Extron website highlights “intuitive” ITD classroom self-help user interface

ITD’s Classroom Technology team has been recognized by audiovisual technology company Extron for innovative use of its products for a “touch-panel-based user interface that is both beautiful and intuitive,” according to its website.

An article featured on Extron’s website described the challenges facing the Instructional Technology-AV team at MTSU: enrollment of about 20,000 on a campus with 55 buildings housing over 420 AV-equipped classrooms, conference rooms, and event spaces with more than 1,000 University-owned PCs.

“Many of their Help Desk calls come from users who need assistance with basic AV system operation or minor troubleshooting. The technical support staff needed a solution that would reduce the number of calls by enabling users to resolve problems themselves,” the article states.

“Thanks in part to Extron Control Professional Certification and training, the team devised an..."
Ready to try Qualtrics? Here are some startup tips

The online surveying tool Qualtrics XM has been available to MTSU faculty and staff for years, but many on campus are beginning to use it for the first time.

If you would like to try the app or get some more information on uses, following is a quick start guide.

To sign in:

1. Open your web browser and navigate to Office.com.
2. Sign in to Microsoft Office using either the orange Sign In button in the middle of the page or the Sign in icon found at the top right.
3. Enter your MTSU credentials and click Next to proceed. The format for student login is username@mtmail.mtsu.edu while faculty and staff should use username@mtsu.edu.
4. If prompted, enter your MTSU password and click Sign In to continue.
5. Click on the dotted square located at the top left corner of the Microsoft Office window to expand your list of available applications.
6. If you see SAP Qualtrics listed, click on it to proceed to Qualtrics.com and advance to step 9.
7. If you do not see SAP Qualtrics listed, click on the link labeled All apps to further expand your list of available apps.
8. Scroll down through your list of applications until you see the “Other” category to find SAP Qualtrics. Click on SAP Qualtrics to proceed.
9. If this is your first time using Qualtrics, click the button labeled No, I Don’t Have A Preexisting Account Here to create your account and continue the login process.
10. Click Sign In to continue accessing Qualtrics.
11. If prompted, accept the Terms of Service to proceed.
12. Click on Get Started to begin a tutorial on how to use Qualtrics or click the small gray X at the top right of the Welcome window to begin using Qualtrics.

Note regarding the name: Qualtrics was purchased by SAP in 2018 and sometimes is listed as SAP Qualtrics. Its homepage only has the title XM, which stands for Experience Management.

Qualtrics has an extensive and user-friendly list of Tips at https://www.qualtrics.com/support/survey-platform/common-use-cases-rc/survey-tips-tricks/
Communicator • December 2022

ITD played key role in creating 'iconic' new concrete building

For two decades, Heather Brown helped build the Concrete Industry Management program at MTSU.

In October, she returned to the new state-of-the-art School of Concrete and Construction Management as vice president of quality control/quality assurance for Irving Materials (IMI), speaking to the first group of CIM students to use the facility. Brown said she was impressed with the look and functionality of the so-called “concrete building,” especially considering it is literally a concrete building.

The new building required “balance” between looking like a concrete industry product with high end concrete block structure, while promoting safety and just being “beautiful.”

“I had visited concrete facilities before, and they were dirty and loud,” she said. “We wanted this to look like concrete but not sound like concrete. We wanted this to be a showcase.”

Brown and other industry representatives spoke to Kelly Strong’s class gathered in the 200-seat lecture hall without using a microphone, illustrating the quality of the acoustics of that room. Working with the design team for the

