



**Fall Faculty Meeting  
Thursday, Aug. 23, 2018  
10 a.m., Tucker Theatre**

**Dr. Sidney A. McPhee, President**



Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

I am honored to extend a warm welcome to each of you as we launch this new academic year.

This gathering marks the 18th time that I've had the privilege and responsibility of sharing the State of the University address with you.

I always take great pride in highlighting the achievements of our faculty, staff, and students, who represent the core of this great university.

I want you to know that I appreciate your attendance today

- as we reflect on our recent progress;
- as we look ahead for ways to maximize opportunities; and
- as we address the challenges facing us to achieve our goals.

Now, before I begin my update, I want you to know that your university is a special community composed of 25,000 dedicated faculty, students, and staff.

We are fortunate to have so many talented people and a strong senior executive team to support the work of our academic community.

I'd like to recognize members of the president's cabinet and a few key executives who provide strong leadership.

Their efforts contribute to the continued progress and success of our university.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to introduce:

- Dr. **Mark Byrnes**, provost and chief academic officer;
- Mr. **Joe Bales**, vice president for university advancement;
- Mr. **Andrew Oppmann**, vice president for marketing and communications;
- Mr. **Bruce Petryshak**, vice president for information technology and chief information officer;
- Dr. **Deb Sells**, vice president for student affairs and vice provost for enrollment and academic services;
- Mr. **Alan Thomas**, vice president for business and finance;
- Ms. **Heidi Zimmerman**, university counsel and secretary to the board; and
- Mrs. **Kimberly Edgar**, executive assistant to the president and my chief of staff.

Next, I would like to recognize some other members of the President's Cabinet. Before asking the entire group to stand, I am delighted to give special recognition to two individuals:

- Dr. **Pippa Holloway**, professor of history, has been added to our cabinet membership in her role as Faculty Senate president for the 2018-19 academic year; and
- Ms. **Courtney Brandon** was elected by her peers to a second term as Student Government Association president because of her outstanding leadership and representation of the student body.

Please join me in applauding this dedicated team of campus leaders.

MTSU's colleges and library are led by our tremendously competent and committed deans:

- Ms. **Bonnie Allen**, Walker Library;
- Dr. **David Butler**, College of Graduate Studies and vice provost for research;
- Dr. **Robert "Bud" Fischer**, College of Basic and Applied Sciences;
- Dr. **Karen Petersen**, College of Liberal Arts;
- Mr. **Kenneth Paulson**, College of Media and Entertainment;
- Dr. **Lana Seivers**, College of Education;
- Dr. **Rick Sluder**, University College and vice provost for student success;
- Dr. **David Urban**, Jennings A. Jones College of Business;
- Dr. **John Vile**, University Honors College; and
- Dr. **Harold Whiteside**, College of Behavioral and Health Sciences.

Let's give our deans a round of applause!

It also is my distinct honor, ladies and gentlemen, to acknowledge and welcome members of our Board of Trustees, who serve as the governing body of our institution.

We recently completed a year and a half under the governance of our Board of Trustees.

The service and guidance of this group of extraordinary civic and business leaders, combined with their love for this institution, have strengthened the university's promise and helped us fulfill our potential as a public university.

With us today are:

- Mr. **Steve Smith**, our board chairman;
- Ms. **Pam Wright**, trustee and chair, Academic Affairs, Student Life and Athletics Committee;
- Mr. **Joey Jacobs**, trustee and chair, Finance and Personnel Committee;
- Trustee **Pete Delay**;
- Faculty Trustee Dr. **Tony Johnston**; and
- **Peyton Tracy**, who is our 2018-19 student trustee.

Please join me in recognizing our trustees!

Also with us today are some very special elected officials.  
From the Tennessee General Assembly:

- State Rep. **Bryan Terry** of the 48th District;
- State Rep. **Mike Sparks** of the 49th District;
- State Rep. **Tim Rudd** of the 34th District; and
- State Rep. **Dawn White** of the 37th District.

