



## Letter of Notification (LON)

### *Policy A1.0 New Academic Programs: Approval Process*

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**Institution:** Middle Tennessee State University  
**Proposed Academic Program:** Organizational and Professional Communication, Master of Arts (MA)  
**Proposed Implementation Date:** May 2024  
**CIP Code and Title:** 09.0901 (Organizational Communication, General)

**CIP Code Definition:**

A program that prepares individuals to communicate dramatic information, ideas, moods, and feelings through the making and producing of films and videos. Includes instruction in theory of film, film technology and equipment operation, film production, film directing, film editing, cinematographic art, film audio, techniques for making specific types of films and/or videos, media technologies, computer image making, multi-media production, and the planning and management of film/video operations.

**LON Submission Date:** October 11, 2023  
**Posted Date on THEC Website:** October 11, 2023  
**Public Comment Period:** October 11 – October 26, 2023

#### Letter of Notification Checklist

THEC Academic Policy 1.0 (Section 1.0.6A) Letter of Notification Requirements:

- ✓ Letter of Support from the President/Chancellor signifying institutional governing board or system office support for development;
- ✓ Program overview;
- ✓ Background information;
- ✓ Feasibility Study;
- ✓ Enrollment and graduation projections;
- ✓ Projected costs to deliver the proposed program;
- ✓ Projected revenues for the proposed program;
- ✓ Letters of support.



LETTER OF NOTIFICATION (LON)  
M.A. in Organizational and Professional Communication

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**Office of the President**

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09 October 2023

Steven Gentile, PhD  
Interim Executive Director  
TN Higher Education Commission  
312 Rosa L. Parks Ave, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Dr. Gentile:

In accordance with Tennessee Higher Education Commission Policy A 1.0, Section 1.0.5A, this letter signifies my support for the development of the **M.A. in Organizational and Professional Communication** at Middle Tennessee State University. MTSU's Board of Trustees enthusiastically approved the program as a "Degree Under Consideration" in April 2023.

The Board and I believe that the addition of the 30-credit hour, nonthesis, online degree program will enhance MTSU's portfolio and will strengthen the University's contribution to the workforce demands of the Middle Tennessee region and beyond – supporting the missions of both the State and the University. The interdisciplinary program will be housed in MTSU's College of Liberal Arts and will be focused on experiential learning, a specialty for our Department of Communication Studies.

We appreciate THEC staff's consideration of this Letter of Notification and look forward to continued collaboration with your office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sidney A. McPhee".

Sidney A. McPhee  
President

CC: Dr. Julie Roberts, THEC Chief Academic Officer  
Dr. Mark Byrnes, MTSU Provost

## **Section I: Overview Program information**

### **Program Information**

Institution:	Middle Tennessee State University
Academic Program:	Organizational and Professional Communication
Concentration(s):	N/A
Degree Designation:	Master of Arts (M.A.)
Proposed CIP Code:	09.0901
CIP Code Title:	Organizational Communication, General
CIP Code Definition:	A program that focuses on general communication processes and dynamics within organizations. Includes instruction in the development and maintenance of interpersonal group relations within organizations; decision-making and conflict management; the use of symbols to create and maintain organizational images, missions, and values; power and politics within organizations; human interaction with computer technology; and how communications socializes and supports employees and team members.

### **Academic program liaison (APL) name and contact information**

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## **Proposed implementation date**

May 2024

## **Section II: Background**

### **Background concerning academic program development**

The Communication Studies Department of the College of Liberal Arts at MTSU seeks a Master of Arts in Organizational and Professional Communication (MOPC) program. The program will be 30-credit hours designed with an option to complete it completely online to provide maximum flexibility for working professionals in Tennessee. MTSU will have the only graduate program in Tennessee with the CIP code 09.0901, as a stand-alone program or concentration. The target audience is existing Communication Studies undergraduate students, alumni, and area professionals that are seeking an advanced degree for career advancement.

Hanover Research has prepared analysis of master's degree programs in Tennessee for MTSU in first quarter of 2022. The Academic Portfolio Optimization report reviewed market opportunities after scanning of master's and doctoral degrees in Tennessee. Speech Communication and Rhetoric is second of the top three regional high-growth master's programs (i.e., average student and labor market demand growth and volume). Feasibility studies also indicated a need for a Corporate Communication master's program in Tennessee, but there are already two in the state. After examining the studies and research findings, the need was determined for Organizational and Professional Communication (OPC), currently there are no such programs offered by state institutions in Tennessee. This name is consistent with the National Communication Association's Organizational Communication Division<sup>1</sup> and the Central States Communication Association's Organizational and Professional Communication Interest Group<sup>2</sup>. Both groups focus on the specialized research and teaching of Organizational Communication to highlight communicative behavior in organizational settings.

The primary focus of this program is communication, which is the backbone of any workplace. The Communication undergraduate major is grounded in the liberal arts tradition at MTSU and builds valuable assets that can lead to many rewarding career opportunities for today's dynamic workforce. The ability to communicate effectively is one of the most highly sought skills by employers. In fact, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Job Outlook 2020 Survey<sup>3</sup> found that the knowledge and skills taught in Communication courses are essential to being hired. Helping students obtain advanced training in an area sought out by most employers will be integral to creating workplaces that thrive.

The MTSU Communication Studies Department currently offers an undergraduate program with three specialty concentrations: Organizational Communication, Cultural and Social Influence,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.natcom.org/organizational-communication-division-0>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cscs-net.org/aww/CSCA/pt/sp/interestgroups>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.naceweb.org/uploadedfiles/files/2021/resources/nace-career-readiness-competencies-revised-apr-2021.pdf>

Health Communication, and a generalist option. Organizational Communication is currently the largest concentration with approximately 40% of students enrolled in the major. Graduates of this undergraduate program interested in graduate school must leave the state to find a program, change their major to another Communication graduate program (e.g., Corporate Communication, Strategic Communication and Leadership, Communication and Storytelling Studies, Health Communication), or switch to another area of study (e.g., Professional Studies, Business, English, Liberal Arts).

Area professionals are also seeking ways to develop professionally and improve communication skills. The program will target working adults seeking an advanced degree for improving oral and written communication, analyzing audiences, fostering teamwork, providing feedback and motivation in the workplace, and improving soft skills<sup>4</sup>. NACE identified eight core competencies for career readiness and lifelong career management<sup>3</sup>. This program will address all eight NACE competencies of career and self-development, communication, critical thinking, equity and inclusion, leadership, professionalism, teamwork, and technology.

The MOPC program will also target professionals seeking continuous education. As one example, MTSU recently partnered with Walter's State Community College (WSCC) to serve regional high school instructors interested in teaching communication dual-enrollment classes. This program will provide an opportunity for those high school teachers and others like them to earn the requisite 18 hours of graduate-level communication instruction to qualify for teaching dual-enrollment courses in public speaking.

Along with WSCC instructors interested in teaching dual-enrollment, other professionals may be interested in a graduate certificate in OPC. The option of a certificate for professional development and career advancement will contribute to enrollment in the OPC graduate program. This option will be communicated to local employers and professional organizations for professionals that may not currently be interested in pursuing the degree but are interested in professional development for career advancement and developing communication skills.