See Concrete Industry, page 6

2021–22 Faculty Fellows

The 2021-22 Faculty Fellows were honored Oct. 26 at the MTSU Faculty Fair. Pictured (l-r) are Lando Carter, interim director of Teaching Excellence for the LT&ITC, which offers the program; Brielle Campos, University Studies; Erica Stone, English; Carrie Pavel, Human Sciences; Kristi Stringer, Health and Human Performance; Carmelita Dotson, Social Work; Sarah Harris, Human Sciences; Janna McClain, Elementary and Special Education; Natalie Griffin, Elementary and Special Education; and Tom Brinthaupt, LT&ITC director of Faculty Development. Not pictured are Alex Kah, Psychology; Ashley Valanzola, History; Bridget Donnelly, English; Catherine Ariail, History; Cyrana Dowell, History; Frank Lambert, Educational Leadership (M.L.S. Program); Hongbo Zhang, Engineering Technology; Jahanzeeb Qurashi, Health and Human Performance; Jun Zhang, Journalism and Strategic Media; Nour Kattih, Economics and Finance; Rebecca Oldham, Human Sciences; Sarah Harris, Human Sciences; Whitney Emerson, Theatre and Dance; and Yi (Vanessa) Liu, Health and Human Performance.
Cross is division's new director of Information Security

Joseph Cross joined ITD on Nov. 1, 2022, as director of Information Security.

Born in Lawrenceburg, Cross earned a bachelor’s degree in Computer Science and Information Technology from Tennessee Tech University and an M.B.A. in Cyber Management and Analytics from TTU. He is a Certified Information Systems Security Professional.

Cross worked from 2013–17 at Cookeville Regional Medical Center as a desktop support technician and later as a network engineer. From 2017–19 he worked for Tennessee Tech University as a cybersecurity technologist for the Cybersecurity Education, Research, and Outreach Center. From 2019–22 he worked at TTU as an IT security analyst for the Information Security Office.

At MTSU, his primary responsibilities are vulnerability management and monitoring.

"One of the largest threats to an organization today is a ransomware attack. These attacks are usually successful due to that organization possessing vulnerabilities within their environment that an attacker exploited to gain unauthorized access," Cross said.

"My job in this area is to detect the vulnerabilities present within MTSU's environment and assist in getting them resolved as quickly as possible so that we can minimize our risk of being a victim to attacks such as ransomware."

Monitoring involves making sure an active threat is not discovered too late, he said.

"We are in the process of implementing tools that will allow us to more easily view suspicious activity as it is happening," he said. "We will also be able to automate actions such as triaging contextual information for an incident or blocking a threat altogether so that we can respond to situations as quickly as possible."

Cross said he enjoys the challenge of developing a "vulnerability management program and creating automation playbooks for our monitoring tools."

"I am beyond excited that I get to be part of a team where I can do those things," he said. "I foresee the biggest challenge being just getting things off of the ground."

"Once the initial lift is complete, these processes will be very fluid—especially with our new IT Service Management platform (ServiceNow) coming online soon, which can greatly help facilitate certain automations such as getting information in front of the right people as soon as possible, reducing friction and the total time needed to address a problem."

Cross and his wife are parents to a 3-month-old. He said they enjoy exercising and involvement at church.

"I dabble in woodworking and actually made most of the furniture in our house," Cross said. "I'm your typical sci-fi buff. I enjoy video games of all kinds and have even competed in some at the semi-pro level during college. I like to tinker with my home lab of network gear and virtualization server, and lately I have been using it to turn my house into a very smart home."

"I also love anything self-improvement related like working out, staying current on recent studies in diet and exercise, or even recently I've taken an interest in personal finance and investment strategies."

Five from ITD receive awards for service totaling a century

Five ITD employees were honored on Dec. 1 for a total of 100 years of service at MTSU.

Award recipients were:

- **10 years**: Alecia Heidt, software developer, Custom Application Development
- **15 years**: James Foster, director of Database Administration Services, Enterprise Application Services
- **20 years**: Charlotte Caruthers, systems analyst 1, Administrative Information System Services
- **25 years**: Toto Sutarso, senior statistician, Academic Instructional Technology
- **30 years**: Eve Jones, director of Administrative Information System Services

ITD Systems Analyst Charlotte Caruthers receives a 20-year Service Award from MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee on Dec. 1.
MTSU has been central in her family and educational history

MTSU has been a central part of ITD Systems Administrator Jennifer Fayissa’s life from childhood, but interest in tech came later in her career.

