Summer is a time of traditional activities such as swimming, family vacations, barbecues, and … doing classroom technology inventory.

That last one is a tradition of ITD’s Client Services Classroom Technology team, as staffers fan out to the University’s 423 rooms in 42 buildings to see if instructional technology equipment is accounted for, in working order, or in need of an upgrade or replacement.

Now, the staff is making the equipment check more high-tech and less time-consuming by using 360-degree 3D photography, said Dustin Smith, classroom audiovisual technician.

“It is part of the design process. We can take 3D pictures of a room, so that when we’re designing a new AV system, we can actually see the room, and then we’re using a laser measure to measure the width, height, and depth,” said Smith.

Gamble's online personal finance class paid huge dividends in COVID pandemic

When Economics and Finance Professor Keith Gamble developed a new online Personal Financial Planning class three years ago, he knew students needed it to help them make better money decisions.

But what he didn’t realize was just how valuable an investment it would become in their academic and personal lives during the COVID-19 crisis of 2020-21.

Gamble was awarded the 2021 Outstanding Achievement in Instructional Technology Award for FIN 2010 Personal Financial Planning, which he developed in 2018 in partnership with the Faculty Instructional Technology Center (FITC)/Learning, Teaching, and Innovative Technologies (LT&ITC) Instructional Design Team.

The course was already proving very popular even before all classes had to be taught in distance-learning formats starting in spring 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. At that point it proved an invaluable, ready-made asynchronous online course option and source of advice, he said.

“Now in hindsight, the online course was well timed, wasn’t it? For two reasons—one for teaching, but also for dealing with what happened during the pandemic,” Gamble said.

Suddenly, students needed personal financial advice even more due to the impact of quarantines and shutdowns.
Tech Tips & Tricks: Summer is busy time for fishing & phishing

For many people, one of the joys of summer is fishing, but for campus IT professionals, one of the hazards is phishing. Scammers and hackers are always looking for an edge. One way to exploit us is by targeting institutions during the summer when defenses may be down. During the summer we are often more distracted and working with fewer staff. We also are in a hurry to do other things, so we don’t always read an email as closely and are more likely to click on things we shouldn’t.

However, we don’t have to be victims. With a little knowledge and a critical eye, you can keep yourself safe from scam emails.

**Double check sender’s address**

When you get an email, double-check the sender’s address. Scammers know you are more likely to open an email from someone or someplace you know or trust. Study the address in the “From” line. Scammers will often use an email address that is close to the real thing. For instance, when you click on the “From” line you may see strange things like Micro-softsupport.com or F3DEx@collections.org. Watching for misspellings can save you a lot of trouble.

**Attachments and time**

Emails that come to you at unusual times—1 a.m. for instance—or have a subject line that does not appear relevant should be considered suspect. They should be doubly suspect if you are part of a group email and only CC’ed with it. If the email has an attachment, especially an executable one, you should take more precautions before moving forward.

**Odd or broken English**

Many scam emails come from non-English-speaking countries. If the language used is awkward or incorrect, this can be a sign of a scam.

**If it seems too good to be true...**

We all should be cautious of any email that promises money or an opportunity that is too good to be true. Emails like this often follow up with requests for you to verify your identity by providing details such as your bank account information. If you really think you have had a windfall, check the website/service that is sending the email. Don’t click on any links in the email. Speaking of email links . . .

**Be cautious of any links**

If you do click on a link in an email and it directs you to a completely different service, it is probably fake. When in doubt, don’t click on links. Instead right-click on the link, copy the address, and put it in a separate search box.

**Never provide confidential info**

A reputable business will not ask for confidential information in an email. If you think they actually have, contact the business’s customer service line before answering any questions.

**Use the Proofpoint process**

Proofpoint is an advanced email filter designed to protect University email from spam, phishing, and other malicious email. Under the quarantine process, bulk email will no longer deliver to users’ inboxes. These messages will appear in the daily user digest, giving users the ability to Release the message, Allow the Sender, or Block the Sender. Take advantage of the Allow Sender and Block Sender options to make sure the email you expect will appear in your Inbox.

Find more info at [mtsu.edu/security/prooﬁpoint-faq.php](http://mtsu.edu/security/prooﬁpoint-faq.php).

Ultimately, common sense will sort out most emails. You also can forward suspicious emails (unopened) to [abuse@mtsu.edu](mailto:abuse@mtsu.edu) or contact the ITD Help Desk at [help@mtsu.edu](mailto:help@mtsu.edu).
Gamble, continued from page 1

“Students said, ‘My work situation totally changed because the restaurant I was a waiter for shut down and then I had to figure out how to pay my bills and I started doing DoorDash deliveries,’” he said. “There were all of these interesting experiences where students had to deal with personal finance decisions and had to adjust.”

