Faculty studying options for online finals

With MTSU faculty required to offer all final exams online this December, instructors are doing their homework on options for how to give and grade them digitally.

Associate Professor Tyler A. Babb, coordinator of the MTSU Professional Pilot Program in the Department of Aerospace, said Desire2Learn (D2L) has been his go-to option during the COVID-19 crisis and will be for finals.

"I have used D2L Quizzes for tests this fall in the following way: I create a large question pool (100-plus questions) and then have the system pull a random 50-60 questions at random order from that question pool," Babb said. "It takes a lot of work to generate that many questions in the D2L system, but I think the result is the most fair system I could employ."

Grading can be a challenge, however, because while D2L offers automatic grading of True/False and multiple choice questions, it is more limited in how it can grade longer answers.

“The D2L quiz system does allow for short answer/essay-type responses, but based upon my class sizes, I can’t see myself doing that much grading,” he said, adding that he has one section with 60 students and one with 80. “Thus, most all my questions are true/false or multiple choice.”

See Online Finals, page 3

D2L award badges allow instructors to give special recognition for student work

A new Desire to Learn (D2L) awards tool allows instructors to recognize their students’ achievements using digital badges, which are visual indicators of knowledge, skills, or accomplishments.

“Awards enable instructors to engage with students and demonstrate their teaching and social presence in an online course, both of which contribute to student persistence and satisfaction,” said Layne Bryant, MTSU manager of Distance Education Resources. “Badges also provide a quick way for instructors to check the progress of their learners and their development over time. Finally, badge achievement can help instructors critically evaluate course content and activities and determine areas for improvement.”

According to Bryant, examples of types of awards include:

- **Completion awards**, such as a unit or module award, can be given to a student who successfully completes multiple required activities in section of the course
- **Activity awards**, such as an exemplary discussion award, would recognize a student’s ability to complete one specific activity at a particularly high level
- **Competency awards** that would recognize a student’s ability to

See D2L Awards, page 8
COVID outbreak limiting Munson’s retirement plans to (model) train trips

The timing of Dave Munson’s retirement this year was either really good or really bad, depending on how you look at it.

Yes, leaving ITD in February after nearly 20 years just as the shutdowns and closures related to COVID-19 began really limited his options for entertainment and travel. On the other hand, staying at home has given him much more time to pursue his favorite hobby—model railroading.

“We had planned a couple of trips to visit Atlanta and Michigan, and toyed with going to Panama City Beach,” said Munson, adding that all those plans had to be canceled. “It did make it kind of necessary to stay in.”

But he is working on an N-gauge model train diorama based on the former Northern Pacific railroad line that once stretched from Chicago to Seattle, with a stop at Yellowstone National Park in between. The scene on a 4- by 8-foot piece of plywood is a work in progress.

“That’s something I’m working on and I finally got a corner of a bonus room cleared, with most of the stuff out of the way,” he said.

A native of Michigan, Munson came to MTSU in 2000 and worked as a systems analyst in Academic & Instructional Technology Services with Senior Systems Analyst Curt Curry and Statistical Consultant Toto Sutarso.

At the time, several ITD services were offered through desktop applications, including the work-order and workshop signup programs. He helped incorporate them into one online database network and consolidate tech support into the Help Desk, where he would sometimes fill in.

“We were utility players. Back then we had very few support people, about half the size it is now,” Munson said.

Munson also helped simplify the process of making payroll deductions for local charitable and service organizations, now called the Employee Charitable Giving Campaign.

Munson grew up in the Detroit area and graduated from the University of Michigan with bachelor’s and master’s degrees in engineering. In 1998, he and his wife, Laurie, moved to the Nashville area as her company merged with Ingram Content Group.

After having worked for a small computer department in a southeast Michigan municipality near Ann Arbor, Munson began working for MTSU. He said the technology changes he experienced in the new millennium have been amazing, and they have accelerated with the need for remote and online work and study due to the new coronavirus.

“If you were lucky, the network could support you doing some functions from home. Now it is a real benefit to the overall functionality of the University that everyone can work from home,” Munson said.

Tech is great, but it is his co-workers that Munson said he misses the most.

