2030

Strategic Plan
College of Education

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

MIDDLE TENNESSEE
STATE UNIVERSITY.

Table of Contents

Letter from the Dean

To our college community members,

I am excited to share this strategic plan — the culmination of a year of dreaming, collaborating, and envisioning the future of our college. Shaped by your voices and the dedication of our entire college community, this plan serves as the roadmap for our future. Your input was invaluable, and your insights have allowed us to envision a future for the College of Education that builds on our dedication to excellence in every sector and among the individuals we serve.

Now more than ever, we are at a pivotal moment for higher education, especially for colleges of education. Despite the uncertainty we face, we are positioned for success thanks to our dedicated faculty and staff, students eager to advance and learn, loyal alumni and donors, and external partners committed to supporting the college. Throughout our history, the College of Education at Middle Tennessee State University has been a trusted source of excellence in Tennessee, preparing students to thrive and succeed in an ever-changing world. Through this strategic plan, we will continue to build on this legacy.

Education serves as the foundation that supports and empowers virtually every other discipline, making us true Difference Makers in our work. We are proud to be a college that approaches education holistically — preparing educators through traditional education programs while also developing leaders in K–12 education and higher education, counselors, and experts in foundational areas such as curriculum design, administration, and school improvement.

Recognizing that education extends beyond traditional classroom structures, we are equally proud of our role in preparing librarians, who provide vital, unhindered access to information, preserving and opening gateways to knowledge for individuals and communities. We are also committed to preparing researchers who generate new knowledge, inform practice, and contribute to innovation across educational settings.

Across each of these disciplines, we are united by our unwavering commitment to growth, learning, and supporting the pathways through which individuals build foundational critical thinking and analytical skills to specialize in their chosen fields. As the world of education continues to evolve, so too does our approach.
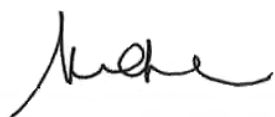
Over the past five years, both the field of education and the ways in which education is delivered have changed significantly. Among the most essential lessons from this period is the critical need for innovative, immersive teaching practices, the seamless integration of technology into learning environments, and a renewed commitment to expanding access to knowledge through creative educational approaches — guiding principles that apply to each of the disciplines housed within our College.

For years, our College has stood at the forefront of educational excellence, committed to teaching and preparing students to thrive in a changing world. This strategic plan outlines the areas we will prioritize to continue advancing our mission, honor our roots, and adapt to emerging trends in an evolving landscape.

Now is the time to look to the future, recognizing that while change is inevitable, we are charting our own course — one that will fulfill our pursuit of excellence across our state and beyond. Building on our historic commitment to education, we are embracing a broader, more comprehensive definition of what education means and working together to prepare the next generation of Difference Makers.

Thank you all once again for your dedication and continued engagement throughout this process. Your willingness to share insights and feedback has been instrumental in getting us to this point. I am excited for the future and optimistic about all we will accomplish together.

Sincerely,

Neporcha Cone, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Education | Middle Tennessee State University

Executive Summary

The College of Education at Middle Tennessee State University is entering a new chapter in its longstanding history of producing qualified, community-driven graduates. While industry demands and student interests are evolving, we stand at the threshold of meaningful and innovative change. As a leader in Tennessee, we are uniquely positioned to address today's challenges and equip our students, faculty, and staff to thrive in a modern, dynamic environment.

Led by a strategic planning steering committee comprised of college representatives, we engaged a variety of voices through surveys, interviews, focus groups, and listening sessions, capturing the thoughts and insights of our community. This plan reflects those voices and the collaboration from our faculty, staff, students, alumni, donors, and external partners who dedicated their time and efforts to shaping a meaningful, shared vision for our future.

The framework of our plan focuses on five core priorities, and includes the actions we will take to achieve them, and how we will measure our progress:

Deliver an Exemplary Student Experience

We are committed to providing our students with an exemplary experience that prepares them to become leaders in their fields and active, service-minded members of their communities. To deliver on this commitment, we will catalyze academic, personal, and professional development while enhancing our efforts in recruitment, communication, and student connection. We will also strengthen advising, engagement opportunities, and support structures to provide every student with the skills needed to succeed.

Expand Career-Focused Learning

In a rapidly evolving educational and industry landscape, we are committed to expanding learning opportunities available to our students across a breadth of formats and/or delivery options. Through the design and delivery of responsive, forward-thinking curriculum, we will align academic offerings with workforce demands and prepare all students for success in their ever-changing fields.

Advance Research Excellence and Impact

Aligned with the university's R2 classification, our focus is on enabling our faculty and students to pursue research excellence and impact within the College. We will prioritize increasing research productivity by enhancing support and resources for faculty, strengthening our research infrastructure and services, and expanding student participation and interest in research across the College.

Elevate Impact Through Strategic Partnerships

Our college has both the resources and legacy of service to elevate our impact across the community. By intentionally engaging with external stakeholders, we will increase our visibility and influence. This effort will center on strengthening our communication strategies to showcase the College's contributions to building and sustaining strategic partnerships with external organizations.

Foster a Strong, Collaborative, and Connected College Structure

Strengthening our internal culture will be critical to the success of this plan. To foster a strong, collaborative, and connected environment, we must intentionally lay the foundation for a culture rooted in wellness, professional growth, collaboration, and clear, consistent communication. To support this, we will standardize internal processes, enhance transparency, improve internal communication, and promote a healthy, supportive workplace for all faculty and staff.