With some of the award funds, Gamble wants to include such stories in the course.

“I want to get more student voices and what they have learned from personal financial planning, their personal experience,” Gamble said. “This was something I did during the pandemic, because I knew students in the class were going through a lot of hardships and new things. So, one of the bonus opportunities I gave students last year is I asked them, ‘How has the pandemic changed your financial experience?’

“There’s a lot of educational value from getting students sharing their stories—there’s a power to storytelling,”

While MTSU is moving instruction primarily back to the classroom, Gamble wants to continue to offer the online resources as part of a class utilizing all three forms of instruction in a concept called HyFlex.

“With the pandemic, I saw an opportunity to try something new and make a flexibly designed class,” Gamble said. “So, starting this past fall, I was in the classroom with mask-wearing and social distancing, and also had a Zoom class going simultaneously with the in-person, classroom experience. And then, in the background for every student is the full online course as well. So, this was my version of HyFlex study—three options.

“What’s different about my class now is its flexibility for students to choose and change week-to-week, class-to-class, the mode that they like to experience.”

That is what made the timing of the original online FIN 2010 course three years ago perfect. Gamble was one of the first to work with the FITC Design Team, made up of a faculty member and instructional professionals who collaborate to create an online course more sophisticated than one of them could build by themselves.

The goal was to provide “the best aspects of an on-ground course in the online environment in D2L,” he wrote in his original application. While he was already bringing in guest lecturers to make presentations on certain topics, the course features 15 professionally recorded interviews with these experts that are accessible any time.

It offers several student-to-student and student-to-instructor interactions through discussion boards, including one with a feature that allows them to ask questions anonymously. They also created dozens of short (5 minutes average) instructional videos on specific core topics, with a goal of “being visually interesting and engaging.”

Gamble and the team also found an open-source textbook and used selected chapters in an online textbook that is completely free and fully accessible to students. These were made interactive by allowing students to test their understanding even before they attempt the graded homework and quizzes.

“On concept and numeric checks, students mouse over or click on their chosen answer and get instant feedback. We also built interactive flash cards within html files on D2L to help students learn the many required terms in personal financial planning,” Gamble wrote.

They included links to free online financial and scientific calculators, as well as an online Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Gamble has come to appreciate D2L Quizzes, which give instant reports on students’ success.

“I can quickly see question-by-question statistics, which allows me to identify the problem areas and address those directly in the classroom. My students love when I will work the most challenging (most missed) quiz questions with them in class. They know that these questions may appear again on the comprehensive exam, and they want to be ready if they see it again when the stakes are higher,” he wrote.

Gamble said the effectiveness of the online course was evaluated by testing students on financial literacy questions used in surveys. At the start of the course, students answered 75% of the questions correctly, but by the end they were answering 93% of them correctly.

As the result, enrollment grew from about 25 students a term when offered only in the classroom to 150 students in the new online or web-assisted sections of FIN 2010 and the cross-listed ECON 2110. And that was pre-pandemic.

In the post-COVID economic and employment environment, these skills are even more important. In the course, students learn how to create budgets based on current and projected income extended over their projected career paths.

“It’s been working extremely well and serving students very well,” Gamble said. “I like that the University will be back in the classroom, but I hope that a lot of these tools are going to continue to be used because that worked really well for my class. I like giving students that flexibility.”

Originally from Enterprise, Alabama, Gamble earned his bachelor’s degree in Economics from Harvard University and his Ph.D. in Economics from the University of California, Berkeley. He taught for seven years as an assistant professor of finance at DePaul University in Chicago before coming to MTSU in 2016 as a professor and chair of the Economics Department.

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Keep access at forefront in move back into traditional classes

A year ago, access barriers were front and center during the move of the majority of MTSU courses and services to remote delivery. That is because it was a problem that every campus constituent was encountering—whether student, faculty, staff, or administrator. The way in which the pandemic altered our operations substantially limited our ability to perform the work that we do, and we needed to find ways to accommodate the limitations imposed by the circumstances.

We had to be flexible and attempt different methods to accommodate those we serve and the ways in which we personally perform our job duties. I have the privilege of serving this campus as the director of ADA compliance, and from that vantage point, I could not help but feel that this experience could bring insight into the importance of access through reasonable accommodation, flexibility, and proactive measures.

As MTSU transitions back to traditional operations, it is important to carry forward the motivation to break down barriers that limit access. With that in mind, I would like to share some tips provided by Cheri Wolfe, who serves the campus as the Instructional Technology Specialist in the Faculty Instruction Technology Center.

