



Graduate Studies

Fall 2025 Newsletter

A wide-angle photograph of a university campus at sunset. A long, straight brick-paved walkway leads from the foreground towards a large, multi-story brick building in the background. The sky is filled with soft, orange and yellow clouds. Lush green trees line both sides of the path, and several black lampposts are visible. In the bottom left corner, there is a white-bordered box containing the text "CONNECT ENGAGE ADVANCE SUCCEED".

CONNECT
ENGAGE
ADVANCE
SUCCEED

Dean's Welcome

As Dean of the College of Graduate Studies at Middle Tennessee State University, I am proud to lead our institution's commitment to expanding graduate student education and enrollment. Through innovative recruitment and marketing strategies and launching new and enhanced graduate degree programs, we have achieved growth in our graduate population, fostering a vibrant academic environment that empowers the next generation of scholars, researchers, and professionals. Our focus on excellence and student success ensures that MTSU remains a top choice for advanced education in Tennessee and beyond.

David Butler, Ph.D.

Vice Provost for Research and Dean of the College of Graduate Studies



Associate Dean's Note

We are grateful to our graduate faculty, program directors, and staff for the care you provide our graduate students every day. At CGS, our focus is a graduate community that thrives in service, education, and creative scholarship, and is growing in students and programs. This issue highlights the Public History Ph.D. program and honors Dr. Carroll Van West for decades of mentoring and statewide impact. We also welcome three new graduate programs in Digital Media, Biomedical Sciences, and Project Management, timely additions that strengthen our graduate portfolio through innovative offerings responsive to workforce needs. In our Data Corner, congratulations to the programs recognized for advancing growth through thoughtful curriculum revisions, branding, marketing, and more. Every interaction with a graduate student matters. Please continue advising, mentoring, and innovating, and tell us how CGS can help you test ideas, streamline processes, and build new or enhanced programs so we can grow together.

Racha El Kadiri, Ph.D.

Interim Associate Dean of the College of Graduate Studies



mtsu.edu/graduate

Program Spotlight: Ph.D. in Public History

MTSU was the first school to offer a Ph.D. in Public History anywhere in the United States (2005), and we remain the most outstanding program. We have seven core members of our Public History faculty, with expertise in historical archaeology, museum studies, historic preservation, archives, digital history, and oral history, among others. No other university, R1 or otherwise, comes close to that many faculty. Moreover, our program is hands-on: Coursework, a yearlong residency, and graduate assistantships put students out into the community working with partners to collaboratively preserve and interpret the past.

Our alums have gone on to leadership positions in national museums and archives, to major consulting practices, and to rewarding careers in national and state park services and other government sector work.

1: Ph.D. student Alexis Matrone (right) at Maramec Spring Park in Missouri

2: Susan Knowles, who earned her Ph.D. in Public History from MTSU and worked at the Center for Historic Preservation, received the William Rule Award for Lifetime Achievement in Knoxville History from the Knoxville History Project, 2025

3: Associate Professor Stacey Graham with graduate students and community members at Ewing Family Cemetery at Ellington Agricultural Center in Nashville, Spring 2025



Q&A: Emily Baran, Ph.D. Chair, Department of History

MTSU was the first university in the nation to offer a Ph.D. in Public History. How has the program evolved since its founding, and what sets it apart today?

All that time has given MTSU History a chance to develop deep relationships with local partners and institutions so that our students can collaborate on history projects that are meaningful. Our residency program and Maymester experiential course both give students plenty of space to dive deep into original research and build skills that put them on career paths when they graduate. And the Center for Historic Preservation and the Gore Center are simply outstanding training grounds for public historians.

With such a wide range of faculty expertise and hands-on opportunities, what do you see as the greatest strengths of the program for preparing students for their careers?

I am so proud of our faculty for making sure our students are learning both inside and outside of the classroom and taking our students out into the community to learn hands-on skills in public history. Students can add multiple skills to their toolbox as they earn their degree.

Looking ahead, what excites you most about the future of the program and the impact your graduates are making in the field of public history?

We continue to attract a growing number of students across our graduate programs. I love hearing from our alumni as they move up in their careers, especially when they are able to network with our next generation of public historians that we are training. That connection well beyond graduation is so important in having an impact out there in the world.

Faculty Spotlight: Carroll Van West

Director, Center for Historic Preservation

Looking back on your decades of leadership with the Center for Historic Preservation, what accomplishments or projects stand out to you as the most meaningful?

Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area. This 25-year partnership with the National Park Service has allowed the center to serve Tennessee communities large and small, contribute to the reclamation of a “lost” Civil War battlefield in Franklin, and emphasize the war’s important outcomes of Emancipation and Reconstruction. Only a handful of Tennessee places have not been touched by the program and its partnerships. Plus, working with the program has trained a generation of public historians.

