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Little things can be big in accessibility

Making classroom materials accessible to all students can involve big things like a very detailed description of a photo. Or it can be small things like watching extra spaces between lines of text.

Those were some tips given to MTSU faculty recently at one of ITD’s regular Universal Design for Learning and Technology Workshops.

“UDL is providing the most access to the most number of people. We’re not asking you to be perfect,” said Jimmy Williams, an ITD instructional technology specialist.

To make lessons come alive for students with disabilities, use the “RIP” method, said Melicent Homan, a lecturer in Communications Studies and Organizational Communication classes who worked as MTSU Accessibility Task Force faculty fellow in the spring semester.

RIP stands for:

- **Represent**—Use accessible documents, outline formats, and audio-visual supplements
- **Include**—Involve everyone with collaborative, problem-solving activities
- **Practice**—Make technology an assessment tool, and provide listening and written modeled outline materials

This is known as a “Plus-One” strategy, she said. That means at every point in the presentation of classroom content ask: “What additional step could be taken for greater accessibility and understanding?” One example—most textbook publishers offer audio versions of their materials online.

Microsoft Word and PowerPoint have built-in functions for organizing materials with headings and subheads to help users easily navigate with screen-reading software, Williams said. Text-to-speech functions are available in most programs, too.

Photos and graphics need to have an embedded “alt-tag” that can be read by a screen-reader and those functions also are available in these programs.

Those tags can be short, detailed, or very detailed, Williams said.

Melicent Homan (l) a lecturer in Communications Studies and Organizational Communication classes, speaks with Rachel Donegan, a Ph.D. candidate in English, at a recent ITD accessibility workshop.

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Biology teacher’s experiment in student reactions yields positive results

MTSU Biology Professor Grant Gardner has used the Turning-Point clicker student survey system in his classes for years as a way of improving student engagement.

In scientific terms, you could call it a successful experiment involving the reaction of living organisms to outside stimuli.

Biology Professor Grant Gardner uses the Turning-Point classroom clicker survey tool to improve student engagement in his classes, as well as quickly “take their temperature” academically to see where to focus.

Gardner began using the system before he came to MTSU four years ago, but has continued to expand its role in classes here. It is now part of every one of his classroom sessions.

"Based on the anecdotal evidence I’ve seen, it helps them engage in the learning process," he said. "Traditionally, what we do in large lecture classes is if we want to formatively assess what our students know, we ask a question to the whole group and the top two or three students—who answer all the questions—will raise their hands or shout out, and then we assume...the whole class knows the answers.

"Which is a poor assumption.”

The student feedback system allows a class to register answers to questions in survey form for immediate results—individually and as a group—that can be displayed for all to see. For example, when he asks a question about something covered in a previous session, he can immediately see the percentage of students who know the answer.

“There is this learning strategy called peer instruction. I’ll do a little of that where the question is more conceptual and not intended to be something that can be easily recalled in a short amount of time," Gardner said. "You put it up and give them a few minutes individually to think about the answer, to problem-solve. Then they will click in and vote on what they think the answer is, and it shows the distribution to the class.”

Sometimes an overwhelmingly positive result isn’t a good thing, he said.

“If everybody is getting it right you move on—no big deal. But if everyone is getting it right, it probably wasn’t a good question. If everyone is getting it wrong, it probably wasn’t a good question either. Then you ask them to discuss, sort of argue on what the right answer is, and justify that answer, then revote,” he said.

Getting that immediate student feedback has helped hold the attention of his larger classes in the social media age. He routinely has 75 to 100 students in some lectures.

The graduate of Vanderbilt earned his Ph.D. at North Carolina State University and did a year-long post-doctorate there.

Before coming to MTSU, he spent three years as an instructional faculty member at East Carolina University. That is where he first began "experimenting" with student clicker survey systems and settled on TurningPoint by Turning Technologies.

"I use sort of a modified ‘flipped classroom,’" he said. "I want them coming in prepared...and when they come to class I try to do as much small group work as I can and have me not talking at them as much as possible. And so the clickers facilitate that.”

He uses it mainly to help them recall what they’ve studied—sort of a high-tech pop quiz—and hasn’t used it...
ITD's Peterson goes above and beyond for student veterans

ITD's Janae Peterson has been honored by the Tennessee Department of Veterans Services for helping MTSU and other state universities more effectively help the student veterans in their ranks.

