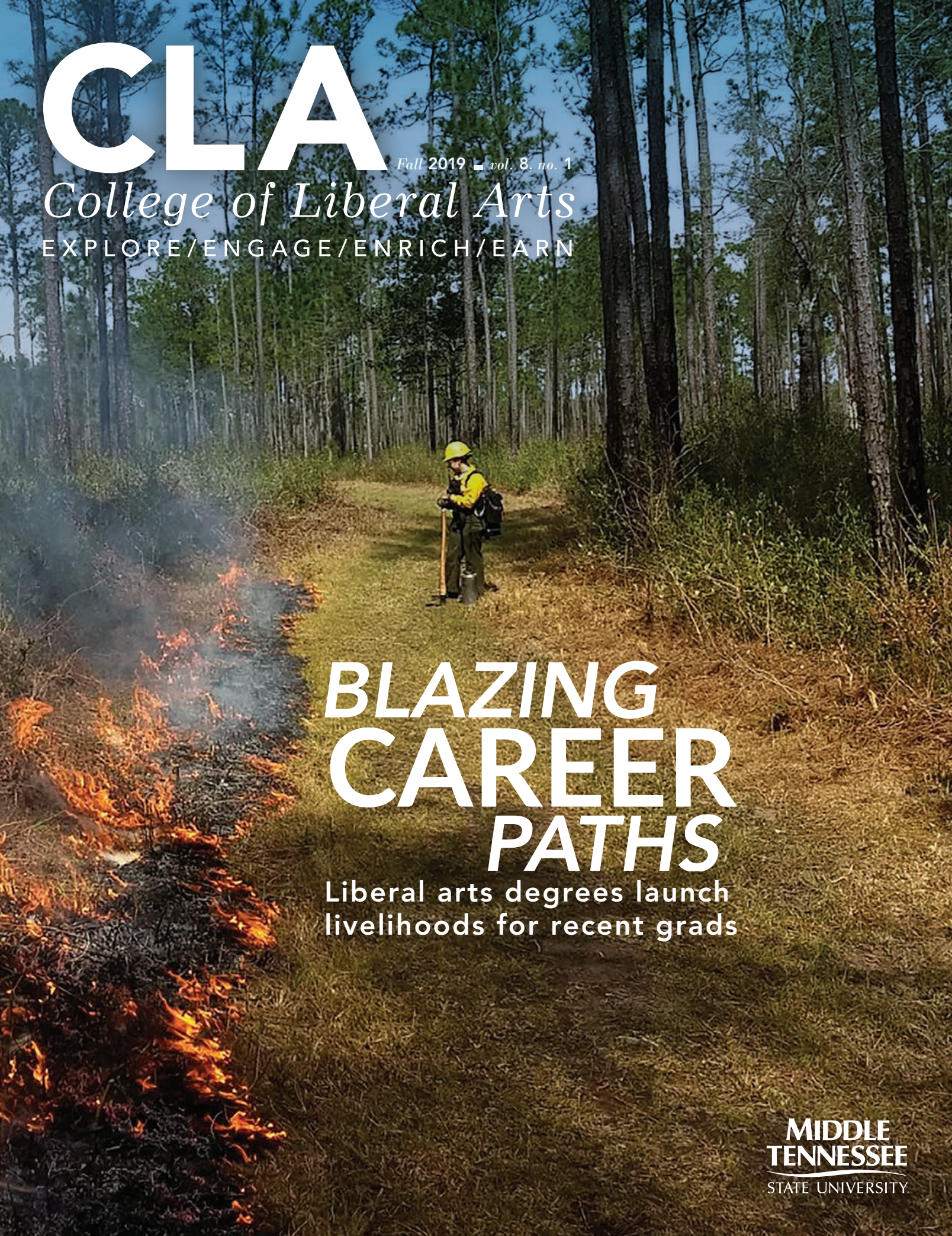


CLA

Fall 2019 ▪ *vol.* 8, *no.* 1

College of Liberal Arts

EXPLORE/ENGAGE/ENRICH/EARN

BLAZING CAREER *PATHS*

Liberal arts degrees launch livelihoods for recent grads

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

CLA
College of Liberal Arts
EXPLORE/ENGAGE/ENRICH/EARN
mtsu.edu/liberalarts
Fall 2019 ▬ *vol.* 8, *no.* 1

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Feature Story

20 ▬ BLAZING CAREER PATHS

Liberal arts degrees launch livelihoods for recent grads



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Dean's Letter

George Anders, senior editor at large at LinkedIn and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, advocates effectively for the value of a liberal arts education. In *You Can Do Anything: The Surprising Power of a "Useless" Liberal Arts Education*, Anders brings substantial empirical evidence to back up his claim that liberal arts graduates enjoy success across a wide variety of occupations. Our alumni provide compelling anecdotal evidence through their varied career paths and successes. A desire to learn, a willingness to try disparate career paths, and an understanding that failure is part of the growth process allow College of Liberal Arts students to "blaze" trails across industry, nonprofits, government, and more. The economy of the future demands the knowledge and skills that result from a broad-based liberal arts education (*see page 19*). You can read more about the benefits of liberal arts on our CLA website at **mtsu.edu/liberalarts**.

The experiences that shape our students (education abroad, internships, field research, and more) result from close working relationships with our faculty. MTSU Liberal Arts programs combine the best of both worlds: the resources of a large regional comprehensive university and the personalized experiences of a small liberal arts college. Our CLA faculty members know their students and they invest in the success of students in and out of the classroom. Unfortunately, sometimes that takes the form of a hospital visit *(see page 16)*. More often, however, it is the subtle encouragement to do just a little more than the student thinks possible—encouragement that builds the confidence to fight fires *(see page 22)*, fight for victims *(see page 32)*, or fight for the less fortunate *(see page 30)*.

I hope you will visit campus soon so that you can see our faculty and students in action, find your way around Peck Hall more easily *(see page 12)*, or explore all of the new additions to campus. Your support makes possible all of the great work you will read about in this magazine. Thank you for helping us continue our tradition as the *best* college at MTSU!

Karen Petersen, Dean
Karen.Petersen@mtsu.edu

mtsu.edu/liberalarts

EXPLORE YOUR WORLD *shape the future*

ENRICH YOUR LIFE *showcase your skills*

ENGAGE YOUR MIND *solve real-world problems*

EARN A LIVING *succeed with liberal arts*

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DANCE

MT Dance Program presents:

Fall Dance Concert

Nov. 21–23, 7:30 p.m.

Tucker Theatre,
Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building

MUSIC

School of Music presents:

MTSU Women's Chorale with the MTSU Meistersingers

Nov. 24, 3:00 p.m.

Hinton Music Hall,
Wright Music Building

ART

Department of Art and Design
Todd Art Gallery present:

Print Media Show

Feb. 15–March 7,

Todd Art Gallery,
Todd Hall Building (Room 224A)

THEATRE

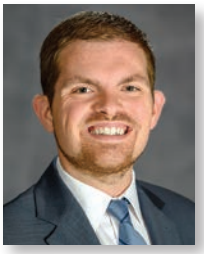
Department of Theatre and Dance presents:

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

April 2–4, 7:30 p.m.; April 5, 2:00 p.m.

Tucker Theatre,
Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building

New Hires



Matthew Hibdon

Strategic Communications Manager

CLA welcomes back Matthew Hibdon, a former academic advisor who recently worked with Warren County Executive Jimmy Haley to improve government accessibility and transparency in his hometown of McMinnville. Prior to that, Hibdon served as director of leadership programs at Omicron Delta Kappa in Lexington, Virginia. As strategic communications manager, Hibdon helps CLA departments and centers effectively promote programs and showcase the successes of students, faculty, staff, and alumni. He is a True Blue graduate of the College of Liberal Arts (B.A., History, '12) and earned his M.Ed. from MTSU's Womack Educational Leadership Department ('14). Hibdon is a liberal arts advocate and often can be found attending lectures, productions, and other CLA functions. He was elected secretary of the MTSU Alumni Association Board of Directors and also volunteers with 4-H and the Tennessee Historical Society.



