisfaction from one of her graduate research projects at Miami University in the early 1990s, which led to another lab developing a cancer therapy agent. But there are

smaller, more frequent payoffs in the promise of research. Such is the case with Farone’s recent discovery of two new bacteria, which could one day shed light on unexplained respiratory illness and even lead to new ways to treat disease. The key to work like Farone’s is not taking your eye off the ball, no matter its trajectory. In her case, the ball was a powerful type of bacteria known to infiltrate municipal water by hiding inside disinfectant-resistant amoebas. That’s how the bacteria got inside a hotel’s chiller plant in 1976, killing 29 people and sickening 153 at an American Legion convention in Philadelphia.

More than 20 years after that first outbreak of the respiratory illness now known as Legionnaire’s disease, Farone’s MTSU research team and a team from Tennessee Technological University began studying *Legionella pneumophila* with a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. Their mission was to assess the prevalence of *Legionella*-like bacteria in water from human-made and natural environments. After collecting amoeba-filled water from sources in Tennessee, Texas, and New Jersey, the team examined the samples for evidence of bacteria. Then they froze the infected samples until the bacteria could be identified.

By 2003, they knew they didn’t have *Legionella pneumophila*, and they began using DNA sequencing to try to identify the bacteria in their samples. By 2016, they published manuscripts describing two previously unknown bacteria, originating from a hot tub and a cooling tower in Putnam County, Tennessee. Farone named them *Candidatus Berkiella aquae* and *Candidatus Berkiella cookevillensis* after Sharon Berk, her former mentor and colleague from Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville and now her consultant on another project.

“These bacteria have very large genomes—they carry a lot of DNA, so they have great potential for genetic manipulation.”

These new bacteria have characteristics of *Legionella* but also two notable idiosyncrasies. First, unlike most bacteria, they seem to enter the nucleus of a cell in an organized way rather than by happenstance. Then they quickly replicate, destroying the host cells.

Second, the bacteria grow only inside other cells, the way viruses do. At this point, Farone has more questions than answers, but even the questions hint at medical promise. She wants to learn exactly how these bacteria enter the nucleus in such a deliberate manner; perhaps they could be used therapeutically, to target cancer cells. “These bacteria have very large genomes—they carry a lot of DNA,” she added. “So they have great potential for genetic manipulation.”

Farone also wants to know whether these bacteria, which grow like viruses and behave like *Legionella*, are in fact pathogens. Perhaps they could explain some of the 70 percent of pneumonia cases with no known cause.

There is plenty of research yet to be done; in a sense, it’s just beginning. Those water samples, collected back in 1999, are revealing new information every day, thanks to steady advances in research technology and the steady patience of Farone.

NORMA DUNLAP



When Norma Dunlap left her job as a medicinal chemist for Hoffmann-La Roche in New Jersey to teach chemistry part time at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, her former co-workers thought she was nuts. In the 1980s, the pharmaceutical industry was the place to be.

Dunlap couldn't argue that point: She loved her interesting, lucrative job. She'd also never taught before. But after some careful calculations, she went with what seemed to her like the right course of action.

Dunlap soon discovered that she enjoyed teaching. She eventually accepted a full-time professorial position in MTSU's Department of Chemistry. Meanwhile, the pharmaceutical landscape was shifting. Once-safe careers were lost to chronic mergers and downsizing. About 10 years after Dunlap left the American headquarters of Hoffman-La Roche, the 5,000-person plant in New Jersey began bleeding jobs, and eventually it closed down altogether, with a shift in headquarters to California.

“We might be able to get something to the point that we can say, yes, it has activity in a mouse, and get a drug company interested in licensing and developing it.”

Leaving industry for academia was the right move. And in life, as in the lab, it can be years before you know whether your careful calculations will end in success.

For a medicinal chemist, success is a process. It means designing a compound to act a certain way; taking it through multiple steps of synthesis (usually of the two-steps-ahead, one-step-back variety); and, finally, having tests prove that it does what it was designed to do biologically.

Dunlap and her research students are in various stages of that process with a large, multifaceted project: designing a core molecular structure that can be synthesized in four steps and then changed in different ways to target specific enzymes linked to disease. She says initial assays have been promising for compounds designed to inhibit the proteasome, linked to certain cancers. Other compounds formulated to impede

beta-secretase, linked to Alzheimer's, also have shown some promise in initial assays. The goal isn't to get a new medicine to market, which can be a billion-dollar proposition, but to create a compound that could lead to the active ingredient in someone else's new medicine, Dunlap said.

“We might be able to get something to the point that we can say, yes, it has activity in a mouse, and get a drug company interested in licensing and developing it.”

Doing so would in a way mean Dunlap had—professionally speaking—come full circle.

DIANE EDMONDSON

Balancing a career with single parenthood is notoriously difficult, and Diane

Edmondson knows that from experience. But she's also convinced that single parenthood got her where she is today. Married at 19, then divorced and pregnant at 21, Edmondson was attending college when her baby was born. Undeterred, she finished her bachelor's degree and went on to earn her master's and doctorate while raising her young son.

“Without him I probably wouldn't have pursued a career in academia,” Edmondson said. “I would have said, ‘Okay, I've got my M.B.A., let's go get a job in industry instead.’ But I could see how the life that I could have in academia would allow me to be there for my son when he needed me.”

In the end it was a win-win-win: good for him, good for her, and good for MTSU. An associate professor of Marketing, Edmondson is a prolific researcher, dividing her focus between applied research and marketing communications and education.

One of her ongoing projects is creating case studies for the classroom, featuring real-world marketing scenarios. She and her students have explored the ethics and dynamics of social media campaigns (the Ice Bucket Challenge); service recovery (a Delta Airlines computer glitch that stranded thousands of passengers); and nonprofits (the Ronald McDonald House, which is heavily promoted, but meagerly supported, by its namesake restaurants).

Edmondson's applied research often involves a subtler area of marketing: the employees who play a critical role in the public perception of their organization.



Most of us think of marketing as the space where company meets customer—a cleverly themed sale, for example, or a drugstore end-cap display. But that intersection also has a human face, from cashiers and sales reps to nurses and teachers. These employees, known in marketing research as “boundary spanners,” must serve both company and customer. “A lot of times that’s antithetical: What the organization wants and what the customer wants are different,” Edmondson explained. “So as a boundary spanner, you’re always thinking, ‘How can I keep both parties happy?’”

In other words, boundary spanners face unique and pervasive stress. Edmondson is interested in finding out how organizations can support these employees to help them deal with that stress.

“Research has shown that if you’re unhappy, you’re going to leave your job, and it costs a lot of money to bring in someone new and get them trained. So the idea is to figure out ways to get people to stay at their jobs longer and be committed to them.”

“Research has shown that if you’re unhappy, you’re going to leave your job, and it costs a lot of money to bring in someone new and get them trained,” she said. “So the idea is to figure out ways to get people to stay at their jobs longer and be committed to them.”

Recently, Edmondson began focusing on a new, largely unexplored subject: gender differences among boundary spanners.

“I’m looking at how organizational support impacts things like job satisfaction and commitment to the organization, and whether men and women need different levels of support in order to have better performance and better satisfaction with the organization,” she said.

Her latest study compared four categories of boundary spanners—married men, married women, single men, and single women—to determine which group best handled a stressful job. The winners? Single women, who were less likely to be emotionally affected by stress and who showed more commitment to their job under high-stress conditions.

Edmondson found those results surprising at first, until she viewed them through the lens of her own experience. Single women, who so often are their families’ sole breadwinners, might have extra motivation to prove themselves in the workplace and to protect their job security.

“I can see how this would happen, being a single woman and a single mom,” she said.

No doubt she can. Edmondson has proven herself professionally with a body of work that extends far beyond her published research, from seats on the editorial boards of two scholarly journals to leadership positions in several professional organizations. Currently, she serves as president of the Society for Marketing Advances, which hosts the third-largest marketing conference in academia. But for all her accomplishments, Edmondson says the most challenging has been balancing her career with single parenthood—perhaps the ultimate exercise in boundary spanning.

DEBORAH WAGNON

Ask Deborah Wagon about intellectual property (IP) rights, and she answers like a woman who just got religion. When songwriters have creative control over their work, she says, “It’s magnificent. You can go crazy with a catalog that you own. All those clichés are really true: Ownership is king. Content is power.”



Power has been a major theme of Wagon’s professional life. As an attorney in the notoriously male-dominated entertainment industry, she became general counsel of Landmark Entertainment Group in Hollywood. Later she was a partner with an international law firm representing a stable of powerhouse recording artists, including Gloria Estefan, Olivia Newton-John, and Reba McEntire.

Wagon was lured to that high-flying position from MTSU’s Department of Recording Industry, where she taught in the mid-1990s. When she returned to the University in 2011, a timely change in copyright law gave the associate professor a unique opportunity to keep a personal promise.

“I’d committed to myself that whatever I did as a professor had to be based in reality, had to be cutting-edge, and had to challenge students and nudge them to their better selves,” Wagon said.

That challenge became the Recapture Project, which empowers students and creative artists through academic research. Until 2011, songwriters or authors who assigned the rights to publishers of their work relinquished legal and creative control over it in exchange for royalties from sales.

That left the financial fate of their work in the hands of whoever held the copyright. But now these artists can terminate a prior copyright assignment to “recapture” a copyright after a 35-year moratorium. With restored creative control of a work, they can give it a fresh shot at profitability, Wagnon said. An old song might be re-recorded by a younger artist, or even reinvented as a Broadway play, as Carole King did with her song “Beautiful.”

