



Fall Faculty Meeting
Thursday, Aug. 18, 2016
10 a.m., Tucker Theatre

Dr. Sidney A. McPhee, President

Good morning colleagues.

Welcome to the start of a new academic year.

Today, it is my honor to deliver to you my 16th State of the University report.

It is always a privilege for me to address our faculty and staff at this annual meeting to provide an update to you on the many accomplishments of our employees this past academic year.

Before I begin my remarks, I would like to introduce my executive team.

These outstanding individuals serve as my key advisers and are involved in much of the overall decision-making on our campus.

First, I wish to extend my welcome and congratulations to **Dr. Mark Byrnes**, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, who has assumed the role of interim university provost.

I am so pleased that Mark, a proud graduate of our university, has taken on this vital leadership role.

We also have on stage:

- **Mr. Joe Bales**, vice president for university advancement;
- **Mr. Andrew Oppmann**, vice president for marketing and communications;
- **Dr. Deb Sells**, vice president for student affairs and vice provost for enrollment and academic services;
- **Mr. Bruce Petryshak**, vice president for information technology and chief information officer; and
- **Mr. Alan Thomas**, vice president for business and finance.

And in the audience is **Ms. Kimberly Edgar**, executive assistant to the president.

These individuals are doing an outstanding job on behalf of our university.

Please join me in expressing appreciation to this dedicated team of campus leaders.

Next, I would like to take a moment to recognize other members of the President's Cabinet.

Before I ask the entire group to stand, I would like to give special recognition to an individual who has been added to our cabinet membership for this academic year: **Dr. Mary Martin**, Faculty Senate president for 2016-17 and professor of mathematical sciences. She is with us on the stage today.

Please join me in thanking these individuals for their service and leadership.

Also, with us on the stage today is **Mr. Tom Provow**, President of the MTSU Foundation Board.

Thank you for joining us today.

Next, please join me in recognizing our 10 deans who are also on stage with us today.

We also have some other very special guests with us that I would like to acknowledge.

From the Tennessee General Assembly:

- **State Senator Bill Ketron** of the 13th District;
- **State Senator Jim Tracy** of the 16th District;
- **State Representative Bryan Terry** of the 48th District;
- **State Representative Mike Sparks** of the 49th District;
- **State Representative Rick Womick** of the 34th District;
- and
- **State Representative Dawn White** of the 37th District

I am pleased to recognize from our local government:

- the mayor of Rutherford County, **the Honorable Ernest Burgess**, and
- the mayor of Murfreesboro, **the Honorable Shane McFarland**.

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

Reasons to Celebrate

Today, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to take a few minutes to recall some of our more remarkable accomplishments from the past academic year.

Our faculty and staff received 91 new awards and contracts during the 2015-16 academic year to support research, public service, and instructional activities.

During the past year, the University produced 224 active grants and contracts with a total sponsored programs portfolio value of more than \$40 million.

Now I would like to share with you two examples of our successes in securing external grants this past year:

- **Dr. Song Cui**, a professor in the School of Agribusiness and Agriscience, received \$714 million from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for studying the use of unmanned aircraft systems in what is called “precision agriculture.”

- **Doug Campbell**, operations manager for MTSU's Unmanned Aircraft Systems Operations Program, is the co-principal investigator for this grant.
- **Dr. Melissa P. Towe, our director of student support services**, received a quarter-million dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Education to fund the continued operations of MTSU's successful TRIO Program.

This is the 15th year that this program has empowered first-generation, income-eligible students to succeed. The funding makes possible services including personal and academic counseling, tutoring, workshops, and cultural events. This is Dr. Towe's first award at MTSU, and the proposal received a perfect score from Department of Education reviewers.

Accreditation Efforts

In April of this year, our university successfully completed its on-site reaccreditation review by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools - Commission on Colleges.

The SACS - COC review to consider reaffirmation of our accreditation represents a critical benchmark in the life of this university, as it independently validates every 10 years that our University is providing a high-quality academic experience for our students that meets the most rigorous standards.

As part of this process, the SACS - COC on-site committee reviewed our Quality Enhancement Plan, MT Engage, which will support the educational experience of students.

I am pleased to report that the reviewers had no recommendations for improvement.

The commission's final decision will come in December at the SACS - COC annual meeting.