### **Purpose and nature of academic program**

This M.A. in Organizational and Professional Communication is designed to guide students to improve their communication and critical thinking skills and increase overall career success. Coursework will include theoretical and experiential learning opportunities to acquire advanced interpersonal, group, and organizational communication skills. Students will increase their overall effectiveness and growth as members and leaders in various fast-paced changing organizational and professional environments. Employers continuously desire strong verbal and written communication skills as top skills for new hires and leaders within their organization, and this program will meet that need. Moreover, unlike other graduate programs in similar subjects, this program will emphasize experiential learning in its graduate instruction. This hands-on application approach to learning will benefit students by providing a valuable experience to apply the material.

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<sup>4</sup> Purdue University, <http://online.purdue.edu/comm/masters-in-communication>

This program will be 30-credit hours with the ability to complete the program online. On ground and hybrid may be offered as options to online classes once the program has been established.

### **Alignment with state master plan and institutional mission**

MTSU is the geographic center of Tennessee, drawing students from across the region, state, nation, and world for its distinct undergraduate and graduate programs<sup>5</sup>. MTSU has a wide variety of diverse, first-generation, nontraditional, and underrepresented students that can benefit from an advanced Communication degree<sup>6</sup>. The program will be unique in Tennessee because it will include experiential and integrative learning, cross-disciplinary classes to deliver a value-added education rich in research, service learning, and civic engagement. This program will complement the MTSU university mission statement.

The program will be the first Organizational and Professional Communication graduate program in Tennessee and will help the target audience thrive in their chosen profession and the changing workplace. The program supports lifelong learning and personal development for the community as MTSU grows its number of graduate programs to compete with similar sized universities. This program will support the university in reaching this goal, and it will help MTSU's undergraduate students as they continue their education after graduation. Part of the MTSU Strategic Plan 2015-2025 is the annual target for 35% of MTSU bachelor graduates to enroll in graduate school within six years of graduation, and 27.5% was reached in 2021-22<sup>7</sup>. This program will target bachelor's degree graduates and current students to return to MTSU to the graduate school, while helping MTSU reach this goal.

Furthermore, the MOPC program will support the mission of MTSU by providing a learning opportunity for students to thrive personally and in their chosen profession. Students will sharpen their skillset through the teaching and learning opportunities, research, and public engagement presented in this program. The students will be provided experiential learning opportunities to apply the content and stay current in the changing global workplace. The Communication Studies department at MTSU has a history of providing a high-quality education and student experience that involves alumni and partnerships with area businesses. For example, the department has a successful internship program through which many alumni and area businesses recruit interns. Recent employers requesting interns from the Communication Studies department include United Way, Chick-fil-A, Nissan, Hershey, and First Priority of America.

Additionally, this program will be unlike other organizational programs in the state of Tennessee by being able to be completed fully online *and* having experiential learning (EXL) present in each of the classes. EXL is a high-impact teaching practice that MTSU has promoted and utilized since 2006. Originally part of a Quality Enhancement Program (QEP) from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), EXL classes have assignments where students must apply the information, either inside or outside the classroom. MTSU has embraced this

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[https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/thecc/cm/2022/fall/CC%20II.%20Mission%20Profiles%20Agenda%20Item\\_Corrected.pdf](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/thecc/cm/2022/fall/CC%20II.%20Mission%20Profiles%20Agenda%20Item_Corrected.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.mtsu.edu/AMP/docs/MTSUAcademicMasterPlan.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.mtsu.edu/iepr/docs/splan22.pdf>



teaching practice in the undergraduate curriculum. However, recently, EXL principles have expanded into the graduate classroom. In 2020-2021, a faculty learning group sponsored by the Learning, Teaching, and Innovative Technologies Center, started the process of turning graduate classes into EXL classes. For some classes, this meant taking what students had learned in their class into the community by putting on trainings and presentations. For other classes, it meant having students apply the class concepts directly to their current jobs. Graduate classes with a designation of experiential learning (EXL) are unique to MTSU. Thus, we can offer hands-on experience that other programs may not be able to provide. This will potentially help our students advance further, faster than their peers at other institutions.

This program further supports the mission, purpose, and vision of MTSU through provision of professional development for the community that enables students to acquire knowledge to think critically and communicate clearly. The program offers high quality affordable academic training with demonstrably effective methods that include experiential and integrative learning and research. The MOPC program will follow the example of the existing undergraduate programs in Communication with a history of EXL partnering with area businesses to provide training for area employees and citizens. Examples include successful programs with agencies such as Greenhouse Ministries, Rutherford County Library System, Cigna, State of Tennessee, Franke Coffee Systems, and Murfreesboro Medical Clinic.

THEC has a Master Plan for Tennessee Postsecondary Education for 2015-2025 with the Drive to 55 Program<sup>8</sup>. The plan addresses the role of higher education in improving Tennessee's future economy. MTSU is a public higher education institution in Tennessee that works with THEC to serve the needs of students, their families, and Tennessee's economy. MTSU is aligned with THEC's goal to keep education affordable in Middle Tennessee with low tuition increases and institutional costs (*TN Master Plan, page 24*). Furthermore, the degree is accessible to a diverse group of students, including working professionals who cannot take time off or people too far away for in-person courses since the program will offer online classes that can be taken asynchronously from anywhere.

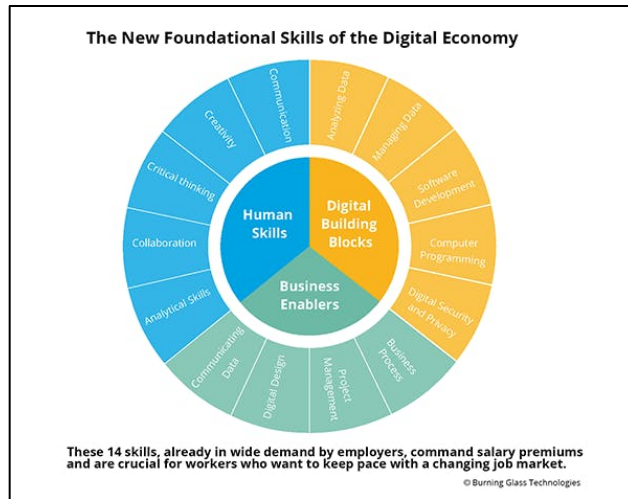
This program will align with Master Plan to help adults engage or reengage in higher education to increase job opportunities and wages. As the Tennessee economy changes, financial security is important to residents. Additional skills can be acquired from this program to help align with industry needs of 2030 and beyond (*TN Master Plan, page 35*). Figure 1 (below) was provided by THEC in the Master Plan and identifies 14 skills that are currently in demand and will continue to be crucial in the changing job market in three categories: digital building blocks, human skills, and business enablers. This program will include digital building blocks skills required for many vocations within the Research Methods course as students will collect, manage, and analyze data<sup>9</sup>. All five human skills will be developed in this program: communication, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and analytical skills. These skills are the "soft skills" that are in high demand in the workplace. Finally, two of the five business enabler skills will be developed: project management, and business process<sup>8</sup>. These business enabler skills play a synthesizing, integrative role in the workplace (Burning Glass).

