**Use D2L process to avoid Zoom purge**

Due to increased distance learning requirements, many faculty members here at MTSU are using Zoom to host class meetings or record lectures.

Recording and posting those sessions also provides a great way for students to view missed instruction, review for an exam, or find information on an assignment. However, Zoom cloud storage, which was always more than adequate in the past, does not have the capacity to handle the number and length of Zoom sessions which are now the norm.

Because of this, Zoom cloud recordings are deleted from your Zoom account after 30 days.

This does not mean that you can’t continue to use those recordings; our Zoom instance is fully integrated with both our Desire2Learn (D2L) learning manage-
"Agents" can keep you connected in distance learning

For educators who feel the new distance learning era has made them too distant from students, how about some help from virtual teaching assistants?

The LT&ITC is helping train faculty members to use Desire2Learn (D2L) Intelligent Agents and Replacement Strings as a strategy for demonstrating presence and building a community of learning through directed and personalized course communication.”

“While distance learning has extended access to higher education for students who cannot take courses on the main campus, the asynchronous online environment can be very isolating,” said Layne Bryant, assessment coordinator and resource Manager for University College.

“It is difficult for learners to see their instructor or other students as three-dimensional people. Studies have shown a relationship between the instructor’s visible teaching and social presence in the online environment and student retention and satisfaction in online courses . . . . I think intelligent agents are useful because they enable the instructor to demonstrate their presence without adding significantly to their workload.”

Bryant recently held a workshop that focused on how to:

- identify the three components of a Community of Inquiry
- find opportunities for demonstrating presence in your courses
- use replacement strings in multiple D2L course tools
- determine where to use intelligent agents in your courses

A Community of Inquiry (CoI) is described as “a group of individuals who collaboratively engage in purposeful critical discourse and reflection to construct personal meaning and confirm mutual understanding.”

Elements of CoI can include setting climate and expectations, directing and redirecting learning, demonstrating a social presence, and engaging with learners.

Replacement strings in D2L can be used in the course homepage, D2L email, course content and the intelligent agents. For example, an intelligent agent can be used to automatically send a “Welcome to class” email to students after they have accessed the course on D2L for the first time. It prompts the student to review the first Weekly Update discussion item and sign up for Remind updates.

Later, if a student does not post an original discussion question before the deadline, the intelligent agent sends an email reminder that the discussion is open and offers some tips for participation.

Likewise, if a student does not make a D2L Dropbox submission for a module assignment, the (agent) can send a reminder of the deadline and whether or not there is any penalty for late submissions.

See Special Agents, page 4
Experience is best teacher: A year of distance-learning lessons

Someone once said, "Experience is the best teacher."

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the MTSU community to quickly do its homework on how best to offer digital pedagogy and online testing options. A year later, the University community has learned more about what works.

Plans are being made for a return to primarily in-person instruction by fall 2021. But as we hit the home stretch for this challenging academic year, remember that ITD has amassed a treasure trove of advice and resources for engaging online teaching and exams.

Find these and more at mtsu.edu/stayoncourse/faculty/index.php.

Jennifer Ponder, instructional technology specialist and designer for the Faculty Instructional Technology Center (FITC), offered the following ideas for faculty members preparing for spring 2021 final exams, whether traditional in-person or the new online variety:

Ideas for designing assessments

► Have clear, defined, and limited learning outcomes.
Both the assessor (usually the instructor) and the assessed (usually the student) should know exactly what will be evaluated on assessments. Whether the assessment is a multiple-choice exam or a semester-long project, the instructor and student should know the scope of information for which proficiency should be demonstrated.

The learning outcomes should be defined prior to content delivery so that students will know what to learn. For example, in an American Literature course, if the instructor told students to “learn about authors and their works from the Colonial period,” this is not clear, defined, or limited and could lead to a misunderstanding on what content proficiency is expected.

However, if the learning outcome directed students to “study the five female Colonial authors listed on the syllabus by reading their published works, learning unique attributes of each author’s writing style, and understand how the time period uniquely affected their writings,” this could more clearly define the expectations of what students should learn for the students and the instructor. This will also help instructors to fairly assess if the students have acquired and understood this specific information.