“I miss the people. It is a terrible cliché but when you work a good while somewhere you develop relationships,” Munson said. He recalled how when things got too quiet in the office, he would make it his mission to start conversations.

“Sometimes when nobody talked during the day, I got up and thought of a question I would ask people. It didn’t matter what it was—football or whatever—it was just to get us talking to each other,” he said.

As for football, Munson was looking forward to another favorite activity after a long wait also due to COVID restrictions.

“I have a bag of chips and a six pack of Diet Coke ready for the start of Big 10 football,” said the avid Wolverine fan.
Babb is teaching a smaller Honors section of AERO 1020: Theory of Flight in person, so the exam for this is all on paper. But he will collect them using D2L's Turnitin system.

Jennifer Ponder, ITD instructional designer and technology support specialist in the Faculty Instructional Technology Center, and Cheri Wolfe, instructional technology specialist for accessibility, have been helping faculty find practical options for administering final exams remotely.

"Since all Fall 2020 finals at MTSU will be online this year, we wanted to help faculty find solutions for assessments that will accurately gauge student learning, while simultaneously encouraging academic integrity," Ponder said. "We also understand the increased workload that has come along with remote and online teaching and have some ideas that won’t increase faculty loads."

Those topics include secure ways to test via D2L, best practices for Examity, and proctoring via Zoom. They also have shared ideas to create assessments that are authentic, require critical thinking skills, and likely outside of the proverbial box.

Ponder said self enrollment is available by going to the D2L homepage and clicking Teaching with D2L - FITC Course, or accessing this web page: https://elearn.mtsu.edu/d2l/home/7025524.

However, if faculty members don’t have time to work on this and need a quick overview, D2L provides a quick start guide to creating assessments at the following:


Ponder said D2L offers the most readily available help to faculty as the final exams approach. Fixed-answer quizzes are the easiest, but the web platform does provide ways to give students feedback on longer written answers, too, she said.

"While D2L can only auto grade multi-guess, True/False, and short answer, assessing (essays) and leaving feedback for students is pretty quick and efficient," Ponder said. "Faculty have the option to just provide a score, leave feedback for each question, leave feedback on the overall assessment, and make this feedback unique for each student or available to the whole class.

Feedback on discussion boards and Dropbox submissions can be created with text, audio, or video."

Turnitin is a tool that has been integrated within D2L that will check the originality of student work by comparing student submissions to a global repository of assignments, web content, periodicals, journals, and other publications.

"While Turnitin is a great way to detect plagiarism, I would discourage teachers from playing detective as this puts more work on them. We discuss ways to encourage academic integrity while also teaching students how and why to avoid plagiarism;" Ponder said.

MTSU Online Director Cindy Adams said each instructor will make her/his own decisions on how their final exams are administered. But she said the University is offering general guidelines.

"Exams given via technology should be designed in such a way that students can successfully complete them regardless of the technology used;" Adams said. "The design of the exam and administration within D2L are, I feel, the best fail-safes to maintain academic standards. Avoiding the use of test banks associated with a textbook, when possible, is also good practice as well as limiting the test time."

As for classes that require more than just reading and writing—such as dance, performance arts, labs, or creating drones—MTSU's newly installed classroom capture system offers several advantages.

"Zoom can be used for exams that require evidence of in-person skills although that may require, in some instances, individual testing," she said. "Faculty may also have students submit their video as their final, for example, if the class is a public speaking class showing the student is in a public area while still socially distanced and making their speech."

Those teaching fully online courses—those with no synchronous class time—will not encounter the same issues that faculty teaching remote courses may because online courses are developed with the assistance of MTSU Online Instructional Designers and have been through peer reviews and chair approvals.

"Faculty, especially those who are teaching remotely, seem to have embraced Zoom videoconferencing, and many may proctor their courses using this tool," Adams said. "D2L testing may be the most utilized tool, however, for proctoring exams and implementing the robust options within the quiz tool to mitigate cheating."

"For online instruction, students are required to complete projects and/or essays as their final exams, which mitigates cheating and provides a more robust connection to the course materials and applications."

