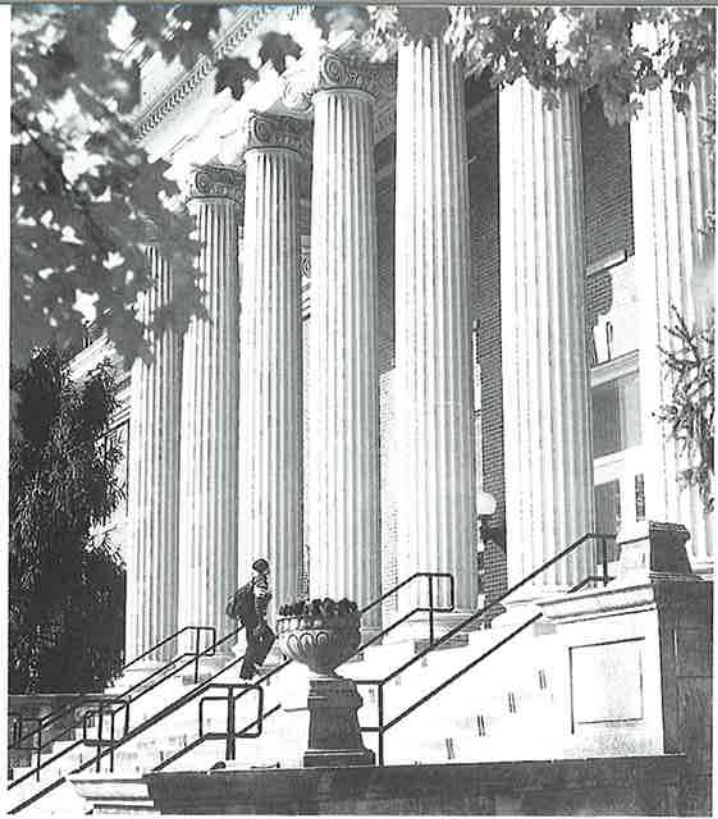


Blueprint for Excellence

# Academic Master Plan

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

2002-2012



# Academic Master Plan

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY 2002-2012

“Worse than being blind would be to be able to see but not have any vision.”

—Helen Keller (1880–1968)



# Academic Master Plan

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY 2002-2012

## A BLUEPRINT FOR EXCELLENCE

Middle Tennessee State University embraces the 21st century with enthusiasm and firmness of purpose. After three decades of growth that have produced a three-fold increase in the student population and a similar increase in the range of available academic programs, the University is poised to move forward with a focus upon academic excellence tied to the needs of the state and region. The next decade promises to be a dynamic one for middle Tennessee and for higher education. As a major provider of educational programs and services, Middle Tennessee State University welcomes the challenge of assuming a leadership role to help the region fulfill its promise.

Recognizing this challenge and being cognizant of the realities now facing Tennessee higher education, President Sidney A. McPhee appointed an ad hoc Academic Master Plan Committee to evaluate and reformulate the existing Academic Master Plan. In his charge to the Committee, President McPhee emphasized the importance of developing a list of strategic priorities to guide the University in its efforts to achieve three primary objectives: namely, attainment of notable *academic quality*, development of a *student-centered learning environment*, and establishment of *partnerships* with area institutions and businesses. In carrying out its work, the Committee considered many sources of information: the 1997-2001 *Academic Master Plan*; the University's Mission Statement; up-to-date feedback from the deans and other program directors to a Committee-generated Academic Program Questionnaire; individual feedback from faculty and staff members; and some thirty-odd assembled documents and task force reports that included student-derived data, demographic and economic projections for the middle Tennessee region, and the outlook for higher education. The Committee gave special consideration to *Defining Our Future*, a recent Tennessee Board of Regents report, and to other goals and plans of the Tennessee Board of Regents and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission.

# FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

During the twentieth century, Middle Tennessee State University progressed from a two-year Normal School through several intermediate stages as a four-year college before achieving university status in 1965. Since 1965, the University has grown, both in size and in the scope of its mission, to serve the needs of a fast-growing region. Approximately 20,000 students are currently enrolled in a wide range of programs, including many at the master's and specialist's degree levels and five at the doctoral level. Even as it expands its role in research and public service, Middle Tennessee State University remains true to its heritage as a teaching institution devoted to the dissemination of knowledge and skills. Its 75,000 graduates are an indication of past successes and a key resource to be cultivated for future development. They have made, and continue to make, significant contributions to the political, economic, and cultural development of Tennessee. Many have distinguished themselves as professionals and leaders—one becoming a Nobel laureate. Today, over half of the college-bound students in the mid-state choose to continue their education at Middle Tennessee State University.

Increased enrollments have led to new facilities. During the past decade, the east side of campus has seen the addition of a new library and a new business and aerospace building linked by a student quadrangle. Farther east, construction of a new home for the University Honors College is underway, and beyond that a new campus recreation facility beckons. Increased enrollment has created opportunities to add new faculty expertise and new academic programs. More than half of the nearly 800 full-time faculty members have joined the University during the past decade. Their energies and interests are reshaping the curriculum and transforming the learning environment. Recent improvements to campus infrastructure and organization have created a computer culture where all members of the campus community are linked to one another, as well as to the vast resources of the electronic world.

