“Even after 40 years in music as both a session musician and producer for well-known artists, I myself had never written songs and always feared songwriting. Professor Odie Blackmon’s Songwriting Practicum changed everything for me; it gave me loads of confidence as a writer and showed me how to collaborate with others. Each week Professor Blackmon—along with top songwriting pros—appraised our work and offered tips and suggestions for improvement. Then we produced a recording session with top session players as our new songs were recorded for the very first time.

“The Songwriting Practicum was easily my most exhilarating college learning experience ever. Period.”
–Steve Fishell, Grammy-winning producer and 2016 Songwriting Practicum student.
Under the leadership of Beverly Keel, Dean of the College of Media and Entertainment, the Department of Recording Industry has consistently been recognized by Billboard as one of the best music business schools in the country, as well as by other nationally renowned professional publications. The department’s goal is for students to become grounded in music business knowledge and then professionally launched by innovative programs like the Songwriting Center that put students’ knowledge to the test of practice and performance to better prepare them to take a place in the music industry.

The Songwriting Center, led by Grammy-nominated associate professor Odie Blackmon, is a core component of the department. The new Songwriting Center in the Miller Education Center at MTSU will house a state of the art hub for musical creativity. The Commercial Songwriting curriculum is rich in music industry history, technical skill-building, and real-world learning opportunities brought to MTSU’s students by experienced faculty, including seasoned guest lecturers and internship experiences. Through Blackmon’s innovative Music Row in Murfreesboro program, students are able to work with and learn from scores of professional songwriters and musicians.

During the Songwriting Practicum, student songwriters work in recording studios with professionals to fine-tune their creations and record them.

Among our adjunct faculty members who bring real-world experience and insights to our classrooms are Grammy Award winners Reid Shippen and Torrance “Street Symphony” Esmond, both MTSU alumni. Recent artistic additions to our adjunct faculty include Veteran artist, Dez Dickerson, guitarist with Prince and the Revolution, will teach Performance Skills. Grammy-nominated No. 1 Hit songwriter, Shelly Peiken, will teach a Pop-Rock Songwriting Workshop. Multi-Platinum Songwriter and Producer, Doug DeAngelis, will teach Songwriting for Film, TV, and Gaming.

Courses in the Commercial Songwriting concentration of MTSU’s Recording Industry major include:

- History of the Recording Industry
- Understanding the Nashville Music Business—Past and Future
- Audio Fundamentals
- Survey of Audio Technology
- Entertainment Intellectual Property I
- Entertainment Intellectual Property II
- Commercial Musicianship
- Commercial Songwriting
- Music Publishing
- Advanced Commercial Songwriting
- Songwriting Instrumentation
- Songwriting Practicum
- Introduction to Popular Music Studies
- History of Country Music
- Artist Management
- Performance Skills for Artists and Songwriters
- Recording Studio Techniques
- Critical Listening
- Music Publishing Administration
- Recording Industry Internship: Songwriting

More than 20 additional courses are available in our curriculum.
Middle Tennessee State University recognizes the outstanding educational programs offered in Recording Industry. The nation’s eyes were focused on MTSU in 2019 when the University was dubbed a “Grammy-winner factory” as part of an NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt report.

By Spring 2022, the Commercial Songwriting program will move to its new home in MTSU’s Miller Education Center. The new Songwriting Center will feature state of the art songwriting classrooms along with private writing studios where students can hone their skills and their compositions. At the core of the center will be a welcoming area/lounge/gathering space encouraging collaborative conversation and productive downtime. In the new Songwriting Center, students and faculty will work, study, and create in well-equipped, newly renovated, and furnished spaces dedicated to the craft of songwriting.
MTSU Alumni Professionals
(partial listing)

Hillary Scott
Chris Young
Luke Laird
Tay Keith
Terrence "Street" Symphony" Esmond
Eric Paslay
Lauren Branson
Jody Williams
Jessi Alexander
Erin Enderlin
Odie Blackmon
Isaiah Rashad
Dave Barnes
Sharon Van Etten
Julien Baker
Laura Rodger
Jeremi Richardson
Sean McConnell
Mitchel Tenpenny
Bret Eldridge
Michael Hardy
Sam Hunt
Amy Lee- Evanescence
Bobby Taylor
Brice Long
Troy Verges
Jessie Alexander
Matt Mahaffey
Josh Kear
George S. Clinton
Bobby Grubic
Aaron Raitiere
Anderson East
Jake Powell
Jason Duke
Peejay
James Porte