I am pleased to recognize from our local government:

- The current mayor of Rutherford County, the honorable **Ernest Burgess**; and
- the mayor of Murfreesboro, the honorable **Shane McFarland**.

And we are delighted to have Mr. **Ron Nichols**, president of the MTSU Foundation Board, attending this gathering.

Will you join me in welcoming our special guests and thanking them for being here today?

Reflecting on the past year, it is difficult to select among the many accomplishments that have taken place by our employees:

- in our classrooms and laboratories,
- in the surrounding communities beyond our campus boundaries,
- and indeed, around the globe.

Whether it's a scientific discovery of a patented compound by the **Tennessee Center for Botanical Medicine Research** team and its promising potential for curing cancer, or the beautiful music recorded by the collaborative partnership between our talented faculty and students from the **School of Music** and the **Department of Recording Industry**, innovative and life-changing work emanates from our university daily.

## **Academic Affairs Update**

Now please allow me to share some specific accomplishments from the past academic year.

The calling to make a difference in the lives of others — the passion that drew each member of our academic community to fulfill careers in teaching, research, service, and providing mentorship — is the ultimate goal of our institution.

And while social media platforms today are often divisive and critical, I find the comments by parents and students on MTSU's Facebook page are mostly complimentary, with praise for the school and the many opportunities that we offer students.

This is great news and sets a positive tone for the upcoming year.

In our time today, I will share a few examples of your exemplary achievements that have inspired these conversations among our parent and students. I also want to take a reflective look at how we've addressed ongoing challenges like:

- improving retention and graduation rates, accountability, and affordability,
- and striving to become the public university that more students and parents look to for a top-rate education.

And finally, we'll take a look at our future and the strategies that can most effectively guide our efforts to provide the highest value for our students and to our state.

Let me start with the national recognition by the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology and their No. 1 overall ranking of the **Master's Degree in Industrial/Organizational Psychology Program** housed in the **College of Behavioral and Health Sciences**.

This recognition comes from the premier professional organization in the field, and one in which we should all take great pride!

Schools.com also identified this program in our **Department of Psychology** among the nation's best.

**The School of Nursing** was recently heralded for its innovative efforts to build a pipeline to educate the next generation of nurses and health care advocates.



Through a collaborative relationship with several local high schools, students who enter as freshmen majoring in health science are provided a direct pathway through guaranteed admission to the School of Nursing.

**The College of Graduate Studies** has focused on strengthening policies to support existing Accelerated Bachelor's to Master's Programs and the development of new programs.

These fast-track programs allow undergraduates to begin working toward a master's degree by taking graduate courses while paying undergraduate tuition rates.

Upon attaining their bachelor's degrees, ABM students can earn master's degrees by completing 12 to 18 months of coursework.

This is an important recruiting tool that allow us to retain highly qualified students from undergraduate through graduate school.

In the area of research funding, good progress is being made by our faculty.

In the past fiscal year, 52 principal investigators at our university received 69 new grants and contracts totaling an impressive award value of more than **\$10.6 million**.

Collectively, the university managed a total of 192 active grants and contracts with a total portfolio value exceeding **\$40.3 million**.

Time allows for me to highlight just a few of these substantial investments in our faculty's groundbreaking work; however, we take tremendous pride in all of our faculty's accomplishments.

In the **College of Basic and Applied Sciences**:

- The National Institutes of Health awarded \$1.2 million for Dr. **Jason Jessen**'s study of "Regulation of Planar Cell Polarity in Migrating Cells."
- And the National Science Foundation has shown its vote of confidence by investing more than \$1.4 million in the **MTeach Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program**, through which Drs. **Amy Phelps** and **Greg Van Patten** are leading the movement to increase the quantity and quality of math and science teachers.