Each priority area in this plan is guided by an overarching goal that sets the direction for our work and is supported by actionable strategies and measurable metrics to track our progress. The plan concludes with an implementation section that outlines the timeline for achieving each strategy, ensuring our efforts remain grounded in the College's mission to champion our students and community.

With this comprehensive plan in place, we are well-positioned to move forward and be true Difference Makers in Tennessee and beyond.

Introduction

The history of Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) is deeply rooted in a fundamental understanding of both the power of education and the responsibility of public institutions to serve the people of Tennessee. Our history dates to 1909, when the General Assembly established a General Education Fund to improve public education, effectively creating three teacher-training institutions, with one facility in each of the state's grand divisions. As a result, Middle Tennessee State Normal School opened its doors in Murfreesboro in 1911, offering a two-year program dedicated to preparing teachers.

Over the decades, this institution has evolved from a normal school to a teachers college, and eventually to a university, yet educator preparation remains a central focus. As the College of Education at MTSU, we carry forward that legacy with purpose and pride, understanding the profound responsibility we have to prepare professionals who will shape classrooms, schools, libraries, and communities across Tennessee and beyond. It is a responsibility we take seriously.

Throughout our time as a college, we have sought to live out MTSU's mission: to offer exceptional academic programs that prepare students to thrive in their chosen professions and to prioritize student success through outstanding teaching, research, creative activity, and public service. These values — service, excellence, and innovation — are woven throughout the work of the College of Education and are reflected in the aspirations of this strategic plan.

This plan is shaped by a year-long, intentional process of reflection, conversation, and collective visioning, driven by the goal of defining a future for the College that is both grounded in our strengths and open to bold new possibilities. We gathered insights from over 600 points of input — including one-on-one conversations, faculty and staff listening sessions, focus groups with undergraduate and graduate students, and surveys of alumni, donors, and community partners.

The input revealed that although they may have different backgrounds and connections to the College, the stakeholders have a shared desire to build on what makes the College of Education distinctive while embracing the innovation necessary to move our work forward. Throughout this process, several clear themes emerged: the need to continually evaluate and modernize our curriculum to ensure it prepares students for today's and tomorrow's careers; the opportunity to coordinate and elevate the student experience across all touchpoints; the importance of supporting faculty in pursuing impactful research and scholarship; and the essential role that strong, intentional partnerships and a healthy, collaborative internal culture play in making all of this possible.

Our planning process occurred alongside the development of MTSU's Strategic Plan 2035, which is centered on academic quality, student success, engagement, and innovation. The alignment between our plan and the university's direction is no coincidence, ultimately reflecting our unwavering commitment to the broader institutional mission, leveraging university-level initiatives to amplify the College's impact, and charting a bold course for the years ahead.

The strategies and priorities outlined in this plan represent the culmination of months of imagining what's possible and committing to the actions needed to get there. This is our roadmap for the next five years, and we are energized by the path ahead. We invite you to join us in bringing this vision to life.

Mission

The MTSU College of Education prepares students across multiple fields to be transformative leaders and Difference Makers in their communities.
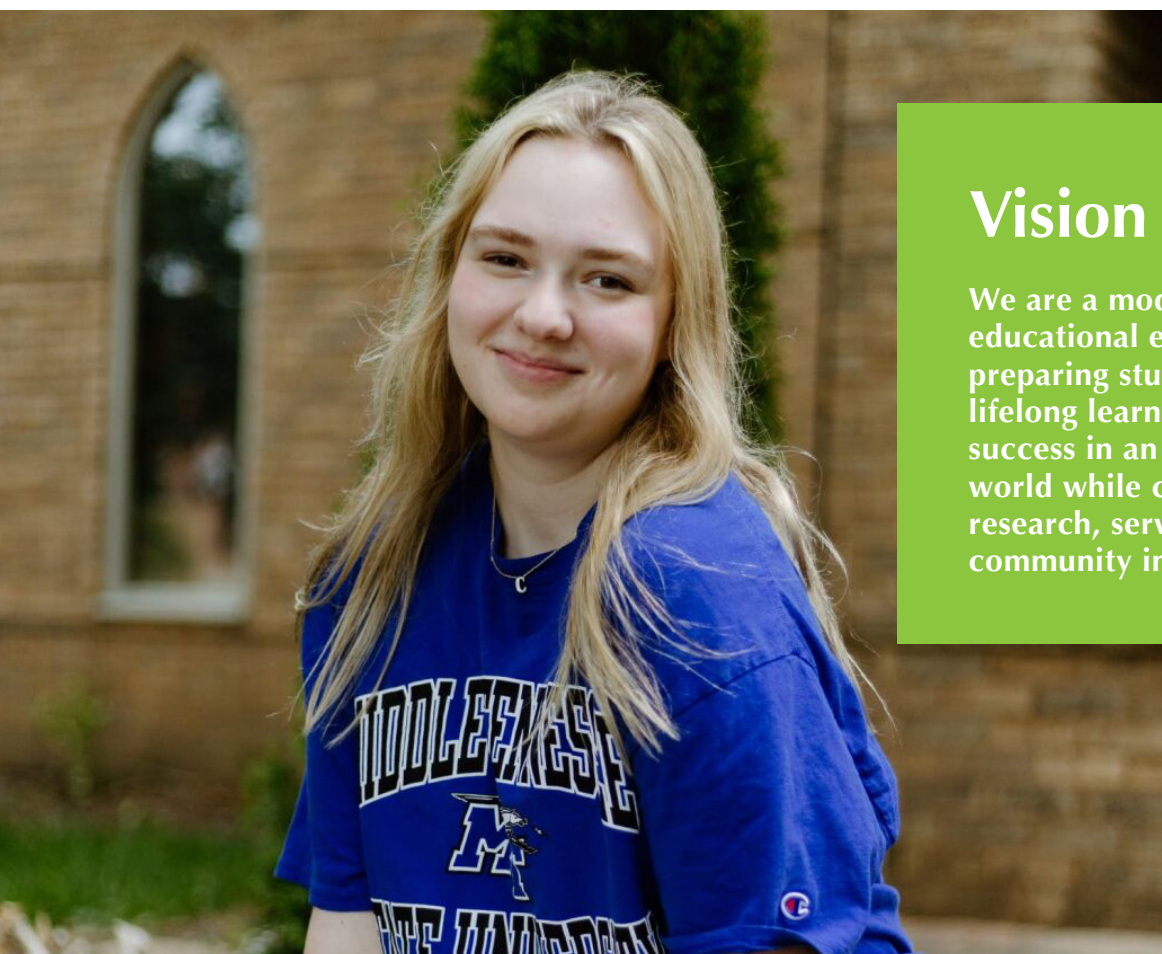
Vision

