



**Fall Faculty Meeting
Friday, Aug. 22, 2014
10 a.m., Tucker Theatre**

Dr. Sidney A. McPhee, President

Good morning.

I am delighted to welcome each of you to our annual fall faculty meeting as we begin the new academic year.

Each fall, for the past 14 years, it has been my pleasure to be among the first to welcome back returning faculty and staff - and extend warm greetings to our newest employees.

Today in my remarks, I would like to accomplish 3 goals:

First, I would like to highlight a few university achievements from this past year.

Next, I would like to comment on our ongoing efforts and initiatives in implementing the Quest for Student Success plan. I will share a few success stories and outline some of the next steps needed to help us accomplish our goal of increasing the degree completion rates of our students.

And finally, I would like to reflect on some of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in the coming year.

But first ... let me take a few moments to recognize some individuals

- who are extremely important to this institution;
- who are committed to our mission...

- and are invaluable to me in working to ensure the successful management and operation of this university.
- I'll begin by introducing my senior executive team, a group of outstanding individuals who serve as my key advisors and are involved in much of the overall decision-making on our campus.

Please hold your applause until each group is recognized.

- Dr. Brad Bartel, university provost;
- Mr. John Cothorn, senior vice president;
- Dr. Deb Sells, vice president for student affairs and vice provost for enrollment and academic services;
- 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;
- And Mrs. 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.

I would also 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 four individuals who have been added to our cabinet membership since last year:

- Dr. William Canak, faculty senate president for 2014-15 and professor of sociology and anthropology. He is with us on the stage today.
- Andrew George, Student Government Association president for 2014-15.
- Dr. Marian Wilson, special assistant to the president for institutional equity and compliance.
- And Dr. Jackie Eller, acting vice provost for research and dean of graduate studies.

Now, will all of the members of the President's Cabinet please stand and be recognized?

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

Next, I would like to introduce our deans:

- Dr. Robert Fischer, dean, College of Basic and Applied Sciences;
- Dr. Harold Whiteside, dean, College of Behavioral and Health Sciences;
- Dr. David Urban, dean, Jennings A. Jones College of Business;
- Dr. Lana Seivers, dean, College of Education;
- Dr. Mark Byrnes, dean, College of Liberal Arts;
- Mr. Kenneth Paulson, dean, College of Mass Communication;
- Ms. Bonnie Allen, dean, Walker Library
- Dr. Mike Boyle, dean, University College
- and Dr. John Vile, dean, University Honors College.

Please give our deans a round of applause!

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

From the Tennessee General Assembly:

- State Sen. Bill Ketron - 13th District;
- State Sen. Jim Tracy - 16th District;
- State Rep. Joe Carr - 48th District;
- State Rep. Mike Sparks - 49th District;

- State Rep. Rick Womick - 34th District;
- and State Rep. Dawn White - 37th District.

I am pleased to recognize from our local government:

- Mayor of Rutherford County, the Honorable Ernest Burgess;
- and Mayor of Murfreesboro, the Honorable Shane McFarland.

Also, with us on the stage today is Mrs. Kathy Jones, president of the MTSU Foundation Board of Trustees.

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

Now, as we embark on this new academic year, as an institution — there are many reasons to celebrate the absolutely amazing accomplishments and achievements in this past year by our faculty and staff.

These accomplishments continue to bolster our standing as a top-tier comprehensive public university and enhanced our reputation across the nation and around the world.

For example:

- The Tennessee Higher Education Commission granted MTSU's request to create a bachelor's degree in mechatronics engineering.

This new and innovated degree program was developed with the support of local industries, including Nissan and Bridgestone.

- The area of research has always been a major focus of our university and will continue to be a priority.

MTSU's leadership in research and in transforming students into scholars supports our goal as a major comprehensive research and teaching institution.

- We initiated new collaborative projects with nine Tennessee colleges and universities, plus Alabama A&M, and submitted over \$17 million in research-related proposals.
- We saw increased National Science Foundation funding to \$2.8 million, five times more than last year, and National Institutes of Health funding to \$632,000, through new grant successes.

- And Dr. Jason Jesson in Biology received the largest grant ever at MTSU from the National Institutes of Health totaling \$1.6 million.

With respect to enrollment:

- In 2013-14, we saw an increase in the number of first-time freshmen enrolled and an increase in their ACT scores. However, we continue to have challenges with our overall enrollment, particularly in the area of returning students.
- Another bright spot in enrollment is the increase in the number of international students enrolling at our institution – both last year and this year.
 - Our international student undergraduate enrollments have increased 20.7 percent over the Fall 2013 semester and new applications increased by 35 percent.

Also:

- For the first time ever, more than 400 MTSU students participated in the study-abroad program during the past academic year.
- And we established and implemented 3+1+1 programs with two prominent universities in China.