Francis Koti

Chair, Department of Global Studies and Human Geography

Francis Koti comes to MTSU from the University of North Alabama after serving for seven years as department head of Geography and one year as interim associate dean in the College of Arts and Sciences. During Koti's 15 years at North Alabama, he designed and led multiple education abroad opportunities in Tanzania. He grew up in Kenya, where he received his undergraduate education. Koti then earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in Geography from West Virginia University. He is fluent in Kiswahili and Kamba and understands two other Kenyan local languages. Koti and his wife, Margaret, have two children, Milton and Arianna. In his spare time, Koti enjoys music, attending his children's activities, traveling with family, professional soccer, and college athletics.



SAVING OLD TOWN

by Skip Anderson

Tennessee's ubiquitous Frist family taps MTSU professor Kevin Smith to help protect and document remains of an ancient civilization in middle Tennessee

Along the tree-lined banks of the Harpeth River in the heart of Williamson County, Tennessee, it's easy to fall under the charms of the agricultural patchwork and well-spaced ancestral homes. Not only does such a bucolic scene inspire a sense of serenity, it also points to our roots as a people: a continuum of culture that spans hundreds of generations and thousands of years. But on one five-acre lot in particular, one that's located where the ruddy waters of Brown Creek spill into the Harpeth River, there is literally more truth to that than an untrained eye could possibly see. And protecting what most of us can't see—clues that a great civilization that one anthropologist from MTSU knows thrived there long ago—is where Dr. William (Bill) and Tracy Frist come into this fascinating story. The heart- and lung-transplant surgeon and former majority leader of the U.S. Senate and his wife, an accomplished equestrienne and farm manager from Virginia who is one-quarter Native American, purchased the land in 2015 with the aim of preserving the site called Old Town, which contains the remains of the civilization that began some 12,000 years ago and flourished both economically and culturally for centuries.

"As a little boy, I remember going to church picnics 'way out' at Henry Goodpasture's farm at Old Town and seeing the big mounds adjacent the stately home and listening to the stories about some distant culture who lived on those lands for hundreds of years and then disappeared," Dr. Frist told *MTSU Magazine*, referring to the property that he now owns. "Mr. Goodpasture had a vast collection of pottery and relics that had been plowed up or found in the front yard along the banks of the Harpeth River."

The Frists launched the Old Town Heritage Project shortly after purchasing the 40-acre property, located about 20 miles southwest of downtown Nashville.

"The purpose of the Old Town Heritage Project is to support academic-led new discovery of the ancient history of middle Tennessee and the broad distribution and sharing of that new knowledge with the public and future generations," he said.

"Academic institutions like MTSU are at the forefront of discovery and play a vital role in uncovering that untold history."

—Dr. Bill Frist, former Senate majority leader



The Frists asked MTSU Anthropology Professor Kevin E. Smith to lead the scientific research component of the preservation effort. Smith had long been familiar with the site, having first explored the property superficially some 25 years ago at the request of previous owners.

"Our hope is to garner a much richer and more complete understanding of its ancient history under the direction and leadership of MTSU," Frist said. "Academic institutions like MTSU are at the forefront of discovery and play a vital role in uncovering that untold history for scholars, archaeologists, historians, anthropologists, and schoolchildren for generations to come."

But what exactly are the Frists working with MTSU to preserve?

"This is a town, not just an archeological site," Smith said. "People lived here and had great leaders. We only have about three such sites in state ownership and two in private, so this is a new addition. This is the first concerted effort by a private land owner in middle Tennessee to take it upon themselves to preserve it as the state would if they owned it."

But picturing what may constitute a "town" from the Mississippian Period can be a challenge. And why did they settle in what would become middle Tennessee centuries later?

"We walk and drive upon a truly grand civilization every day in middle Tennessee," Smith said, noting that a paved stretch of the Natchez Trace covers part of Old Town's ruins. "There used to be about 40 towns like Old Town all along the Cumberland River and its tributaries. There's also great farmland here, which supported their economy. It was one of the most densely populated areas east of the Mississippi in the prehistoric era. Geographically, it was the center of the trade routes in all directions."

In a few small ways, Nashville has something in common with the prehistoric civilization that occupied middle Tennessee thousands of years ago: It is one of only a handful of U.S. cities to have three interstates intersect within its city limits, thus fueling economic trade in all directions. Agriculture remains the Volunteer State's top industry. And to say it's "densely populated" would be an understatement.

The most obvious clues that mark the site as an ancient civilization are the multiple earthen mounds ranging from 4 to 12 feet in height that are scattered on a plot of land roughly the size of a football field.

"This civilization lasted 500 years or so, with about a century and a half where there were dozens and dozens of towns and tens of thousands of people building some of the mounds that were some of the largest earthen constructions built in middle Tennessee until the 1950s," Smith said. "We didn't have the ability to build these types of structures until we got bulldozers, and they did it with baskets."

Smith, who has studied six other mounds in the region since the 1980s, said they played important, multifaceted roles in the lives of those who lived in the community.

"Mounds like this are platforms that elevate; they are the same as Maya temples [in Guatemala] atop a pyramid," Smith said. "These in middle Tennessee were built with earth and on top were houses for the kings of these towns and their families and temples."

In addition to establishing vibrant trade relations throughout the region—the Natchez Trace perhaps being the most significant (and famous) prehistoric trade route for the region—the Mississippian people, as scholars know them, also cultivated a rich, highly developed artistic tradition.

"In many ways, it was the most fabulous art tradition that ever existed in North America," Smith said. "Much of Mississippian art centers on things that took place at the time of what they viewed as creation, with depictions of supernatural heroes who cleared the earth of monsters so humans could live here—much like the hero twins associated with the Maya civilization. The other part of the Mississippian peoples' art dealt with what happens to the soul after the body dies. Their art explored the possibility of reincarnation."

Previous owners of the property, including the Nashville historic families of the Browns and the Goodpastures, musician Jimmy Buffet, and later, singer Kim Carnes, took measures not to impact the site in ways that might be destructive. The Cromling family, originally from Ohio, restored the dry-stacked bulwarks of the historic 1802 Old Town bridge over Brown Creek and used state-of-the-art ultrasound technology to identify more than 220 ancient stonebox burial sites in sampled areas around the mounds. And the Frists, working with MTSU, are taking giant steps toward preserving the site in perpetuity, but not without inviting other stakeholders to the table, too.









"If the soil chemistry cooperates, we'll have a picture of where the houses were located, . . . where the cemetery and graves were located, and a more precise idea of where the original town wall was located . . . without turning over a spade of soil."

—Kevin Smith, MTSU Anthropology professor

"Obviously, there are many people who should contribute to the decision-making process, including the descendants of the southeastern Native American tribes," Smith said. "And I hope we can find some of the descendants of the slaves of the Brown family and gauge their insights and perspectives on how the site should be interpreted and preserved. The Frists are certainly very cognizant of that."

For now, Smith is overseeing non-invasive exploration using radar-type equipment that can provide clues as to what secrets the mound may contain.

"We're currently doing non-intrusive, high-tech archeology using magnetometry and ground-penetrating radar to map this site out without disturbing it," Smith said. "If the soil chemistry cooperates, we'll have a picture of where the houses were located, as well as where the cemetery and graves were located, and a more precise idea of where the original town wall was located. And all of that can be done without turning over a spade of soil. Then, with the input of all the stakeholders, we can decide whether we'll do some limited archeological work to answer specific questions without disturbing any graves or destroying anything."

This isn't the first initiative funded by the Frists at MTSU. Far from it, in fact. The couple has donated several times to research-related causes in recent years.

"We first contributed to MTSU about 10 years ago, working with [alumnus and MTSU Board of Trustees chair] Steve Smith to support a Center for Strategic and International Studies Presidential Scholar from the school," Frist said. "Second, Tracy and I two years ago established the Bill and Tracy Frist Old Town Endowed Scholarship for Native America, which matches funds raised through Kevin Smith."

Dr. Frist's interests in cultural and anthropological history span his lifetime and have led him to leadership roles in some of the world's top institutions. He has served on the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., which is the governing board for all 15 individual Smithsonian museums and facilities. He currently sits on the board of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian.