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/thec/bureau/research/other-research/master-plan/finalmp.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.burning-glass.com/wp-content/uploads/New\\_Foundational\\_Skills.pdf](https://www.burning-glass.com/wp-content/uploads/New_Foundational_Skills.pdf)

Figure 1: The Foundation Skills of the Digital Economy



**Communication** – The proposed program will develop students’ communication skills for communicating downwardly, horizontally, and upwardly within an organization, and to others outside of the organization.

**Creativity** – The proposed program will develop students’ creativity skills by developing training and consulting plans to help an organization to reach their goals ethically and realistically. Students will learn to solve problems with unique and innovative approaches.

**Critical Thinking** – The proposed program will develop the students’ critical thinking skills by connecting a range of past and future experiences to the academic courses. Furthermore, the courses will assist students to analyze, evaluate, and problem-solve in these courses and the workplace.

**Collaboration** – The proposed program will develop the students’ collaboration skills to communicate clearly and effectively with teams, stakeholders, and other parties within the organization. Students will learn active listening, resolve conflict, negotiate, adapt to changing environments, and build trust. These skills will help students to effectively help an organization work towards their goals.

**Analytical Skills** – The proposed program will develop the students’ analytic skills to understand a problem, explore options, find solutions, deep-dive into analysis, and communicate the outcome within an organization.

**Project Management** – The proposed program will develop the students’ project management skills by providing the students course projects to plan, manage, execute, and monitor while controlling scope and meeting deadlines. Students will work

independently or within teams to complete these projects, which will provide leadership, followership, and other important skills that will be transferrable to the workplace<sup>10</sup>.

Business Process - The proposed program will develop the students' business process skills in the academic courses by focusing on communication to help organizations experiencing systems thinking, rules of decision management, and change management<sup>11</sup>.

These foundation skills are required in the new digital economy with artificial intelligence and automation, both globally and within Tennessee. According to Burning Glass, these skills will help graduates thrive in technology and other industries, earn higher salaries, and become increasingly more requested in senior or managerial roles. In summary, the MOPC program will help reach the goals of the university and THEC.

### **Institutional capacity to deliver the proposed academic program**

The proposed MOPC degree will have a positive impact on student enrollment within its home department of Communication Studies at MTSU. The target students for the MOPC primarily desire specialization in the communication field, and many have switched their focus to continue their education at MTSU or may attend graduate school outside of Tennessee. Housing this program at MTSU will be a great service to the undergraduate students in the Organizational Communication program, as they will be able to stay in the Middle Tennessee region and at MTSU.

There may be a temporary negative impact on the number of students currently enrolled in generalist graduate programs at MTSU, such as Master of Arts in Liberal Arts and Master of Professional Studies. See **Table 1** for the head count (HC) of these two programs for the past three years.

Table 1: Graduate Programs Using Communication Courses

<b>Master's Program at MTSU</b>	<b>Fall 2021 HC</b>	<b>Fall 2022 HC</b>	<b>Fall 2023 HC</b>
Liberal Arts	47	35	29
Professional Studies	148	135	146

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.indeed.com/hire/duties-and-skills/project-manager?gclid=Cj0KCCQjw756lBhDMARIsAEI0Agmb1TnMeFqhH7L6EpbQ4j8dYGVbW5ES\\_cRbrzxOLr8Oja3x dp-DapQaAhmUEALw\\_wcB&aceid=&gclsrc=aw.ds](https://www.indeed.com/hire/duties-and-skills/project-manager?gclid=Cj0KCCQjw756lBhDMARIsAEI0Agmb1TnMeFqhH7L6EpbQ4j8dYGVbW5ES_cRbrzxOLr8Oja3x dp-DapQaAhmUEALw_wcB&aceid=&gclsrc=aw.ds)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.bpminstitute.org/resources/articles/what-skills-are-needed-bpm-success#:~:text=As%20outlined%20in%20the%20BPMInstitute,collaboration%2C%20decision%2Dmaking%20and%20process>

The MOPC program will allow for more course options for the existing programs and will provide larger overall course enrollments through shared classes. For example, the MOPC program will include Conflict Management and Resolution, a course that is currently being taken by Professional Studies and Liberal Arts students. This course is offered twice a year and fills with a wait list. This course is also being considered as a course in both the new Project Management and Aerospace graduate degrees. The high demand for the current graduate Communication courses speaks to the success of a free-standing MOPC program. The MOPC program also may include courses from other departments. Such shared coursework is likely to benefit students through the diversity of ideas with several programs being represented in a class, and the departments that offer the classes will benefit by having more student interest in multiple classes.

### **Existing programs offered at public and private Tennessee Institutions**

The proposed M.A. in Organizational and Professional Communication at MTSU is the *only* organizational/professional communication program in Tennessee with a generalist focus, as illustrated with the use of Federal CIP 09.0901 Organizational Communication, General. It is also unique because it is a non-thesis 30 CH program completely available online to meet the needs of the Middle Tennessee working professional who wishes to scale up their communication skills in the organizational/professional environment.

The proposed MTSU program will build on an already successful undergraduate degree program (up 15% in enrollment for AY2024) to offer classes in Communication in Leadership and Organizational Crisis Communication. The curriculum will be further explained in the NAPP. Conversations have begun with other graduate degree programs on campus, including psychology and management, to determine if classes can be cross-listed with the proposed MOPC program. A committee within the Communication Studies department has been formed to help with curriculum development upon approval of the LON. Furthermore, a business advisory committee will be formed to help discuss curriculum needs within the professional community in Middle Tennessee.

Currently, there are 7 master's degree communication related programs in Tennessee (6 at public universities). See Table 2 below. Only three of the public institutions (APSU, UTM, and TTU) and the private (Belmont) appear to have an organizational or professional focus.

Only one of these programs (TTU) is online and at 30 CH. However, unlike the proposed program at MTSU, TTU's program is not part of the Communication Studies department, but Professional Studies. MTSU's communication faculty is very accomplished, having collectively won many teaching and research awards. Students in MTSU's MOPC will be taught by faculty with terminal degrees in communication who are well published in the discipline, many of whom have worked in corporate environments and/or currently consult within those environments.

Experiential learning will be the centerpiece of the graduate program at MTSU. While competing graduate programs often focus on theory building, MTSU's degree program will emphasize application, analysis, and creativity through high-impact teaching methods. The undergraduate Communication program in Organizational Communication is successful because it has

embraced experiential learning since its inception. Students have used school projects as ways to connect with employers and earn jobs, and these students have often outpaced their peers in the workplace because they have applied experience. Using this similar approach at the graduate level will set the MPOC program apart from its counterparts.

See Table 2 below for a summary of the CIP codes in Tennessee graduate programs<sup>12</sup>, the program credits and concentrations (university websites), and degrees awarded data from 2019 to 2021<sup>13</sup>. Data is missing for Belmont because, in an email to MTSU staff dated Sept. 29, 2023, they said that they do not have access to graduate numbers for 2019-2021.