Middle Tennessee State University's growth in recent decades has been carefully managed to maintain and enhance the quality of its student body, faculty, and academic programs. Targeted recruitment strategies and rising admission standards have increased the diversity and overall academic preparation of the student population. More mid-state high school valedictorians and salutatorians choose Middle Tennessee State University than any other Tennessee university or college, and the ACT scores of entering students now exceed state and national averages. More than anything else, the enhanced quality of its students, faculty, and academic offerings, combined with a new emphasis on partnerships, represent the foundation upon which the University expects to build a new edifice devoted to academic excellence.



## A Strategic Niche

As Middle Tennessee State University approaches the centennial year of its founding, its leaders are defining its academic niche and the future needs that it will address within the realm of higher education. The University will build upon its tradition as the State's largest provider of teachers and education-related professionals; upon its signature programs in aerospace, business, computer systems, and mass communication; and upon its emerging strengths in high technology, science, and health-related professions. Through its University Honors College and coordinated policies, the University seeks to provide outstanding educational opportunities to a diverse student population, including the best and the brightest of its service region, the nation, and the world. **Consistent with its mission and as the largest university within the Tennessee Board of Regents System, Middle Tennessee State University will strive to provide (1) a comprehensive range of undergraduate programs that serve the interests of students and the needs of the region, (2) a varied array of master's degree programs, and (3) a limited number of doctoral programs in areas where the need is critical and academic strengths are great.** In addition to providing a curriculum that is both broad-based and vertically structured, Middle Tennessee State University is determined to enhance its reputation as a provider of programs of recognized quality and value.



The niche, or educational space, that the University seeks to fill is important and multifaceted. It seeks to build upon a tradition of providing a student-centered learning environment designed to serve the needs of a diverse student population. It seeks to become Tennessee's leader and a regional model in the establishment of partnerships—partnerships that leverage the University's resources and benefit the region. It seeks to maintain the quality of its liberal arts foundation at the same time it dedicates the resources needed to support a continued flowering of its many successful programs. The University's programs in aerospace, business, dyslexic studies, equine studies, historic preservation, the human services area, mass communication, and the fine arts have demonstrated excellence. Going forward, the University seeks to enhance and initiate new programs in the areas of biotechnology; the life sciences, including nursing; and high technology disciplines that support knowledge-based industries and economies. By 2012, the first decade of its second century, Middle Tennessee State University will be a recognized leader among comprehensive public universities that emphasize undergraduate education while also having a significant commitment to graduate and research programs and to partnership-centered outreach programs.

## A Future of Growth and Change

Burgeoning population and economic growth is projected for Nashville and the outlying middle Tennessee region—the University's traditional service area. As a consequence, employment opportunities across a range of industries and occupations will be generated as the region becomes a more important and integral part of the national and international economy. The region is impacted by new demands for health-related services and growth in knowledge-based industries and biotechnology. As the largest provider of higher education services within the region, Middle Tennessee State University must be prepared to anticipate, support, and respond to the dynamism and growth of the region.

At the same time the region is changing, higher education itself is evolving. The University's diverse student population will become even more varied, both in terms of age and cultural background as well as ethnicity. The computer age will further transform the way in which education is delivered, and an ever-changing workplace will increase demand for higher education, as the lifelong learning concept becomes deeply rooted in the educational and business worlds. Employers and their employees will expect custom-designed programs offered on a timely basis and at convenient locations. Driven by technology, teacher-centered classrooms will evolve into spatially dispersed interactive learning communities. As distance learning becomes commonplace, colleges and universities will be challenged to maintain instructional quality and integrity and to compensate for outside-the-classroom learning opportunities that have long been integral parts of the resident college experience.

Advances in technology will also add to the complexity of the higher education marketplace as corporate enterprises target niches traditionally served by colleges and universities. Pressed to become more responsive, expand access, and control rising costs, public higher education will likely face a heightened financial challenge. To fulfill its mission, Middle Tennessee State University must document its successes and demonstrate the effectiveness of its programs in ways that will increase public support for higher education. At the same time, the University must also vigorously pursue new funding sources and partnerships that will enhance its strengths and permit a robust execution of its mission.

## A Blueprint for Excellence

**“To be successful, you don’t  
have to do  
extraordinary things.  
Just do ordinary things  
extraordinarily well.”**  
—Jim Rohn (1930– )

Any imposing edifice rests upon a foundation of excellence in its supporting and contributing parts. Strategies to ensure that essential excellence in supporting parts of Middle Tennessee State University's Blueprint for Excellence will target the intersection of the three broad areas of academic quality, student-centered learning, and mutually beneficial partnerships. Middle Tennessee State University will focus on a pursuit of excellence that benefits its students and makes it a signature university for the middle Tennessee region and beyond. Student-centered learning will be a central component in preparing both undergraduate and graduate students for productive professional lives or for further study in graduate or professional schools. Partnerships and collaborations, both within the University and with the larger community, will be another component in the University's formula for excellence. The foundational excellence of academic quality will call for a diverse and high-quality student body and faculty, a dynamic and viable curriculum, appropriate educational facilities and equipment, and a campus environment that provides students a sense of community and nurtures both personal and intellectual development beyond the classroom and beyond graduation.