Study guides have received a bad reputation, often rightfully so, as a list of questions and answers to be memorized.

However, if clear, defined, and limited learning outcomes are reiterated on a study guide, this likely helps the students focus on important and relevant information.

► Use a grading rubric. This is another way to have clear, defined, and limited expectations for assessments. Students will know what to expect, and instructors will have a guide that can lead to more objective assessing.

Desire2Learn (D2L) offers options for creating rubrics and linking them to assignments and the Dropbox. View an archived presentation on this and numerous other ideas for active, engaged learning and testing at mtsu.edu/stayoncourse/faculty/presentations.php.

► Avoid using only multi-guess tests for high-stakes assessments. Designing multiple-choice tests well is very difficult. While helpful in measuring students’ knowledge and mastery of facts and concepts, these types of assessments often only measure base-level memorization.

Also, it’s easy for students to be tempted into dishonesty on these types of tests. (Persistent myths about multiple-choice tests often cause even the best students to appear as though they aren’t proficient. Ever heard any of these? “Always choose C if you don’t know.” “Too long to be wrong.” “All of the above is always right.”)

Online Proctoring

Because of the limitations of many online proctoring systems, faculty have come up with innovative ways to administer assessments.

Several have collaborated with students and their colleagues to create huge test pools to ensure that no student is taking the same test as another.

Some are using Zoom or Microsoft Teams to proctor the tests themselves. Some faculty have even moved completely away from traditional multiple-choice tests that can be easily compromised and are testing out semester long projects for the basis of determining the final grade.

One type of these assignments that I found particularly interesting was when a faculty member assigned each student a question/prompt, and the student had to submit a three-minute video explaining his or her response, using primary and secondary source material.

For more ideas, contact the FITC at 615-904-8191 or itdacad@mtsu.edu.
Rubrik adds 120TB of space

MTSU ITD’s data backup capabilities were recently upgraded with the addition of a third Rubrik appliance.

This addition adds 120 terabytes of available space to the backup system, helping Enterprise Server Services to keep pace with the ever-growing data requirements of the University.

Rubrik is an appliance-based backup solution for virtualized and physical environments. It is designed to be “vendor-agnostic,” which translates to ease of backup for all platforms used at MTSU, be they virtual (regardless of host), physical, or cloud-based.

Rubrik appliances use data deduplication (a process that eliminates redundant copies of data) to reduce storage overhead.

Alexander, continued from page 1

"I have made so many friends who have helped me, and I certainly hope I have helped them too," she said. "Working here has taught me to appreciate people and love people.”

She thanked the Education Department and M.A. Higgs, associate professor in University Studies, for the nomination.

Alexander has a daughter, Kristal, and a son, Chris, and a grandson, C.J.

The Unity Celebration is held each year in connection with Black History Month. Honorees must be 60 or older, have resided in the Middle Tennessee area for 25 years or more and have made outstanding contributions to his or her community.

This year’s event can be viewed at http://facebook.com/mtsublueraiders and http://youtube.com/mtsunews.
Copeland's goal has been improving classroom A/V tech

Nine years ago, as an undergraduate student, James Copeland used a videoconferencing program called Zoom for study sessions with classmates.

A few years later, as a grad student, he used the program to review recorded classroom lectures.

Little did Copeland know at the time that he was getting a preview of a major tech tool that MTSU faculty, staff, and students would learn to use in the era of distance learning brought about by COVID-19.

“I started using Zoom in 2012 while in undergrad for study sessions with other students. In grad school, a lot of my professors used Zoom for class,” Copeland said. “It really helped out when we had the ability to record lectures and I could go back and review them.”

Copeland, ITD assistant director of Classroom Technology and senior audiovisual engineer, said a silver lining of the pandemic is how it forced more students, and faculty, to explore the benefits of such technology that they might have previously avoided due to uncertainty.

