

MTSU MAGAZINE

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

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Bonnaroo Campus

For the fifth consecutive year, MTSU deployed a team of multimedia students from its College of Media and Entertainment to cover the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival. Eighteen live, unrehearsed concerts in four days taught students aspects of television production that they will never get from a book or a lecture. Student journalists on MTSU's Seigenthaler News Service team at Bonnaroo pounded laptops and uploaded photos and videos for media clients who hired them to cover the 2018 festival. MTSU's low-watt, but high-spirit, student radio station, WMTS, joined its big sister, the 100,000-watt Americana public radio giant WMOT, in working from Radio Roo. "We have a major commitment to feet-on-the-ground learning through participatory learning experiences at industry events like Bonnaroo," said Billy Pittard, chair of the Department of Media Arts. "We do everything we can to give our students the opportunity to be career-ready upon graduation."

MTSU Audio, Visual, and Journalism students help cover Bonnaroo 2018
photo: Eric Sutton

cover photo: Tennessee Titans/photo illustration: Brian Evans

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Cover Article: True Blue Titan

Professional athlete Kevin Byard ('15) traveled a road from poverty to MTSU to All-Pro status in the NFL





Make More MT Memories at Homecoming!

Oct. 19–20, 2018

Friday, Oct. 19

- 10:00 a.m. Class of 1968 Golden Raiders Reunion and Induction Ceremony (RSVP required; see below)
- 4:00 p.m. Alumni Awards Reception

Saturday, Oct. 20

- 9:30 a.m. Mixer on Main Parade Watching Party
- 10:00 a.m. Homecoming Parade
- 2:00 p.m. Middle Tennessee vs. UNC–Charlotte
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Join us for these activities and much more

Event listing, RSVP, and updated information available at mtalumni.com or by calling 1-800-533-6878 (times subject to change)

Update your contact information at mtalumni.com



Will Work for the Homeless

by Drew Ruble

The City of Murfreesboro projects its population to grow to 228,000 by 2035. It's been the fastest-growing city in Tennessee for the last three years and is one of the 15 fastest-growing large cities in the United States.

Such rapid population growth inevitably gives rise to a more somber development—a spike in the number of individuals who can't afford the high costs of having a place to live. Forty-one percent of homeless individuals in the City of Murfreesboro have been without permanent shelter for less than six months, but 30 percent have been homeless for two years or longer, according to data collected in 2017 by the Murfreesboro Cold Patrol nonprofit organization.

The Murfreesboro 2035 master plan calls for providing a mix of housing options, including a comprehensive solution to meeting the needs of the city's most vulnerable citizens. The question local agencies that work tirelessly to serve the homeless population are working to answer is **"How do we achieve that goal?"**

Last July, MTSU Social Work faculty and students presented a plan to the Murfreesboro City Council that addresses another key component of the local housing crisis—the need for a centralized campus of social service agencies to serve the homeless and those at risk of losing current housing. The campus would remove many of the barriers that individuals and families face in accessing the quality support and services required to regain health and economic self-sufficiency.

The proposed campus—originally the idea of Scott Foster, founder of the nonprofit Journey Home local outreach center—would house satellite offices of agencies that provide assistance to the homeless. One such model investigated by MTSU students is Haven of Hope in San Antonio, a 22-acre campus with 30 agencies dedicated to providing food, health care, child care, job training, and even pet care.

In addition to preparing the proposal and tailoring it to Murfreesboro's specific needs, the students gained valuable experience at Journey Home,

working 20 to 25 hours each week with homeless individuals in May and June 2017. All the work put in by then-graduate student **Jackie Jones** and two undergraduates, **Justin Oliver** and **Samantha Cantrell**, was made possible by a \$15,000 grant from the city council.

Ultimately, a city council panel funded a part-time community liaison position in partnership with the decades-old Homeless Alliance of Rutherford County. Jones, now an MTSU alumna with a Master of Social Work degree, holds that position. She is currently funded to work two days a week on the project through September 2018.

"My role as a community liaison is to continue to build relationships between nonprofits, government agencies, and the community through communication, advocacy, and capacity-building," Jones said.

From her studies and experiential learning opportunities, Jones understands better than most that homelessness is a complex problem made even more complicated by a lack of affordable housing. She also knows that solutions to the problems homeless individuals face lies in part in greater awareness and involvement by the entire community, including MTSU. Her efforts both while a student and now as a graduate are geared toward helping established programs, agencies, and individuals like Foster perhaps better organize and streamline community efforts to affect lasting change. Having MTSU, through its Social Work program, now growing in visibility regarding the local homelessness issue can only serve the greater good.

For Jones, the learning experience has been a rewarding and fulfilling complement to her MTSU education.

"The complexity of addressing affordable housing and homeless is balanced by the many amazing individuals and organizations committed to serving clients and addressing the issues," Jones said.

Among those amazing individuals and organizations—I believe—are Jones and MTSU.



**30 percent
have been
homeless
for two
years or
longer**

*[Editor's note:
MTSUNews.com writer
Gina K. Logue contributed
mightily to this report.]*

MTSU



A brief conversation on a recent event with MTSU President Dr. Sidney A. McPhee

MTSU is by far the largest producer of college graduates in the region. I know you have a passion for preparing students not just for work but also for life. Commencement is the launch point for that, and I know it is one of your favorite times of the year. What are your takeaways from the most recent commencement?

The trio of guest speakers at MTSU's two-day series of Spring 2018 commencement ceremonies offered similar suggestions to our record 2,641 MTSU graduates: Use your hard-earned knowledge and skills to meet new challenges and to serve others.

MTSU Anthropology Professor **Kevin Smith**, who is last year's Career Achievement Award winner, told our 435 doctoral, master's, and education specialist degree graduates that the "piece of parchment" he received for his Ph.D. was really about the skills and training he took away from his graduate school experience, the ability to see new opportunities, the ability to construct meaningful research projects that touch a diverse set of audiences, and the flexibility to take advantage of unforeseen possibilities. "That is what you should also be taking away with you today," he said at our College of Graduate Studies commencement. "Go forth and accomplish great things. The diploma will be in the mail. But you already have what you need to discover the next chapter in your own stories."

Lt. Gen. Robert L. Caslen Jr., who is superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, recognized the 93 veterans among the graduating class for their service and told our graduates that many more of their classmates also are serving the country. "Many of you have committed yourselves to a life of service," Caslen said, noting the police officers, firefighters, teachers, doctors, nurses, and community volunteers in the group. "Service takes many forms. The common thread is a desire to help others, to make neighborhoods and communities better, to be a part of something bigger than yourself, and to make a difference in the lives of others."

The commencement speech delivered by alumnus and MTSU Board of Trustees Chair **Stephen B. "Steve" Smith** especially struck a chord with me. I think it is such an important message for our time, and I want all MTSU alumni and *MTSU Magazine* readers to experience it.

A lightly edited version of that speech is reprinted here. Thank you, Mr. President.

I'm humbled to be your speaker, so I'll make it brief. I'm keenly aware, with just a few exceptions, no one's here to hear me speak. Congratulations to the parents, grandparents, friends, and family. Your dedication and drive paved the way to walk across this stage.

Beyond the knowledge you've gained, you've proven yourself to you, your family, and yes, your future employers, that you can stick with it to the finish line. This is and always has been a shockingly rare talent—sticking with it.

I am a Raider. I'm one of you. I'm the first generation of my family to complete college. My mother's father was a butcher; my father's father, a Nashville fireman. My dad was a Nashville fireman and then sold Butterfingers and Baby Ruths for 10 years before his hard work and optimism catapulted him to financial success.

It took me longer from enrolling to graduate than anybody here—nearly 40 years. MTSU permanently shaped my life. Whatever your circumstances or situation, you will be successful.

I'd like to share three ingredients for success in my life.

One, choose to be happy. Practice the unbelievable power of positive thinking. Henry Ford said, "If you think you can or can't, you're right." In other words, it's up to you. If you think you can, you will. If not, you won't. **It's hard to believe it's that simple, but it is.**

Find something good in every person and every day. Compliment a friend. Be thankful and happy that your sacrifices and perseverance will provide opportunities from people you have never met. Choosing optimism over cynicism is a tough everyday task and is not fashionable. Wake up in the morning, look in that mirror, and know you're going to make a sale. I'm a peddler. I have to make a sale every day. But most importantly, you make a sale every time you meet someone. It's either good or bad. Make the right sale. Believe what you're doing today will make tomorrow better. It will.

There are many obstacles to staying optimistic, too many to list, but I want to tackle two widely-accepted harbingers of pessimism and popular falsehoods of doom and gloom. The first is that America, our country, is more divided than ever. That's not true. It's false, and it should be obvious to anyone with a sophomore knowledge of American history. Our founding fathers Adams and Jefferson quarreled with each other and accused each other of every crime and vice under the sun. Our sitting vice president shot and killed the former Treasury secretary, Alexander Hamilton, in a duel over the banking debt. We're more divided now? Andrew Jackson killed a man in a duel in Nashville, and he was shot at Capitol Hill. Less than 5 miles from where we're sitting,

“GIVE SOMETHING BACK”

STUDENT
ATHLETE

Stephen B. “Steve” Smith





“

THE
DISCIPLINE
NEEDED
TO FINISH
YOUR
DEGREE
IS A
GREAT
STEP ”

23,000 Americans killed each other—died fighting each other. The Great Depression almost ended our free enterprise system. A sneak attack on Pearl Harbor decimated half the fleet, and in one day, the West Coast was braced for a full-scale invasion. In my lifetime, Vietnam, political assassinations, and the fight for civil rights all came together to make us believe we would tear each other apart. Today's problems pale in comparison.

What makes our country great is a difference of opinions and the peaceful resolution of the same. Just in the time you've been enrolled, we've had two presidents, completely opposite, both politically and culturally. I think that's solid proof that anyone can be president of the United States. Any one of you can. We had a self-made man to the left, an ultra-rich guy to the right, and in less time than it took you to get a degree, not one shot was fired. **Celebrate and enjoy our diversity.**

The second untruth is that our world is falling apart. It's easy to believe when you read the news and watch it on TV, but it's not true. It's getting better by almost any measure. In the last 30 years in this great country, poverty rates have fallen from 11 percent to 3 percent. Thirty years ago, a third—actually 37 percent—of our world's population lived in extreme poverty, barely able to feed themselves. Now that number is in the single digits. Homicide rates fell. We're spewing less pollution into the environment and yet driving more miles. There were 46 oil spills in 1988, but only five in 2016. Globally, in the last 30 years, we've seen a reduction in the number of wars raging and in their deadliness. The number of people living in a democracy has more than doubled from 2 billion to 4 billion. We have a better world. Just in 30 years, polio, smallpox, and diphtheria ravaged the world and killed millions. Now they are a small section in your history book. Life expectancy around the world has nearly doubled in 100 years. In 2000, AIDS was ravaging and hollowing Africa and threatening the world with over 10 million deaths, with no end in sight. But as a fabulous example of what we can do when we work together, Majority Leader Bill Frist, who joins us today, convinced our nation to stand by and follow a plan, and we have virtually won the battle on AIDS, saving more than 20 million lives. **One man in your presence helped save 20 million lives.**

A second key is perseverance. Perseverance in business, friendship, hobbies, sports—all worthy goals. You have to do it. "Do it now" was a small sign on the desk of the man that I looked up to. Do it now. **Put nothing off that can be finished now.** Tell your friends and family you love them now. Take that job offer. It's easier to get a job when you have a job. Don't overthink what's down the road. It'll come soon enough. Grasp, claw, and grab what's in front of you. Nothing will be handed to you. If you can have it, grab it. **You're the master of your own obituary.**

I worry, and it's both my strength and weakness. Those who know me know that I worry about everything. I worry that we might think luck controls our lives—that lucky breaks are the only way to success. That's untrue and dangerous. Sure, luck plays a part. But I know **your success is directly proportional to how much sweat is running off the end of your nose.** This is true in every life endeavor. Thomas Edison reminds us that opportunity is missed by most because it's dressed in overalls and looks like work.

The discipline needed to finish your degree is a great step toward the attitude that's required to expect to win. You paid the price. You expect it. It's not arrogance to expect to win if you've outworked your competition. Every great person I have personally known deep down loved the grind of self-discipline, and in time you'll look for opportunities to challenge yourself and you'll enjoy that grind too.

Third, in closing, give something back. We've got a roomful of people that have given you the opportunity to be here. Be part of something bigger than self. Join a campaign, volunteer for the Red Cross, teach a Sunday school class, adopt a friend from the Boys and Girls Club. Maybe just bend over and pick up a piece of trash on the sidewalk. Maybe you want to run for office. I hope you've all heard President Kennedy's quote, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." You can substitute school, church, or profession. You live in the greatest time in history to make a difference. You live in the infancy, the beginning, of the greatest experiment and freedom mankind has ever known. You're armed with knowledge and confidence. I expect you to win and do great things for yourself, your country, and your school.

Thanks for giving me your attention, and God bless America. 

Stephen B. Smith ('11), chair of MTSU's Board of Trustees, has a lengthy history of involvement with the University. He has served on the President's Council and the board of directors for the Blue Raider Athletic Association. Smith also chaired the search committee for MTSU's director of athletics and spearheaded the successful effort to raise \$5 million to construct a new baseball facility. He received the Tennessee Board of Regents' Chancellor Citation for Excellence in Philanthropy and was awarded the Jennings A. Jones Champion of Free Enterprise Award in 2010. Smith is chair of the board of Haury and Smith Contractors Inc. He has served on the board of the Metropolitan Nashville Planning Commission and Regional Transit Authority and chaired the board of directors of Metropolitan Nashville Parks and Recreation.



MTSU students with President Sidney A. McPhee at MusicCares event



Academy of Country Music CEO and MTSU alumnus Pete Fisher, center right, and MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee, center left, with the rest of the visiting MTSU contingent on the floor of the ACM Awards Show at the MGM Grand Hotel and Casino's Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas

A STRONG PRESENCE

THE HALF-DOZEN MTSU-CONNECTED NOMINEES AT THE 60TH ANNUAL GRAMMY AWARDS MADE THEIR ALMA MATER PROUD WITH THEIR RESPECTIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

Producer/songwriter Wayne Haun, a 2000 grad of MTSU's School of Music in the College of Liberal Arts, produced three of the five best roots gospel album nominees. Haun's Grammy-nominated projects, released between October 2016 and July 2017, included *Hope for All Nations* by Karen Peck and New River, on which he also co-wrote five songs.

Jason A. Hall (B.S., '00) engineered Little Big Town's *The Breaker*, a Grammy nominee for best country album. The Department of Recording Industry grad won a 2005 best rock gospel album Grammy for his work on Audio Adrenaline's *Until My Heart Caves In*.

Former student Sam Hunt's chart-busting "Body Like a Back Road" earned best country solo performance and best country song Grammy nods. Hunt attended MTSU in 2003-04 and played football for the Blue Raiders.

Country trio Lady Antebellum, which includes former MTSU student Hillary Scott, also had dual nominations: best country duo/group performance and best country album for "You Look Good" and *Heart Break*, respectively. Scott picked up two Grammys of her own in 2017 for her Hillary Scott and the Scott Family contemporary Christian album *Love Reigns* and its single "Thy Will."

Two-time Grammy winner Torrance Esmond, the 2003 MTSU Music Business graduate known professionally as Street Symphony, also sought gold for his work on the best children's album nominee *Rise Shine #Woke* by the Alphabet Rockers. Esmond won Grammys for the 2013 best gospel album as the executive producer for former MTSU student Lecrae Moore's album *Gravity* and again in 2015 for co-writing the best contemporary Christian music performance/song, "Messengers" by Lecrae.

The Secret Sisters—MTSU '09 College of Media and Entertainment alumna Laura Rogers and her sibling Lydia—bounced back from losing their label deal, a lawsuit by a former manager, near-bankruptcy, and a temporarily dry creative well to earn a nomination for a best folk album Grammy for *You Don't Own Me Anymore*, their third release.

"More than anything, I feel a sense of redemption," Laura Rogers said during a special party MTSU held in the sisters' honor on Grammy weekend. "It's a big honor for us."

Since 2007, MTSU alumni, faculty, and former students have brought home 16 Grammy Awards in categories from classical to gospel to bluegrass to rap.

MTSU alumnus Garry Hood, who has spent the last three decades as the head stage manager for the Grammys, was in charge behind the scenes at the event again this year.

MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee and College of Media and Entertainment Dean Ken Paulson and Recording Industry Chair Beverly Keel were in New York City to congratulate the nominees



Torrence Esmond



Wayne Haun



Jason A. Hall



Lady Antebellum



Sam Hunt



Secret Sisters



Michael Cartwright of American Addiction Centers and President Sidney A. McPhee

NCE

MTSU's connections to the 2018 Grammys and Academy of Country Music Awards run deep

by Gina K. Fann and Drew Ruble

and recognize MTSU's ties to the Grammys. It was the fifth year MTSU's held pre-Grammys events at the site of the music industry's biggest ceremony.