After reviewing the current Academic Master Plan and the demographic and economic projections for the region and weighing the University's resources and aspirations, the Academic Master Plan Review Committee endorses three major goals that must be central to academic decision-making during the next ten years. These goals are the pillars upon which the entire Academic Master Plan rests. The pursuit and realization of these goals over the next decade will provide crucial support for the region's development and permit Middle Tennessee State University to reach new heights of academic excellence.



# Academic Master Plan

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY 2002-2012

## I

Middle Tennessee State University will enhance academic quality by engaging in systematic efforts to strengthen and streamline its curriculum, attract meritorious students, develop and reward its faculty, fully integrate technology, and address limitations of the physical plant.

## II

Middle Tennessee State University will create and nurture a student-centered learning environment responsive to the needs of a diverse student body.

## III

Middle Tennessee State University will leverage resources by establishing mutually beneficial partnerships with business, industry, and non-profit organizations.

# GOAL I

**Middle Tennessee State University will enhance academic quality by engaging in systematic efforts to strengthen and streamline its curriculum, attract meritorious students, develop and reward its faculty, fully integrate technology, and address limitations of the physical plant.**

## **Enhance Academic Quality**

The achievement of acclaimed academic quality is an overarching goal that intersects significantly with the other major goals of Middle Tennessee State University. Although past successes can and should be a source of pride, the University cannot become complacent. Middle Tennessee State University designs its plans for achieving excellence in academic quality by using a common-sense paradigm, one which suggests that quality depends upon a synthesis of five critical components: a diverse and intellectually capable student body; a well-qualified and highly motivated faculty; a comprehensive and academically rigorous curriculum; sufficient library and electronic support services; and state-of-the-art physical facilities and equipment.

Middle Tennessee State University's focus on quality is incorporated into its recruitment strategies, both for students and faculty. The University is committed to attracting and retaining a student population that is diverse and of high academic promise. The University Honors College, the only one of its kind at a public university in Tennessee, and the Paul W. Martin, Sr. Honors College Building, now under construction, are sources of campus pride.

The growing number of honor students and a movement toward higher expectations for all students are helping to transform the learning climate in all of the University's programs. Since academically promising students are eagerly sought after in today's higher education institutions, attracting and retaining these students requires increasing scholarship and financial support and provision for activities that will sustain their wide-ranging intellectual and social interests.

A highly qualified and culturally diverse faculty is essential to the maintenance and development of challenging academic programs. During the recent past, Middle Tennessee State University has attracted a faculty well prepared to support established programs and energized to create new ones. However, their morale and intellectual growth must be supported in order to generate the instructional enthusiasm and scholarly research that characterize high-quality academic programs. The University endeavors to provide its faculty with a range of technological resources and services that allow them to achieve instructional goals; to compete for grants or other sources of extramural funding; and to become engaged in professional activities related to scholarship, creative activity, and public service. Enhanced professional expectations for its faculty are underscored by the University's commitment to providing faculty support services, competitive salaries, and equitable workloads.



Building upon the established strengths of the current General Studies Program, Middle Tennessee State University has developed a comprehensive range of undergraduate offerings and an impressive array of graduate curricula. Its nine undergraduate degrees consist of over 60 majors and over 90 concentrations. Twelve graduate degrees are offered in 36 specialized majors, including five at the doctoral level. Over the next decade, these programs must adapt to the changing nature of society, the workplace, and the needs of the industries and professions that they serve. In the workplace of the twenty-first century, the ability to communicate effectively, to understand past and present cultures, and to apply scientific, mathematical, and technological concepts will be primary. Graduates will be expected to integrate large amounts of information, to conceptualize problems, and propose solutions for them. Achieving excellence will require that students be able to use a variety of research methods and tools, create artistic productions in a chosen field, and participate effectively in the international workplace and the world community.

The James E. Walker Library and the University's Division of Information Technology are vital resources that support academic programs. Investments in the maintenance and expansion of these resources are imperatives in any plan to heighten academic quality. AMIGOS, a database that is useful in evaluating library collections, has identified areas where library holdings must be expanded for programs to remain nationally competitive. Recent administrative restructuring that created a new office—Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer—signals the University's determination to give priority to supporting technology that impacts instruction and academic quality.



Academic quality requires a physical plant that meets the educational needs of students and faculty. Adequate classroom, laboratory, and studio space for established and developing programs must be provided and must be well equipped and maintained. Adequate office space for faculty and instructional support personnel also must be provided for the essential business of the University to be accomplished.

As Middle Tennessee State University moves into the future, it must recognize that little advancement in academic quality will be possible without simultaneous progress in each of the five areas outlined above. Middle Tennessee State University recognizes that achievement, even outstanding achievement, in regard to some areas without progress in other equally and all-important areas may result in minimal gains in quality. It should be obvious, for example, that a university without a diverse, motivated, and intellectually capable student population cannot achieve excellence in academic quality, even when other important factors are in place. Likewise, excellence can never be achieved in cases where major inadequacies of the physical plant are apparent and are ignored, or in instances where the faculty is poorly qualified or unmotivated. As it moves into the future, Middle Tennessee State University will improve academic quality by means of a concerted and coordinated effort to address each of the factors that impact quality. In an age of accountability, effort and selective accomplishment, by themselves, are not enough. As the University reaches toward the goal of enhanced academic quality, it must develop a yardstick by which its successes will be measured. Only by achieving enhanced quality, and by knowing that it has achieved it, will the University finally realize its desired degree of academic improvement and the excellence it seeks.

