

College of Behavioral and Health Sciences

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These three words
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*Vernice Armour ('97)
2014 MTSU
Distinguished Alumni*

CBHS Alum Keeps Flying High

Vernice Armour Named MTSU 2014 Distinguished Alumni



“Responsibility, leadership, and gratitude. These three words sum up what being honored by my alma mater truly means to me. I am standing on many shoulders and the most meaningful and purposeful action I can take is passing what I have learned on to future generations.” Vernice shared these words after learning she had received the MTSU Distinguished Alumni Award.

During Operation Iraqi Freedom, as a member of the United States Marine Corps, Vernice Armour ('97) was recognized as America's first African-American female

combat pilot. Vernice flew above the deserts of Iraq in her missile-equipped attack helicopter, engaging the enemy and scouting the roads from her cockpit, making sure they were safe for her fellow Marines and soldiers on the ground, during two tours of duty.

In civilian life, she has used that experience and training in combination with her training as a police officer and learnings from her Health and Human Performance degree to develop “Breakthrough Mentality” a powerful behavioral plan that instructs people on how to move through business and life and go from *Zero to Breakthrough*—with the same “Breakthrough Mentality” that propelled her from beat cop to combat pilot in a record-breaking three years. Her success has taken her from the couch on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* to the White House and thousands of places in-between, inspiring and wowing audiences with her high energy presentation.

“I truly believe MTSU and a solid education are a gateway to the American dream ... and continue to be for thousands of engaged students every day! I learned life lessons in the classroom on campus and off!

Vernice will receive the MTSU 2015 Distinguished Alumni Award at an awards ceremony on Friday, October 17 during Homecoming Weekend. Dean Whiteside will host invited guests at a reception on Saturday to recognize her achievements, along with CBHS Advisory Board Member and Murfreesboro City Schools Director, Dr. Linda Gilbert, who will receive the True Blue Citation for Achievement in Education.

“We are very proud of Vernice and Linda,” said Dean Whiteside. “Accomplished alumni increase the value of all the degrees from MTSU, but they also say to potential students, ‘this is where you can get your start toward achieving greatness.’” **CBHS**

Advice will Rule the Day and Retention

New CBHS Advisors and Student Success Officer Coming Aboard

“There are so many little things that have the capacity to negatively impact the student experience, and they become multiplied exponentially when a student doesn't utilize their advisor. Everyone knows a student who took a bunch of classes that could not be credited to their major or another who came back to campus for one class in their final semester in order to graduate. These outcomes, more often, result when students bypass advisors. We are going to have enough advisors to make it a proactive and twenty-first century holistic advising process that goes beyond course selection to provide the coaching and services that students need to increase their chances for degree completion and success beyond MTSU,” explains Brelinda Johnson, who will manage the seventeen-member CBHS advisement team. The staff will be in place this fall in a new office suite on the first floor of the Cason-Kennedy Nursing Building. Expansion of the advisement staff is part of MTSU's strategic efforts to improve retention.

Dean Terry Whiteside also appointed Professor Colby Jubenville special assistant to the dean. Dr. Jubenville will be the first college-based student success officer at MTSU and will work directly with students to help them build and execute personal success plans. He will collaborate with the college development officer, Bea Perdue, to build more corporate and community partnerships for experiential learning, research, and thought across areas that affect health and well-being. “This is a perfect role for Dr. Jubenville, said



Brelinda Johnson speaking to students.

alumnus Anthony Dudley. “I am a perfect example of his ability to motivate, encourage, and guide [students] to success. As a student I didn't immediately want to hear what he had to say, but he kept saying it and one day it all clicked. He helps you to understand that personal success requires personal responsibility and he helps you make a plan for it and then makes it clear that he expects you to do the work and succeed. At that point you're afraid to let him down.” Dudley is director of development at the Nashville Sports Council. **CBHS**

Good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience.

R.J. Light

Donors Support Grows for CBHS Efforts

Alum Pam Wright ('67) Pledges \$100,000 to Establish Wright Travel Scholars Fund

Pam Wright has a True Blue history of serving and supporting her alma mater. She is currently serving as co-chair of the MTSU \$80 Million Centennial Campaign and helped to launch that effort by funding the Wright Travel Endowed Professorship in the School of Business. When the College of Behavioral and Health Sciences began to develop its case for support, Pam was one of the first to offer her assistance by hosting fellow alums for a CBHS Focus Group Session in her home last summer. The session allowed Dean Whiteside to share his vision for MTSU's newest college and gain insight from the most important group of stakeholders on how to strengthen their connection to their departments, the college, and MTSU. Throughout the year, Pam kept abreast of programs and activities of the College until she was able to match her philanthropic goals with the needs of CBHS. "I know that level of ability and the size of the dreams that reside with many of the young people in our region far exceed their economic capacity; those are the young people that I feel compelled to help. They are often drawn to what many of us refer to as the 'helping' disciplines that make up our College and make tremendous contributions to improving outcomes in the communities that they know from experience. If I can help them realize those dreams, then I know that I've made a difference," Wright said.