Peterson received the Transformational Award for her work in developing a series of computer datablocks in Argos that produce reports for the University's Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center. The work has helped the center in its mission to identify veterans enrolled at MTSU, find out their needs, and develop programs to help meet them.

"It pinpoints the veterans they have on campus and helps them communicate with their veterans," Peterson said. "When they are having a career fair or something like that on campus, they can actually target certain veterans on campus to invite them to this.

"They can also target poor-performing students by choosing specific GPA ranges and go and look and see where their GPA stands, and if it's below a 2 or 2.5 they can run a report, and then they can target these students with tutoring information or have them come in and talk one-on-one," she said.

Peterson, a systems analyst 2, began working on the project in 2014 within Argos, MTSU's enterprise reporting system used to connect to the Banner database or the BluelInfo data warehouse.

"The Veterans and Military Affairs Committee here on campus had a list of things they wanted to find out," she said. "First, they were just trying to find out who their veterans were. . . . They wanted to know how many of their veterans are receiving financial aid; how many of their veterans are receiving benefits; how many are receiving Pell Grants and performing well. What is their retention and graduation rate as compared to the general MTSU population?"

The data is used to help submit grant proposals and reports, plus identify student veterans who may be at-risk academically and offer them assistance.

"So they don't have to go and try to gather that information every single year—all these individual pieces of information. They can run that Argos report and it can spit all that information out for them," Peterson said.

Since then the work has expanded and gone on the road.

"We've taken it beyond just using them here at MTSU—we've gone to the different regional veterans education academies for the state of Tennessee and shared these Argos datablocks that we created with them. So when the different institutions—whether they are universities or community colleges—contact us and say they'd like to use these datablocks, they can have a datablock designer import them into Argos for their institutions."

Hilary Miller, director of the Daniels Center, said Peterson's work helps them more effectively address the needs of student veterans, including academic advising and handling paperwork for federal benefits and financial aid.

"Mrs. Peterson has been tireless in setting up forms, reports, and dashboards so we can easily pull data on our student veterans. We use this information to be able to write grants, win awards (you may have seen we have been recognized many times as one of the nation's best schools for veterans), and most importantly, know and understand our veterans," Miller said.

"Because of Janae, we can track students within certain GPA ranges, certain majors, or year in college. All of this allows us to help and communicate more effectively."

The 2,600-square-foot center on the first floor of the

See Peterson, page 9
Systems administrator ran his own business after high school

While many people head to college or start working for someone after high school, Ben Lynch took another path. He became a small business owner.

“I started a company right after high school dealing with break-fix and moved into managed/contract services with six employees,” Lynch said. “After almost 20 years, and countless late hours, it was time for a change so I sold my company and my wife accepted a job nearby and we relocated to middle Tennessee.”

While running the business that provided webpage development, communications, home and business security, and repairs, he also would earn a bachelor’s of business administration from Catawba College in his hometown of Salisbury, North Carolina.

In February 2015, he joined ITD as a systems administrator dedicated to Facilities Services.

“At first I would joke with folks and say, ‘if it has an Ethernet cable and involves Facilities Services, it will at some point end up on my desk.’ But this has proven to be very true,” Lynch said.

While he loves the technical parts of the job, it’s his coworkers who make it a great place to work.

“The best part is the people that I work with. MTSU has some amazing and awesome folks, both in Facilities and ITD. They are an extension of family. The most challenging part of my job is the pure variety of items which I support: From HVAC, access controls, to daily desktop applications. No two days or even hours are the same," he said.

Sign-in for MTSU systems to change

The credentials you use to log into PipelineMT, D2L, and EAB SSC Campus are being changed over the next few months to be the same credentials you use for your MTSU email account.

For those of you who make your PipelineMT password and MTSU email password the same, you should not notice a difference.

ITD will send additional emails with more information as each system’s target date gets closer. We are targeting mid- to late-July for D2L, and Sept. 16 for PipelineMT, but have not yet finalized a date for EAB SSC Campus.

Any other system that uses PipelineMT credentials also will be changing and each system is being actively worked on this summer.
UDL workshops, continued from page 1

Joycelyn Gray, a lecturer in the MTSU University Seminar student success classes, said she came to the workshop in anticipation of accessibility challenges she will face in the coming new academic year.

“We want to make sure that all students with disabilities have the necessary resources conducive to learning,” she said. “If I ever have a student who is blind, I will make accessible documents by using heading structures . . . and alt-text to describe visuals, or transcripts for audio.