Table 2. Similar Graduate Programs in Tennessee

Institution	1=Public 2=Private	Department/School/ College Name	Concentrations/Degree Name	CIP CODE	Degree Offer	Credits	Online	Graduates 2019	Graduates 2020	Graduates 2021
<b>Austin Peay State University</b>	1	Communication	Concentrations: General Comm, Corporate Comm, Marketing Comm, Media Management	05.09.0102.00	MA	34	Yes	21	18	25
<b>East Tennessee State University</b>	1	Communication	Communication and Storytelling Studies	05.09. 0100.00	MA	36	No	18	29	13
<b>University of Memphis</b>	1	Communication	Film & Video Production, Communication Studies	05.09.0102.00	MA, PhD	30- 36	No	9	2	4
<b>University of Tennessee - Knoxville</b>	1	Communication and Information	Advertising, Communication Studies, Journalism & Electronic Media, Public Relations	05.09.0102.00	MA PhD	30	Both	13	22	24
<b>University of Tennessee - Martin</b>	1	Communications	Strategic Communication	05.09.0999.00	MA	33	95%	1	7	4
<b>Belmont</b>	2	Strategic Communication & Leadership	Strategic Communication & Leadership	N/A	MA	30	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Tennessee Tech</b>	1	Professional Studies	Corporate Comm Concentration, Training & Development	05.09.9999.00	MA	30	Yes	1	0	4

## Accreditation

MTSU is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award baccalaureate, masters, specialist, and doctorate degrees. Degree- granting institutions also may offer credentials such as certificates and diplomas at approved degree levels<sup>14</sup>. This program will also have the SACSCOC accreditation.

<sup>12</sup> <https://thec.ppr.tn.gov/THECSIS/Research/Research.aspx?TabID=API+Search>

<sup>13</sup> <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/DataFiles.aspx?gotoReportId=7&fromIpeds=true&>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.mtsu.edu/sacscoc/index.php>

The National Communication Association (NCA) does not have accreditation for undergraduate or graduate programs. However, NCA does offer resources to help with program development, such as learning outcome guides to assure that Communication constructs the social world and is relational, collaborative, strategic, symbolic, and adaptive<sup>15</sup>.

### **Administrative Structure**

The organizational chart for the structure involving the proposed degree is detailed in the Organizational and Professional Communication Graduate Program Organizational Chart below (Figure 2). The degree will be housed in the Communication Studies department under the College of Liberal Arts at MTSU.

Figure 2: Organizational and Professional Communication Graduate Degree Organizational Chart



<sup>15</sup>

[https://www.natcom.org/sites/default/files/publications/LOC\\_2\\_Drawing\\_Learning\\_Outcomes\\_in\\_Communication.pdf](https://www.natcom.org/sites/default/files/publications/LOC_2_Drawing_Learning_Outcomes_in_Communication.pdf)

## Section III: Feasibility Study

### Student Interest

Interest surveys (see Appendix A) were electronically sent to two target audiences: (1) existing students at MTSU, and (2) alumni and area professionals. The surveys consisted of seven questions to determine interest in a graduate program. The questions asked the participants' undergraduate degree, if they continued or plan to continue education after graduating, the benefits they see in obtaining a master's degree, plans to pursue the degree. These questions were tailored slightly for each audience. Results included 107 total responses between March 3 – April 26, 2023.

#### *Survey 1: Existing Students (N = 53)*

The survey for existing students had 53 participants, of which 24 (45.3%) were Communication majors, and 29 (54.7%) were other. Other majors included double majors with another major, Health Care Administration, Professional Studies, Integrated Studies, Allied Health, Psychology, English, Information Technology, Information Systems, Public Safety, German, Marketing, Nursing, Business and Human Geography.

When asked if they were considering graduate school on a scale of 1-5 (1-definitely not, 5-definitely yes), the mean score was 3.35. When asked if they were planning on staying in Middle Tennessee for this degree with the same Likert scale, the mean score was 3.46.

Participants were also asked to check all the benefits they personally see from earning a master's degree from this list of items (in order of responses): (43) career advancement, (39) additional income, (33) becoming more competitive in the workplace, (33) becoming a specialist in my field, (11) my employer pays my educational costs, (5) other, and (1) can't find a job.

Participants rated their level of interest in the program (0-none, 6-extremely interested) the mean score was 4.45 with the standard deviation of 1.82.

The remaining four questions on the survey included questions on class interest, concentration interests, additional benefits (e.g., study abroad, internships, teaching assistants), and additional comments. This information will be used in program development.

#### *Survey 2: Alumni and Professionals (N = 54)*

The survey for alumni and area professionals had 54 participants, of which 38 (70.4%) were Communication majors, 4 (7.4%) Communication minors, and 12 (22.2%) others including Business, Music, Management, Education, Political Science, Humanities, Psychology, and Pre-med.

When asked if they continued their education after graduating with their undergraduate degree, 20 (45.3%) did and 29 (54.7%) did not. Graduate schools the participants attended included MTSU, Florida, Tennessee, Georgia, Missouri, Western Governors, Murray State, Belmont,

South Dakota, California, and Arizona. Of the 24 that attended graduate school, 20 graduated (83.3%). Reasons for not graduating include costs or still attending.

Participants were also asked to check all of the benefits they personally see from earning a master's degree from the list: (37) becoming more competitive in the workplace, (35) career advancement, (31) additional income, (26) becoming a specialist in my field, (17) my employer pays my educational costs, (15) career shift, (2) I can't find a job, and (3) others.

Participants rated their level of interest in the program (0-none, 6-extremely interested) the mean score was 4.93 with the standard deviation of 1.79.

The remaining four questions on the survey included questions on class interest, concentration interests, additional benefits (e.g., study abroad, internships, teaching assistants), and additional comments. This information will be used in program development.

The mean score for interest in this program was slightly higher for professionals and alumni than current students, and the professionals also recognized a stronger need for becoming more competitive in the workplace. This information will help target potential students for the program.

MOPC will also target Nashville Metropolitan Area professionals as students for this program. Hanover Research has created a report for MTSU in October 2021 indicating projected 1.9% average annual population growth in the Greater Nashville Area to a total population of 1.4 million by 2026. This includes 600,000 adults between the ages of 20-49 who are prospective graduates. The EAB (2021) demographic trends in Nashville Metropolitan Area for 2011 to 2020 also indicated that graduate degree attainment has steadily increased since 2011, with the metro rates being 2-2.5% points higher than in the larger state. The metro rates are highest in Davidson and Williamson counties. This data indicates that not only will the targeted population continue to grow in Middle Tennessee, but the need for graduate programs also is growing.

The program is a generalist program that does not offer specialist licenses or certifications as some (e.g., Nurse Practitioner, Certified Public Accountant). The employment options will vary for students that complete this program. Upon reviewing the Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development projections of employment by occupation from 2020-2030<sup>16</sup>, see Table 2 for the projected occupations that may benefit from an advanced degree in Organizational and Professional Communication.

### **Local and Regional Demand**

The target market for MTSU is Middle Tennessee residents. THEC has further divided this market into Northern Middle Tennessee and Southern Middle Tennessee to identify the high

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.jobs4tn.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>



demand occupations<sup>17</sup>. Table 3 below includes high demand jobs that can benefit from the proposed MOPC program. Please note that there are several positions listed in both state job projections (Table 3) and region job projections (Table 4).