Online Exam Resources

MTSU’s Stay The Course website offers instructions and resources for remote and online teaching:
https://mtsu.edu/stayoncourse/faculty/beyond-basics.php

Click here for a webinar from the International Center for Academic Integrity that provides tips for promoting academic integrity during assessments.

If you have questions regarding the D2L Quiz feature, email itdacad@mtsu.edu.
MTSU grad Cochran joins ITD as middleware systems administrator II

Joey Cochran started in July as a middleware systems administrator II with ITD.

Cochran, of Franklin, Tennessee, is an MTSU graduate, having earned a bachelor’s degree in Management of Information Systems.

Before joining ITD, his career most recently included working as an application developer for Kroger, software engineer for Incware, and application developer for DaVita. He also previously worked in IT for several organizations, including Vanderbilt University and Rutherford County Schools.

He began his IT career as an MTSU student worker in the Todd Library computer department. His responsibilities with ITD include systems supporting solutions, mostly middleware, APIs, and custom programming.

“I have always liked automating things, designing solutions with computers and software and seeing the light bulb go off for stakeholders, co-workers and having my own epiphanies,” he said. “I love challenges for finally arriving at that ‘aha’ moment and mapping the solution out and executing it.”

He has been married 25 years to Lucy Hilliard Cochran, and they have two children—son Trey, who is a photography student at MTSU, and daughter Mary, who is a sophomore at Siegel High.

“I play drums and percussion around middle Tennessee, just as fill-in or short-term in performances and recordings,” said Cochran, who has a music minor from MTSU. “I enjoy musical theater, science fiction, Audible books, and our yard fire pit.”

Jeremy “Tiko” Simmons Remembered

Jeremy “Tiko” Simmons, a 22-year employee of the ITD Telecommunications Department, is being remembered by colleagues for his positive outlook and supportive attitude.

Simmons died Oct. 16. He was 46.

He worked as a telecommunications specialist starting in March 1998. He took a brief absence to pursue other interests in July 2005, but returned in November 2005 in the same position.

Simmons provided support for the campus voice and cable TV systems, including programming, troubleshooting, and one-on-one training. He also assisted ITD’s Network Services with data port activations, as needed. Most notably, he played an integral role in the Avaya to Skype for Business (S4B) migration.

But it was his personality that made the most impact.

“It is the people you work with that make your workday rewarding, and for me and the rest of my work family, Jeremy brought nothing but positivity and a can-do attitude each day he punched the clock,” said Emily Harper, assistant director of Telecommunications. “He was the guy who always met you with a smile and within minutes you were guaranteed to hear his infectious laugh. He was the guy you could call on when you needed a favor, and without hesitation, he would drop what he was doing to run across campus to tackle the task at hand.”

Harper said in a variety of roles and responsibilities, Simmons “was the guy that never turned down the opportunity to learn new things. “But most of all, he was the guy that touched the lives of so many on this campus. His impact on those that knew him is immeasurable and he will be greatly missed,” Harper said.

A native of Murfreesboro, Simmons professed his faith in Christ at a young age at First Baptist Church in Murfreesboro. He was a wrestler and football player for Riverdale High School, graduating with the class of 1992.

Simmons graduated from MTSU with a bachelor’s degree in Health and Physical Education. He was a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Mighty Mu Zeta Chapter.

David Senior, assistant director in Telecommunications, hired Simmons and supervised him his entire career at MTSU.

“His first job on campus was with me,” said Senior. “He came in as a student worker, then after that he was hired full time as a technician. ... Jeremy and I were buddies—not just supervisor and employee. We barbecued together. He loved to cook, especially BBQ.”

See Simmons, page 10
Staff News

Growden comes to MTSU in position of systems analyst II

Eric Growden began working for ITD as a systems analyst II in July.

Growden, of Smyrna earned a bachelor’s degree in Management and Human Resources, and an associate degree in Information Technology, from Nashville State Community College.

“I’ve been working a lot with Banner Document Management and various other systems linked to it, like Dynamic Forms processing,” said Growden.

“Everyone is very willing to share their expertise and tolerate my questions about how everything works here. I really like understanding things from end to end, the whole picture, which must be trying sometimes.”

He worked five years in computer operations at Arnold Engineering Development Center at the Air Force base in Manchester, and 33 years at Square D/Schneider Electric in different IT roles.