“I’d committed to myself that whatever I did as a professor had to be based in reality, had to be cutting-edge, and had to challenge students and nudge them to their better selves.”

Wagnon’s Recapture Project, part of her Copyright Law class curriculum, takes students back into the pop-culture past (in the case of the project’s inaugural year, back to works created in 1978 and their parents’ vinyl). Once they’ve chosen a work they consider particularly marketable, they create a plan to recapture and exploit it. Then they pitch the proposal to the class. Wagnon and two other professors with expertise in copyright law select the winning project, which she presents to representatives of the artist or author. One of Wagnon’s favorite proposals so far is for Beverly Cleary’s *Ramona Quimby, Age 8*, which includes a read-aloud app for hospitalized children and a tie-in campaign for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis.

In a sense, all the Recapture Project participants win. “It gives students the confidence to convince a potential client—Eric Clapton or Carole King or whomever—that they know how to get back their copyrights, and to diplomatically propose how to exploit them once they do,” Wagnon said. “Then they can go crazy with the creative side.”

If the Recapture Project immerses students in the nuances of U.S. copyright law, the International Classroom Initiative (ICI), which Wagnon launched in 2014, drops them into the wobbly infrastructure of IP law in developing countries. So far she has accompanied 44 students to Belize, which Wagnon calls “an amazing cauldron of chaos with respect to IP.” The law is so roundly ignored there that radio stations don’t pay performance royalties. In Belize, Wagnon’s students witnessed what she preaches about intellectual property as “the fuel that drives our world. . . . It involves trademarks, patents, rights of publicity. Without it, you have no way to claim ownership of what you’ve created and be paid for it—to survive from your talent, rather than just having it as a hobby.”

Her new companion series, *The International Classroom Initiative Journal*, views IP through the lens of specific “portal territories.” Volume one, *ICI Journal: Belize, Central America*, includes Wagnon’s own research on Belize and neighboring countries, as well as articles by each student who traveled there through ICI between 2014 and 2016. With subsequent volumes, she plans to broaden the journal’s physical reach and geographical focus, first to all of Central America and then to other continents, highlighting developing markets where strengthened IP law can improve opportunities for creativity and innovation. As “a loving thorn in the side” of governments that fail to empower their artists, Wagnon has created one more tool with which artists can empower themselves. [MTSU](#)



ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MTSU ALUMNI

Alumni from Middle Tennessee State University generate more than **\$9 billion** in extended total revenue annually for Tennessee businesses. This contributes significantly to state, regional, and local economies, according to the 2018 *MTSU Alumni Impact* study by the Business and Economic Research Center (BERC) at MTSU.



TRENDS AND KEY FINDINGS

- The report shows the necessity of a college education for the increasingly competitive Tennessee job market, with 36 percent of U.S. workers who recently relocated to the state holding a bachelor's degree or higher—compared to 25 percent of resident Tennesseans.
- MTSU alumni are concentrated in counties surrounding major cities in the state (and likewise in the nation). Alumni account for 71 percent of the recent degreed population increase in Rutherford County; 16 percent in the Nashville MSA, which is experiencing rapid economic growth; and 13 percent in Tennessee.
- The total MTSU alumni impact is shown in the following data by analyzing: the value of a degree from MTSU (Core Impact); spending by alumni (Economic Contributions); and spending of alumni, plus that of their employees (Extended Economic Contributions).

MTSU Alumni Impact in Tennessee



Core Impact
\$3 billion

Economic Contributions
\$8.3 billion

Extended Contributions
\$9 billion

THE VALUE OF AN MTSU DEGREE

The earning potential of MTSU alumni is substantially higher than in-state workers with only a high school diploma. MTSU's importance as a vital learning environment for people across Tennessee will increase further as competition for educated, skilled workers continues to intensify. With calculations based on differences in purchasing power, Davidson (\$613.7 million) and Rutherford (\$603.5 million) top individual counties with the biggest additional business revenue from MTSU graduates' earning power. Next were Williamson, Wilson, Sumner, Maury, Shelby, Hamilton, Knox, and Coffee, ranging in descending order from \$564 million to \$65 million.

Added Value of Degrees Earned



\$2.3 billion
to greater
Nashville economy

\$2.16 billion
in personal income

110,000 jobs
including MTSU alumni

SPENDING BY MTSU ALUMNI

BERC estimated the business revenue within Tennessee based on median income and numbers of degree-holders in each area. MTSU alumni support 126,747 jobs statewide as the result of their economic activities, with the largest impact in the Nashville MSA (90,976 jobs). The counties with the highest MTSU alumni-generated revenue are Rutherford, Davidson, Williamson, Wilson, Sumner, Maury, Shelby, Hamilton, Coffee, and Knox, ranging in descending order from \$2.1 billion to \$170 million.

Alumni Economic Contributions

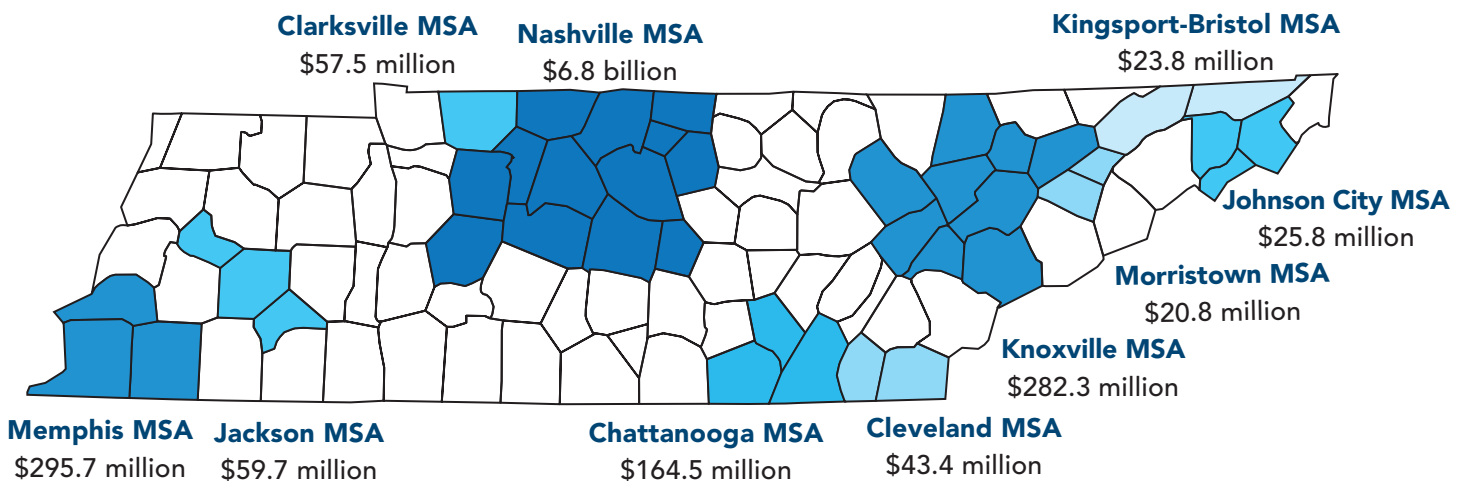


\$8.3 billion
from activities
within Tennessee

\$6.3 billion
to greater Nashville
in business revenue

\$2.1 billion
to Rutherford County
in business revenue

EXTENDED ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ALUMNI



Using data from an earlier MTSU alumni survey, the BERC project also measured entrepreneurial activities of MTSU alumni and estimated the economic impact of both alumni and their employees. These calculations are very conservative. Davidson County (\$1.7 billion) accounted for 20 percent of the business revenue MTSU alumni generated within the state. Williamson (\$1.3 billion) surpassed expectations to rank second ahead of Rutherford (\$1 billion), followed by Wilson, Sumner, Maury, Shelby, Coffee, Knox, and Bedford in the remaining top 10, ranging in descending order from \$463 million to \$146 million.

Alumni and Their Employees



\$6.8 billion to
Nashville MSA in
economic activity

\$1.7 billion to
Davidson County
in business revenue

\$1.3 billion to
Williamson County
in business revenue

\$1 billion to
Rutherford County
in business revenue

A Championship Season

The MTSU Blue Raider football team was the Conference USA East Division champions in 2018! The team secured the C-USA championship game to be played for the first time ever in Murfreesboro at Floyd Stadium.

Quarterback Brent Stockstill was later named Conference USA's Most Valuable Player—the first player from MTSU to win the award. His dad, Blue Raiders head coach Rick Stockstill, was tabbed as C-USA Coach of the Year, his third such award in 13 years after being named Sun Belt Coach of the Year in 2006 and Co-coach of the Year in 2009.





R+L CARRIERS NEW ORLEANS BOWL

The Blue Raiders went to their eighth bowl game in the Rick Stockstill era and school record fourth in a row! Middle Tennessee was invited to represent Conference USA in the R+L Carriers New Orleans Bowl on Dec. 15. The game against the Sun Belt champion Appalachian State Mountaineers was played in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome in New Orleans and was televised nationally on ESPN.

