

September 2025

Perspectives from the College



A New Year of Impact

Now that we are a week into the new semester, I hope everyone is celebrating this opportunity to reconnect with colleagues, friends, and students. We are hoping for good news with our fall enrollment and paying close attention to Census Day when we get our official fall enrollment report, a critical component in determining our budget for this academic year.

Last year we had five Task Forces that offered some great recommendations. One Task Force recommended a monthly communique – a newsletter like this – that was short, to the point, and offered some highlights of what is happening around the College. So look for this newsletter the first week of each month!

As you may have heard, we are launching a search for a newly configured role in the Dean's Office, a position formerly held by Alfred Hall, Celia Anderson, and Leigh Harrel-Williams. The position will provide leadership and support to both our academic enterprise and curriculum as well as student support, retention, and recruitment. The position is: Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs, and with some luck, we will have someone on board by the Spring semester.

We are also launching our two Task Forces for the year exploring the structure of our academic departments as well as how we express and make use of shared governance in the College. I am grateful to Dr. Chris Mueller and Dr. Celia Anderson for their leadership chairing these Task Forces.

I am also pleased to share that Dr. Dustin Hornbeck will serve as the College's second representative to the University Council for Graduate Studies (UCGS). His service will ensure our College has a strong voice in shaping graduate education across campus.

This is a busy time of year and I hope that all of you know how much your efforts are truly appreciated. The staff in the Dean's Office is here to support you in any way that we possibly can and we are grateful for your hard work and dedication!

Happenings: What's Going On This Month



September 4: Breakfast in Ball (*Free breakfast!*)
Ball Hall 215-B | 8:30-10 | RSVP Email Amy Wilson | lwilson10@memphis.edu

September 11: Faculty Development Series — Teaching— *Academic Accountability*
Morgan Linsy, Office of Student Accountability
Ball Hall 209 | 12–1 PM

September 17: Staff Leadership Council — Planning and Organizing for the New Academic Year.
Ball Hall 124 | 11 AM–12:15 PM

September 18: Faculty Development Series — *The Research Enterprise (NSF I-Corps Hub)*
Chris Ramezanpour, Assistant Director of Innovation Ecosystems, Research and Innovation
Ball Hall 209 | 12–1 PM

September 26: Weekly Writing Sessions — Dr. Alison Happel-Parkins
Bell Tower Coffee (back room) | 9 AM–12 PM

New Faces

Say hello to

Kevin Barbee-Manager of Marketing & Communications, COE Dean's Office

Madison Maw- Academic Services Coordinator

Help us say good-bye to

Carolyn Kaldon, Research Professor, CREP

Wendy Griswold, Associate Professor of Adult Education, LEAD

FACULTY/STAFF HIGHLIGHTS AND AWARDS



Happel-Parkins Named Department Chair

MEMPHIS, Tenn. –The College of Education (COE) at the University of Memphis has announced the appointment of Dr. Alison Happel-Parkins as chair of the [Department of Leadership](#) (LEAD). She currently holds a joint faculty appointment as associate professor of Educational Research and Higher and Adult Education and has served as LEAD's interim chair since 2023.

[Read Full Story](#)



Faculty Spotlight

Dr. Andrew Tawfix Wins National Book Award

Awarded AECT's Outstanding Book Award for Transdisciplinary Learning Experience Design



Recognized by the Association for Educational Communications & Technology (AECT) 2025 Design & Development Outstanding Book Award

Dr. Andrew Tawfix Wins National Book Award

MEMPHIS, Tenn. - Dr. Andrew A. Tawfik, Professor of Instructional Design & Technology, has been honored with the 2025 AECT Design & Development Outstanding Book Award. His co-edited volume, *Transdisciplinary Learning Experience Design: Futures, Synergies, and Innovation*, was recognized by the Association for Educational Communications & Technology (AECT) for its significant contribution to the field. The book explores emerging approaches to designing learning experiences that cut across disciplines, blending theory and practice for the future of education.



Dr. Chrisann Schiro-Geist Addresses United Nations on Inclusive Higher Education

MEMPHIS, Tenn. – Dr. Chrisann Schiro-Geist, Director of the University of Memphis Institute on Disability (UMID) and Professor of Rehabilitation Counseling, recently addressed a global audience at the United Nations in New York City, speaking on the importance of inclusive higher education for students with intellectual disabilities.

[Read Full Story](#)

[Watch Her Speech Here](#)

Research Spotlight



UofM Alumni Drs. Topeka & Jaques D. Singleton Shaping the Future of Doctoral Education

Memphis, TN – Two proud alumni of the University of Memphis College of Education are helping shape the future of doctoral education. Dr. Topeka Small Singleton and Dr. Jaques D. Singleton, both faculty members at Arkansas State University, recently published a research article in the Arkansas Association of Teacher Education Journal that explores how EdD programs can better prepare students for leadership in the field.

[Read more about Singletons' research »](#)



Gao's Research Sheds Light on the Digital Divide

Memphis, TN – Dr. Huan Gao, Assistant Professor in the Department of Instruction and Curriculum Leadership, is the lead author of a new British Journal of Sociology of Education article, “Digital Stratification: Comparing Digital Literacy Practices Among Aboriginal and Mainstream Children in Australian Homes.”

[Read more about Gao's research »](#)



Dr. Byford Explores Professional Development in Middle Grades History Classrooms

MEMPHIS, Tenn. - Dr. Jeffrey M. Byford, Professor of Social Studies Education at the University of Memphis, is the lead author of a new History Education Research Journal article, "Burden or Benefit: The Use of Professional Development in the Middle Grades History Classroom."

[Read more about Byford's Research](#)

For more research publications, check out the [@COE LinkedIn page](#)



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Alumni News



Anne Kenworthy Named President of Spalding University

Louisville, Ky. – President of Spalding University, Dr. Kenworthy leads with a mission-focused approach rooted in her time at the University of Memphis. Her formal inauguration is set for this September.

[Read More About President Kenworthy](#)



Dr. Mario Brown: A Proud COE Alum Leading with Purpose

A two-time graduate of the University of Memphis, Dr. Mario Brown (B.S.E.T. '03, Ed.D. '12) earned his doctorate from the College of Education and now serves as Chief Talent Officer at First Horizon Bank. As President-Elect of the UofM Alumni Association National Board, he continues to lead with the same passion and purpose he developed on campus.

[Read More About Dr. Brown](#)



Brett Heinrich Appointed Principal of Collierville Middle School

University of Memphis College of Education alumnus Brett Heinrich was recently promoted to Principal of Collierville Middle School. He brings extensive experience and a strong record of leadership to his new role.

[Read More About Principal Heinrich](#)

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