"Interestingly, both the Smithsonian museums of Natural History and the American Indian, as well as the Peabody Museum at Harvard, have ancient pieces and remains dating back a thousand years that were removed from our property at Old Town years ago," Frist said.

He also serves as a director on the global board of The Nature Conservancy, the largest land and environmental conservation group in the country. And the paternal grandmother of Tracy Frist is Native American, leading her to be a "devoted student of Native American culture," he said.

Together, the Frists have participated in the Lakota summer solstice celebration in South Dakota near Hill City the past four years, he said. And Tracy has long participated in Lakota Sun Dance ceremonies in the same region.

"Tracy and I are passionate about conservation of land, nature, and culture," Frist said. "History in context inspires us, and we want it to inspire others. We want to add to the limited body of knowledge of what is today known about ancient civilizations in middle Tennessee. It is largely an untold story. The preservation of Old Town and conservation of the land and legacy for generations to come is our passion and our mission."

A CAREER WELL DONE

A tradition at MTSU's Fall Faculty Meeting is the annual presentation of the MTSU Foundation Awards, which recognize, celebrate, and reward University faculty members for their accomplishments inside and outside the classroom.

The 2017 recipient of the foundation's Career Achievement Award, considered the pinnacle of recognition for stellar MTSU professors, was Kevin E. Smith, a nationally recognized professor of Anthropology at MTSU since 1988, a full-time faculty member since 1994, and the founder and director of MTSU's Anthropology program in the College of Liberal Arts' Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

Smith's research interests lie in the archaeology of the southeastern United States, with a particular focus on the late prehistoric Native American cultures of middle Tennessee pre-1500 C.E., Tennessee's late 18th- and early 19th-century frontier period, and African-American life from slavery through Reconstruction. He's an internationally recognized scholar on middle Tennessee's archaeology and an acclaimed mentor to hundreds of students whose involvement in the more than 30 different courses he's taught at MTSU is enabling them to take their knowledge and talent around the world.

Smith said he felt MTSU's Anthropology program has been vital over the years in preserving archaeological sites around the region as the areas around Nashville experienced tremendous growth and development over the years.

In addition to his University service, Smith has organized or chaired more than 20 national, regional, and state conferences and symposia and conducted archival and collections research for the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian and the Tennessee State Museum, among others.



New Finds @ PECK HALL

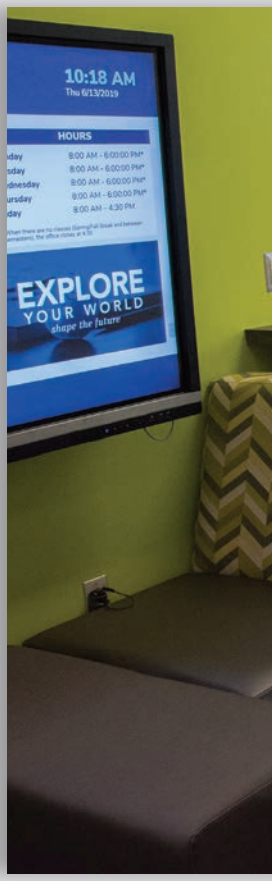




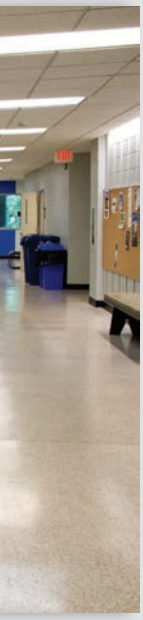




Getting lost in Peck Hall has long been a rite of passage for MTSU students. In efforts to try to help, Peck Hall has gotten a makeover! Check out the additions to navigation, beautification, and comfort now in use. The halls and stairwells have been color-coded, wayfinding signage has been added, and hydration stations have been installed.










EARN
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Second Floor
International Admissions
Political Science & International Relations
Education Abroad
Classrooms 211-213
Classroom 206
Restrooms
Elevator
2





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OFF THE BEATEN PATH

From staff reports

Travel guru encourages students to connect with other cultures

Renowned world traveler Rick Steves visited MTSU to speak on the importance of leaving home to learn more about yourself and others.

MTSU's Department of Global Studies and Human Geography brought in Steves, whose focus on personalizing travel and stepping off typical tourist routes has taken him on a nearly 40-year journey as an author and public TV and radio host.

In his new book, *Travel as a Political Act*, Steves makes the case that travel abroad both increases our awareness of other cultures and our understanding of our own culture. He delivered his lecture, "Travel as a Political Act" (named to mimic his book), to a packed house at the Student Union Ballroom last November.

He encourages Americans to get to know residents to "connect with people and try to understand them" when they travel and to "make itinerary decisions that put you in touch with locals."

As a result of connecting with fellow humans around the world, Steves says, Americans can better understand their role in the world and how American solutions to problems might work—or not work—in other places. "Embrace cultural differences with joy rather than with judgment," Steves said.

A travel writer, TV host, and humanitarian who founded his own travel company, Steves has hosted the weekly *Rick Steves' Europe* public television series since 1991 and his *Travel with Rick Steves* public radio program since 2005. He's been writing since 1980, authoring more than 50 travel guides and books, and he writes a syndicated newspaper column.

While the Department of Global Studies and Human Geography (GSHG) proposed and organized the visit, co-sponsors included: the MTSU Distinguished Lecture Fund, Office of International Affairs, College of Liberal Arts Lecture Series, MTSU Provost's Office, College of Graduate Studies, Department of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, and the Department of History.

"The Department of Global Studies and Human Geography wanted to bring Rick Steves to MTSU because his message about international travel aligns with the basic mission of our program," said David Carleton, GSHG interim chair. "All Global Studies majors go abroad as a fundamental part of their education. Our students have been to three dozen countries on six continents, and these are transformative experiences in their lives.

"Rick Steves teaches that international travel broadens perspectives, deepens understanding, and builds person-to-person contacts that last a lifetime. This is the experience of our students. Global Studies and Human Geography students come back to campus from around the world truly transformed: excited and engaged, with a deep appreciation of the cultures and people they have met, and confident in their abilities to communicate, work, and thrive in cultures around the world," Carleton added.

"Rick Steves' message on campus emphasized why all MTSU students ought to participate in international education and why international education is so fundamental to our Global Studies program."



Caring faculty share in recent graduate's success after horrific accident

An Astonishing

Mary (Ellis) Prieskorn nearly died Sept. 25, 2017. While driving to her student teaching assignment at Riverdale High School in Murfreesboro, and only 10 minutes from her Wilson County home, the MTSU student blacked out due to exhaustion. Her BMW veered off the road, crashing—she was later told—into three mailboxes and knocking down a telephone pole. She was flown by LifeFlight to Vanderbilt University Medical Center and woke up in the hospital a day later.

Determined to finish her degree and fully supported by caring MTSU faculty, she miraculously resumed her Art Education classes just a month after the accident, with strict orders to avoid bright lights, loud noises, and other triggers for people with brain injuries. Prieskorn made a full recovery over the next two years, with only a tiny scratch on her forehead serving as a reminder of that fateful day. She married in 2018 (to Enoch Prieskorn), graduated from MTSU in May 2019, and landed her first job with local homeschool tutorials in the Mt. Juliet area.

Jane Ellis described her daughter's accident as "horrific." Despite wearing her seatbelt and the successful deployment of the car's airbags, Prieskorn spent three days in Vanderbilt's trauma unit. Although there were no broken bones, she suffered a brain injury with a subarachnoidal bleed (a life-threatening type of stroke) and one laceration requiring six stitches.

Prieskorn needed a miracle to recover and achieve her goals. A community of supporters, including concerned MTSU faculty, joined together to pray for her and assist in her recovery.

Ellis drove her daughter everywhere, including to MTSU for classes, from the family home in Mt. Juliet. Prieskorn registered with the MTSU Disability and Access Center so that she could continue her studies in an environment free from the stresses that aggravate traumatic brain injury.

