Yes there's been an app for that since 2011, thanks to MTSU students

When MTSU Computer Science major John Peden tells people he works on the University’s mobile app, they sometimes assume he is an intern or student employee working for the developer.

“They think that maybe we’re working underneath the developers, but I explain that we pretty much do everything,” Peden said. “We have guidance . . . but other than that, students started the app, we maintain it, we add features, we de-bug it, we push it to the store, we manage all of the accounts, we work on the servers that back the app. So it’s real-world, professional experience working on an enterprise app.

“And when people know that they say, ‘that’s actually really, really good.’”

Peden is leader of a group of 6–10 students who are carrying on a seven-year tradition at MTSU.

In 2011, a group of MTSU Computer Science students approached the Information Technology Division with a proposal to develop a mobile application for the University, volunteering to work on the app.

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ITD leadership listened to the proposal and thought it was a great idea.

If the idea worked, not only could it provide an opportunity for the students to get real IT work experience but it also could produce a viable app for the University instead of MTSU buying an off-the-shelf mobile app product.

These student volunteers soon turned into a formal group employed by ITD as the MTSU Mobile Development Team.

Members of the 2017–18 MTSU Mobile App team are, l-r: Nzubechukwu Molokwu, team leader John Peden, Bishoy Boktor, Madison Karrh, Kate Lovett, and Jesse Offei-Nkansah. New members added to replace those who will be graduating this year are (not pictured): Lucas Remedios, Justin Barker, Elijah Dangerfield, and Thai Do.

See MTSU app on page 2
The workload is divided up based on experience, interest, and time available.

“We all kind of support each other because we all have varying school schedules,” said app team member Kate Lovett, also a senior Computer Science major. “Say there’s one week where I have a big project and a whole bunch of exams so I might not put in as much time. So we all kind of help each other out and work harder one week, and maybe a little less so the next week.”

Being part of the team is a source of pride and a great resume enhancer.

Bishoy Boktor, a junior on the app team, said he was visiting another major university recently and learned its mobile app had been developed by paid professionals.

“I think we should wear it as a badge of pride. Their mobile app was done by professional developers and it is not as good as ours. The fact we are working on this app and it is student-led . . . and you look at all of the other apps done by professional developers for universities, and ours is very similar if not just as good,” Boktor said.

“We know the kinds of things students really want out of an app that maybe a professional developer might only think of major things, like classes, a map.”

While the first team members have long since graduated and moved on to great jobs in the workforce, the team has continued on each year with more MTSU student developers.

As members graduate from MTSU, the existing team participates in interviewing and hiring the replacement team members.

That took place before the start of Christmas break, as four new members were brought on board to replace current members as they graduate.

The experienced team members will share their knowledge with those new ones and work to get them up to speed on the development environment.

Each iteration of the team has continued to maintain the University’s mobile app and develop new features for both iOS and Android devices. Much time has to be spent making sure the app can function with each newly released operating system on both platforms.

The team conducts its own meetings with campus constituents to discuss new projects and analyze needs.

The team meets weekly with Lisa Rogers, ITD’s senior associate vice president for Information Technology, to review project progress and discuss plans for new features and improvements.

The 2017–18 team members are Peden, Jesse Offei-Nkansah, Bishoy Boktor, Kate Archer, Madison Karrh, and Nzubechukwu Molokwu. New members brought on in January to replace current members as they graduate are Lucas Remedios, Justin Barker, Elijah Dangerfield, and Thai Do.

Remedios, a sophomore, is excited about the opportunity to join the team after making the cut out of 30 students interviewed.

Even interviewing for the team is a great real-world experience, members said.

“I came in for a technical interview, so the team members basically asked programming questions and they put me on a whiteboard marker and I had a little whiteboard marker and I was solving the problems on the whiteboard. I think it was a really cool experience because the interview was conducted by students—it’s really the team picking who they want,” Remedios said.

Lovett said the team is always looking for improvements and additions. Lately she has spent a lot of time making the app more accessible with dynamic text and voice to text features.