Table 3: Tennessee Employment Projections by Occupation, 2020-2030

Employment in 2020	Employment in 2030	Change	% Change	Annual job openings	Occupation code	Occupation
14,678	17,918	3,240	22.07%	1,684	112000	Advertising, Marketing, Promotions, Public Relations, and Sales Managers
55,783	63,739	7,956	14.26%	6,594	210000	Community and Social Service
2,070	2,296	226	10.92%	247	211099	Community and Social Service Specialists, All Other
6,723	7,841	1,118	16.63%	676	131041	Compliance Officers
39,941	42,698	2,757	6.90%	4,334	431011	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers
1,869	2,228	359	19.21%	284	319099	Healthcare Support Workers, All Other
4,168	5,008	840	20.15%	446	113121	Human Resources Managers
12,321	15,261	2,940	23.86%	1,584	131071	Human Resources Specialists
10,203	12,324	2,121	20.79%	1,217	413021	Insurance Sales Agents
5,559	5,684	125	2.25%	700	434111	Interviewers, Except Eligibility and Loan
840	869	29	3.45%	83	131075	Labor Relations Specialists
9,662	12,921	3,259	33.73%	1,419	131161	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists
5,085	6,362	1,277	25.11%	603	112021	Marketing Managers
1,734	1,940	206	11.88%	150	195011	Occupational Health and Safety Specialists
2,167	2,407	240	11.08%	184	195000	Occupational Health and Safety Specialists and Technicians
103,214	122,355	19,141	18.54%	11,381	119000	Other Management
1,167	1,486	319	27.34%	141	112030	Public Relations and Fundraising Managers
2,279	2,761	482	21.15%	276	273031	Public Relations Specialists
279	325	46	16.49%	33	251069	Social Sciences Teachers, Postsecondary, All Other
1,183	1,439	256	21.64%	141	113131	Training and Development Managers
5,633	6,998	1,365	24.23%	713	131151	Training and Development Specialists

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/thec/research/supply-and-demand.html>

Table 4: Middle TN Employment Projections for "High Demand" Jobs

Region	OES 2019 SOC Code	Description	2020 Jobs	2020 Employment Concentration (National Avg. is 1.00)	2028 Projected Employment	Annual Openings (2018 - 2028)	Job Postings: Openings Advertised Online 2020	2020 Hires	Entry Level Earnings	Median Earnings	Experienced Earnings	Work Experience Required	Openings (2018 - 2028)/ Employment	Postings/ Employment	Hires/ Employment
Northern Middle TN	11-3131	Training and Development Managers	460	1.7	623	62	124	206	\$31.97	\$46.62	\$59.53	5 years or more	13.48%	26.96%	44.78%
Northern Middle TN	11-9198	Personal Service Managers, All Other; Entertainment and Recreation Managers, Except Gambling; and Managers, All Other	6,210	1.89	14,415	1,237	3,065	2,617	\$24.06	\$38.27	\$51.14	Less than 5 years	19.92%	49.36%	42.14%
Northern Middle TN	13-1071	Human Resources Specialists	4,870	1.08	5,562	597	988	4,496	\$18.66	\$26.87	\$36.03	None	12.26%	20.29%	92.32%
Northern Middle TN	13-1121	Meeting, Convention, and Event Planners	520	0.68	1,415	169	55	444	\$17.83	\$25.17	\$28.84	None	32.50%	10.58%	85.38%
Northern Middle TN	13-1161	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	4,180	0.87	5,640	646	520	2,997	\$19.36	\$28.60	\$37.21	None	15.45%	12.44%	71.70%
Northern Middle TN	27-3041	Editors	970	1.49	1,123	129	32	601	\$15.83	\$25.27	\$34.99	Less than 5 years	13.30%	3.30%	61.96%
Southern Middle TN	11-1021	General and Operations Managers	1,970	0.82	2,228	205	240	1,030	\$13.81	\$34.85	\$54.71	5 years or more	10.41%	12.18%	52.28%
Southern Middle TN	11-2021	Marketing Managers	90	0.32	91	9	16	61	\$27.36	\$45.05	\$55.91	5 years or more	10.00%	17.78%	67.78%
Southern Middle TN	11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	360	0.87	571	56	146	199	\$24.48	\$35.26	\$46.72	Less than 5 years	15.56%	40.56%	55.28%
Southern Middle TN	11-9198	Personal Service Managers, All Other; Entertainment and Recreation Managers, Except Gambling; and Managers, All Other	490	1.02	1,192	104	227	185	\$17.96	\$27.38	\$36.00	Less than 5 years	21.22%	46.33%	37.76%
Southern Middle TN	13-1071	Human Resources Specialists	390	0.59	393	41	59	387	\$17.42	\$25.96	\$32.25	None	10.51%	15.13%	99.23%
Southern Middle TN	13-1151	Training and Development Specialists	180	0.55	302	33	6	120	\$15.90	\$24.49	\$31.94	Less than 5 years	18.33%	3.33%	66.67%
Southern Middle TN	13-1161	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	250	0.35	357	41	10	194	\$17.37	\$28.83	\$46.26	None	16.40%	4.00%	77.60%

Additional items to note in the above table are the large salary range, typical entry level education, and work experience. As noted above, there is not a specialized license or certification required for these positions, so a bachelor's degree may be all that can be required. However, a master's degree will give job candidates a competitive advantage for these positions, which will lead to stronger job placement and higher starting salaries. Someone with a bachelor's degree may earn the entry level earning rate, whereas someone with no experience and a master's degree can earn the median earnings, and those with both experience and a master's degree can earn closer to the experience earning rate. The rate difference is significant, which will help to demonstrate the value of this degree and the investment made in their professional development.

### Employer demand

A random sample of 402 job postings on LinkedIn<sup>18</sup> indicate senior level and above communication positions that require a bachelor's degree and prefer a higher-level degree. Data reported from LinkedIn supports that between 25% - 38% percent of applicants for these positions have a master's degree. The MOPC degree will better position alumni from the program to be considered, selected, and earn a higher salary than many other applicants for these positions. See Table 4 for a sampling from this search on LinkedIn.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com>

Table 5: Employment Postings in Middle Tennessee

Employer/ Position	Master’s degree required	% Applicants with master’s degree	Estimated Salary Range
Amazon, Sr. Strategic Comms Manager	No	38%	\$90k - \$220k
Synctera, VP, Marketing & Communications	Preferred	33%	\$159k - \$281k
Bridgestone, Communications Manager Product Technology	Preferred	25%	\$50k – \$138K
Crown Bakeries, Marketing & Communications Director	Preferred	32%	\$78k – 131k
Senior Manager, Technical Field Education Training & Development	No	38%	\$65k - \$101K


The data in Tables 4 and 5 have similarities in the requirement of a bachelor’s degree and the lack of requirements for a master’s degree. However, LinkedIn has reported that 25-38% of the applicants have the advantage of a master’s degree. Furthermore, the salary ranges reported by LinkedIn or found on Glassdoor<sup>19</sup> provide a large salary range. The MOPC will provide the opportunity for a higher starting salary and job placement. This aligns with the mission of MTSU and THEC, and will benefit the individual, community, and Tennessee.

