

**December 2025**

## From the College

"Help others get ahead. You always stand taller with someone else on your shoulders."

-Bob Moawad

This fall semester has flown by. Please know how much you are appreciated and valued by everyone in the College: your faculty and staff colleagues, administrators and especially our students.

A couple of quick things to note. First, we are beginning our on-campus interviews for the Associate Dean of Academic and Student Affairs position. Exact times and presentation locations will be shared soon, and I hope you will attend and offer your valuable feedback.

Second, we have nine faculty searches underway for Fall 2026 start dates. Attending candidate research presentations makes a real difference. It shows that we care about each other, about our collective scholarship and about the supportive community we have built here.

Third, a reminder that the President's Ascend Character Education Conference is coming up on February 17 in the UC. It will be here before you know it.

There have been many notable faculty, staff and student accomplishments this semester, and we are doing our best to highlight these on social media. If you receive an award or know someone who has, please share it with Kevin Barbee so he can post it on our official College accounts. We are also tracking this information to feature in our 2026 Annual Report.

As the semester winds down, I hope you get the opportunity to relax, spend time with those you care about and take a deep breath before the spring term begins. We will share a short welcome in January, and our monthly newsletter will return in February. I hope to see all of you on December 4 in the UC for our Holiday Reception.

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## Happenings: What's Going On This Month And Next



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**December 4:** COE Holiday Reception  
UC Fountain View Round (350)  
2:30 – 4:30 p.m.

**December 13:** Commencement  
FedExForum (Downtown Memphis)  
10:00 am

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## **Professional Learning Opportunity: Ascend University of Memphis**

Staff and faculty across the University of Memphis are invited to register interest in a Spring 2026 professional learning community connected to the Ascend University of Memphis initiative. Sessions will focus on supporting undergraduate education and exploring the pedagogical themes from *Cultivating Virtue in the University*.

Those interested are encouraged to register by today, December 1.

## COE Community Highlights



### 80 Students Celebrated at Annual TEP Pinning Ceremony

**MEMPHIS, Tenn.** – The College of Education welcomed 80 students into the Teacher Education Program during this year's Pinning Ceremony. Hosted by the Office of Teacher Education and Clinical Practice, the event recognized students for meeting the academic and program requirements needed to enter TEP, marking a significant step on their path to becoming educators. Families, faculty and staff joined in celebrating this milestone as students move closer to leading their own classrooms and making an impact in schools and communities.

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## Student / Mentor / Supervisor of the Month: November 2025

**MEMPHIS, Tenn.** — The College of Education Office of Teacher Education and Clinical Practice is proud to announce the recipients of Student Teacher, Mentor Teacher and Supervisor of the Month for November 2025: Olivia Brown, Amy McCoy and Rebecca Bocz.

[Read more here »](#)

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## Student / Mentor / Supervisor of the Month: October 2025

**MEMPHIS, Tenn.** – The College of Education Office of Teacher Education and Clinical Practice is proud to announce the recipients of Student Teacher, Mentor Teacher and Supervisor of the Month for October 2025: Mark Maclin, Amanda Wellons and Anne Faulks.

[Read more here »](#)

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# Online Doctorate in Educational Psychology Program