Other achievements include:

- We have completed the necessary work to earn the designation of Adult Learner-Friendly Institution.

MTSU is the only public institution of higher education in Tennessee to have earned this designation.

- In addition, we were named a “Military Friendly School” for the third year by G.I. Jobs magazine.

This honor is given to only the top 15 percent of colleges, universities and trade schools who actively promote resources and services to veterans looking to return to school.

Also, Military Times named the MTSU Jones College of Business among its “Best for Vets: Business Schools 2014” rankings.

- The College of Mass Communication was ranked among the top 20 programs in the U.S by members of the Radio Television Digital News Association.

The college also forged a first-ever partnership with the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival, allowing students to cover the world-famous event for area media outlets.

- MTSU, working with partners at Vanderbilt, will participate in the U.S. Energy Department's Solar Decathlon 2015, competing against 19 other college teams to build solar-powered and energy-efficient houses.
- The MTSU Wind Ensemble, conducted by Dr. Reed Thomas in the College of Liberal Arts, stands alone in Tennessee with the release of its second CD entitled "Earthrise," a collaboration with three international composers on Naxos, known as the world's leading classical music label.
- The MTSU Arts production of the Oscar- and Tony-winning musical "Les Misérables" drew four consecutive sellouts of Tucker Theatre, setting a record for the facility.

The music and theatre programs in the College of Liberal Arts produced the show.

- Finally, in our development efforts over the past year, campuswide fundraising efforts surpassed the \$10 million

level and successfully garnered support for a number of critical projects and initiatives.

- This level of support places MTSU among the top 20 of its national peers and further demonstrates the incredible support we continue to receive from our alumni and friends.
- With less than one and a half years remaining in the Centennial Campaign, we are well positioned to reach and exceed our goal while providing important long-term resources to strengthen many of our top overall priorities.

In the department of athletics, we had an exciting and productive year during its first season of Conference USA action.

The Blue Raiders won three championships, sent four teams to postseason play and had 11 individuals advance to NCAA Championships.

In the classroom, 159 student-athletes were on the Commissioner's List and 11 were named to various C-USA All-Academic teams.

During the spring 2014 semester:

- Nine of 17 teams had a semester team grade-point average of 3.0 or higher;
- 101 student athletes made the Dean's List (3.5+ GPA), and 37 had a perfect 4.0.
- Overall, 193 of 340, or 57 percent, of the student-athletes had a 3.0 or higher.

For the fifth consecutive year, all 17 of Middle Tennessee's athletic teams earned a multi-year Academic Progress Rate (APR) of over 930 as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) released its annual report in June.

The most recent APR scores are based on a multi-year rate that averages scores from the past four academic years.

Two teams were recognized by the NCAA for earning Public Recognition Awards, based on their most recent multi-year APR.

These awards are given each year to teams with APRs in the top 10 percent in each sport.

Both men's and women's golf were honored for this prestigious award.

Also, Middle Tennessee football was one of just 20 FBS programs nationally to make a bowl game, win at least eight games, and have an APR score of over 970 out of 1,000.

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

MTSU 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 new \$147-million state-of-the-art Science Building project was completed ahead of schedule and will be ready for selected classes and labs this semester.

A formal ribbon cutting is set for Oct. 15.

There is no doubt in my mind that this building is one of the very best science facilities in the world. It is simply magnificent.

The science facilities improvements continue with the renovations of the Davis Science and Wiser-Patten buildings, with the start of construction in early spring 2015.

A new entrance between the buildings will provide ADA access to both buildings and will connect improved labs and classrooms and the science programs in that area of the campus.

The occupants will be Physics, Geosciences, Forensic Science, Anthropology, and 20 new advising offices for Basic and Applied Sciences.

In addition:

- Renovations will soon begin on the Bell Street property.

This is the former medical facility that we acquired more than a year ago.

Future occupants of this facility include the Graduate Business Studies for the Jones College of Business, the University College, and the Center for Counseling and Psychological Services.

Construction is set to begin this fall and move in is expected by next summer.

- Traffic flow in and out of campus continues to improve, as well.

Lightning Way on the northeast side of campus has reopened in time for the start of fall classes, connecting the new rotary at the intersection of Lightning and Champion Ways to the rotary at Blue Raider Drive.

- Parking for students will also get another boost this fall, with construction wrapping up on a surface lot off MTSU Boulevard east of the new garage at the Student Services and Admissions Center.
- Work has begun on a \$5 million indoor tennis facility at Old Fort Parkway that will greatly enhance Middle Tennessee State University's tennis program while providing greater

opportunities for the growing local tennis community.

- Our renovations of the historic Murphy Center will be finished in November.