And in a brilliant cross-disciplinary endeavor, Dr. **Eric Oslund** from the **College of Education** joined forces with Drs. **Dong Zhijiang**, **Joshua Phillips**, and **Chrisila Pettey** from the **College of Basic and Applied Sciences** for a STEM education project titled "Growing a Regional Computer Science Workforce" funded at approximately \$1 million from the National Science Foundation.

Texas Instruments selected our **College of Education** was selected by to premiere its workshop "Teaching Strategies for Success in a Mathematics Classroom."

This represents just one of the many ways that we are providing professional support for teachers throughout the Southeast.

It is also a great example of MTSU's growing commitment to building entrepreneurial relationships with nationally and internationally renowned businesses.

College Choice ranked our online **Master's in Library Science Program** 12th in the nation for providing an affordable and high-quality program.

The **Jones College of Business Real Estate** student team captured a No. 7 ranking among the 39 teams competing in the national Real Confidence Investment Challenge.

In the **College of Liberal Arts**, our **MTSU Debate Team**, led by Professor and Coach **Pat Richey**, achieved one of the best seasons in its 100-year-plus history.

For its exceptional performance, which earned 148 awards, including the top national award in the International Public Debate Association team competition, State Sen. Bill Ketron sponsored a resolution in the Tennessee General Assembly commending the Blue Raider Debate Team for its achievement.

Dr. **Suzanne Sutherland** received a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend for her project, "War, Diplomacy, and Knowledge in Habsburg Europe."

Not only was Dr. Sutherland, a professor of history, one of only three faculty in Tennessee to receive this highly competitive and prestigious fellowship, it was her second year in a row to be named a NEH fellow.

The **College of Media and Entertainment** collaborated with the **School of Music** and other campus partners to host the 2018 Association for Popular Music Education Conference.

Thanks to **Odie Blackmon**'s expert oversight, 175 popular music educators throughout the nation took part in four days of intensive learning, demonstrations, and networking.

For the fourth consecutive year, the **Department of Recording Industry** earned a top ranking on *Billboard*'s semi-annual list of the nation's music business schools.

**University Honors College** students **Emily McTyre** and **Kelsey Keith** took part in the four-week US-UK Fulbright Commission's Summer Institute.

The highly sought-after and competitive Fulbright Award offers undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to travel abroad and participate in research, study and teaching.

As the first Tennessee university library to incorporate a Makerspace as part of its services, **Walker Library** is providing faculty and students from all disciplines with innovative applications for learning and creating through their 3D printing technologies.

Using a variety of Geographical Information Systems programs, our expert library staff members are teaching students and faculty cutting-edge methods for presenting research in digital formats.

## **The Quest for Student Success**

We are all familiar with the challenges that come between students and their goal of graduating.

Nationally, the six-year completion rate is around 57 percent.

Attrition is an expense that affects students and universities alike.

This is particularly true in Tennessee with the 2010 implementation of using outcomes as a measurement, rather than enrollment numbers, to determine higher education funding.

Our Quest for Student Success initiative has reshaped our approach to teaching and learning, reduced dropout rates, and helped students achieve their educational goals.

Under the leadership of Provost Mark Byrnes, Vice Provost Rick Sluder and his staff, and the incredible University College team, the quest has seen unprecedented outcomes on several key student success measures.

The full-time freshman retention rate has increased from **69 percent** in fall 2013, when we first began our student success initiatives, to **76.8 percent** in fall 2017.

Similar increases have occurred for all student classifications, across all colleges and schools. Our unwavering efforts in this arena have become a national model.

And our targeted programs have garnered media attention from *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and dozens of other media outlets.

In fact, just last month, Harvard's Graduate School of Education and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation brought a contingent of researchers to our campus to learn about our

strategies and how they could be used to enhance initiatives at other universities.

And just last week, AASCU, a national higher education association, extended an invitation to us to share our student success initiatives with university presidents from across the country.