## Strategic Direction

**Middle Tennessee State University will engage in systematic efforts to strengthen and streamline its curriculum.**

### GOAL I • STRATEGIES 2002-2007

**Middle Tennessee State University will seek approval for graduate degree programs that contribute to academic quality.** The University will vigorously pursue the conversion of its Doctor of Arts degrees to Doctor of Philosophy programs. This re-designation is consistent with academic programs across the nation and will improve the value of these programs to students and graduates. In addition, approval for other graduate programs currently under review by the Tennessee Board of Regents or Tennessee Higher Education Commission will be sought. Some of these graduate programs include M.F.A. in recording arts and technology, M.A. in political science, M.A. in foreign languages and literatures, M.S. in nursing, and M.S. in health, physical education, and recreation (3 separate majors).

**Middle Tennessee State University will develop new programs that address demonstrated needs consistent with the mission of the University.** Middle Tennessee State University must add new programs as needs arise. For example, interdisciplinary programs that will provide educational opportunities in knowledge-based technologies and economies should be considered—areas such as biotechnology and computer or electronic applications. Additionally, programs in the life sciences, including nursing, and the human services professions, should build on current synergies created by the Health and Human Services Partnership. Other programs that merit consideration include a distinctive graduate degree program in business that emphasizes healthcare, a master's degree in professional counseling, and unique and interdisciplinary graduate degree offerings that involve the interface of disciplines such as health, psychology, and dyslexic studies. These programs, and other programs identified for future development, must be founded upon clearly established needs of the state and region and upon the University's particular strengths. They must also be developed with sensitivity to possible overlaps with existing programs at other Tennessee universities.



**Middle Tennessee State University will encourage its departments, schools, and colleges to develop programs that broaden the world perspectives of its students.** Middle Tennessee State University graduates should have some exposure to cultures and perspectives that extend beyond the borders of the United States. Departments will be encouraged to develop study-abroad programs and/or include in their curricular requirements appropriate opportunities for students to learn about the cultures, languages, literatures, history, politics, business perspectives, and communication styles and practices of other countries.

**Middle Tennessee State University will streamline its academic inventory of degree offerings by phasing out programs where there is little student demand or demonstrated need, recognizing that some small programs must be maintained to ensure that Middle Tennessee State University is a comprehensive university.** Historically low producing programs should be evaluated to determine whether they should be maintained. This determination should be based upon cost savings that result and the credibility that the presence of the program provides Middle Tennessee State University as a comprehensive university. Evaluation should include these issues as well as the understanding that some low producing programs may need to be maintained.

## GOAL I • STRATEGIES 2007-2012

Middle Tennessee State University will establish new distinguished or endowed professorships and programs. These professorships will provide a focus for Middle Tennessee State University's areas of competitive advantage, support programs that address the emerging needs of the region, and provide scholarly leadership. Some of the likely areas for these professorships include destination programs such as aerospace, mass communications, and concrete industry management, as well as additional programs of high demand in middle Tennessee such as nursing, education, business, psychology, and programs in emerging growth areas, including tourism, and disciplines such as biotechnology that support knowledge-based business and industry.

## Strategic Direction

Middle Tennessee State University will fully integrate technology.

## GOAL I • STRATEGIES 2002-2007

Middle Tennessee State University will provide up-to-date technological tools and support services to enhance the academic core. Faculty and students require tools that allow for effective use of technology to enhance instruction, research, creative activity, and service. In addition, a flexible, technology-based means for accessing administrative data and course information is essential to support the academic core.



Middle Tennessee State University will promote appropriate use of technology to enhance communication, the curriculum, and course delivery and management. Timely communication between and among faculty, students, and administrative services is essential to teaching and learning effectiveness. Faculty development opportunities will be provided to enhance appropriate use of technology in the classroom and to increase the technological skills of students. Faculty will be supported in the development and offering of distance learning courses and programs.

## GOAL I • STRATEGIES 2007-2012

Middle Tennessee State University will commit the resources to become a national leader in the appropriate use of technology to facilitate communication, curriculum, course delivery, and management. Faculty must be equipped with the resources and tools needed to prepare graduates to contribute in a technologically oriented society. Information technology staff will be increased to ensure that students and faculty are technologically supported so that they can effectively and creatively use technological resources.

**“Our focus must be on academic quality. Middle Tennessee State University is today a very good university—but it can be a great university. We have spent the past decade getting bigger—I want us to spend the next decade getting better.”**  
—President Sidney A. McPhee, inaugural address, April 2002

## Strategic Direction

Middle Tennessee State University will attract meritorious students.

### GOAL I • STRATEGIES 2002-2007

Middle Tennessee State University will establish new, privately funded academic scholarships to advance its commitment to the recruitment of academically talented students. The growing number of academically talented students attending Middle Tennessee State University improves the intellectual climate in all of the University's programs. Attracting and retaining these students requires increasing financial support for scholarships. Through these scholarships, Middle Tennessee State University will ensure that it maintains a diverse student body with high academic promise.

Middle Tennessee State University will establish new graduate assistantships and increase stipend amounts to that of peer institutions. More assistantships and greater monetary support for existing assistantships, including summer tuition, will permit the University to better recruit and retain the most sought after students. Providing additional assistantships will allow more students to pursue full-time graduate study.