“I want to take advantage of what I learned in this training to ensure that all of my classrooms are equipped to meet the challenges for people with disabilities.”

Williams said paying attention to the little things can be big. What about those extra spaces between lines?

“There are going to be some line breaks and that is perfectly fine. An individual who is using a screen reader is using the down arrow to go to the next line, so two or three lines might be part of the formatting. But if you go down past that they might think, ‘OK there is no more [content] on this page, I am going to go to the next page,’” he said.

Also, don’t use all capital letters to emphasize words—a screen reader may view them as acronyms. Even font colors need to be considered if they are being used to help organize a presentation. Color-blind students might not be able to follow certain colors.

It’s not just students with visual or auditory disabilities that are helped by Universal Design for Learning principles. Using “Plus One” strategies such as closed-captioning will help every student to better comprehend what they are hearing. Captioning services are offered through YouTube and Camtasia.

“I’ve started using closed-captions a lot for just general purposes. Closed-captions have been shown to boost memory, and students use it as a study guide if they come across something that is difficult to get the first time,” Homan said.

“Closed-captions are great for language learners.”

Another suggestion is to “flip the classroom.” In other words, have students review lessons before class, then use lecture time for applying those lessons in problem-solving. Diversify your direct instruction with the use of round-tables, collaborative/partner learning, and Socratic method discussions, Homan said.

Williams acknowledged that teaching materials cannot be made 100 percent accessible for every possible scenario. But he encouraged using Desire2Learn (D2L) curriculum notes to open a dialog with students who might need assistive technologies.

“If an individual student has a problem and contacts disability services there is a lag time involved with that. Then there is a lag time with the next person, etc., and meanwhile the student hasn’t been able to access materials for five days,” Williams said.

D2L does not have a built-in screen reader, he said. So students need to use programs such as Natural Reader.

Materials posted to D2L need to be rendered accessible. If you can’t highlight separate words in a document, but the entire page turns blue, that is one sign it is not renderable. Even a good-quality microphone could be the difference in being able to provide scripting or closed-captioning to materials using these programs, Williams said.

See UDL workshops schedule on page 9
Angle new systems administrator 2

Tom Angle began working with ITD on March 27 as a systems administrator 2.

The native of Homesville, Ohio, earned an associate’s degree from the University of Akron Wayne College. He lives in Smithville, Tennessee.

He previously worked for Orschlen Products as a systems administrator/developer, Snyder Solutions as a systems administrator, Goodyear Tire and Rubber as an infrastructure systems administrator, and DTC Communications (DeKalb Telephone Company) as a Linux Systems Administrator.

At ITD he focuses on working with Linux systems infrastructure.

He enjoys taking part in church activities and doing hand-tool woodworking.

Student surveys, continued from page 2

for full exams up to this point.

“Oftentimes I have a handful of questions I ask them when they walk into class. Those are really to hold them accountable to doing this stuff ahead of time. These questions are for a small amount of points, basic questions from what they’ve read,” he said. “It gives them a way to self-assess.”

If a question produces 95 percent correct answers and 5 percent incorrect, Gardner doesn’t publically show who submitted the wrong answers.

“I don’t call those 5 percent out. I say, ‘You know who you are. Obviously if you’re not getting this, you need to come talk to me,’” Gardner said. “Then I can go back and look at individual students if I want.”

He was familiar with the program when he started at MTSU, but got some help from ITD to set it up and test it.

Taylor hired as database administrator

Tim Taylor began working for ITD on April 24 as a database administrator.

The native of Selmer, Tennessee, is a graduate of the University of Tennessee–Martin, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, and Bachelor of University Studies.

Taylor worked at UTM as a repair services senior technician and as an IT administrator.

Other career highlights include working under a Department of Defense contract as a project lead in systems administration and for IMC Companies, also in system administration.

In his current role, Taylor is responsible for the “general care, maintenance and improvements of the database systems used on campus”.

Taylor said he enjoys a “challenging work environment and the ever-shifting world of IT.”

He and his wife have 3-year-old twins—a boy and a girl. Hobbies include “anything classic car or Mustang-related.”

MTSU Biology Professor Grant Gardner is pictured here using the TurningPoint clicker student survey system in one of his classes this past academic year.

Fields is ITD administrative secretary

Yolonda Fields started with ITD on May 1 as administrative secretary.

