



**Fall Faculty Meeting
Thursday, Aug. 22, 2019
10 a.m., Tucker Theatre**

Dr. Sidney A. McPhee, President

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to our annual fall faculty and staff meeting.

Today marks the start of another academic year and the 19th year that I've had the privilege of presenting the State of the University address.

We begin this new school year with a sense of great optimism and excitement!

This annual gathering provides an important opportunity for all of us to reconvene, reconnect, and reaffirm our commitment to improve the lives of our students through education, and to use our scholarship, research, and service to benefit and strengthen our communities.

Whether you answered the calling to enter the teaching profession for the first time this year, or you're a seasoned faculty member; your acceptance of this formidable challenge holds a transformative and significantly positive impact on the lives of our students.

I am deeply grateful that you are a member of this university family. Your active engagement makes us infinitely better and stronger.

Over the last 20 years, our university has experienced tremendous growth.

And this incredible progress is due, in no small measure, to the hard work and achievements of our dedicated employees.

You are the life blood of what we do and what we stand for.

And I appreciate each of you being here today as we take a quick look back at our recent progress.

We'll also take a look ahead, seeking ways to leverage opportunities to address the challenges that face us now and in the future.

But first, please allow me to introduce some of the key university leaders who contribute to our shared success.

We have a strong senior executive team who is passionately dedicated to supporting the work of our university community.

Now, I'd like to recognize the provost and vice presidents:

- Dr. **Mark Byrnes**, provost and chief academic officer;
- Dr. **Deb Sells**, vice president for student affairs and vice provost for enrollment and academic services;
- **Joe Bales**, vice president for university advancement;

- **Alan Thomas**, vice president for business and finance;
- **Andrew Oppmann**, vice president for marketing and communications; and
- **Bruce Petryshak**, vice president for information technology and chief information officer.

Other members of the Cabinet include:

- **Heidi Zimmerman**, university counsel and secretary to the Board of Trustees; and
- **Kimberly Edgar**, executive assistant to the president and my chief of staff.

Also, Dr. **Justin Gardner**, associate professor in the **School of Agriculture**, who has been added to our Cabinet membership as **Faculty Senate** president for the 2019-20 academic year:

And **Delanie McDonald**, who was voted by her peers to serve as the 2019-20 **Student Government Association** president.

And now, our distinguished deans:

- Dr. **David Butler**, dean of the **College of Graduate Studies** and vice provost for research;
- Dr. **Robert Fischer**, dean of the **College of Basic and Applied Sciences**;
- Dr. **Jason Martin**, interim dean of the **James E. Walker Library**;
- Dr. **Karen Petersen**, dean of the **College of Liberal Arts**;
- Dr. **Zeny Panol**, interim dean of the **College of Media and Entertainment**;
- Dr. **Lana Seivers**, dean of the **College of Education**;
- Dr. **Rick Sluder**, dean of the **University College** and vice provost for student success;
- Dr. **David Urban**, dean of the **Jennings A. Jones College of Business**;
- Dr. **John Vile**, dean of the **University Honors College**; and
- Dr. **Harold Whiteside**, dean of the **College of Behavioral and Health Sciences**.

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

Next, it is my distinct honor to acknowledge and welcome members of our **Board of Trustees**, who for the past three years have served as the governing body of our institution.

With us today are:

- Vice Chairman **Darrell Freeman**;
- Trustee **J.B. Baker**;
- Trustee **Tom Boyd**;
- Trustee **Pete DeLay**;
- Trustee **Joey Jacobs**;
- Faculty Trustee Dr. **Mary Martin**; and
- Student Trustee **Samantha Eisenberg**.

Thanks to their individual and collective skills, talents, and leadership, the business of the university is being conducted with greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Please join me in recognizing our trustees!

Also with us today are some very special civic and governmental leaders from our surrounding community, which we are so proud to be a part of.

From the Tennessee General Assembly:

- State Sen. **Dawn White**, 13th District;
- State Sen. **Shane Reeves**, 14th District;
- State Rep. **Bryan Terry**, 48th District;

- State Rep. **Mike Sparks**, 49th District;
- State Rep. **Tim Rudd**, 34th District; and
- State Rep. **Charlie Baum**, 37th District.