CounselingPsychology.org

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# #1



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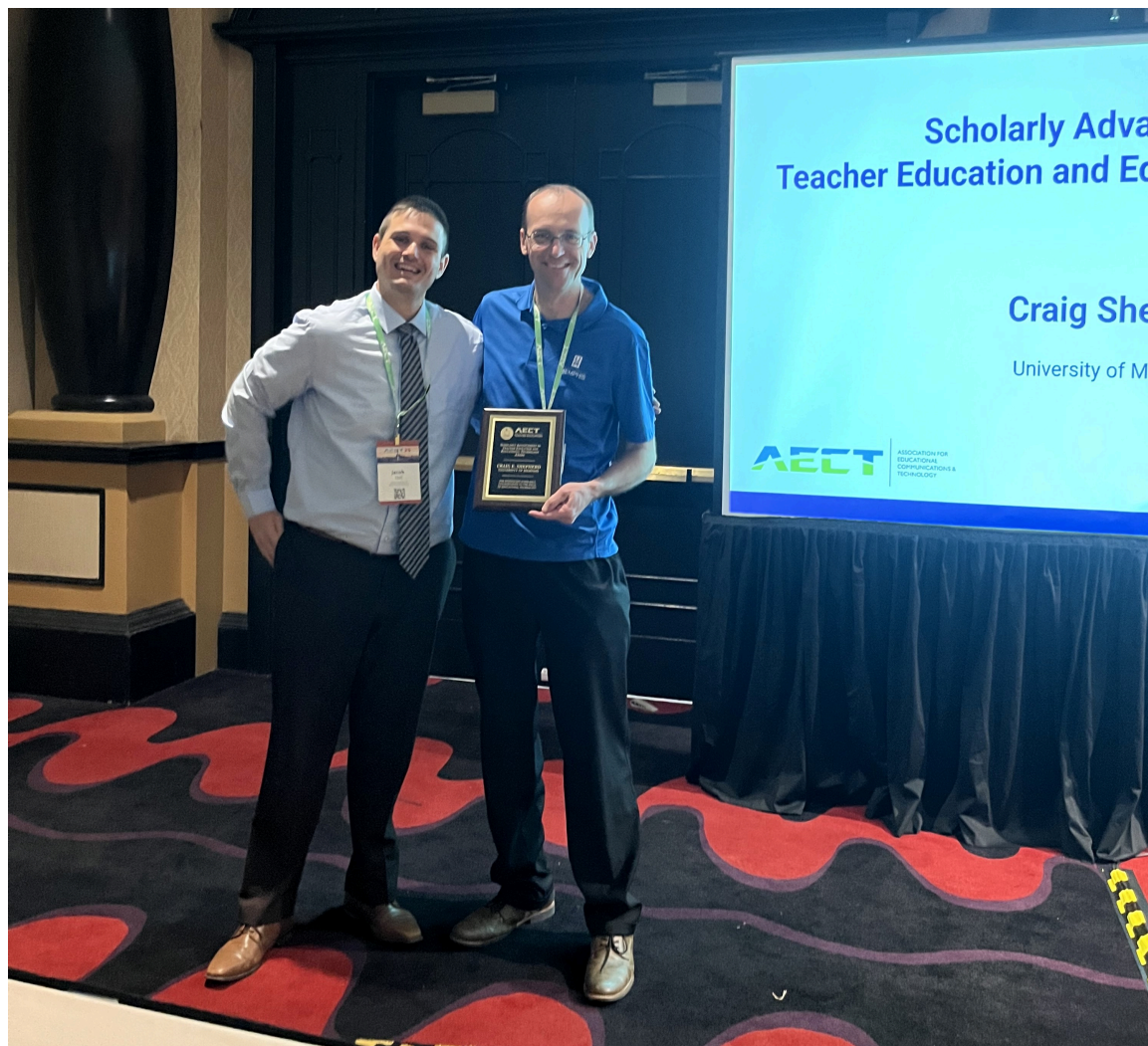
## EDPR Online Doctorate Ranked #1 in the Nation

**MEMPHIS, Tenn.** — The College of Education's PhD in Educational Psychology and Research has been ranked the #1 Online Doctorate in Educational Psychology Program in the country by *CounselingPsychology.org*.

This recognition highlights the program's strong faculty, research-driven curriculum and commitment to preparing exceptional scholars and practitioners in the field of educational psychology.

[Read more here »](#)





## Dr. Craig Shepherd Receives National Award for Scholarly Advancement

**MEMPHIS, Tenn. .** –Dr. Craig Shepherd, Associate Professor of Instructional Design and Technology, has received the 2025 Scholarly Advancement of Teacher Education and Technology Award from the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT).

The award honors individuals who have made significant scholarly contributions to the fields of teacher education and educational technology through research, publication, and advocacy.



Dr. Shepherd was recognized for founding and editing the *Journal of Technology-Integrated Lessons and Teaching (JTILT)*, a peer-reviewed, open-access journal that publishes innovative lesson materials for PK–16+ learning environments. The journal, now in its fourth year, allows educators to freely use and adapt lessons under a Creative Commons license, promoting accessible and collaborative teaching practices.

He received the award at the AECT Annual Convention in Las Vegas on October 23, 2025.

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**Dr. Kayla Hubbard Receives National Research Award**

**MEMPHIS, Tenn. .** – Dr. Kayla Brooke Hubbard, a recent graduate of the College of Education's Higher and Adult Education program, received the *Outstanding Research Award* from the National Orientation Directors Association (NODA) during the organization's 2025 Annual Conference in San Francisco.

The award is given annually to one graduate student or recent graduate whose research demonstrates excellence in the field of orientation, transition, and retention.

Dr. Hubbard's dissertation, *Evaluating a New Student Orientation Program with Tinto's 1993 Framework and Council for Advancement Standards*, earned recognition for its thoughtful analysis and contribution to the understanding of student success initiatives in higher education.