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## Strategic Direction

Middle Tennessee State University will provide development opportunities and rewards for its faculty.

### GOAL I • STRATEGIES 2002-2007

Middle Tennessee State University will increase resources to support extramural grant funding. Increasing the level of grant funding from local, state, federal, and other non-profit sources allows the faculty to enhance academic programs through research and service. At the same time, increased funding also allows for increased experiential student learning. Within the next five years, Middle Tennessee State University will increase extramural funding to ten million dollars per annum. These resources can be used to pursue academic initiatives that are not supported by state funding allocations and they will, over time, lead to more opportunities for grants.

Middle Tennessee State University will staff at levels to enhance academic quality and will establish faculty salary levels consistent with increased performance expectations for research/creative activity and public/professional service activities. A university that desires enhanced academic quality must strategically recruit and retain faculty members who have skills in teaching, research/creative activity, and service and are active participants in these three areas. Middle Tennessee State University will provide an adequate number of positions to allow faculty to fulfill their teaching mission while also pursuing scholarly activity. Providing competitive salaries will allow Middle Tennessee State University to hire and retain high-quality faculty. These performance expectations will be monitored through an ongoing evaluation system coupled with appropriate rewards and recognition.



**Middle Tennessee State University will ensure that its General Studies Program provides its graduates with a foundation that includes interdisciplinary perspectives as well as skills needed to solve problems and adapt to rapid changes in the workplace and society.** The General Studies vision is to "provide all students with the intellectual building blocks that will make it possible to find meaning in the ever-changing world." Middle Tennessee State University will establish an evaluation cycle for General Studies courses to ensure that program goals are met.

**Middle Tennessee State University will expand library holdings, access to electronic sources, and library support staff to the level of its peer institutions.** Investments in the maintenance and expansion of library resources are critical to the quality of academic programs. Because Middle Tennessee State University has fewer library holdings per full-time equivalent student (FTE) than its peer institutions, additional funding will be sought to provide greater access for students and faculty to scholarly journals, reference materials, and books. Library holdings will be expanded to meet appropriate collection standards, such as those yielded from the AMIGOS evaluation. Additional public and private funding will be sought for on-line library resources and licenses and for infrastructure that allows students to access information on-line.

**Middle Tennessee State University will develop a comprehensive system of evaluation to assess academic quality.** Self-assessment must include at minimum: (1) accreditation by approved accrediting bodies specific to the discipline, (2) approval by external academic review processes, and/or (3) identification of discipline-specific standards of quality as they relate to the academic program. These effectiveness assessments will serve as a basis for formative as well as summary self-assessments through which the program, personnel, procedures, and services are improved.

**Middle Tennessee State University will review its academic structure and make changes that are necessary or efficacious.** Changes could, for example, include the creation of new colleges, schools, or departments. Proposals for the creation of new colleges or other academic units must, of course, balance the costs of reorganization against the potential, and probable, benefits.

## **GOAL I • STRATEGIES 2007-2012**

**Middle Tennessee State University will expand library holdings, access to electronic sources, and library support staff to exceed the level of its peer institutions.** The University will provide library holdings commensurate with the enhanced quality of the University's curriculum offerings as a nationally recognized comprehensive university.

**Middle Tennessee State University will implement a comprehensive system to assess academic quality.** In addition to seeking a Phi Beta Kappa chapter and the Baldrige Education Award designation, the University will explore other benchmarks of excellence as a part of its overall plan for assessing academic quality.

# Strategic Direction

Middle Tennessee State University will address limitations of the physical plant.

## GOAL I • STRATEGIES 2002-2007

Middle Tennessee State University will renovate existing academic space and add new academic space for classrooms, laboratories, studios, and faculty offices. Many of the University's existing buildings are in serious disrepair, particularly Jones Hall, Boutwell Dramatic Arts, Saunders Fine Arts, Peck Hall, Kirksey Old Main, Davis Science Building, Wiser-Patten Science Building, and Todd Building. These buildings, all built between thirty and ninety years ago, have problems that negatively impact the learning environment. For a safe and comfortable learning environment, issues pertaining to the adequacy of the physical plant must be addressed at the earliest possible time.

Middle Tennessee State University will develop specific tactics to ensure funding for essential facility needs to carry forward the University's academic mission. Additional classrooms, laboratories, and faculty offices for programs in biology, chemistry, art, agriculture, and mass communications are critically necessary because of the age of existing facilities and program growth. Construction of the proposed classroom addition to the McWherter Learning Resources Center, to house programs in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, and completion of the Paul W. Martin, Sr. Honors College Building, to house the University Honors College, likewise are essential to the University's mission.



# GOAL II Middle Tennessee State University will create and nurture a student-centered learning environment responsive to the needs of a diverse student body.

## Foster Student-Centered Learning

During recent decades, Middle Tennessee State University has developed and cultivated a reputation as a university that welcomes and accommodates a diverse student population. The University is increasingly known as a place of caring faculty, where excellence in classroom teaching is an expectation. The reality that underlies this reputation has been, and continues to be, a contributing factor in the University's growth and heightened status in the higher education marketplace. Successful traditions of the past must be continued. Equally important for the future is the need for the University to ensure that student needs are central in a rapidly changing educational environment.