Fayissa grew up coming to the University with her dad, Bichaka Fayissa, an Economics and Finance professor for nearly 40 years. She also has earned two master’s degrees from the University, the first an M.B.A. and the second a master’s in Information Systems.

During her M.B.A. studies at MTSU, she roomed near campus with her sister, Jessica, who died in 2012 at the age of 31. Looking back, she is so thankful for all the time they were able to spend together.

“And now I’m working here—I can’t get away from MTSU and I don’t want to,” she said.

Hanging out with her father helped familiarize her with the family nature of MTSU faculty and staff, and she said that has continued in her work in Enterprise Support Services since October 2021.

However, she determined IT work was a more stable career choice. As part of her studies she interned in 2015 at Community Health Systems in IT, and continued working there until 2020.

When she started with ITD in 2021, things were pretty “quiet” due to COVID. Her main project for ITD has been updating Windows servers, which requires constant coordination and cooperation with other subject matter experts on campus.

“I work with different departments, so this gives me a good opportunity to speak to a lot of people all at once to communicate to get everything transferred over,” Fayissa said. “It just involves so many people because each server has to have so many hands on it—networking, security—so for each one we have multiple people involved to get the systems upgraded.”

She likened much of her job to being a project manager and joked that if “I have bothered someone, I would like to say I’m sorry.”

Away from work, her main focus is being mom to three boys—13-year-old twins Jude and Ebba, and 4-year-old Bradford. Fayissa and her husband, Adam, spend most of their time taking the boys to sports or traveling.

The twins have both shown interest and talent in wrestling, she said. She said Bradford loves marine life, so they’ve taken trips to aquariums in Chattanooga and New Orleans.

Fayissa said she has volunteered to care for children most of her life, whether babysitting, childcare at church, or volunteering at the Boys & Girls Club.

“I have always tried to influence young people in a positive way, whether teaching or being a mentor,” she said.

Another favorite activity is gardening and landscaping.

“I love to garden. That’s where you’ll find me, if I have free time,” she said.

—Jennifer Fayissa

Jennifer Fayissa, ITD systems administrator, grew up coming to MTSU with her father, a longtime Economics and Finance professor. She also earned an MBA and MIS from the University.
You'd better watch out ... for increased malicious cyber activity

The Information Security Office would like to remind the campus community that the month of December brings us the end of the fall semester, finals, the eagerly anticipated holidays, and increased malicious cyber activity disguised as emails.

These phishing attempts range from offering unbelievable discounts on merchandise that are too good to be true, bogus job offers promising easy and fast cash, and my favorite, the desperate email from a “supervisor” who must have gift cards purchased while they are in a meeting.

While the themes of these emails vary, the goal is the same—to trick you into providing information that can be used to compromise your account.

I urge everyone to be vigilant this December and all year through, stop before clicking on the link in the email, and examine the email for red flags:

• Do you know the sender? Look closely at the email address—is it really who you think it is, or is someone spoofing the person you know and trust?
• Does the special one-time offer sound too good to be true?
• Is the tone of the email urgent and asking you to “do” something?

To help communicate current threats more effectively the ITD Information Security Office has created a “Cyber Threat Level” indicator on the homepage of PipelineMT. This allows us to let the MTSU campus community know if Phishing attacks are under way, if so, what subject lines are being used in the attack. This is a new approach, and we expected it to become more robust over time.

The malicious users are counting on us to be too busy and caught up in the year-end and holiday hustle and bustle to pay attention to the red flags we would normally recognize. If we all take a moment and pause, we can ensure we have a wonderful year-end and leave the malicious user with empty phish hooks.

Deb Zsigalov is ITD’s assistant vice president and chief information security officer.

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Concrete Industry, continued from page 2

style, and “it was mission accomplished.” Some of the unique features are:

• Materials and building labs capable of wet or dry projects
• A virtual design and construction lab capable of creating advanced building models and construction simulations, as well as an augmented virtual reality lab for immersive experiences.
• A dedicated mechanical electrical plumbing classroom where a complete small-scale structure can be built.
• A covered outdoor amphitheater classroom where students could work with trucks and mixers

“Every space had to be custom; we had to get it right,” Brown said, adding that the result was “an iconic academic building.”