For a specific example, please review the job posting found on LinkedIn in Figure 4. The Change Realization Specialist position at Bridgestone’s corporate offices in Nashville is one that utilizes many of the foundation skills identified in the THEC Master Plan and covered in the MOPC. The responsibilities for the position include communication and collaboration with executive leadership and cross-functional teams. Verbal and written communication skills include facilitating, coaching, consulting, influencing, defining, and delivering. The requirements for this position indicate that this would be a great prospect for a graduate from the MOPC program.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.glassdoor.com>


Figure 3: Current Job Posting in Nashville


↪ ...


## Change Realization Specialist


Bridgestone Americas · Nashville, TN (On-site) 1 week ago · 20 applicants


 Full-time · Mid-Senior level

 10,001+ employees · Motor Vehicle Manufacturing

 7 company alumni · 5 school alumni

 See how you compare to 20 applicants. [Try Premium for free](#)

 Skills: Training Delivery, Communication, +5 more

[Apply](#) 

[Save](#)

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### About the job

#### Company Overview

Wherever you work and whatever role you fill, when you represent the Bridgestone name you know that you are a valued teammate who is part of our larger mission to "Serve Society with Superior Quality." We start by offering each teammate more than just a salary. We provide formal training, competitive performance incentives, paid vacation and holidays, healthcare packages for full-time and part-time employees, and a 401k plan to help build your future.

We believe people can only provide superior service and quality to others when they are allowed to bring their whole selves to work and know they are supported. We believe in championing all perspectives, individuals and teams because we understand the importance of seeing the world and our business through many different lenses. We are building a team as diverse as the world we serve. So, show us what you're made of. Show us the smart stuff, the tough stuff, the bold, beautiful and brave stuff. Because who you are is what we need.

Bridgestone Americas, Inc. is headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee and is the U.S. subsidiary of Bridgestone Corporation headquartered in Japan. Bridgestone Americas and its subsidiaries develop, manufacture and market a wide range of Bridgestone, Firestone and associate brand products to address the needs of a broad range of customers and industries.

#### Job Category

Communications

#### Position Summary

The Change Realization Specialist will play a key role in ensuring Bridgestone Business Services transformation and delivery initiatives are realized by creating and implementing change management and communications strategies that will increase adoption and usage of business processes, systems, technology, job roles, and organizational structures. The role will be based in Nashville, TN at the corporate office working in a hybrid environment.

#### Responsibilities

- Apply structured methodology and lead change management planning and activities
- Assess the change impact; conduct impact analysis and other evaluations to determine change plan
- Support communication efforts through the design, development, delivery and management of communication
- Act as a coach for senior leaders and executives in helping them fulfill the role of change sponsor
- Support project teams in integrating change management activities into their project plans
- Support training efforts through providing input, document requirements and support the design and delivery of training programs
- Define and measure success metrics and monitor change progress
- Work cross-functionally and collaboratively to ensure all applicable parties are co-creating and aware of plans and timelines
- Create and manage communication strategy for BBS function
- Produce written and visual communications needed to distribute messages related to the organization, strategy, performance, etc. related to Business Services
- Work as a team player and collaboratively with and through others
- Consult and coach project teams
- Clearly articulate messages via verbal and written communication to different audiences.
- Influence others to move toward a common goal or vision
- Effectively facilitate meetings; must be able to communicate with executive leadership

#### Minimum Qualifications

- Typically requires a minimum of 5 years of related experience with a bachelor's degree; or 3 years and a master's degree; or a PhD without experience; or equivalent work experience
- Experience with a variety of large- and small-scale change management initiatives
- Able to work well in ambiguous situations remaining flexible and adaptable

## Community and Industry Partnerships

The Communication Studies department at MTSU has developed strong relationships with area businesses and nonprofit organizations. The undergraduate program provides credit for internships, prepares and presents experiential learning activities for the public and area businesses, partners with area businesses on class projects, and has business professionals for guest speakers and interviewers within the classroom. For example, Jarrad and the State of Tennessee have been great partners for the existing undergraduate degree. Jarrad has provided case studies for classes and participated in classes as guest speakers. The State of Tennessee has partnered with a Conflict in Communication class that presented training to the Human Resources department and has provided internship opportunities for undergraduate students in this program.

The new graduate program plan was shared with four supporting industry partners for the existing undergraduate program to determine employer need and interest in supporting MTSU's MOPC program. The respondents included Middle Tennessee Electric Company, Jarrad Inc., Ascend Federal Credit Union, and the State of Tennessee. These four employers and industry partners provided letters of support (see Appendix B) for the MOPC program. Table 6 includes the names of the organizations along with the means for their support to this program, such as job placement for graduates, continuous education for existing employees, and additional experiential learning opportunities.

Table 6: Community and Industry Partners

<b>Company</b>	<b>Means of Support</b>
Ascend Federal Credit Union	<input type="checkbox"/> Continuing education for current employees <input type="checkbox"/> Job placement
Jarrad Inc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Continuing education for current employees <input type="checkbox"/> Job placement <input type="checkbox"/> Class projects
Middle Tennessee Electric Company	<input type="checkbox"/> Job placement
State of Tennessee	<input type="checkbox"/> Continuing education for current employees <input type="checkbox"/> Job placement

## Section IV: Enrollment and Graduation Projections

Conservative program projections include six students enrolled in the MOPC in the first year. Program enrollment will increase to twelve the second year, as eight more students will enroll in the program. Anticipated attrition is one student, with five students graduating at the end of Year 2.

Projections continue to begin the third year with ten new students, which would bring the overall program enrollment to eighteen, with attrition of two student. Graduation of five students is expected to begin year four with an existing twelve students and twelve new students. Of the twenty-four students, two students will discontinue and six will graduate. Year 5 will begin with seventeen existing students and thirteen new students for thirty students.

These projections do not include students that would be enrolling as part of the certificate program or partnership with WSCC for instructors seeking 18 communication credits. These additional students will be a great asset to the program and would help fill classes, increase visibility of the program, and provide existing and future enrollment.

Table 7 – Projected Enrollments and Graduates

Projected Enrollments and Graduates				
Year	Academic Year	Projected Total Fall Enrollment	Projected Attrition (10%)	Projected Graduates
1	2024-25	6 new	0	0
2	2025-26	14 total (8 new)	-1	-5
3	2026-27	18 total (10 new)	-2	-5
4	2027-28	24 total (13 new)	-2	-6
5	2028-29	30 total (14 new)	-2	-6

### Section V: Projected Costs to Deliver the Proposed Program

Please see Appendix C: THEC Financial Projections Form for a breakdown of the costs described in Section V. The main costs for this program will be marketing, course development fees, and labor. Several areas covered in the Financial Projections Form will not incur additional costs beyond what is already covered through existing undergraduate program and university budgets. Please note that the overall expenses from start-up to the end of Year 5 is projected at \$319,706. The overall revenue for the first five years of the program is \$191,160. The overall profit after expenses for this program for the first five years is \$355,726. Please see Appendix C and the summary below for a breakdown of this budget.

#### Faculty & Instructional Staff

The program will require an existing faculty member to assume responsibilities for the Graduate Program Director role to recruit new students, advise and meet with students, and organize the program throughout the academic year. Because the program is a two-year program that will require continuous recruitment, projections include three hours of course reassignment in the fall and spring semesters, and a stipend during the summer. The annual cost for the Graduate Program Director is equivalent to hiring an adjunct to teach two courses a semester at \$2,400 a course and up to \$5,000 for a summer stipend for the graduate director, for a total annual cost of \$14,600.