The quality of student life has a direct impact upon student success. Students are best served by a learning environment that meets their needs as individuals through the integration of student life services and academic programs. Critical components of such an environment are programs that provide for collaborative partnerships that enhance the quality of student life by creating co-curricular programs that foster learning both inside and outside the classroom.

A comprehensive, coordinated advising program that addresses student retention and successful graduation is another important component of the student-centered learning environment. Quality academic advising assists students in realizing academic direction, career goals, and a sense of belonging within the academic community. The University's traditionally large student commuter population combined with the availability of new educational opportunities through distance learning present a special challenge to the advising system and to the creation of a sense of community.

Technology plays an increasingly important role in the world, in particular, the living-learning world of the student. Technology is redefining the boundaries of the classroom and reshaping student and teacher relationships. Today, students expect greater access to and involvement with technology, and Middle Tennessee State University expects to provide the technological resources needed.

In the face of change, excellence in teaching remains a constant in the equation that defines a student-centered learning environment. But maintaining instructional excellence presents its own challenge. Emerging research indicates that students learn most efficiently through active involvement in critical thinking, novel applications of knowledge and skills, and through guided discovery where analysis and synthesis of information are important. To address the needs of its students, Middle Tennessee State University must have a faculty that is knowledgeable about, and committed to, the active learning model. Thus, a comprehensive student-centered learning environment addresses effective teaching and learning strategies, technology, responsive student services, and quality academic advising. Middle Tennessee State University recognizes that creation of a student-centered learning environment is fundamental to the University's mission and future success and hereby rededicates itself to student-centered learning as a foundational element of academic excellence.

## Strategic Direction

Middle Tennessee State University will promote a responsive learning environment that fosters academic and personal development of students.

### GOAL II • STRATEGIES 2002-2007

Middle Tennessee State University will foster a University-wide culture of scholarly inquiry and creative activity for students and faculty. Enhanced academic quality requires a faculty that is intellectually active and engaged in professional research and creative activity. Appropriately limiting the teaching load for research-active faculty allows for pursuit of research and creative activity without sacrificing quality of teaching and student learning. The University recognizes that classroom teaching and research are not inversely related to each other. Rather, productive research often complements classroom teaching and thereby enriches the learning experience.

Middle Tennessee State University's pursuit of excellence will include structures that provide students with opportunities for inquiry-based learning. This process integrates an inquiry-based approach to learning in each discipline in an appropriate major course. This approach acquaints all students with the nature and process of research/creative activity and immerses them in this atmosphere early in their studies. In all disciplines, research and creative activity invariably lead to the edges of disciplinary knowledge where intersections with other areas of knowledge are often discovered. Furthermore, capstone experiences in research and creative activity often foster collaboration among students and faculty. Such curricular collaborations often model for students the collaborations called for in the non-academic world.

The University will develop and implement a major campus housing renovation plan. The planned renovations and construction will help the University achieve its objective of providing a campus environment that is both conducive to learning and supportive of an overall sense of community.

Middle Tennessee State University will improve safety and enhance communications to promote student welfare and greater student involvement in campus life. University students have the right to live, study, and play in a safe environment that encourages involvement in campus life. Middle Tennessee State University is committed to providing such an environment.

### GOAL II • STRATEGIES 2007-2012

Middle Tennessee State University will construct a state-of-the-art student center, which will provide centralized access to student services. Such a center will benefit students by making services more convenient and by helping to create an enhanced sense of community. Central location of student services will also facilitate communication and coordination among administrative offices that serve students and student organizations.



## Strategic Direction

Middle Tennessee State University will pursue service-learning activities with community partners to promote student-centered education and faculty development.

### GOAL II • STRATEGIES 2002-2007

Middle Tennessee State University will form partnerships that enable students and faculty to confront pertinent community issues through service learning. Service-learning initiatives focus on a curriculum that simultaneously responds to identifiable community needs and experiential learning opportunities for students. These initiatives reach out to specific groups such as the elderly, at-risk children, or adults attempting to complete the requirements for the GED with activities meaningful to both the targeted groups and to the students. Such activities imbue students with a civic identity that ideally translates into subsequent community involvement. Service learning also further strengthens university-community bonds, thereby helping create a seamless community by integrating campus and civic goals. Since service learning occurs in actual community settings, opportunities are also created for student and faculty research and service that is based on external models.

Middle Tennessee State University will coordinate service-learning activities through the service learning coordinator in the Division of Student Affairs.

The service learning coordinator coordinates policy through a Service Learning Advisory Council in order to increase the number and range of opportunities for service learning. These new opportunities will provide faculty additional avenues for professional growth and will, in many cases, serve as a means of improving academic quality through course enrichment.

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## Strategic Direction

Middle Tennessee State University will develop a coordinated and effective academic advising program that meets the needs of all students.

### GOAL II • STRATEGIES 2002-2007

Middle Tennessee State University will establish a comprehensive advising center to coordinate academic advising, testing, counseling, mentoring, career planning, and related services. An advising center will become the organizational nexus of the University's advising system to ensure that the advising needs of every student are addressed.

**“Life is a sort of splendid torch which I’ve got hold of for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.”**

—George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950)

## GOAL II • STRATEGIES 2007-2012

An Excellence in Academic Advising Program will be developed to recognize excellence in faculty academic advising as a part of the tenure and promotion process and to establish an annual award for an outstanding faculty or staff academic advisor. Advisor training and evaluation will meet the standards of the National Academic Advising Association and documented progress will be made toward appropriate and equitable advising loads.