“Though it has been difficult, it has forced people to use technology more, and I think those are skills everyone can harness and use for the rest of their life. . . . Anything you’ve never seen or used before is intimidating and scary, but a lot of times the technology available out there is a lot easier to use than you think it is. It’s just a matter of taking the time to learn it.”

Meanwhile, improving technology available for faculty in the classroom has been Copeland’s goal since he joined ITD in November 2018. Originally from Paris, Tennessee, Copeland served seven years in the Marine Corps and later in the Marine Corps Reserves.

While in the Reserves he earned a bachelor’s degree in University Studies, with a concentration in Health Sciences, from the University of Tennessee—Martin. After two years off, he returned to UTM to earn an M.B.A., graduating in December 2018 just after starting at MTSU.

In his first few years at MTSU, his main focus was assessing current classroom technology and creating a plan to improve its functionality and quality.

Copeland, ITD assistant director of Classroom Technology and senior audiovisual engineer, has been working on improving audiovisual capabilities in classrooms since 2018.

“We did a campus-wide assessment and found that 71% of classrooms were using older analog tech and cabling,” he said. That number has been reduced to 50% currently, he said. Another improvement was to upgrade the campus standard for touch panel control systems in the classroom from AMX to Extron. That alone has made a major difference in classroom downtime.

All of this work put the University in a better position in spring 2020 when there was an immediate requirement to offer distance learning options through synchronous, asynchronous, and hybrid classes. After a period of quarantine, Copeland and his staff went to work.

“We had to do a massive amount of inventory of classrooms to find out how were going to create a design for what was coming—the classroom recording system,” he said. “So we did not have a consistent standard of equipment across campus and a lot of times it was due to equipment being so old. We would have equipment from 20 years ago in one classroom, then in another classroom we had the next generation of tech—every version of their products on campus.”

Because the new classroom recording system is digital, that meant converting all analog to digital so class sessions could be recorded.

By the start of the Fall 2020 semester, every classroom
When thinking accessibility, don't forget basics in MS Word

Microsoft Word is commonly used by faculty to share content, assignments, and other information online. When used correctly, Microsoft Word is accessible—documents can easily be read by assistive technologies, and students with learning differences can participate fully online.

To ensure that your online course documents can be read by screen readers or other assistive devices, keep the following in mind:

**Headings**

A well-organized document benefits all readers; using the Heading feature in Word adds another layer of accessibility for students with vision impairments. The Heading tool contains tags that differentiate the heading text from other text on the page. This allows screen reader and Braille users to navigate the topics on a page.

Making text larger, bold, or even emphasizing with text color does not make it a heading.

In order to convert text to a heading in Microsoft Word, you must use the built-in Heading styles like Heading 1 and Heading 2, available from your home screen. Use the headings to outline your document; once you have designed your heading using the tool, you may still choose to change the font or color—this will not affect your heading.

**Alternate Text**

Screen readers cannot read pictures and images, so in order for a visually-impaired student to understand what the image conveys, we use alternate text—Alt Text. You can add Alt Text to any image in Microsoft Word by clicking on the image. Most versions of Word allow you to right-click on the image to add Alt Text, but you can also add Alt Text from your Picture Format tab. The goal is to provide a description of what the image conveys, or to mark it as decorative.

**Lists**

Lists should be created using Word’s built-in tools for numbered or bulleted lists. Without these tools, a list is not really a list—it’s just several incomplete sentences. This can make the content more difficult for screen reader users to fully understand.

**Hyperlinks**

Screen readers have the ability to collect information from content pages, including curating a list of links in a document. This is only helpful if the links convey relevant information about the link destination. Make your links relevant by describing them. (Example at right):

Adding meaningful hyperlinks in Word is simple; highlight your text, right click, and select Hyperlink.

**The Accessibility Checker**

Microsoft products have a built-in accessibility checker that tests the overall accessibility of the document. The checker provides inspection results and suggestions on how to repair any issues.

Remember, making your documents accessible benefits all students. If you need additional information or support, please contact the Faculty Instructional Technology Center at itdacad@mtsu.edu or 615-904-8189.
Equipment loans, LinkedIn Learning not just for students

Last year, in response to the increased demand for distance learning due to COVID-19, ITD instituted an equipment checkout program.