I want to acknowledge the outstanding work of **Ms. Faye Johnson**, QEP Chair **Dr. Dianna Rust**, and the many dedicated team members for their many hours of preparation for this review.

2016 also is the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Faculty Senate at Middle Tennessee State University.

Throughout this coming year, Faculty Senate President Martin and her colleagues will celebrate our tradition and practice of shared governance.

Good News from Our Colleges

I am pleased to report some significant accomplishments achieved by our faculty in various departments and colleges:

First, in the College of Basic and Applied Sciences:

- This past May, 13 seniors became our first MTSU Mechatronics Program's graduating class. Mechatronics is a multidisciplinary field of engineering that includes a combination of systems — mechanical, electrical, telecommunications, control, and computer engineering.
- And our Department of Aerospace dedicated its new Flight Simulator Building at Murfreesboro Municipal Airport this past spring.

In our College of Behavioral and Health Sciences:

- Two exciting gifts are going to have a major impact on students in the college.

Thanks to the generosity of local real estate developer **John Floyd**, who made a \$1 million commitment, a new student success program is being developed.

Under the direction of **Dr. Colby Jubenville**, this program will utilize intensive advising, coaching, and presentations to enhance students' professional preparation and soft skill development.

The goal is to readily identify these students as an immediate asset to employers or support their goals of continued graduate/professional studies.

- Our alumna **Pam Wright** committed a \$100,000 donation to support 11 students in the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences in October 2015.

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The money will fund the Pamela Wright Leadership Scholarship Program, which is designed to motivate students through strategic coaching, formal mentoring opportunities, and pathways to scholarship money upon their completion of specific criteria.

In our Jones College of Business:

- We have retained our business and accounting accreditations by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.

This accreditation is the hallmark of excellence in business education and has been earned by less than 5 percent of the world's business programs.

- And just recently, a team of Jones College students participating in a real estate portfolio challenge finished third in the nation, behind only Texas Christian University and the University of Chicago.

In our College of Education:

- Our faculty and administrators have worked for more than 40 years to gain approval for a doctoral program focused on the improvement of K–12 teaching and learning.

Just a few days ago, the first cohort of 10 students received this new doctorate in education at our spring commencement ceremony.

In our College of Graduate Studies:

- At the Spring 2016 commencement, in our first special graduation ceremony for graduate students, 349 students received their graduate degrees, including 316 master's candidates, 16 education-specialist degree recipients, and 17 doctoral candidates.
- Our Master of Science in Professional Science programs continue to be considered a national model of how to successfully create and operate such a program.

We achieved national recognition and a successful external review in 2016.

In our College of Liberal Arts:

- The U.S. Fulbright Committee awarded College of Liberal Arts student **Dalton Lauderback**, who is majoring in

global studies and political science, a Fulbright scholarship.

The program places U.S. students in other nations to teach or conduct research for eight to 10 months.

In our College of Media and Entertainment:

- NewsPro magazine named the college one of the top 30 programs of its kind in the United States.

We were the only Tennessee university included on the survey by members of the Radio Television Digital News Association.

- Our Department of Recording Industry was ranked No. 17 in the world on The Hollywood Reporter's list of Top 25 Music Schools for 2015.

The list also includes Juilliard, Berklee, the Seoul Institute for the Arts, and the Conservatoire de Paris.

- MTSU media students received 37 top awards and two honorable mentions at the 2016 Tennessee Associated Press Broadcast and Media Editors College Contest.

Sidelines, the college's student-run news outlet, won Best College Website against stiff competition from our neighbors Belmont, Vanderbilt and Lipscomb universities.

In our University College:

- Through our partnership with the world's leading tire and rubber company, Bridgestone Americas, we have created an innovative leadership development program to help people already in the workforce enhance their skills and even earn a degree.

The program offers adult learners already on the job a chance to earn additional job certifications — and even a bachelor's degree — through online courses and short, intensive on-campus instruction in leadership theory, communication and problem-solving, leading teams, leading people, and managing change.

In our University Honors College:

- 2015-16 marked the seventh consecutive year that one or more MTSU students were offered Fulbright Fellowships to teach or study abroad.
- This past academic year also marked the sixth consecutive year that one or more MTSU students has received either a Goldwater Fellowship or a Goldwater Honorable Mention for excellence in sciences.
- And 2015-16 marked the fourth consecutive year in which an MTSU student has won one of 42 national Phi Kappa Phi Scholarships.

