Student tech work provides real-world stage to showcase IT skills

Torrance Bell Jr. has always enjoyed performing in front of an audience as a musician. In addition, from a young age he has enjoyed fixing tech problems by taking things apart and putting them back together.

Little did the MTSU junior know that working for ITD's Classroom Technology team would one day allow him to combine those things.

Torrance Bell Jr. says his time as an ITD Classroom Technology worker has helped him apply tech knowledge in challenging real-world situations, while learning other valuable skills such as customer service.

Bell recalled how he was sent to a classroom to help an instructor get a Smart Board interactive display working in order to start the class—while all the students were waiting and watching.

“I had to reach out to one of the full-time technicians and went through some steps and they helped me get it going again,” said Bell. “There was an awkward silence and everyone was, you know, looking at me, watching to see what I was doing and watching the board to see if it would work.”

When the digital whiteboard began working again there was even a little applause.

Bell is earning a degree in Engineering Technology with a concentration in computer engineering and minors in Computer Science in mathematics. But in addition to that, he has taken advantage of every such opportunity to earn certifications and gain real-world experience like customer service and being part of a team.

“Everything just comes together when you’ve learned something and then you do it—there is the knowledge in your head about how it works, then there is actually making it work,” he said.

“It’s still a learning experience as well. I’m still learning stuff each and every day,” said Bell. “I’m always going to ask questions on how to resolve issues and learning to constantly build on that foundation in the technology world and audio-visual system world as well.”

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His non-tech interests including playing piano and marching as a member of the drum line in the MTSU Band of Blue. Bell said he had to take a break from that for a while, but plans to march one more season with the band.

He also has earned certifications including Dell and Computer Fundamentals, and is working toward a COMP-TIA certification.

Bell’s interest in technology began early in life, when he decided to figure out how some of his toys and gadgets worked.

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Many people know that OneDrive is Microsoft’s Cloud storage service for saving documents, photos, and small videos. But they don’t know that OneDrive also can be used as online backup or to transfer files.

It allows for easy sharing of documents between MTSU Microsoft account holders and can upload files as large as 20 Gigabytes.

OneDrive can be accessed through the MTSU portal page https://portal.office.com. Log in with your MTSU email address and you will see a list of online apps such as Word, PowerPoint, and Excel. Here you also will find OneDrive, identified by the cloud icon.

It can be used right away to upload documents or images by simply clicking into it and pressing Upload, or dragging and dropping the files into the window.

A lesser-known use is configuring your Microsoft Office account to save to OneDrive like a University share drive. Simply choose Add a Place, select OneDrive, then log in with your University credentials. OneDrive can also be downloaded and installed as a stand-alone application.

MTSU OneDrive accounts are 1 terabyte in size and expand to 5 terabytes when needed. That storage capacity obviously suggests a location to back up many files, but it is designed to do even more.

Click on the Shared link on the left-hand navigation and you will find folders for Files Shared With Me and Files I Shared. There also is an option to create Shared Libraries for group collaboration.

Some instructors use it to receive documents from students, particularly when those files are too large to receive as an attachment or be uploaded to Dropbox.

Likewise, students can save files to OneDrive to share with instructors.

Another use of OneDrive is as a replacement for your computer’s My Documents folder. OneDrive exceeds the My Document’s folders usefulness by being available from anywhere. If your documents are stored in OneDrive they will be accessible through any device that has a web browser including phones and tablets.

Perhaps the best benefit of using OneDrive is that since the files live on the server they cannot be lost or corrupted if your computer fails. You needn’t worry about hard drive failure if the files are saved in the cloud.

While it is fair to be concerned about the security of your files, MTSU uses Multi-factor Authentication, which has made OneDrive more secure.

If you are interested in using OneDrive but have questions, contact the ITD Help Desk at 615-898-5345 or through email at help@mtsu.edu.
New password policy has no expirations

As part of ongoing efforts to improve user experience with student account passwords, ITD has implemented a new password policy for the campus.

As of November 2021, mandatory password expirations for student accounts are no longer required. This means you will no longer be required to change your MTSU Active Directory (aka FSA or Single Sign-On/SSO) password every 180 days. In addition, the minimum password length increased from 8 to a minimum of 12 characters.