The program is intended to provide a computer and/or a hot spot (mobile internet connection) to people who need reliable access. The service is free, and loans can last from as long as a semester to as short as a week or two.

Accessing the program is easy. Go to mtsu.edu/itd, click on Request Equipment, and fill out the online form. Once the online form is received, ITD Help Desk staff members find and set aside the requested equipment and the client is notified by email or phone.

Depending on the time of the year there can be a variety of computers available, ranging from MacBook Airs to Dell Precisions to HP Chromebooks. If you don’t see what you need, you can use the notes option to make a request and you will be contacted when one is returned.

The hot spots ITD provides are T-Mobile Alcatel products. Once charged up, these devices can provide internet access anywhere T-Mobile service is available. They are capable of providing internet access for up to 15 devices and unlimited data to those who have no internet access or unreliable access.

Initially designed to support students, the equipment loan program was expanded to allow staff or faculty members to take advantage of it as well.

LinkedIn Learning

MTSU students, faculty, and staff also have access to a resource that can help them in their personal or professional skills development—the online training video library LinkedIn Learning, formerly known as Lynda.com.

It offers thousands of tutorials on writing, publishing, graphic design, animation, and audio/video programs; career fields like marketing, filmmaking, game creation, IT security, and web design; and even job skills such as time management and project coordination.

So whether for classroom assignments or personal and professional development, you can learn with LinkedIn Learning.

Access LinkedIn Learning with your MTSU account

1. **Log in to the access portal** at: [https://portal.office.com/myapps](https://portal.office.com/myapps). Once the page loads, you will see the Office 365 sign-in page.

2. **Faculty/Staff:** Under “Work / School Microsoft Account” credentials enter your FSA username@mtsu.edu. (For example, if you sign in to your work computer with the FSA username jjones, then you would enter jjones@mtsu.edu.) Then type in your FSA password. **Students:** Under “Work / School Microsoft Account” credentials enter your MTMail username@mtmail.mtsu.edu. Then type in your MTMail password.

3. **Click the Sign-in button.** If you are prompted to choose a Work, School, or Personal account, then please choose “Work or School.”

4. **Click on the LinkedIn Learning tile.** If you do not see it, click on the tiles icon in the upper left hand corner, click on “All apps” and click on LinkedIn Learning under “Admin selected apps.”

    The first time you sign in to your account, you will be asked if you wish to connect your LinkedIn Learning account to your LinkedIn account or continue without connecting your LinkedIn account.

We recommend you continue without connecting your LinkedIn account and then do it later if you wish to have personalized course suggestions.

LinkedIn Learning also has an app. Check in the Apple Store or the Google Play store to download the app.

And as always, if you need help with this or anything else tech-related, contact the ITD Help Desk at 615-898-5345 or by email at help@mtsu.edu.
**Tax refund scam targets emails of university staff and students**

A recent IRS news release warned of an impersonation email scam that primarily targets students and staff members of higher educational institutions.

The emails display the IRS logo and use various subject lines such as "Tax Refund Payment" or "Recalculation of your tax refund payment" and ask the recipient to click a link and submit a form to claim a refund.

The phishing website requests that taxpayers provide personal information: Social Security number, first name, last name, date of birth, prior year annual gross income (AGI), driver's license number, current address with ZIP code, and electronic filing PIN.

The IRS will never contact taxpayers about their tax documents or refunds through email or text messages. Therefore, you should never click on any links, respond to any emails or text messages, or share your personal information if asked.


If you receive this or any suspicious emails, forward them to [abuse@mtsu.edu](mailto:abuse@mtsu.edu) and then delete them.

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**Zoom Purge, continued from page 1**

If you set up your Zoom recordings from within your D2L course and chose “Record to the Cloud,” those class recordings automatically save to both the Zoom cloud repository (which expires in 30 days) and also the Panopto video repository in your D2L course—the Videos tab.