I am also pleased to recognize officials from our local government: from Rutherford County, the Honorable Mayor **Bill Ketron** and Deputy Mayor **Steve Sandlin**, and the mayor of Murfreesboro, the Honorable **Shane McFarland**.

We also are delighted to have **Ron Nichols**, president of the **MTSU Foundation Board**, attending this gathering as well.

Let's welcome our special guests and thank them for taking time from their busy schedules to be here.

Academic Affairs update

A prestigious national recognition is a great way to kick off the new year.

We take great pride in the very recent Princeton Review's selection of our university among its rankings of **the 385 Best Colleges in the Country!**

This is significant, as there are more than 5,300 colleges and universities in the United States and only

13% of those institutions are afforded this honor.

In previous years, we have only appeared on the review's Best of the Southeast Region list.

We are now recognized as one of the best in the nation.

Furthermore, we were one of only six universities to move from the regional to the national list.

What a tremendous honor and an affirming testament to our dedication to continuously seek to strengthen our intellectually stimulating, welcoming, and creative learning environment devoted to helping students succeed in the classroom, in the workplace, and throughout life.

Here are some of the comments and observations about our university from the Princeton Review:

- “A go-to choice for those wishing to receive a quality and affordable education.”
- Professors “like to be on a first-name basis” with students and often “make it a point to get to know you.”
- “Advising is top notch,” and MTSU fosters “an environment of care for each and every student.”

- “This school is amazing, and it is such a hidden gem.”

I’d like to take a quick look at how we’ve moved the needle during this last academic year to earn such a position among our country’s very best colleges and universities.

We’ve put forth a tremendous amount of effort to tackle some very challenging initiatives like enhancing student retention, improving graduation rates, addressing accountability, and affordability.

Indeed, these are significant hurdles. Yet, by using:

- a strategic vision;
- plans designed to meet students’ needs,
- and lots and lots of hard and smart work,

we have written a story that has and continues to parlay into individual success stories for hundreds of thousands of graduates.

Our measured and thoughtful response tells how we’ve earned the distinction of being one of Tennessee’s best public universities, where students choose to fulfill their educational goals and dreams.

We are honored by the strong level of confidence that so many hold for our university.

And we take great pride that more Tennessee Promise students, who've transferred from state community colleges, chose MTSU over any other institution.

This adds continued luster to our standing as the No. 1 choice for transfer students overall.

We keep our finger on the pulse of the state's economy to develop programs and degrees that are aligned with the needs of the workforce of today and tomorrow.

In April of this year, Gov. **Bill Lee** joined us in celebrating a substantial gift to a successful degree program that is strategically designed to meet the state's growing needs.

As we gathered in the Miller Education Center atrium with corporate leaders from **Siemens Digital Industries, Nissan, and Bridgestone**, the governor praised MTSU's engagement with industry and our willingness to develop and produce degree programs to meet the workforce needs of the state.

He cited the **College of Basic and Applied Science's Mechatronics Engineering Program** and its collaboration with Siemens as a model partnership for its generous in-kind gift of computer-aided design software.

We were honored with the governor's remarks that singled out MTSU as a leader and a major contributor to

Tennessee leading America in sustaining and attracting businesses and industries.

Here are some reasons why we are considered best in class among our peer universities.

Our **Department of Criminal Justice Administration** programs recently received recognition by “The Best Schools,” a higher education organization.

The College of Graduate Studies continues work in support of existing Accelerated Bachelor's to Master's programs and the development of new programs.

And more than \$3 million in graduate teaching assistantship stipends were awarded this past year to 382 graduate students.

In our **College of Education**, the **Womack Department of Educational Leadership** recently celebrated 50 years of training professional counselors.

Under the expert supervision of our faculty, graduate students offer counseling to children and adolescents and go on to provide these vital services in elementary, middle, and secondary schools.

A half-century of educating counseling professionals is truly a milestone!

The Jones College of Business Professional Sales concentration represents another strategic collaboration between our university and an industry partner with the goal of helping students secure high caliber sales jobs.

With **Insurance Group of America's** initial \$100,000 sponsorship investment and yearly \$20,000 funding commitments for the next five years, Professional Sales students receive coaching from industry professionals and business partners and networking opportunities to connect and transition into the thousands of available sales positions predicted as a result of Middle Tennessee's economic growth.