Preservation of Landmarks of the Civil Rights Movement in the South. No other university has had both the honor and opportunity to work with communities to preserve so many nationally significant Civil Rights landmarks. The projects began in 1998–2000 at Memphis with the Glenview neighborhood and First Baptist Church, Lauderdale, and then moved to the Civil Rights Historic District and Bethel Baptist Church in Birmingham. Those were followed by landmarks in Macon County, Alabama (such as Shiloh Rosenwald School associated with the Tuskegee Syphilis Study); Selma (Tabernacle Baptist Church, Jackson House, and Burwell-Dinkins House); and Montgomery, Alabama (First Baptist Church and Capitol Hill historic district). The work has come full circle, back to Memphis, where I am co-authoring, with Katie Randall, a former M.A. student who is now a preservation expert, the National Historic Landmark nomination for the Lorraine Motel and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Preservation of the Cherokee Trail of Tears. This work began in 2004 and has allowed the center to work closely with the Cherokee Nation and the Eastern Band of Cherokee, with the invaluable support of

Left: Carroll Van West with several students he mentored

Right: Carroll Van West, director of MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, and graduate students at the West Gaines School in Lawrence County, 2023



“The legacy is most certainly the students.”

the National Park Service, to research, survey, and preserve parts of the historic trails and the buildings and structures that survive from that time. We have helped to create two museums to help tell the story of the trail in Tennessee along with numerous wayside interpretive panels in state parks, federal lands, and private lands. And MTSU students have gained invaluable experience in field research.

Tennessee Century Farms program. Recognizing historic family farms across Tennessee is my oldest program, which began on my first day at the center in 1985. It will end up being the program I work on at my last day next summer as I complete a book, sponsored by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, on the Frontier Century Farms of Tennessee. The program includes properties from every county, and preserving rural Tennessee history has been a great joy for 40-plus years.

As you prepare for retirement, what do you hope your legacy will be—for the program, for the field of public history, and for the communities your work has impacted?

The legacy is most certainly the students. They will keep the projects alive and meaningful for another generation, at least, because they endorse our basic philosophy—“It is not about you, it is about them”—and the service as historians that we can provide to all sorts of communities. Over 200 graduate students have worked with me, and, after their graduation, the programs they created and the projects they have pursued have enriched this nation in so many ways. I will be forever grateful for the privilege they conveyed to me by choosing to pursue historic preservation and public history at MTSU.



Student Spotlight: JoBeth Scarlett

M.S. in Horse Science,
Equine Education

JoBeth Scarlett completed her B.S. in Animal Science at Middle Tennessee State University May 2023. Her involvement with MTSU's Equestrian Team and Stock Horse Team led her to pursue her master's.

Scarlett joined Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College in August 2025 as a coach for the Equestrian Team, as well as Equine Instructor.



What inspired you to pursue your M.S. in Horse Science with a concentration in Equine Education, and how did that shape your career goals?

My coaches, Ariel Higgins and Andrea Rego, were the driving force behind my decision to pursue my M.S. I entered college planning to become a veterinarian, but midway through my undergraduate studies, I realized that path no longer fit. While I loved the field, something was missing. Around that time, I began stepping into leadership roles on both the Equestrian Team and the Stock Horse Team, where I discovered a genuine passion for teaching and coaching. After several conversations with about my long-term goals, it became clear that pursuing an M.S. in Horse Science with a concentration in Equine Education would provide the hands-on teaching experience and deeper industry understanding I needed to prepare for a collegiate coaching and teaching career.

Looking back, what has been the most meaningful experience during your time in the Horse Science program—whether through coaching, your graduate project, or working with students?

I've had many meaningful experiences, two stand out most.

The first was in my very first semester as a graduate student, while serving as a teaching assistant for Andrea's Advanced Western Competition class. We were working on reining maneuvers, and Andrea asked me to work one-on-one with a student. That session became the first time I guided a student through to a true "lightbulb moment," where everything suddenly clicked. It was an incredibly rewarding experience that confirmed my passion for teaching.

The second was at IHSA Nationals in 2024. That year, I worked closely with Monica Braunwalder, our team's Beginner rider. Her drive to succeed matched our team's energy, making her a joy to teach. At Nationals, she had an outstanding ride and won the National Champion title in Team Beginner Horsemanship, while our Western Team earned its second consecutive National Championship. Seeing her success and knowing the role I played in her preparation was deeply rewarding—it solidified my commitment to this career path.

As you begin your new role at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, what are you most excited about bringing from your MTSU experience into your coaching and teaching career?

I'm excited to bring the perspective I gained at MTSU into the strong culture already established here. Under Sarah Kenderdine's leadership, the team has developed a solid foundation, and I look forward to contributing to that culture while helping the program grow even stronger.