While in New Orleans, the University held remote graduation ceremonies for members of the Blue Raider football team, the Band of Blue, and the cheer squad. MTSU



Delta Bound

MTSU's partnership with Atlanta-based Delta Air Lines will be a boon not only for the Aerospace Department's Professional Pilot majors, including student veterans, but also for prospective students, the department's growth, and potentially Delta's major hubs in Nashville, Atlanta, and Cincinnati. Delta announced plans last July to hire more than 8,000 pilots during the next decade to replace current pilots reaching retirement age and to support planned growth in its fleet and network. Simultaneously, the airline launched the Delta Propel Pilot Career Path Program with eight universities nationwide to reach out to the next generation of pilots, including MTSU Pro Pilot majors. The Collegiate Pilot Career Path provides successful candidates a qualified job offer, detailing a defined path and an accelerated timeline to become a Delta pilot. "The fact that MTSU is only one of eight selected by Delta for the rollout of this program speaks to the high regard the industry extends to graduates of our Aerospace Department," MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee said. "We're uniquely positioned to supply Delta with talented and extremely capable pilots to fill anticipated needs." Along with MTSU, Delta chose Auburn University; Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University–Daytona Beach in Florida; Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University–Prescott in Arizona; Middle Georgia State University; Minnesota State University; the University of North Dakota; and Western Michigan University.



MTSU Provost Mark Byrnes (l) and Delta Capt. Patrick Burns discuss the launch of the Delta Propel program at an Aug. 31 event in the Student Union Ballroom.



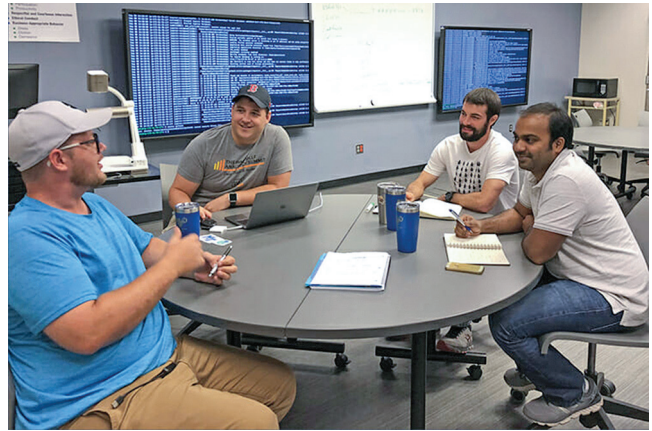
MTSU broke ground Sept. 18 on a new academic classroom building that will house programs within the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences. Pictured (l-r) are Trustee Pete DeLay; student Trustee Peyton J. Tracy; President Sidney A. McPhee; Trustee Chair Stephen Smith; Trustee Pam Wright; Trustee Darrell Freeman; and Faculty Trustee Tony Johnston.

A New Home

MTSU officials and other dignitaries broke ground last Sept. 18 for construction of a new building to house three disciplines in the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences (CBHS). The \$39.6 million, 91,000-square-foot edifice will house the departments of Criminal Justice Administration, Psychology, and Social Work, including faculty offices, classrooms, and laboratory space. The building will be located in an area north of the Student Union Commons on what is now partly grass and partly a parking lot. Completion is projected for the summer/fall of 2020. MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee said the "state-of-the-art design will enhance our campus quadrangles and enrich our learning landscape." Some labs will be dedicated to the collection of questionnaire responses and other data. Others will be used for teaching data collection to both undergraduates and graduates. Neuroscience programs for the study of electroencephalography, which is the recording of electrical activity in the brain, and eye tracking, which measures eye positions and eye movement, will benefit from the new lab space. "Student-faculty undergraduate research will grow astronomically," CBHS Dean Harold "Terry" Whiteside said. "Graduate research and faculty research will also be enhanced." Another feature of the new building will be a command center where students from all three disciplines will be trained to interact with different types of emergency management personnel. "We're going to bring in experts to show our students . . . (how) to run simulation scenarios involving various disasters," said Lance Selva, Criminal Justice department chair. "And, when you're talking about disasters, you're not just talking about terrorism" but also events like the horrific impact of Hurricane Florence last fall. Previously ranked first on the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's priority list, the new MTSU academic building was among \$94.8 million in capital outlay projects for universities recommended by Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam in the 2018–19 budget. Of the total cost, \$35.1 million is funded by state government and \$4.5 million will be provided by the University. The Nashville-based architectural firm of Bauer Askew designed the three-story building. New York-based Turner Construction, with offices in Nashville, is the general contractor.

Data Analysis

Last May, MTSU announced the creation of the Data Science Institute, led by Professor Charlie Apigian, to promote funded interdisciplinary research and develop public and private collaborations around the emerging field of “big data.” Apigian is former department chair of the newly renamed Information Systems and Analytics in MTSU’s Jones College of Business. In one of its first projects, the Data Science Institute is digging deep into data provided by mid-state social impact technology company Hytch to see how users of its app-based rewards program are affecting traffic throughout the region. Hytch’s service seeks to reduce traffic congestion and pollution through ride-sharing, carpooling, or use of public transit. The objective is to learn where the company might focus greater incentives and give cash rewards to people who share their rides. If Hytch takes 1,200 cars off the road through ride-sharing, it trims an average mid-state commute by 15 minutes. And, according to the analysis by the student-led team at MTSU, at least one car is taken off the road for every car ride that is shared. “When a company wants to know what its data is telling them, an academic environment is the perfect place to turn,” Apigian said, because companies are “always trying to solve a problem *today*, and they don’t have the time or resources to look retroactively. . . . It’s a lot of data exploration that we’re doing for them.” MTSU recently notified the Tennessee Higher Education Commission of plans to develop a bachelor’s degree in Data Science to build upon many of the attributes of the new institute.



A team of MTSU students and mentors is involved in a “big data” consulting project between the MTSU Data Science Institute and Nashville-based Hytch LLC, the social impact technology company. (l-r) Brandon Boshers, mentor Rob Harrigan, Nick Matala, and Kiran Donthula.

A Film Achievement

A new documentary created by Academy Award-nominated MTSU Media Arts film professor Tom Neff, along with students and faculty from across the College of Media and Entertainment, celebrates the 40 gifted women of the Olympic-winning Tennessee State University Tigerbelles and their coach, the beloved Ed Temple. *Mr. Temple and the Tigerbelles*, on the International Documentary Association’s short list of film shorts nominated for the 2018 IDA Documentary Awards, boasts a roster of informative interviewees and rare footage of the color-barrier-busting athletes who brought home 23 medals from the 1960 Olympics in Rome, including 16 golds. The most famous Tigerbelle was Clarksville native Wilma Rudolph, who became the first American to win three gold medals in a single Olympic Games. The women continued their college education, all earning their bachelor’s degrees and several going on to master’s and doctorates. *Mr. Temple and the Tigerbelles* was nearly three years in the making, airing last spring on the CBS Sports Network. The filmmakers plan to enter it in festivals, and the documentary was already named an official selection of the 2018 HollyShorts Film Festival in August. The film places the successes of the Tigerbelles firmly in the perspective of the civil rights era. The gifted young women of TSU struggled to practice with no financial aid and no support during the time of Jim Crow discrimination.

MTSU



On the steps of the physical education building, the Tennessee A&I University Tigerbelles stand behind fifty trophies they have won over the years. Standing l-r: Shirley Griffin, Wilma Rudolph, Shirley Crowder, Barbara Jones, Lucinda Williams, Martin Hudson, Anna Smith, Joann Terry, Coach Ed Temple.

Top: Members of the Tigerbelles, former and current, gather on the steps of TSU’s Kean Hall after the September 2016 memorial service for their beloved coach, Ed Temple.

Bottom: Members of the 1959–60 Tigerbelles join Temple in looking over the 50-plus trophies they had won.

1960s

Martha Rippy Jordan ('61),

Murfreesboro, was named the 2018 MTSU Secretarial/Clerical Employee of the Year. Jordan has been a member of the MTSU Alumni Relations Office staff for 17 years.

K. Ray Bailey ('63), Fairview, North Carolina, president emeritus of Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, received the 2018 I.E. Ready Award, the highest honor bestowed by the North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges. Bailey served A-B Tech for 41 years, the last 17 as president, before retiring in 2007. He also was a member of the North Carolina State Community College Board in 2009–15.

Lloyd Arnold ('68),

Leavenworth, Indiana, retired after teaching fourth and sixth grade for 26 years. Arnold also retired from the U.S. Army after serving 28 years and receiving 47 awards and decorations, including three Purple Hearts for service in Vietnam and Desert Storm.

Jim Gaines ('69), LaJolla, California, was conferred membership in the Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) Foundation John Barratt Rudolph Society, which designates the \$50,000 level in gifts. Gaines is the first brother of MTSU's Tennessee Beta chapter of SAE to reach this level.



Jim Free

An MTSU alumnus who maintains a thriving career in Washington, D.C., **Free ('69, '72)** took time recently to share his experience with students at his alma mater. Free, co-founder of The Smith-Free Group, spent a busy two days talking to about 230 students in Political Science, Recording Industry, and History classes on Sept. 26–27. He is a Distinguished Visiting Professor for the 2018–19 academic year. In Kent Syler's American Government and Politics class, Free, the former special assistant to the president for congressional affairs under President Jimmy Carter, expressed pride about working with members of Congress for passage of the Clean Air Act, the Alaska Lands Act, national energy legislation, and intellectual property protection. Free served as 1968 student government president at MTSU, where he earned a bachelor's in Political Science and a master's in Public Administration. A former administrative assistant to Tennessee House Speaker Ned McWherter, Free ascended to chief clerk of the state House of Representatives and became president of the American Society of House Chief Clerks and Senate Secretaries. Before co-founding The Smith-Free Group in 1995, he served as vice chair of Walker-Free Associates. With both groups, Free represented major global companies in the arenas of health care, financial services, transportation, energy, and entertainment over a span of three decades. But he has never forgotten MTSU. "MTSU changed my life," Free said. "It was a great education and a great experience."