Some of the Jones College programs that were recognized with national rankings over the last year include the online master's in finance degree and the accounting program as a Best Value.

Meanwhile, **the College of Liberal Arts** racked up a few top rankings of its own.

Continuing our legacy of serving student veterans, Liberal Arts' offerings received several top recognitions from the rankings agency College Factual.

- Among all colleges and universities reviewed in Tennessee, we captured the top spot for veteran friendliness.

- And we landed in the top 15% of all schools nationwide for offering veterans a quality education.

Liberal Arts offerings continue to grow and expand. Recently, our trustees approved consideration of a new Bachelor of Science in Public Writing and Rhetoric. This interdisciplinary degree program will be the first of its kind in the region.

This past academic year, **the College of Media and Entertainment** took **Department of Media Arts** students behind the scenes at the **Academy of Country Music Awards** rehearsals in Las Vegas.

For the second year in a row, our alumnus **Pete Fisher**, former CEO of the awards show, joined the ACMs' current director, Glenn Weiss, to use the production of the nationally televised show as a learning lab for our students.

This past February, with seven MTSU alumni nominated in various award categories, we were well represented at the ACMs.

Taking home the Group of the Year award was LANCO. Three of the five members of this band are our alumni, and the other two secretly wish that they were!

The **School of Journalism and Strategic Media** will offer a newly created Sports Media concentration to

prepare students for careers in sports information, sports promotion, publicity and social media, and sports journalism.

Continuing its winning streak with *Billboard* magazine, the **Department of Recording Industry** earned, for the sixth time, a top ranking on the magazine's semi-annual list of the nation's music business schools.

Our **University Honors College** students and staff always make us proud, and this past year was no exception.

- **Gareth Laffely** received the university's Community Service Award and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's Harold Love Outstanding Community Service Award.
- We also had two students awarded the Fulbright to teach English in Bulgaria, making 18 student Fulbrights in 10 years.
- And **Laura Clippard**, the International Fellowships and Honors College coordinator, received a Fulbright to study in Japan over the summer.

Also making us proud is **Ken Paulson**.

After re-energizing the College of Media and Entertainment as dean over the past six years, he has

founded and is directing a new **Free Speech Center** on our campus.

With a focus on public policy, the center is home to the **1 for All Program**, a national nonpartisan campaign to promote the five freedoms that comprise the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Ken, we are delighted that you're continuing your distinguished work in this area on our campus.

At the **Walker Library**, technology is being developed and implemented to enhance learning in some amazingly innovative ways.

Using augmented reality headsets, students **Isaac Shirk** and **Myranda Uselton** are creating software that will be used in chemistry, physics, and astronomy laboratory and classroom teaching.

The Walker Library also has developed a textbook affordability collection to help students with the rising cost of textbooks, aid in retention, and contribute to student success.

Beginning with this fall 2019 semester, textbooks assigned for high-enrollment general education classes will be on reserve and available for three-hour, in-library use checkout.

Our **Quest for Student Success** initiative continues to be a national model for other educational institutions, pioneering ways to improve the universal challenges and issues of student retention and graduation. The dramatic increases that we've experienced in graduation rates illustrate the impressive strides our university has made in helping students stay on track and earn their degree.

Our progress in improving student retention and graduation led to a Tennessee Higher Education Commission formula allocation of more than \$4.5 million for our 2019-20 budget.

I want to emphasize that each and every one of us has a responsibility to ensure the success of our students in achieving their academic goals.

We are all responsible for recruiting, retaining, and graduating students who choose our university to further their studies.

And I am grateful to all of you for your dedicated work in pursuing these goals.

Special gratitude goes to:

- Provost **Byrnes**;
- Vice Provost **Sluder**;
- Associate Vice Provost **Vincent Windrow**;
- Associate Vice Provost **Brian Hinote**;

- **Brelinda Johnson**, manager of our **Scholars Academy**;
- our academic advisers;
- faculty, staff, and academic administration; and
- the entire **University College** team for their efforts in this regard.

Another national model of success, emulated by others across the country, is our **Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center**.

The second annual **MTSU Veterans Impact Celebration** gave us a perfect opportunity to pay tribute to these amazing students and to enjoy some inspiring music performed by the center's generous benefactor and namesake, the incomparable **Charlie Daniels**.