“It is good to be out of the corporate world and work with mostly local team for an organization that has clear objectives to help the community,” he said.

Growden and his wife, Donna, have two grown children.

Growden is a big Nashville Predators hockey fan and enjoys video games, especially RPG, and “lots of typical geek stuff like Star Wars.”

Meek working as systems analyst II

Bill Meek began working for ITD in July as a Systems Analyst II.

Meek, originally from Evansville, Indiana, earned a bachelor’s degree in Management Information Systems from Appalachian State University.

“I have been in the IT business my entire career, mainly software development and support. The last 15 years were at a medical malpractice company in Brentwood,” he said. “Prior to that I worked at Ingram Content for seven years in LaVergne.”

His responsibilities at MTSU include supporting Banner, Degree Works, and other systems.

“I am excited to be learning new applications and systems unique to the higher education environment. I am also excited to be just one small part of a large operation dedicated to helping students pursue their education and achieve their goals,” he said.

He is also “very thankful to be working five minutes from home” after 15 years of commuting to Brentwood.

“I have not met most of my colleagues in person yet, nor gotten to know them on a more personal level. It’s a very strange way to start to a new position, but I’m sure things will return to normal in the near future,” he said.

Meek and his wife, Lisa, have been married 29 years. Their son, Hunter, is a recent graduate of University of Tennessee-Chattanooga, and daughter, Taylor, is a junior at MTSU and a member of the MTSU Stock Horse and Equestrian riding teams.

“We have lots of friends who work at MTSU, and everyone in my family has taken classes here at one time or another, so we have been part of the MTSU family for a long time. Now working here just makes it all the more special to us,” he said.

Meek enjoys golfing, hiking, snowboarding, and traveling.

Robinson is new systems administrator II for ITD

Brian Robinson began working for ITD in July as a systems administrator II.

Robinson, of Murfreesboro, earned his bachelor’s degree in Behavioral Science at MTSU and has worked in IT for nearly 15 years.

“My job responsibilities with ITD will primarily include Virtual Servers and Virtual Desktops as well as multiple other roles and responsibilities,” he said. “What I like most about my new position are the employees of ITD. So far I have felt welcomed and part of the team even though most of us are working from home.”

Robinson and his wife, Holly, have been together since high school. They have two children—Elijah, 14, and Brooke, 12.

“I enjoy all things space-related. My favorite book series is ‘The Dresden Files.’ I also have loved Legos since I was young,” he said.

“I am proud to be working at MTSU. I actually look forward to people asking me where I work! I am looking forward to learning in my new role as well as taking a few courses here at MTSU!”
Webb enjoys big data projects and great outdoors

Before “data science” was an IT trend in education and administration, Josh Webb enjoyed working with large amounts of information.

“I like working on back-end applications with data, seeing it come together by pulling from different tables,” said Webb, who joined ITD in October 2018 as a senior systems analyst. Webb has been primarily working with Banner, MTSU’s main information system for student records, admissions, financial aid, finance, human resources, and course scheduling.

“A lot of work has been data feeds for third-party projects, like data for Barnes & Noble’s new (campus) bookstore,” said Webb. “I also helped set up the Panopto for audiovisual recording in classrooms. I pulled the classroom dates and times from Banner—the teacher, the room number, etc.—for automatically recording.”

Another major project has been with Digital Measures, which allows faculty to file documents from their work history, including classes taught, articles published, research completed, CVs, and more into one location for easy access during the review process for tenure or promotions.

“It creates a work flow for them to send it to their department chair, dean, or provost,” he said.

Although he has been working at home lately like many MTSU employees, Webb said he is making a move to Murfreesboro soon to shorten his daily commute from Tullahoma—something he has done for years as a student and employee of the University. He earned a degree in Information Systems from MTSU in 2007.

From there, Webb worked for almost 10 years in the IT department at Arnold Air Force Base, where he got to handle missile and jet engine testing data.

“I spent about a year on the test side pulling data points for engine testing. There were so many data points per second; they wanted every bit of info they could get,” he said.

In 2017, he joined a software company that consulted for companies in the health care industry, helping design web portals for communication between doctors and patients.