1970s

Larry Flatt ('73), McMinnville, was named executive director of the new Advanced Robotics program at Motlow State Community College.

Diane Fisher ('74), Saint Cloud, Florida, received the Federal Aviation Administration's Master Pilot Award, flying 50 years with no accidents or suspensions.

Rita Shacklett ('74), Murfreesboro, director of the Rutherford County Library System, was awarded the TLA Honor Award at the Tennessee Library Association's 2018 convention in Memphis. The award recognizes any person or group who has made a significant contribution to the furtherance of librarianship on a statewide or national level.

Sydney Robinson McClain ('75), Columbia, received the President's Award of Honor for Distinguished Service from Columbia State Community College.

Rachel Gibson

Gibson ('09) was recently named vice president of Historic Belle Meade Plantation. Gibson has been a part of the Belle Meade Plantation family for more than 11 years. While completing her master's degree at MTSU, she was hired as a historical interpreter, but soon transitioned to working with the student groups, summer camps, and homeschool programs in the education department. Gibson served as the assistant education director for five years before taking on the role of education director. In the two years since, she has focused on improving the quality of family experiences on site, as well as bringing innovation to all student groups programs. In her new role, Gibson is also tackling the challenge of thinking holistically for the entire site, leading the way in cross-departmental improvement in both visitor engagement and experience, and joining other members of the senior leadership team to strategically focus on the future of the historic property's reputation as a world-class site.



John R. Rucker Jr. ('75), Murfreesboro, was elected a Fellow of the Tennessee Bar Foundation, an association of 855 attorneys across the state. Rucker, a shareholder in the firm of Rucker and Rucker, has been practicing law for 40 years.

Roy Chamlee III ('76), Greer, South Carolina, was appointed by the Greenville County Council to a three-year term on the Greenville Area Development Corp. Board. He is retired after a career of over 30 years with Michelin North America, most recently as Michelin's director of state and local government affairs.

Randy Hubbell ('78, '96), Columbia, was named principal at Sante Fe Unit School. Most recently, Hubbell was principal of Lewisburg Middle School for nearly 15 years, and he previously was assistant principal at Marshall County High School.

John R. Hunter ('79), White Bluff, retired after 37 years in Mainframe Software analysis

Charlie Hatcher



Tennessee Gov.-elect Bill Lee named **Hatcher ('80)**, a 10th-generation farmer, as new commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. Since 2009, he has served as the state veterinarian for the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. Hatcher also is the general managing partner of Hatcher Family Dairy, which was established in 1831.

and development. During his career, he was employed by National Life, American General, IBM, and Comdata.

1980s

Philip Augustino ('82),

Ooltewah, was named senior vice president of construction for the Chattanooga office of EMJ Construction.

Doug Markham ('83), Nashville, retired after 31 years of service in the communications department with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency while also serving as a host for local hunting and fishing television and radio shows. He spent 10 years early in his career as co-host of *The Tennessean Outdoorsman* television show and later served as host of the *Outdoors with Doug Markham* radio show on Nashville's 99.7-FM. He also wrote two books, *Boxes, Rockets, and Pens: A History of Wildlife Recovery in Tennessee* and *The Compleat Tennessean Angler: Everything You Need to Know About Fishing in the Volunteer State*.

Bill Spurlock ('84, '95, '02), Murfreesboro, was appointed director of schools for Rutherford County. He previously was principal of Oakland High School.

Phil Walker ('84), Nashville, principal of The Walker Collaborative, was inducted

into the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Certified Planners. Walker also was appointed as a site visitor for the Planning Accreditation Board to evaluate collegiate city planning programs.

Dawn Hankins ('85), Tullahoma, rejoined the news desk of the *Shelbyville Times-Gazette*. In addition to her passion for news and feature writing, Hankins is an aspiring author of both children's literature and historical fiction.

Raleigh Holtam ('85) and **Sheryl Dugger Holtam ('84)**, Perry, Florida, both retired from Tennessee government positions in 2018. Raleigh was magazine editor/graphic designer for the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA). Sheryl's 30 years of service included 29 years as an attorney with the State of Tennessee and then as general counsel for the TWRA.

Gregory D. Smith ('85), Clarksville, was appointed by the U.S. Department of the Interior to the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Court of Indian Appeals. Smith, Tennessee municipal judge of the year for 2017, also serves on five tribal supreme courts.

Elvis Brandon ('86), Gallatin, received his Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from Union University. He is dean of Health Sciences at

Volunteer State Community College.

Derrel Martin ('86), Athens, was hired as head coach of the women's lacrosse team at Lee University. He formerly served in the same capacity at Tennessee Wesleyan University.

Melissa Hudson Wells ('86), Old Hickory, a right-of-way supervisor for the Tennessee Department of Transportation, is the 2018–19 president and international director of the Tennessee Chapter of the International Right of Way Association, Chapter 32.

Darrell Boston ('87), Loretto, was inducted into the MTSU Band of Blue Hall of Fame last April. He is currently director of bands at Loretto High School.

Shari Fox ('87, '93), Franklin, formerly president of O'More

College of Art and Design, which merged and consolidated operations with Belmont University in Nashville, was named director of Belmont's O'More School of Design.

1990s

Devin Carr ('91), Nashville, joined Michigan Medicine as chief nursing officer for University Hospital and the Frankel Cardiovascular Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Mark Green ('91), Chapel Hill, was promoted to deputy general counsel of the Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance, responsible for the legal services for the Regulatory Boards and Consumer Affairs Divisions.

Damon Joyner ('91), Port Jefferson, New York, was appointed chief financial

officer of American Portfolios Financial Services.

Michael Casteel ('93), Old Hickory, was inducted into the Band of Blue Hall of Fame last April. Casteel has been a professional musician in Nashville for 30 years.

Deana C. Hood ('93), Franklin, was appointed Spring Hill's new Municipal Court judge. She is a past director of the Tennessee John Marshall American Inns of Court.

Rebecca Draper ('94), Melbane, North Carolina, was hired as principal of Cardinal Charter Academy, and **Timothy Draper ('94)** is program director for the Sports Medicine Fellowship at Cone Health in North Carolina. Rebecca has served in leadership positions at a variety of schools in North Carolina and Tennessee since

2001. Timothy also serves as the team physician for Guilford College and was co-medical director for the 2011 and 2015 U.S. Figure Skating Championships.

Courtney Nichols ('94), Readyville, was named principal of Cannon County High School.

Jon Alden ('95), Atlanta, was appointed head of school at Springmont School, the oldest Montessori school in the Southeastern United States.

Gregg Mayer ('97), Jackson, Mississippi, was named chief operating officer for Mississippi Public Broadcasting, a state-wide TV and radio network. Mayer, previously a newspaper reporter and editor, earned a law degree in 2006 and worked in private practice for 10 years.

(continued on page 48)

Cindy Watts and Dave Paulson

MTSU graduates **Watts ('02)** and **Paulson ('04)** have earned the trust of long-time celebrities, new talent, and readers as they report on the ever-growing and changing music business with authentic and knowledgeable voices. Both were hired by *The Tennessean* in Nashville in 2007. As their beats evolved and experience honed their craft, their MTSU Recording Industry degrees set the stage for interesting careers.

Cindy Watts

A recent day on the job for country music writer Cindy Watts included interviews with Kane Brown, Christian group For King and Country, Blake Shelton, and Charlie Daniels. After 18 years in the business, Watts has conducted thousands of interviews with music makers, watched as stars were born, and has built relationships based on trust.

"I've known a lot of people for so long now that we just start talking," Watts said of her interview style. "They know there are no tricks, and I'm going to accurately and fairly report whatever it is. They see how you handle scandalous situations, and those are the moments to show your true colors and what you're about."



Cindy Watts with fellow MTSU alum and recording artist Chris Young

Growing up in Sevierville, Watts, 39, was immersed in country music. The train whistle from the Dollywood theme park woke her up on summer mornings, and her family often went to music shows there. These days, while juggling her full-time job with her husband and children, she still goes to Sevierville at least once a month to see family.

In 1988, at age 9, she met members of country rock band Exile at an autograph session after a Dollywood concert. “I was always awkward and felt less-than, but the singers there were so nice to me,” Watts said. That kindness spoke volumes to her. As a fan club member, she’d call a radio station every day to request their songs. The DJ told the young Watts that she should work in country music.

The seed was planted.

As a young teen, she met Jamie Allen (Martin), who later became then-Exile member Paul Martin’s wife. She watered that seed with clear directions. “She told me that when I graduate, I needed to go to MTSU, major in Recording Industry, find Beverly Keel [who is now department chair for Recording Industry], and tell her she sent me,” Watts said.

So she did.

As a Recording Industry business major, Watts also minored in Marketing and Mass Communication. She found her first journalism job while studying full time at MTSU, initially working part time for Murfreesboro’s *Daily News Journal* and diving headfirst into reporting on entertainment and kids. In 2007, *The Tennessean* hired her.