More than \$150,000 was raised in support of the center and its mission to serve the brave men and women who have served our nation with dignity and honor.

Lt. Gen. **Keith Huber**, Dr. **Hilary Miller**, and her **colleagues** have done a remarkable job in positioning our university as a national leader in serving our student veterans and their families. Let's thank them for their excellent work.

The staff in our **Division of Student Affairs, Enrollment and Academic Services** and **Admissions** work diligently throughout the year to recruit students

and to provide a vibrant learning and social environment.

A review conducted by the **American Association of Collegiate Registrars** gave high praise for our personal approach to recruiting qualified applicants for our institution.

The reviewers also commended our efficiency in processing applications and communicating promptly to our newest students.

Preliminary enrollment numbers for new freshmen are strong and demonstrate the enormous impact of our multi-year strategic plan to increase the value of guaranteed scholarships for our most academically talented students.

As of Aug. 1, we have received 11,497 new freshman applications — an increase of 11% and a new record for freshman applications received.

As of Aug. 1, we have admitted 7,273 new freshmen.

This is a particularly interesting number, because it represents a whopping 48% increase in our number of admitted freshmen but at the same time represents an increase in our selectivity.

That group of 7,273 admitted freshmen represents 63% of all freshman applications received.

Last year, MTSU admitted approximately 70% of all freshman applications received.

Of course, the most important number is the number of these newly admitted students who actually enroll for this fall semester.

As of today:

- The number of new freshman students enrolled for fall is up by 412 students for an increase of 14.59%.
- The number of new transfer students enrolled for fall is up just shy of 5%.
- Those numbers represent a combined total new student enrollment increase of 10.76%.

We are working diligently to increase our graduate and continuing student enrollments, which are challenges we continue to face.

And I'm pleased to report that as of today, our total enrollment shows an increase over this same time last year. While there will still be some increases and decreases before we get to the final census, I feel confident that due to everyone's hard work, we are on the brink of a new era of enrollment increases for the university.

We have made incredible progress over the past five years in increasing retention rates at all student classification levels.

For example, from fall 2013 to fall 2018, first-time freshmen retention increased from 68.5% to 75.6%.

All areas of campus have contributed to this success.

However, at the same time, our goal is to increase freshmen retention to 80%.

We clearly have more work to do, and I am calling upon our academic leaders and the entire campus to redouble our efforts and sharpen the focus to achieve this and other stated student success goals.

I extend special thanks to our recruiters, Financial Aid staff, admissions counselors, faculty and our university administrators who join me on the **True Blue Tours** that provide an opportunity for prospective students and their parents to hear firsthand about the distinctive educational experience MTSU offers.

The past few years, we have expanded our True Blue Tours to include nine stops in Tennessee as well as five cities in Alabama, Kentucky, and Georgia.

To keep abreast of our progress in adding new academic degree programs and expanding existing

ones, many renovations and new buildings are underway, taking shape. or opening for use.

I am pleased to share a few quick highlights.

Our **College of Behavioral and Health Sciences**' new academic building that will house the departments of Criminal Justice Administration, Psychology, and Sociology is making good progress with the goal of holding its first classes next fall.

This 91,000-square-foot building will provide critically needed classrooms, offices, and lab spaces.

The governor's recent budget, approved by the state Legislature, appropriated \$31 million for a building to house our **School of Concrete and Construction Management**, which continues to grow and attract more and more students.

This 54,000-square-foot building is estimated to be completed in late 2021.

And on Aug. 2, we finally celebrated the opening of Middle Tennessee Boulevard.

Yes, I know at our last Fall Faculty Meeting, I announced a projected completion date of December 2018. And I know we all suffered through the dust and long, drawn-out construction phase. But now we have a

beautiful thoroughfare that serves as the gateway to MTSU with sidewalks and a pedestrian-friendly design.

Budget and salary overview

As you know, the university's budget is funded primarily by state appropriations and student tuition and fees; therefore our salaries, likewise, are tied to state funding, allocations, and revenue generated by student tuition and fees.

I am pleased to report in his first year as governor, Bill Lee and the 111th Tennessee General Assembly fully funded THEC's recommendation of the outcomes-based formula.

