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"It is what it is" is the motto of ITD's Yolonda Fields. Story on page 4

Updates on campus email migration and new backup system for servers and software. Stories on page 5

2019 Fall Faculty Fellows

Pictured are 2018–19 Fall Faculty Fellows, (l-r), seated: Betsy Allgood, Lisa Swart, Bethany Contreras, Stephanie Wise, Holly Hebert, and Katie Schrodt. Standing: Jackie Gilbert, Shane McCoy, Fusae Ekida, Jennifer Woodward, Pam Elliott, Renee Jones, David Trowbridge, Tiffany Saul, Kathryn Fenton, Maddie Liseblad, Vickie Harden, Poushali Bhadury, and LaToya Eaves. Not pictured are Angie Hooser, Nikki Jones, Elissa Ledoux, Liz Smith, Elizabeth Stephens, Josh Tipton, and Nicky Wu. See more photos from the Fall Faculty Fair on page 6.

Award recipient teaches Wikipedia writing

If you still look down upon Wikipedia as a weak academic source due to inaccuracies, plagiarism, and tinkering, you should talk to MTSU Professor Joan McRae.

“We're working one student at a time, one article at a time, to build up the reputation of Wikipedia,” said McRae, who received one of the 2019 Outstanding Achievement in Instructional Technology awards for her ongoing project to use the creation and editing of Wikipedia articles as part of her Department of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures classes.

McRae and Jean Reese, coordinator of instructional media resources at MTSU's Walker Library, developed the project in recent years to integrate an information literacy component into humanities courses by assigning students to create scholarly content and disseminate it in the public through Wikipedia. “Everybody knows what Wikipedia is—when you Google something it is the first entry that pops up,” said McRae, who has taught at MTSU for nearly 10 years.

See Wikipedia, page 7
Be sensitive when using color for important wording

'Tis the colorful time of year, with red, green, silver, and gold popping up everywhere. But for some students it is difficult to distinguish one color from another. In fact, the combination of red and green is one of the most difficult.

Chris Magliacano, manager of the MTSU Adaptive Technology Center, encourages staff and instructors to remember that when preparing student documents and especially classroom instruction materials.

"Frequently in syllabi, handouts, etc. instructors will convey important information through the use of color (or other means of special text formatting). For example, I often see on a syllabus important due dates will be changed to a red font to attract attention and mark the snippet as important," Magliacano said.

"Although this can be effective for many, the message is completely lost to anyone with color-blindness or anyone with a visual impairment who uses a screen reader, since the screen reader will only read the text and not note that the font is uniquely colored from the rest of the document.”

Magliacano said the point isn't to avoid using color or special formatting, but just be conscious "that it is not the only one way an important message is conveyed to those working with the material."

Other options for drawing attention to special content includes patterns such as stripes and dots, all-caps lettering, or glyphs such as arrows, asterisks, or bullets.

But for those who use text-to-speech readers, the best answer is to simply use wording that makes the message stand out, according to MTSU's Academic and Instructional Technologies Department:

"Don't miss the deadline!" is better written as "Important note: Don't miss the deadline!" because it announces "Important note" aloud to text-to-speech users, instead of using color alone.

Numerous tips and resources, including the WebAIM: Color Contrast Checker, can be found at mtsu.edu/ait/accessibility/index.php. Information specific to creating PowerPoints can be found at mtsu.edu/ait/accessibility/powerpoint_accessibility.php. For more information, email itdacad@mtsu.edu or call 615-904-8189.

Proofpoint Targeted Attack Protection has arrived: Here’s how it works

Starting in November, MTSU began using technology called Proofpoint Targeted Attack Protection to help protect against threats that are distributed via email, including phishing and targeted attacks.

These threats are triggered when users click on malicious, embedded attachments and links (URLs). This technology protects you by blocking access to such threats that might be trying to steal your information or lure you into communicating with a malicious actor.

While it is still important that you carefully choose what you click, this technology will protect you by rewriting URLs in email messages.

This means that when you hover over links, you will see a different URL from the original link (one that begins with https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/...), as seen in the graphic at right:

If the link you received is safe, you will be directed to the website. If the link is malicious, you will know you are successfully protected by seeing the notification in the graphic at right:

For more info, contact the ITD Help Desk at 615-898-5345 or help@mtsu.edu or visit mtsu.edu/proofpoint.
Chris Goebel joined ITD in July as inventory clerk.

Goebel, originally from Alliance, Ohio, has lived in Shelbyville, Tennessee, for the past eight years.

He is currently working on his Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting at MTSU.