Finally, in our Walker Library:

- We have established and launched the MakerSpace as an expansion of the Digital Media Studio.

This will be an interactive learning space for student to bring computer-aided design to reality and even augmented reality.

- Updated tallies show that our Walker Library now sees the equivalent of the entire student body every three or four days.

Let's give a round of applause for all these individual and departmental accomplishments.

Academic and Program Changes

We have continued to update and expand our academic program offerings.

Here are some highlights:

- This fall we are starting a new Master of Library Science degree — the only such degree in the Board of Regents system.
- Also this fall, we are elevating our successful Journalism and Animation programs from concentrations within the College of Media and Entertainment to stand-alone bachelor's degrees in the college.
- During the past year, we also elevated the Actuarial Science concentration in mathematics to a stand-alone major.

The program is the only one of its kind in Tennessee, preparing our students for what many recognize as one of

the best jobs in America and that Time magazine calls one of the highest-paying jobs in the country.

- We also created new academic minors in Musical Theater Performance, Corporate Communication, and Arabic.
- We have received approval of our letter of application to establish a new bachelor's degree with a major in Dance.

This will be one of only two dance majors in the state.

- We also received approval for our letter of application to establish a new bachelor's degree in Fermentation Science, which will build on the resources of our School of Agribusiness and Agriscience in the College of Basic and Applied Sciences.
- Looking forward, we continue to seek opportunities to develop unique programs to meet the needs and interests of Tennesseans.

Enrollment

Our enrollment held steady during the last academic year, thanks to increases reported in new undergraduate students, new transfers, and dual-enrollment programs with area high schools.

We are hoping to report similar results in a few weeks for this academic year.

It should be noted that our success in managing our enrollment last year was due to many factors.

Our admissions team, led by Vice President Sells and her staff in Admissions and Enrollment Services, has redoubled recruitment initiatives and efforts.

We added new recruitment events and took our “True Blue Tours” into new regions including, Atlanta, Huntsville, and Bowling Green.

We have a dedicated new recruiter — our first — focusing on areas outside Tennessee with hopes of a significant increase in our out-of-state enrollment.

Our new Regional Scholars Program allowed us to offer discounts on out-of-state tuition to exceptional students within a 250-mile radius of our campus.

We renewed our focus on our key counties of Rutherford and Davidson and began a concerted push into nearby Williamson County.

Reinforcing this effort was an expanded advertising and marketing campaign that urged prospective students and parents to “Take a Closer Look” at the many advantages and opportunities at MTSU that perhaps they never fully considered before.

This has been a remarkably effective effort in extending our brand.

I offer my thanks also to the faculty members, department chairs, and deans who have been actively involved in student recruitment activities.

Development

We continue to make progress in securing support from our donors who are alumni and friends of the university.

Our centennial campaign was concluded this spring with a record of more than \$105 million raised.

An integral part of this historic campaign was our effort to provide additional support for our faculty and to enhance our campus facilities and infrastructure.

I'm pleased to report that we were able to secure commitments of more than \$10 million for new chairs and professorships, as well as increasing funding for faculty achievement awards.

In addition, we secured more than \$20 million for new classroom and laboratory facilities and enhancing our athletic department's infrastructure.

This achievement is even more remarkable when you consider that we launched this campaign in the middle of one of our nation's biggest economic downturns.

We set a goal that many people told us was impossible to reach, even if the economy was getting better.

But we met and exceeded this goal thanks to the passion and generosity demonstrated by our alumni, supporters and students – and the hard work by Vice President Bales and his development team.

Athletic Accomplishments

Our athletic programs continue to make good progress, both in the classroom and on the playing fields.

- We are one of the few universities nationally with a 100 percent graduation rate for both basketball programs — a fact that was highlighted by USA Today.
- Our athletic department was one of only 10 Division I programs nationally to have both its men's and women's basketball teams selected for the NCAA basketball tournament — after both secured their respective Conference USA championships.
- The Blue Raiders men's basketball team earned its second invitation to the NCAA Tournament in the past four years and produced a thrilling win over Michigan State, which has been recorded as one of the greatest upsets in tournament history.

The national and international recognition we received from that historic win over Michigan State

was simply too large to measure. All of our university, beyond Athletics, has benefitted from this exposure.