We are a model of educational excellence, preparing students for lifelong learning and success in an evolving world while championing research, service, and community impact.

Plan Framework

This five-year strategic plan is organized around five core focus areas that represent cornerstones of the College of Education's mission and daily work, beginning with the student experience and curricula that guides the training our students receive, the research and supporting infrastructure that enables our faculty to effectively contribute to the scholarship and research in their fields, and reimagining how we intentionally engage and partner with others beyond our walls. Our final priority area places a renewed emphasis on our internal culture, prioritizing clear communication, strong collaboration, and a healthy, supportive environment that empowers the faculty, staff, and students who carry out this important work.

Each area of focus begins with a guiding goal statement, a clear articulation of what the College seeks to achieve through intentional investment in that domain, supported by a set of targeted strategies further organized under relevant subcategories to clarify intent and action. Together, these strategies reflect a comprehensive and cohesive vision for the future of the College.

To ensure ongoing progress and accountability, each focus area also includes a set of metrics and indicators designed to guide implementation, measure impact, and inform continuous improvement. These metrics will help the College of Education stay responsive to the evolving needs of students, communities, and the education profession, while remaining steadfast in its pursuit of preparing transformative leaders and Difference Makers across multiple fields.

Priorities

01

Deliver an Exemplary Student Experience

GOAL: **Provide a responsive, consistent, and high-quality student experience that supports academic, personal, and professional growth and equips all students for lifelong career success and engagement with the college and the broader community.**

To fully prepare students for success in today's educational and professional environments, the College of Education is committed to creating a student experience that is engaging, supportive, community-centered, and consistently excellent across all programs and modalities. From the moment students consider MTSU for their educational journey to long after they graduate, we strive to ensure they feel welcomed, connected, and empowered.

We believe an exemplary student experience begins early. When students first encounter the college, they should have a clear understanding of who we are, what we offer, and how to access opportunities. Our goal is to make information about the college and its programs accessible and consistent, with coordinated communication and messaging that helps students feel confident in their decision to choose MTSU.

Students should feel like valued members of the Blue Raider family from day one. That means clearly communicating the resources available to them at both the university and college level and creating intentional opportunities to build community and connection. Through thoughtful onboarding, proactive support, and programming that fosters community, we aim to cultivate a sense of belonging that persists throughout their time at MTSU.

We also recognize ongoing connection and support are essential to long-term success. Students must understand how to navigate their academic path, access advising and career services, and connect with opportunities both inside and outside the classroom. We believe it's just as important for students to remain connected to the college after graduation — returning for continued learning, mentoring future students, and serving as ambassadors in their professional communities.

By investing in a student experience that is holistic, consistent, and future-focused, the College of Education is not only helping students succeed, but we are also preparing them to thrive as lifelong learners, leaders, and Difference Makers.

Strengthen Recruitment, Communication, and Connection

- Coordinate and streamline communication efforts from prospect to enrollment, ensuring a seamless and welcoming experience with clear touchpoints across programs, the college, and the university

- Develop standardized marketing language, messaging, and talking points about the college to be used across programs, departments, and communications channels, ensuring prospective and admitted students receive consistent, compelling information

- Develop and implement a consistent, college-wide onboarding plan for all new undergraduate and graduate students that introduces them to the culture, expectations, and support systems of the college and MTSU

- Foster community-building through curricular and co-curricular opportunities, including programming for online and hybrid learners, to ensure all students feel welcome and engaged regardless of program format or modality

- Develop outreach strategies aimed at enhancing access and support for all students

METRICS

- Enrollment

- 4- and 6-year undergraduate completion rates

- Graduate student completion rates

- Graduate student exit data (self-reported)