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## Strategic Direction

Middle Tennessee State University will recruit and develop faculty who have a deep commitment to excellence in teaching, as well as knowledge of a discipline.

## GOAL II • STRATEGIES 2002-2007

The Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs will convene a task force to review and update criteria for recruitment and retention of faculty. The task force will identify criteria for recruiting new faculty that will allow the University to make progress toward the objective of achieving levels of faculty diversity comparable to that of the student body. The task force will review and recommend promotion/tenure criteria to determine if they appropriately reflect the importance of excellence in teaching within the active learning model.

Middle Tennessee State University will provide a collaborative faculty excellence program. An excellence program will provide resources, incentives, and evaluation to enhance teaching, research, creative activity, and the integration of instructional technologies into the teaching and learning environment. A strong and dynamic academic core requires a faculty that values the latest developments in the art of teaching, in research/creative activity, and in the effective integration of technology. The faculty excellence program will encompass professional development seminars, workshops, instructional design support, technical support and training, consultation, and mentoring resources. The University will recognize and reward excellence in teaching, research/creative activity, and service through financial incentives/merit pay, reassigned time, and achievement awards.

Middle Tennessee State University will establish an Office of Instructional Excellence. This office will support, coordinate, and provide activities designed to assist faculty in their efforts to establish effective student-centered learning environments. Activities may include seminars to support mentoring of new and adjunct faculty, maintenance and publication of a roster of faculty development opportunities, consultation and support for evaluation of tenured and non-tenured faculty, documentation of institutional progress toward achieving a student-centered learning environment, and organization and implementation of the Research Task Force goals.



## Strategic Direction

Middle Tennessee State University will enhance the student-centered learning environment through access to appropriate technology.

### GOAL II • STRATEGIES 2002-2007

The Office of the Vice President for Information Technology will implement and continuously update the plan for support and expansion of master classrooms, computer laboratories, library technology services, and discipline-specific technology. The Office of the Vice President for Information Technology will update the plan annually.

The University will provide support services to update instructional equipment and training of faculty and staff on a systematic basis. As updates in instructional equipment are made, faculty and staff will be provided training to maximize the effective use of the updated equipment.

The Division of Continuing Studies will develop and implement a comprehensive distance education plan. The University will expand distance-learning services by assessing programs and student readiness for distance-learning opportunities. Programs and courses will be developed, within the Tennessee Board of Regents' goals and expectations, which reflect the needs of the students in the region and beyond.



Middle Tennessee State University will leverage resources by establishing mutually beneficial partnerships with business, industry, and non-profit organizations.

## GOAL III

### Leverage Resources Through Partnerships

Partnerships leverage the resources of all participating parties. As mutual working relationships between two or more institutions—businesses, industries, universities, school systems, or service organizations—they allow goals to be accomplished that are beyond the reach of any one party acting alone. They encourage development of important bonds and connections that lead to a sharing of human, spatial, financial, and knowledge resources.

Partnerships, when they are well-conceived and properly administered, lead to many desirable outcomes. From the university perspective, partnering extends the teaching-learning environment beyond the campus and blurs the boundaries between town and gown. The community and workplace essentially become learning laboratories where shared resources create educational opportunities that are experiential, service-oriented, and problem-based. Partnerships facilitate the development of a regional sense of community; they promote communication and understanding between the worlds of work and service; and they integrate the workplace with the world of higher education.

From the community perspective, partnerships promote regional growth and development. Middle Tennessee State University, a viable community partner, is already known regionally and increasingly nationally for its signature partnerships, such as the internship programs for students in recording industry management and concrete industry management. Evidence of the University's recent embrace of community outreach through partnerships may be found in its college-level partnership plans that involve the areas of education; arts, communication, and entertainment; science and technology; and health and human services.

Middle Tennessee State University is committed to building continuing relationships with both its current and potential partners. By developing strong relationships with area partners, it can honor its commitment to provide experiential learning for its students and drive the economic development of the region. These partnerships are important in any economic climate and are especially vital in a time of scarce resources. By making partnerships one of its three major academic goals in this Blueprint for Excellence, Middle Tennessee State University signals its determination to become a model among American universities that leverage resources through partnership outreach.

**“Community partnerships, nonfinancial investments, and profitable social responsibility can offer companies of all sizes new ways to widen their community relationships. And community involvement is definitely good business.”**

—C. William Verity, Jr. (1917– )

## Strategic Direction

Middle Tennessee State University will develop a formal structure within the University to increase the number and diversity of partnerships.

### GOAL III • STRATEGIES 2002-2007

Middle Tennessee State University will establish a **University Partnership Council** and a **Corporate Partnership Advisory Board**. The University Partnership Council, consisting principally of University personnel, will make recommendations pertaining to proposed partnership initiatives and methods of coordinating and improving existing partnerships to a designated administrator. The Corporate Advisory Board will include community leaders and representatives from institutions with whom the University maintains partnerships. The Board will make recommendations regarding existing partnership arrangements and directions for future arrangements to the president of Middle Tennessee State University.

Middle Tennessee State University will **provide an administrative structure to coordinate all University partnerships**. Middle Tennessee State University will promote collaboration across departments and programs to focus on student-centered initiatives and service-learning opportunities. As the University expands its partnership arrangements, there will be an evident need for administrative oversight in order to ensure coordination, facilitate communication, and monitor progress.