Current program growth estimates require the addition of a faculty member to the department during Year 4, when there are 24 students in the program. The additional faculty member will

work with existing faculty to build online courses and teach the courses offered in the Communication Studies graduate and undergraduate program. The numbers calculated in the form include salary and benefits at \$97,398 annually.

### **Non-Instructional Staff**

Additional non-instructional staff for the first five years of this program are not anticipated.

### **Graduate Assistants**

One Graduate Assistant is projected beginning in the 2nd year of the program. The reoccurring cost is calculated at \$9,144 annually.

### **Accreditation**

There are no industry specific accreditation fees or expenses. Accreditations will take place through MTSU and SACSCOC.

### **Consultants**

As part of the THEC approval process, the program will require an external reviewer in the planning year, with a one-time cost estimated at \$4,000, which includes a \$1,500 stipend.

### **Equipment**

N/A

### **Information Technology**

This program will not require additional technology acquisitions. The James E. Walker Library has 350 computers for student use, plus laptops and hotspots are available to checkout. Many students also have their own technology to use for online classes.

One laptop will be provided for the Teaching Assistant to use while teaching for the MTSU Communication Studies department, for a total of \$1,500 in Year 2. This laptop will be passed on to future Teaching Assistants during the first five years of the program. The department will budget to replace this laptop on the same schedule as the other university assigned department laptops.

### **Library resources**

The James E. Walker Library at MTSU has adequate resources to support the MOPC program through scholarly resources, research expertise from Librarians and staff, and support services for student success. The department is assigned a librarian specializing in Communication. There are currently adequate resources available for use through many databases and interlibrary loan programs.

### **Marketing**

The program will require \$3,600 (an average of \$300/month) during the planning year to invest in marketing materials (e.g., print collateral, brochures, swag), as well as social media advertising to create awareness of the program and encourage applications. In Year 1, marketing costs will increase to \$6,000 to invest in additional digital advertising designed to increase awareness and enrollment. After the initial push in Year 1, the program will continue to

advertise, but at an investment of \$3,000 per year. In Year 5, marketing costs will increase slightly to \$3,600 to cover the costs of additional promotional placements to highlight and showcase any fifth anniversary announcements and/or events, etc.

**Facilities**

None.

**Travel**

Travel, estimated at \$750 annually and beginning in the planning year, will be required to recruit at conferences, off campus, employers, and for professional development of the Graduate Program Director/Coordinator or Graduate Faculty.

**Other resources**

None.

**Section VI: Projected Revenues for the Proposed Program**

Please see Appendix C: THEC Financial Projections Form for a breakdown of the revenue described in Section VI.

**Tuition**

Tuition was calculated based on the number of students enrolled in the program taking 6 credits per fall (\$3,708) and spring semester (\$3,708) - for a total of \$7,416 per academic year. The projections are calculated using current 2023-24 rates.

**Grants**

N/A

**Other**

N/A



Tools ▾

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## Comm Studies Graduate Program: Alumni & Professionals

ExpertReview score **Great**

▾ Default Question Block

Q1

What was your undergraduate degree in?

- Communication Studies major
- Communication Studies minor
- Other, please specify

Q2

Did you continue your education after graduating with your undergraduate degree?

- Yes, State where you attended and the program
- No

Q2A

▾ [Display this question](#)

If Did you continue your education after graduating with your undergraduate degree? Yes, State where you attended and the program Is Selected

Did you graduate from that program?

- Yes
- No

Q2B

▼ [Display this question](#)

If Did you graduate from that program? No Is Selected

If not, why?

Q3

What benefits do you personally see from earning a master's degree? (check all that apply)

- Career advancement
- Become a specialist in my field
- Career shift
- Additional income
- Become more competitive in the workplace
- My employer pays my educational costs
- I can't find a job
- Other, please specify

1

We are proposing a graduate degree at MTSU in Organizational and Professional Communication. See description below:

The Department of Communication Studies offers an online Master of Arts in Organizational and Professional Communication. This program will guide students to improve their communication and critical thinking skills and increase overall career success. Coursework includes theoretical and experiential learning opportunities to acquire advanced interpersonal, group, and organizational communication skills. Students will increase their overall effectiveness and growth as members and leaders in various fast-paced changing organizational and professional environments.

Q4

What is your interest level in this program (0 none, 6 extremely interested)?

Q5

What classes would you like offered in this graduate program (check all that apply)?

- Communication Theory
- Research Methods
- Persuasion
- Conflict in Communication
- Instructional Resources for HR Trainers
- Consulting & Auditing
- Internship in Communication
- Organizational Crisis Communication
- Communication in the Global Workplace
- Other, please specify

Q6

What specialty would you consider in a master's degree in Organizational & Professional Communication?

- Health Communication
- Human Resources & Development
- Nonprofit Organizations
- Corporate Communication
- Other, please specify

Q7

Would you be interested in the graduate program offering any of these items (check all that apply)?

- Teaching opportunity for COMM2200 Fundamentals of Communication (Public Speaking)
- Professional experience in an internship
- Student abroad opportunity
- Student abroad/internship abroad semester or summer opportunity
- Financial assistance with teaching or research assistantship
- Scholarship opportunity
- Complete online program accessible from anywhere
- Taking a mix of online and in person classes
- None of the above
- I am not interested in going to graduate school
- I am not interested in this program

Q8

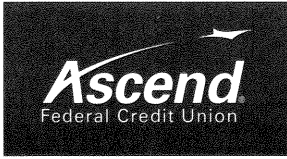
Please share additional comments or concerns about this proposed program that you would like to share with us

 [Import from library](#)[Add new question](#)[Add Block](#)

End of Survey

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.

Your response has been recorded.



P.O. Box 1210  
520 Airpark Drive  
Tullahoma, TN 37388  
800-342-3086  
ascend.org

March 27, 2023

Meredith E. Kerr  
Development Director, College of Liberal Arts  
Middle Tennessee State University  
MTSU Box 109  
Murfreesboro, TN 37132

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Master of Arts in Organizational and Professional Communication program to be offered by the Department of Communication Studies at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU).

As a Human Resources leader at Ascend Federal Credit Union, I believe that this program will greatly benefit the professional development and success of graduates in Middle Tennessee.

At Ascend, we value strong verbal and written communication skills for new hires and leaders within our organization. We also understand the importance of effective communication in achieving our organizational goals and building strong relationships with our members. The proposed program is designed to guide students to improve their communication and critical thinking skills, which will inevitably lead to greater overall career success. Additionally, the online availability of the program makes pursuing higher education possible and convenient for working professionals, including Ascend employees.

Effective communication skills are crucial in today's face-paced and ever-changing business environment. As a long-standing partner with MTSU and Blue Raider Athletics, Ascend is eager to explore opportunities for collaboration with the Department of Communication Studies to support the development of the next generation of communication professionals and leaders.

Sincerely,

Renee Crosslin  
Vice President of Talent and Culture  
Ascend Federal Credit Union

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Renee Crosslin".