- Undergraduate survey

- End of year advising survey (undergraduate)

- Year-over-year retention (undergraduate) + persistence (graduate student)

Enhance Advising, Engagement, and Support Structures

- Audit current advising practices and develop a standardized framework for graduate advising, incorporating best practices and faculty/staff training to ensure consistency and quality

- Enhance integrated advising appointments that bring together academic advising, career services, and other student supports for a more holistic and efficient student experience

- Expand partnerships to embed opportunities for engagement throughout all programs to offer undergraduate and graduate students access to applied learning opportunities early in their academic journeys

- Establish feedback systems to regularly gather student input, such as an annual college-wide survey, advisory council, and feedback checkpoints, and use this information to inform continuous improvement of programs and services

- Develop affordable access strategies to reduce cost-related barriers to credential and non-degree offerings

- Leverage on-campus events and activities to engage existing student groups and organizations in the college

Expand Career-Focused Learning

GOAL: Design and deliver responsive, forward-thinking curricula that reflect the constantly evolving needs of the workforce sectors that we serve.

In an era marked by rapid shifts in workforce demands, credentialing pathways, and professional expectations, the College of Education is committed to designing and delivering curricula that are responsive to present-day needs and anticipatory of future opportunities. The fields we serve — education, library science, counseling, and related disciplines — are constantly evolving, and we must not only keep pace with these changes but also lead through innovation to ensure our students are fully prepared.

This requires a willingness to rethink traditional academic structures and remain flexible in how, when, and where learning occurs. We recognize that many of the professionals we prepare will navigate multiple career changes over the course of their lives, and our programs must be adaptable to support that reality. From stackable credentials to short form learning modules, we are expanding our offerings to meet students and professionals where they are, while helping them build the skills they'll need for sustained success.

The development of strategic partnerships with employers, alumni, industry leaders, and other educational institutions is central to this work — these relationships provide us with valuable insight into the shifting landscape and allow us to continuously evaluate and refine our academic offerings to ensure alignment with workforce and licensure expectations. Advisory councils, alumni feedback loops, and collaborative program designs are just a few of the mechanisms that help us stay connected and responsive.

By leading with curricular innovation, we position the College to not only meet current demands but also to imagine and shape the future of professional preparation, ensuring our graduates remain competitive, adaptable, and deeply impactful in the communities they serve.

Align Curricula and Learning Opportunities to Industry Needs

- Maintain active program-level advisory councils composed of industry, education, and community partners to provide real-time feedback

- Pilot and evaluate pathways to building curated learning and development offerings for external organizations outside of the traditional degree model

- Partner with employers and other constituents to co-develop certificates, curriculum enhancements, and capstone projects aligned with emerging job roles

- Regularly assess program offerings using data-driven sources such as industry trends, licensure trends, and feedback from stakeholders to ensure continued relevance and quality

- Provide resources and skill building for faculty to embed emerging technology used in the discipline fields into coursework

- Engage alumni to gather feedback on career preparedness and the relevance of coursework

Encourage Flexible Career Pathways and Career Preparation

- Ensure pathways are clearly articulated and accessible for transfer students, adult learners, and underserved communities

- Create and promote stackable credentials that allow students to earn meaningful qualifications as they progress toward degrees

- Develop short-term learning modules for in-service professionals that respond to specific industry demands and can serve as on-ramps to degree offerings

- Develop and market stackable additional curricula and short-form courses to support licensed practitioners to meet endorsement requirements and achieve career goals

- Develop a non-credential pathway for students pursuing degrees in education

- Identify and cultivate partnered opportunities to provide early career professional development for in-service professionals, with a focus on increasing retention and long-term success within their professions

- Expand experiential learning offerings to include nontraditional education roles

METRICS

- Number of option tracks/ curriculum/programs

- Development of new certification path

- Development of student paths in early career + workforce

- Post-degree employment

- Number of courses with technology integration

Advance Research Excellence and Impact

GOAL: Increase research productivity across the College by equipping faculty with the support, resources, and structures needed to engage in impactful scholarly activity.

This moment presents both an opportunity and a responsibility, and the College of Education is renewing its commitment to supporting faculty in achieving and maintaining research productivity, recognizing that meaningful scholarship depends on clear direction and ongoing, intentional support. We understand research productivity is not the result of individual effort alone, but of a culture that nurtures inquiry, fosters collaboration, and provides the foundational infrastructure to help ideas grow.

In alignment with MTSU's strategic prioritization of innovation, we are committed to thinking creatively about what we research and how we support that research. This includes encouraging faculty to explore bold, future-focused topics that address complex educational and societal challenges, while also reimagining the internal structures and systems that enable research success. Innovation, in this context, means not only producing new knowledge but also building flexible, people-centered systems that make meaningful scholarship more achievable, collaborative, and impactful.

As part of this commitment, we will identify college-level research priorities that reflect both our disciplinary strengths and the pressing needs of our region, creating opportunities for faculty to connect their work to shared themes and interdisciplinary collaboration both within and beyond the College. These themes will serve as guideposts for internal funding, partnerships, and planning.

We will continue to invest in comprehensive research support systems, including expanding internal seed funding, strengthening grant development resources, increasing coordination of research activities, and centralizing access to information and opportunities. These efforts are designed to reduce barriers while activating and empowering faculty across the college to pursue high-impact, innovative scholarship.