Assistant Professor Nancy Caukin, the Ready2Teach program coordinator in the College of Education's Womack Educational Leadership Department, visited Prieskorn in the hospital while she was enrolled in Caukin's problem-based instructional strategies course. "I wanted her to know I was praying for her full recovery and I would be a support structure for her on campus if she needed it," Caukin said.

"Mary always had a positive attitude. That helped her get through this," added Debrah Sickler-Voigt, Department of Art and Design professor in the College of Liberal Arts, who visited her student at home to check on her.

Prieskorn was "in a really challenging practicum course," Sickler-Voigt said. The accident interrupted her Riverdale student-teaching assignment. Riverdale art teacher Rebecca Hunter "let Mary come at nontraditional times to complete her art display." The following spring, Ted Edinger, art teacher at Tulip Grove Elementary School in Hermitage, "mentored her through school noise challenges" and more. "Having great community partners—asking teachers to do this out of the goodness of their hearts—helps tremendously," Sickler-Voigt said.

Caukin says educators were all amazed at how quickly Prieskorn returned to school at MTSU. "I know she experienced concern for how she would do. Mary works very hard and wants to do her best at all times," Caukin said. "Because of her injuries, she could only spend a comparatively short amount of time on the computer doing school work. I reassured her that she had the time she needed to complete her assignments, to not put too much pressure on herself.

"Little by little, she met each challenge head-on. I am so proud of Mary's determination. She pushed herself to complete my course and her other courses amidst her challenges."

When it came time for the Residency II state exam for prospective classroom teachers, Prieskorn "did really well," scoring in the 50s, Sickler-Voigt said. The MTSU average is 44. Prieskorn also graduated magna cum laude from MTSU with a 3.85 GPA.

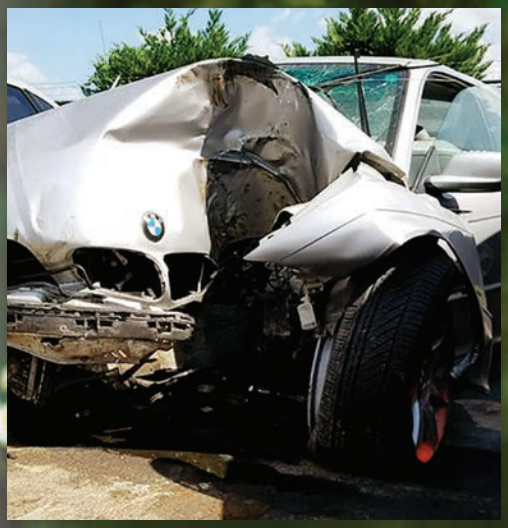
Sickler-Voigt noted that Priekshorn applied "thought and preparation" to her student-teaching experience. "The children were so excited. She put her heart into it and found something her students would enjoy."

In comments posted to the MTSU Parent and Family Association Facebook page, Priekshorn's mother shared her gratitude to MTSU faculty for supporting her daughter on this journey. Mary "has nothing but praise and thanksgiving to God for sparing her life, but also for her MTSU professors. Three of her professors either visited her in the hospital or at our home, bringing gifts, friends, and prayers/well wishes. I think this speaks volumes concerning her professors at MTSU—they are the most caring, thoughtful group of teachers!"

The Ellis family has quite a legacy at MTSU. In addition to Prieskorn, sisters Stephanie Ellis and Kristen (Ellis) Truitt have earned their degrees from the University. Two brothers are current students in the College of Liberal Arts: Matthew Ellis, a junior English and History major, and Joshua Ellis, who is a freshman this fall in the School of Music.

Recovery









"Little by little, she met each challenge head-on. I am so proud of Mary's determination. She pushed herself to complete my course and her other courses amidst her challenges."

—Nancy Caukin, Assistant Professor


QADDAR HOTEL






FULBRIG
HOUSE



FULBRIGHT FACULTY FORAY

Petersen takes invigorating international trip to India for educators

MTSU's College of Liberal Arts Dean Karen Petersen has one question for students, faculty, and staff considering applying to the Fulbright Scholar Program: "Why wouldn't you?" During the Spring 2019 semester, Petersen traveled to India for two weeks as part of the Fulbright International Education Administrators (IEA) seminar. The dean, who is also a professor of Political Science, shares some highlights of her recent Fulbright educational experience abroad.

Why Fulbright?

The purpose of the Fulbright program is to deepen relationships between the people of the United States and citizens of other countries and to promote international understanding and cooperation. Established in 1946 under legislation introduced by then-U.S. Sen. J. William Fulbright of Arkansas, the program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The IEA seminar is designed to facilitate connections between senior higher education officials while providing the opportunity to learn about the host country's education system.

The U.S. Fulbright Scholar Program offers nearly 470 teaching, research, or combination teaching/research awards in more than 125 countries. Grants include flexible, short-term programs, academic year programs, and multi-country opportunities.

MTSU students benefit from the Fulbright student program as well. Since 2008, MTSU students have been awarded 24 student Fulbright grants, with over 70% going to students with at least one CLA major (us.fulbrightonline.org).

Why did you choose India?

India "checked all of the boxes" for me as a faculty member and as an administrator. India's vibrant history and its status as the world's largest and most diverse democracy make it an ideal destination for a scholar of international politics. I run a simulation of the British withdrawal from the Indian subcontinent in my Global Politics class, so traveling to India enhances my ability to teach and informs other aspects of teaching, such as discussions about the many varieties of democratic governance and the resilience of democracy.

India also sends 200,000 students to the United States annually, second only to China, and accounts for 18% of the international student population in the U.S. As MTSU looks for ways to strengthen our international ties, India makes the most sense given that we already have a strong presence in China.

What did you learn?

We visited 13 universities, one startup hub, and one multinational corporation in four cities during our two-week whirlwind visit to India. Almost universally, the theme of our discussions came back to the need for *more* liberal arts! Universities and colleges, public and private, including technical institutes, are integrating the humanities and social sciences into their programs. Essentially, India, which has been almost exclusively focused on technical/vocational education, is moving toward the traditional U.S. model based on liberal arts while we are moving toward the Indian model.

Our visit with an associate vice president of Infosys, a tech company with more than 229,000 employees and $12 billion in annual revenue, encapsulated the message. He told us that the people they hire must be willing and able to learn and be nimble, open, and flexible. In other words, he wants people with a "liberal arts attitude" irrespective of their actual educational or technical background.

I left India optimistic about the future of a country with one of the most challenging political environments imaginable and remain convinced that the United States would do well to strengthen its ties with an important strategic ally.



BLAZING CAREER PATHS

By Skip Anderson



Liberal arts degrees launch livelihoods for recent grads

Three recent College of Liberal Arts graduates are using their Bachelor of Arts degrees in varied disciplines to springboard into the next chapter of their respective lives. Each distinguished themselves in and out of the classroom to graduate with honors, and each is entering the post-graduation world with well-considered plans for building their exciting futures.

Maddy Ellis now holds a Philosophy degree and excels at fighting fire with literal fire, and joined the National Park Service in Virginia while her husband dives into graduate work at MTSU. Rebecca Clippard majored in Spanish and Japanese (and minored in English, for good measure), then declined a Fulbright that would have taken her to Spain so she could enter a program that takes her to Japan for up to five years. Dalton Slatton has well-guided political ambition and left his pastoral hometown to continue his education at the nation's oldest law school—but not before lending a hand to a "mom-and-pop" law firm swamped with nine federal cases.



Maddy Ellis already lighting the world on fire

Madison Ellis graduated magna cum laude with a B.A. in Philosophy last May, but her work prevented her from participating in commencement. Known as Maddy to her friends, Ellis spent much of the winter working with the Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit conservation organization. While her classmates were donning a cap and gown, she was busy lighting fires in Perdido, Alabama. In the forest management trade, this is called "setting prescribed burns," she says.



"I opted out of the ceremony since I worked as a prescribed burner," Ellis said. "We set the woods on fire for a living. I have absolutely no disappointment for not getting to walk."

Prescribed burns, she explains, are a forest management tool that can reduce dried wood, underbrush, and leaves in a controlled way, thereby reducing the risk for large-scale, unintended forest fires.