- And the new football turf at Floyd Stadium has been installed.

For most of the 13 years of my presidency, I have used this line in my speeches at one time or another:

“Middle Tennessee State University is the No. 1 choice of undergraduates in the state of Tennessee.”

It is an applause line and, without a doubt, we, and I, have sure loved saying it again and again.

For many years, student enrollment was considered the metric to make the case for state appropriations.

That was how we were supposed to be fully funded by the state.

That was how we were compared with our sister schools and out-of-state peers.

And that was how we defined ourselves in our marketing and advertising.

But times change, as do expectations of institutional performance by state and federal policy makers.

In 2010, the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee enacted major reforms to higher education, emphasizing degree completion as a primary metric for institution funding.

This led us to a renewed focus on student success.

We have accepted and embraced this new state emphasis on student success and institutional performance.

It is important for you to know that:

- Of the 21,162 undergraduates enrolled with us last fall, only 7,780 or 37 percent of them were 20 years or younger.

- The average age of our students is 26 years old.

- We are the No. 1 choice of adult students of all four-year universities in Tennessee.
- And the median family income of our students is approximately \$70,000.

These statistics speak to the fact that we have reached far beyond the typical, so-called “traditional” freshmen – newly graduated high school seniors – and serve a much broader and diverse audience.

Now more than ever, given ...

- the clarity of mission from the Tennessee Board of Regents and the Tennessee General Assembly,
- the variety of options available for students in pursuing higher education,
- and the need to be more cost-efficient and effective in serving our students,

... we must ensure that we recruit, retain and graduate students.

Now, we are proud of our legacy as the largest undergraduate university of the state.

But we recognize that despite how satisfying it is to make that claim, it is not how we should define ourselves moving forward.

Our future success and survival as an institution depends on our ability to graduate students and prepare them for gainful employment.

These are the metrics that matter.

During the last academic year, we began an aggressive effort to implement initiatives to improve the educational experience of our students in and out of the classroom.

Our efforts — some of them sweeping and bold — include:

Hiring almost 50 new advisors, who will be housed in the individual colleges.

- They will work in support of our faculty;

- and, together, they will help mentor and guide students toward graduation.

We are providing a state-of-the-art software tool, developed by the nationally recognized Education Advisory Board, known as the Student Success Collaborative Project.

- This new system will help faculty and staff advisors identify challenges our students may encounter in their individual paths toward degree completion;
- It will give them an early alert when a student may need intervention and guidance;
- It will create an advising record that keeps track of the advice, notes and guidance that the student has received during his or her academic career;
- Using an analysis of 10 years of MTSU student data, this system will identify at-risk students and will help identify their obstacles to degree completion.

There is nothing wrong with a student being challenged while pursuing a degree.

We do not want to guide a student toward the easiest academic path.

Rather, we want to help the student make a choice that has manageable risks – combined with high student satisfaction and high career potential.

We have recently hired Dr. Richard “Rick” Sluder as our new vice provost for student success. He assumes his new role on Sept. 15.

- He comes to MTSU after serving as vice provost for recruitment and outreach at the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg.
- He brings a wealth of experience and knowledge about student success issues and a proven track record of accomplishments, helping UCM increase its enrollment and leading its initiative to improve student retention and graduation rates.

Our efforts collectively must be focused on doing our part to help students succeed — and our colleges, schools, and academic departments must take the lead in these endeavors!

Last year, we recognized the Department of Physics for the great strides to improve student success.

In this regard, I would like to single out another academic department that has shown:

- commitment to continuous improvement;
- innovative curricular changes;
- and enhanced student engagement opportunities.

I am proud to announce that the Mathematical Sciences Department will receive the 2014 President's Student Success Award for Innovation in Academics.

During my address to the faculty last year, I identified MATH 1730, or Pre-Calculus, as one of seven general education courses with the highest D-F-W rates.

This was not a revelation to the Department of Mathematical Sciences.

The faculty and leadership of this unit within the College of Basic and Applied Sciences had already identified a series of issues

beyond this particular course that needed attention.

They were hard at work, exploring ways to increase student success throughout the major.

Here are some of the solutions that the department developed and metrics they used to assess their outcomes:

- They standardized the multi-sectioned, general-education courses in mathematics. They now have common syllabi, topics and work expectations.
- Four general-education mathematics courses now have common final examinations.
- Graduate teaching assistants who teach these courses are offered additional teaching support, are more closely supervised and have their teaching evaluated multiple times during the academic year.

The outcomes are impressive:

- The 2013 student success rate of MATH 1010, Mathematics for General Studies, was significantly higher than the previous

six fall semesters and the previous five spring semesters which reflect – a decline of 16 percent in the D, F, W rates since Fall 2010.