As I have said on many occasions, Student Success is the responsibility of each of us.

We **all** should be accountable for the progress of this important endeavor.

And I thank every member of our faculty, staff, and administration for your commitment to ensuring the success of students on our campus.

## **Daniels Center**

Another means of helping students succeed takes place in the **Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center**, led by Dr. **Hilary Miller** and her staff with Lt. Gen. **Keith Huber**.

The center's staff provides outstanding support for our country's veterans.

This summer, the Inaugural Veterans Impact Celebration event brought in over \$170,000 in funding support, including a check for \$100,000 from the center's generous benefactors and those for whom the center was named: Charlie and Hazel Daniels and their Journey Home Project foundation.

## **Student Affairs**

The work performed by the **Division of Student Affairs** and our **Office of Admissions** team has no beginning and no end.

Students are the very pulse of the university.

Recruitment efforts and providing an academically challenging, socially engaging environment is an around-the-clock, yearlong job.

Although our final census numbers for this fall are still being tabulated, based on the guaranteed scholarships that have been accepted, I am proud to report that average ACT scores for incoming freshmen, which reached an all-time high last year, will once again increase and set a new record.

Preliminary enrollment numbers show an increase in new transfer students and new graduate students, and in total, we are holding about even with last year's enrollment even after purging 1,400 students for non-payment of tuition and fees earlier this week.

Our major annual recruiting event, the **True Blue Tour**, gets bigger and better each year.

These events require a team effort with the deans, faculty, administrators, academic advisors, financial aid and admissions officers joining me to share, with thousands of prospective students and their families, information about incredible educational experience that MTSU offers.

Just two days ago, we held a True Blue Tour on campus to host our hometown students and families of Rutherford County.

This local event was an extremely successful new addition to the tour with more than 300 people in attendance.

We also will add a stop in Clarksville, Tennessee this fall.

This brings the grand total of tour stops to a record number of 14, including nine in Tennessee and five outside the state (two in Kentucky, two in Alabama, and one in Georgia), plus 13 luncheons throughout Tennessee and our surrounding states for high school guidance counselors and community colleges advisors.

Vice President Deb Sells, our director of undergraduate admissions Ms. **Linda Olsen**, and their respective recruiters and staff deserve special thanks for their dedicated efforts.

## **Construction Update**

To keep pace with our growth in both student population and new programs, and to accommodate the amazing progress emanating from all corners of the campus, construction has become a near constant on our campus.

I am pleased to share a few quick highlights.

Our new Academic Classroom Building will house an innovative, state-of-the-art facility for the **College of Behavioral and Health Sciences**, providing much-needed classroom, office, and lab spaces for the **Department of Criminal Justice, Department of Psychology, and Department of Social Work.**



With a total project cost of \$36 million and 91,000 square feet, we will break ground shortly, and this building is projected to be completed in summer 2020.

You will also be pleased to see that renovations for Peck Hall are nearing completion.

You will find new ceiling and lighting for the breezeways, new lighting for the corridors, refinishing of the flooring on the second and third levels, and new furnishings for the courtyard areas.

And the much-anticipated completion of the Middle Tennessee Boulevard construction is drawing near, with a completion date of December 2018!

It seems like an eternity that we've endured the dust and noise that come with such a major project.

However, the finished four-lane corridor, divided by a landscaped median, with bike lanes and pedestrian walks and crossings, will make it all worth the wait.

Both the safety and aesthetic of this major traffic artery will be improved as better lighting, underground utilities, and entry walls mark a majestic boundary for campus entry points.

Our **Parking and Transportation Services** will have a new facility, located on City View Drive, which is projected to be completed by the end of 2019.

Please be extremely careful and patient as we continue critical infrastructure work throughout the campus.

## **Budget and Salary Overview**

I remain deeply committed to making our faculty and staff salaries competitive and equitable.

We have established a list of peer institutions for market salary comparisons, and we are working diligently to address market pay gaps.