"It was challenging when I began doing prescribed burns, but I got better at it with time," she said. "Internal ignitions were fun, because they'd hand you a compass and say, 'Go west and light fires.' You just had to make sure you didn't get tangled up in the vines or you might get caught up" in the blaze.

This year, the career-minded Ellis has lived in three states while working jobs and internships. In fact, she rarely sees her husband Jeremy Smith, who graduated MTSU in May with a B.S. in Biology. "Now, Jeremy is doing graduate work in genetics at MTSU," Ellis said.



The couple met at Motlow State Community College where each attended prior to enrolling at MTSU.

"We don't live together [for now], and we'll have a long-distance marriage for a little bit longer since I'm moving to Virginia for work," Ellis said. "I've spent my last semester in Alabama and have also lived in Tennessee and Virginia over the past three months."

Smith and Ellis, who grew up in the Murfreesboro area, drove cross country this summer to vacation in Yellowstone National Park before she started her new job.

"This is a post-graduation trip for both of us," she said.

After they camped their way through the country's first national park, Ellis began work at Manassas National Battlefield Park, the site for the Civil War's Battle of Bull Run.

"I'm working as a historical landscape preservationist doing trail maintenance," she said. "I run a crew of high school students working on deferred maintenance— meaning all the work that the regular staff can't get done, we'll do with the high school kids."

Manassas National Battlefield Park is located 25 miles west of Washington, D.C., and 40 miles east of Shenandoah National Park.

"I'm not a Civil War buff, at least not compared to the people I work with—I just can't get into the history of it. So, I'm an anomaly in that regard, I guess," Ellis said. Although she previously worked at Stones River National Battlefield in Murfreesboro, Ellis chose a role behind the scenes at Manassas. "I realized I could not get into it at the level necessary to cater to the crowd that comes out for Civil War battlefields," she said.

What Ellis does have, however, is a flexibility gained by her experiences at MTSU that helped prepare her for this position.

"It wasn't just the schoolwork, though. It was all the things," Ellis said. "While at MTSU, I volunteered with organizations that led to internships and jobs. I stuck my neck out further and further and applied for things that I might not have otherwise, and I took classes that I might not otherwise have taken.

"I took a lot of independent studies and I changed my minor several times. I took a lot of science courses—chemistry, biology, and math, for instance, that I didn't need to take in order to graduate. I studied abroad in Cuba and Ireland. Seeking experience-learning to supplement bookwork gave me the opportunity to do things that I wouldn't have otherwise."

Ellis began work at Manassas National Battlefield Park, the site for the Civil War's Battle of Bull Run.







Rebecca Clippard declines Fulbright to work in Japan

Rebecca Clippard has a great deal in common with her mother that extends far beyond their shared last name. She graduated summa cum laude from MTSU's Honors College in December 2018 after double-majoring in Spanish and Japanese; her mother, Laura, works in the Honors College and coordinates international fellowships. Clippard is now Japan teaching English in the public school system through the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program; her mom spent two weeks in Japan last June exploring the country's higher education institutions after winning a Fulbright.

And that's where the similarities end—*almost*: Like her mom, Clippard, too, won a Fulbright. However, unlike her mother, she turned it down.







"Mom won a faculty Fulbright, and I won a teaching Fulbright that would have taken me to in Spain," Clippard said. "But I decided to accept the Japan Exchange and Teaching opportunity instead. Like the Fulbright, it's also a program for teaching. I had applied for both the JET and the Fulbright, and to be honest, I wasn't sure I was going to get either."

So, what tipped the scales?

"The JET program lets you go for five years, and they offered more outreach programs," Clippard said. "For instance, you can apply to get language classes or take national tests. Plus, they helped me through the visa program, and they helped me with housing."

Clippard says she's "conversational" when speaking the Japanese language.

"I can get through the day just fine, but the vocabulary just isn't there yet," she said. "That's why I'm so excited to go to Japan for so long."

This isn't Clippard's first trip to the Land of the Rising Sun. She spent her junior year in one of the world's most populous cities—Osaka, Japan, a sprawling urban area with a population of 19 million people. Conversely, this time, shes living on Japan's southern tip in the coastal town of Minamisatsuma, with a population of 39,012—roughly the size of Murfreesboro in the mid-1970s.

"I was in Osaka, a very large city, and my new location is very small," Clippard said. "When I got my contract, they said in no uncertain terms that I will need a car and that I will have to drive, which makes me nervous since they drive on the other side of the road!"

Her experience in Osaka, however, will give Clippard a leg up on Japanese customs that an American might not have known had she not already lived there.

"Oh, I made a couple of *big* mistakes when I was in Osaka," she said. "For example, in Tennessee you might smile at a stranger or say hello—it's a hospitality thing. My first couple of days in Japan, I must have said hello to everybody I met. But that's not what they do, and that made them uncomfortable. I just had to acclimate a little bit and learn the culture. I also had to realize that for a lot of people I met there, I was possibly the first American they had ever met. When I was respectful of their customs, they were more open and respectful with me as well."

Clippard earned an International Baccalaureate diploma from nearby Oakland High School in 2014.

"When the [Oakland] seniors warned that I wouldn't have any free time in the I.B. program, I thought: Challenge accepted," she said. "I also took Saturday classes learning Japanese."

Clippard traces her interest in the Japanese language to movies she watched as a child, including the 1988 animated Japanese classic, *My Neighbor Totoro*, which she first saw as a young child.

"I had an imaginary friend who was Japanese when I was 3 or 4. I took her name, Michiko, from the movie," she said.

While at MTSU, Clippard also studied abroad in Spain in the summer of 2018, taught Japanese at the Center for Accelerated Language Acquisition, was an Alternative Spring Break volunteer, and served as a student representative of the Honors College.

"I'm one of those crazy people who isn't happy sitting still or not having enough to do," she said.

A high-achieving Murfreesboro native with an overflowing calendar, Clippard applied exclusively to MTSU.

"In high school, they gave us the 'college talk,' which says to apply to five schools, including some reach schools and a safety school, but I only wanted to go to MTSU and that's all I applied to," she said. "I knew if I lived at home, I would have enough money to go study abroad."

Clippard is in Japan teaching English in the public school system through the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program.





Dalton Slatton chooses the Constitution over chemistry

Main Street in Whitwell, Tennessee, is main street in name only. Anyone who knows anything about Whitwell knows that the town's signature corridor is Hudson Street, whose route follows the gentle turns of the nearby Sequatchie River. This town of around 1,600 people doesn't have a Dairy Queen. Instead, it has the Whitwell Dairy Bar, complete with a walk-up window and two picnic tables. Those who prefer their soft-serve cone to be "Scrumpdillyishus" will have to drive 10 miles west to Jasper. Those are the simple facts of the ice cream situation in Whitwell, a pleasant, sleepy town located 25 miles northwest of Chattanooga.

Whitwell's bucolic charms might tempt one to surmise that any law firm operating within its tiny footprint might be a no-pressure gig for a recent college graduate to park oneself for a few months while waiting to start law school in the fall. But bucolic charm has a way of misleading people. Just ask Dalton Slatton, who graduated summa cum laude in May with a degree in





Political Science only three years after enrolling at MTSU. Last summer, he worked at a four-attorney law firm, as he puts it, that is busy working nine federal cases at the moment.

Slatton previously served as an intern with the Tennessee state legislature, which he says helped prepare him to take on a greater role at the firm this summer than he could last summer when he worked there. He says the Political Science faculty at MTSU also were instrumental in molding him for a career in law.

"My professors in Poli Sci really prepared me for law school through showing me how to study and how to develop skills in critical thinking and communications," Slatton said. "Dr. Jennifer Woodward helped shape how I think and apply logic. She really helped me understand what the intent of a law is and how to pick out what you're looking for in a document and set aside what is supplemental. Those skills helped me in my internship in the Tennessee General Assembly. I worked at a law office at home this summer, and that's been really helpful there. Worked for a man who had nine federal cases, and he's just a mom-and-pop law firm. So, he was really covered up and on a time crunch."