Prior to coming to MTSU, Goebel was a store manager for Circle K for five years and for Dollar General three years.

“So far, the majority of my job has been to track the location of computers on campus,” Goebel said. “I enter new computers into the campus inventory and update the changes in location for existing computers. I am currently working on the project to replace eligible administrative computers on campus.”

He said he enjoys the work and his co-workers.

“Yolonda Fields makes me laugh pretty much every day. I also benefit from the flexible scheduling,” he said. “I would say my biggest challenge is looking for ways to be innovative and forward-thinking when it comes to the inventory spreadsheet, also keeping track of computers that can be ordered by a multitude of people and departments.”

Goebel and his wife, Hannah, have a 7-year-old daughter, Mackenzie, who is in second grade, and a 5-year-old son, Jackson, in kindergarten.

“I’m convinced (Hannah) has superpowers the way she keeps it all together,” Goebel said. “I am the biggest Ohio State Buckeyes football fan ever. I enjoy attending sporting events, especially baseball and football games. Watching my kids experience something for the first time is also something I definitely love!”

Goebel said his biggest advice for anyone not happy with their work situation is: “It’s never too late, but don’t wait any longer.”

“Take the leap, make the change. Go back to school, apply for your dream job, whatever that looks like in your life, just take that first step. You will be glad you did,” he said.
Fields’ motto “It is what it is” has deeper meaning for her

“It is what it is,” ITD administrative secretary Yolonda Fields likes to say.

But what is “it”?

For Fields, it is several things starting with her Christian faith, her family, and a desire to be someone who is approachable and ready with a listening ear, quick joke, and kind word.

“I hope people see God in me, they see light and not dark,” she said. “He influences me to be an overcomer. It does impact my interactions with people. I’m not overly vocal about it—I’m a believer that your actions speak louder than your words.”

Fields started with ITD in May 2017. Her primary responsibility is maintaining “site licenses” for software programs used campus-wide.

Originally from Fort Pierce, Florida, Fields and her family have lived in South Carolina, Connecticut, and elsewhere in Florida—the longest time being 12 years in Jacksonville.

Her husband, Charles, is retired from the U.S. Navy after 20 years. He is completing a degree at MTSU in Business Administration and is set to graduate in August.

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.

The couple has two daughters, Jasmine and Brittany, who have two boys each—Isaiah, Xavier, Jaeden, and Daniel. So grandparenting is a big part of life for the Fields.

Away from work she also enjoys reading, mostly courtroom dramas such as those by John Grisham, as well as biblically based historical fiction.

She and Charles are active in World Outreach Church small group Bible studies and the children’s ministry.

As for her favorite phrase?

“What is it? It just is, so why stress out? It is what it is,” she said. “In one of my Bible readings, it said, ‘I am what I am.’ Paul was talking about who he used to be and how God changed him.

“It took me a long time to get to this place where I can say that. . . . But the basis of it all, in order for me to be able to keep that smile on my face, ‘It is what it is.’ And He definitely is who He is and that is where I find my strength.”

Yolonda Fields, ITD administrative secretary

ITD Administrative Secretary Yolonda Fields works to maintain site licenses for software used on campus. Away from work, she enjoys reading, spending time with her four grandsons and involvement in Bible study and children's ministry at World Outreach Church.
Watch for information on email migration process

ITD is migrating all MTSU mailboxes from on-premises to Microsoft Exchange Online to help provide an improved email experience.

ITD is the first department being moved to Exchange Online, said Michael J. Barton, director of ITD Enterprise Server Services.

“Over the period of a few months, groups of users will be migrated to Exchange Online. By moving to Exchange Online in Office 365, your mailbox size will increase in size to 100GB. Moving to Office 365 will also allow easy access to your mailbox no matter where you are connecting from and improve collaboration between students, faculty, and staff,” Barton said.

Additional information will be provided about this transition as ITD prepares to migrate other department mailboxes.

“Keep an eye out for future communications that will include information like the day your mailbox will be moved, how to get connected to your new mailbox, and other changes you will need to be aware of,” Barton said.

These communications will come from the email address: migrationhelp@mtsu.edu.

New Rubrik backup system installed for servers, software

ITD's Enterprise Server Services has implemented a new method of backing up servers, software, and applications within the MTSU IT infrastructure.

The new backup solution was recently purchased from the Rubrik company (www.rubrik.com). It replaces the old backup system based on EMC Networker software, which had been used for backup and recovery duties the past 10-plus years and was in need of software and hardware upgrades.