Brown served from 2001–21 as a professor, director, and department chair in the School of Concrete and Construction Management. She said returning to speak to students in the new building was somewhat “bittersweet,” recalling the challenges of using the Voorhies and Midgett buildings on campus in the early days of the program.

Designing and installing classroom tech in the new building was unlike other projects on campus, said ITD Director of Classroom Technology James Copeland.

“One of the challenges was just the acoustics— they are all hard surfaces,” Copeland said of the main lecture hall. “We used foam insulation on ceilings to absorb sound and added acoustical panels on the walls.”

Because the concrete wall on the first floor is load-bearing, the team couldn’t run conduits inside it horizontally, only vertically, he said.

"So instead of a connection to the left of a display being run horizontally 10 foot, we had to install it in the wall vertically from the display to the ceiling out into the hallway then from the hallway back into the lab down to the laptop connect location," he said. “We had to use a lot more cabling.”

As for instructor stations, technology that is designed to be put in the walls had to be scaled down and hidden behind displays. The lecture hall has the University’s second LED wall—a series of connected screens.

Much of the current equipment is just temporary to allow students and faculty to use the facility, which opened in mid-October. The permanent equipment is scheduled to be installed in the next few months, Copeland said.

At the Oct. 13 dedication, University President Sidney A. McPhee called the facility “a true living laboratory.”
Screen readers help you understand and meet student needs

What is a screen reader? A screen reader is a text-to-speech application that allows people who have a vision impairment to use devices that convey content. It converts screen elements into audio outputs—things like text, images, and tables can be represented aloud.

Our students with blindness or low vision depend on screen readers to be successful; however, screen readers can be helpful for our students with lower literacy, for ESL learners, and for anyone who prefers to listen to content in place of reading.

Many of our instructors have never used a screen reader or tried navigating a course using only the keyboard keys. Although we are all busy teaching classes, trying a screen reader can help you truly understand our students’ learning experiences—and frustrations.

There are many different screen readers available. MTSU provides the **Job Access With Speech (JAWS)** screen reader free to eligible students, as well as installed on computers around campus (the Adaptive Technology Center, the Walker Library, and other campus computer labs.) There are also many other readers available, depending on your computer operating system or browser:

- **Narrator** is the built-in reader for Windows computers. From your desktop, select Start and then type Narrator. Narrator includes built-in instructions for beginners.
- Apple devices use the built-in **VoiceOver** screen reader; turn this on in Settings under General > Accessibility.
- Google **Chrome Screen Reader** is a browser extension that can be added to your Chrome browser to read web pages.

Whichever reader that you choose, be sure to read the instructions. Screen readers have many shortcuts and special commands that allow you to jump from heading to heading, activate links, or navigate columns and tables. If you aren’t ready to use a screen reader on your own, you can watch this 5-minute video from Mark Sutton of the University of California San Francisco and his **Screen Reader Demo for Digital Accessibility**—it’s an eye-opener.

MTSU’s Disability and Access Center provides resources to support teaching and learning for students, faculty, and staff. The Center for Technologies and Training employs an instructional technology and accessibility specialist for specific technology questions as well as provides guidelines and best practices for accessibility in D2L and course design. Let us know if you have questions or need support.

**Holiday voicemail set up with S4B**

As you head out for holiday break, remember that with Microsoft Skype for Business (S4B) there is no longer a dial-in access number for voicemail.

Listening to voicemail and recording greetings are now strictly managed from your desk phone, S4B or Microsoft Teams app.

Integrated with Microsoft Exchange, Unified Messaging (UM) automatically routes voicemail messages to Outlook email, with a speech-to-text preview of the message, as well as a complete audio attachment of the voice message within email.