Slatton's choice to pursue a career in law surprises himself almost as much as it does his family. Entering MTSU, he figured pharmacy might make for a nice career. But the Constitution proved to be a greater pull than chemistry. Politics also figured into this decision to switch to a pre-law tract. Slatton was active in student government at MTSU where early on he proved to be effective at consensus-building. In his first year on campus, he wrote a bill that doubled the number of votes members of the Freshman Council are allowed.

"I greatly enjoy politics despite coming from an apolitical family," Slatton said. "My paternal grandmother was the only one when I was growing up who voted, and she only did so during presidential years. So, I always say I'm an oddball when it comes to the political scene. Politics can be used to help people. Governments can be used to make lives better. In fact, it's their job to help their constituents to have a better life and to keep them safe."

In September, Slatton relocated to Williamsburg, Virginia, where he is attending the country's oldest law school—the Marshall-Wythe School of Law at the College of William and Mary, commonly referred to as William and Mary Law School.

As a high school student, and later as an undergraduate at MTSU, he put into practice his civic-mindedness. "I did 500 hours of community service over five years, volunteering in a nursing home, at a food bank, in homeless shelters, and for Habitat for Humanity—things that are focused on helping people," Slatton said. "Seeing people who sometimes are beaten down or the odds haven't been in their favor for a while, I like that I might be able to help them. I enjoy giving back to the community, and I would love to run for office and serve one day."

Slatton relocated to Williamsburg, Virginia, where he is attending the country's oldest law school.





MAKING A

Mayberry is one of "Us" in new movie thanks to inspired artwork

by Gina Fann

While the world was watching Jordan Peele's newest movie, *Us*, from behind splayed fingers and popcorn boxes, MTSU Graphic Design major Phillip Mayberry savored the feeling of seeing his own art in one of the film's trailers.

Mayberry, a Union City native who now lives in Nashville, was one of thousands of fans around the world who answered an ongoing challenge—via Chocolate City Comics, Instagram, and Universal Studios—to create artwork inspired by the horror movie.

The result is a photorealistic image of Oscar-winning actor Lupita Nyong'o's dual roles in *Us*, a split-screen treatment that's as beautiful and puzzling—and horrifying—as the characters in the film. Mayberry's creation was one of five pieces featured in a trailer for the Academy Award-winning writer-director's new film that opened in March nationwide.

Mayberry's girlfriend, who is also his publicist, told the Department of Art and Design student about the opportunity. Over New Year's weekend, after a three-day fast, inspiration came to him. Four hours later, it was done.

"I figured I'd take part in it, not thinking that anything would come out of it," Mayberry said, "but I put my best creative juices together and came up with what I came up with.

"It kinda picked up a little notoriety on Instagram, and Universal reached out to me and talked about being on the marketing campaign."

Next thing he knew, Nyong'o mentioned him and four other artists on her own Instagram feed and linked to a new trailer.

"Just the way they edited the video to make it look like the picture that I'd made . . . I was glad to see how they did that," Mayberry said quietly.

Peele even expressed his gratitude to the artists on the movie's official website before the nationwide premiere. "The fan art response to the *Us* trailer has been inspiring," he said.

Peele also made use of fan art for his 2017 directorial debut, *Get Out*, for which he won an Academy Award for best original screenplay. That film also earned him nominations for best picture and best director.



"Art is the one tool we have against the true horrors of the world," Peele said then.

Mayberry creates his art in Photoshop, working—especially over the last four years—to hone his skills with every project. The results all feature his unique perspective on the world.

"I do the Art Crawl in Nashville once a month, and people always walk up to my artwork and say 'Are these pictures, or did you draw this?'" he said with a grin.

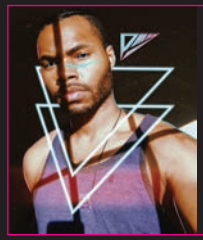
"I always have to explain that I drew it instead of it being photography. When I tell 'em I do it in Photoshop, they think it's just me working with a photo, but no, I'm drawing it from the sketch-up, painting and coloring it digitally, the whole thing."

Mayberry, a rising senior at MTSU, has been drawing "since I was 4 or 5, ever since I was able to pick up a pen, a pencil, a crayon, anything."

"I have to give a big thanks to my grandmother, because she's been one of my biggest inspirations," he added. "I remember I had this little homework assignment to draw a log cabin. I was like 5 or 6 and I really didn't know how to draw from memory or whatever, and my grandmother said, 'Look. Watch this,' and she drew out a log cabin for me. She said, 'Go off this right here,' and I used it like a reference to draw my own. She didn't take it seriously, but she could do it. I'd see doodles, too, on my uncles' homework, when I was younger, and that would inspire me to do my own thing. My family has been real inspirational to me through the years, whether they knew it or not." Mayberry says he'll continue refining his skills and learning new ones.

"I'm getting as many eyes as I can on my artwork," he said. "After school, I'd like to remain in the art field, doing either concept art, animation, and even fashion design—pretty much anything in the design field, because I want to keep growing as an artist and not be boxed in to any one single thing. I just want to leave my mark."

MARK



Online gallery

See more of Phillip Mayberry's work at **instagram.com/pmayxart** or **pmayxart.com**.

Alumni **Spotlight**

Jeremy Cowart



Jeremy Cowart (Graphic Design, '99), MTSU's 2019 Distinguished Alumnus, was named the "Most Influential Photographer on the Internet" by Huffington Post, *Forbes*, and Yahoo in 2014. Cowart is an award-winning photographer, artist, philanthropist, and entrepreneur whose mission in life is to "explore the intersection of creativity and empathy." He has published four books and is a sought-after speaker, having presented at TEDx, the United Nations, and creative conferences across the country.

Cowart achieved celebrity for his portraits of A-list clients, such as Taylor Swift, President Barack Obama, the Pope, Carrie Underwood, the Kardashians, Keith Urban, and many more. His project *Voices of Gatlinburg*, featuring drone photography of families in the remains of their homes after the devastating 2016 wildfires, helped raise funds for the fire victims. Cowart's latest endeavor is The Purpose Hotel, a planned global for-profit hotel chain designed to fuel the work of not-for-profit organizations. He's the founder of a global photography movement, Help-Portrait; a mobile social networking app called OKDOTHIS; and an online teaching platform, See University. Cowart lives in Nashville with his wife and four children, two of them recently adopted from Haiti.

His new book, *I'm Possible: Jumping Into Fear and Discovering a Life of Purpose*, is an extension of Cowart's belief that greatness must serve a greater purpose. Based on Cowart's viral life story video that was released in 2015, the book encourages people of all ages to jump into fear in order to find their own purpose in life.

Alumni Spotlight

Pete Lasalandra



Pete Lasalandra (M.A., Liberal Arts, '18) was born in Chicago to Italian immigrant parents. A job transfer to Arnold Air Force Base in Tullahoma brought Lasalandra here from Chicago in 1992.

After graduating from MTSU in 1999 with a degree in Information Systems, he started a career in electronics repairing computer terminals. Lasalandra worked his way up to mini-computers and mainframes. An opportunity with Hewlett-Packard led to super-computers, software, and maintaining operating systems.

A move into a sales position helped Lasalandra expand his technology experience into the business world. Eventually he moved into software development project management before retiring in 2017 to help care for his parents.

Lasalandra felt that he needed something fulfilling during this time and went back to school on a part-time basis and graduated with the Master of Arts in Liberal Arts in 2018. While in the MTSU master's program, he was asked to join a strategic brainstorming session with professors, staff, and a few other College of Liberal Arts students. Lasalandra enjoyed the experience so much that combined with his belief in the importance of a liberal arts education, it led him to serve on the CLA board.

He is married with two grown sons and two grandsons. When he's not spending time with family, Lasalandra enjoys racquetball, golf, teaching Sunday school, supporting the Blue Raiders, and lifelong learning.

Alumni Spotlight

Dani Bryson



Dani Bryson (Political Science, '09) wrote her undergraduate thesis on victims' rights under the direction of Honors College Dean John R. Vile. She then earned a J.D. with honors and a concentration in Advocacy from the University of Tennessee law school. As an assistant district attorney in Tennessee's 23rd Judicial District, Bryson handled over 2,000 domestic violence cases in one three-year period, ranging from harassment to first-degree murder.