She is originally from Fort Pierce, Florida, but has lived in South Carolina, Connecticut, and elsewhere in Florida with her husband of 32 years, Charles, who is retired from the U.S. Navy.

Prior to coming to MTSU, she worked locally as a banking administrator at Stewart Title doing reconciliations of escrow accounts for three years and also as district administrator at Best Buy for seven years.

“It’s a joy to be around a variety of people again,” she said. “The challenging part so far is learning a whole new role—I’ve had a professional history of administrative work but each job is a little different.”

Fields has two daughters and four grandchildren. A special moment for the family is coming up later this year.

“I have not met one of my grandkids yet because he was born in Frankfurt, Germany. But they are due back in the States—hopefully before this fall, so I’m extremely excited,” she said.

Away from work she enjoys “reading, word games, and hanging out with my family.”

Taylor

MTSU Biology Professor Grant Gardner is pictured here using the TurningPoint clicker student survey system in one of his classes this past academic year.
Computers installed with Windows 10 are now available as new or replacement orders at MTSU.

“We have been testing Windows 10 compatibility with various standard programs used by MTSU faculty and staff, and feel confident that issues will be minimal,” said Robin Jones, ITD’s assistant vice president, client services and IT business operations.

“However, I encourage everyone to make an effort to research whether or not any specialized software packages you currently use are compatible with Windows 10 before purchasing a new computer or requesting an upgrade.”

A Windows 10 resource page can be found on Microsoft’s website here. This should answer many questions regarding the upgrade to Windows 10.

If you would like to have your current computer upgraded to Windows 10, you may place a work order at mtsu.edu/itd, contact the ITD Helpdesk at extension 5345 to submit a request, or email your request to help@mtsu.edu.

Minimum system requirements for Windows 10 are:

• 1 GHz or faster processor
• 4 GB RAM
• 20 GB available hard disk space (32-bit) or 20 GB (64-bit)
• DirectX 9 graphics device with WDDM 1.0 or higher driver

“We will assist in evaluating your system to determine whether or not it meets the requirements for Windows 10 and create an upgrade request for those that do,” Jones said.

“Upgrade requests will be handled in the order received, and the response time for the upgrade will be prioritized alongside new computer installs and service and support work orders.”

Telephone Tidbits: Before vacation, record an away greeting in voice mailbox

It’s the time of year when many people are taking a few days away from the office.

Don’t forget to record an away greeting on your Exchange Unified Messaging voice mailbox to let callers know you will be out of the office.

This also will give them a point of contact should they need immediate assistance while you are away.

The instructions below will guide you through this process:

LOG IN
1. Dial in to Exchange UM 615-494-8648 and listen for the voice prompt.
2. Enter your extension number.
3. (If you are calling from your campus phone, you will only be prompted for the password)
4. Enter your password and [#].
5. For instructions on resetting your password, visit mtsu.edu/itdtele/ExchangeUM_ResettingPIN.pdf.

CREATE YOUR AWAY GREETING
1. From the main menu press [6]–[2]
3. Your current away greeting, if recorded, will be played. To re-record press [2] and press [#] to stop recording.
5. After you accept the recording, press [*] to return to the previous menu.

ACTIVATE YOUR AWAY GREETING
1. From the main menu press [6]–[1]
2. Your current away greeting, if recorded, will be played. Press [1] to accept the recording, or [2] to record your greeting again.
3. After accepting the recording, press [*] to continue.
4. To turn off your away greeting, from the main menu press [6]–[1].

Learn more at mtsu.edu/itdtele/services/voicemail.php.
S4B migration is topic of presentation by Hampton

ITD’s Dustin Hampton was one of several presenters from MTSU at the annual Tennessee Higher Education Information Technology Symposium (THEITS) in April.

Hampton is a system administrator 2 in the Enterprise Server Services division. THEITS is geared toward networking between higher education institutions, public or private, in the state of Tennessee, with a focus on information technology.

Others from ITD taking part in the event at Fall Creek Falls State Park were Tom Wallace, Lisa Rogers, Ben Lynch, David Stevenson, John Stevens, Curtis Parish, James Foster, Jimmy Williams, Michael Barton, and Alan Franklin.

“The conference gave me the opportunity to hear several presentations by my peers at MTSU and also from other institutions. The presentations varied, but for me I looked for presentations that applied to me and my responsibilities here at MTSU,” Hampton said. “Between the presentations and the rest of the time that I spent at the conference, there was a lot of knowledge sharing and great ideas that were discussed between me and other system administrators from other institutions.