Our belief that research is integral to the student experience is equally important, and by intentionally integrating undergraduate and graduate students into our research efforts, we help them build critical thinking skills, gain applied experience, and see themselves as contributors to the generation of new knowledge.

Ultimately, these efforts are about more than increasing research output — they are about cultivating a vibrant, college-wide culture of inquiry. A culture where asking questions, seeking solutions, collaborating across disciplines, and contributing to the public good are embedded in the daily life of our college community. Through this shared commitment, the College of Education is poised to contribute meaningfully to MTSU's Research 2 (R2) mission and elevate the visibility, relevance, and impact of our scholarly work.

Strengthen Research Infrastructure and Support Services

- Identify broad research themes that align with institutional priorities and regional needs and build internal structures around them, such as research groups and seed funding, to foster interdisciplinary collaboration and catalyze competitive external funding

- Establish centralized, easily accessible research topics and funding opportunities to help facilitate research productivity

- Increase faculty awareness and utilization of university-level research supports

- Develop targeted support, training, and resources to increase scholarly engagement among first-time researchers and the college community

- Develop structures and guidance for conducting community-engaged research, including best practices for building and sustaining reciprocal partnerships

Expand Student Participation In Research

- Equip faculty to integrate undergraduate and graduate students into their research through grant proposals, project-based learning, and course-embedded research

- Increase faculty participation in institution-wide programs that support undergraduate and graduate research by promoting awareness of available models, funding pathways, and collaborative opportunities across campus

- Offer regular research programming — including workshops, brown bags, and informal gatherings — that bring together faculty and students to explore research topics, exchange ideas, and foster a collaborative culture of inquiry across the college

- Formalize opportunities for students to earn course credit through supervised research experiences that align with their academic and professional goals

METRICS

- Number and dollar amount of seed grants awarded annually

- Number of new research projects initiated

- Number of new research partnerships formed with external parties

- Number of undergraduate and graduate students involved in research

GOAL: Engage intentionally with external stakeholders to increase the College's visibility and ensure partners receive timely, relevant, and meaningful information.

The College of Education has long held a reputation as a trusted and engaged partner by collaborating with school districts, professional organizations, and community-based institutions across the state and beyond. These partnerships have been a cornerstone of the college's work for decades, and as we look to the future, we recognize the need to redouble our efforts in this historic area of strength.

Strong, strategic partnerships are the connective tissue that brings the rest of this plan to life. They are how we ensure our curricula remain aligned with the real-world expectations and evolving needs of the professions we serve; how we equip our students with meaningful, hands-on learning experiences, inside and outside the classroom, that prepare them for lasting career success; and how we elevate the relevance and reach of our research, particularly in disciplines where community-engaged or embedded scholarship is essential for advancing understanding and impact.

Most importantly, partnerships are how we ensure that our work has a tangible, lasting effect in the world. The innovations, insights, and practices developed in our college cannot remain confined to academic settings — they must be actionable, shareable, and implemented in ways that improve lives, transform systems, and respond to the needs of the communities we serve. None of this is possible without trusted collaborators walking alongside us.

As we move forward, the College is renewing its focus on intentional communication around our partnerships, making it easier for individuals and organizations to understand how to engage with us while fostering strong, mutually affirming relationships that amplify the purpose and impact of our work.

Through consistent outreach, coordinated engagement, and visible storytelling, we will strengthen our role as a partner of choice, creating shared value for our students, our collaborators, and our communities.

Communicate With Intention to Highlight Impact

- Create a centralized, one-stop hub, such as a dedicated webpage, to manage and respond to partnership inquiries, making collaboration more accessible and efficient

- Establish a consistent schedule of outbound communication to external partners (e.g., school districts, employers, nonprofits) to share college updates, opportunities, and success stories

- Highlight the impact of collaborations on students, communities, and partner organizations through storytelling, case studies, and marketing materials

- Design and disseminate accessible content and digital engagement opportunities that elevate the College's visibility and foster stronger external partnerships

Build and Sustain Strategic Relationships

- Maintain an inventory of existing partnerships with schools, districts, and organizations to inform planning, coordination, and outreach

- Use a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to track engagement, strengthen partner relationships, and inform follow-up strategies

- Intentionally market new academic and professional development offerings aligned to partner and industry needs

- Foster a sense of continuity and shared ownership with partners by publicly celebrating impact and inviting them to stay engaged as collaborators, ambassadors, and advocates

- Develop welcoming events to celebrate and showcase the impact of partnerships, providing opportunities for external partners to connect with students, faculty, and staff