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## Educational Psychology Student Receives Distinguished Research Award

**MEMPHIS, Tenn.** – Zaria J. Reed, a B.A. to Ph.D. student in Educational Psychology and Research, received the Distinguished Research in Progress Award at the Mid-South Educational Research Association (MSERA) 2025 Conference in New Orleans. Reed's manuscript, *"Bridging Barriers and Building Identity: Understanding STEM Engagement Among Equity-Seeking Students Through an Ecological Lens,"* explores how students from equity-seeking groups engage with STEM and build identity through learning. Her recognition highlights the College's commitment to supporting emerging researchers whose work advances educational practice and equity in learning.

[Read more here »](#)

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## UMID Hosts Fall Transition Resource Fair

**MEMPHIS, Tenn.** – The University of Memphis Institute on Disability welcomed nearly 300 high school students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to this year's Transition Resource Fair. Students and families met with community organizations, employers, campus partners and inclusive higher education programs from across Tennessee to explore opportunities for employment, education and independent living. The event reflects UMID's commitment to creating meaningful pathways that support young adults with disabilities as they prepare for life after high school.

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## UMID Hosts 2025 Life Ball for All

The University of Memphis Institute on Disability hosted the 2025 Life Ball for All this past weekend, celebrating the impact of UMID and the TigerLIFE program. The event featured keynote speaker Stephanie Smith Lee, who received the UMID Lifetime Distinguished Service Award for her national leadership in disability advocacy.

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## Research Spotlight



## **Dr. Anna Falkner Examines Civic Engagement in Early Childhood Classrooms**

**MEMPHIS, Tenn.** – Dr. Anna Falkner, Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education, investigates how young children demonstrate care, inclusion, and responsibility through their everyday classroom interactions. Her research highlights that preschoolers are already active contributors to their communities—long before these behaviors are formally labeled as “civic engagement.” By examining how young learners collaborate, show empathy, and take initiative, Falkner’s work helps educators recognize and nurture the leadership potential that children naturally exhibit as they learn and grow together.



[Read more about Dr. Falkner's research »](#)

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## Dr. Laura Casey and Dr. Jeff Byford Examine Effective Professional Development for Social Studies Teachers

**MEMPHIS, Tenn.** – Dr. Laura Casey and Dr. Jeff Byford in the Department of Instruction & Curriculum Leadership have published new research exploring how middle school social studies teachers perceive professional development. Their study found that while general, one-size-fits-all PD is often ineffective, content-specific and pedagogy-focused professional development—aligned with standards and student data—can strengthen teaching practice and improve student achievement.

[Read more about their research »](#)

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For more research publications, check out the @COE LinkedIn and Facebook page



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT — HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS



**Dr. Canidra McGuire Finds a Full-Circle Journey in Leadership at the UofM**

**Why did you choose the University of Memphis for your studies?**

I chose the University of Memphis because I wanted a local program that I could be a part of the campus community while I began my early career. The UofM had a strong reputation for developing transformative leaders and many were trailblazers in the Memphis and Mid-South community. When I reached out to the department for information to get started, they made me feel like I found my place and immediately connected me with people and resources to make my journey smooth from start to finish. I completed my master's degree and immediately knew that I wanted to continue with additional studies. I wanted to learn from faculty who were both scholars and practitioners in the schools and the University of Memphis provided that balance of rigor and real-world application.

**What is a favorite or meaningful memory from your time here?**

One of my most meaningful memories were the late nights in Ball Hall with peers and faculty on projects that pushed us to connect theory to the real school leadership challenges we were experiencing. The relationships built during late-night study sessions, cohort discussions, and field experiences not only strengthened my knowledge but also created a professional network that continues to support and inspire me today. The push that I experienced during my doctoral studies was like no other. I learned to push myself beyond my own capacity in many leadership skills and competencies.

**How did your experience at the UofM prepare or shape you for the work you do now?**

My experience at the University of Memphis shaped me into the leader and educator I am today. In fact, it been a full circle moment of my life. The program instilled a deep understanding of instructional leadership which I took along the journey as grew from school to district leadership, data-informed decision-making that has been using along the way, and the importance of 'true blue' leadership, which is what I found in the community of leaders of the department that prepared me. The UofM not only prepared me to lead with both compassion and courage, but I also now believe, as a professor and mentor, I have the privilege of helping aspiring leaders develop those same skills to make a difference in their schools let me know if you need me to expand!