“Last fall I went through several interviews and they were all very impressed and interested in the fact that we have a mobile app that is run by students. I had one company tell me they keep an eye on the MTSU student mobile team because they like the people who come out of it,” Lovett said. “It catches people’s attention, which is really, really helpful when graduating and joining several other people in interviews.”
“Like” it or not: MTSU sets up Facebook group for parents, along with students

“Like” it or not MTSU students, your parents are on Facebook and they are probably talking about you . . .

MTSU has organized student Facebook groups for years. But what you may not know is the University also has a dedicated group for your parents on the social media networking site.

“I think it is a really good tool, especially for parents if this is their first experience with higher education . . . I think it has been really beneficial to have that network of parents. This is just another way for them to actually feel they are connected to other parents and the University,” said Lydia Cayton, coordinator of New Student and Family Programs, who oversees the Parent and Family Association Facebook group.

The MTSU Parent and Family Association has administered the parents’ Facebook group since about 2009 and it now has about 4,600 members, Cayton said. Unlike the students’ groups, which are organized by graduating class, the parents’ group consists of any parent of a current or former student.

“We don’t take parents out of the group once their student graduates; they can stay if they want. Some of them choose to leave, but a lot of them will stay and give advice and answer questions from the experienced parent perspective,” Cayton said.

“It is a great place to connect with other parents and connect with staff on campus where your student is at school.”

Administrators limit access strictly to MTSU student parents to give them freedom to interact. No student is given access to the parents’ Facebook group and vice versa. Students can get information posted on the parent site, such as campus events or volunteer/employment opportunities, but it must come through one of the advisors, she said.

They also control access by other outside parties to prevent marketing on the site, she said.

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They also control access by other outside parties to prevent marketing on the site, she said.

Popular topics include financial aid and registration advice, finding a roommate for their child, and even helping their student connect with support or interest groups on campus. Cayton said she and several administrators monitor the site to answer questions and clear up any miscoumunication if needed, but most of the time the parent-users police the site themselves.

And don’t worry, students, there hasn’t been any attempted matchmaking and only a limited amount of embarrassing bragging, she said.

“As far as any embarrassment stuff, there are parents who will get on there and say ‘Imagine if our children saw this and remember we’re all experiencing this in a different way,'” Cayton said.

Debra Sells, vice president for Student Affairs and vice provost for Enrollment and Academic Services, and Laurie Witherow, associate vice provost for Admissions and Enrollment Services, are among those who regularly monitor the site and will post responses as needed.

“They give much more detailed conversations on how do you support your student, what is the best way to get in touch with counselors, the best way to handle situations. We try to give them all the resources they need,” Cayton said. “A lot of times parents will police themselves but if it gets really bad, someone on the administrative side might step in.”
MTSU rules for Facebook group use

MTSU's Facebook pages are intended to be a place for civil discussion and sharing among those interested in our institution.

We encourage interaction from Facebook users, but we are not responsible for comments or wall postings made by visitors to the page. Also, comments from visitors express their personal opinions and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the University.

MTSU asks that people making comments on the page show respect for their fellow users by ensuring the discussion remains civil, especially since Facebook allows individuals 13 and over to join.

Comments are also subject to Facebook’s Terms of Use, as well as these University policies:

- **MTSU's Ethics and Code of Conduct - Policy No. I:01:25**
- **MTSU's Harassment Policy - Policy No. I:01:22**

MTSU students are also subject to the **Student Code of Conduct**.

Our page administrators reserve the right to remove any comment or post, photos, links, profile pictures, user names, or page names at their discretion, without notice or explanation if such are deemed contrary to these standards. However, these administrators assume no responsibility to monitor this Facebook page for this purpose.

We also do not permit any messages selling off-campus products or services, or messages that promote commercial, political, or other ventures. However, at the discretion of the page administrators, we may permit messages about products and services offered by University organizations and entities.

Facebook encourages all users to utilize the “Report” links when they find content contrary to the standards set forth above.