After so many famous folks, Watts still has a few wish-list interviews: Betty White for one, and Jon Bon Jovi. “I’ve interviewed everybody in that band except for Jon . . .”

Dave Paulson

Throughout his college days and career, Dave Paulson has been able to enjoy his two loves, writing and music. At *The Tennessean*, he covers an eclectic mix of non-country music as well as entertainment/event news.

Also a songwriter and musician, Paulson, 35, recently released a new concept album, just for fun, that’s getting some national attention. His rock album *Sandusky, Ohio* came out last June and is a musical storytelling of the 1995 Chris Farley/David Spade comedy *Tommy Boy*. While he said some of his previous music has been called “cryptic,” this album’s songs celebrate the PG-13 movie that he had snuck into as a preteen.



Dave Paulson with Little Richard

Originally from New York, Paulson moved with his family to the Nashville area in 1997 when he was 14. “We moved here just as I was learning guitar,” he said. “And I never wanted to be anywhere else.”

He followed country punk band Jason and the Scorchers. In the early 2000s, Nashville’s Kings of Leon got hot and Murfreesboro’s rock scene was bubbling up. Paulson was in heaven.

With a keen interest in music, the Brentwood High student always saw MTSU on the horizon as a college choice. He majored in Recording Industry audio production with minors in Mass Communication and American Music Studies.

His father, Ken Paulson, later became dean of MTSU’s College of Media and Entertainment in 2013. “We joke about how I got him his job there,” Paulson said.

“I was kind of thinking both would be my career,” he said about writing and music. He liked the creative aspect of music producing, but would find opportunities in writing.

Paulson began freelance writing for *All the Rage*, a sister publication in Nashville to *The Tennessean*, while in college and was later hired as a staff member. Over time, the publication’s content merged into *The Tennessean*, where Paulson became a staff writer.

He writes about TV shows, music festivals, new music, bands, and artists. Over the years, he’s welcomed chances to interview Ringo Starr, Jack White, Little Richard, and more.

“You don’t want to seem like a super fan, and you don’t want to be adversarial,” he said. “It’s a thin line to walk.”

—by Vicky Travis

1990s (continued)

Neal Pinkston ('97),

Chattanooga, the district attorney general serving Hamilton County, was elected by the members of the Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference to serve on its executive committee. Pinkston has been a prosecutor since 2003 and was elected as attorney general of the 11th District in 2014.

Mike Molinar ('98), Nashville, was promoted to general manager of Big Machine Music (BMM). Since the firm's inception nearly six years ago, Molinar has led the charge on over 500 song placements, 13 No. 1 hits, and 20 Top 10 singles, while nine BMM songwriters achieved their first career No. 1 or Top 5 hit.

Kathy Mullins ('98), Woodbury, was named the new federal programs/PreK supervisor for Cannon County Schools.

Charlotte Peay ('98),

Murfreesboro, was chosen as head coach for Oakland High School's softball team. Peay was formerly the Oakland Middle School softball coach.

Todd Stinson ('98), Hixson, was appointed principal of Lookout Valley Middle/High School. He most recently was principal of Signal Mountain Middle/High School.

Richard Stone ('98, '04),

Murfreesboro, was named senior vice president and Rutherford County market president for Reliant Bank, guiding Reliant's expansion into Rutherford County.

Marc E. Hill ('99), Nashville, was selected as the new president of the Civic Council of Greater Kansas City. Hill had served as chief policy officer at the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce since 2011.

Shannon DeVido

DeVido ('04) calls herself a late bloomer, finding her niche and her people in the theater and comedy worlds a few years after earning her Music Business degree with a Music Performance minor.

DeVido honed those skills about four years after graduating, when her ascerbic wit and delivery brought her into performing improv and doing stand-up. As a writer, actor, singer, and comedian, DeVido has worked in comedy clubs, in off-Broadway plays in New York City, in sketch comedy, and recently as the lead in an independent film, *The Homecoming*. As a wheelchair user, she's utilized her comedy and roles she's taken to poke gaping holes in stereotypes that come from an able-bodied point of view.

For instance, she recently finished a summer 2018 run in the off-Broadway show, *Teenage Dick*. "That's not porn," she quipped. "It's based on *Richard III* in high school." The reimagined Shakespeare play, written by Michael Lew, features Richard, who had cerebral palsy as does the actor who portrayed him. DeVido performed the role of his friend Buck, who serves as a sarcastic foil. She also plays an edgy character on Comedy Central's *Delco Proper*.

"I love playing these horrible humans," she said. "They have an anger and a bite to them. Too often with disabled portrayals, you just see something inspiring or YouTube videos of someone being nice to a disabled person. That's not what we really are in the world."

Philadelphia-born and bred, DeVido discovered MTSU while in Nashville on another college visit. She was sold on the University for at least two reasons. Its music business program is one of the best in the nation. And, she and her folks were impressed with MTSU's disability services.

DeVido, 36, was born with spinal muscular atrophy, a type of muscular dystrophy, in which muscles deteriorate over time. She has never walked and has always used a wheelchair.

"I was always performing as a kid and my parents never put limitations on me," DeVido said. "If I wanted to try something, I did it." That's where theater came in. "I found theater because of the fact that I couldn't play sports, which I love. My parents really allowed me to be the person I am."

DeVido and Aubrie Williams, her friend and improv partner, are developing a web series. Her YouTube channel, youtube.com/c/shannondevido features her acting roles, interviews, and her *Stare at Shannon* videos in which she does social experiments with a goal to break the conventional image of disability through comedy. In the "Supermarket Edition," DeVido experiments to see just how much she can get away with eating in a grocery store. The answer: a lot. In other episodes, she recreates the famous run-through-Philadelphia scene from *Rocky*, and she works out her aggression in roller derby.

—by Vicky Travis



2000s

Jeff Fisher ('00), Hendersonville, joined Integrated Healing Technologies as chief financial officer.

Jason Melton ('00), Woodbury, recently graduated from the Southeastern School of Advanced Commercial Lending. He is a loan officer with the Murfreesboro branch of First National Bank of Manchester.

Laurie Offutt ('00, '05), Murfreesboro, was named principal of Winfree Bryant Middle School in Lebanon after most recently serving as coordinator of instructional effectiveness and assessment for Murfreesboro City Schools.

Thomas Roddy Jr. ('00, '02), Murfreesboro, joined the senior leadership team as chief operating officer at Saint Thomas Rutherford Hospital.

Brenda Colladay ('01), Nashville, was hired as vice president of museum services at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. Colladay administers the museum's collection of more than 2.5 million artifacts, along with overseeing planning, design, and installation of exhibits in the museum's gallery space, Historic RCA Studio, and the Taylor Swift Education Center.

Chad Wiginton ('01), Altus, Oklahoma, was promoted to president of Western Oklahoma State College. He previously was vice president for student support services and also worked in student recruitment, student retention, and alumni relations.

Larry Ezzelle Jr. ('02), Murfreesboro, was appointed vice president of operations, based in the LaVergne office for George P. Johnson, one of the world's leading experimental marketing agencies.

Nathan Vinson ('03), Bowling Green, Kentucky, is a partner with the law firm of English Lucas Priest and Owsley.

Walt Bell ('05, '06), Tallahassee, Florida, is offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach at Florida State University. He is a former wide receiver for the Blue Raider football team.

Stacy Blythe ('05), Nashville, was promoted to the role of vice president of promotion at Big Loud Records.

Richard Willis ('05), Jackson, was appointed principal of Isaac Lane Elementary School. For the past five years, he has served as PreK director and principal of Stigall Primary School in the Humboldt City School System.

Michelle Boykin ('06), Mount Juliet, was promoted to chief operating officer of Rackley Roofing Co. Boykin serves as recruitment chair for National Women in Roofing and is the past chair of the Tennessee Council for National Women in Roofing.

Nathan Dane ('06), Roswell, Georgia, was named chief financial officer of Intent Solutions. The Atlanta-based technology, software, and data services company focuses on the use of technology to reduce the misuse, abuse, and diversion of opioids and other prescription drugs and to improve medication safety and adherence.

John Herrold ('06), Spring Hill, joined Southern Land Co. as development manager, overseeing the continued residential build out of Westhaven in Franklin. He previously managed a diverse range of projects across Tennessee and Texas for BACAR Constructors.

Mike Jackson ('06), Minneapolis, is director and employee relations counsel at Target's headquarters. In this role, he is the lead employment counsel for and leads a team that supports all Target stores in the central U.S. (more than 500 stores). Jackson also is

the lead employment counsel for Target's asset protection/loss prevention team and is actively involved in Target's Legal Affairs Diversity Action Committee, where he serves on both the external engagement and pipeline pillars.

Emily McCamy ('06), Fife, Alabama, was named the new director of transportation for the DeKalb County Council on Aging.

Luke Paschall ('06, '07), Chapel Hill, North Carolina, is wide receivers coach and special teams coordinator at the University of North Carolina. He is a former wide receiver for the Blue Raider football team.

Jean Sweeton ('06), Clarksville, is a member of the Department of State Political and Economic Section at the U.S. Embassy in Riga, Latvia. Her areas of emphasis include political-military affairs, environment, science, health, technology policy, and border security policy.