This change in password policy is now possible due to the implementation of multi-factor authentication to protect accounts, in addition to requiring longer passwords and recommending passphrases. As a result of this increase in security, after you set your new password, it will be good for the life of your account. The only exception to this would be if ITD received a report that your account had been compromised.

As of Nov. 17, 2021, you were required to change your password one last time to ensure it meets the minimum character requirement. Please note that although the minimum required number of characters will be 12, we encourage a minimum of 15 characters.

You may also use a passphrase, if it meets the necessary complexity requirements, which will be explained below.

What is the new password requirement?
The new password must be a minimum of 12 characters in length (but we recommend 15+). It also must meet 3 of the 4 following requirements:

- Must contain at least one special character
- Must contain at least one lowercase letter
- Must contain at least one uppercase letter
- Must contain at least one number

The password cannot include:

- Any portion of your name
- Any portion of your M#

If you need assistance, contact the ITD Service Desk at 615-898-5345 or by email at helpdesk@mtsu.edu.

ITD equipment loan program available

ITD has a limited number of Chromebooks, Wi-Fi hotspots, and laptop computers available for students to check out on a first-come, first-served basis for use during a semester.

To make a request to borrow equipment, go to the webpage mtsu.edu/itd/equipment-request/.

For more information contact the Help Desk at 615-898-5345 or help@mtsu.edu.

Nearly 60 MTSU students participated in the seventh annual “HackMT” event held Jan. 28-30. The “hackathon” and project expo, hosted by MTSU’s Department of Computer Science, challenges teams to invent new web platforms, mobile apps and gadgets over 36 hours. MTSU’s Data Science Club created a way to search nonprofit organizations nationwide, earning first-place honors. For more details including winners visit mtsunews.com/tech-driven-students-use-hackmt-to-bolster-resumes/.
Voting registration, ID info for students

The 1998 Higher Education Act requires all post-secondary institutions to distribute information to students concerning voter registration. Tennessee residents who wish to register to vote may do so by visiting this website: https://sos.tn.gov/elections.

To vote in Tennessee, you must be registered at least 30 days prior to the election date. Upon receiving and approving the voter registration application form, the Rutherford County Election Commission will assign a voting precinct (where the voter will vote on election day based on residence).

Voter Registration applications are available on campus at the MTSU Student Union Information Desk or by visiting the Rutherford County Election Commission website at https://election.rutherfordcountytn.gov/. Additional information about registering to vote, upcoming elections, and MTSU student voting rates from the American Democracy Project may be found online at mtsu.edu/amerdem/index.php.

Students with questions about any election process should call the Rutherford County Election Commission at 615-898-7743, or email inquiries to election@rutherfordcounty.org. The Election Commission office is located at 1 Public Square South, Room 103, Murfreesboro, TN 37130.

Individuals may register to vote if they:

- Are a U.S. citizen
- Will be 18 years of age on/or before the next election
- Are a resident of Tennessee
- Have not been convicted of a felony or, if convicted, had voting rights restored by a court order or pardon

The following IDs may be used even if expired:

- Tennessee driver license with your photo
- United States Passport
- Photo ID issued by the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security
- Photo ID issued by the federal or Tennessee state government
- United States Military photo ID
- Tennessee handgun carry permit with your photo

Photo IDs that aren't issued by the federal or Tennessee state government are NOT acceptable. This includes university IDs, county or city issued photo IDs, such as library cards, and photo IDs issued by other states.

Want to keep student records private?

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords students certain rights regarding their education records. MTSU Policy 500, Access to Education Records, outlines those rights, defines related terms, and explains the circumstances under which MTSU may release personally identifiable information.

Find more info at mtsu.edu/policies/student-affairs/500.php.

The following information may be provided to any requesting party: student name, city of permanent place of residence, photograph or video when related to a MTSU activity, birth year, major field of study, enrollment status (full-time, part-time, withdrawn), student level (freshman, sophomore, etc.), dates of attendance, degree status (expected graduation date and/or dates conferred), university-recognized honors and awards and dates received, participation in officially recognized activities/sports, including weight and height of members of athletic teams, and the most recent educational agency or institution attended by the student.