The Wright Travel Endowed Scholars Fund will support student scholarships and provide leadership coaching through the CBHS Office of Student Success, headed by Dr. Colby Jubenville. [CBHS](#)

The College of Behavioral and Human Sciences is grateful for the support of numerous alumni and other donors whose contributions are furthering the growth and development of the college. We would like to recognize and extend a special thanks to our 2014 major and special gift donors.

- HCA Foundation: \$25,000 to support the Collaborative Learning and Leadership Institute (CCLI)
- Jon Breeding (93'): \$25,000 to establish the LGBT Heroes Endowed Scholarship Fund
- Deloitte and Nissan: Presenting Sponsors of the Inaugural LGBT+ College Conference
- Community Foundation: Grant support for the Inaugural LGBT+ College Conference
- Family Dollar Foundation: Grant support for Health Literacy
- Margaret Hall ('72): Generous Estate Gift to support the School of Nursing
- Mary Secrest ('74): Generous Estate Gift to fund CBHS Scholarships

To make a financial or in-kind gift of support contact CBHS Development Director Bea Perdue at 615-898-2417 or Bea.Perdue@mtsu.edu.



1: Best in Show at the ASID state conference competition was the True Blue dress. Molly Curtis, CDFS student, modeled the winning design, and Paige Acorn, MTSU ASID president and Interior Design major, modeled a competing design.

2: To prepare for building Harmony House entry for Solar Decathlon 2015, MTSU and Vanderbilt students helped build a Habitat for Humanity home in Dickson in late May and June. (submitted photo)

3: Early on, MTSU rising senior interior design student Elizabeth Kurtz, foreground, assumed a leadership role, seeking volunteers for Solar Decathlon responsibilities. Waiting to

volunteer are (from left) Haifa Mbanna, Kaitlyn Daniels, Shelby Stone, Lesley Robinson, and Marcus Byers. (MTSU photo by News and Media Relations)

4: School of Nursing students and faculty participate in the 2014 American Heart Association Heart Walk.

5: Social Work Alum Giovanna Gomez's ('14), "Fostering Hope," a film collaboration with other MTSU students, is now a permanent part of Tennessee's Department of Children's Services webpage at <http://www.tndcs.org/>. The film highlights foster families in Tennessee and speaks to what has become a passion and profession for the recent graduate.

Dean's Message

The 2015 academic year finds us on a forward trajectory, continuing our focus on creating new and meaningful outcomes, like those highlighted in this issue of our newsletter. Like always time moves fast during an academic year, because there is always something new happening.

Vernice Amour has soared since leaving MTSU in 1997 with a degree in Physical Education. Not just in her U. S. Marine Corp missile-equipped attack helicopter, but as an entrepreneur determined to improve personal and professional outcomes for others. CBHS can take great pride in her selection as the 2014 MTSU Distinguished Alumni. Vernice, Mary Secrest, and Pam Wright, and so many other CBHS Alums prove daily that the college is equipping students to make a distinct mark, not only in their chosen disciplines, but in whatever dreams they choose to pursue. In these alums we see a foundation for success and a determination to support the future successes of both today's and tomorrow's students.

I can't say "thank you" enough for the generosity of Pam, Mary, Jon Breeding and Margaret Hall along with more than 500 other individuals and companies who saw value in our efforts. When you gain financial support for efforts like the CCLI from the HCA Foundation along with other projects that have garnered support from the Community Foundation, Family Dollar Foundation, Deloitte, and Nissan it serves as confirmation that our teaching, research, and thought leadership brings value to the community at large.

Confirmation is not completion, though, and our goal in 2015 is to up our game, working to give our students the support and counsel they need to perform well within a rigorous academic environment. We want to be a trusted resource to the community at large contributing to the health and well-being of our citizens and the communities where we all live, work, and play.

We continue to focus on advancing opportunities that will make 2015 a year in which all of our stakeholders can be True Blue proud! [CBHS](#)



Terry Whiteside
Dean Terry Whiteside