- The fall 2013 student success rate of MATH 1710, or College Algebra, was significantly higher than the previous six fall semesters – a decline of 8 percent in the D, F, W rates since Fall 2010.
- The fall 2013 student success rate in MATH 1730, our Pre-Calculus course, was significantly higher than the previous four fall semesters – a decline of 10 percent in the D, F, W rates since Fall 2010.

As a result of faculty recognition and concern for student success in all freshman-level mathematics courses, especially Pre-Calculus, mathematics faculty began discussions of course redesign.

This discussion included:

- mathematicians and mathematics educators;
- tenured, tenure-track and full-time temporary faculty;
- and veteran faculty as well as those newer to the profession.

During these discussions, the faculty recognized that in addition to traditional pedagogies, other instructional strategies may prove to be more effective with some students.

Thus, ongoing discussion focused on alternative institutional approaches that could increase student involvement in the teaching-learning process.

Several teaching strategies were considered.

To help in these discussions, Dr. Marilyn Carlson, director of research innovations in mathematics and science education at Arizona State University, was brought to campus for a workshop on process-guided learning.

The outcomes of these important discussions and development opportunities offered in the department have been:

- This fall, as many as 10 sections of redesigned pre-calculus, using new course materials, will be taught by both tenure-track and temporary full-time faculty.

- A faculty working group has begun discussions about course redesign in Calculus I;
- And supplemental instruction is now available in the lower division general education courses.

The department's willingness to engage in course redesign and new pedagogical techniques illustrates the priorities and commitment of the faculty and staff to helping the students of MTSU succeed in their educational endeavor.

Would Dr. Donald Nelson, professor and chair, and the entire mathematics faculty, please stand and be recognized?

I also want to single out a few other student success-related initiatives that are showing great promise in our quest to improve student performance.

They include:

- The Human Sciences Department;
- the Art Department;

- the Department of Electronic Media Communication;
- and the Department of Management and Marketing.

Other initiatives include:

- The College of Education provided training for 86 faculty and supervisors to provide assistance and tutoring to 1,369 students to prepare for the ED-TPA, the externally scored assessment designed for all pre-service candidates.
 - As a result of this assistance, the MTSU student pass rate for ED-TAP increased from 49 percent in Fall 2013 to 74.40 percent in Spring 2014.

There were many other success stories in colleges and departments throughout the university:

- We attracted 114 students to our Scholars Academy program this summer, a significant percentage increase over last summer.

This program was led under the direction of Mr. Vincent Windrow.

- In addition, we had 100 percent participation by faculty last fall in our initiative to give mid-term grade feedback to students.
- We launched our centralized tutoring initiative along with college-based tutoring.

In this coming year, we intend to expand it beyond its initial offerings in the Walker Library and increase the number of selected academic programs.

- Thanks to the efforts of our True Blue Community Initiative, assisted by our first lady, Elizabeth McPhee, we funded the first round of “micro-grants,” which allowed our deans to give emergency financial aid to students.
- And recently, we launched and rebranded the Bachelor of Science in Integrated Studies degree, formerly known as the Bachelor of University Studies degree.

This degree will be attractive to many students.

As we approach the future, we are excited about the direction of the

university.

We are confident that we will contribute to the goal of increasing the number of college graduates for the workforce in the state of Tennessee.

In the coming academic year, we intend to:

- Continue work on several new degree programs including a Master's of Science in Finance; a Master of Arts in Liberal Arts; a Bachelor of Science in Global Sciences and Cultural Geography; and a Bachelor of Science in Theatre.
- Explore ways to create financial incentives for incoming students who graduate on track and on time.
 - Develop target geographical areas where tuition discounts would be offered for out-of-state students.
 - Develop aggressive outreach and recruitment efforts of our "Common Market" programs.
 - Target certain public and private high schools to increase enrollment of high-ability students.

- Begin preparation for the institution's Southern Association of Schools and Colleges reaffirmation.

- And continue our efforts to aggressively implement our Quest for Student Success plan.

I encourage you to visit our website, [MTSU.edu/studentsuccess](https://www.mtsu.edu/studentsuccess), to read about more of the Quest for Student Success initiatives.

In conclusion, it is important to note that any of the ideas advanced through our Quest for Student Success do not include watering down academic programs or reducing rigor.

We have a moral imperative to not only enhance the present academic experience but also to continue to add value to the degrees already obtained by our alumni.

Thus, we are not lowering the bar; we are – in many instances – raising the standard for all of us including the students.

Finally, you, as members of our faculty are positioned best to know about the great value MTSU offers our students and the excellent care and instruction they receive.

And, as I reminded you last year, 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 have a responsibility for student success.
- — and always — to remain True Blue.

I thank you for your attention today and look forward to working with you in the coming academic year.