The tips are aimed at faculty, but there are methods that everyone can apply:

**Accessibility: Ten Things to Do RIGHT NOW**

1. When creating or redesigning course documents, use the accessibility features already in Microsoft Word. The “Styles” feature for headings and text is designed to accommodate screen readers.

2. Use the “Tables” feature in Microsoft Word when creating columns or tables—for example, when creating a course outline, calendar, or assignment list. Mark the “Header Row” using the table tools to ensure readability.

3. Use the MTSU accessible syllabus template to develop or redesign your course syllabus. This template uses the “Styles” feature in Microsoft Word to differentiate headings and normal text; you can just fill in text specific to your course.

4. Provide Alternative Text (Alt Text) when inserting an image, or mark it as decorative. This tells a screen reader to describe or ignore the image.

5. Run the built-in Accessibility Checker in Microsoft Word or PowerPoint to check your documents. The checker not only identifies possible issues, it also suggests fixes.

6. Get organized! Your course should be organized in a logical, consistent manner. Good organization benefits all of our students.

7. Use descriptive, meaningful names and titles in your courses like, “Chapter 1, Lesson 4: Ruminants,” instead of shortcuts like “Ch 1 L4.”

8. Use the built-in Accessibility Checker when creating content in Desire2Learn (D2L).

9. Use descriptive links. Most screen readers can pull and organize links from within a document, but this helpful feature works best when using descriptive links. For example, instead of “Click here to access the Accessibility Checker,” or https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Accessibility-Checker, use instead, “The Accessibility Checker can provide guidance as you review your documents.”

10. Caption your instructional videos. Panopto provides automated captioning services that are approximately 85% accurate, for no additional charge. You can also edit your captions.

**Lance Alexis, MTSU director of ADA compliance, can be reached at Lance.Alexis@mtsu.edu.**

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**Help us help you relocate your phone**

Moving to a new location on campus? Remember to email telecom@mtsu.edu before you start packing.

A Unified Communications technician will be happy to assist you with reconnectiong your phone, as well as ensuring your phone connects properly to the network to eliminate potential issues in the future.

Also, it provides an opportunity for us to update your location record for E911. In your email, be sure to include the following:

- Name
- Campus telephone number
- New location, including building and room number
- Date of move

We request a two-week notice on work order requests. Should you have additional questions, feel free to contact Unified Communications at 615-898-2991.

When your move is complete, you must update your campus location on PipelineMT so that the online directory has the most current information.
That helps technicians determine where AV equipment needs to be installed “without having to actually go to the room every time to get a measurement,” he said.

“On the front end, you can actually just look at the room and say, ‘OK, so it’s a fairly wide room, but it’s not very deep. You can’t do massive screens or you have to do two screens to reach both sides of the room.’ And there are this many rows of chairs.’ So it’s also nice when you’re actually designing,” Smith said.

The photography project has just begun, but plans are to use it as part of the database of information on each room, which includes the asset tags for all the equipment, the dimensions, and layout. And the amount of technology being implemented in classrooms is increasing.

MTSU Master Classrooms already had desktop or laptop computers for displaying teaching materials through projectors or doc cams. Then last summer, because of COVID-19 protocols, the Classroom Technology staff installed a new audiovisual system to automatically record teaching sessions for access by students.

The classroom capture system includes a 10X zoom Mini Curl camera that is set to automatically focus on a whiteboard in each room, where the instructor is asked to stand during lectures. Microphones are provided on a lanyard worn around the necks of instructors.

Recordings automatically begin at the designated start time of a class and end when it does. Then the recordings are automatically uploaded to cloud storage to be accessed through Desire2Learn (D2L) by students who are absent or would like to review the class.

“We’re including a lot more data than we used to, and it’s fairly detailed in regards to what is in the room,” Smith said. “We’re still doing the physical inventory, because you have to test everything real quick and make sure nothing’s missing or needs to be upgraded and all that. But for small things we won’t have to go all the way across campus.”

### Summer is great time to get your Team some training for fall

Whether you are new to Teams or just want to learn more about a specific feature, there are a variety of resources to assist with Teams and all the Microsoft applications. Here are a few ways to access them:

- **Teams Support**—Microsoft Teams help and learning is the central location to find information from getting started to troubleshooting, or search for other apps such as Outlook, OneDrive, or OneNote. Go to [https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/teams](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/teams).
- **Microsoft Education Support**—Allows you to open a ticket directly with Microsoft 365 support. When prompted, select Educator. Sign in with your MTSU username@mtsu.edu and FSA password. You can also view the Microsoft 365 Message Center for a list of new features/functionality. Visit [https://edusupport.microsoft.com/support](https://edusupport.microsoft.com/support).
- **LinkedIn Learning**—Find a variety of training resources at [https://mstu.edu/itd/lil.php](https://mstu.edu/itd/lil.php). Please note the last update date to make sure the training is the most current available.