MTSU again partnered with the Americana Music Association for a pre-Grammys event in 2018, this time honoring The Secret Sisters, and also serving as one of the presenters of a concert salute to legendary Americana artist Emmylou Harris. McPhee hosted an MTSU Alumni Association reception before the concert, which attracted graduates from Media and Entertainment and other colleges. Attendees included alumna Carla Moore, a vice president for Home Box Office, and Jasmine Sanders, co-host of the nationally syndicated D.L. Hughley radio show.

Last, MTSU was out front at the Grammys when Fleetwood Mac was honored as this year's Person of the Year by MusiCares, the centerpiece charitable event of the Grammys. Students from MTSU's College of Media and Entertainment worked behind the scenes at the event, held at Radio City Music Hall, assisting with the silent auction, putting together the gift bags for attendees, and acting as VIP concierges.

MTSU was able to participate as a sponsor to the event thanks to the generosity of Brentwood-based American Addiction Centers (AAC), led by former MTSU student Michael Cartwright.

Later in 2018, also due to the support of AAC, a select group of MTSU students and faculty also got a behind-the-scenes look at the Academy of Country Music Awards in Las Vegas. Five Media Arts students shadowed the ACM's preparations for the national telecast of the 53rd awards, which showcased the biggest names and

emerging talent in country music. The students also visited the National Association of Broadcasters conference in Las Vegas. Cartwright and McPhee, meanwhile, announced AAC's contribution of student-centric information about substance abuse prevention and treatment that MTSU will provide students through the University's Health Promotion Office.

MTSU alum Pete Fisher ('97) is the CEO of the ACM. Fisher, who was already familiar with the impact of the college's five previous trips to the Grammy Awards, said he was glad to see the University represented in Las Vegas. "As they have done over the years at the Grammys, MTSU realizes the value of being present at these marquee events," he said. Fisher said hosting students at the ACM Awards was yet another opportunity for him to pay forward what he received as a student at MTSU. "None of this would have been possible if it weren't for the education and experiences I had at MTSU," he said. "MTSU has given me, and consequently, my family, a gift I will never be able to repay. So, I'll keep on giving, in hopes I can get close."

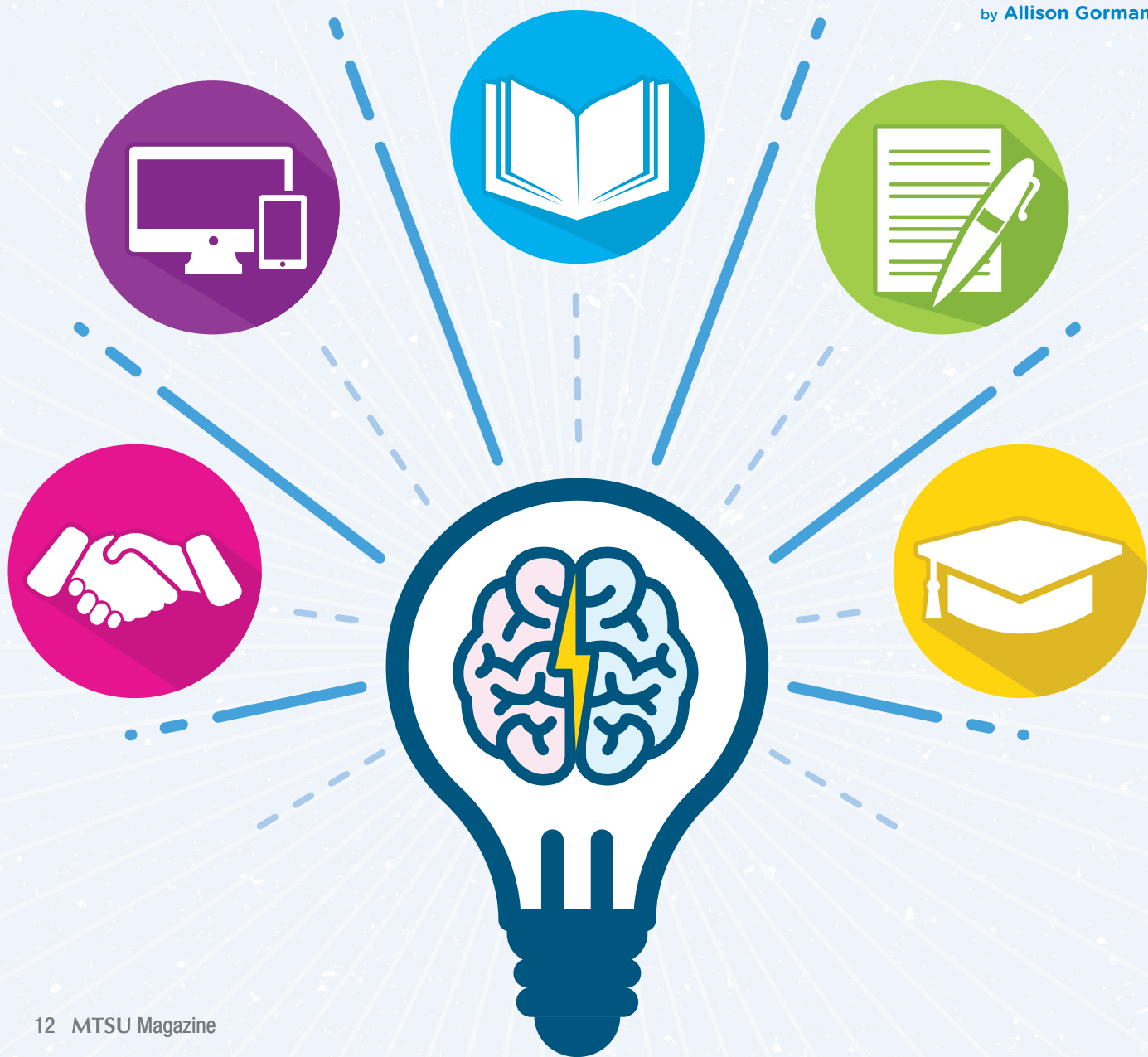
Prior to the awards show, Keel joined her two fellow co-founders of Change the Conversation (Country Music Television Senior Vice President Leslie Fram and veteran music executive Tracy Gershon) to discuss obstacles faced by women in country music. The forum at the MGM Grand Hotel and Casino featured singer/songwriter Cam. Keel said holding this event during ACM Awards weekend provided "a prominent platform that will offer female artists education and support, while creating a forum for industry leaders to work together to find solutions." **MTSU**

ON THE

LEADING EDGE

Behind the scenes, a team of innovative, tech-savvy educators are transforming MTSU into a national model for student success

by Allison Gorman



90%

When prospective Blue Raiders tour MTSU's School of Music, academic advisor Brad Baumgardner, who is also an adjunct professor in the school, delivers this challenge to their parents: "Wherever else you're going, ask the music department what their year-to-year retention rate is. If they can't tell you, they're not tracking. If they're not tracking, they don't care. Now, ask me about our retention for music majors." He waits a beat. "From fall to fall, it's 90 percent."

The phrase "90 percent retention rate" might not sound sexy, but it's music to the ears of these parents. With the cost of college, their kids can't afford not to graduate, especially if they have student debt.

Yet American universities suffer from chronic attrition. About a third of college freshmen don't return for a second year. Universities have tried various strategies to keep students on a path to graduation, but nationally the six-year completion rate hovers at 57 percent.

Attrition isn't just expensive for students. Universities take a hit too—especially in Tennessee, which in 2010 began using outcomes rather than enrollment numbers to calculate higher education funding. At that time, a 3,000-student freshman class at MTSU could expect to lose 900 students its first year. Only half the class would graduate within six years.

Suddenly, that 1,500-student exodus represented lost state funding on top of lost tuition fees.

"That clearly had an invigorating effect on our student success efforts," University Provost Mark Byrnes said. "Now the ever-decreasing amount of state funding we have is going to be based on how well we do. That was the impetus behind the Quest."

Launched by MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee in 2013, the Quest for Student Success radically rethought the University's approach to attrition. While MTSU has always targeted at-risk populations for support, the new Office of Student Success (OSS) is boosting every student's chance to succeed. Working collaboratively, the University has overhauled student advising, developed fresh options for academic help, and redesigned courses that are traditional stumbling blocks to graduation. At the same time, it's using predictive analytics—an approach more commonly associated with health care than higher ed—to fight attrition in a highly surgical way. Predictive data can help identify students who are at statistical risk of attrition even if they don't fit into traditionally "at-risk" populations. Armed with this knowledge, faculty and advisors

can watch them to spot any problems early and get them back on track.

The results of the Quest have been dramatic, and it has become a standard by which other such initiatives are measured. In 2017, MTSU was one of just 45 American universities invited to join Re-Imagining the First Year, an initiative sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to help other institutions improve their student success too.



Vice Provost Rick Sluder came to MTSU in the fall of 2014, charged with implementing the Quest for Student Success. Within months, every college in the University was reporting record persistence rates: The total number of students who had stayed in school from fall to spring beat the previous year's total by 400. By the fall of 2015, MTSU's year-to-year retention rate had increased by 3 percent to 73.7 percent, its highest level in 15 years. In fall 2016, it rose again, to 76.1 percent. The national media noticed. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, and a dozen other outlets have since profiled MTSU and its Quest for Student Success.

In 2015, MTSU received the Data-Driven Impact Award from EAB, the Washington-based consulting firm that provides data analytics. Since then, Sluder has kept MTSU on the leading edge of student success, said Lindsay Miars, a director with EAB. "Rick is my research subject because of all the cool things MTSU has been doing," she said.

As MTSU's retention numbers and national profile grow, so do the requests for Sluder and his Office of Student Success colleagues—Brian Hinote, associate professor and administrative fellow, and Vincent Windrow, associate vice provost for student success—to explain the Quest's robust results.

They credit University leadership and especially faculty and advisors, who've done much of the heavy lifting. "We're just worker bees over here," Sluder said. But he acknowledges that he, Hinote, and Windrow have camaraderie and complementary talents that serve their mission well.

Sluder, who previously managed student success initiatives at the University of Central Missouri, shares an interest in data analytics with Hinote, a Sociology professor with a background in quantitative methods, health care, and



photo: J. Intintoli

Rick Sluder, Vincent Windrow, and Brian Hinote

analytics. Hinote works with faculty and advisors; Windrow (formerly MTSU’s director of Intercultural and Diversity Affairs) oversees student support programs and encourages students to use the help available to them, among other duties.

Together, the three are taking a multifaceted approach to student success. Each facet is data-informed, reflecting best practices in higher education.

“There’s no one path to success, but there’s an old Chinese proverb, ‘The track of the previous cart is the teacher of the following cart,’” Hinote said. “Analytics helps us identify what tends to be a successful path for students.” Data can’t and shouldn’t supplant the experience of advisors or faculty, but it can give them new insights to work more effectively with students, he adds.

Pittard is one of many faculty members who use SSC Campus as a convenient reference tool when they meet with students and as a way to communicate and coordinate with students and advisors. The platform is more than a friendly interface, however. It’s also an early warning system, signaling when a student might be heading off track.

It’s well established that some student populations are vulnerable to attrition from day one. Hence the standard outreach to first-generation and Pell-eligible students, as well as freshmen with lower ACT scores. But even established college students who don’t fit any “at-risk” demographic and appear to be chugging along in school can have subtle warning signs in their academic record, Miars said. For example, sophomores and juniors with GPAs between 2.0 and 3.0 have a disproportionately high dropout rate.

“Because they’re not getting targeted support for being on probation or targeted praise for doing really well, they often get ignored by the institution,” EAB’s Miars explained.

These average students, known as “the murky middle,” can fall through the cracks before anyone notices to intervene. That’s the sort of trend EAB’s data scientists study. Pulling from 475 million course records provided by the 500 member institutions of EAB’s Student Success Collaborative, they isolate specific academic patterns linked with failure or success in college—whether that’s making a certain grade in a certain class, or taking certain classes in a certain order. Using those subtle historical trends, EAB helps universities like MTSU build predictive risk models based on a decade of their own student data.

SSC Campus, which EAB developed, can filter students by any combination of risk-related patterns or factors—academic or demographic. The results can be used to target groups of



Billy Pittard, chair of the Department of Media Arts, knows a thing or two about digital design. In early 2013, when McPhee was discussing the Quest with departmental faculty, Pittard floated his idea for a digital platform that would collect basic student information—major, advisor, GPA, transcript, contact information, photo—and aggregate it into individual student profiles. As it was, Pittard said, he could find that information “everywhere, but nowhere in one place.” He got his wish in late 2014, when MTSU unveiled a new web-based platform called SSC Campus. “When I look at a student profile . . . I get this picture of what that student’s about, what they’re struggling with, and what they’re really good at. Now I’m in a position to help them,” Pittard said.

students for communication, or to identify individual students who merit closer monitoring. For example, a first-generation student who lives off campus and made a D in History 2020 (more on that later) would have three risk factors and, thus, a moderate to high risk of attrition, Hinote said.

Predictive modeling “is not a crystal ball, but it’s good at putting us on the trail of . . . students who might be at risk of having problems,” he said.

Baumgardner, from the School of Music, said he can now help scholarship students boost a borderline grade before they lose academic eligibility. “That can be make-or-break for them,” he said. “It’s dropping out of school for 1,500 bucks.”

Baumgardner is one of 47 new advisors MTSU hired (a significant investment McPhee made during a period more marked by budget tightening) when it restructured a patchwork system that had offered mostly transactional relationships between advisors and students. So is Suzanne Hicks, an advisor in the College of Basic and Applied Sciences (CBAS), where the average advising load there dropped precipitously.

Hicks said with an ideal 300 students, she now has time to get to know her advisees and offer interventional support at the first sign of a problem. If the tough STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) curriculum still threatens to derail their graduation, she can help them recalibrate. She’s been training on Degree Works, new software that gives students a “roadmap” to graduation and lets advisors gauge the impact of changing course.

Again, external observers have taken notice. For its comprehensive use of technology to boost student success, MTSU won a \$225,000 Integrated Planning and Advising for Student Success (iPASS) grant, funded by the Gates Foundation and awarded by EDUCAUSE, a Washington nonprofit. Ana Burray, director of learning for EDUCAUSE, said, “MTSU is a fabulous example of something very well done.”



Anatomy and Physiology is traditionally a “high-DFW course”—meaning lots of D’s, F’s, and withdrawals. Few students would sit through it twice if they’d aced it the first time. But Seneka Robertson, a sophomore Exercise Science major, did just that last spring. She was a Supplemental Instruction leader, one of 36 students paid to attend high-DFW courses in which they themselves have excelled. Through voluntary review sessions, leaders help their classmates understand and retain challenging

material. Robertson attended SI sessions “all the time” when she took Anatomy as a freshman; without them, she said, she would have made a B or C.

Adopted by MTSU as part of the Quest, Supplemental Instruction is another data-informed strategy: Regular participants historically see a half- to a full-letter grade improvement on their exams. SI has worked so well at MTSU that Hinote expanded it from 21 to 70 course sections over just two years.

A big focus of SI has been predictive courses, those in which a student’s grade can forecast overall academic success, regardless of major. MTSU’s most predictive course is History 2020 Survey of United States History II, Sluder said. Some 80 percent of students who make an A graduate, compared to 40 percent of students who make a D. Hinote said it makes sense to invest SI resources in predictive courses like History 2020, which are often “gateway” courses with large enrollment streams from many majors.

RIM 3000 History of the Recording Industry doesn’t fit those criteria, but it has tripped up so many Recording Industry

Predictive modeling “is not a crystal ball, but it’s good at putting us on the trail of . . . students that might be at risk.”

—Brian Hinote

students that department chair Beverly Keel requested SI for the course. She said the peer-to-peer model has been highly effective in helping students learn the huge volume of information the required course covers.

“SI leaders are part of your class—they’re hearing the same things you are, so you can learn it and interpret it better,” Keel said. “That’s better than meeting with a tutor who’s outside your learning community.”

Biology Department chair Lynn Boyd said SI is effective, but in CBAS, the overachievers actually use it most; struggling students respond best to course-specific tutoring. “We use tutoring more than any other college,” she said.

The Office of Student Success has them covered, establishing the Tutoring Spot in Walker Library, with satellite locations that include CBAS. Specific tutoring is provided for 180 courses and is coordinated by Cornelia Wills, director of Student Success.



When Megan Berry ('17) was a freshman, early academic setbacks left her feeling “discouraged and incompetent.” But Scholars Academy, which offers mentoring, tutoring, and other support to Pell-eligible and first-generation freshmen, helped her overcome those setbacks, keep her grades up, and get involved on campus. She became an SA peer mentor, a student orientation assistant, a campus tour guide, and eventually homecoming queen. “It means the world to have a program that allows students with the odds seemingly stacked against them to feel empowered and as if they’re going to succeed at the university level,” she said.

Windrow ran Scholars Academy before he joined the OSS; since then, he’s scaled it way up, from 28 participants to 351. (His goal is 500.) Between 2013 and 2016, SA participants had an 80.9 percent first-year retention rate, seven points higher than non-participating freshmen, he said.