Webb attends Wesley Heights United Methodist Church in Tullahoma. In his spare time, he enjoys playing disc golf and hiking at area parks, including Tims Ford, Radnor Lake, and the Fiery Gizzard trail in South Cumberland State Park. He enjoys playing with his dogs, Maya and Buddy, and has been doing more cooking during the coronavirus lockdown.

“I sort of miss my co-workers, I haven't seen them in forever,” he said.

Webb said he has thought about the long-term impact of COVID-19 on higher education.

“I could see a lot of students getting used to the online world and I don’t see (universities) taking it away. It is a great way to pull in more students overall even if less are on campus,” he said.
Closed captioning videos simple with classroom capture system

Beginning this fall term, MTSU began offering more fully online and hybrid courses than ever before.

Some of the main components of the classroom capture system are Panopto and Zoom, which record the class activity. These recordings are accessible through D2L Brightspace, MTSU’s learning management system. Students can watch the videos in lieu of traditional in-class instruction, for review of important concepts, and even as guides for lab activities or procedures.

However, some of us may be missing an important step: closed captioning your instructional videos.

Why provide captions for your videos? The most important reason is that ensuring your content is accessible to every student is the law. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing require that videos be closed captioned in order to have an equivalent viewing experience—to have equal access to your instructional content.

But more than that, captioning has been shown to benefit all students. National research conducted by Oregon State University on the use of closed captions and transcripts with videos found that 52% of the students reported that captions were helpful as a learning aid; these students reported improved comprehension when listening and reading together.

Lucky for us at MTSU, our video partner, Panopto, includes an automated captioning service.

This captioning service includes your Zoom recordings, since they are also stored in your Panopto video folder. It’s never been easier to caption your instructional videos.

To caption your videos, follow the instructions below:

1. In your Panopto Video account, select the video and choose “Edit.”

2. A new window will open. Click on “Captions” in the upper left menu.

3. Then click “Import Captions” and choose “Import Automatic Captions” from the drop-down menu.

4. Your auto-generated captions should populate immediately. On this page, you can review and edit your captions.

5. Once reviewed, click the “Apply” button in the top right corner to save and apply the captions.

Remember, closed captions can be beneficial for all students. If you have questions or need assistance, call 615-904-8189 or email itdacad@mtsu.edu.

Cheri Wolfe is ITD instructional technology specialist—accessibility.
Microsoft Teams now active on campus, training available

With the completion of the email migration to Microsoft Office 365, all faculty, students, and staff have also been enabled for Microsoft Teams. Microsoft Teams is the chat-based workspace in Microsoft 365 that makes it easy to have conversations, host meetings, share files and collaborate on documents, and get work done with teams across the organization. Teams lets you work in a natural, conversational way—with everything you need in one place—available anytime, on any device.

ITD has engaged with Microsoft to provide several training sessions on Microsoft Teams. Review the list of workshops and sign up for those that are of interest to you. These 100 and 200 level sessions will be offered from now through December, and you can register for them at mtsu.edu/workshops (see direct links below). Additional training is planned for February 2021.

Microsoft Teams - Getting Started (Level 100)
Microsoft Teams - Modern Meetings (Level 100)
Microsoft Teams - Enriched Collaboration; Chat, Posts & Meetings (Level 200)

Each link will direct you to the ITD Workshops page with a list of the sessions available. Selecting a session will provide more details on the training and allow you to register.

Everyone’s time is at a premium these days, so we will be recording and uploading these sessions to the ITD Microsoft 365 Workshops channel a day after the webinar. That said, we strongly encourage you to attend as many live (virtual) sessions as you can, so you can engage with the trainer and ask questions.

Getting Started
If the Microsoft Teams software is not already available on your computer, please ask your departmental IT support staff or contact the ITD Help Desk at help@mtsu.edu or 615-898-5345 for assistance.

Please also feel free to explore Teams. In Teams, you will see a Go Teams! icon on the Navigation panel for an interactive Q&A on our Teams environment.

Information is also available at the MTSU Teams portal https://www.mtsu.edu/Teams.

Tech Tips & Tricks: Private Address improvement causes issues

Sometimes an “improvement” has some unintended negative consequences.