The new Rubrik solution simplifies backup and recovery for virtualized and physical environments. Features include the following:

• Backup software and backup storage are combined into a single appliance.
• 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.
• It leverages data deduplication (a process that eliminates redundant copies of data) to reduce storage overhead.
• Management and reporting capabilities are improved compared to the previous backup solution.

ITD boosts connectivity for MTSU's Foundation House

Just in time for the fall 2019 semester, ITD provided dramatically improved wireless connectivity to the MTSU Foundation House that increased its ability to host events.

The Foundation House on Thompson Lane had only weak DSL connection for years, said Chris Piety, ITD director of Network Services.

“It was never enough for events out there as far as bandwidth,” Piety said. “They didn’t have good network connectivity for big events.”

The plan originally called for an ASE circuit conduit from the street to the house but that was cost-prohibitive. Instead, Curt Parrish, senior network engineer, headed up installation of a new point-to-point wireless connection from nearby Miller Coliseum to the Foundation House.

Working with Systems Integration of Lebanon, Tennessee, the project resulted in increased connectivity up to 100 MB.

One of the added benefits was the Foundation House now could connect to the MTSU phone system.

“So they’ve got a faster connection, more reliability, and (communications) services just like they are on campus,” Piety said.
The Fall Faculty Fair in the Lucinda Taylor Lea Learning, Teaching, and Innovative Technologies Center provided an open-house event for networking about services and resources available on campus. Above left, Jeanette Stevens, (l), recruiting coordinator for the Career Development Center, and Melissa Miller, director of the MTSU Office of Education Abroad, talk about the program. Above right, Nancy James, director of the campus Day Care Center (l) chats with Renee Jones. At left, EXL Scholars Program Director Carol Swayze (l) discusses the program with psychology Assistant Professor Bethany Contreras.

At right, Professor Ryan Seth Jones explains the Group-Based Collaborative Computing program to Julie Myatt, director of MT Engage. If you are interested in consulting with the LT&ITC staff, contact them at 615-494-7671 or ltanditc@mtsu.edu.
“Everybody uses it. But of course it’s been frowned on for many years by teachers because of inaccuracies.

“One of the things I am struggling with in working with Wikipedia is the wider public perceptions of it—the 10-years-ago perception when anybody could do anything. That is not the case at all. Yes, you can add, but if your addition is not properly sourced, it will get taken away. ”

Starting four years ago she became part of the effort to improve the academic quality of Wiki entries and shake that negative image.

“I was at a conference and there was a group of grad students who stopped me and said ‘Hey, you want to come learn how to do Wikipedia?’” McRae said. “I said, ‘Yeah, sure!’ I thought, ‘This is fabulous, because now I can go fix the things that are wrong.’”

She began to edit and create articles on her own, then later decided it would be a great part of her syllabi.

The Wikipedia editing and creation project was first used last spring in HUM 2610H: Foreign Literature in Translation, a course that counts in the requirement for general education and is required for Buchanan Fellows.

The project has been extended to graduate-level courses in the M.A. in Liberal Arts and the M.A.T. in Foreign Languages programs.

Working with Walker Library staff, primarily Reese, McRae developed a set of instructional materials and exercises to teach students how the Wikipedia encyclopedia works. It starts with a workshop where students learn how to correct information, improve writing, and enhance the scholarship and source materials of relevant Wikipedia pages.

One example of editing is the page titled “Ebola ’76.”

Then they move on to creating new articles. Students are asked to analyze recently translated novels and create original Wikipedia articles about them for publication.

“You have to start with editing, because they won’t let you create a new article until you’ve done a certain number of edits,” McRae said.

As part of the process, McRae led a group of students to France earlier this year to visit locations to be featured in their pages. The results of those trips can be seen in two pages created by students—on the Cemetery of Montparnasse and the Museum of Cluny.

She said those skeptical of Wikipedia in its early days might be surprised at how stringent the online encyclopedia has become about editing or creating new content.

Articles are not published just because they are submitted, but go through a rigorous screening process. Articles are not wide open to anyone who wants to tweak them, and many pages are locked down to changes.

“In order to publish an article in Wikipedia, you have to prove notoriety, you have to show that it is worthy of an article,” McRae said. “And you have to have a certain number of reliable sources.

... You have to have anywhere from four to eight articles published on this book. You’ve got to show it is a book notable enough to deserve an article.”

A second workshop is held several weeks before the articles are submitted. Students work with each other, McRae, and Reese to review their drafts for organization, appropriate sections, credible and notable source materials, and images or links to videos. When ready, they submit them to Wikipedia for review.