I am equally excited to join a department filled with outstanding professionals in the Equine program. I look forward to helping shape the future of our industry by mentoring students and preparing them for success.

"I look forward to helping shape the future of our industry..."



Total Graduate Studies Enrollment
2452

Where Our Students Are From

Tennessee
82.2%

Out of State (34 states)
6.6%

International (43 countries)
11.2%

International Enrollment by Country

India: 19.2%	Vietnam: 3.3%
Nigeria: 18.8%	South Korea: 2.2%
Nepal: 11.2%	Turkey: 2.2%
China: 9.1%	Saudi Arabia: 1.8%
Ghana: 6.9%	Other: 21%
Bangladesh: 4.3%	

Out-of-State Enrollment by State

Georgia: 14.2%	Texas: 4.9%
Alabama: 9.3%	Indiana: 4.3%
Kentucky: 8.6%	North Carolina: 4.3%
Florida: 8.0%	New York: 3.7%
Mississippi: 6.2%	Other: 36.4%

Top 5 Programs (by YoY Growth)

150%

1
M.S.
Exercise
Physiology

136%

2
M.S.
Cybersecurity
Management

131%

3
Ed.S.
Administration
and Supervision

114%

4
M.S.
Athletic
Training

85%

5
M.P.H.
Public
Health



Opportunities and Deadlines

Lightning Track Virtual Sessions (invite only)
Oct. 7, 10 a.m. Oct. 8, 3 p.m.

Graduate Faculty Applications and Curriculum Proposal Deadlines (for 2026–27 catalog)
Oct. 8, Nov. 12, and Jan. 14

Lightning Track Reception
Oct. 21 (tentative)

Grad Council Meetings
Oct. 24 • Dec. 5

Thesis/Dissertation Student Workshop Nov. 5

New GA Hiring – Summary Form and EPAF Deadline for Spring 2026
Nov. 15

Fall 2025 Thesis/Dissertation Priority Deadline
Nov. 18

Domestic Grad Student Health Insurance Enrollment Period for Spring 2026
Dec.1, 2025–Jan. 28, 2026

Student Travel Funds
Rolling deadline until all funds have been allocated

News and Updates

Three New Graduate Programs Welcome First Students

We're excited to officially celebrate the launch of three new graduate programs, each designed to meet the evolving needs of today's workforce. These programs welcomed their first students in Fall 2025.

Digital Media, M.S.

This fully online, one-year accelerated program is designed for media professionals seeking advanced skills in social media, search engine optimization, and strategic communications.



Biomedical Sciences, M.S.

Created in collaboration with industry partners, this 30-credit, non-thesis program addresses critical health care workforce needs in Greater Nashville and across Tennessee. The degree can be completed in a year.



Project Management, M.S.

Ideal for professionals in IT, health care, construction, and finance, this program offers practical training in project planning, risk management, and stakeholder communication using both PMP and Agile methodologies.



We're proud to offer these new pathways and look forward to the impact they'll have on our students and the communities they serve.

Graduate Council Leadership – AY 2025–2026

The 2025–2026 Graduate Council will resume meetings this September. We're pleased to welcome



Frank Lambert,
Ph.D.



Patrick Richey,
Ph.D.

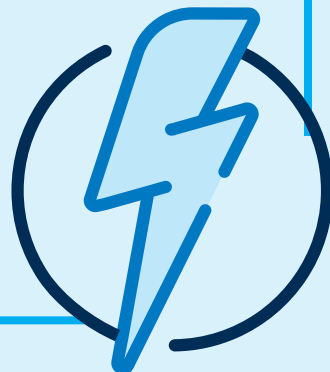
Frank Lambert (Library Science) as chair and Patrick Richey (Communication Studies) as vice-chair. Their leadership will help guide curriculum review, policy decisions, and continued excellence in graduate education at MTSU.

Lightning Track

After a successful pilot, Lightning Track is launching campuswide for the 2025–26 academic year. This accelerated pathway is designed for high-achieving seniors who plan to continue their educations at MTSU. Eligible students graduating with a 3.0 GPA or higher receive guaranteed admission into participating graduate programs with no application, entrance exam, or fee required.

Over the past year, we worked closely with graduate advisors to gather feedback and refine the process. With all components now in place, 36 degree options are participating, with more being added.

Lightning Track offers a clear, low-friction path to graduate study for students and strengthens enrollment, retention, and program efficiency.



Voluntary Graduate Student Health Insurance Launches

MTSU launched a voluntary health insurance plan for domestic graduate students enrolled in 6 or more credit hours, starting Fall 2025. In partnership with Wellfleet Student, the plan offers comprehensive coverage at a competitive group rate. This supports the well-being, recruitment, and retention of graduate students. Enrollment began at the end of July 2025. International students will continue with required insurance managed by International Affairs.



WELLFLEET

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STATE UNIVERSITY.

College of Graduate Studies

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