For instructions on accessing Cloud Voicemail from various devices visit [mtsu.edu/itdtele/skype.php](http://mtsu.edu/itdtele/skype.php)

**ITD extends new BLUEWIFI network**

ITD is continuing to extend the new and improved BLUEWIFI network across campus.

As of Nov. 28 it is available in the Campus Recreation Center, Honors College, and School of Concrete and Construction Management building.

Connecting is simple. The links below have instructions for each platform.

- **Windows**
- **macOS**
- **Android/iOS**

NOTE: The proposed schedule for implementing BLUEWIFI in the remainder of campus buildings will be available soon.

If you have questions or need any assistance, contact the ITD Help Desk at [help@mtsu.edu](mailto:help@mtsu.edu) or at 615-898-5345.
ideal solution. Using Extron Global Configurator Professional and GUI Designer software, they were able to deploy a TouchLink Pro touch-panel-based user interface that is both beautiful and intuitive.

The interface makes it easy for instructors, students, system installers, and technicians to operate and troubleshoot the AV system.”

The team also uses the remote AV system management capabilities of Extron’s GlobalViewer Enterprise software to improve the troubleshooting capabilities available in the touch-panel interface, which guides nontechnical users through routine AV system operations from startup to shutdown in real time with clear, uncluttered interactive graphical user interfaces that change for each room so that all controls are customized to match the AV system installed there.

ITD staff used Global Configurator Professional to develop an extensive library of troubleshooting macros that perform signal tracing to localize points of possible signal interruptions.

“Once the point of signal loss is pinpointed, the macro either sends a command to correct the problem or displays a message to the user suggesting how to proceed. The macros emulate the troubleshooting steps and decision branching that a tech support person would perform,” the article states.

“If a problem cannot be resolved by the applicable troubleshooting macro, a telephone number and QR code appear on the touch-panel GUI, advising the user to contact tech support at the Help Desk.”

James Copeland, ITD director of Classroom Technology Client Services, said the attention began when Extron contacted him to find out why ITD was ordering so many of their products.

“When they saw we were purchasing 400 new control systems for the campus, they were wondering what we were doing,” he said. "When they found out what we were doing they said, 'No one else in the country is doing this.'”

Copeland said the goal was to do more troubleshooting and support remotely, limiting the time team members have to go to the classrooms.

“Previously instructors would often call us out to the classrooms for issues as simple as a blank screen caused by a PC or document camera that wasn’t turned on;” he said in the Extron article. "Now, the touch panel prompts them with 'Please Power-on the PC'; and when the system then detects an active signal, the touch screen confirms with 'PC Signal Detected'. Something this simple has reduced such time-consuming service calls to zero."

“Student workers who help us in tech support roles have a high turnover rate driven by their class schedules. We were constantly training new people. The self-help user interface helps reduce the learning curve, allowing us to make efficient use of this transient workforce.”

The ITD team included Classroom AV Technicians Dustin Smith and Dustin Cunningham, Classroom Control Systems Programmer Aaron Dill, and former ITD AV Tech Jonathan Moore. Copeland said they are now seeking “to share the knowledge and techniques they’ve developed with their peers in the educational AV field and the broader AV community.”

See the full article at www.extron.com/article/mtsu. On the right-hand menu you can watch video overviews of the Troubleshooting and Self-Help Process and more features of the classroom user interface.

Ellucian Experience, continued from page 1

“Cards and pages are the primary methods for delivering content to users and provide a concise snapshot of information with the ability to drill down further for more detailed information,” she said.

“Users can customize their dashboard to their specific preferences and save time by having a single entry point to the technology they use daily.”

The Ellucian website describes the Experience as allowing the entire university to “speak with one voice to the student.” Maas said that because Ellucian Experience is cloud-based it “allows us to evolve at our own pace with future-proof, lightweight, and secure Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) technology.”

With SaaS technology, a vendor maintains the software and offers access to it through the internet.

“No components are installed locally, which frees up IT resources to concentrate on business process improvements,” she said.

The Experience Mobile App will provide users with the same content as the browser-based Experience web application, presented in a mobile app that takes advantage of native mobile features.