METRICS

- Response rates on outbound communications

- Number of repeat engagements with partners

- Number of alumni engaged through mentorship, speaking, or networking events

- Number of touchpoints with strategic stakeholders annually
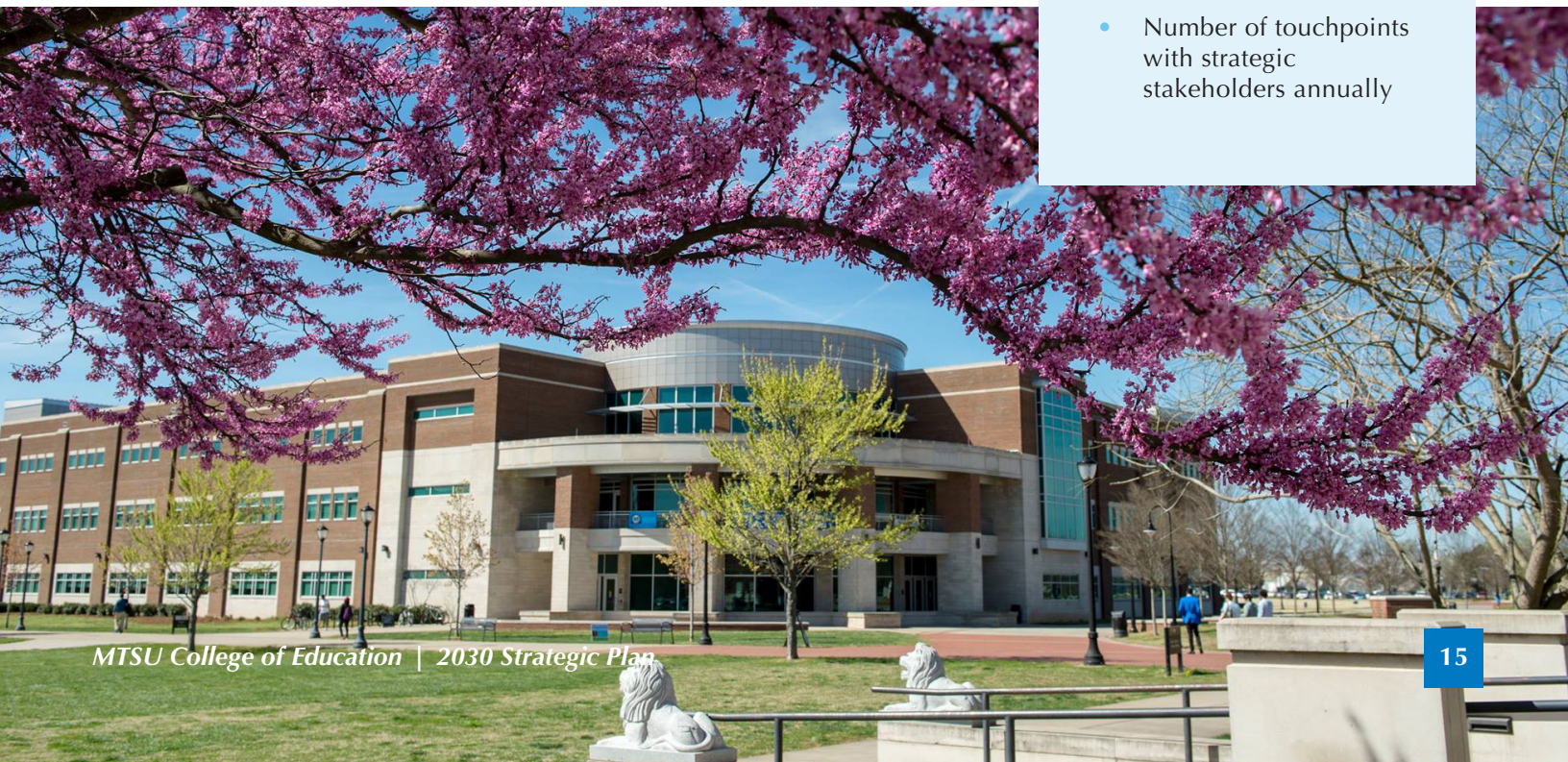
GOAL: **Establish an internal culture that values wellness, supports professional growth, fosters collaboration, and maintains clear, consistent communication with all members of the college community.**

Our people are the heart of the College of Education's work. Whether preparing future educators, counselors, librarians, or other professionals, we know human connection is the core driver of our impact. This truth has consistently emerged across our values and strategic priorities, and it is especially clear in the vision we've set forth in this plan. We must invest in the individuals who make this work possible to realize the goals contained here and to navigate the inevitable changes ahead.

This begins with building a culture rooted in clear, open communication and transparency. Establishing a regular cadence of communication across departments and roles allows for alignment, trust, and collective momentum. We must also look inward at the structures and processes that guide our daily work – while standardization is necessary, our procedures must be purposeful, collaborative, and people-centered, designed not to create barriers, but to empower collaboration and efficiency.

We are committed to supporting our students throughout their academic journey, and we must do the same for our faculty, staff, leaders, and administrators. That means intentionally setting up our people for success from the very beginning through clear expectations, effective onboarding, and mentorship to help new team members start strong and be provided with the ongoing support needed to continue to thrive. From roles and responsibilities to promotion and professional development, we must make sure our people understand where they are, where they're going, and how to get there.

Finally, we recognize that wellness and holistic support are not optional — they are essential. As the saying goes, "you can't pour from an empty cup," and we strive to cultivate a culture where faculty, staff, and students feel seen, supported, and able to bring their full selves to their work. When people are well-resourced and connected to a shared purpose, they are positioned to do incredible things — for themselves, for our students, and for the communities we serve.