Trina Lloyd-Weidner ('06), Nashville, was named vice president of operations of Helping Our Music Evolve (H.O.M.E.). Previously at Nashville Songwriters Association International, she was director of regional chapters, managing



Tyler Whitaker

The Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana announced **Whitaker ('13)** as the new linguist for the tribe's Language and Culture Revitalization Program, playing a critical role in restoring the Tunica language, keeping it alive, and preserving tribal culture. Whitaker has a Bachelor of Science in Anthropology from MTSU and a master's degree in Linguistic Anthropology from Southern Illinois University. For the past three years, Whitaker has worked as a contributing linguist and assistant teacher at the Tunica-Biloxi Language and Culture Camp. Recently, a grant of \$748,200 was awarded to the tribe by the Administration for Native Americans to support this effort.

Kevin Byard

Professional football player **Byard ('15)** generously gave of his time and energy at an October MTSU Alumni Association event allowing participants to tour Nissan Stadium, home of Byard's Tennessee Titans in downtown Nashville; meet and greet Byard; and have a piece of memorabilia signed. The tour and reception price also included a ticket to the Titans vs. Ravens game. Later in October, during the Titans' bye week, Byard was inducted into the hall of fame at Martin Luther King Jr. High School in Lithonia, Georgia.



more than 130 songwriting chapters worldwide and overseeing the daily duties of the membership team. Prior to that, she worked with BMI and Cromwell Radio Group.

Crystal Kennedy ('07, '10), Auburntown, was named career technical director for Cannon County High School. She has served as business education/CTE teacher and work-based learning coordinator at the school since 2007.

Erin Phillips ('07, '09), Murfreesboro, was selected assistant principal at Cason Lane Academy. She rejoins Murfreesboro City Schools

after serving two years with the Tennessee Department of Education as a South Central reading coach consultant. Previously, Phillips was a classroom teacher and academic coach at Hobgood Elementary.

Jerry Whitmore Jr. ('07, '08), Madison, Wisconsin, was appointed clinical assistant professor in the higher education administration program at Boston University. He was director of first-year and retention programs at the University of Wisconsin.

Brian R. Heffron ('08), Clay, New York, was chosen as the new principal of Oswego County's P-TECH (Pathways

in Technology Early College High School) at the Center for Instruction, Technology, and Innovation. P-TECH brings students together for intense work in science, math, and technology.

Lauren E. Simpson ('08), Marietta, Georgia, received her Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership from Argosy Atlanta. Along with being a marketing coordinator in Atlanta, she is CEO of the Social Media Dr. and founder of Adjust Your Crown Mentoring.

Rachel Simes Guttman ('09), Nashville, is an associate entertainment attorney for Stephanie Taylor Law.

Brad Lamb ('09), Murfreesboro, joined Pinnacle Financial Partners as senior vice president and mortgage advisor. He was previously with First Tennessee Bank.

Emmanuel "Manny" Tyndall ('09), Clarksville, retired as inspector general of the Tennessee Office of Inspector General, which identifies, investigates, and criminally prosecutes individuals committing fraud connected to TennCare.

2010s

Ashley Buchanan ('10), Murfreesboro, is community manager of Renderosity.com and owner of Creative Movements.

Carli Bryant ('11), Pelham, Alabama, is now an associate attorney at Cory Watson Attorneys.

Elaine Haw ('11), McKenzie, joined Full Circle Equine Veterinary Services as a veterinarian.

Dustin Hillis ('11), Atlanta, was elected to the Atlanta City Council and began a four-year

term serving the Ninth District last January. Hillis is a clinical nurse in Emory University Hospital's neuroscience ICU.

Josiah Holland ('11), Nashville, was named principal of the Alternative Learning Center for Williamson County Schools. Formerly, he was assistant principal at Fairview Middle School.

Richelle Albright ('12), Chattanooga, became communication director in the office of Chattanooga Mayor Andy Berke.

Sydney Elizabeth Hester Broadhead ('12), Jonesborough, received a Master of Public Health degree from Vanderbilt University.

Ben Eggebeen ('12), Nashville, became sales manager for Visit Franklin—the public brand name of the Williamson County Convention and Visitors Bureau. He comes to Visit Franklin from Andrew Jackson's Hermitage, where he was event and tour sales manager.

Clint Foster ('12), Harriman, joined the Tennessee Valley Asset Management Partners, a Knoxville-based financial planning company, as a wealth advisor. Foster also is continuing his education through Boston University.

Jana Horvath ('13), Nashville, was recently promoted to account executive after joining business and financial management firm Flood, Bumstead, McCready & McCarthy in 2014.

Pirjin Tayip Laser ('13), Nashville, joined Waller Lansden Dortch & Davis as an attorney, assisting publicly traded and privately held companies in mergers, acquisitions, joint ventures, and divestitures.

Joshua Sweeton ('13), McMinnville, was promoted to the rank of master sergeant in the United States Army. He currently is serving as operations coordinator for the Defense Attaché Office, a diplomatic posting, at the U.S. Embassy in Riga, Latvia. He manages the day-to-day operations, including administration, logistics, financial, and operations, of the Department of Defense representational office to the Republic of Latvia.

Justin Beasley ('14), Old Hickory, is now a sports photographer and reporter at WSMV-Channel 4 in Nashville. Prior to this position, he covered the University of Tennessee–Martin and Murray State University for WPSD-Channel 6 in Paducah, Kentucky.

Jeremy Charbonneau ('14), Franklin, joined the sales team of Paradigm Group as a consultant.

Kait Lehew ('14), Milton, moved to Pinnacle Financial Partners as a financial specialist.

Pamela Nucifore ('14), Memphis, is the first female chief pilot of Endeavor Air, which operates as Delta Connection for Delta Air Lines.

Zach Sanders ('14), Huntingdon, is the new Cannon County community education coordinator for the Child Advocacy Center.

JoAnna Wilson ('14), Alamo, graduated with a Juris Doctor from Belmont University College of Law in 2017. Wilson now practices with Casey, Simmons & Bryant in Jackson.

Jessie Bosdell ('16), Murfreesboro, joined Pinnacle Financial Partners as a financial specialist.

Maliyah Bass ('17), LaVergne, launched a Thai-style ice cream truck called Rolled 4 Ever Ice Cream, serving rolled ice cream.

Megan Berry ('17), Murfreesboro, is working as an admissions counselor at MTSU.

Tanner Stewart ('17), Gulfport, Mississippi, is a news anchor for WXXV-Channel 25. While at MTSU, he anchored and reported for MT10 News.

Roger Wynne Jr. ('17), Murfreesboro, was sworn in as a special agent by the Tennessee Alcoholic Beverage Commission, working in the Nashville area.

Annabeth Hayes ('18), Franklin, was hired as director of preservation for the Heritage Foundation of Franklin and Williamson County.

Madeline Horton Record ('18), Ringgold, Georgia, is teaching at Westside Middle School and assisting with the softball program.

Zephanie Dykes

Dykes ('17), Miss Black Tennessee, works for the Tennessee Board of Education and is a Tennessee Titans cheerleader. She also is one of just two individuals from Tennessee selected to participate in the summer intensive at the highly regarded Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre in New York City.



IN MEMORIAM

1940s

L'Wanna Wammack Donnell ('45), Sugar Mountain, South Carolina, June 26, 2018

Vivian Crowell Farrar ('42), Murfreesboro, July 2, 2018

Felix Snell ('49), Gallatin, April 9, 2017

1950s

Clinton Adams ('56), Lynchburg, May 6, 2018

Opal Anderton ('51, '67), Tullahoma, June 5, 2018

Virginia Annible ('55, '82), Shelbyville, March 26, 2018

Sarah Becton ('55), Indialantic, Florida, May 17, 2018

Billie Reed Bacon ('53), Hixson, Aug. 14, 2018

Geraldine Walling Clark ('56), Walling, July 2, 2018

Edmund Russell Briley ('58), Fayetteville, June 8, 2018

John Freeman ('59), Lebanon, June 4, 2018

Marvin Gleaves Jr., ('58), Chapmansboro, May 7, 2018

Charles Hall ('58), Columbia, July 4, 2018

Jean Hargrove ('52, '59), Nashville, April 1, 2018

Leo "Burrell" Harris ('51), Crossville, Aug. 6, 2018

Don Horsley ('58), Cookeville, June 18, 2018

Betty Jo Russell Kaylor ('57), Maryville, March 26, 2018

James Kidwell ('55, '63), Watertown, June 15, 2018

Peggy McAdams ('58), Barnesville, Georgia, April 25, 2018

Franklin Mason Sr. ('59), Murfreesboro, Aug. 30, 2018

Herschel Moore ('51),
Nashville, Sept. 4, 2018

Elizabeth Newbell ('54, '69),
Pine Bluff, Arkansas, June 9,
2018

Thomas Partlow ('59),
Lebanon, April 21, 2018

Charles Rash ('59), Columbia,
Sept. 8, 2018

James Shubert ('50),
Fayetteville, April 9, 2018

Joyce Nokes Simmons ('55),
Salisbury, North Carolina, Sept.
17, 2018

John A. Singleton ('59), Apex,
North Carolina, Aug. 19, 2018

Rebecca Smith ('57, '59),
Roswell, Georgia, July 19, 2018

Elizabeth Keith Vaughter ('51),
Hendersonville, April 23, 2018

Marian Whitfield ('55),
Franklin, July 23, 2018

James Windsor ('56), Tomball,
Texas, July 22, 2018

Norma York ('56),
Murfreesboro, Aug. 1, 2018

1960s

Ozane Adams ('62, '67, '76),
Cleveland, June 25, 2018

Patricia Swift Cary ('68),
Brentwood, April 24, 2018

Frank Cheek ('61), Nashville,
May 24, 2018

Kathleen Clarke ('68), Dripping
Springs, Texas, April 10, 2018

Marion Collins ('62), Temple,
Texas, June 11, 2018

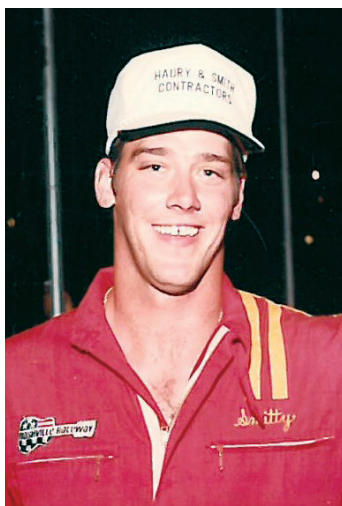
Hazel Cothran ('62), Antioch,
July 17, 2018