- MTSU's football team capped off another strong season with a trip to Nassau in the Bahamas Bowl, the only college football game played internationally.
- Two of our track and field athletes — **John Ampomah** and **Janet Amposah** — qualified for the 2016 Olympic games in Rio for their native Ghana.
- Our men's track team finished 18th in the nation.
- Our women's golf team won its second straight Conference USA tournament – and **Chris Adams** was named coach of the year.
- And I am very proud to report that:
 - 12 of our 15 teams had a semester team GPA of 3.0 or higher in the Spring 2016 semester;
 - 90 student-athletes made the Dean's List;

- 30 had a perfect 4.0 GPA; and
- overall, 174 of 304 student-athletes had a 3.0 or higher.

I would like our Athletics Director **Chris Massaro**, along with our coaches, administrators and athletes here today, to stand and be recognized for their wonderful accomplishments.

Campus Facilities

Our campus facilities continue to be transformed and upgraded as the University implements its long-range plans aimed at providing students the best possible educational experience at a great value.

The following projects are completed or currently underway:

- Renovations to MTSU's older science buildings — Davis Science Hall and Wiser-Patten Science Building — are about 85 percent complete.

Full occupancy is anticipated in January 2017, before the start of the spring semester.

- This major renovation will benefit all of the 11 departments of the College of Basic and Applied Science.
- The Department of Physics and Astronomy will significantly expand its footprint on floors of both buildings.

- Geosciences — the newest department in Basic and Applied Sciences — will gain a new home in the renovated building.

This move will allow for expansion of the Computer Science Department.

Other completed or ongoing facilities projects this past year include:

- The new Veterans and Military Family Center, which we opened with great fanfare last November.

It is the largest facility of its kind at any university in Tennessee, and it has already made a profound and fundamental difference in how we care for our student-veterans and their precious family members.

In just a few days, the Center will be renamed “The Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center” in honor of the Daniels’ generous donation.

- We also renovated the McFarland Building for the

Photography Department and our Bell Street Center, now known as the Andrew Woodfin Miller Sr. Education Center, which houses:

- a new Center for Executive Education in the Jones College of Business;
- the offices for our University College;
- the Center for Counseling and Psychological Services in our College of Health and Behavioral Science; and
- our new Center for Chinese Music and Culture, which was made possible by a \$1 million grant we secured from Hanban, the worldwide headquarters of the Confucius Institute in Beijing, China.

The long-awaited Middle Tennessee Boulevard widening project also is well underway and is scheduled for completion in fall 2018.

The roadway design features bike lanes, new sidewalks and lighting, landscaped medians and turn lanes, and new signalized pedestrian crossings at Lytle, Bell, and Division streets for improved pedestrian safety.

We ask all our students, faculty, staff, visitors, and guests to please exercise extreme caution whenever you enter the area, and avoid it if at all possible. It is a construction zone.

Budget and salaries

Now, I know most of you follow higher education on a national and state level and you know that

- budgets;
- educational and tuition and fees costs; and
- state support

are a universal concern.

Tennessee and MTSU are no different. We have, and must continue to address, the issues associated with rising tuition and decreasing state support if we are going to fulfill our potential as a University.

So let me offer a very brief history that highlights our current situation and the challenges we face.

Thirty-five years ago, the State of Tennessee provided nearly 70 percent of the funds needed to operate our colleges and universities, while tuition dollars provided almost all of the remainder.

Today, these percentages have essentially flipped, as our students and their families now provide nearly 70 percent of the funds needed for their higher education, while the state provides most of the remaining dollars.

You don't need an advanced degree to understand that the burden has shifted.

What is most troubling with this situation is that, while state support for higher education has declined, the state Legislature and our own Board of Regents have also stressed the need to limit tuition increases in an effort to control costs.

The combination of these actions has forced all of our institutions to make difficult choices and has inhibited our ability to serve the needs of our Blue Raider community.

Since my arrival in Murfreesboro over 15 years ago — actually, back to my days at the University of Memphis and the TBR central office — I cannot recall a state budget that had greater opportunity this year to significantly enhance support for higher education.

With a major surplus and a commitment to expand the educational opportunities available to our citizens, the state should have made higher education a higher priority for funding during this fiscal year.

Note, I said, “*should* have,” but they did not.

As we have seen for more than 20 years, state support for higher education means that the primary burden for paying for a college degree still rests with our students and their families.

We appreciate the fact that the governor included \$3.7 million in enhancement funds for the coming year, representing the most significant increase in state support in several years.