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## **Dr. Mike Skirius Returns to Memphis to Shape the Next Generation of Counselors**

### **Why did you choose the University of Memphis for your studies?**

I knew pretty early on that I wanted to be a Counselor, and as I was finishing up my undergraduate, I knew I wanted to work in areas that emphasized crisis intervention skills. I researched the faculty that were teaching at counseling programs and that is what brought me back to Memphis. Even though I left the Memphis area after high school (I graduated from Collierville High), it was the expertise of the faculty and the *care* they showed that brought me back home. As I was applying to other masters programs, I remember Dr. Rice taking his time to help introduce me to different resources and connections to help make graduate school happen, and he and I spent a couple phone calls with him answering questions about the program and path to licensure. He didn't have to do that, but once I got here, I found that he was acting out the spirit in which the faculty interacted with the students and I could not have made a better decision about where to pursue my masters.

**What is a favorite or meaningful memory from your time here?**

My favorite and most meaningful memory of my time here (as a student), is when I had a chance to help on a particular project with the US Army. I was a student lead on the Crisis Research Team under Dr. James and Dr. Holman. We had been contacted by one of the US Army's Forward Surgical Teams to help develop verbal de-escalation training for their medical teams who often deployed beyond forward operating bases. The short version of the story is that we worked with that unit before they went on deployment, and near the end of that deployment we received an (unclassified!) email from the Colonel in charge of the unit thanking us and letting us know that our work helped them bring people home safe. That is still one of the most meaningful emails of my career.

**How did your experience at the UofM prepare or shape you for the work you do now?**

If I had not had the chances to engage in research and “real-life” practice that I had, I definitely wouldn’t have continued to a doctoral degree and I definitely would not have found my love for teaching and training future counselors. I knew I wanted to be a clinician, and I still do some clinical work, but I always had professors that were willing to take the time to talk, listen, and walk through whatever questions or concerns I had. They brought opportunities to within reach for those that were willing to engage in those opportunities. I was able to work in community clinic settings with court-mandated violent offender populations with the goal of preventing further violence/abuse, I was able to work with kids who were working through trauma that most people wouldn’t understand, I was able to present at conferences, work with law enforcement, the military, survivors, kids, adults, you name it. It took a lot of time, dedication, and energy, but it was worth it. I think some of the things I worked with were definitely on the darker side of the human experience, but I was also able to witness the best in people. I saw established professionals give of themselves to make sure that the future counselors entrusted with taking care of our community were the kinds of clinicians that they would trust their loved ones with. I saw clients who were able to grow in their own lives, connect more meaningfully with their families, start careers, etc. Memphis led me through the textbook/classroom material but it also gave me the experience to see just how much this work matters in the real world by offering chances to *do* the work in our community.

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## **From Classroom to Innovation: Dr. Logan Caldwell's Journey in Instructional Design and Technology**

**Why did you choose the University of Memphis for your studies?**

In my fifth year of teaching elementary school, having already achieved National Board Certification, I found myself eager to continue growing professionally and deepen my impact as an educator. I had just been hired at Campus School to teach second grade, and I wanted to extend my learning beyond the classroom to explore new ways of designing meaningful experiences by earning a graduate degree. During a meeting with an advisor in the College of Education at the University of Memphis, she introduced me to the Instructional Design and



Technology (IDT) program, and I instantly knew it was a fit for me. The blend of creativity, technology, and pedagogy immediately resonated with me. It offered the perfect opportunity to expand my skill set, explore innovative teaching tools, and prepare for versatile roles in education and beyond. Choosing IDT for my master's degree (and eventually my doctorate as well) felt like a natural next step in my journey to elevate my practice.

### **What is a favorite or meaningful memory from your time here?**

One of my most meaningful memories from my time at the University of Memphis was getting the chance to work with a real-world client, AutoZone. As part of a team project, we collaborated to design an interactive training module for their new hires. It was exciting to apply the skills I had learned in the IDT program to a professional setting and see our work make a real impact. The experience not only strengthened my design abilities but also gave me valuable insight into working with clients and developing solutions that meet real business needs.

### **How did your experience at the UofM prepare or shape you for the work you do now?**

My experience at the University of Memphis deeply shaped the work I do today as a Clinical Associate Professor in Instruction and Curriculum Leadership within the Elementary Education program. The Instructional Design and Technology program gave me practical, hands-on experience. That real-world application helped me build confidence in using technology to support learning. When COVID hit, those skills became even more valuable. I was able to quickly pivot and create meaningful online learning experiences for my college students, ensuring they stayed engaged and supported during a challenging time. Today, I continue to use what I learned to design effective instruction both online and in person across the courses I teach, creating flexible, engaging, and student-centered learning environments that meet the needs of all learners. The program not only prepared me to be adaptable but also equipped me to lead with innovation.



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