Paul Dunn ('60), Knoxville,
July 21, 2018

Emily Edmonds ('65),
Murfreesboro, Aug. 3, 2018

Roberta Felderman ('69),
Dandridge, April 5, 2018

William Faulk ('60, '61),
Hixson, May 5, 2018



Mark Welsh Smith

Smith, 59, nondegreed alum, of Franklin, died on Aug. 7, 2018. A native Nashvillian, Smith was a stellar athlete in baseball and basketball, which led to a two-sport scholarship at MTSU. He was drafted by the Atlanta Braves and spent five years in the minor leagues before retiring from baseball in 1983. Smith later drove stock cars professionally at numerous tracks, including Daytona, and was always sponsored by the Smith family business, Haury and Smith Contractors. In the last few years, Smith owned Mark Smith Roofing.

Bobby Flowers ('69),
Murfreesboro, April 18, 2018.

William Green ('68),
Bell Buckle, July 24, 2018

Johnny Allen Gross ('66),
Jonesboro, Arkansas,
Jan. 2, 2018

Jack Haley ('67), Mount Olive,
Mississippi, May 27, 2018

William Larry Hardison, ('67),
Shelbyville, April 20, 2018

Gracie Bond Hernandez ('68,
'71), Riverside, California,
March 30, 2018

Jerre Holloway ('67),
Chattanooga, July 31, 2018

Mikel Jones ('67), Harvest,
Alabama, July 26, 2018

Richard "Dick" Kottler ('68),
Nashville, May 30, 2018

Betty McGovern ('66),
Tracy City, June 13, 2018

Kenneth Odom ('62), Smyrna,
April 2, 2018

James "Don" Pickel ('69),
Pigeon Forge, March 10, 2017

Verretta Pittman ('62),
Murfeesboro, May 23, 2018

Barney Porter ('66), Cullman,
Alabama, May 29, 2018

Thomas Selover ('64, '67),
Cooperstown, New York, Aug.
8, 2018

Joe Shadwick ('62), Soddy
Daisy, April 22, 2018

Ann Waldron Stuart ('61),
Maplewood, New Jersey,
July 22, 2018

John Curtis Tucker ('68),
Brooksville, Florida, Feb. 13,
2018

Bobby Don Vance ('69),
Bradyville, Sept. 15, 2018

Glenn Warner ('60), Franklin,
July 13, 2018

Ralph Williams Jr. ('62),
Marietta, Georgia, April 20, 2018

Jeneal Wood ('63, '72),
Knoxville, June 9, 2018

Carl Wortman ('65), Newark,
Ohio, Aug. 11, 2018

Ted York ('60), Shelbyville,
Sept. 1, 2018

1970s

Tirrell Barnette ('73), Tarboro,
North Carolina, June 3, 2018

Larry Barnickle ('70, '76, '81),
Daphne, Alabama, July 25,
2018

Debra Butler ('78, '81),
Murfreesboro, March 22, 2018

Betty Davis ('72), Smithville,
May 31, 2018

Doris Dickinson Coady ('71),
Murfreesboro, Sept. 10, 2018

Roy Eklund ('79), Savannah,
July 20, 2018

Rodney Fuller ('75),
Birmingham, May 8, 2018

Larry Garrett ('72), Brentwood,
April 5, 2018

Harry Hargis ('77, '78),
Murfreesboro, June 8, 2018

Betty June Hester ('72), Dover,
April 28, 2018

James Johnson Jr. ('77),
Soddy Daisy, May 15, 2018

Catherine Davis Kennedy ('76),
Lewisburg, Aug. 16, 2018

Michael Kittle ('74),
Murfreesboro, September
10, 2018

William Ledbetter ('72),
Anniston, Alabama, May 9,
2018

Stephen "Herb" Lester ('71),
Lascassas, Sept. 21, 2018

Eddie Mahaffey ('73),
Shelbyville, May 12, 2018

William Meredith ('74),
Smyrna, June 30, 2018

Michael Merlin ('72), Nashville,
Jan. 26, 2018.

Marguerite Mullins ('70),
Covington, Georgia, Sept. 13,
2018

Lanham Preston ('72), Franklin,
July 23, 2018

Margarett Rush ('74),
Manchester, July 6, 2018

Emma Spurlock Morris ('74),
Manchester, May 2, 2018

Larry Pistole ('77), Saint
Stephens Church, Virginia,
May 12, 2018

Thomas Savage ('77),
La Quinta, California,
Aug. 4, 2018

William Shelton ('77),
Nashville, Sept. 1, 2018

Mary Sumner Spivey ('77),
McMinnville, Sept. 20, 2017

Bobby Vance ('73), Bradyville,
Sept. 15, 2018

Karen Flemming Warren ('79),
Murfreesboro, Aug. 6, 2018

John Wilks ('73), Murfreesboro,
Sept. 1, 2018

Terri Williams ('77), Grapevine,
Texas, May 21, 2018

Lloyd Wilson ('75), Bloomington,
Indiana, Sept. 17, 2018

Bruce York ('70), Middletown,
Delaware, May 25, 2018

Gary York ('72), Franklin,
June 21, 2018

1980s

Helen Hines Barry ('81),
Franklin, May 30, 2018

Charlene Pesterfield Clower ('80),
Manchester, Aug. 13, 2018

James Connell ('84),
Hermitage, June 19, 2017

Debra Craton ('83), Powder
Springs, Georgia, Sept. 9, 2018

Gary Czeskleba ('89), Mount
Juliet, Sept. 1, 2018

William "Bill" Eubank ('85),
Estill Springs, Aug. 28, 2018

Laura Robinson Harrison ('85),
Franklin, April 30, 2018

Robin Herlinger ('81), Sierra
Vista, Arizona, May 20, 2018

Carolyn Jordan ('83),
Hermitage, May 2, 2018

Roy Landrum ('82),
Murfreesboro, Oct. 23, 2017

Lisa Fielden Mefford ('80, '91),
Knoxville, March 21, 2018

George Ogum ('82),
Montgomery, Alabama,
Aug. 5, 2018

Terrance Smithson ('86),
Murfreesboro, July 5, 2018

Benjamin Williams ('80),
Gallatin, July 31, 2018

Bonnie Worley ('89), Columbia,
April 17, 2018

1990s

Wendell Clowers ('97),
Chattanooga, July 15, 2018

Brian Hartman ('94), Franklin,
Aug. 22, 2018

Dana Cooksey Holt ('92),
Adams, April 5, 2018

Patty Henry Lemarr ('94),
Smyrna, July 8, 2018

John McAdams ('97),
Columbia, Aug. 3, 2018

Johnny Moore ('91),
Hermitage, June 8, 2018

Tracy McCauley ('97),
Murfreesboro, Oct. 8, 2018

Christy Fisher Perry ('92),
Gallatin, Aug. 9, 2018

Jason Reed ('93), Shelbyville,
Aug. 22, 2018

**Penny Trenholm McCammon
Vernon ('92)**, Franklin, March
23, 2018

John "Nick" Shelton ('95)
Franklin, Sept. 19, 2018

2000s

Weiguo Chen ('03), Metuchen,
New Jersey, June 26, 2017

William Fisher ('07), McKenzie,
Sept. 2, 2018

Heather Lanier ('01), Rockvale,
June 4, 2018

Robert Orr ('04), Soddy Daisy,
May 17, 2018

Andy Paine ('03), Centennial,
Colorado, June 23, 2018

April Parham ('05), Olive
Branch, Mississippi, Aug. 22,
2018

**Melody Simons Johnson
Russell ('05)**, Murfreesboro,
April 29, 2018

James Sanders ('08),
Monteagle, April 30, 2018

2010s

Bryan Brock ('10),
Hendersonville, May 26, 2018

Geoffrey Cheruiyot ('18),
Eldoret, Kenya, May 30, 2018

Kevin Conner ('13),
Chattanooga, March 2, 2018

Cassidy Adair Ganey ('18)
Murfreesboro, May 28, 2018

Avery Washington ('13),
Chattanooga, June 6, 2018



Brian Robert White

White ('09), a Ravenwood High School graduate from Brentwood, earned an Aerospace degree at MTSU in 2009. He later applied for and was accepted into the U.S. Army's Warrant Officer program, where he became a Blackhawk pilot and served a nine-month tour in Afghanistan. On July 29, 2017, White and his fiancée, Rebecca Raumont, died in a plane crash in Big Bear, California. They had gotten engaged the day before. At the time of his death, he was serving his country as a maintenance test pilot for a fleet of UH-60s in Fort Irwin, California. Raumont was a San Bernardino County deputy sheriff. He was 30, she was 28. According to his family, White loved his time at MTSU because it gave him a tremendous advantage in going to a nearby school with an Aerospace Department second to none. The family honored him and MTSU with the establishment of the Brian Robert White Scholarship for two deserving Aerospace students. The first two awards were given in April 2018.