Standardize Internal Processes

- Clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations for faculty and staff, particularly related to project teams, committee work, and cross-functional initiatives

- Develop consistent onboarding templates and processes for faculty and staff that include both college-level and unit-level components

- Implement a structured mentorship program with defined goals, expectations, and best practices for new faculty, staff, and students

- Regularly review and update, as needed, promotion, tenure, and evaluation standards to ensure clarity and that they accurately reflect current expectations

Strengthen Internal Communication and Transparency

- Establish consistent communication expectations across departments and units

- Regularly review and update, as needed, the current standing committee structures to develop clear purposes, defined scopes, and accountability or reporting processes to promote purposeful, efficient, and transparent in-college service

- In standing committees, use standard meeting agendas and guiding questions to support participation and ensure meetings are efficiently used to make progress toward set objectives

Promote Wellness and a Supportive Work Environment

- Provide regular and proactive communication about wellness resources, including mental health supports

- Develop and maintain a centralized and easily accessible online hub for faculty and staff that consolidates professional development resources and university-level training opportunities

- Incorporate dedicated time for intentional community-building into regularly scheduled meetings

METRICS

- Number of faculty and staff participating in structured mentorship programs within their first year

- Percentage of new hires reporting role clarity and defined expectations in onboarding

- Climate survey results

- Establishment of regular college-wide communication cadence

Implementation

This strategic plan outlines a bold and actionable path forward for the MTSU College of Education over the next five years, reflecting both the current needs of the College and the opportunities on the horizon. It is rooted in the shared values and aspirations of our community and designed to guide our collective efforts as we continue preparing transformative leaders across multiple educational fields.

We recognize that five years is a substantial period, especially in a rapidly evolving educational landscape. Just as the past five years have brought significant changes, we anticipate continued transformation in the years ahead. Our students' needs, the demands of the workforce, and the broader social and educational context will continue to evolve, and this plan is designed to be flexible and responsive in the face of that change.

To support implementation and maintain momentum, the College has developed an accompanying implementation timeline, which outlines estimated timeframes for completion of each strategy. This tool is not only meant to assist with prioritization as work begins, but also to serve as a mechanism for accountability, helping ensure that progress is tracked and communicated over time.

Ultimately, this plan is the product of a year-long, community-driven planning process. It represents the shared goals and commitments of faculty, staff, students, and partners who participated in shaping its direction. The inclusion of clear metrics within each focus area and a structured implementation framework will help guide shared responsibility and sustained progress, ensuring the College continues to lead with impact, purpose, and innovation.

APPENDIX:

Implementation Timeline

The following is a guide for the College to navigate the priorities and strategic initiatives outlined within this strategic plan, organized by short-term (0-1 years), medium-term (2-4 years), long-term (5+ years), and ongoing timeframes. While some initiatives will be implemented quickly, others need dedicated effort through 2030 and beyond. Many initiatives are connected, and what may drive the progress of one strategy will support the completion of others.

PRIORITY 1: DELIVER AN EXEMPLARY STUDENT EXPERIENCE

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE	SHORT-TERM (0-1 YEARS)	MEDIUM-TERM (2-4 YEARS)	LONG-TERM (5+ YEARS)	ONGOING
1.1 Coordinate and streamline communication efforts from prospect to enrollment, ensuring a seamless and welcoming experience with clear touchpoints across programs, the college, and the university		●		
1.2 Develop standardized marketing language, messaging, and talking points about the college to be used across programs, departments, and communications channels, ensuring prospective and admitted students receive consistent, compelling information	●			
1.3 Develop and implement a consistent, college-wide onboarding plan for all new undergraduate and graduate students that introduces them to the culture, expectations, and support systems of the college and MTSU		●		
1.4 Foster community-building through curricular and co-curricular opportunities, including programming for online and hybrid learners, to ensure all students feel welcome and engaged regardless of program format or modality				●
1.5 Develop outreach strategies aimed at enhancing access and support for all students		●		
1.6 Audit current advising practices and develop a standardized framework for graduate advising, incorporating best practices and faculty/staff training to ensure consistency and quality		●		
1.7 Enhance integrated advising appointments that bring together academic advising, career services, and other student supports for a more holistic and efficient student experience			●	
1.8 Expand partnerships to embed opportunities for engagement throughout all programs to offer undergraduate and graduate students access to applied learning opportunities early in their academic journeys			●	
1.9 Establish feedback systems to regularly gather student input, such as an annual college-wide survey, advisory council, and feedback checkpoints, and use this information to inform continuous improvement of programs and services		●		
1.10 Develop affordable access strategies to reduce cost-related barriers to credential and non-degree offerings			●	
1.11 Leverage on-campus events and activities to engage existing student groups and organizations in the college		●		