Her career has come full circle back to prosecuting Drug Task Force cases for the five-county district, but Bryson recently worked on two first-degree murder cases including a death-penalty case. Bryson, also the sole prosecutor in Stewart County for two years, actually practiced as an acting ADA as an intern for the 23rd under another attorney's supervision. She also interned for the Knox County DA, always wanted to be a prosecutor, and had a career goal "to never bill an hour." At MTSU, she enjoyed Vile's Constitutional Law class and got the idea for her Honors thesis when adjunct professor David Hudson commented that emerging victims' rights bills across the nation would make an interesting research topic. Bryson called it "the perfect intersection of criminal and constitutional law for me," which became personally important to her as a prosecutor.

Her typical week: a trial where a confidential informant purchased methamphetamine, a suppression hearing after a drug dog found 10 kilos of cocaine at a traffic stop, and a Drug Court plea deal allowing an addict to go to rehab.

Bryson sings at church alongside her husband, MTSU alum Spencer Bryson ('06), a music leader and a teacher, and they live in Dickson with two young sons.

MTSU THEATRE AND DANCE



Nov. 12–15, 2019

Nov. 21–23, 2019

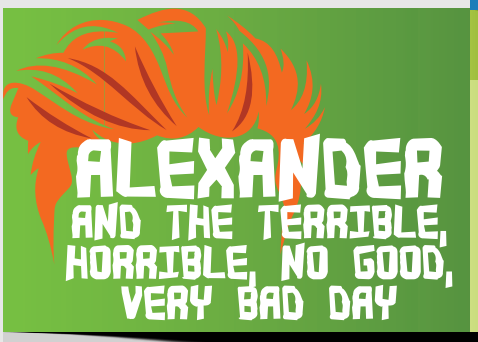




Jan. 30 –Feb. 2, 2020

Feb. 20–23, 2020





Apr. 2–5, 2020

Apr. 16–18, 2020



Tickets: mtsuarts.com

Hitting the High Notes

Five alumni earn CMA awards for music educators

MTSU alumni took home five of the 30 Music Teachers of Excellence Awards handed out this year by the CMA Foundation to honor "change agents who go above and beyond their role and responsibilities in the classroom and are vital to their students and communities."

An April awards ceremony in Nashville, hosted by three-time CMA Award winner Dierks Bentley, celebrated and recognized music educators throughout Tennessee and the U.S. for their commitment to shaping the next generation through music. The 2019 winners who earned their degrees at MTSU are:

- **John Hazlett**, McGavock High School Band
- **Michael Holland**, Nolensville High School Band
- **Susan Waters**, W.H. Oliver Middle School Band
- **Anna Laura Williams**, Siegel Middle School
- **Ben Zolkower**, Hillwood High School Band

Hazlett, Waters, and Zolkower were among 10 music educators honored from Metro Nashville Public Schools, while Holland (Williamson County) and Williams (Rutherford County) were in the group of 10 music teachers chosen from districts across the state. Another 10 award recipients were selected from around the nation.

"These teachers have gone above and beyond in their classrooms to really bring music to life, and their commitment and determination has not gone unnoticed," Bentley said. "As a parent I have seen first-hand the importance of music in my children's lives and its importance in school programs. Every child deserves the chance to feel the power of music, and it's not possible without supporting these teachers."

The Music Teachers of Excellence program was created in 2016 to recognize those who are having the greatest impact on their students, using music as a vehicle for change. The CMA Foundation is a national music education nonprofit and the philanthropic arm of the Country Music Association.

Along with a night of celebration at the invitation-only event, the foundation invested $2,500 into each teacher's music program to help drive their commitment to high-quality music for all children forward. Each winner also received a $2,500 gift to use however they like, with past winners using their award earnings for down payments, continuing education, recording their own music, and more.

To date, the CMA Foundation has awarded over $575,000 to ensure music educators have the support and funding needed to create a thriving program within their schools and communities.

"Music education has proven to be an effective and invaluable tool for academic achievement and social development, yet we consistently hear that programs are not properly supported," said Tiffany Kerns, CMA Foundation executive director. "Each year, when we recognize the tremendous group of music educators through our Music Teachers of Excellence program, it allows us to give back to those who have dedicated their lives to serving our next generation. These educators, who spend countless hours in the classroom, are helping to shape creative, collaborative, future leaders through the power of music."

Music has been proven to be an integral part of brain development, human connection, and even stress relief, the foundation notes. Music also increases student participation and classroom engagement and makes students better equipped to learn, retain, and articulate what they've learned when they're exposed to music education.

Since 2006, CMA's annual four-day music festival in Nashville, where more than 300 country music artists perform for free, has given a portion of the proceeds to the CMA Foundation.

Because these artists give their time and their talent to support the work of the CMA Foundation, more than $25 million has been donated to support the enrichment of music education programs across the United States.

MTSU's School of Music, housed in the College of Liberal Arts, offers five different concentrations for the Bachelor of Music, including Instrumental Music Education and Vocal/General Music Education, as well as a Master of Music graduate program.



Visit **CMAworld.com** for more information about the winners, foundation, and supporting music education.

Four CLA students earn MT Engage Scholarships

Engage Academically.
Learn Exponentially.
Showcase Yourself.

Students with College of Liberal Arts majors accounted for one-third of the 12 MT Engage Scholarships granted for 2019, including the top recipient in the competitive awards:



Hannah Solima is the overall winner of the MT Engage Scholarships. Now a senior, she is triple-majoring in International Relations, French, and Criminal Justice Administration (Homeland Security concentration), along with a minor in German. Also an Honors College student, Solima has been part of four signature study abroad programs with three more slated in coming semesters. Additionally, she serves as an Education Abroad global ambassador. Solima is a member of UNICEF and Model United Nations. She plans to continue her education internationally and hopes to gain a career in international security serving as a foreign service officer for the U.S. government.



Meredith Craig is a junior Communication major with a concentration in Organizational Communication. She is an Honors College student and plans to graduate from MTSU in only three years. In coming semesters, Craig is looking forward to participating in study abroad programs. She is an active volunteer in her community working with refugees. After graduation, Craig hopes to obtain employment with the United States government. She plans to continue her volunteer work as part of a nonprofit or faith-based organization.



Ella Denney is a senior pursuing a degree in Communication through the Organizational Communication concentration. She is a member of Alpha Omicron Pi sorority and was selected to serve as a Panhellenic delegate alternate and then as a Panhellenic recruitment counselor. Denney also has been accepted into the Order of Omega honor society for Greek leaders. She is currently exploring internship opportunities for her senior year. When she graduates, Denney hopes to find a position that combines her communication skills with her interests in journalism, photography, and animals.



Gabriella Morin is a junior double-majoring in Spanish and Biology with a pre-medicine track. She is an active member of the Student National Medical Association and spends her time volunteering at a local clinic and serving as an interpreter. Originally from Tennessee, Morin has lived the past few years in Honduras, where she volunteered at a nonprofit clinic for an underserved population, and it was there that she found her calling. Upon graduation, she plans to pursue a medical degree and work to bridge the gap between Type 2 diabetes research and prevention practices.