“It is a formal process,” McRae said. “Not all of them are accepted. A lot of it depends on how persistent the students are.”

She has teamed up with Wikipedia to create a course on how to edit and construct articles. It offers exercises to practice and provides a Wikipedia advisor dedicated to the class. Future plans include offering more workshops for faculty, staff, and students. McRae wants to expand the project into more classes and promote it to other departments.

McRae plans to schedule a workshop for faculty on editing in Wikipedia to combat the continued “resistance” to Wikipedia.

“The biggest thing I found at the end is how excited and satisfied students were that their work, that they had spent hours putting together, instead of going in my file cabinet, was out for everyone to see.”

MTSU French Professor Joan McRae
After 10 years as a math instructor, Jan Pontia now prefers her role of "teaching the teachers" how to incorporate technology in their classroom.

"I had a friend say to me, 'Once a teacher, always a teacher,' and I didn’t understand it at that point, but I understand that phrase now," said Pontia, who joined ITD in January 2017 as an instructional technology specialist focusing on helping faculty use Desire2Learn (D2L).

"I don't think I ever left teaching. I don't stand in front of a classroom of students like I used to but I have the best of both worlds. I get to enjoy all the evolving technology, and I get to work with faculty in a variety of ways—with FITC workshops, the updated D2L support area of the AIT section of our website (mtsu.edu/ait), one-on-one sessions in our lab, the phone calls, the emails, and with a self-paced course for learning to use D2L—I feel like I'm still teaching."

Pontia holds a bachelor's degree in Math Education from West Liberty University, not far across the Ohio River from where she grew up in eastern Ohio.

But the transition to instructional tech began when she was earning a master's degree in Math and Science Education at Wheeling Jesuit University in West Virginia.

“When I was getting my master’s degree, the director of IT was the instructor of one of my UNIX classes and he said 'I have an open IT position I'd love for you to apply for;’” she said. She got that part-time IT job and also another one at the NASA Teacher Resource Center located on campus, which involved working with students from preschool to college level.

Later, she had to choose between those two positions and so the part-time IT job became full time.

“He wanted me to start helping the faculty at the university with using technology, along with the IT work that I was doing,” Pontia said. “The part that always remained the most natural for me was working with faculty.”

From Wheeling Jesuit, she worked at Birmingham-Southern College, then at Northwest Florida State College in Niceville, Florida. There she enjoyed the love of water that began as a child living just blocks from the Ohio River.

But when all three of her daughters moved to the Nashville area, she began praying and searching for a way to be nearer to them.

“I just trusted as I was looking that God would lead me to where I needed to go," Pontia said. But after several job possibilities that were just too far away from the Nashville area, she found the opportunity with ITD at MTSU. “Two of my daughters live in Murfreesboro. Isn’t that amazing?

“I read that job description and said ‘This is it!’” Pontia said. “This job has my name all over it.”

Asked about her outside interests, she said her Christian faith is a “huge” part of her life and she loves serving as a Scripture lector at the Church of the Nativity in Spring Hill, greeting worshippers, and participating in several prayer groups.

“Giving back to God and the church is one of those things I'll always do,” she said. “Every day I'm thankful for the grace of God. He has done great things for me.”

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Jeanette Leigh Pontia Obituary

Jeanette Leigh Pontia, 60, resident of Spring Hill and Murfreesboro, passed away at her home on Saturday, Nov. 30, 2019.

A Memorial Mass will be held at 1 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 14, at the Church of the Nativity in Thompson's Station, with Father Jerry Strange officiating. Inurnment will follow in the Resurrection Columbarium at Maury Memorial Gardens. Heritage Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

Pontia was born June 5, 1959, in Martins Ferry, Ohio, the daughter of Patricia Schuller Pontia and the late Raymond A. Pontia. She earned her master’s degree at Wheeling Jesuit College in West Virginia, and she worked in the IT Department at Middle Tennessee State University. She loved her church, church family and was a member of the CHRP group in Destin and Fort Walton Beach, Florida. She enjoyed the ocean and traveling.

She leaves to cherish her memory, three daughters: Jenilee McNamara and Jill McNamara, both of Murfreesboro, and Juliette McNamara of Spring Hill; her sister: Debra Norman of St. Clairsville, Ohio; brothers: Raymark Pontia of Yorkville, Ohio, and David Pontia of Columbus, Ohio.

In lieu of flowers, the family request donations be made in her memory to the Church of the Nativity, 2793 Buckner Lane, Thompson's Station, TN 37179.