PRIORITY 2: EXPAND CAREER-FOCUSED LEARNING				
STRATEGIC INITIATIVE	**SHORT-TERM (0-1 YEARS)**	**MEDIUM-TERM (2-4 YEARS)**	**LONG-TERM (5+ YEARS)**	**ONGOING**
2.1 Maintain active program-level advisory councils composed of industry, education, and community partners to provide real-time feedback				●
2.2 Pilot and evaluate pathways to building curated learning and development offerings for external organizations outside of the traditional degree model		●		
2.3 Partner with employers and other constituents to co-develop certificates, curriculum enhancements, and capstone projects aligned with emerging job roles			●	
2.4 Regularly assess program offerings using data-driven sources such as industry trends, licensure trends, and feedback from stakeholders to ensure continued relevance and quality				●
2.5 Provide resources and skill building for faculty to embed emerging technology used in the discipline fields into coursework		●		
2.6 Engage alumni to gather feedback on career preparedness and the relevance of coursework				●
2.7 Ensure pathways are clearly articulated and accessible for transfer students, adult learners, and underserved communities		●		
2.8 Create and promote stackable credentials that allow students to earn meaningful qualifications as they progress toward degrees		●		
2.9 Develop short-term learning modules for in-service professionals that respond to specific industry demands and can serve as on-ramps to degree offerings	●			
2.10 Develop and market stackable additional curricula and short-form courses to support licensed practitioners to meet endorsement requirements and achieve career goals		●		
2.11 Develop a non-credential pathway for students pursuing degrees in education			●	
2.12 Identify and cultivate partnered opportunities to provide early career professional development for in-service professionals, with a focus on increasing retention and long-term success within their professions		●		
2.13 Expand experiential learning offerings to include nontraditional education roles			●	

PRIORITY 3: ADVANCE RESEARCH EXCELLENCE AND IMPACT				
STRATEGIC INITIATIVE	**SHORT-TERM (0-1 YEARS)**	**MEDIUM-TERM (2-4 YEARS)**	**LONG-TERM (5+ YEARS)**	**ONGOING**
3.1 Identify broad research themes that align with institutional priorities and regional needs and build internal structures around them, such as research groups and seed funding, to foster interdisciplinary collaboration and catalyze competitive external funding		●		
3.2 Establish centralized, easily accessible research topics and funding opportunities to help facilitate research productivity	●			
3.3 Increase faculty awareness and utilization of university-level research supports		●		
3.4 Develop targeted support, training, and resources to increase scholarly engagement among first-time researchers and the college community		●		
3.5 Develop structures and guidance for conducting community-engaged research, including best practices for building and sustaining reciprocal partnerships				●
3.6 Equip faculty to integrate undergraduate and graduate students into their research through grant proposals, project-based learning, and course-embedded research			●	
3.7 Increase faculty participation in institution-wide programs that support undergraduate and graduate research by promoting awareness of available models, funding pathways, and collaborative opportunities across campus			●	
3.8 Offer regular research programming — including workshops, brown bags, and informal gatherings — that bring together faculty and students to explore research topics, exchange ideas, and foster a collaborative culture of inquiry across the college				●
3.9 Formalize opportunities for students to earn course credit through supervised research experiences that align with their academic and professional goals			●	

PRIORITY 4: ELEVATE IMPACT THROUGH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS				
STRATEGIC INITIATIVE	SHORT-TERM (0-1 YEARS)	MEDIUM-TERM (2-4 YEARS)	LONG-TERM (5+ YEARS)	ONGOING
4.1 Create a centralized, one-stop hub, such as a dedicated webpage, to manage and respond to partnership inquiries, making collaboration more accessible and efficient	●			
4.2 Establish a consistent schedule of outbound communication to external partners (e.g., school districts, employers, nonprofits) to share college updates, opportunities, and success stories		●		
4.3 Highlight the impact of collaborations on students, communities, and partner organizations through storytelling, case studies, and marketing materials				●
4.4 Design and disseminate accessible content and digital engagement opportunities that elevate the College's visibility and foster stronger external partnerships		●		
4.5 Maintain an inventory of existing partnerships with schools, districts, and organizations to inform planning, coordination, and outreach			●	
4.6 Use a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to track engagement, strengthen partner relationships, and inform follow-up strategies			●	
4.7 Intentionally market new academic and professional development offerings aligned to partner and industry needs				●
4.8 Foster a sense of continuity and shared ownership with partners by publicly celebrating impact and inviting them to stay engaged as collaborators, ambassadors, and advocates				●
4.9 Develop welcoming events to celebrate and showcase the impact of partnerships, providing opportunities for external partners to connect with students, faculty, and staff		●		

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE	SHORT-TERM (0-1 YEARS)	MEDIUM-TERM (2-4 YEARS)	LONG-TERM (5+ YEARS)	ONGOING
PRIORITY 5: FOSTER A STRONG, COLLABORATIVE, AND CONNECTED COLLEGE CULTURE				
5.1 Clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations for faculty and staff, particularly related to project teams, committee work, and cross-functional initiatives	●			
5.2 Develop consistent onboarding templates and processes for faculty and staff that include both college-level and unit-level components		●		
5.3 Implement a structured mentorship program with defined goals, expectations, and best practices for new faculty, staff, and students		●		
5.4 Regularly review and update, as needed, promotion, tenure, and evaluation standards to ensure clarity and that they accurately reflect current expectations				●
5.5 Establish consistent communication expectations across departments and units	●			
5.6 Regularly review and update, as needed, the current standing committee structures to develop clear purposes, defined scopes, and accountability or reporting processes to promote purposeful, efficient, and transparent in-college service				●
5.7 In standing committees, use standard meeting agendas and guiding questions to support participation and ensure meetings are efficiently used to make progress toward set objectives	●			
5.8 Provide regular and proactive communication about wellness resources, including mental health supports				●
5.9 Develop and maintain a centralized and easily accessible online hub for faculty and staff that consolidates professional development resources and university-level training opportunities			●	
5.10 Incorporate dedicated time for intentional community-building into regularly scheduled meetings	●			

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