Nearly half of all incoming freshmen at MTSU are Pell-eligible and/or first-generation. The Quest has enabled Windrow to double down on effective programs for at-risk groups like these while developing new initiatives too. REBOUND, launched in 2015 for freshmen who “shot and missed” (making below a 2.0) their first semester, is already putting up good numbers: Participants are 50 percent more likely to return the next year than qualifying students who don’t participate.

“For many of our students, education will be the vehicle that they will place their families in to move to a different level of society.”

—Vincent Windrow, MTSU assistant vice provost

A planned initiative for black male students, who have MTSU’s lowest retention rate, will focus on assimilation. “What we know is, if they’re on the outside of the community, a slight breeze will blow them away,” Windrow said.

The Quest has only strengthened MTSU’s longstanding commitment to diversity and the long-held conviction that

MTSU has a moral responsibility to give every student the best shot at succeeding. “For many of our students, education will be the vehicle that they will place their families in to move to a different level of society,” Windrow said.

Statistically, all students benefit from a diverse population, according to a Feb. 22 report in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*: Data shows “that some of the sharpest student gains happen at regional public universities—institutions that prize opportunity above exclusivity,” it read.



For four years, the scene in Stephen Decker’s Public Speaking class played out like this: He lectured for 70 minutes, and his students fell asleep. (“The frontal lobe goes numb after about 15 minutes,” he observed.) In 2014, he “flipped” his classroom. Now, his lectures are the homework: 15-minute videos he posts online. And what used to be homework—research, group projects, outline development—happens during class, with his input. In his flipped classroom, he said, “the outlines are better, the speeches are better, the grades are better, their attitude is better.”

It was Decker’s decision to flip his classroom, but the impetus behind the change was the overarching Quest for Student Success.

Funding was provided to redesign 27 courses, among them the 10 most predictive, representing some 13,000 students, Sluder said. “That’s no small matter. If students don’t have a great experience in those courses, things go amiss from the start,” he said.

When it comes to student success, the classroom is where the rubber meets the road, according to Sluder. “You can get advisors and bring in analytics; all those things will help. But in the end, if there’s something that’s not happening in the classroom, it’s just not going to work,” he said.

As the culture of best practices takes hold, MTSU faculty have voluntarily redesigned at least 100 courses.

Which leads us to the “next big thing” in student success—something Sluder is often asked about, since data analytics is the big thing now.

“It’s faculty,” he said. “Making sure they have the support they need to do their work in the best way possible.”

Looks like MTSU is on the leading edge again. [MTSU](#)

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HIRERS

A closer look at the new head coaches of two of MTSU's nationally prominent men's athletic programs

from staff reports

A new era for Blue Raiders men's basketball began this year as Nick McDevitt (Mick-DEV-it) was selected as the 20th men's basketball head coach in MTSU school history.

"I've had the privilege of working at several major universities and never before have I had such a powerful first impression from a prospective coach," MTSU President Sidney A.

McPhee said at the time of the hiring. "I was simply blown away by Coach McDevitt's enthusiasm, his energy, and how he shares our vision and values."

McDevitt, a native of Marshall, North Carolina, arrived in Murfreesboro following a five-year stint as the head coach at the University of North Carolina–Asheville, where he led the Bulldogs to a 98–66 overall record, including three consecutive 20-win

campaigns in the last three seasons. McDevitt's Bulldogs made three consecutive postseason appearances, starting with a trip to the NCAA Tournament in 2016 before playing in the 2017 CollegeInsider.com Tournament and the 2018 National Invitation Tournament.

"We had a thorough, national search and Coach McDevitt kept rising to the top," said Chris Massaro, MTSU's director of athletics. "People all

across the country have commented on his ability to coach at a high level while recognizing how well he has recruited. He is the total package, and I think our community will embrace him because he is a great fit for Middle Tennessee.”

The 38-year-old’s run at UNC–Asheville actually first began in 1997 when the guard signed to play for the Bulldogs. Following the end of his playing career in 2001, former head coach Eddie Biedenbach immediately appointed McDevitt to his staff as an assistant coach.

After 10 years as an assistant under Biedenbach, McDevitt was elevated to associate head coach prior to the

2011–12 season and took over the head job in 2013 upon Biedenbach’s resignation.

At MTSU, McDevitt succeeds former head coach Kermit Davis, who left for Ole Miss after leading the Blue Raider program for the previous 16 years.

“This program has enjoyed many successes over the last several years under Kermit Davis’ leadership, and we’re excited to build upon and grow the program moving forward,” McDevitt said.

Davis said he’s coached against McDevitt’s teams and therefore knows that he does “a fantastic job”

with his players and is also “a great recruiter.”

“He’ll do a wonderful job, and I believe he has a personality that the Murfreesboro community will really embrace,” Davis summed up.

Beyond basketball, McDevitt was a 2017 finalist for the Skip Prosser Man of the Year Award. Named after the late Prosser, who died suddenly in 2007 while the head coach at Wake Forest, the award is presented annually to those who not only achieve success on the basketball court but who also display moral integrity off of it as well.

The New Skipper

MTSU also recently named a new baseball coach, Jim Toman, the first MT manager in 45 years to not have direct ties to the program.

“Jim Toman is nationally known for his recruiting skills, which have been on display at previous stops,” said MT Athletics director Chris Massaro at the time of the hire. “It showed as the head coach at Liberty where he won 60 percent of his games with a very selective recruiting pool available. Coach Toman was also a critical part of the dynasty that was created at South Carolina. I believe he will be a perfect fit for our baseball program, University, and community.”

Toman brings a wealth of experience and success to the Middle Tennessee program as both a head coach and top assistant in two Power 5 conferences (the ACC and SEC).

“Middle Tennessee sits in a great area for recruiting, is the largest school in the state and has tremendous facilities,” Toman said when hired. “I’m super excited to be here and can’t wait to roll my sleeves up and get to work.”

Regarded as a top-flight national recruiter, Toman fashioned a 329-205-1 record in his nine seasons as head coach at Liberty in the Big South Conference. Prior to his successful stint at Liberty, Toman spent 11 years as Ray Tanner’s top assistant at the University of South Carolina, and an additional seven seasons under Tanner at NC State.

During his career, Toman has presided over 15 Top 25 recruiting classes, including 11 consecutive during one stretch. **MTSU**



photo: Tyler Lamb

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

The 1911 Society

For MTSU nontraditional student Corbitt Huseth, the scholarships and financial assistance he received thanks to MTSU donors was critical in him being able to balance family and a graduate assistantship. He earned his degree in Exercise Science in fall 2017 and is working on finishing his master's while continuing as a graduate teaching assistant in MTSU's underwater treadmill lab, which provides treatment for those with spinal injuries. Huseth hopes to start on his Ph.D. this fall. "The fact that I did receive (a scholarship), financially was a huge impact on me," he told donors at MTSU's sixth annual 1911 Society Luncheon earlier this year. "It allowed me to work less, study more, and spend more time with my family. . . . It also allowed me to continue to work in the underwater treadmill lab, which changes lives on a daily basis." Huseth, a 29-year-old Memphis native, spent five years in the Marine Corps infantry, with three deployments that took him to the Middle East and the Asia Pacific area, before returning to the States to start a family—with a wife and now two small children—in middle Tennessee.

Two other MTSU scholars publicly gave thanks at the 1911 Society luncheon. MTSU junior Psychology major Samantha Eisenberg, from Kingston, Tennessee, is on schedule to graduate in May 2019. Eisenberg shared that she's grateful MTSU recognized that she came from a middle-class family making just enough income that paying for a college education would be challenging. MTSU scholarships helped meet that challenge while propelling her from "a shy, small-town girl into somebody really coming into her own in that leadership niche that everybody said I always could have with the right opportunity." MTSU senior Biology major Conner Moss, of Murfreesboro, graduated in May from the College of Basic and Applied Sciences and the University Honors College. He said he was fortunate to receive the Paul Martin Scholarship, as well as Honors College funding for undergraduate research. "Coming from a family of six and being one of four boys, I knew that paying for college was not going to be easy," he said. While working part time, Moss received scholarships and funding throughout his four years at MTSU that have "helped tremendously and allowed me to spend more time on my academic pursuits and to reach my career goals." After graduating from MTSU, he hopes to attend medical school and "looks forward to being able to give back to MTSU one day."

University President Sidney A. McPhee, development officers, several MTSU deans, and other top administrators joined the students April 6 at Stones River Country Club to express their appreciation for the newest members of the 1911 Society, which celebrates individuals and families who have created gifts to the University through their estate plans. The 1911 Society is named in honor of MTSU's founding year, with new members receiving a framed rendering of Kirksey Old Main. This year's new 1911 Society members included Dana J. Clegg, Dan and Zita Elrod, William Langston, Dorothy W. Potter, and George Vernardakis.



MTSU scholarship recipient Conner Moss



MTSU scholarship recipient Samantha Eisenberg

Tech Titan

Charlie Apigian, chair of MTSU's Department of Information Systems and Analytics, was recently named Community Leader of the Year by the Nashville Technology Council.

"We made a conscious effort to get out into the community to bridge the gap between employers and our students," Apigian said. "These efforts led to working with individuals, organizations, and companies in the IT community that are a pleasure to work with."



True Blue Red Cross Hero

MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee was named the 2018 recipient of the American Red Cross (Heart of Tennessee Chapter) Hero Award. The chapter covers 17 counties in the region. MTSU's partnerships with the Red Cross over the years include the University holding its ongoing traditional Bleed Blue, Beat WKU blood drive competition during the football season annually, an effort that has led to more than 7,000 pints of blood being donated since 2010. MTSU's most recent Red Cross-related effort was the Raider Relief initiative in the wake of Hurricane Maria in September 2017 that devastated Puerto Rico. With the family of former Blue Raider men's basketball standout and Puerto Rico native Raymond Cintron in need of water, food, generators, and medicines, McPhee, MTSU alumnus and board vice chair Darrell Freeman, and then-men's basketball coach Kermit Davis launched Raider Relief to raise funds and gather supplies for Raymond's family and fly them to the island in Freeman's private airplane.



President Sidney A. McPhee, right, was presented with the 2018 Hero Award by MTSU's John Hood at the Feb. 21 Heroes Breakfast by the American Red Cross Heart of Tennessee Chapter. Hood, director of community engagement and support, was the 2017 recipient of the award.



Pictured with some of their awards are MTSU Debate members Skye Irish, Steven Barhorst, Joshua Hendricks, Alex Fingerroot, Jordan Nickell, Katelyn Brooks, and Josh Tilton. photo: Jimmy Hart

Great Debate

MTSU's Debate Team experienced one of the best seasons in its more than century-long history. The team of 25 students won 148 awards over the 2017—18 season. Its accomplishments include the top national award in the International Public Debate Association team competition and a first-place finish in the varsity division at a Spokane, Washington tournament. The team also hosted a friendly competition with the Irish Times National Champions from Ireland in March. This led to a total of five top national awards, a regional championship, and two Tennessee state titles, as well as numerous individual titles in various tournaments throughout the season.



Dean Bud Fischer, (r) and Tony Johnston, director of MTSU's Fermentation Science program, are shown at the Hop Springs construction site. MTSU will oversee a hands-on laboratory there when the site opens in the fall.

Honing their Craft



Attendees of the Brewers Association's national 2018 Craft Brewing Conference in Nashville got a sneak peek in May of MTSU's Fermentation Sciences laboratory under construction at the Hop Springs agritourism destination being built by Steel Barrel Brewery in Murfreesboro. Conference-goers were offered bus rides from Nashville's Music City Center to the Hop Springs site, where they sampled Steel Barrel beers and reviewed plans for the facility. Also attending the event was state Sen. Bill Ketron, R-Murfreesboro, who sponsored legislation that enabled MTSU to create the Fermentation Science program, which opened up to students in Fall 2017.

Horse Sense

Walker Library has been making room for a substantial collection of printed books and archival materials—the Margaret Lindsley Warden Equine Collection, formerly located at MTSU’s Albert Gore Research Center, which has been described by some as one of the best equine collections assembled by a private collector. In a state that always has displayed an affinity for horses, Warden never lacked for material as an equestrian reporter and “Horse Sense” columnist for *The Tennessean* from 1939 to 1994. Warden’s trove of horse literature includes rare volumes from the 1500s to the early 1800s, numerous books from modern times, and 45 different periodical titles—some with issues dating back to the 1800s. Photography is a prominent part of the Warden collection with about 2,900 images.



Music U.

MTSU’s College of Media and Entertainment, in conjunction with the School of Music and several other campus partners, hosted the 2018 Association for Popular Music Education (APME) Conference, which attracted 175 popular music educators from throughout the nation for four days of intensive learning, demonstrations, and networking in June. Odie Blackmon, coordinator of MTSU’s Commercial Songwriting program, oversaw this year’s conference. Topics ranged from bridging classical and pop in music theory courses, to using technology in composing and producing music, to incorporating rap, Broadway, rockabilly, hip-hop, heavy metal, and world music into classes for all ages. “Roughly 25 percent of attendees are from high schools,” said Blackmon, who also is a producer, publisher, songwriter, and Grammy nominee. The APME conference was “a great opportunity to recruit” people to come to MTSU, as well as expose attendees to a host of talented workshop presenters, Blackmon said. MTSU’s Department of Recording Industry was recently listed for the fourth consecutive year on *Billboard*’s list of the nation’s top music business schools, alongside Berklee, UCLA, and New York University. The magazine highlighted MTSU’s ongoing “learning experiences” for Recording Industry students at the annual Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival in nearby Manchester.

Good Advice

Students rely on MTSU academic advisors, who work tirelessly to guide them toward a successful educational future, even if that means countless appointments, emails, and phone calls. Among those advisors is College of Liberal Arts advising manager **Lucy Langworthy**, who has been recognized nationally for her diligence with an award from the National



Academic Advising Association (NACADA). She received the 2018 Region 3 Excellence in Advising-Advising Administrator Award. Langworthy served as an MTSU advisor for nearly eight years before accepting the position of CLA advising manager in July 2014. This is the **third consecutive year** that someone from the CLA advising center has won a NACADA award. Past winners include Brad Baumgardner (2015) for the 2016 Region 3 Outstanding New Advisor Award and Matt Hibdon (2016) for Excellence in Academic Advising for Region 3.

A Sign of Excellence

The leader of MTSU’s new Africana Studies major was the recipient of the University’s highest award for minority faculty. Louis Woods, an associate professor of History, received the 2018 John Pleas Faculty Award. The Africana Studies degree program, which officially began in August, now has 19 majors, and Woods said he was excited about its progress and its future. Woods’ areas of expertise include public history, civil rights history, federal housing policy, African-American World War II naval history, and African-American veterans’ access to the G.I. Bill. The John Pleas Faculty Award was established in 1997 to honor John Pleas, a professor emeritus of Psychology and recipient of the 1999 Outstanding Teaching Award. It is presented annually to a minority faculty member who has demonstrated excellence in teaching, research, and service.



John Pleas (r) presents the award to Louis Woods

Patriot Programs



MTSU's Keith M. Huber presents a framed certificate of appreciation to Dollar General CEO Todd Vasos (l) and Bob Ravener, Dollar General executive vice president (r).

Representatives from the MTSU Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center recently presented Dollar General executives with a framed certificate, thanking and recognizing the major retailer for their strong partnership. Keith M. Huber, MTSU senior advisor for veterans and leadership initiatives, made the presentation to Dollar General CEO Todd Vasos, executive vice president and chief people officer Bob Ravener, and members of the company's military employee resource group (SERVE) at the company's corporate headquarters in Goodlettsville, Tennessee. Huber, who retired as a U.S. Army lieutenant general after a nearly 40-year career, was first introduced to Dollar General's military hiring initiatives through the company's Paychecks for Patriots program. Aimed at supporting veterans' transitions to civilian life, the program helped find meaningful employment opportunities for veterans and their families. In 2017, Huber helped form a formal partnership between MTSU and Dollar General when he spoke at Dollar General's Memorial Day ceremony at the Middle Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery in Nashville.

Heart of Service

John R. Vile (top), a Constitutional law scholar and dean of the University Honors College, and **Robert L. Owen** (bottom), a Biology major focusing on Physiology and minoring in Chemistry, were two of 10 recipients of the 2018 Harold Love Outstanding Community Service Awards. Vile's public service activities have included moderating area political forums, teaching Sunday school classes in three different churches over a period of 30 years, and leading a Bible study for immigrant families for more than 10 years. He has been a pastor and adult Sunday school teacher at Beech Grove Cumberland Presbyterian Church since November 2001. Owen, a rising senior from Murfreesboro, participated on a medical mission to rural Kenya to help lepers and a mission to Beirut, Lebanon to assist more than 700 Syrian and Iraqi refugees. This summer, Owen will perform another medical mission in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. He is a volunteer minister at his church, New Song Christian Fellowship in Nashville, and he aspires to attend medical school so that he may continue to assist the underserved at home and abroad.



The 2018 Cessna Skyhawk 172 is nose-to-nose with the MTSU Beechcraft King Air 200.