Gov. **Bill Haslam**'s final state budget for 2018-19 included a slight reduction in state funding for MTSU under the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's Outcomes Based Funding Formula.

However, this reduction was offset by budget enhancement funds, which resulted in a \$2 million state appropriation increase for our university due to progress made in our student success outcomes and in meeting the goals set forth by the state regarding student progression, graduate outcomes, and the overall educational attainment rate.

Not only have our dedicated efforts made us a national model for increasing student success, they've resulted in more financial resources appropriations by the state.

**THANK YOU** — and let's keep up the good work!

I am pleased to report that, at the June quarterly meeting, our Board of Trustees approved my recommendation to allocate a 1.5 percent across-the-board salary increase or \$500, whichever is greater, for our employees.

They also approved the use of the remaining funds from the state-mandated salary pool, along with an additional \$2 million, for partially implementing the university's compensation plan.

This will put \$3.7 million into addressing the gap between actual employee salaries and market salaries as reported by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources.

This action is significant, and it is only the first step to addressing this long-standing priority for the university.

A plan to implement these market adjustments is currently being developed and will spread across all classes of employees.

The board also approved a combined tuition and mandatory fee increase of 2.88 percent.

New funds from this action, along with the appropriations increase, will provide support for:

- MTSU's portion of the state-mandated 2.5 percent pool for salary increases;
- partial implementation of the salary compensation plan;
- faculty promotions; and
- resources for student success efforts.

My recommendations to the trustees for a salary plan allocates the 2.5 percent salary pool into two parts:

- Cost of living adjustments, which became effective July 1 for staff and on Aug. 1 for faculty.
- And on Oct. 1, 2018, a plan to address needed market adjustments through the compensation plan will be implemented.

Unfortunately, due to limited funds available, these increases will not apply to adjunct faculty, temporary employees, graduate assistants, or student workers.

It is my sincere hope that as more resources become available we will be in a position to address these very important groups of employees.

Reductions in state support is, and will remain for the foreseeable future, a challenge; however, with our own good stewardship and fiduciary oversight, we are managing very well.

Our proven ability to educate graduates with the least amount of taxpayer dollars per student is something in which we can, and should, take great pride.

### **University Advancement**

The True Blue spirit of giving strengthens this university and is a positive affirmation of our dedicated efforts to provide a world-class education at an affordable price.

Support from alumni and friends continues to be strong, with **over \$12.7 million** in gifts in the last fiscal year which exceeds the prior year giving.

Significant gifts include:

- A major donation of product lifestyle management software from Siemens International to our **Mechatronics Engineering Program**. With a commercial value of **\$278 million**, it is the largest in-kind gift of this type in university history.
- A gift of **\$1 million** to support enhancements of athletic facilities.
- Two major estate gifts, totaling nearly **\$1.5 million**, allocated toward providing student scholarships and programs.
- Over **\$325,000** was raised during our inaugural “**True Blue Giving Day**.” This 48-hour giving campaign far surpassed our \$250,000 goal and drew donations from more than 600 alumni and friends.

These totals continue to exceed the national averages for our peer institutions.

Through our new corporate engagement initiative, we have reached out to more than 50 businesses and industries.

And we’re engaging in high-touch, collaborative recruitment efforts with the Rutherford, Williamson, and Nashville Area Chambers of Commerce.

These strategic outreach efforts have positioned MTSU as the primary source for college graduates entering the regional workforce.

## Athletics Update

Our Blue Raider athletes are excelling on the fields and courts and in the classroom.

Here are some highlights from the past year.

The NCAA's annual report recognized that each of our 17 athletic teams earned a multi-year Academic Progress Rate of over 930 out of 1000.

This makes the ninth consecutive year that we've achieved this outstanding record!

Blue Raider **baseball, women's golf, and volleyball** all earned **NCAA Public Recognition Awards** in May — the third time in our history that three MTSU teams have been honored.