You are also able to access much of this information while in the Teams application by clicking on the Help or Go Teams button of your navigation panel. Other links from the Help button include:

- **Topics**—A little bit of all the resources available.
- **Training**—See a list of available docs and training.
- **What’s New**—See some of the new Teams features.

### ITD equipment checkout continues

ITD’s equipment checkout program is continuing for MTSU faculty and staff.

Visit [mtsu.edu/itd](http://mtsu.edu/itd), click on Request Equipment and fill out the online form. ITD Help Desk staff members will notify you by email or phone when the equipment is ready to be picked up.

Depending on the time of the year, a variety of computers are available, ranging from MacBook Air, to Dell Precision, to HP Chromebooks. The hot spots ITD provides are T-Mobile Alcatel products.

If you have any questions contact the ITD Help Desk at 615-898-5345 or by email at [help@mtsu.edu](mailto:help@mtsu.edu).
Jennifer Brigham joined ITD in April as a technical clerk for Unified Communications. Originally from the middle Tennessee area, she lived in Memphis for nine years before moving back in 2014.

"I've worked in the legal field and educational field," she said. "I worked multiple years as a paralegal for a law firm and before accepting the position at MTSU, I was employed by Rutherford County Schools as a bookkeeper."

Brigham and her husband, Jason, have been married 18 years and have a daughter, Taylor, who will be a senior at Central Magnet School this fall.

"I enjoy traveling and spending time with my family," she said. "Learning something new can be challenging at times, but the transition has been a wonderful experience. The MTSU staff has been very welcoming and I'm very happy and excited to be here."

Josh Knight started in June as the new IT Help Desk manager. Originally from Portland, Tennessee, Knight graduated in 2011 from Tennessee Tech University with a degree in Management Information Systems and is pursuing a master’s degree in Strategic Leadership. He also has received training in Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) v3.

"My career in IT began as a student worker in IT at TTU. I worked in end-user support, doing Tier1 and Tier2 level work," he said. After graduating, he continued to work for the TTU computer labs before being hired by the networking team as a technician/administrator.

Near the end of 2013, he was hired to manage a soon-to-be created Help Desk at TTU and continued in that role until coming to MTSU this year. Knight is looking at what positive changes can be made at the IT Help Desk to help better serve the campus community.

"This can at times be an overwhelming thought, but not all change has to happen at once. The key is to make the right changes at the right times to prevent change fatigue while maintaining momentum and positivity," he said.

Knight and his wife, Karen, have a son, Gavin, 5, and a daughter, Leia, 3.

"I met my wife at Camp Indogan, a church camp near Angola, Indiana, while I was still in college," he said.

Knight’s other interest is art.

"I'm an artist at heart, and in my youth considered a career in the graphic arts or in LA or NY in the comics industry. . . but that doesn't pay the bills," Knight said. "I've written and illustrated my own comics over the years, just for fun. For several years, I also illustrated for a small Bible-content publishing company."

He also is an avid bowler and enjoys video gaming.

Dustin Cunningham began work in May as an ITD classroom audiovisual technician.

Originally from Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Cunningham earned a bachelor’s degree in Television Production from MTSU. He previously worked as a video technician for various musical artists, setting up camera systems, projectors, and direct view LED screens.

Those included Dolly Parton, Josh Turner, Miley Cyrus, Women of Faith, Bassnectar, Skrillex, The Fresh Beat Band, and more.

"I also squeezed in multiple years of awards shows produced by Univision, including Premios Juventud and Premio Lo Nuestro as well as the Latin Grammys," he said. "After touring, I took a full-time job with VER (Video Equipment Rentals) where I was a project manager for the Nashville office. My main responsibility was the TV series Nashville beginning with Season 2, where any concert scene with moving lights or a LED screen was set up by my crew."

Cunningham spent the summers between seasons as a project manager for the CMT Music Awards and up-and-coming artists.

"Not long after Season 6 wrapped and it was clear no one would be picking up a seventh season, I was looking for a change and found the technical services coordinator position in the Student Union at MTSU, where I worked for a little over two years," he said.

At MTSU, Cunningham helps maintain and update control systems, projectors, TVs, computers, etc. in classrooms.

"What I like most is having a team that works together with different areas of expertise and are helping to teach each other," Cunningham said.