However, the final state budget, as proposed by Governor Haslam and approved in April of this year by the state Legislature, included a reduction of \$1 million in state funding for MTSU under THEC’s Outcomes Based Funding Formula.

While I am pleased the net result was an overall increase in support for our University, the reality is that we still needed

additional funds in order to enhance the University and to help move our programs and facilities forward.

In keeping with the trend for minimizing the impact of tuition, earlier this year, the Tennessee Board of Regents increased our tuition by only 2.6 percent this fall.

While we welcome the increase in revenue, it too, will fall short in covering our increasing fixed costs.

I was particularly disappointed that, for the first time, the salary increases proposed by the governor for state employees did not include higher education as a line item.

The lack of dedicated funding for faculty and staff raises, especially when other state employees are getting raises of up to 4 percent, severely hampers our ability to attract and retain employees and has a negative impact on campus morale.

The state, however, is allowing higher education institutions to use funds from appropriations for increases.

But that's the same money that we need to cover:

- inflationary costs;
- repair and purchase crucial computers and technology;
and
- perform long-overdue maintenance on our aging infrastructure.

This coming year, we are left on our own to determine how to meet the new Fair Labor Standards Act provisions that go into effect Dec. 1.

Unless Congress makes substantial changes to the act this fall, we anticipate a significant number of administrative positions at the University will become non-exempt positions, which will require those individuals to report hours worked.

This change will have a significant impact on the University's budget as well.

So, as in years past, we are again faced with hard choices.

Despite these challenges, I remain committed, as I have been throughout my tenure, to enhancing the salaries of our faculty

and staff, while maintaining the integrity of our academic programs.

As you probably have read by now, a recently completed salary survey showed, once again, that our faculty salaries are below market when compared to similar public institutions.

And while the recent market survey focused on faculty, the reality is that salaries of our entire university community lag behind our peers.

While that isn't the kind of news we like to hear, I can assure you that progress, while slow, is being made.

You may find it informative to know that during the first six years of my time as president and prior to the 2008 recession that resulted in drastic cuts to our budget, the University allocated over \$21 million to the academic side of the university to hire new faculty and improve salaries.

Furthermore, in the past five years leading up to last year, despite budget reductions coupled with declining enrollment,

the University has invested approximately \$8.6 million for faculty salaries.

In addition, \$1.8 million was provided for equity adjustments for faculty, \$5.4 million for across-the-board raises for faculty, and \$1.4 million for faculty promotions.

All of this was done, despite budget limitations that placed a greater burden on our nonacademic units to absorb any shortfall and manage expenses, and most importantly, without any reduction in personnel.

I am committed to continuing to find ways to bring our salaries in line with our peers.

As such, I intend to seek approval from the TBR in September to raise the salaries of faculty identified in the salary survey as being below the established minimum pay ranges.

Any remaining monies that we can devote to pay increases will be used in a small cost-of-living increase for all unrestricted and restricted regular full-time and part-time benefit eligible

employees and participants in the post-retirement service program on the payroll as of June 30, 2016.

I am pleased to announce that each eligible employee will receive an increase at a minimum of 1 percent of his or her salary.

The final percentage increase will not be determined until after our fall enrollment figures are known.

Unfortunately, the lack of funds means that these increases will not apply to adjunct faculty, temporary employees, graduate assistants or student workers.

If grant funding is available, increases for grant employees will be charged to the appropriate grant, and increases for auxiliary employees will be funded from auxiliary revenues.

If approved by TBR, all increases will be effective Oct. 1, 2016.

It is important to emphasize that there are only two sources of revenue stream that would allow us to address the significant gap in faculty and staff salaries at our University. They are new

state appropriations and tuition and fees generated from increased enrollment.

The reality is that state appropriation has been significantly declining over the years, and we have little or no control of over what the state provides to us.

This year, however, the state again provided funding to match eligible employees' deferrals in the 401(k) plan and for longevity payments at \$100 per year of creditable service up to a maximum number of 30 years.

And one bright spot in the state budget was the \$6.7 million in capital maintenance funds for MTSU.

Included in that total were funds for HVAC updates in the Saunders Fine Arts Building, as well as campuswide projects, such as:

- energy recovery boiler repair;
- electrical updates;
- building automation system control panel replacements;
- and

- exterior repairs to several buildings.