“All higher education institutions provide the same or very similar services to students, and this is a good opportunity for us to get together and discuss our experiences, good or bad.”

Hampton’s presentation was on MTSU’s Skype for Business migration plan.

“I presented at THEITS last year and this year. This year’s presentation was an update on our progress and it also included the do’s and don’ts I have learned over the past year. It also allowed for questions from others who are deploying Skype for Business or looking to deploy it,” he said. “It was also a great team-building opportunity with my peers and upper management here at MTSU.”

Skype for Business switch-over continues, training is available

Work continues across the MTSU campus to migrate Avaya telephone users to Skype for Business.

To date, nearly 1,900 users have been enabled on the Skype for Business system. Most recently, the following buildings were migrated:

• Satellite Chiller Plant
• Storage Warehouse
• Woodmore Cybercafe
• Hastings Maintenance Complex
• Student Services and Admissions Center
• Stark Agribusiness and Agriscience Center

Next on the list, and already in production, are the following buildings:

• Bayer Travis Maintenance
• Central Utility Plant
• Floyd Stadium
• Student Union Building
• James Union Building
• James E. Walker Library
• Saunders Fine Arts Building
• Andrew L. Todd Building
• Wright Music Building
• Printing Services Building
• Peck Hall
• Tennessee Livestock Center
• Warehouse
• Women’s Softball Complex
• Kirksey Old Main
• Midgett Building
• Stephen B. Smith Baseball Clubhouse
• Parking Services Building
• Internal Audit (Wansley House)
• Murphy Center

For more information on the Skype for Business project, including the remaining deployment schedule, visit the Skype for Business website at mtsu.edu/itdtele/skype.

To sign up for a S4B Basic or Advanced training workshop, visit mtsu.edu/itd/workshops.
IT Tips & Tricks

Most of us tend to take notes while we work on our computer. The problem is we tend to end up with a lot of sticky notes. However, both Microsoft and Apple have us covered with electronic versions of the sticky notes.

If you are in the Microsoft world (i.e., Windows 7 or 10), the application is called Sticky Notes. Whereas in the Mac world (i.e., OS X Sierra), it is called Stickies.

Regardless of whether you are using the Windows or Mac version of them they both pretty much work the same way. You open the application and are presented with a simple sticky note. You type or copy/paste text into the sticky notes.

The great thing is the sticky notes stay open on your desktop and you can refer back to them as long as you want.

Peterson, continued from page 3

Keathley University Center opened in November 2015 and was named for the legendary country music artist and his wife in May 2016.

Peterson was surprised by the award presented by Tennessee Department of Veterans Services Commissioner Many-Bears Grinder.

“They completely caught me off guard, I wasn’t expecting it at all,” she said of the recognition at the state Veterans Education Academy in March. “I’m really appreciative. I think we’re a very lucky campus to have the staff over there in the center that we have to provide what we can for our veterans.”

Peterson and her family have strong ties to MTSU. Peterson received a computer science degree in 1990, then earned a master’s degree after starting in the Institutional Research Department in 2007. She joined ITD in 2012.

Her husband, Elliott, has earned degrees from MTSU, along with their son, Collin, and daughter, Fallon, and even a future daughter-in-law—all in music-related fields.

“We are an MTSU and musical family,” Peterson said.

Peterson

Grinder

Use digital signage for countdown clocks

Digital signage can be used to display important information on upcoming events and deadlines.

It can even be used to countdown to a celebration ... Yeah! Graduation!

For more information about MTSU’s digital signage network or to make content suggestions, email digicontent@mtsu.edu.

UDL Workshops offered this fall

Universal Design for Learning Workshops offered this fall include:

**Beginner workshops**
- 2 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 20, in LT&ITC—Level I
- 2 p.m., Monday, Oct. 9, in Telecom Training Center—Level II
- 10 a.m., Thursday Nov. 9, in LT&ITC—Level I
- 2 p.m., Monday, Nov. 20, in Telecom Training Center—Level II

**Online-Specific Classes Workshop**
- 2 p.m., Monday, Oct. 23, in Telecom Training Center

**Online Faculty Mentor Workshop**
- 2 p.m., Monday, Nov. 6, in Telecom Training Center

To sign up for these sessions, visit [mtsu.edu/itd/workshops](http://mtsu.edu/itd/workshops).