The following information may only be provided to requesters for a legitimate educational purpose or in relation to a MTSU activity: email addresses (campus and personal), mailing addresses (campus, primary, and permanent), and university ID Number (M#).

If you want request that no information concerning you be released to anyone, you must complete a Non-Release of Directory Information form, which can be found at mtsu.edu/one-stop/docs/nonrelease.pdf. The non-release directive will remain in effect until you notify the Registrar’s Office in writing to release it, and it prevents directory information from being released, except as noted in the Access to Education Records policy.

Students also may indicate they do not wish to receive solicitations, offers, or other advertisements by mail or otherwise for the issuance of credit cards based on being listed in the printed or online directory. An asterisk will be added to the directory after your name to indicate you do not wish to receive these solicitations. Instructions for opting out can be found at mtsu.edu/resources/students/cc.php.
"As a kid I liked to work on stuff and figure it out by breaking it down and taking a look inside of it," he said. "Just growing up I just had a curiosity that brought me into technology and it has been steadily evolving over the years."

Bell said he would recommend the STA program to any student interested in the tech field.

"I'm learning stuff now that I can see myself working within in future. It's giving me the experience hands on, as well as obtaining the education I need," Bell said.

His career plans are flexible starting out, but he definitely has a goal in mind.

"I want to start somewhere to gain knowledge wherever I can get it, in whatever opportunity arises, but later down the line I want to branch out and maybe try to start my own company," he said. "I'm interested in all aspects—repair, programming, software, hardware. I'm looking at all sides of it."

Working with the ITD classroom and audiovisual team has helped him gain a skill that can't really be taught in class—working on deadline pressure for people who can't do their job unless he does his.

"Sometimes we have to go in to the classroom to help the teachers," he said. "I can communicate and interact with professionals at that level. You never know what you might run into."

Bell joked that while many tech geeks are introverts and a little withdrawn, he is the opposite. He loves spending time with friends at MTSU.

"The diversity really was the main thing," he said. "I just came here and it just felt good to me, you know, and it's just stuck."

The Memphis native said family is also a big part of his life, something that has been driven home even more by the past two years of the COVID pandemic.

"You've got to cherish every moment we have the way the times are now, with what's going on in the world—every moment—because we're here one day and gone tomorrow," Bell said.

In his time away from work and study, he enjoys some gaming and returning to that childhood hobby.

"If I have a broken laptop, I still just take it apart and see what's wrong with it," he said.

It pays to help fellow students as a Student Technology Assistant. The STA program is designed to give students an opportunity to provide front-line assistance to computer lab and Help Desk users on a wide range of computing-related issues, with an emphasis on customer service.

The goal is for participating labs to become student-centered, technology-based learning environments where students, faculty, and staff can use the latest computer technology available on campus.

To work as an STA you must be enrolled as a full-time student in the fall and spring semesters. If a student is enrolled full time in the fall, he or she may work during the summer months without taking a summer class. (Exceptions may be made for graduating seniors.)

STAs are not allowed to work more than 28 hours per week. International and graduate students are limited to 20 hours per week. STAs are not allowed to work in any other department on campus while employed in any TAF-supported lab or at the ITD Help Desk.

The STA program consists of 3 Levels:

- **Level I** introduces common MTSU policies/procedures regarding workplace situations and how we make our services and labs available to students. This level also introduces basic programs you will be working with such as Microsoft Office 365. You will be expected to review the material, complete the exercises and submit assessments. NOTE: In most labs, completion of this level is required for continued employment.

- **Level II** introduces more advanced concepts for the programs you will use most often, such as Microsoft Office 365 Word and Excel. You will have the opportunity to prepare for and earn the Microsoft Office Specialist certification.

- **Level III** offers more advanced training on topics including Networking, Security, the Windows Operating System, and Programming Languages

For more info or to get started visit [mtsu.edu/sta/index.php](http://mtsu.edu/sta/index.php).