Top Hawk

MTSU Aerospace students claimed their prize—use of a new, custom-branded Cessna Skyhawk 172—as part of Textron Aviation's 2018 Top Hawk program. Six student flight instructors and Department of Aerospace administrators accepted delivery of the plane from Textron officials in April during a ceremony in the Flight Operations building at Textron headquarters at Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport in Wichita, Kansas. Elizabeth Keller and Harry Arcamuzi, two of the flight instructors, submitted MTSU's application, which was one of five chosen by Textron Aviation. Under the Top Hawk program, MTSU will utilize the plane until late September to support flight training, recruiting efforts, and promotional activities throughout the spring and summer.

Leading Indicators

MTSU's College of Media and Entertainment again made national news in April with the release of its latest political poll. Conducted twice yearly, the poll tracks attitudes regarding free expression, faith in major institutions, and a wide range of public issues. Students serve as an integral part of the poll's creation and post-analysis. The April poll garnered national attention as it revealed Tennessee—a traditionally "red" state—was leaning toward electing a Democrat to its open Senate position. In the April poll, former Tennessee Democratic Gov. Phil Bredesen held a 10-percentage-point lead over Republican U.S. Rep. Marsha Blackburn among state voters in a head-to-head contest for the seat being vacated by retiring U.S. Sen. Bob Corker.

MIDPOINTS continued on page 38

T R U E B L U E TITAN

**Professional athlete Kevin Byard ('15)
traveled a road from poverty to MTSU
to All-Pro status in the NFL** by John Glennon

WITH ONLY SECONDS REMAINING IN THEIR MOST important game of the regular season, the Tennessee Titans needed one more big play to secure their first trip to the playoffs in a decade.

It was former MTSU star Kevin Byard who delivered, stepping in front of a pass by Jacksonville Jaguars quarterback Blake Bortles and producing his second interception of the contest.

The long postseason drought for Nashville professional football had ended at last.

Byard's big moment capped a tremendous 2017 regular season for the second-year player, who tied for first in the National Football League (NFL) with eight interceptions, earned All-Pro honors, and participated in his first Pro Bowl.

"I wanted to have a great season this year, at least put myself on the map as far as people knowing who I am," Byard said. "At the end of the day, I always say if you shoot for the moon, you'll land amongst the stars."

All of Byard's accolades last season also represented the latest steps in the story of an overlooked overachiever, one who overcame a challenging family background and the doubts of every college that failed to recruit him.





Kevin Byard poses with future Blue Raiders Landon Crawford and Myles Keene during an exclusive alumni tour of Nissan Stadium.

“By the time we got to Georgia, I might have had 100-something dollars left. I was scared, very afraid.”

—Artina Stanley, Byard’s mother

He could have fallen off track as a young teenager, when he was forced to play a father-figure role for five younger siblings. He could have faltered during his senior year in high school, when he was snubbed by nearly every college.

Instead, Byard adjusted and excelled so well that he became an all-conference player at MTSU and now is already recognized as one of the NFL’s best safeties.

“A lot of people come from a tough background, a tough upbringing, and a tough home life,” MTSU football coach Rick Stockstill said. “Some use that as an excuse. They’ll say, ‘Well, I didn’t have this. I didn’t have that.’ They let their situation define them.

“But Kevin Byard was the complete opposite. He was never going to use his own upbringing—or anything he didn’t have growing up—as a crutch or as an excuse.”

Crying All the Way to Georgia

The second-oldest of seven siblings, Byard’s life took quite a turn following his mother’s divorce in 2007.

Artina Stanley, Byard’s mother, packed up her big family and drove a U-Haul to Atlanta, where she could start a new life and get more athletic exposure for Byard, who was already showing signs of becoming a very good football player. In addition, one of Stanley’s best friends lived in the area.

“We all cried the whole way to Georgia, but I felt in my gut it was just the right thing to do,” Stanley said. “By the time we got to Georgia, I might have had 100-something dollars left. I was scared, very afraid.”

Stanley settled her family of eight in the finished basement of a friend,

and within a couple of weeks, she landed a job as a waitress.

But because she worked from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., Byard and his older brother, Kavonne, took on parental roles at home—even as they attended high school and played football.

“(Kavonne) had to pick up one of his baby sisters at day care every day,” Stanley said. “Kevin would be at home straightening up the house or making sure his little sisters and brothers had lunch, or possibly preparing dinner or whatever. They had to do all this between the time they were dismissed from school and when they had to go back to practice at 4 o’clock. They had to do this before they could do anything else.”

Byard wasn’t always thrilled with his new responsibilities, but he accepted them, understanding how important his role was in keeping a semblance of order to the family.

“I was just 14 going on 15, so being that age, you really want to be a teenager,” Byard said. “You want to go out there and do the different things that everybody else is doing, but you’ve got to make that sacrifice.

“You’ve got to change from being a teenager. You can’t go out. You have to come home and make sure the house is clean. That was pretty much the biggest change for me, doing stuff that I didn’t want to do. But it was something I had to sacrifice for me and my mother.”

Byard’s mother often worked two or three jobs, taking part-time gigs at another restaurant and at an insurance company. But there were times her income, as well as the support of Byard’s father, wasn’t enough to pay the rent. The family was evicted seven times in nine years, and Byard figures he moved three or four times during his high school years alone.

“When I look back at that time, it was definitely the most adverse time in my life—my mom moving with little to no

money, and my oldest brother and I having to be caretakers for my little brothers and sisters,” Byard said. “But it’s definitely something I feel like groomed me into the man I am today and into being responsible at a young age. It definitely helped me grow up fast.”

Playing with a Chip on His Shoulder

As he neared high school graduation, Byard wasn’t getting a lot of recruiting attention from big-name schools. But, oddly enough, two Southeastern Conference (SEC) football programs played a role in his winding up at MTSU.

Kentucky was the lone SEC school that—near the end of the recruiting process—finally showed interest in him. Byard planned to sign with the Wildcats, but Kentucky pulled its offer at the last minute, choosing to use that scholarship for a more-heralded athlete who withdrew an earlier commitment to Alabama.

The turn of events meant Byard would sign with the Blue Raiders, who had been smart enough to recognize his potential.

“I’m sure if Kentucky had given him that offer, that’s where he would have ended up going,” Stockstill said. “So we were holding our breath a little bit there at the end, hoping we could get him. We were very happy when Kentucky didn’t make him an offer.”

Byard redshirted during his first season at MTSU, but he was still the kind of player that could be found in the weight room or in the football office, where he watched film on his own or with Blue Raiders coaches.

“He took it serious from the day he got here,” Stockstill said. “Some guys do that. Some, well, it takes them a couple years. But he had a great focus, a great mental intensity from the day he got on campus.”

Added Byard: “I always had great coaches and great mentors. They were always putting that picture in my head that as long as you continue to work and keep doing



He had a great focus, a great mental intensity from the day he got on campus.



Byard: By the Numbers

MTSU Career

1st in Interceptions (19)
1st in Interception Return Yards (377)
1st in Interception Return Touchdowns (4)
6th in total tackles (312)
In 49 career game played, he forced or gained 25 turnovers (19 INTs, 5 FF, 1 FR).

Titans Career

32 games
145 tackles (106 solo)
1 sack
8 interceptions

the things you're doing, you have a bright future. I bought into that."

It didn't take long for Byard to make an impact once he finally got on the field. He intercepted four passes during his redshirt freshman season, 11 over the next two years, and finished with a total of 19—setting a school record. Byard's effort and production stemmed in part from the perceived snub he'd felt at the hands of many college recruiters.

Blue Raider Kevin Byard played in the Bahamas Bowl with MTSU.



"I felt that I was better than other people thought I was, but I knew I had to play with a chip on my shoulder," Byard said. "I was always comparing myself to the top safeties in the conference and the league, knowing I had to be better than them."

A Titan-Size Step Forward

Byard didn't let his football focus overtake his studies, however, evidenced by the fact he earned his MTSU bachelor's degree in Liberal Studies in the spring of 2015.

"That was probably the most important goal I set when I went to college was graduating with my degree," Byard said. "It was very important to me because I was actually the first guy out of my immediate family to graduate. My oldest brother graduated a few weeks later. But it was

definitely something I'm very proud of, something I'll always remember."

A year later, following his final season with the Blue Raiders, Byard received another football snub reminiscent of his earlier days.

Though he had twice been named to the All-Conference USA first team and been invited to the Senior Bowl, Byard wasn't included among the 60 defensive backs invited to the NFL Scouting Combine. That's where scouts, coaches, and general managers traditionally review the college game's top talent.

But that didn't stop teams like the Titans from visiting Byard on the MTSU campus, where general manager Jon Robinson, then-head coach Mike Mularkey, former

I'd say the most important things I gained there were all the life messages and friendships

defensive coordinator Dick LeBeau, and Titans scouts worked him out.

They wanted to not only know how fast Byard ran and how high he jumped, but what kind of character the player had.

It might have been one of the easier recommendations Stockstill ever delivered.

"I told them what a mature young man Kevin was and how he'd handled himself like a professional since he got here," Stockstill said. "I was proud that Kevin hadn't used what he didn't have growing up as an excuse. He didn't let that define him."

The Titans clearly liked what they saw, selecting Byard in the third round of the 2016 NFL Draft with the 64th overall pick.

He flashed potential as a rookie in 2016, starting seven games and contributing 63 tackles. But that was nothing compared to what Byard showed when he became a full-time starter in 2017. He intercepted multiple passes in three games—totaling three against the Cleveland Browns—and

led the entire NFL with 10 takeaways (he also had two fumble recoveries).

It was a giant step forward for Byard in just his second season.

“I think his range really improved—getting from point A to point B a lot faster and making plays off that,” Titans linebacker Wesley Woodyard said. “But I think overall, he’s taken the next step in his game mentally—

I’ve grown up a lot just as a player and even as a person. My confidence has grown.

knowing the playbook better and knowing what plays are coming.”

Added Byard: “I’ve grown up a lot just as a player and even as a person. My confidence has grown. I think you can see it from the stats of this year. But at the end of the day, I have to set even higher goals for myself next year, try to get to double-digit interceptions, try to get even better.”

A True Blue Ambassador

One of the first things Byard did with his NFL money was move his mother and the remainder of the family into better living conditions. He’s been paying the rent on their new home for the last couple of years.

“Things are definitely a lot different,” Byard said. “It feels good to have that security, especially being back home and knowing my mother doesn’t have to move if she doesn’t want to.”

He’s also serving as an informal resource for MTSU’s players, especially those who might be seeking advice about the draft or signing with an agent as they move toward an NFL career. For instance, star MTSU wide receiver Richie James, who was drafted into the NFL this past spring, credited Byard with making him a better player and more prepared for the next level.

Stockstill and Byard remain in close contact, texting one another throughout the season with congratulations or good-luck messages.

In the summer, Byard regularly works out at MTSU’s facilities in Murfreesboro. And when the Titans’ bye week coincides with a Blue Raiders home game, Stockstill knows to expect a visit from Byard.

“I have a ton of respect for Kevin Byard,” Stockstill said. “I appreciate his friendship. It’s one I’ll have for the rest of my life. He’s a great ambassador for our football program and our University.”

NASHVILLE RAIDER

While Kevin Byard made the biggest splash among former MTSU football players with the Titans last season, he wasn’t the only Blue Raider to make an impact. Linebacker Erik Walden, a four-year starter at MTSU in 2004–07, also played a key role on a Titans team that reached the playoffs for the first time in a decade.

Walden, who had played for Kansas City, Miami, Green Bay, and Indianapolis before signing with the Titans in 2017, said he’s “still having fun, doing what I love to do, so I can’t really complain. Having played college ball 30 miles down the road just kind of made everything that much better.”

Walden says he stays in regular contact with MTSU head coach Rick Stockstill, who took over the Blue Raiders program before Walden’s junior season. Stockstill said Walden was one of the veterans who helped the coach make a smooth transition into his new job. “When you come in as a new coach and you’re taking over a program, you really rely on the upperclassmen to help you establish the culture that you want,” Stockstill said. “Erik was a big part of our early success. I really leaned on him from a leadership standpoint.”

One of Walden’s most productive seasons was 2016 in Indianapolis, where he recorded a career-best 11 sacks for the Colts. That led to last season’s one-year contract with the Titans, when Walden notched 44 tackles, four sacks, and five tackles for loss. Walden became a free agent in 2018, but he has every intention of playing his 11th season in the league somewhere.

Walden said the time he spent at MTSU was essential in shaping the player and person he is today. “I’d say the most important things I gained there were all the life messages and friendships, and just being accountable, not only on the field but off, for my kids and my family,” Walden said. “It kind of molded me into the man I am today—each and every experience—and I thank God for it.”



EXPANDING CBHS

MTSU and the state combine funds for a much-needed new academic building for the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences

from staff reports

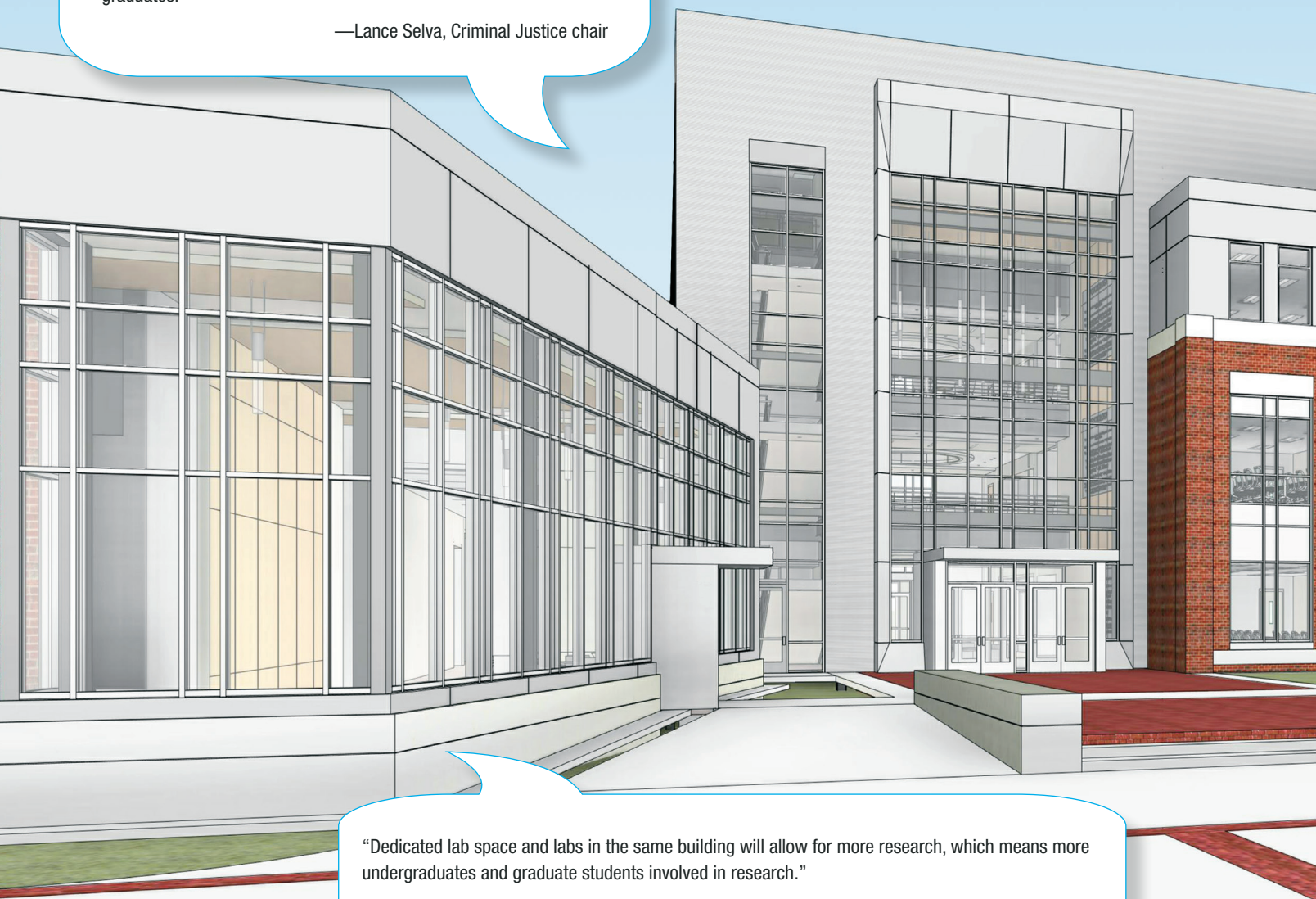
“One of the primary centers of our new building will be a simulation fusion center that will offer students opportunities in homeland security operations, emergency management operations, and responses in disaster relief operations. These are areas of increasing importance and will increasingly provide employment opportunities for our graduates.”

—Lance Selva, Criminal Justice chair

MTSU will soon construct a \$38 million new academic classroom building for MTSU's College of Behavioral and Health Sciences.

The MTSU building, which previously ranked No. 1 on the higher education priority list by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, was among \$94.8 million in capital outlay projects that Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam recommended for the state's universities, community colleges, and technical colleges in his 2018–19 budget.

The building will bring together the college's departments of **Criminal Justice**, **Psychology**, and **Social Work**, which offer highly related, integrative programs now located in multiple buildings across the campus, to allow for greater collaboration. The dean's office will move there as well.