Finally, I want you to know that I will not stop advocating for a change in the formula that recognizes not only what MTSU has achieved, but also invests in the proven performance we have exhibited.

Despite our funding challenges, we remain:

- **the No. 1 producer of graduates in the Tennessee Board of Regents;**
- **the No. 1 producer of graduates for the Greater Nashville region and economy;**
- **the No. 1 choice of Tennessee's transfer students;**
and
- **the No. 1 choice of students 25 years and older.**

All of these are crucial elements to our state's goal to have 55 percent of Tennesseans earn a post-secondary educational credential.

As we move into a new era of governance and accountability, I would like to see us rewarded in the funding formula for the sheer volume of graduates we produce, so that we could have resources to address critical needs.

What Can We Control?

So, what can we control?

We do have some level of control over our recruitment, retention, and graduation of students that would lead to increased revenue and resources that would help us address some critical needs such as improved salaries.

Our Quest for Student Success initiative is designed to support students in achieving their educational goals, thereby, improving our retention and graduation rates.

Here are a few updates on our student success efforts:

- REBOUND, our homegrown intervention for freshman students who earned a grade-point average below 2.0 their first semester, recently received a Models of Excellence award from University Business magazine.
- The Scholars Academy continues its history of outstanding successes in serving at-risk students.

The program has grown from an initial 30 students to 113 in 2014 and then 168 in 2015.

A total of 85 percent of the students that started in the fall 2014 cohort returned in fall 2015. This compares to an overall freshmen retention rate of 73 percent.

- Last academic year, we offered free tutoring in 187 courses for fall 2015, representing 24 disciplines.

In this past semester alone, students spent 7,089 hours in tutoring.

- Through the work of faculty and other University leaders, a total of 21 sections of Supplemental Instruction courses will begin in their pilot phase in fall 2016.

Supplemental Instruction is a leading educational best practice that provides students with additional support, typically in courses where many students experience difficulties.

- And we continue to make great progress in improving success rates for new freshmen.
 - In fall 2013, freshman retention was 68.2 percent.
 - In fall 2014, the freshmen retention rate increased to 70.2 percent.
 - And, in fall 2015, MTSU's retention rate for new freshmen, 73.2 percent.
 - The improvement in freshman retention between fall 2014 and fall 2015, 3.0 percentage points, was the largest one-year documented increase at MTSU in at least the past 15 years.

MTSU continues to receive national attention for its student success efforts.

In recent weeks and months, articles about MTSU's Quest for Student Success have appeared in media outlets including USA Today, The New York Times, The Washington Post and Inside Higher Education.

In the past six months, representatives from six colleges and universities interested in best practices in implementing student success programs have visited MTSU.

These are examples of things we have done, that are within our control, that have helped our destiny, change our trajectory and improve our situation.

President's Student Success Award

For the last several years, I have used this occasion to recognize a particular department with The President's Student Success Award.

I have awarded it to recognize innovation and proven results in helping our students succeed.

This year's recipient is the **Department of Computer Science**. Congratulations to Chair Chrisila Pettey and her faculty!

An award of \$20,000 will be given to this department.

A close runner-up was **the Department of Theatre and Dance**.

Department Chair Jeff Gibson and his dedicated faculty will receive a \$10,000 award. Congratulations to them!

In Conclusion

Looking forward, there are many remarkable opportunities on the horizon.

This year will mark a substantial change in our governance structure, with the appointment of a new Board of Trustees for MTSU.

Many faculty, staff and administrators in this room have been working tirelessly to prepare for our transition to a local board.

In particular, I would like to thank University Counsel **Heidi Zimmerman**, Vice President **Thomas** and **Ms. Edgar** for their hard work in leading this transition.

I also ask each of you to follow my blog, *MTSU.edu/president*, for news and updates about this process.

To our outstanding faculty, there is much we have accomplished. For that, I thank you.

There is much to be done.

For that, I again challenge you to dig deep, think about the outcomes you can control, and apply that energy in a way that helps move the needle in student success and the recruitment of new students capable of handling the rigors of a university environment.

I also welcome our new faculty, many of whom are joining us today, and urge you to quickly learn about your college's student success initiatives and figure out what you can do to help.

Once again, I ask each of you to remember that no matter what you do, as a member of the faculty, staff or administration, all of us are responsible for student success.

This is what we mean when we say, "I AM TRUE BLUE."