

# April TGL Lunch and Learn

## Adult Higher Ed Opportunities for State Employees

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On the same day it was announced that more than 10,000 adults had applied for Tennessee Reconnect Scholarships, Tennessee Government Leadership (TGL) held a Lunch & Learn about Adult Higher Education Opportunities. Featuring panelists from TSU, MTSU, Middle TN Reconnect Community and the TN Higher Education Commission, TGL alumni were treated to 60, fact-filled minutes about what is available for adult learners.

Paige Turner, Population Health Director for Benefits Administration, introduced Richard "Bucky" Rosenbaum, Talent Management Business Partner at DOHR. As this session was Bucky's "brainchild," he served as the master of ceremonies. Bucky became involved in promoting higher learning after assisting co-workers with finding resources to complete their higher education degrees. He is currently a Master of Professional Studies student at MTSU.

The session began with a panel presentation followed by a Q&A. Panelists and special guests included: Dr. Rodney Stanley and Dr. Cara Robinson with TSU; Dr. David Gotcher, Dr. Peggy Carpenter, Dr. Pamela Morris, and Andrew Oppmann with MTSU; Lara Ward with Middle TN Reconnect Community; and Jessica Gibson with the TN Higher Education Commission.



First, Dr. Rodney E. Stanley, Ph.D., the Department Chair of Public Administration at TSU, presented information on six department graduate programs:

- **Ph.D. in Public Policy & Administration:** Only Tennessee university offering this Ph.D. Currently, 35 students are enrolled in this program.
- **Master of Public Administration:** Caters toward those working in state government. Includes budgeting, policy, and more of the "nuts and bolts" of government.
- **Master of Professional Studies:** Offered completely online and in conjunction with the six (LGI (locally governed institution - formerly TBR) universities. Three different concentrations are available: Strategic Leadership, Human Resources Leadership, and Training and Development.
- **Public Policy Certificate:** For those interested in policy and advocacy in government and non-profits.
- **Executive Leadership Certificate:** Often referred to as "Command College." Currently 92 students are enrolled in three state cohorts. Six total courses, six certificate courses transfer to a Masters of Professional Studies, or five courses transfer to a Masters of Public Administration.

- **Nonprofit Management Certificate:** Courses can transfer to Masters in Public Administration program.

Next, Cara B. Robinson, Ph.D., Chair and Associate Professor at TSU, spoke about the Department of Social Work and Urban Studies programs:

- **Civic Leadership Program – State of TN Partnership:** Certificate from the State of Tennessee. Good program for those who have some college credits. Work experience may be considered toward credits.
- **Bachelor of Science in Urban Studies:** Need 120 credit hours to complete but could include work experience. Political science, economics, management, and leadership skills are some of the focus areas.
- **Bachelor of Science in Social Work:** Need 120 hours to complete but could include work experience.
- **Master of Social Work:** Collaborative program with other LGI universities. If you have a BA in Social Work, only takes one year to complete.

If you would like more information about TSU programs and admission requirements, go to <http://www.tnstate.edu/> or contact Dr. Stanley at [rstanley1@tnstate.edu](mailto:rstanley1@tnstate.edu).



Andrew Oppmann, MTSU's VP of Marketing, introduced MTSU panelists and special guests. He encouraged state employees to take advantage of the State's Fee Waiver program offered through the department of Higher Education. First, Dr. Peggy Carpenter spoke about Applied Leadership and the University College, the focus of which is on adult learners at the undergraduate level:

- Adult learners can design their own major. The Integrated Studies program brings together everything students have done before to design a major they want. Students choose two areas of study. Can be completed online or a combination of onsite and online classes (hybrid).
- **Concentration in Applied Leadership:** Four programs are available. Worked with industry leaders to develop a program that focuses on basic leadership theory, communication, and team building. Program leads to a BA or a certificate program in Integrated Studies. Advisors work with students to design their program.

Dr. Morris presented information about the **MTSU MPS Online Degree Program**, which currently has 86 enrolled students:

- **The Master of Professional Studies (MPS)** degree program is an all online degree program.
- The MPS degree program is designed for working professionals offering the flexibility needed when balancing family, work, and education.

- The MPS degree offers three concentration areas: Strategic Leadership, Human Resource Leadership, and Training & Development.
- The MPS degree program is a 30-hour non-thesis degree program.

**MTSU's admission requirements for the MPS program:**

- Non-GRE or Portfolio Option: (2.75 GPA or higher plus five years full-time work experience). Submit a resume, essay, and three letters of recommendation.
- GRE Option: Take the GRE General Test and submit scores to MTSU (Code 1466), 146 verbal, 144 quantitative, and 4.0 on analytical writing. Submit three letters of recommendation.

Those interested in applying can go to [www.mtsu.edu/graduate](http://www.mtsu.edu/graduate), click on "Apply Now." Send letters of recommendation to [Graduate@mtsu.edu](mailto:Graduate@mtsu.edu). Employees can also contact Dr. Morris with any questions or concerns at [Pamela.Morris@mtsu.edu](mailto:Pamela.Morris@mtsu.edu) or call (615) 898-5920.

Next, Jessica Gibson with the **Tennessee Higher Education Commission** discussed getting more adult Tennesseans into higher education programs. Tennessee Reconnect is the State of Tennessee's initiative to help adult learners earn an associates or technical certificate tuition free. The program focuses on those who have not completed a degree and provides last dollar scholarships. Students must enroll in two classes a semester, but don't have to be enrolled full-time. Interested students must apply for the grant, fill out a FAFSA, and apply to the college. Students can use the grant at TCATs and community colleges. There is also a Tennessee Reconnect ambassador program and they will come out and talk to your employees about going back to college.

The last speaker, Laura Ward, is with the **Tennessee Reconnect Community** and she spoke about Reconnect Advisors. They have seven across the state who work with adults who want to go back to school. They also work with those who have never attended college.

**Reconnect Advisors Provide**

- Help with program selection
- Connection to resources
- Help figuring out how to:
  - Pay for college
  - Start college
  - Stay in college
- Support "to-and-through" a degree program

If interested, you can go to <http://midtnreconnect.org> and click "GET STARTED" for more information.

**Sources:** TSU website, MTSU website, Tennessee Reconnect website, program PowerPoint presentations.