BABY RAIDERS

Leighton Caine Powell born Oct. 4, 2016, to **Cory ('13)** and **Allison Powell ('15)** of Tavares, Florida

Weston Nash Boehms born Aug. 5, 2017, to **Sid ('12)** and **Charlotte Boehms ('11)** of Dickson

Garrett Cartwright Van Hekken born Nov. 26, 2017, to Gina and **James C. Van Hekken ('04)** of Eagle, Colorado

Isaac Michael Cornett born March 8, 2018, to Kyle ('05, '16) and **Rachel Peay Cornett ('06, '09, '14)** of Murfreesboro

Peter Liam Cox born May 3, 2018, to **Aaron ('10)**, and **Emily Cox ('10)** of Murfreesboro

Paige Emma Romero born May 16, 2018, to Sarah and **Jon Romero ('05)** of Nashville

Olin Hugh Jarrell born May 29, 2018, to Kenneth and **Erica Foster Jarrell ('09)** of Huntsville, Alabama

Easton Andrew Adkins born June 5, 2018, to **Blake ('17)** and **Juliana Adkins ('15)** of Murfreesboro

Eleanor Kate Wald born July 18, 2018, to **Steven ('01)** and **Carrie Barker Wald ('04)** of Brentwood

MTSU



Powell



Boehms



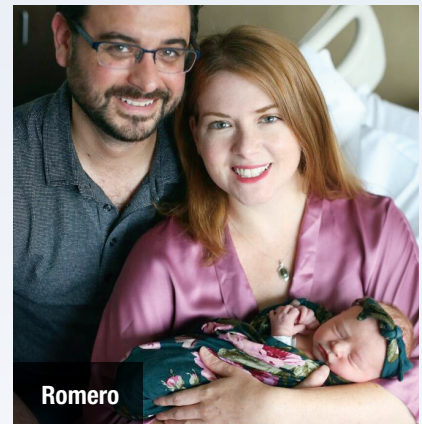
Van Hekken



Cornett



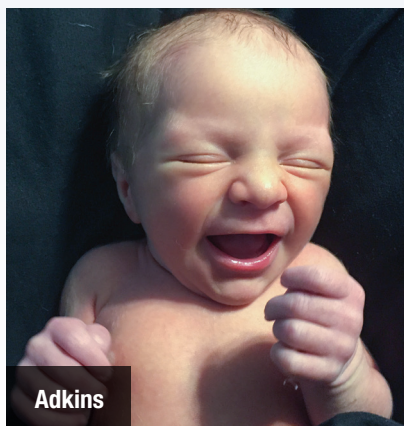
Cox



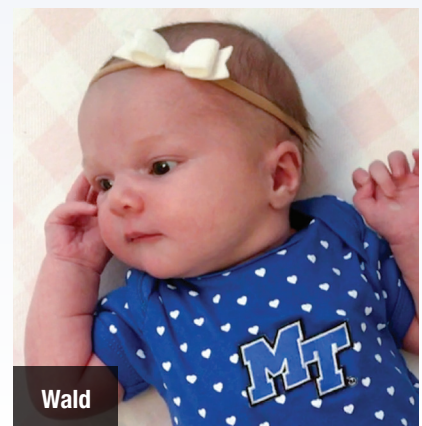
Romero



Jarrell



Adkins



Wald

Stay up to date all year-round

Walking the Walk

MTSU's 1,731 newest graduates are out in the world and ready to use their education after receiving their degrees—and words of encouragement from enthusiastic guest speakers—in the University's fall 2018 commencement ceremonies Dec. 15 in Murphy Center.

Wanda Lyle, managing director of UBS AG and general manager of the UBS Business Solutions Center in Nashville, urged students at MTSU's morning graduation ceremony to recall the adage, "Education is a gift."

"It's true, but your education is yours, your accomplishment, that you own, and you will define how best to use it," she said. "The opportunity to earn your college degree is surely a gift, but successfully completing your education is not. . . It's the product of your hard work."

Alumna **Holly Thompson**, a WSMV-Channel 4 news anchor and journalist reminded her fellow Blue Raiders at the afternoon commencement to hold fast to their principles and have faith in their abilities.

"You are paving your own way, forging your own path," she said. "At some point, you will face conflict. You will face fear. You will hear naysayers doubt you, maybe even ridicule you and try to quench your fire and your passion. . . . No matter the challenge, know this: You can do it."

Integrated Studies major **BryTavious Chambers** of Memphis, known professionally as Tay Keith, graduated from MTSU's University College the same month a rap single he produced went double-platinum and No. 1 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 chart and was nominated for two Grammy Awards. He said he was glad he'd chosen MTSU for his education.

"I learned so much academically and personally while being here at MTSU," Chambers said. "I enjoyed my four years here, and I appreciate all of the support I received from the community while in school."

Chambers produced rap superstar Travis Scott's No. 1 track, "SICKO MODE" with Drake, Big Hawk, and Swae Lee, which was nominated for the Best Rap Performance and Best Rap Song Grammys and is part of Scott's also-nominated No. 1 *Astroworld* album.

In his senior year alone, besides the double-platinum "SICKO MODE," Chambers produced nearly a dozen hot tracks for both renowned artists and newcomers, including DJ BlocBoy JB's triple-platinum "Look Alive"; Drake's "Nonstop," which peaked at No. 2 on the *Billboard* charts; Lil Wayne's "Hasta La Vista"; and Eminem's "Not Alike."

U.S. Army veteran **Jay Strobino** received his degree in Exercise Science in the afternoon ceremony. The Silver Star recipient, shot 13 times during one-on-one combat in Iraq in 2006, celebrated his new degree with his wife and kids, as well as his parents, who flew in for the ceremony.

Of the 1,731 students receiving degrees 1,471 were undergraduates and 260 were graduate students (receiving 248 master's, one education specialist, and 11 doctorates.)

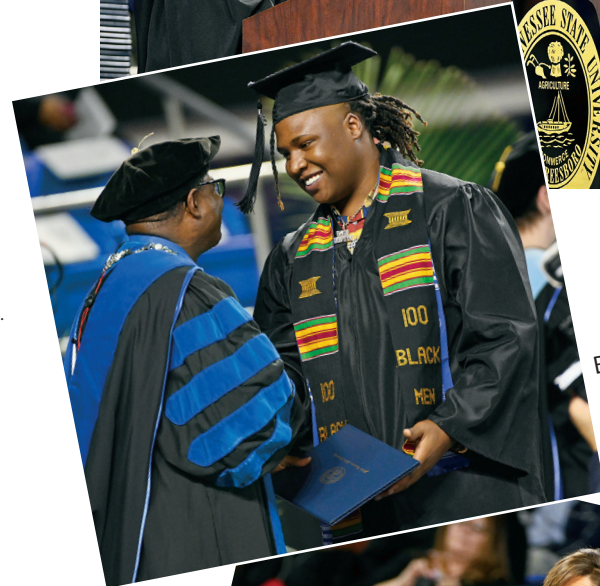
Two graduate students and 19 undergraduates also received certificates for their advanced studies.

[mtsunews.com/fall-commencement-2018](https://www.mtsunews.com/fall-commencement-2018)

photos: Andy Heidt



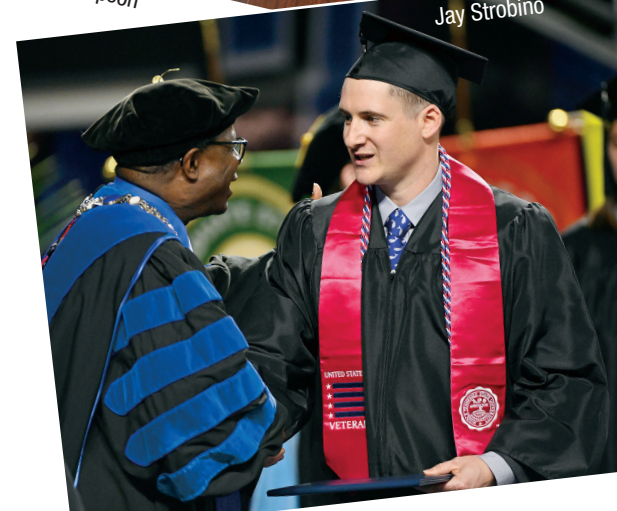
Wanda Lyle



BryTavious
Chambers
a.k.a. Tay
Keith



Holly Thompson



Jay Strobino

Join us for these upcoming activities and much more

Live Webinar	Feb. 26, 2019 Noon	<i>The Art of Work: Creative Strategies for Discovering an Authentic Career</i> Presenter: Dusty Doddridge, Interim Director of the MTSU Career Development Center
Alumni Spring Showcase	April 5–13, 2019	Experience Today's MTSU
Alumni Summer College	June 19–21, 2019	That's Entertainment
Alumni Travel	Sept. 19–26, 2019	The Islands of New England

Event listings, RSVP, and updated information available at mtalumni.com or by calling 1-800-533-6878