Although this year's budget did not include a separate funding allocation for employee salary increases, it included additional funds to be used at the discretion of the university.

As you know, our Board of Trustees approved a combined tuition and mandatory fee increase of 2.37%.

New funds from this increase, along with the appropriations increase, have resulted in a 2% pool for employee compensation and funds for faculty promotions and adjunct salaries.

Our trustees also approved a plan to divide the 2% salary pool into two parts: cost of living adjustments and needed market adjustments.

The board's approval allowed us to provide an across-the-board salary increase for eligible employees of 1% or \$500, whichever was greater, with part-time employees receiving a prorated payment.

I am pleased to report that for the first time in more than 20 years, adjunct faculty will receive a salary adjustment — a flat rate increase of \$800 per number of credits granted toward the faculty load.

Making university salaries competitive remains one of my top priorities, and you have my pledge that it will continue.

University advancement

True Blue donor support is a vote of confidence in our commitment to provide an outstanding education with an affordable price tag.

Here are a few examples of some of the more significant gifts from this past year that are strengthening our great university.

- \$5.2 million in commitments have been pledged for our new School of Concrete and Construction Management Building.
- \$2.2 million has been secured for new geo mapping technologies and software for our **Department of Geosciences**.
- The annual “**True Blue Give**” campaign raised over \$400,000 in a span of 48 hours, exceeding our projected goal.
- We maintained our portfolio of more than 70 corporate partners and prospects and established relationships with several new companies, including Amazon and Alliance Bernstein.
- And former MTSU student and award-winning country music artist **Chris Young** generously donated \$50,000 to create an educational and experiential performance lab in our former Cyber Café.

Athletics update

Blue Raider sports teams experienced another exciting and productive year.

Since our university joined **Conference USA** in November 2012, Blue Raider teams have consistently reached postseason play, won conference championships, and earned conference All-Academic team status.

The statistics I get the most excited about however, are the ones our student-athletes are generating in the classroom.

- 61% of all student-athletes had a grade point average of 3.0 or higher.
- 35% of all student-athletes made the Dean's List.
- 11% of all student-athletes had a perfect 4.0 GPA.
- Twelve of 15 teams had a semester GPA of 3.0 or higher.
- Cumulative GPA for all student-athletes was an impressive 3.115.
- The NCAA's annual report recognized that 100% of our athletic teams earned a multi-year Academic

Progress Rate of over 930 out of 1,000 points.

We've achieved this amazing distinction for 10 consecutive years!

International initiatives

MTSU's reach continues far beyond our campus boundaries, providing our students and faculty with life-changing opportunities for international travel that expands their knowledge of other cultures and their understanding of the vastness of the world that surrounds us.

Our international initiatives have a global impact that creates important partnerships for research and higher learning.

I am proud to share just a few recent examples of how we are connecting around the world.

- This past academic year, 333 MTSU students participated in a wide range of study-abroad programs in 37 countries.
- The first cohort of students from the joint degree program with Guangxi University successfully completed their program on our campus.

- Also from Guangxi, China, 10 students from Guangxi University of Technology spent two weeks here learning about computer science and American education and culture.
- Two groups of 70 middle school students from Hangzhou Dongcheng Education Group participated in a cultural exchange program on our campus this past July.
- And the global demand for professional pilots helped propel a partnership this summer between MTSU and Moi University of Kenya.

I recently signed a five-year agreement with Moi's president that will promote collaborative teaching, research, and student exchanges.

True Blue Voter

Closer to home, next year's presidential election presents a tangible way for all of us to experience the power of our vote and the impact that it has on the government and direction of our country.

This is especially true for our students.

Spearheaded by our Board of Trustees Chairman Steve Smith, the **True Blue Voter** initiative was launched last year as a "model partnership" between MTSU and the

Rutherford County Election Commission to inform students about voter registration and absentee voting.

We are grateful to Chairman Smith for proposing this very important initiative that helps students mitigate the roadblocks that can impede them from registering to vote.

Quest 2025

Ladies and gentlemen, by any measure, together we've achieved a tremendous level of success in the last year.

We can, and should, take great pride in our achievements. At the same time, we understand the dynamic nature of higher education.

To be relevant, our strategic plans and our goals, must change with the times. To remain on the cutting edge, we must do even more!