CLA Highlights



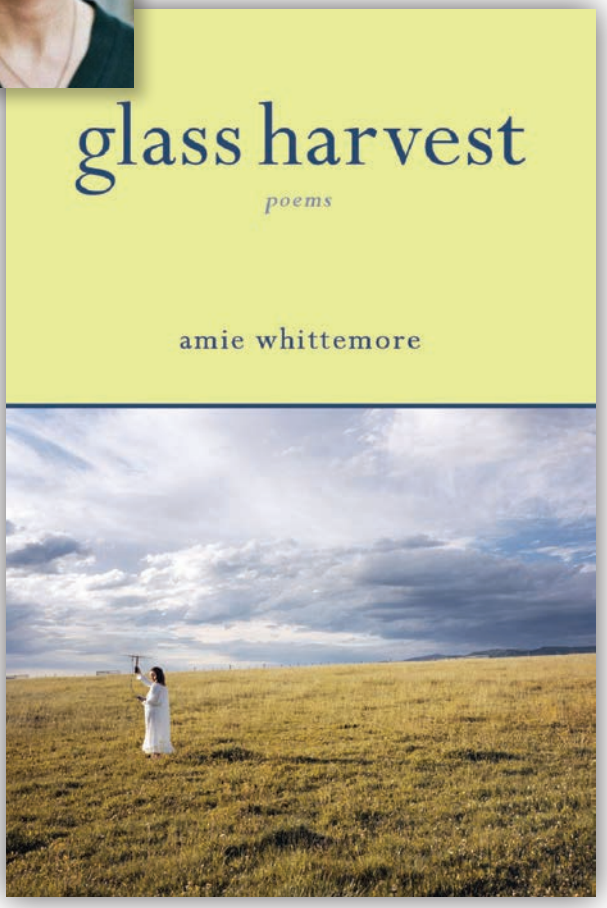
Faculty News

Priya Ananth, associate professor of Japanese in World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, was awarded the 2019 Southeastern Association of Teachers of Japanese (SEATJ) Teacher of the Year Award at the 34th SEATJ Conference March 2 at Wake Forest University in North Carolina.





Amie Whittemore, English lecturer, was recently featured in Garrison Keillor's *Writer's Almanac*. Her beautiful and heart-breaking poem entitled "For My Former Niece" appeared in her 2016 book *Glass Harvest*.



Student News

MTSU hosted the 12th Tennessee Area Japanese Speech Contest this year. Nissan North America, Mitsui & Co., and Japan Airlines were among sponsors for the April 6 event. The Consulate-General of Japan in Nashville and the Tennessee Language Center also supported the contest. A total of 35 students competed, representing seven universities from Tennessee and Kentucky. Participants were divided into three levels—beginning, intermediate, and advanced—and spoke before an audience of almost 100 people. Five MTSU students gave excellent speeches, including three winners:

Beginning First Prize: **Gauguin Simmons** (JAPN 2010)
Beginning Second Prize: **Hannah Sandefur** (JAPN 2010)
Advanced Third Prize: **Rachel Reece** (JAPN 4030)

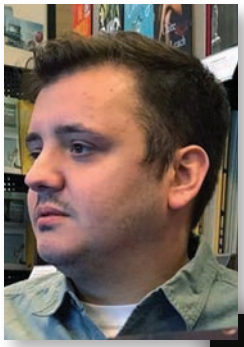


MTSU Political Science and Experiential Learning students gained valuable experience helping WSMV-News 4 gather and report election results for the 2018 mid-term elections last Nov. 6. The students joined their professor and News 4 political analyst **Kent Syler** for the Election Day coverage.

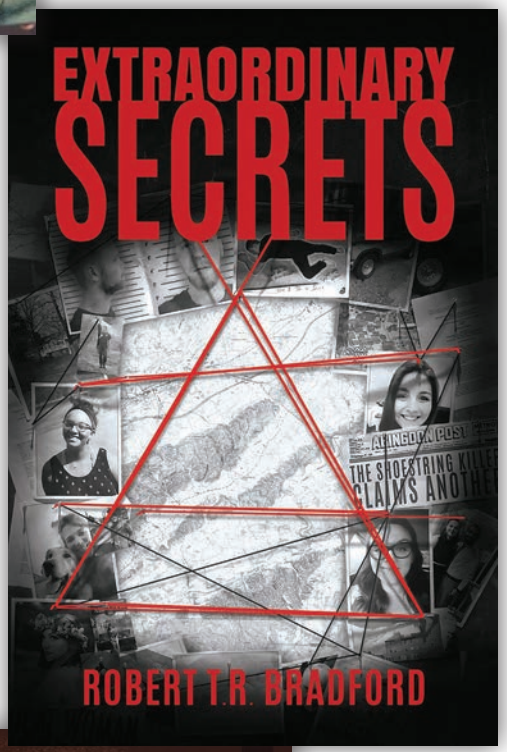


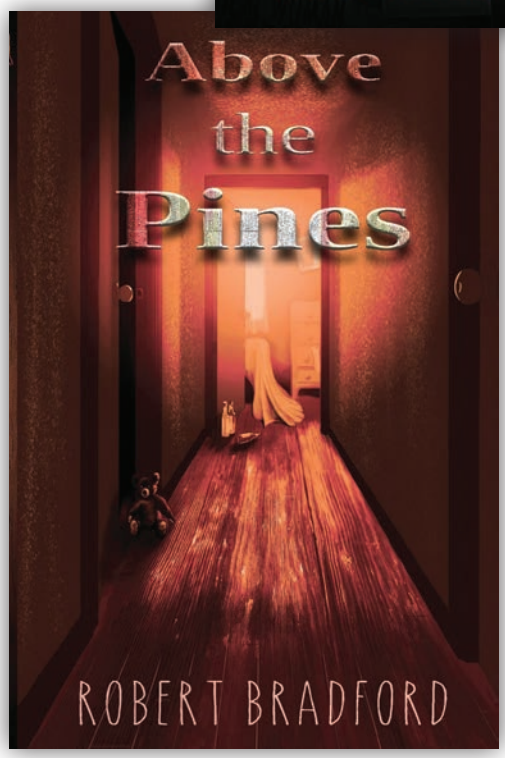
Pictured (l–r) are: standing, Hannah Giles, Ann Marie Ventura, El Jo, Mitchell Casto, Jess Newman, Peyton Tracy, Katey Brosche, Kristen Rowsey, and Lauren Hennessee; and seated, Syler, Tom Randles, and Tracy Kornet.

Alumni News



Robert T.R. Bradford ('18) recently published his second young adult novel, *Extraordinary Secrets*, after having a double-lung transplant in 2017 due to cystic fibrosis. He published his first novel, *Above the Pines*, in 2015.













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We hope you've enjoyed this edition of the *CLA Magazine* and are as excited as we are about the accomplishments of the College of Liberal Arts students, alumni, and faculty. Please consider a tax-deductible gift to support one of the programs highlighted in this issue—your generosity makes innovative learning in and out of the classroom possible.

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Outstanding Alumni

MTSU is again recognizing outstanding alumni who represent excellence and distinction through their professional careers, loyal support, and service to the broader community. The College of Liberal Arts had a good showing with three award winners: Jeremy Cowart (1999) as the Distinguished Alumni award recipient; Aaron Shew (2011) as the Young Alumni award honoree; and Carroll Van West (History) for the MTSU Faculty Achievement in Education award.

mtsunews.com/2019-20-distinguished-alumni



Programming Updates

MTSU faculty appeared on WGNS Radio recently to share information about an upcoming writing conference on campus and a master's program that offers flexible curriculum. MTSU Write Director Jennifer Kates, an English instructor, discussed the department's from-home mentorship program and the Fall Creative Writing Conference in October. Leah Tolbert Lyons, associate professor of French and director of the M.A. in Liberal Arts program, talked about the customizable, interdisciplinary master's program.

mtsunews.com/wgns-july-2019



Tops in U.S. for Veterans

College Factual, a higher-ed insights firm, rates MTSU's liberal arts offerings among the top 50 universities for student veterans. It recently released its 2019 rankings for Best Liberal Arts General Studies Programs for Veterans, ranking MTSU No. 41 out of 355 for veteran friendliness of all colleges and universities reviewed. MTSU's College of Liberal Arts is listed No. 1 out of the eight colleges and universities in Tennessee reviewed by College Factual for veteran friendliness.

mtsunews.com/vet-friendly-liberal-arts-ranking



Embodied Exploration

In MTSU's Dance program, experiential learning is the backbone of both the creative and educational processes. "We like to say that practice is research, and research is practice," said Meg Brooker, assistant professor in the Department of Theatre and Dance. "We encourage traditional research such as going to the library, writing papers, and conducting interviews, but we also practice embodied research, where we're putting ourselves into an experimental space and reflecting on what that experience is like."

mtsunews.com/embodied-exploration

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