Middle Tennessee State University will **explore plans and evaluate the feasibility of establishing a SmartPark**. The purpose of a SmartPark, an off-campus, entrepreneurial branch of the University, would be to conduct applied research and explore options for commercialization of the products and outcomes of such research.

### GOAL III • STRATEGIES 2007-2012

If feasible, Middle Tennessee State University will **establish a SmartPark as an off-campus, entrepreneurial branch of the University**. Establishment of a SmartPark will allow interested faculty and staff to explore areas of applied research and prospects for commercialization through legal agreements between, or among, the University, financial sponsors, or others having claims upon the intellectual property generated through Park activities. Successful development of a SmartPark would provide a foundation for subsequent development of a University-sponsored business incubator for applied research.



## Strategic Direction

**Middle Tennessee State University will seek opportunities to partner with other universities, businesses and industries, public agencies, and those in the broader community to pursue collaborative research and grants.**

### GOAL III • STRATEGIES 2002-2007

**Middle Tennessee State University will establish a Partnership Information Center that will foster research and grant partnerships among colleges and universities.**

This information center will help faculty considering proposals that are beyond the capabilities of any one institution but within the capabilities of two or more partnering institutions. The Vice Provost for Research will facilitate contacts with other universities.

**Middle Tennessee State University will promote the development of a research partnership network among area agencies, businesses, and industries.**

Exploratory contacts will be made with such entities as the Tennessee Valley Authority; local governments and chambers of commerce; Oak Ridge National Laboratory; research hospitals; the Tennessee State Department of Education; local school systems; the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development; state health and social programs; the National Aeronautics and Space Administration; the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation; the Tennessee Department of Tourism, Travel and Recreation; the Tennessee Department of Justice; and other law enforcement agencies.

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## Strategic Direction

**Middle Tennessee State University will develop and provide incentives for faculty, staff, and external communities to initiate and engage in partnering relationships.**

### GOAL III • STRATEGIES 2002-2007

**Middle Tennessee State University will develop incentives to encourage faculty and staff to pursue new partnerships and participate in existing ones.** These incentives, at the University, college, and department levels, will target the full range of partnerships between Middle Tennessee State University and the regional community. Incentives may include time, organizational support, start-up funding, special recognition, or other tangible or intangible rewards.

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## Strategic Direction

**Middle Tennessee State University will support and strengthen ongoing partnership initiatives within individual colleges or among collaborative groups of colleges within the University.**

### GOAL III • STRATEGIES 2002-2007

**Middle Tennessee State University will support and strengthen college-level partnership plans developed over the past five years.** Each plan will be revisited to meet the challenges presented in the current Blueprint for Excellence. Through existing partnership arrangements, opportunities for students are being provided for training, field placements, internships, cooperative education opportunities, and professional mentoring.

## A BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

Middle Tennessee State University's Academic Master Plan creates a strategic Blueprint for Excellence that is aggressive, manageable, and focused. It builds upon the vision of President Sidney A. McPhee; the hopes and dreams of students, faculty, staff, and community leaders; and upon the dedicated work of the ad hoc Academic Master Plan Committee. The Plan commits the University to a leadership role in higher education and to building middle Tennessee's future, a future projected to be one of dynamic growth and change. It commits the University to the achievement of unprecedented levels of excellence in academics and to development of a student-centered learning environment. Finally, the Plan commits the University to selective development of new programs, to a leadership role in technology, and to vanguard status among universities that emphasize service learning and partnerships. The Academic Master Plan is a strategic document and therefore must be guided by clearly communicated administrative policy and implemented according to a written administrative action plan.

The challenge of the work that lies ahead is obviously great. Equally obvious is the fact that future efforts must be guided by a well-designed plan in order for the University to realize its academic ambitions and for the region to flourish economically and culturally. A focus upon enhancement of existing partnerships and establishment of new ones, improvements in the living and learning climate for students, and the opportunity to heighten academic quality in an inclusive and pervasive way are worthy goals to which Middle Tennessee State University aspires. Its success in reaching its goals will depend upon many things and many people. A number of new facilities, starting with a new science building, must be constructed. To produce a campus capable of achievement and one reflective of the diversity that characterizes Tennessee's workplaces and the world community, unprecedented emphasis must be placed upon quality in both student and faculty recruitment. The University must market itself effectively, cultivate its friends and partners, and develop new ones. Finally, and most importantly, it must mobilize its human and financial resources and use them in creative ways.

Middle Tennessee State University's transformation from a small college into a major university with the state's second highest enrollment has been documented over the past three decades, a fact that is appreciated by an increasing number of people locally and nationally. Its caring faculty, beautiful campus, central location, and quality programs and services have played key roles in the University's steady rise in status, enrollment, and scope of mission. Over the years, the University has demonstrated a willingness to accept and plan for change. Paradoxically, the best plans of any university are those that anticipate the need for direction in an ever-changing world. Middle Tennessee State University confronts the future with purpose, confident that the implementation of this Academic Master Plan will fuel the lamp of learning and provide a beacon to guide the citizens of the region and beyond.





**Sidney A. McPhee**

President, Middle Tennessee State University

**Kaylene Gebert**

Executive Vice President and Provost

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