# Jarrard Inc. | Support for Master's Program

---

**Dr. McPhee,**  
**President, Middle Tennessee University**

I am writing you today on behalf of Jarrard Inc., a communications consulting firm headquartered in Middle Tennessee, with offices in Chicago as well as remote-based colleagues around the country. Our firm is dedicated to the healthcare industry exclusively. Within the healthcare space, our clients are primarily providers of care from large/national health systems to innovative health services companies, all across the country. We leverage the power of communications to help these healthcare leaders find their voice for moments of change, challenge and opportunity.

Our CEO and founding partner, David Jarrard, is a proud alumna of MTSU and as a firm, we have forged a collaborative relationship with MTSU over the years. Some ways that we support MTSU currently include:

- Guest speakers for Senior Seminar classes, as guests of Dr. Natalie Hoskins (3 semesters and counting)
- Individual colleagues who graduated from MTSU have maintained relationships with professors and deans, and often request referrals for stand-out graduates for recruitment efforts for the firm (we currently have 5+ alumnae on staff)
- Creation of an immersive, hands-on learning day, hosted at our Brentwood office, exclusively offered to MTSU communication, journalism and public relations students (our first day will be held March 31, 2023)

## **Support for Master of Arts in Organizational and Professional Communication**

Jarrard would be in support of a Master's program focused on this skillset as it is integral to the work we do as a firm, and we have found it to be very meaningful to our clients - healthcare systems and providers. We equip healthcare leaders to yield their influence through communications in order to lead their organizations and bring about needed changes to the healthcare industry.

We feel a Master's program dedicated to Organizational and Professional Communication would help teach a potential new wave of leaders the value and impact of strong communications. We would be happy to encourage our current colleagues who are interested in advanced degrees to consider this program, especially those based in Middle Tennessee, as a way to continuously improve in their chosen field and craft.

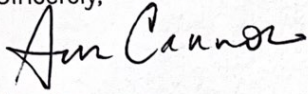
Additionally, the firm would be supportive of continued collaboration between ourselves and the University - either in the form of our colleagues visiting classes and sharing wisdom and counsel, as well as potentially inviting students of the program to visit us at Jarrard for a "day in the life" of a communications professional.

From a recruiting standpoint, graduates from this program would certainly be attractive to a firm such as ours and other communication firms, as we seek out the best-of-the-best talent, especially those that possess strong verbal and written communication skills, which is in demand from most employers these

days. Our clients know the value of strong internal and external communications to help them reach goals as an organization and to impart information to their employees as well as patients.

Thank you and please let us know if you have any questions or need additional information at this time.

Sincerely,



**Ann Cannon**

Vice President, Talent Development

Jarrard Inc

[acannon@jarrardinc.com](mailto:acannon@jarrardinc.com)

615-254-0575 (office phone)

March 27, 2023

To Dr. Sidney McPhee, University President:

I am writing with enthusiasm to endorse the idea of a Master of Arts in Organizational and Professional Communication, which I understand the College of Liberal Arts and the Department of Communications Studies is proposing for the university. As the leader of a local business, a former professional communicator and as someone with a bachelor's degree in communications, I can see great potential value from such a program.

From my perspective as the leader of Middle Tennessee Electric, I can say our organization seeks professionals who can communicate effectively and think critically. The need for these capacities is greater than ever, and I only see that need increasing. Ironically, it seems finding professionals who execute these capacities at a high level is more challenging than ever. I could envision top performers at MTE in various disciplines benefitting from a program that features "theoretical and experiential learning opportunities to acquire advanced interpersonal, group and organizational communication skills." Further, MTE would be happy to work with the university through this program by creating opportunities for students not affiliated with MTE to do project work for and at our company.

In my earlier professional life, I was a communicator for more than 25 years, primarily in corporate communications. I certainly wish I would have had access to a program like this years ago. Candidly, after understanding what this program is proposed to look like – including it being online and designed for working professionals – I would consider participating in this program for myself, even now.

If I may be so bold, my personal example is a testimony of how communication skills can help pave a pathway to leadership in an industry where leadership is traditionally dominated by engineers. Within my industry and through my associations with various other categories of business and industry, I am observing how employers more keenly desire for their new hires and their rising leaders to have the skills this program seeks to foster. I can see this program setting apart its graduates for marketability across the business spectrum.

Please reach out if I can be of help in the furtherance of your evaluation for the Master of Arts in Organizational and Professional Communication program. While MTE is engaged with MTSU through several avenues, this might be a spot where I and some of my associates could be of particular help.

Sincerely and respectfully,



Chris Jones  
President/CEO  
Middle Tennessee Electric





September 22, 2023

Meredith Kerr, Development Director  
Middle Tennessee State University, College of Liberal Arts  
MTSU  
Box 109  
Murfreesboro, TN 37132

Dear Meredith,

I'm writing in support of the College of Liberal Arts' proposal for an advanced degree in Organizational and Professional Communication. The last three years have proven that both new hires and current employees must be flexible, organized, and have strong verbal and written communication skills. As an alumnus of Middle Tennessee State University and an Executive Director with the State of Tennessee, I work with professionals in IT Administration. The professionals on my team must exhibit outstanding interpersonal, group, and organizational communication skills. This degree could make an important difference in opportunities for advancement for my existing staff and graduate placement within state. Additionally, the 30-hour, online format will be accessible for full-time employees.

I applaud the university for considering new opportunities that will benefit the community.

Sincerely,

*Emily S. H. Gibson*

Emily Gibson, PhD  
Executive Director, Enterprise Governance & Administration



### Financial Projections Form

<b>Institution</b>	Middle Tennessee State University
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<b>Program Name</b>	MA in Organizational and Professional Communication
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Projected One-Time Expenditures						
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Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Faculty & Instructional Staff						
Non-Instructional Staff						
Graduate Assistants						
Accreditation						
Consultants	\$4,000					
Equipment						
Information Technology			\$1,500			
Library resources						
Marketing						
Facilities						
Travel						
Other						
<i>Total One-Time Expenditures</i>	<i>\$4,000</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$1,500</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>

Projected Recurring Expenditures						
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Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Faculty & Instructional Staff	\$14,600	\$14,600	\$14,600	\$14,600	\$111,998	\$111,998
Non-Instructional Staff	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Graduate Assistants	\$0	\$0	\$9,144	\$9,144	\$9,144	\$9,144
Accreditation	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Consultants	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Information Technology	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Library	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Marketing	\$3,600	\$6,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,600
Facilities	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Travel	\$750	\$750	\$750	\$750	\$750	\$750
Other	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>Total Recurring Expenditures</i>	<i>\$18,950</i>	<i>\$21,350</i>	<i>\$27,494</i>	<i>\$27,494</i>	<i>\$124,892</i>	<i>\$125,492</i>
<b>Grand Total (One-Time and Recurring)</b>	<b>\$22,950</b>	<b>\$21,350</b>	<b>\$28,994</b>	<b>\$27,494</b>	<b>\$124,892</b>	<b>\$125,492</b>

Projected Revenue						
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Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Tuition	\$0	\$44,496	\$103,824	\$133,488	\$177,984	\$222,480
Grants	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$44,496</b>	<b>\$103,824</b>	<b>\$133,488</b>	<b>\$177,984</b>	<b>\$222,480</b>