“Dedicated lab space and labs in the same building will allow for more research, which means more undergraduates and graduate students involved in research.”

—Greg Schmidt, Psychology chair

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC CLASSROOM BUILDING

MURFREESBORO TENNESSEE

B A U E R A S K E W
a r c h i t e c t u r e . p l l c

It also will provide critically needed classrooms, offices, and **lab space** for CBHS and its programs (EEG, Eye Tracker, and Whisper Rooms for neuroscience, sensation and perception, and cognitive research; dedicated labs for collecting questionnaire and other data; and computer labs specifically for teaching undergraduate and graduate stats, as well as data collection).

The building, to be located between the Student Union Building and the Tennessee Livestock Center, is scheduled for completion by the **Fall 2020 semester**.

The recommendation actually provided \$35.1 million in state funding, therefore requiring the University to raise \$2.9 million through other sources.

The schematic design for the new, three-story building is presented here. The appointed designer is Bauer Askew, while Turner Construction is the construction manager/general contractor for the project. **MTSU**

“The Department of Social Work is looking forward to our new, cohesive home. Due to the greater number of classrooms available, we will have more flexibility in scheduling classes, which will benefit student schedules and faculty workloads. Students will have much better access to spaces outside of class that will facilitate their interaction with each other and with faculty, and give them a better opportunity to be comfortable as they meet, read, study, and relax before and between classes. The new, interconnected location of the Department of Social Work and the faculty offices will make it easier for students to be familiar with and locate their professors in order to access us for help with coursework and professional advising.”

— John Sanborn, Social Work interim chair



SEEING beyond THE WALL

One of MTSU's newest educational centers demystifies Chinese culture for MTSU students and local citizens alike

by Skip Anderson

The outgoing voicemail message on Mei Han's phone is different than that of most faculty of MTSU's School of Music. She begins with a personalized message: "You have reached the office of . . ." But the unexpected difference comes at the end of the message, right at the moment you might expect to hear the "beep." That's when Han repeats the message in Mandarin Chinese, her native tongue.

Another key difference that sets Han, an associate professor of Music and an ethnomusicologist, apart from her faculty colleagues, is that she spends significantly less time in the Wright Music Building in the heart of campus. Instead, she most often works in the Miller Education Center that opened two years ago a few blocks west of campus, where she serves as director of MTSU's Center for Chinese Music and Culture (CCMC), a program that launched in March 2016.

Inside the CCMC are classrooms, performance space, a library, and a veritable cache of beautiful Chinese musical instruments—some vintage, some contemporary, some stringed, others percussive or woodwinds—all of which are intended to draw MTSU students into a rich, exotic-to-Westerners culture that spans thousands of years. They also serve to contextualize the lessons Han teaches. Everywhere she looks, Han sees connections to her motherland of China. Sometimes

it's in those beautiful musical instruments designed to play the music of a faraway land, and other times it's in the photos of visiting musicians who traveled to Murfreesboro from halfway around the world at her invitation to participate in meaningful cultural exchanges with MTSU students.

Toward that end, Han points to her lecture on Chinese opera as an example of how she uses class time to demystify elements of Chinese culture to her mostly American students.

"Some people say Chinese operas sound squeaky. But to me, that's an out-of-date and misinformed perception," Han said. "Of course, the singers are high-pitched, but there's an underlying understanding of the culture that explains why. And that often goes overlooked in the West."

Chinese operas developed long ago from a folk tradition and were associated with the celebration of the Chinese New Year—and the famous Chinese dragons that Westerners often identify with the related celebrations.

"Long ago in the old time, China was an agricultural society, and people believed you needed to please dragons to ensure you would have enough rain to bring the harvest," Han said. "So, to please the dragon, you needed to have a lot of loud sounds like gongs and bells. And those sounds were

photo: Andy Heidt



represented in our operas, so the singer had to sing in a higher pitch to break through that accompaniment.”

There’s another reason, too, she explains. And it’s less related to folklore.

“In the Old China, the women were not allowed to go out of the house. Their feet were bound, and they definitely were not allowed to perform in public,” Han said. “So women’s roles in opera were played by men who would tighten their throats to get that sound to sound like a female.”

“For me, the center brings the information that represents the history and the current Chinese music in its cultural context, and also in a more informed environment.”

Just like that, Han peeled back the curtain on a signature trait of Chinese opera by contextualizing the culture of “Old China,” as she calls it. And, at its core, this exemplifies the mission of the Center for Chinese Music and Culture.

“For me, the center brings the information that represents the history and current Chinese music in its cultural context, and also in a more informed environment,” Han said. “Lots of Chinese musicians who come to the West do so to ‘promote’ Chinese music; I don’t like the use of the term ‘promote.’ I am here—and the Center for Chinese Music and Culture is here—to *share* Chinese

music. We're not here to promote it. Promoting is something a salesperson does. Sharing is different. Sharing is giving of something you love and want others to have, too, if they'd like to have it."

Han was born into a military family in Beijing, a city of nearly 25 million people located in northeastern China near the intersection of the Xishan and Yanshan mountain ranges to the northwest and the Bohai Sea 100 miles to the southeast. As a young girl, Han learned to play the violin. However, she wasn't inspired by it. The instrument that would become her passion—and soon her ticket to see the world—was the zheng, a 21-string instrument that, to some, may resemble a harp that's lying on its side. However, it's more closely related to the German instrument called a zither, Han said.

“Lots of Chinese musicians who come to the West do so to ‘promote’ Chinese music. . . . I am here—and the Center for Chinese Music and Culture is here—to share Chinese music.”

“My first instrument was the violin. But after six months, I knew that was an instrument that I didn't want to continue playing,” Han said. “I was drawn to the Chinese zheng—it was not popular at all at the time. This was in the early 1970s during the Cultural Revolution. Very few people even knew this instrument existed. It may look like a harp to some, but it sounds much different from the harp as the pitches can be bent, and its five-tone scale sounds like flowing water.”

Han was exceptionally good at playing the zheng. So good, in fact, that she toured parts of China as part of an ensemble. This, of course, would have been strictly taboo, if not outright forbidden, in “Old China.” However, a pivotal cultural movement was under way that shed many of the gender-based restrictive norms of “Old China.” This opened the world to the talented young musician, who would soon travel the world and eventually settle in the creative mecca of Vancouver, Canada, 150 miles due north of Seattle. Han married Randy Raine-Reusch, an acclaimed composer and pioneer of world music. She taught at Kenyon College in Ohio before joining MTSU in 2015.

Han continues her work of shedding light on the rich Chinese culture and musical heritage for MTSU students—and drawing connections to Tennessee when she can. Toward that end, Grammy-winning banjo virtuoso Abigail



Washburn spoke at MTSU's Chinese center in February 2017. Washburn, who is married to musician Béla Fleck and has traveled extensively throughout China, discussed “Bridging Cultures through Language and Music” as part of the center's celebration of the Chinese New Year.

Another surprising connection Han makes to students in her classes is to the dulcimer family of instruments that many believe to be indigenous to east Tennessee.

“The hammer dulcimer is a Chinese instrument as well,” Han said.

Interest in the hammer dulcimer, Han said, traveled from China, into the Middle East, up into Europe, and eventually to North America, where it became a particularly influential instrument in the Appalachian region of east Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina.

Some viewed the opening of the Center for Chinese Music and Culture in 2016 with skepticism, as it is partially funded by the Chinese government. It was launched through an initial \$1 million grant from Hanban Confucius Institute, an organization sponsored by China's education ministry that oversees similar cultural centers in hundreds of colleges and universities worldwide.

MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee has no such concern. McPhee, whose deep personal and professional connections to Chinese institutions of higher learning stretch across nearly two decades of frequent travel there, has long espoused the value of education exchanges between China and MTSU. The veracity of that opinion, arguably, is embedded in the richness of the MTSU student experience.

“We're in our fourth semester operating the new center,” Han said. “And the students seem to enjoy it very much. They say rather than watching a YouTube video or hearing a recording of Chinese music, they're touching the instruments and watching a live performance. It's interactive teaching. And the information they receive is a lot more alive.” [MTSU](#)

PANGEA

An uplifting journey through time and space



Friday, September 22, 8 p.m.
Hinton Music Hall,
Wright Music Building

Presented by MTSU Center
for Chinese Music and Culture

Drawing from centuries of cultures migrating across the Silk Road, PANGEA weaves a rich musical tapestry derived from the vibrant music traditions of Mongolia, China, Central Asia, and Spain. The deeply passionate vocals of guitarist Erkin Abdulla highlighted by the soaring erhu of multi-instrumentalist Hong Wang, dance over the lush soundscapes of Alberto Chang's keyboards. This evocative and beautiful music demonstrates the potential of the human spirit to seek beyond cultural distinctions to seek an inner harmony common to all.



FINAL REPORT OF THE FIRST MURFREESBORO FESTIVAL OF CHINESE ARTS 首届墨菲斯堡中国艺术节结项报告



MARCH 25 2018 2018年3月25日



Discovery in a Single Tone



箫——次 Mingshi Issai
ichigenkin (one-string zither)

Elizabeth Brown and Ralph Samuelson
shakuhachi (end-blown bamboo flute)

比竹笛 Zhuosong Du
xiao (end-blown bamboo flute)

王安妮 Zini Wang
qin (seven-string zither)

MIDDLE
TENNESSEE
STATE UNIVERSITY
Center for Chinese
Music and Culture

Friday, October 20, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.
Trout Theater, Belmont University, Nashville

Saturday, October 21, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.
St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Murfreesboro

This concert is presented by the MTSU Center for Chinese Music and Culture.



The Center of It All

The Center for Chinese Music and Culture, the first and only center of its kind in North America, opened at MTSU in March 2016.

The 3,200-square-foot facility includes a library, an archive, classrooms, and a musical instrument gallery and serves as a central hub for promoting not only Chinese music and culture but also language, business, and trade.

MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee, who has visited China every year since 1999, highlighted the educational component of the center as a stimulus for classroom learning.

The center also “designs curricula that includes Chinese music as an integral part of the general education offerings reaching more than 3,000 MTSU undergraduate students,” McPhee said.

Center director Mei Han noted that chances to appreciate her own culture during her youth in China were limited, but expanded greatly during her time in the West.

“The experience of learning about different cultures and opportunities to interact with people from other cultures is very powerful,” Han said. “It nurtures minds, deepens human connections, and sparks innovation. Life becomes richer and more meaningful.”

At the time of the opening of the center, Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam stated: “Facilities like this can play a tremendous role in building bridges between different and diverse cultures, fostering greater understanding, and spotlighting mutual opportunities for educational and economic growth.”

The center has established regular public visits by local and regional public schools, seniors groups, and other interested organizations, while also taking Chinese music education to various middle Tennessee school districts.

“The experience of learning about different cultures and opportunities to interact with people from other cultures is very powerful. It nurtures minds, deepens human connections, and sparks innovation. Life becomes richer and more meaningful.”

More than a repository for indigenous instruments, the center collaborates with programs at MTSU, including those offered by the School of Music, College of Liberal Arts, and College of Media and Entertainment.

For more information about the Center for Chinese Music and Culture, visit mtsu.edu/chinesemusic.



photo: Andy Heidt



photo: J. Intintoli



photo: Andy Heidt

GREEN GOLD

MTSU signs an international pact to study, develop, and promote Tennessee-grown herbal products for sale in Asia and other emerging markets

This past spring, President Sidney A. McPhee traveled to China with state Sen. Bill Ketron, R-Murfreesboro, and businessman Paul Martin, the first graduate of MTSU's Honors College. The trip was organized by and in support of MTSU's Confucius Institute. The highlight of the trip occurred in Nanning, where McPhee announced the creation of a new institute in concert with the Guangxi Botanical Garden of Medicinal Plants, MTSU's primary research partner in China. In the agreement, the Tennessee Center for Botanical Medicine Research at MTSU agreed to create a joint ginseng institute in partnership with Guangxi to study, develop, and promote Tennessee-grown herbal products for sale in Asia and other emerging markets. The new **International Ginseng Institute**, with MTSU researcher and associate professor Iris Gao serving as its American director, will spin off from the Tennessee Center for Botanical Medicine Research at MTSU, which will continue to work with the garden on other projects.

"This collaboration between MTSU, the Guangxi Botanical Garden, and business and industry is pioneering and a model for other types of collaborations between our countries," McPhee said.

Miao Jianhua, director of the Guangxi Botanical Garden of Medicinal Plants, said the garden plans to spend the equivalent of about \$30 million in U.S. dollars for the construction in August of a new lab at the Nanning complex to support the effort. The garden has been designated **one of China's top 10 research facilities in funding priority**. He also outlined the garden's plans to hire up to 130 researchers and staff devoted to the institute.

Ginseng, an over-the-counter supplement used to boost the immune system, was one of the first herbs from traditional Chinese medicine to be widely used. It is popular with those suffering from colds or flu or whose immune systems are suppressed, such as cancer patients. Tennessee, Kentucky, and North Carolina

are the top three states among the 19 that can legally harvest and trade ginseng in the United States.

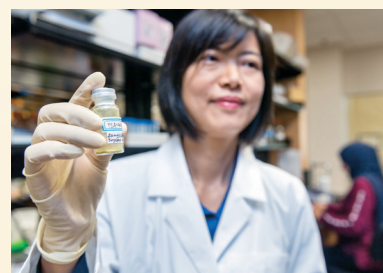
McPhee was accompanied at the signing by two local businessmen, Ted LaRoche and Edward Chiles, whose **Greenway Herbal Projects** firm has given \$2.5 million toward MTSU's herbal research. Martin arranged for the first contribution to the new institute: a \$2,500 check from the **Walter and Edith Loebenberg Foundation**. The University's pursuit of the study of ginseng goes back to 2013, when Ketron encouraged MTSU to use its China ties and research expertise to help Tennessee farmers add ginseng as a cash crop. The senator also helped gain state funding in November 2013 for a demonstration plot on the MTSU campus.

Other highlights of the trip to China included:

- Lectures at Guangxi University and Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine (the two universities agreed to look for ways to sync up with the institution, especially given the creation of the International Ginseng Institute) in Nanning, North China University of Technology, Hangzhou Normal University (MTSU's partner in the operation of the Confucius Institute), and Hunan Normal University. The lectures serve as part of an effort to share American culture with high-ability students considering potential study-abroad opportunities.
- Attendance at the annual meeting of the MTSU Confucius board with Hangzhou officials. Leaders from both universities discussed potential joint research, new scholarships for Chinese students to attend MTSU, and ways to showcase MTSU's Center for Chinese Music and Culture in Murfreesboro.
- A meeting with Hangzhou alumnus and Chinese business magnate Jack Ma, founder and executive chairman of the Alibaba Group. Ma, who is also chair of Alibaba Business School at the Hangzhou university. [MTSU](#)



From staff reports



Iris Gao of MTSU's Tennessee Center for Botanical Medicine Research





STEM Stars

Thomas Jones, a 17-year-old junior from Stratford STEM Magnet High School, already has a contract with Microsoft for a game he created called *Blanco: The Color of Adventure*. At the sixth annual Middle Tennessee STEM Expo, held in April at MTSU's Student Union

Ballroom, Jones showed off his "Conceptual Forensic Retrieval System," an educational

tool for children. He was among more than 600 students from across the mid-state taking part in the expo that showcases the fifth- through 12th-graders' recent STEM projects. "Pet Zoomer," "The Quick Feet Baseball Cleat," and "Energy Drinks vs. Orange Juice" were just a sampling of other project titles.

Cruising Altitude

The Civil Air Patrol's National Engineering Technology Academy returned to MTSU in June. About 40 cadets from across the nation were selected on a competitive basis for the week-long national cadet activity, sponsored by the MTSU College of Basic and Applied Sciences. The academy relocated from Auburn University to MTSU in 2017. In addition, for the third consecutive year this summer, MTSU hosted the weeklong cadet encampment for the Tennessee Wing of Civil Air Patrol. The event attracts about 100 youth between the ages of 12 to 21 eager to benefit from MTSU's world-class Aerospace faculty and facilities, including this year its one-of-a-kind, 360-degree air traffic control flight simulator. The Civil Air Patrol's close ties to MTSU stretch back to 1948 when CAP's Middle Tennessee State College Squadron was organized.

Taking the Reins

The MTSU equestrian team finished in a tie for third place at the recent Intercollegiate Horse Shows Association National Championships in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. It marks the first time in five years the Blue Raider riders qualified as a team in the Western (horsemanship and reining) category, allowing riders of all levels and abilities—from beginner with no show experience to ones having success at a high level—to compete as a team. MTSU took four individuals and six Western team riders to the nationals, which includes more than 400 teams and nearly 9,000 competitors. To advance, MTSU had to place in the top three in the regional.



