



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MEMPHIS

College of Education

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September 2026

Education Elevated

From The College

“The beginning is the most important part of the work.” — Plato

Welcome back to campus! We hope you had an opportunity to rest this summer, reconnect with those you care about and recharge for the new academic year. This is shaping up to be an exciting year, with many opportunities to engage with colleagues and help guide the future direction of the College.

We are excited to welcome a first-year class that is twice the size of last year's, and we applaud the work of our colleagues in the Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology and Research for achieving 25% enrollment growth. We will continue to monitor enrollment, and we are hopeful that Maurice Gray's arrival will help us build on that growth.

Along with our CACREP site visit and the beginning of work on our CAEP report, we are acting on recommendations made by several task forces last year. We will develop a Faculty Council to strengthen shared governance in the College and launch both a Graduate Student Advisory Council and an Undergraduate Student Advisory Council. We hope these efforts will help us continue building community throughout the College.

We also continue working to improve Ball and Patterson halls. If you have a recommendation or notice something that needs attention, please let us know. We are incredibly grateful for the hard work everyone contributes to the College and University, and we want you to know how much that work matters to our students.

Thank you for all you do, and let's have a great year!

Michael T. Miller
Dean, College of Education

What's Going On This Month

Sept. 7

Labor Day
University Closed | No Classes

Sept. 9

Breakfast in Ball (Free breakfast!) | Ball Hall 215
Grab and Go | 8:00-9:30 a.m.
RSVP Email Amy Wilson | lwilson10@memphis.edu

Sept. 24

Professional Development Sessions
Embedded AI Literacy: Teaching Ethical, Transparent Use of Generative AI
Ball Hall 209 | 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

New Faculty



Say hello to

CEPR

Nic Heimpl | Assistant Professor Counseling Psychology

Joonwoo Lee | Assistant Professor Counseling Psychology

Hannah Rapp | Assistant Professor Educational Psychology

ICL

Sarah Hudler | Assistant Professor SPED

Brian Barnes | Clinical Assistant Professor Youth Development

Logan Caldwell | Clinical Associate Professor IDT | New Area/Promotion

LEAD

Sarah Ray | Assistant Professor HIAD

CREP

Wesley Morris | Research Assistant Professor | Start Date: October 1

Dean's Office

Maurice Gray Jr. | Coordinator of Student Recruitment

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Research & Scholarship

Research Highlight

How Family and School Experiences Shape Student
Questioning in STEMM



Dr. Kate Ayers
Program Director, St. Jude
College of Education Alumna



Dr. Alison Happel-Parkins
Chair, Department of Leadership



Dr. Olayinka Mohorn-Mintah
Assistant Professor

COE Alumna Ayers Leads Research on Student Questioning in STEMM

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — College of Education alumna Dr. Kate Ayers and faculty members Dr. Alison Happel-Parkins and Dr. Olayinka Mohorn Mintah recently published research examining how experiences across family and school environments influence the questions students ask in STEMM. The study highlights how relationships, memories, physical spaces and institutional expectations shape scientific curiosity and students' sense of belonging.

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Dr. Yu Wu Examines How Instructional Leadership Supports Student Achievement

MEMPHIS, Tenn.— Dr. Yu Wu recently published research in the Asia Pacific



UofM Autism Treatment, Training and Research Clinic Receives Urban Child Institute Grant

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — The University of Memphis Autism Treatment, Training and

Journal of Education examining how instructional leadership can support student achievement by encouraging teacher collaboration and innovation. The study explores the relationships among school leadership, teaching practices and student outcomes.

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Research Clinic has received a \$143,750 Urban Child Institute grant to support autism services for children and families while expanding graduate student clinical training.

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Andrew Tawfik Explores Smarter Learning Technology

MEMPHIS, Tenn.— Dr. Andrew Tawfik studies how technology, problem-based learning and learning through failure can help students think more deeply and solve real-world problems. Read more about his work in a recent UofM faculty research feature.

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University of Memphis Institute on Disability Receives \$124,394 Tennessee Believes Grant

MEMPHIS, Tenn.— The University of Memphis Institute on Disability (UMID) has received a \$124,394 Tennessee Believes grant from the Tennessee Department of Disability and Aging to support TigerLIFE.

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Creating Calm Classrooms to Support Student Success

MEMPHIS, Tenn.—Dr. Michelle Welch Brasfield is leading a new grant-supported project that will provide trauma-informed professional development for educators and establish 32 classroom calming corners in a rural West Tennessee school district. The spaces will help students practice emotional regulation, regain focus and remain engaged in learning.

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Schiro-Geist Receives \$20,000 Grant for Disability Employment Project

Dr. Chrisann Schiro-Geist received \$20,000 from the Tennessee Department of Disability and Aging for SALT-VR, a project exploring how AI-driven virtual reality can support employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Community Highlights



TENURE AND PROMOTION

Celebrating Faculty Achievement



LaSheba Hilliard
Associate Professor



Anna Falkner
Associate Professor



Dan Collier
Associate Professor



Craig Shepherd
Professor



Leigh Harrell-Williams
Professor



Genie Bettencourt
Associate Professor



Alison Happel-Parkins
Professor



Mehmet Ozturk
Associate Professor

Brian Wright
Professor

Faculty Recognized for Tenure and Promotion

Several College of Education faculty members received tenure and promotion during the 2025–26 academic year. Their achievements reflect continued excellence in teaching, research, leadership and service.

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NEW DEAN'S FELLOWS

2026–27 Academic Year



Dr. Laura Casey



Dr. Christian Mueller

College Names Casey and Mueller New Dean's Fellows

Dr. Laura Casey and Dr. Christian Mueller have been appointed the College of Education's new Dean's Fellows for 2026–27—the first appointments in five years. They will support academic and strategic priorities while maintaining their faculty roles.

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TigerLIFE's Brandon Porter Receives Tiger Spotlight Award

Brandon Porter recently received the University of Memphis Tiger Spotlight Award for his dedication to TigerLIFE students and his work coordinating a full year of program scheduling. The award also recognized his willingness to learn and the care he brings to strengthening processes that support students and the program.

Alumni Spotlight

Kia Tate



Leading with Purpose and Community Impact

College of Education alumna Kia Tate reflects on earning her EdD in Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of Memphis, the mentorship and practical wisdom gained through PADEC and a career dedicated to leadership, education and community impact.

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