Take the Apple IOS 14 Private Address upgrade for example. Apple updated its mobile operating system in mid-September with IOS 14. It made several cosmetic and user interface changes and added a number of new features.

One feature that is impacting MTSU students, staff, and faculty is Private Address.

When Private Address is turned on, your iPhone or iPad will appear to the University network as a new device every 24 hours, or whenever you restart the Apple product. This leads to people registering the device repeatedly. Making it worse—MTSU allows the registration of only six devices under most circumstances.

Running out of registrations can keep you from getting that phone or laptop on when you need it. Should you need to delete registrations, you will need to contact the ITD Help Desk. They can purge them all, forcing you to re-register. It is an annoyance you can avoid by turning off Private browsing.

Private Address is not a bad feature, it is just not compatible with MTSU’s security. It does make it harder for you to be tracked by MAC address in public areas. Turning it off for the University wireless network will not open you up to security issues in other locations because Private Address will need to be turned off at any new Wi-Fi connection.

What this means for you is that you can turn it off for MTSU, but need not worry about doing so at your local coffee shop. To turn off this feature:

- Go to Settings>Wi-Fi> and click on the far left of the screen where you see the lowercase letter I in a circle.
- On the next screen scroll down until you see Private Address.
- Drag the slider beside Private Address to the left, turning it off.
- When prompted, rejoin the network.

If you have already registered the device, it will begin working again automatically and will not attempt to register it again every time.

As always if you have problems, contact the ITD Help Desk at 615-898-5345.
demonstrate a particular skill achievement across several, or all, course activities. Examples include excellent demonstrated skills in information literacy, academic writing, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, or communication.

- **Behavioral awards** can be used to incentivize students to engage in behaviors that positively impact their learning. Examples include completing optional self-assessments, reading assignment feedback, attending virtual or in-person office hours, or attending an outside-the-classroom tutoring session or workshop.

- **Community awards** recognize learners’ contributions to building and sustaining the online community. Examples might include posting a personal introduction or going above and beyond expectations by helping classmates.

- **Engagement awards** are a way for instructors to recognize students for smaller achievements. These awards help instructors demonstrate their teaching presence because they show students that the instructor is engaged and paying attention to the student’s progress and contributions. These awards might be given to the first student who responds to the weekly discussion, a student who posts more than the required number of discussion responses to classmates, or a student who shows significant improvement.

The D2L awards tool makes it really easy for instructors to create and award course digital badges, Bryant said.

“There are several engagement-type awards preloaded in D2L that an instructor can add to their course, but it is also possible to create new awards from scratch,” she said.

“In the Awards tool, the instructor selects the ‘add award to course option,’ which opens the settings page for the new award. Instructors then name the award and add a brief description to explain to students which accomplishment the award represents. The instructor can select an icon for the award from D2L’s icon library, or they can upload an icon of their own.”

**Selecting recipients and issuing awards**

D2L Awards can be allocated manually or automatically by creating release conditions. To give awards manually, the instructor navigates to the Awards tool to see their list of students. They can then select a box beside the student’s name, and click the Issue button, Bryant said. The pop-up window will present a dropdown menu in which the instructor can select the award they would like to issue. Then they will enter a brief description of the reason the student is earning the award. The award will then appear in the student’s award list.

The instructor can also issue an award to multiple students at once using this process.

“This method works best for engagement, community, and behavioral awards that may not be associated with a graded assignment or activity,” Bryant said.

If instructors would like to automatically distribute awards, they can establish release conditions in the award properties. The system will not issue the award to a student unless they have met the conditions the instructor specifies.

“For example, if I only want to issue the Exemplary Discussion Award to students who earned an exemplary score on the discussion grading rubric, I can create a release condition tied to the rubric score. The award will then only be issued to students who earned the exemplary score. This method works best for completion, activity, and competency awards that are connected to graded activities in the course,” Bryant said.

D2L awards are specific to the course in which they were created. In the course, awards provide students an easy way to see their achievements outside the gradebook. Awards also provide an element of “gamification” for students who need external motivation. Awards can help learners feel a sense of satisfaction and pride when accomplishing a goal or task.