Young Einsteins

Young Middle Tennessee inventors apparently have developed quite the reputation among national Invention Convention leaders and participants. "Tennessee grows some really, really smart kids," Juli Shively, senior director of outreach for the STEMIE Coalition's National Invention Convention and Entrepreneurship Expo, told more than 800 fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade geniuses attending MTSU's 26th annual Invention Convention. Each year, the youngsters create and present inventions from one of two categories—Games and Make Our Lives Easier—and compete for trophies, ribbons, and cash awards. Local winners made their mark on the last two years' National Invention Conventions in Washington, D.C., too, bringing home multiple national honors that include the 2016 Stanley Black and Decker's "Cool Tool" Award and the 2017 Henry Ford Student Innovators of the Year. The record 800-plus students from 51 mid-state schools, who developed their ideas for months, hauled more than 430 unique gadgets, contraptions, and devices into MTSU's Student Union to present to judges and await the results. State Farm Insurance is the longtime local sponsor of MTSU's annual Invention Convention.



Top Ranks

- The Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, the premier professional organization in the field, ranked **MTSU's Industrial/Organizational Psychology master's program tops in the nation**. The society published its final rankings in the spring 2018 issue of *The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist*. I/O psychology is currently the fastest growing occupation in the country, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. MTSU's program is affiliated with the Center for Organizational and Human Resource Effectiveness (COHRE), an independent consulting unit that offers valuable experience to MTSU's I/O Psychology students. Some of the clients COHRE have served since its 2003 inception include Goodwill Industries, Nissan, Procter & Gamble, State Farm, Cracker Barrel, and several local, state, and federal governmental agencies.
- MTSU's veterans-support program made another appearance in the *Military Times* Best: Colleges 2018 ranking by Vienna, Virginia-based *Military Times*. It represents the sixth straight time MTSU has received the honor, formerly known as Best for Vets, and first time the University has cracked the top 50. MTSU leaped to **49th out of 140** four-year schools on the 2018 list after being 75th out of 130 four-year schools selected in 2017. The University ranked 65th out of 125 schools in 2016 and 94th out of 100 in 2015. The only other Tennessee school making the 2018 list was the University of Tennessee–Chattanooga, selected 114th overall.
- Among America's Psychology bachelor's degree programs that are available online, collegechoice.net places MTSU **30th in the nation**. MTSU's 38-hour online Psychology major can be completed totally by computer, which is particularly convenient for working nontraditional students and students with children.
- MTSU ranks in the **top 20 nationally** in the affordability of its online master's degree in Library Science, according to College Choice, a leading authority in data-driven college and university rankings and resources. College Choice put **MTSU's Master of Library Science program at No. 12**. The College of Education's M.L.S. program is the only online program in Tennessee that made the top 20. The flexibility the program offers by being 100 percent online, along with its affordability, allows educators from across the state the ability to pursue a different, but still strongly related, career path whenever they are ready to do so, with minimal disruption to their professional and personal lives.

Harnessing Big Data

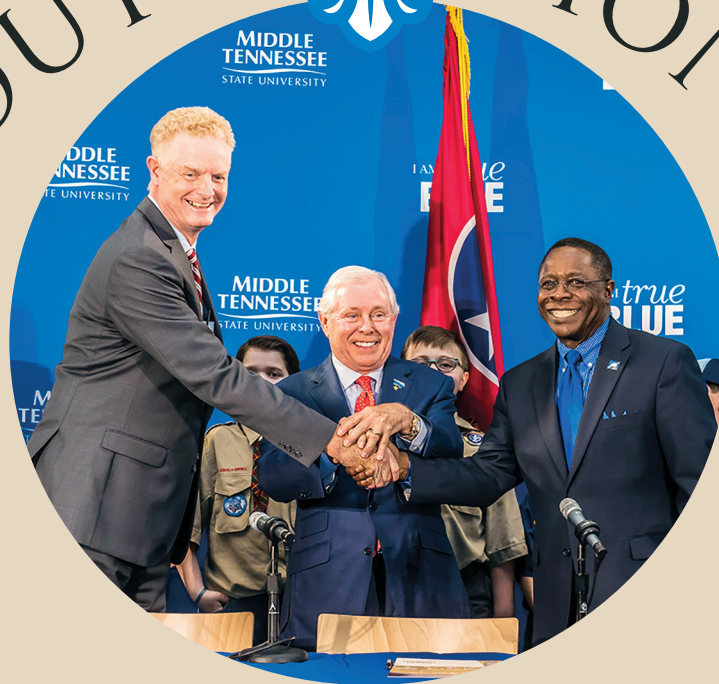
Mars colonization? Self-driving cars in the mid-state? Integrated health care databases? All are big topics that require "big data" to address. And they will be among research areas explored initially by MTSU's new **Data Science Institute**, launched earlier this year with a mission to promote funded interdisciplinary research and develop public and private collaborations around the emerging field of big data. "The trend to gather more data has become more prevalent over the last 10 years, whether it be your Twitter or Facebook feed, or just data that companies are able to collect," said Charlie Apigian, interim director of the institute and department chair of Information Systems and Analytics in MTSU's Jones College of Business. "The problem is many companies don't know how to analyze and bring that together to make good business decisions. So in the last few years, data science has become more at the forefront to be able to add more business value and to be able to make better decisions using data." The Data Science Institute at MTSU will seek to create opportunities for faculty and students to collaborate on interdisciplinary research; bring in substantial grants and funding for interdisciplinary data projects; and establish big data partnerships and projects with companies and other external entities. The interdisciplinary nature of the institute is critical because a given big data project could require the expertise of faculty from disciplines ranging from agribusiness and sociology to chemistry and information systems.



Pathway to Success

Motlow State Community College and MTSU signed an agreement earlier this year that highlights the pathways for Motlow students with associate degrees to move seamlessly to the four-year university. The agreement, signed on Motlow's Smyrna campus with MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee, was one of the first official actions by new Motlow President Michael L. Torrence. MTSU is the No. 1 transfer destination for students in Tennessee, and more Motlow students transfer to MTSU than to any other four-year institution in the state.

SCOUT'S HONOR



by Randy Weiler

MTSU Trustee J.B. Baker spearheads a novel new effort to connect the University to local Scouting programs

MTSU and the Middle Tennessee Council of the Boy Scouts of America (MTCBSA) signed a partnership earlier in 2018 that will allow the University to be a greater resource for Scouting programs, particularly in science and technology. And, in doing so, the University will gain an opportunity to reach and recruit prospective students from the council, which serves 37 Middle Tennessee counties and Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee was joined by former MTCBSA President J.B. Baker, who is now a member of the University's Board of Trustees, and Scout Executive Larry Brown in signing the memorandum of understanding (MOU). The council, based in Nashville, has more than 18,600 youth and their families participating in programs. It has been the fastest-growing of 270 nationwide councils the past two years, charting a 24-percent increase since 2015.

"What a great group of potential students for MTSU," McPhee said. "I'd like to see MTSU become the undergraduate and graduate choice for not only the council's Scouts, but also their parents and leaders who may be looking for a higher education option."

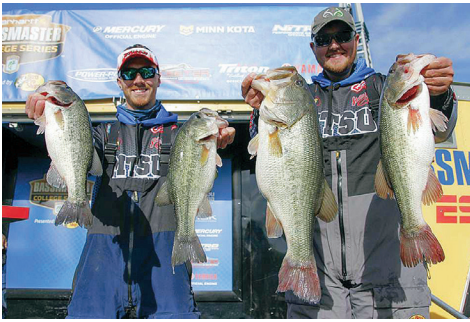
Baker, a Nashville resident and owner and CEO of Sprint Logistics, is an Eagle Scout who has served on various council committees. He now serves as a council trustee.

"It's personal for me," Baker said. "The MOU is great. It's a well-worded document—allowing the two parties to work together in collaboration and in purpose."

While the partnership signed in March is new, Brown said "hundreds of thousands of Scouts in the Middle Tennessee Council have benefited from a strong partnership with MTSU since 1920," citing numerous projects and activities that have impacted generations of Scouts.

The new agreement puts into play the educational resources of MTSU's College of Basic and Applied Sciences to engage Scouts in science and technology pursuits. The pact is based upon a similar aerospace education partnership the college forged four years ago with the Tennessee Wing of the Civil Air Patrol's cadet program.

The agreement with the Scouts was signed in Strobel Lobby, which connects the newly renovated Davis Science Building and Wisner-Patten Science Hall on the Science Corridor of Innovation. Cub Scouts from Scales and Rockvale elementary schools attended the event. [MTSU](#)



Gone Fishin'

Two members of the MTSU Fishing Club advanced to the national collegiate bass fishing championship after securing a top 10 finish in a regional tournament. Matthew Cross and Mekiah Jack finished in sixth place in the Carhart Bassmaster College Series Southern Tour on Pickwick Lake in Florence, Alabama, April 22. The national tournament takes place July 19–21 on Lake Tenkiller in Oklahoma.

mtsunews.com/anglers-tourney-spring2018



Rock 'n Recovery

A second \$10,000 donation in a year's time from Grammy-nominated rock band 3 Doors Down's Better Life Foundation will continue to benefit MTSU students and faculty working in equine therapy with military veterans. The Center of Equine Recovery for Veterans (CERV) program is a partnership between the Murfreesboro-based Veterans Recovery Center and MTSU Horse Science. CERV offers VRC veterans an opportunity to interact with horses, while MTSU students gain experience in helping facilitate the sessions.

mtsunews.com/10k-donation-aids-mtsu-equine-therapy



Leaders of Women

The Rutherford ATHENA Leadership Forum, hosted by MTSU's Jones College of Business in association with the Rutherford Cable women's professional development organization, identifies emerging women leaders among the best MTSU students, keeps talented emerging leaders in Rutherford County, and connects them with established women leaders. Mila Grigg, CEO of MODA Image and Brand Consulting, and Margaret Morford, CEO of The HR Edge, were among featured guest speakers at the third annual event.

mtsunews.com/athena-leadership-forum-2018



Textbook Teacher

Textbook publisher McGraw-Hill Education presented the prestigious John Robert Gregg Award to Virginia Hemby, an MTSU Business Education professor, at the National Business Education Association's annual convention in Baltimore. A specialist in business education for over 25 years, Hemby focuses her current research on such topics as bullying in higher education and age discrimination relating to graduation dates and veterans' service in online employment applications.

mtsunews.com/hemby-nbea-award-spr18



True Blue Student-Athlete

Ed Simpson was a consummate team player as a student-athlete, contributing to an MTSU basketball program that won a record-tying 100 games during his four seasons. A 2018 graduate, Simpson served as project manager for a Mechatronics Engineering student team at a Spring 2018 Department of Engineering Technology Open House featuring senior projects. Simpson, Chance Ferguson, Eli Little, and Jeremy Hood made a robotic pancake-making machine, which produced pancakes for visitors in attendance. Even before graduation, Simpson landed a systems engineering position with Boeing.

mtsunews.com/engineering-robots-et-open-house-spring2018



A Perfect Gift

Jean Gould said she knew her husband would have thrown himself into supporting the MTSU Mechatronics Engineering degree program "100 percent." Professor Emeritus Richard H. "Dick" Gould, who died in 2012, spent 29 years at MTSU and was chair of Industrial Studies (now called Engineering Technology) from 1979 to 1995 when he retired. The program, launched a year after his passing, has grown to more than 300 students. Jean Gould spoke at the dedication of the Dr. Richard H. Gould Mechatronics Laboratory earlier this year. Her undisclosed gift will provide a robot and additional equipment.

mtsunews.com/mts-unveils-gould-mechatronics-lab

true
**BLUE
VOTER**



*I'm registered
to vote.
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www.GoVoteTN.com

mtsu.edu/truebluevoter

A new MTSU initiative addresses concerns regarding the current voting practices of MTSU students

by Gina K. Logue

AS THE 2018 MIDTERM ELECTION approaches, MTSU announced a dynamic new program to boost the participation of college students.

MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee, MTSU Board of Trustees Chair Stephen B. Smith, and Rutherford County Election Commission Administrator Alan Farley introduced the True Blue Voter Initiative in June at the Miller Education Center in Murfreesboro.

The True Blue Voter initiative is designed to engage students in civic participation and leadership through voting. The Rutherford County Election Commission will provide expertise to inform MTSU students about early voting and voter registration.

Farley said the True Blue Voter Initiative represents a “model partnership” between MTSU and the local election commission and “sets an example for other colleges and universities throughout the state to connect with students on campus during events like orientation and in other places where they live and study, making it easy and convenient for them to register to vote.”

Throughout the summer CUSTOMS orientation sessions and at other events in the fall semester leading up to the Nov. 6 election, the Rutherford County Election Commission, MTSU Student Government Association, and leadership of the MTSU American Democracy Project (ADP) will provide expertise on registration procedures and voting practices.

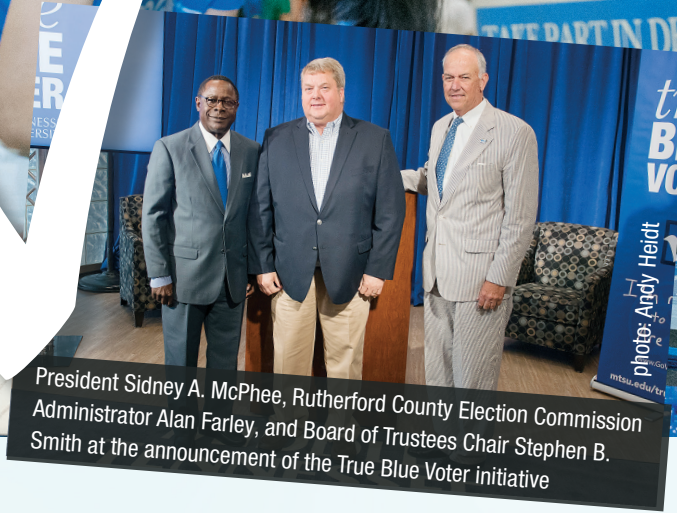
The primary task of the partnership is to assist students in becoming successful voters through individualized processes that best fit their unique circumstances.

Increasing Student Voter Participation

According to the National Study of Voting, Learning, and Engagement, 44.5 percent of MTSU students voted in 2016. That's an increase



Students Skyler Senesombath, Zachary Brow, and Amy Lin register to vote at the first MTSU CUSTOMS event in May.



President Sidney A. McPhee, Rutherford County Election Commission Administrator Alan Farley, and Board of Trustees Chair Stephen B. Smith at the announcement of the True Blue Voter initiative

from 44 percent in 2012. However, it's still below the national average of 50.4 percent for college students.

McPhee said the University was happy to support this effort to develop "True Blue citizens who value and exercise their right to vote."

"Civically engaged college students are more likely to carry forward their civic engagement as they move into careers and future home communities, becoming engaged and active citizens for life," McPhee said.

The True Blue Voter initiative will build on the success of the ADP, led by Mary Evins, historian and associate professor in the University Honors College. MTSU is one of some 250 campuses across the country that seeks to promote civic knowledge and participation through ADP.

"The MTSU American Democracy Project pushes continually to increase student voting, which is an 'all-in challenge' across every sector of campus," Evins said. "We are absolutely thrilled that the True Blue Voter initiative is engaging fresh energy from the Rutherford County elections team, our board chair, and [MTSU] administration to take on this work with us."

The True Blue Voter plan will augment and enhance the already successful ADP by utilizing new student registration and early voting techniques researched by the Rutherford County Election Commission administrator's office.

Good Stewardship

In the end, the True Blue Voter initiative seeks to increase the number of MTSU students who are registered to vote to 85 percent and those who vote to 55 percent by 2020.

Farley credited MTSU board chair Smith with having the vision for a partnership model with MTSU and the Rutherford County Election Commission working together to promote student voter registration.

"Thanks to his idea, the True Blue Voter Initiative and the booth at CUSTOMS orientation are mitigating the roadblocks and efficiently launching MTSU students as active citizens and registered voters," Farley said.

"Active involvement and personal investment in the classroom and in the community are hallmarks of the MTSU experience," said Smith, also an MTSU alumnus. "It's what we do!"

True Blue!

1911 Society Celebrates New Members

Your Legacy, Their Future

The 1911 Society, named in recognition of the University's founding year, includes and honors alumni and friends of MTSU who have created a planned gift through their wills, life insurance, or retirement plan assets. The legacy gifts of 1911 Society members will support students and the University for years to come.

New members recognized at the 1911 Society Luncheon on April 6:

Dana Clegg

Zita and Dan Elrod

Dorothy Williams Potter

Dr. George Vernardakis

Each new member received a framed rendering of Kirksey Old Main as a token of appreciation.

If you ever thought you'd like to create a new scholarship or special fund at MTSU to support a program, degree, department or college that was important through your life's experiences, we can show you how.

Planned gifts are often simple to arrange, and many have no cost during your lifetime.

Your planned gift could be included in your will with this simple language:

I hereby give, devise, and bequeath \$XX.xx (or XX%) to the MTSU Foundation.

Or, you could name the MTSU Foundation as the beneficiary on a life insurance policy, IRA, or retirement plan.

By making a planned gift, YOU can leave a legacy without adversely impacting your financial well-being during your lifetime. We can show you how—and thank you as you become one of the newest 1911 Society members.



Dean Terry Whiteside (l) and President Sidney A. McPhee (r) present Dana Clegg with her Kirksey Old Main rendering.