We must project ahead.

We must think boldly and act boldly!

We must be our own architects for the future.

Our original Quest for Student Success, implemented in 2013, set ambitious goals that led to significant

improvements in student retention and graduation rates over the past five years.

These achievements have set the stage for us to bolster our quest for years to come and further define our Academic Master Plan.

To launch this process, I convened several members of our faculty and staff, under the leadership of Provost Byrnes, to glean our best and boldest ideas of how we can continue to strengthen our efforts toward helping students to become academically successful.

Provost Byrnes, members of the **Quest 2025** committee, and recently retired administrator and faculty member **Faye Johnson**, have taken these ideas to create a roadmap to focus the steps that will chart our path and move us forward.

Their work has culminated in our vision statement expressed in the **Quest for Student Success 2025**.

Quest 2025 focuses on student success marked by a deeper and broader academic and student life experience that extends learning beyond graduation.

Students learn:

- how to learn;
- how to ask the right questions;
- how to take risks and learn from their mistakes; and

- how to succeed personally and professionally.

Today I'd like to lay out a few key components of our updated Quest plan.

The ultimate goal is to graduate students who are:

- prepared to thrive professionally;
- committed to lifelong learning; and
- actively engaged as citizens of their communities and the world.

The committee has developed three areas of focus.

1. Enhance the quality of the academic experience by helping faculty engage with students.
2. Enhance the quality of the student life experience.
3. Build an academic and student support network that facilitates learning.

The plan will include specific measurable metrics to be accomplished.

In summary, the new **Quest for Student Success 2025** underscores the university's core mission: to produce graduates who are prepared to thrive professionally, committed to critical inquiry and lifelong learning, and engaged as civically, globally responsible citizens.

I am also excited to share an update about our efforts in general education redesign.

Our campus prides itself on offering an excellent, well-rounded education with great value for our students.

In our continuous efforts to strive toward greatness and growth, MTSU is leading the way in the state in general education reform. This has been a faculty-driven process with student involvement and will continue to be so.

As redesign efforts continue this year, you will be given the chance to shape the curriculum of the future by participating in town halls and other opportunities for feedback. I hope you will participate as fully as possible in the process.

Next week, we'll launch our redesigned strategic plan for the "**True Blue Core**," complete with a virtual launch event on Aug. 26.

I invite you to participate in the redesign process and keep an eye out for communication from the provost with further details.

Before closing, I would like to share a few of our highest aspirations for this new academic year and for future years.

These boldest of our ideas will rely on public/private partnerships, corporate investments, and governmental support.

I have long believed that our university can be more effective and impactful in our academic and public service by creating partnerships with public and private entities.

On the other hand, I believe any such partnerships must return value, preferably to both parties, in order to be worthy of our time and attention. Certainly, we will not achieve these goals overnight.

My colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, to be on the vanguard, we know that we must think big.

We will aggressively endeavor to pursue **three big bold ideas**:

1. Align our Quest 2025 goals and leverage the future potential that the enhancements to MT Boulevard bring.

We aspire to create a campus district to bolster student experience and tourism by transforming the area surrounding our campus into a vital and active educational, cultural, and commercial district.

2. Expand on our highly educated and ready-to-work graduate success.

We aspire to build a business partnership hub closer to Nashville by developing a facility, strategically located near major corporate headquarters and large employers, that would offer programs and services that support career development and career advancement and further respond to business and industry demands for employee education.

3. Aggressively pursue the goals of Quest 2025.

We aspire to establish a tradition of immersive learning by incorporating a high-impact learning experience into each major.

Finally, through our collective efforts, we offer great value to our students, to our communities, and to our constituents.

Our ready-to-work and well-educated graduates with a strong liberal arts foundation are fueling and driving the economy of our area, state, nation, and world.

Through data-informed initiatives and best practices, we're making dreams of attaining a degree an achievable reality for our diverse student population.

To maintain our edge and advantageous position, we must continue to work hard to implement strategic plans to accomplish our goals.

We must continue to create innovative academic programs to anticipate the jobs of tomorrow and to prepare our students with the knowledge and skills to fulfill them and become productive citizens.

I thank you for your True Blue spirit of passion and commitment as we set our sights to achieving our goals and greatness throughout the year ahead!