Bryant said D2L awards primarily used in the online course in which they are earned; however, students may also include their awards in their D2L ePortfolio, which can be shared with anyone outside the course.

“While completion and behavior awards may not be meaningful outside the classroom, awards for competencies such as information literacy or multimedia communication may be more meaningful to outside audiences,” she said.

The awards tool also introduces students to digital badging, which is used by many organizations to represent competencies, achievements, or memberships.

There are now credentialing organizations like **Credly** and **Accredible**, that offer evidence-based badges that people can showcase on their social media or professional networking platforms. Students may encounter these in their careers.
Senior said Simmons was a “happy guy and always ready to tackle any situation on campus.”

“We were brothers, we shared everything. We would eat lunch together and had so much fun, laughing and keeping this campus rolling and people happy,” Senior said. “It’s been really hard. I lost a friend, we were family.”

Simmons was preceded in death by his father Joseph Allen “Sim” Simmons. He is survived by three children, Kerry Dontel Simmons, Jaylan Demarco Simmons and Jade Samaia Simmons; a grandson, Zion Dontel Simmons; and his mother, Melbra Simmons, who works at MTSU.

Eric Miller, ITD telecommunications tech 3, worked with Simmons for 15 years, and said they “had very thorough and thoughtful discussions about a myriad of topics: sports, politics, pop culture, history.”

“But perhaps our most animated discussions revolved around food. Which spot had the best wings? Which restaurant offered the best prices? Which smokehouse had the best BBQ?” Miller said. “The man was passionate about his BBQ. The talks would be wide-ranging and all-encompassing.”

Simmons would share his opinion on all aspects of barbecue, from the right temperature, sauce, grill, temperature and wood.

“He was a staunch low-and-slow kinda guy,” Miller said of Simmons' favored BBQ style. “I’m not sure he ever met a vinegar-based sauce he didn’t like.”

Miller said two other topics Simmons was passionate about were fishing and auto-detailing.

“He'd come in on a Monday, excited about his new, favorite fishing spot. I swear the guy had ‘new, favorite fishing spots’ scattered all across Rutherford County,” Miller said, sharing a story Simmons told about having problems with a boat motor and attempting to fix it by spraying cleaner into the carburetor.

“The motor started but began to ooze, bubble, spurt, and whine . . . What he thought was carb cleaner was actually airplane paint remover! I've never laughed so hard at a story in my life.”

Miller joked that friends knew Jeremy had a good weekend “when he pulled up into the parking lot with his truck sparkling in the sun.

“I swear a man could shave himself in the reflection,” Miller said.

But Simmons was most proud of his family.

“He'd talk about how Jaylan was doing at football, how Kerry was managing his job and college courses, and how Jade was managing high school,” Miller said. “He'd beam when he talked about his grandson. He was certainly a proud grandad and the ‘saltiness’ in his beard, which I'm sure was exacerbated by duties associated with being a grandad, was a badge worn with love, honor, and distinction.”

And while Simmons was known for his smile and humor, “he was a professional to the core and strive[d] to ensure his end users were taken care of.”

“Jeremy meant so much to so many. Several people reached out to me upon hearing of his passing with remarks of how fun he was to be around and how his smile and attitude made their bad day better. Throughout our 15 years together, he taught me a lot about being a professional, a father, and a friend and those lessons learned will stick with me forever.”

Eric Miller

---

**Cloud Voicemail upgrade brings changes for MS Office 365 email users**

Microsoft, our Skype for Business and Microsoft 365 voicemail provider, has upgraded Cloud Voicemail to the latest release. Due to this upgrade, some functionality has changed for users that have had their email migrated to the cloud (Office 365).

Find detailed voicemail instructions at: mtsu.edu/itdtele/PDFs/365_Cloud_Voicemail.pdf

Some of the highlights include:

- The voicemail menu now only has two options: Listen to Voicemail or Record Personal Greeting (Personal & Out of Office)
- You no longer need a PIN number to access voicemail.
- The message light on your phone may either be stuck on or off.
- You will receive a “missed call” email if a caller is transferred to your voice mail and doesn’t leave a message.

If you have a department or generic account that you need access to, email telecom@mtsu.edu with the extension and associated email account, for additional instructions.