Zita and Dan Elrod (center) of Nashville are proud MTSU alumni and new 1911 Society members.



Dorothy Williams Potter (c) is thanked by Dean Karen Petersen (Liberal Arts) and President Sidney A. McPhee.

Professor Emeritus George Vernardakis (c) has generously supported scholarships for many years.



For more information, contact Pat Branam, MTSU Director of Development
pat.branam@mtsu.edu or 615-904-8409

Class Notes



Craig Campbell

Campbell ('84) launched Campbell Entertainment Group in 2008. The respected publicity business represents (or has represented) artists the likes of Gretchen Wilson, 38 Special, and Shooter Jennings, along with corporate clients ranging from the Tin Pan South Songwriters Festival to the Pepsi Gulf Coast Jam. He currently manages the up-and-coming all-female group Farewell Angelina and is part-owner of Granddaddy Mimms Authentic Corn Whiskey. He formed a new company called The POD with music industry veteran Vanessa Davis in 2012, and together they do publicity for several artists and Zavitson Music Group, as well as manage virtuoso pianist Kory Caudill.



Mark Fedyk

Jockey tapped Fedyk ('86) to serve as president and chief operating officer effective January 2018. Fedyk joined Jockey in 2008 as head of retail before becoming the president of Jockey North America's wholesale business and chief merchandise officer. Prior to joining Jockey, Fedyk held positions at Sears, Saks Department Store Group, and Ulta. Jockey, based in Kenosha, Wisconsin, makes, distributes, and is a retailer of underwear and sleepwear for men, women, and children.

1970s

Lannie Burger ('77, '79), Woodbury, retired from Arnold Engineering Development Center after 37 years as a software engineer. His wife, **Gay Glenn Burger ('77)**, previously retired following 27 years as a teacher with the Cannon County School District.

Charles Arnold ('78), Murfreesboro, is associate director for finance and administration with the Franklin Special School District.

Lanas Smith ('79), Boulder, Colorado, was inducted into the Wilson County Agricultural Hall of Fame.

1980s

Alison Pockat ('80), Cary, North Carolina, is a landscape architect with a professional practice since 1989. Her second book, *Adam's Land*, dealing with site ecology for third- through sixth-graders, was published in the fall of 2017.

John Wilson ('81), Decatur, Georgia, retired from the position of associate vice president of International Programs at the University of North Georgia. In all, Wilson spent 33 years at the university.

Mike Stewart ('83), Purcellville, Virginia, was named vice president and airport manager for Washington Dulles International Airport by the Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority.

1990s

Col. Kevin Melton ('90, '92), Lake Charles, Louisiana, was appointed new airport executive director for the Chennault International Airport Authority in Louisiana. He joins Chennault from American Airlines in Dallas, where he served as vice president for line maintenance, facilitating and directing airport terminal and hangar construction projects for national and international sites. Melton retired from the U.S. Air Force in August 2016 after 24 plus years of service.

Alice Parker ('90, '96), a special education teacher living in Watertown, was named Teacher of the Year at Auburn School for the category of grades 5–8.

Tracy Graham-McGlocklin ('91), Columbia, is now vice president of marketing and community relations at Advent, an experiential design firm.

David Bower ('92), Mount Juliet, joined Pinnacle Asset Management as senior vice president and financial consultant operating out of Pinnacle's Donelson office. Before coming to the firm, he spent more than 24 years with SunTrust Investment Services.

Jonathon Hawkins ('93, '00), Murfreesboro, became director of alumni relations and annual giving for The Webb School in Bell Buckle. His role includes serving as project coordinator for the school's 150th anniversary celebration in 2020.

T. J. Gentle ('97), Chattanooga, is a member of Miller & Martin

Michael Bowen

The City of Murfreesboro named **Bowen ('01)** its new chief of police in November 2017. Bowen began his career in law enforcement in 1988 as a patrol officer with the Murfreesboro Police Department.



PLLC in its corporate department, where he practices business law with an emphasis on mergers and acquisitions and securities transactions. Prior to returning to Miller & Martin in 2016, Gentle spent 10 years as a business operator, which included serving as president/CEO of SmartFurniture.com, a venture-backed internet retailer, and co-founder of Delegator.com and PriceWaiter.com. His board service includes a stint on the Business Forward Business Advisory Council in Washington D.C., where he consulted with senior White House officials regarding small business policy matters.

Laura Hazelbaker Monks ('97, '03), Fayetteville, was named president of the Tennessee College of Applied Technology–Shelbyville.

Eunice Goldberg ('99), Seward, Nebraska, was inducted into the Concordia Athletic Hall of Fame. During a professional career that spanned from 1967 to 2011, she served numerous roles as a coach, professor, committee member, and Health and Human Performance Department chair. Due to her influence, Concordia emerged as one of the first colleges in Nebraska to offer competitive sports for female athletics.

2000s

Josh Brackin ('00), Clinton, Mississippi, joined the Nashville law office of Loeb & Loeb LLP as senior counsel, bringing more than 15 years of experience in various segments of the music

and new media industries, including representing recording artists, record labels, distributors, songwriters, music publishers, managers, producers, mixers, and other media-related entities. Brackin previously practiced at Greenberg Traurig in Atlanta and also held positions in business affairs at Bug Music, BMG, and Evergreen Copyrights.

Scott Cook ('01), Murfreesboro, was hired as provost of Madisonville Community College in Kentucky. He formerly was Honors program director, vice president of quality assurance and performance funding, and professor of History at Motlow State Community College.

Brian Parker ('01), Woodbury, was named Teacher of the Year for his work as a special education teacher at Woodland School. He also was awarded the Cannon County School District Teacher of the Year in grades PreK–4.

Matt Daniel ('03), Monroe, Georgia, was named head football coach and economics/personal finance teacher at Cannon County High School, his alma mater, in Woodbury.

Carlandria "Carla" Hayes-Hill ('03), St. Louis, was appointed director of partnership for Explore St. Louis, responsible for partnership sales and services and development activities for the region's official destination marketing organization. She also was appointed as board treasurer for Aspenstand, a local start-up nonprofit.

Brandon Hudson ('03, '05), Murfreesboro, was named assistant director of the Tennessee College of Applied Technology–Shelbyville campus. He previously held the position of special programs coordinator at TCAT–Nashville.

Chris Smith ('03), Collierville, was promoted to director of marketing at MCR Safety.

Jesse Newsom ('05), Cullman, Alabama, was named athletics director for Cullman Parks and Recreation, focused on bringing more sports-based tourism to the Cullman area.

Melanie Blair Riddick ('05), Mount Juliet, was selected as the first executive director for Delight Ministries, a college women's ministry with chapters on 100 college campuses throughout the country. Delight is currently working with young women to launch a Delight chapter at MTSU in the fall of 2018.

Erin Mercer ('06), Jackson, was named communications manager of diversity, inclusion, and Title IX at Michigan State University. Mercer was most recently an account supervisor at MP&F Public Relations in Nashville.



Lauren (Walker) Bush

In 2017, **Bush ('11)** joined Rutherford County Schools as its new staff attorney. She previously worked as a staff attorney with the Sumner County Law Director's Office. A Siegel High School graduate, Bush earned her bachelor's degree in English from MTSU before getting her law degree from Belmont University.



Chelsea Bell

Bell ('15) portrayed Ophelia in the Nashville Shakespeare Festival's 2017 production of *Hamlet*. It was her Nashville professional theater debut.



LaShan Mathews Dixon

Dixon ('07, '10, '11, '14), a former Miss MTSU Blue Raider and Miss Black Tennessee, is currently assistant public health director with the Rutherford County Health Department. She also teaches health and wellness classes in the Exercise Science program at MTSU.

Megan Holt Seeman ('06), Nashville, was promoted at National General Insurance (NGI) from social media manager to director of brand, production, and creative services. Seeman is leading broadcast and digital creative production, as well as branding efforts, for all NGI brands including Direct Auto and Life Insurance, ABC Insurance, and Personal Express Insurance, among others.

Benjamin Balch ('07, '09), Murfreesboro, was promoted to senior manager of budgets and reporting for the Country Music Association.

Tim Gray ('07), Mount Juliet, Grayscale Marketing CEO, launched a new leader-

ship web series and audio experience, *The Golden Rules*, featuring interviews with music industry veterans, entrepreneurs, authors, philanthropists, and brand marketing executives.

Lisa Oakley Vickers ('08), Woodbury, was named Teacher of the Year for grades PreK-4 at Short Mountain School, where she teaches second grade.

Nathan Holt ('09), Gainesville, Georgia, completed his Ph.D. in Theoretical Physics from Texas A&M University and is currently an assistant professor of Physics at Piedmont College.



Jeremy Pruitt

The University of Tennessee hired **Pruitt** (non-degreed alum), a former MTSU student-athlete, as its next head football coach. Pruitt previously served as Alabama defensive coordinator under head coach Nick Saban. Pruitt began his college football career at MTSU, playing under legendary coach Boots Donnelly. Recruited as a quarterback, he switched to defensive back, but later transferred to Alabama.

2010s

Kaye Jernigan ('10), Readyville, made history during National Women's History Month by becoming the State of Tennessee Commission on Fire Fighting's first female graduate of its highest-level training for Fire Officer IV certification. She has served with the Murfreesboro Fire Rescue since 1988, becoming the first female captain at the department in 1996 and first female assistant chief in 2011.

Cindy Larson ('10), Woodbury, was named Teacher of the Year for PreK–4 grade at Auburn School, where she teaches first grade.

Dustin Hillis ('11), Atlanta, was elected to the Atlanta City Council in December 2017. Professionally, he is a clinical nurse in Emory University Hospital's neuroscience ICU. He also previously served on Emory's Serious Communicable Disease Unit during the 2014–16 Ebola virus disease outbreak, caring for the first Ebola patients treated in the U.S. Hillis served as an integral part of creating and revising the national standards for treating patients with Ebola.

Amy Hutton ('12, '13), Morrison, joined Pinnacle Financial Partners at the Murfreesboro location as a finance specialist. She previously spent four years with KraftCPAs PLLC in Nashville, where she was a senior associate in assurance services.

Rachel Lytle ('12, '15), Nashville, is the 2017 recipient of the Outstanding New Biology Teacher Achievement Award sponsored by Pearson, the Neil A. Campbell Educational Trust, and NABT, which recognizes outstanding "new" biology and

life science teaching in grades 7–12.

Michael "Adam" Riddick ('12), Mount Juliet, works at Vanderbilt University Medical Center as the export compliance manager.

Bill Wilkerson ('12), Murfreesboro, competed on the bagpipes at solo Grade 3 in the Eastern United States Pipe Band Association. He competed at 17 venues in 56 events and amassed enough points (298 total, one point from first place) to become the 2017 Season Champion. Wilkerson, a member of the Nashville Pipes and Drums Band, is a disc jockey at WMTS.

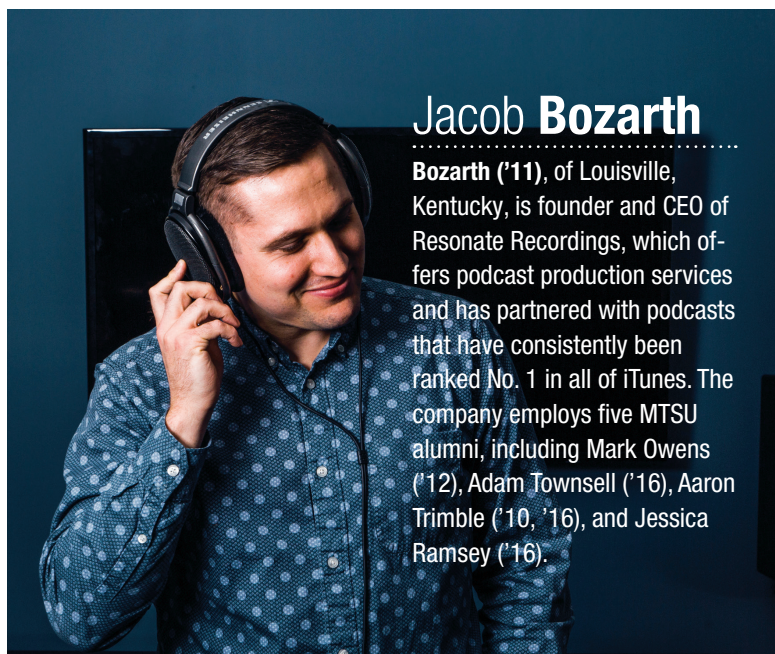
Anna Landon ('13), New Haven, Missouri, was named chief nursing officer for Mercy Hospital Washington. She had been director of perioperative services.

Kelley Boland ('15, '16), Murfreesboro, became coach coordinator for the Petra Coach team, helping teach, direct, and support member companies in reaching their organization goals. Prior to the move, she worked as business development manager for Rezult Group.

Lindsey Taylor ('15), Mount Juliet, joined the interior design team of Nashville-based commercial real estate and design firm Southeast Venture.

James Christian Sartain ('16), Murfreesboro, graduated from the U.S. Marine Officer Candidate School on March 17, 2018 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps. He is currently stationed in Quantico, Virginia.

Logan Hickerson ('17), Murfreesboro, works as a 4-H livestock extension agent for the Rutherford County Extension Office. [MTSU](#)



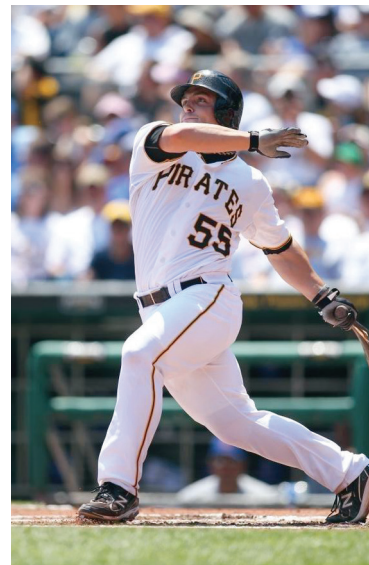
Jacob Bozarth

Bozarth ('11), of Louisville, Kentucky, is founder and CEO of Resonate Recordings, which offers podcast production services and has partnered with podcasts that have consistently been ranked No. 1 in all of iTunes. The company employs five MTSU alumni, including Mark Owens ('12), Adam Townsell ('16), Aaron Trimble ('10, '16), and Jessica Ramsey ('16).



Dereck Stewart

Stewart ('17) was promoted to colonel of the Tennessee Highway Patrol in June. The new leader of the THP succeeded Col. Tracy Trott, who retired after 40 years in the post. Appointed by Tennessee Safety and Homeland Security Commissioner David W. Purkey, Stewart is the first African-American to lead the state's highway patrol. Stewart was originally commissioned as a trooper with THP in December 1987, serving in Montgomery County.

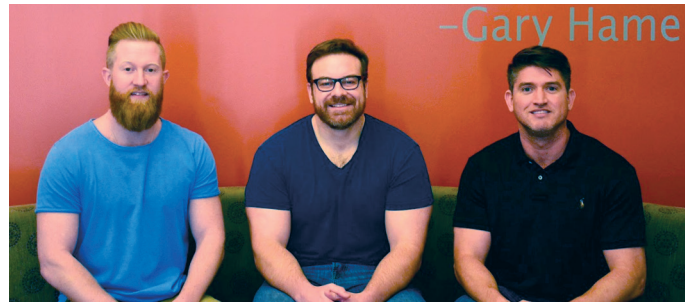


Michael McKenry

One of the all-time greats in MTSU baseball history, **McKenry** (non-degreed alum), who spent seven seasons in the major leagues playing more than 300 games for the Pittsburgh Pirates and Colorado Rockies—more than any other former Blue Raider, retired from professional baseball and was subsequently named director of player development for the Blue Raiders. McKenry was also named Pirates studio analyst for AT&T Sportsnet in pregame and postgame shows.

Gene Caballero, Bryan Clayton, and Zach Hendrix

Caballero ('02, '06), Clayton ('03), and Hendrix ('05) say they mowed a lot of grass in their day, both during high school and college to fund their educations. After graduating with business degrees from MTSU, they launched GreenPal, a smartphone app pairing residential homeowners and lawn care companies. Vendors selected for Green Pal's app pass a rigorous screening. Potential clients then make bid requests outlining their lawn care needs. Once a selected vendor completes a job to the client's satisfaction, they are paid through GreenPal, with the company securing a 5 percent fee. Now a multimillion dollar business operating in several states, GreenPal boasts more than 2,000 vendors and around 50,000 customers using the app.



Cassie Sade Turnipseed

Turnipseed ('16) was named the 2017 Diversity Educator of the Year by the Mississippi Board of Trustees State Institutions of Higher Learning's Diversity Committee. Turnipseed, a History instructor with Mississippi Valley State University, won the recognition for her work in highlighting the sweat equity contributions of Southern cotton pickers. In addition, Turnipseed founded and is executive director of Kafre Inc., a nonprofit organization designed to engage communal activism toward creating a monument and national park dedicated to the history of enslaved workers in the American South.