These awards are given to teams scoring in the top 10 percent in their respective sport based on their most recent multi-year Academic Progress Rate.

- 57 percent of our student-athletes had a grade point average of 3.0 or higher, with **33 percent of all student-athletes achieving Dean's List status** with a GPA of 3.5 or higher.
- 42 of these young men and women earned a **perfect 4.0**.
- 11 of 15 teams had a **semester GPA of 3.0** or higher.
- Tennis earned the highest GPA of our men's teams with an average **3.776**.
- And Softball achieved the highest GPA among women's teams with an average **3.441**.

In summary, this past year the Blue Raiders finished with five conference championships, a bowl win, and a high ranking in the Directors' Cup, which nationally recognizes college athletic achievements.

In additional news, a few months ago, we began talks with Valparaiso University regarding a transfer of its law school to our university.

Let me emphasize that this transaction would be a *transfer* and not a purchase.

We've engaged in a series of discussions with Valparaiso University and others, exploring a proposal that aligns closely with our university's mission.

We are also working closely with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, the American Bar Association, SACSCOC, and a number of other accrediting groups as we consider this transfer.

Ladies and gentlemen, MTSU has carved out a very unique position among public universities.

Our work is shaped by our history and traditions and defined by our role as a public university and the value that we bring to Tennesseans and to the residents in our neighboring states.

We can, and should, take great pride:

- in the faculty accomplishments and institutional progress mentioned today and those achieved throughout the past year,
- in our student success stories and the steps we've taken to make it possible for students to stay enrolled and complete their degrees,
- and in the overall enhancements we've made to the academic experience.

At the same time, we must plan for the road ahead and the university's future.

## **Challenges and How to Address Them**

In our rapidly changing global society, the demographics and the needs of our students are also changing.

This calls for our university's leaders, faculty, and staff:

- to use data-informed processes, initiatives, and best practices to make higher education an achievable reality for our diverse student population;
- to develop strategies that address the challenges that our students face; and
- to continue to improve our graduation rates, a task which has been a real challenge for our institution.



## **MTSU's Future and How We Get There**

We've laid a solid foundation.

We've set a standard for student success that other universities seek to emulate in their own programs.

However, the field of higher education is not static. The target is continually moving.

Therefore, to remain relevant, the strategic plans that we create to accomplish our goals, and the metrics we use to measure our achievements, must change correspondingly.

So, within the next couple of months, I am planning a retreat of our senior administrators and deans, where we will identify a limited number of strategic courses of actions for the next five years that will differentiate MTSU from our peers and competitors.

I hope to engage the entire campus in this process.

We've just completed a historic first year with our Board of Trustees' guidance and support.

This governance allows the university to be more nimble and strategic.

The board's input and support regarding policy issues will continue to help move us forward to the next level.

Our board chair, Steve Smith, recently inspired the new **"True Blue Voter Initiative."**

In partnership with the **Rutherford Country Election**

**Commission**, the initiative helped register almost 200 hundred members of the incoming class during CUSTOMS.

Along with the **American Democracy Project**, we look forward to using this initiative to engage our entire community in active citizenship.

And I would be remiss if I didn't recognize our trustees for committing their personal finances to create an emergency fund to help students who are struggling to pay tuition and fees.

Their action speaks strongly to their dedication to helping students achieve their educational goals.

Earlier this week, nearly 1,400 students who had registered for classes and failed to make arrangements for payment of tuition and fees were removed from our roster.

Due to the generous donations from our trustees to the emergency scholarship fund, we were able to provide assistance to several of these students with outstanding balances.

Finally, I thank each member of our faculty, staff, and administration:

- for being a part of this important work;
- for choosing to make a difference in the lives of others;
- AND for choosing MTSU as your university.

I thank you for your passion and True Blue commitment as we begin a new year and forge our bright path ahead! And I hope you have a great academic year.