Those videos remain for the full term, and for several months after the semester ends.

If you are hosting Zoom class sessions from outside of D2L, those Zoom Cloud videos may still be saved; faculty can go to the Zoom repository and download those videos and then upload them to their Panopto video course folder for the corresponding class.

In addition, videos may be saved and used from one term to the next; for instructions, please contact the Faculty Instructional Technology Center at [itdacad@mtsu.edu](mailto:itdacad@mtsu.edu) or 615-904-8189.

If you choose to save and use videos multiple times, your videos must be closed captioned. Panopto provides instructions at [https://support.panopto.com/s/article/ASR-Generated-Captions](https://support.panopto.com/s/article/ASR-Generated-Captions)

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**Add CC to Panopto videos**

If you choose to save and use videos multiple times, your videos must be closed captioned. Panopto provides instructions for adding auto-generated captions to your videos.

If you aren’t sure how your Zoom videos are saved, just click on the Videos tab in one of your D2L courses; if you see your Zoom recordings for that course, then you have them saved correctly.

If not, you’ll need to save those recordings that you want to keep. When you’ve finished, be sure to delete any Zoom recordings that you don’t need—we can use the space!
on campus was equipped with a new audiovisual system to automatically record teaching sessions for access by students. Copeland and his staff led the effort to install the systems in 418 rooms in 42 buildings on campus. They feature a 10X zoom camera that is set to automatically focus on a whiteboard in each room.

Recordings begin at the designated start time of a class and end when the class ends.

Panopto recordings are automatically uploaded to cloud storage to be accessed through Desire2Learn (D2L) by students in online, remote, or hybrid classes or by those in traditional classes who miss a class or would like to review a lecture.

“I think because we were able to get it done so quickly, we are in better shape for our students as far as being happy with their education here,” Copeland said.

Copeland described getting classrooms ready for the recording system as a “race against time on multiple fronts.” “The whole country was trying to buy the same thing, and they would say, ‘We can hold it for you for five days, but after that it is gone,’” he said.

Copeland praised ITD’s decision to implement the classroom recording project. “That is something I’m very proud that we spent our money on,” Copeland said. “Not just that it helped us during this time period, but it is something that will stay in our classrooms for several years. The faculty and students will benefit from for a long time. I do remember back to the time I was student and had the benefit of classroom capture, so it’s kind of personal to me to know they are going to have that and have more successful education.”

He added, “What I’m most proud of are my employees and how they worked extra hours and did all kinds of stuff they had never done before with the classroom recording system, and learned it very quickly. It was a very stressful time for us, but they stuck with it.”

Copeland and his wife, Lexie, have a 6-year-old son, Lucas, and a 4-year-old daughter, Lily. The children were being home-schooled even before the pandemic and are also involved in gymnastics. The family attends New Vision Church in Murfreesboro and enjoy outdoor activities.

He also enjoys SCUBA diving and teaches a course on it.

**STA is great opportunity for students**

Do you know any students with an interest in IT who are looking for on-campus work?

The Student Technology Assistant (STA) program offers the opportunity to earn money and gain experience providing front-line tech assistance to computer lab and Help Desk users.

It consists of online training at three levels: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced.

To work during a semester, an STA must be enrolled as a full-time student in the fall and spring semesters. If a student is enrolled full time in the fall, he or she may work during the summer months without taking a summer class. (Exceptions may be made for graduating seniors.)

For info or to apply visit [mtsu.edu/sta/](http://mtsu.edu/sta/).

Three ITD employees worked together to earn designation as Certified Technology Specialists-Design. They are (l-r) James Copeland, assistant director for Classroom Technology, and Aaron Dill and Jonathan Moore, classroom audiovisual technicians. They studied as a group throughout the Fall 2020 semester to prepare for the CTS-D Exam. This certification, along with the CTS and CTS-I, were developed by AVIXA, the trade association for the professional audiovisual and information communications industries, to provide standardization in the A/V industry. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) governs the certification, which has been obtained by less than 1,000 people worldwide including about 50 who work for universities.