Additional rules apply to posts involving prospective student-athletes. Please see the **“NCAA Compliance”** section on GoBlueRaiders.com, the official site for MTSU Athletics, for details.

If you have questions about the MTSU Facebook Page, please email our page administrators at socialmedia@mtsu.edu.

It's often a “great way to get that quick response from faculty and staff,” she said.

“A lot of times we have parents who will ask questions like ‘What is the best place to live for students?’ ‘What’s this apartment complex like?’ ‘What is this professor like?’” she said.

If there is a complaint about a professor the advisors recommend contacting the department chair rather than disseminating such criticism publicly.

The site can be very valuable in keeping parents informed if they have any public safety concerns—especially those who live far out of state. She said the administrators do a great job of dispelling rumors and “sharing correct information . . . to help them calm down and reassure them.”

The message to parents is, “If anything happens, we will send out notifications and if you hear anything else just check with us or just kind of ignore it because anything official will come from someone from the University.”

Most of the time the topics are much more practical, she said.

“A lot of times too they’ll talk about ‘My student needs a ride to the airport,’ or ‘My student is from Atlanta, and is there anyone who can give them a ride?’” Cayton said. She added that most parents appreciate MTSU’s Facebook pages and say they wish every university offered that service.

“A lot of parents will say ‘I have students at other schools, and they don’t have this tool,’” Cayton said.

First MTSU Facebook “class”

Meanwhile, students graduating this spring are part of an MTSU social media milestone—the University's first graduating Facebook group.

The student Facebook groups are set up per graduating class, with the first one put together for the Class of 2018 in early 2014.

“For students, it’s just a resource for a variety of information. As students encounter academic obstacles throughout the year they will share their experiences and seek advice from their peers,” said Nathan Haynes, associate director of Marketing and Technical Support in Undergraduate Admissions.

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“Rush rules!”

Well almost, when it comes to the most popular video tutorials on Lynda.com at MTSU. As the spring semester begins, don’t overlook this valuable learning resource available to students any time with an amazing array of tutorial topics.

That includes a recording tutorial that focuses on classic prog-rock group Rush. A recent usage report for MTSU covering the last three months of 2017 showed nearly 4,500 users on campus had viewed 41,485 videos, with average viewing time of 24 minutes.

The top 5 courses were:

- Excel 2016 Essential Training
- Tableau 10 Essential Training
- Pandas for Data Science
- Photoshop CC 2017 One-on-One: Fundamentals
- Live Sound Engineering Techniques: On Tour with Rush . . . what?

Frank Baird, assistant professor in the MTSU Recording Industry program, and Eben Powell, adjunct professor in the department, are part of the reason for its popularity on campus.

“It is the only real video that discusses Sound Reinforcement or Live Sound,” said Baird. “I toured with Brent Carpenter, the author, and worked for that particular sound company, Clair Global. It’s as real as it gets. The video defines topics not necessarily covered in class and at the arena rock level.”

Baird used the tutorial as part of his curriculum, assigning the students to watch it and write a two-page review of it.

“It addresses digital console programming, rigging, teamwork, collaboration and support of musicians to name a few,” Baird said. “In terms of outside-of-class learning and not having to read a textbook, this particular Lynda video conveys an attitude and demonstrates professional behavior. This is the one Lynda video that I feel addresses the topic.”

This Lynda.com tutorial follows sound engineer Brent Carpenter on tour with classic rockers Rush. Here, he explains the complex process of miking the unique drum set of legendary Rush drummer Neal Peart for a live arena show. The "On Tour With Rush" video tutorial has been one of the most popular at MTSU in recent months.

The video tutorial follows Carpenter on tour with Rush, as he demonstrates what it is like to be a live sound engineer for the legendary three-member rock group. The video shadows the Rush sound crew as they prepare for a Denver show on their Clockwork Angels tour, performing for 12,000 fans.

Carpenter explains how he and the crew set up the rigging and amp racks, and fly the speaker arrays to achieve a well-balanced stereo sound that reaches every seat in the arena.