Alicia Bognanno

Indie rocker **Bognanno ('12)** is founder of the band Bully, which signed with Seattle-based Sub Pop (the independent record label behind Nirvana and Soundgarden, among others) and released a new album, *Losing*, in 2017. With the band long a staple of the Nashville rock scene and formerly signed to a Columbia Records imprint, the Sub Pop signing has been hailed as a leap forward for the profile of Nashville's rock music community. Bully has toured the United States and Europe extensively, making appearances on stages such as Bonnaroo and *Austin City Limits*.



To submit
class notes
and pictures,
go to
MTAAlumni.com,
or email
alumni@mtsu.edu.

BABY RAIDERS

Michael Edgar Simcox born Feb. 23, 2018 to **Chad** ('03) and **Cindy Householder Simcox** ('02) of Littleton, Colorado

Blane Martin Webb born Aug. 7, 2017 to Adam and **Riki Templeton Webb** ('01, '02) of Murfreesboro

Levi Grace Sanders born May 26, 2017 to **Deo** ('13) and **Kayla Hockett Sanders** ('09), of Murfreesboro

Tinsley Denise Williams born Sept. 29, 2017 to **Taurean** ('08, '14) and **Angela Harris Williams** ('08) of Lebanon

Savannah Morgan Schwartz born Oct. 10, 2017 to Mike and **Gina Miller Schwartz** ('98) of Fredericksburg, Virginia

Beckett Clark Green born June 7, 2017, to **Russell** ('07) and **Chasity Green** ('07) of Winchester

Garner Beck Seeman born Nov. 3, 2017 to Jason and **Megan Holt Seeman** ('06), of Nashville

Isaac Dale Bozarth born Nov. 17, 2017 to **Jacob** ('11) and **Whitney Bozarth** ('10) of Louisville, Kentucky

Ronan Charles Cartwright born May 22, 2017, to Charlie and **Michele Cartwright Jr.** ('06) of Smyrna

Maggie Erin Easley born Oct. 21, 2015 to **Aron** ('09) and **Mandy Easley** ('10) of Franklin

Malachi John Brown born Jan. 27, 2017, to Edgar Ray and **Destany Michelle Brown Jr.** ('13) of Wartburg

Addison Brooke Barrett born Dec. 17, 2017, to Alex and **Danielle Harrell Barrett** ('08), of Milton

Blakely Christine Higgs, born April 3, 2018, to **Blake** ('09), and **Regan Vaughn Higgs** ('08), of Lascassas

Ryman Michael Molinar born April 25, 2018, to **Mike** ('98) and **Amanda Molinar** ('16) of Nashville

Tinsley Denise Williams



Garner Beck Seeman



Maggie Erin Easley

Blane Martin Webb



Savannah Morgan Schwartz

I AM *true*
BLUE



Malachi John Brown



Beckett Clark Green



Blakely Christine Higgs



Michael Edgar Simcox



Ryman Michael Molinar



Ronan Charles Cartwright



Addison Brooke Barrett



Isaac Dale Bozarth



Margaret Barton Gordon

Gordon ('56, '71), born in Normandy, Tennessee on July 4, 1926, died on Feb. 15, 2018. Gordon earned a B.S. and a master's in Education at MTSU. She taught seventh grade at McFadden School, helped develop the Holloway Alternative School, and later became director of the Title I program for Rutherford County. She retired in 1981. Gordon was a founding member of St. Mark's United Methodist Church, where she taught Sunday school. She was president of the American Legion Auxiliary and the Grange Garden Club, as well as an active member of several other organizations. She is survived by her only child, former U.S. Rep. (and MTSU alum) Bart Gordon. She met her future husband, Robert Gordon, in a Sociology class at MTSU in 1945.

Steven Edmonds ('69), Smyrna, Feb. 25, 2018

James "Jim" Holder ('60), Franklin, Nov. 25, 2017

Dorothy Sellers Howard ('66), Murfreesboro, Dec. 30, 2017

Margaret Crownover Jenkins ('62), Sherwood, March 7, 2018

James Jobe ('64), Murfreesboro, Oct. 20, 2017

Richard D. King ('69), Rising Sun, Maryland, Jan. 28, 2018

John Lowe ('68), Madison, March 4, 2018

Daniel Norton ('66), Lebanon, Oct. 23, 2017

Raymond Osburn ('65), Homosassa, Florida, April 11, 2017

Mary Yates Potts ('65), Nashville, Feb. 15, 2018

Buford Reynolds ('67, '70), Brentwood, July 5, 2017

Robert Rowland ('66), Smyrna, Dec. 1, 2017

Helen Salisbury ('68), Murfreesboro, March 20, 2018

David Self ('68), Mount Juliet, Feb. 14, 2018

Thomas "Ed" Shirley Jr. ('65, '89, '91), Bradyville, March 23, 2018

James Slowey III ('66), Athens, Nov. 10, 2017

Wilda Barnhart Snyder ('67), Murfreesboro, Nov. 14, 2017

John Sugg Jr. ('61), Signal Mountain, Jan. 26, 2018

Jared Trammell ('65, '69), Murfreesboro, Dec. 2, 2017

Sally Baker Williams ('62), Knoxville, March 5, 2018

Cordell Winfree ('60), Lebanon, Dec. 14, 2017

Glenn Winnett ('66), Spring Hill, Jan. 8, 2018

IN MEMORIAM

1940s

William B. Brandon ('42), Gainesville, Georgia, Oct. 23, 2017

Earl E. Elliott ('42), Decatur, Alabama, Dec. 3, 2017

Robert Eskew ('48), Nashville, Nov. 10, 2017

Helen "Carolyn" Collier Gill ('48), Fayetteville, Nov. 12, 2017

Ann Howard Ward Todd ('48), Murfreesboro, Jan. 26, 2018

1950s

Earnest Allen Sr. ('54), Columbia, Nov. 1, 2017

Richard Albert Anderson ('55), Nashville, Dec. 15, 2017

Horace Bomar ('51), Merritt Island, Florida, Oct. 31, 2017

Martha McCullough Bouldin ('57, '73), Murfreesboro, March 16, 2018

James Burks ('58), Brentwood, Jan. 9, 2018

Thomas Cathey ('51), Lewisburg, Dec. 5, 2017

Ben Dudley ('56), Lebanon, Feb. 14, 2018

William "Howard" Henard ('52), Murfreesboro, Jan. 8, 2017

James Hightower Jr. ('55), Huntsville, Alabama, Jan. 28, 2018

John W. Hill ('57), River Falls, Wisconsin, Aug. 7, 2017

Ben Hurt ('57), Murfreesboro, Nov. 12, 2017

Ernest "Ernie" Glenn Lautzenheiser Jr. ('58), Melbourne, Florida, Dec. 31, 2017

Gallie McCormack Jr. ('58), Dickson, Nov. 22, 2017

Barbara Barrett Milligan ('57, '80), Lakeland, Florida, Oct. 16, 2017

June Brown Moore ('51), Nashville, Jan. 25, 2018

Ada Blankenship Norfleet ('58), Nashville, Dec. 10, 2017

Rockne Porter ('57), Nashville, Jan. 10, 2018

Robert Rains ('55, '67), Waynesboro, Feb. 9, 2018

James Ralph ('52), Goodlettsville, Dec. 1, 2017

James Sides ('51), Owens Cross Roads, Alabama, Jan. 18, 2018

William Simpson ('54), Swansboro, North Carolina, Oct. 8, 2017

Faye Stone Sparkman ('59), Flintville, Dec. 2, 2017

Calvin Watkins ('58), Springfield, Virginia, Dec. 8, 2017

1960s

Robert Belcher ('61, '63), Murfreesboro, Oct. 15, 2017

Robert M. Bratcher ('68), Joelton, Nov. 8, 2017

Bettye Bass Burks ('65, '75), Wartrace, Feb. 27, 2018

Carolyn Cunningham ('66), Bellbrook, Ohio, June 6, 2017

Ronald Dooley ('66, '71), Franklin, March 15, 2018

Patrick Doyle ('65), Murfreesboro, Oct. 8, 2017

1970s

- Darlene Amacher ('75, '80)**, Hot Springs, North Carolina, Oct. 19, 2017
- Stan Baskin ('75, '78, '81)**, Murfreesboro, Feb. 27, 2018
- Brenda Barnes Boggess ('71)**, Murfreesboro, March 2, 2018
- Rita Jackson Bradley ('72, '77)**, Madison, Nov. 28, 2017
- Benita Bullion ('71)**, Joelton, June 22, 2017
- Deanna Burlason ('73)**, Aurora, Colorado, Dec. 24, 2017
- Roger Carter ('78)**, Atlantic, Iowa, Feb. 3, 2018
- Katherine Arbeiter Blanchard Chovanec ('73, '76)**, Sulphur, Louisiana, Jan. 7, 2018
- Stephen Clark ('75)**, Pulaski, Jan. 22, 2018
- Thomas Daniel ('70)**, Brentwood, Oct. 19, 2017
- James Davis Jr. ('73)**, Murfreesboro, Jan. 16, 2018
- Randall Davis ('78)**, Murfreesboro, Oct. 3, 2017
- Hansford Fields ('70)**, Salado, Texas, Jan. 1, 2018
- Gerald Gaither ('72)**, Bell Buckle, Dec. 21, 2017
- Terrell Greene ('78)**, LaVergne, Feb. 2, 2018
- John Griffin ('76)**, Murfreesboro, Oct. 20, 2017
- Nancy Lemmond Haynes ('75)**, The Villages, Florida, Jan. 19, 2018
- Dennis Johnson ('75, '81)**, Franklin, Feb. 28, 2018
- James Keysor ('79)**, Chester, West Virginia, Oct. 19, 2017
- Brent Lewis ('76)**, Virginia Beach, Virginia, Jan. 4, 2018
- Joseph "Skip" Lyons ('74)**, Chattanooga, Nov. 16, 2017

- David Matthews ('73)**, Carmel, California, Nov. 19, 2017
- Barbara McDaniel ('71, '76)**, Murfreesboro, Oct. 2, 2017
- Joe Moore ('79)**, Roswell, New Mexico, Nov. 22, 2017
- John Newman ('78)**, Gallatin, Nov. 1, 2017
- Philip Nichols ('79)**, Abilene, Texas, March 21, 2018
- Tad Parvin ('70)**, Crossville, Jan. 4, 2018
- Sylvia "June" Williams Patton ('74, '77)**, Decherd, Oct. 17, 2017
- Steven Peeler ('75)**, Durham, North Carolina, Feb. 22, 2018
- Billy "Bill" Ray Pierce ('79, '80)**, Murfreesboro, Nov. 22, 2017
- Charles "Steve" Shehane ('74)**, Old Hickory, Nov. 3, 2017
- Patsy Hale Slaymaker ('76)**, Dickson, March 5, 2018
- Donna Brake Smith ('77)**, Atlanta, April 1, 2018
- Ginger Faye Tucker ('77, '87)**, Smyrna, Dec. 5, 2017
- Jimmy Washington ('76)**, Houston, March 17, 2018

1980s

- Alan Alsop ('81)**, Nashville, Nov. 2, 2017
- Pauline "Polly" Bell ('87)**, Pleasant View, March 21, 2018
- Fred Bowie ('88)**, New Port Richey, Florida, Feb. 13, 2018
- Thor Catalogne ('87)**, Nashville, April 13, 2017
- Mark "Chip" Davis ('85)**, Hendersonville, Feb. 1, 2018
- David Dunn ('80)**, Maryville, Oct. 10, 2017
- Julie Gee ('82)**, Chattanooga, March 14, 2017
- Karen Blair Jacobs ('86, '94)**, Smithville, Oct. 26, 2017

Clifton Frazier Sr.

Frazier ('73) died on Aug. 9, 2017 at the age of 81. Clifton graduated from the MTSU School of Nursing. A disabled veteran, he worked for the Alvin C. York Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Murfreesboro for three decades as a registered nurse.



James Jordan III ('87), Oak Ridge, Feb. 9, 2018

William Madrey Jr. ('84), Pfafftown, North Carolina, Feb. 1, 2018

Susan Menefee ('88), Topeka, Kansas, Jan. 7, 2018

Michael Neely ('82), Nashville, Dec. 31, 2017

Margaret Weible Pickle ('86), Columbia, Oct. 20, 2017

Lloyd Pistole ('83), Lebanon, Jan. 12, 2018

Alec Tillman ('80), Murfreesboro, Sept. 22, 2017

James "Randy" West ('82), Oneida, Feb. 28, 2018

Kimberly Whitefield ('89), Portland, Dec. 6, 2017

Lisa Gibson Wilson ('89), Fayetteville, Oct. 24, 2017

1990s

Laura Berrier ('94, '04), Soddy Daisy, Jan. 22, 2018

Steven "Todd" Fennell ('95), Nashville, March 7, 2018

Robert Fortney ('98), Murfreesboro, Jan. 6, 2018

Pamela Guthrie ('90), Nashville, Jan. 31, 2018

Carlos Johnson ('90), Gallatin, Dec. 19, 2017

Carolyn Laxson ('97), McMinnville, Nov. 24, 2017

Martha Redding ('96), Culleoka, Feb. 15, 2018

Julie Roberts ('94), Antioch, Feb. 13, 2018

Geralyn Lister Robinson ('95), Christiana, Oct. 19, 2017

Trinity Ruth ('97), Woodbury, Oct. 23, 2017

David Sanders ('92), Columbia, Dec. 19, 2017

Miracle Williams ('91), Lawrenceville, Georgia, Sept. 8, 2017

2000s

Reuben Bellomy ('06), Brentwood, March 12, 2018

Elizabeth Vaden Drury ('02), Lebanon, Sept. 22, 2017

David Moeding ('03), Cavour, South Dakota, July 7, 2017

2010s

Stacey Brown ('11), Thompson Station, Nov. 25, 2017

Lawrence McKenna ('14), Gallatin, Oct. 11, 2017 MTSU

A Tour of Duty

First Veteran Impact Celebration raises \$170,000-plus for Daniels Center

By Randy Weiler

LEGENDARY COUNTRY MUSIC SUPERSTAR CHARLIE DANIELS shook hands and mixed and mingled with many of the more than 200 people attending the inaugural MTSU Veteran Impact Celebration June 28 at The Grove at Williamson Place.

Daniels held court for an hour for a number of media interviews. Later, he performed “In America” and “My Beautiful America” with his band and offered a patriotic recitation, recalling German warships in the Atlantic Ocean near his Wilmington, North Carolina, hometown as a young boy.

By night’s end, Daniels, Journey Home Project co-founder David Corlew, and the nonprofit foundation’s newest board member, MTSU alumnus and U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Terry “Max” Haston, presented a \$100,000 check for the Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center.

Coupled with more than \$41,000 raised through corporate sponsorship of tables, gifts in kind, and pledges, Daniels Center officials estimated about \$171,000 raised for MTSU’s nationally recognized center.

The 3,200-square-foot Daniels Center is the largest and most comprehensive veterans center in Tennessee and one of the largest in the nation. It serves MTSU’s nearly 1,000 student veteran and military family members, giving them a one-stop-shop to meet many academic, Veterans Affairs, and career needs.

Daniels performed near the end of the program, along with Scott Brown (Scooter Brown Band) and singers/songwriters from the Operation Song project pairing veterans and MTSU songwriting students with Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame members.

“Freedom is not free,” said Daniels, who praised the Daniels Center that bears his and his wife’s names. “There are two things you can count on—the grace of God and the U.S. military. . . . We fully intend to make this an annual event.”

The Hiller Companies owner Jimmy Hiller already has agreed to be the major sponsor for the second Veteran Impact Celebration on June 27, 2019.

MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee said the “University’s efforts to give back would not be nearly as comprehensive and impactful if not for the individuals, businesses, governmental agencies and nonprofits who have opened their hearts to provide so generously to MTSU’s programs, centers and initiatives. Tonight, we also celebrate these organizations and individuals for empowering our efforts.”

This year’s sponsors included: diamond level—Hiller, Transition to Trades, and Dollar General; platinum—Nashville Predators, Barrett, and FirstBank; and gold—Panasonic, Mapco, BlueCross BlueShield, Ole South, and The Journey Home Project. Ten other organizations and four individuals—retired U.S. Army Lt. Gen. William “Bill” Phillips and fellow MTSU alumni and veterans Don Witherspoon, Bob Lamb, and Bud Morris—provided bronze-level sponsorships. Supporting sponsors for the meal were Steel Barrel, Stones River Total Beverages, Mission BBQ, and The Grove.



Retired Lt. Gen. Keith M. Huber, MTSU’s senior advisor for veterans and leadership initiatives, showed the audience a brick with Charlie and Hazel Daniels’ names on it that will be placed at the MTSU Veterans Memorial site.

photos: J. Intintoli



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Todd Art Gallery Presents:
**Department of Art and
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Aug. 27–Sept. 8, 2018

MTSU Symphony Orchestra
Oct. 6, 2018

9 to 5 the Musical
Nov. 8–11, 2018

Fall Dance Concert
Nov. 29–Dec. 1, 2018

Joys of the Season
Dec. 2, 2018, 3 p.m.

For a full calendar of events or to learn how to become a member
of the **MTSU Arts Patron Society**, please visit mtsuararts.com

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