He shows how he sets up his console to mix the onstage sound for Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson, and Neil Peart and configures the in-ear monitor system and balance of audience mikes for each member of the band.
Lynda.com, continued from page 5

"Imagine, if you will, when you went to work in the morning, you had to take your office out of a tractor-trailer, set it up, assemble it, and then at the end of your eight- or nine- or 10 hour day, you had to put it all back into boxes, and put it right back into another truck to let it meet you in the next city," Carpenter says.

The tutorial illustrates how Lynda.com can be used to supplement other classroom materials at MTSU, either as an official part of the curriculum or for continuing education—for students and staff.

Powell has used it in 3010 Audio fundamentals and 4330 Sound reinforcement classes. "The fundamentals class is one of the first classes a student takes in the process of gaining candidacy in the (Recording Industry) program," Powell said. "Some of the 3010 classes can be very large, up to and sometimes over 100 students."

Videos like this one can add an extra dimension for students by showing them the practical along with the technical.

"Lynda.com allows students to see into a process, being on tour, in a way that was not possible a few years ago," Powell said. "These videos were chosen as part of the introduction to the audio workplace and may help the student make decisions about future classes and even career paths that they may want to pursue. In a short time, the student gets to see a complete day in the life of a touring professional and what each job or position on the tour entails."

Powell asks students to watch the videos before class "and then we can discuss the content and ask and answer questions without using the limited time we have in the classroom."

"Using Lynda.com is a fantastic way to learn anything, and I mean anything. It is a great asset to students and I am very happy that MTSU has given students access to this fantastic resource," Powell added.

And Powell said it's not just students who benefit: "I am learning how to cook and watching videos on photography and video editing."

Facebook continued from page 4

"It's the most effective way we've found to mass communicate with students while also allowing collaboration from the entire class of students."

Like with the parents, it is a closed Facebook group, not a Facebook page. While Haynes is involved in setting up and adding users to the group, others are more involved in the moderation and collaboration.

Admitted students are invited to the Facebook group via the MTSU email communication plan, Haynes said, and administrators vet requests to prevent spam.

Like with all social media, he encourages students to remember that what goes out on FB can't ever be fully taken back.

"Collaborate, ask questions, and engage in the community—that's the whole idea of putting these Facebook groups in place," he said.
MTSU will move to the new look and feel of Desire2Learn (D2L) called “Daylight” this summer.

The normal functions of D2L will work exactly as they always have but the interface will now be mobile-friendly and respond to the size of the screen on the device it is being displayed.

Those using phones and tablets will have a much-improved experience. Chances are that we may continue to reference it as D2L for a while even though the new name Brightspace has given the product is “Daylight.”

The D2L “My Home” screen will have the biggest change in appearance. The blue banner will no longer appear across the top of the screen.

Instead, simple icons or images will be available to navigate to courses and other D2L functions. Typical three-line menu icons may appear on smaller devices for navigating the interface. The “My Courses” widget will have graphical images for courses along with the course name and start date information.

For instructors designing courses, course banner images may be used within the “Course Home” page. Again, simple icons will appear across the top of the course.

Summer 2018 look

For those who do not use the MTSU standard navigation (Course Home, Content, Assessments, Communication, Help), the course navigation will become one line of options.

In the current D2L layout, faculty sometimes opt for several navigation options around the course header area; those will be combined to one long navigation if the MTSU standard navigation is not used.

Everyone should easily adapt to the new look and feel without much difficulty. D2L boasts that the new interface is modern, clean, and easy to follow.

Because D2L updates the system every month, small changes occur throughout the year to continually improve how D2L performs. Features like the new Accessibility checker and shuffling quiz questions are constantly being added to D2L's course resources to improve the experience for everyone.

“Daylight” is another avenue D2L is using to improve the experience on any device, by being responsive to the size screen on the device of the end user. Look for email and references to come during the spring for more detail as we prepare for “Daylight” at MTSU.

Student Technology Handbook available online

A digital version of the Technology Handbook for students is available on the ITD website.

Go to mtsu.edu/itd/publications.php.