

A Letter From the Dean

by E. James Burton

Friends of the College of Business and the Business and Economic Research Center:

I am excited to have the opportunity to address you in this special issue of *Tennessee's Business*. The decisions to be made soon by the leadership of the state will be very critical to the ability of the College of Business and the university as a whole to meet the demands of the next century. Whatever decisions are made, the impacts will be felt for a very long time. Because of these far-reaching impacts, we feel it is important for everyone to have as much information as possible.

We have gathered articles from some of the most informed, involved people in the State of Tennessee. The thoughts they present are their own. The purpose of this and all of our publications is to help our readers participate in the process in a well-reasoned way. We do not advocate any specific tax nor any alternative funding system or source.

We will extend the discussion of some of these issues at our annual Economic Outlook Conference on Friday, October 29, in the James Union Building at Middle Tennessee State University. This conference, co-sponsored by the Business and Economic Research Center (BERC) of the College of Business and the Jennings A. Jones Chair of Excellence in Free Enterprise, will feature the nationally known economic forecaster and commentator Dr. Don Ratajczak, as well as Dr. Albert E. DePrince, the new director of the BERC.

I welcome Dr. DePrince as he assumes his responsibilities. He brings both quality and quantity of experience to the position. And we say "thank you" to Dr. Reuben Kyle who, after nine years at the head of the BERC, returns to a full classroom schedule.

Now, if I may, I would like to change directions. I became dean of the College of Business at Middle Tennessee State University August 1. This is perhaps both the greatest honor and the greatest challenge of my life.

I am honored:

- to serve in a legacy started by Firman



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Cunningham, the first dean of business at MTSU, and more recently perpetuated by Barbara Haskew, who is now our academic vice president and provost

- to lead the 110 extraordinary people who serve as faculty members in our college
- to be entrusted with the finest facilities available to any college of business in the country.
- to serve a student body whose entrance qualifications improve every year

- to work with a business community which supports our efforts to educate students not only to compete but to excel in the challenging global economy
- to serve under the extraordinary leadership of President James E. Walker

These are great honors. There are also the challenges:

- to provide professional development opportunities for those 110 faculty members who must re-educate themselves on an almost daily basis in order to remain current in their field and to provide the instruction their students want, need, and deserve
- to maintain the facilities we have in the face of shrinking funding.
- to maintain the technology in the classrooms and the offices so students are immediately productive when they enter the employment environment
- to keep the best and brightest of faculty and students when states around us offer them more than I can match
- to establish mutually beneficial partnerships with our friends in the business community so that you receive benefits back for every investment of time, people, and money you make with us

These are great challenges.

Thank you for the honors and for the challenges. I stand in the shadow of the honor; the real honor belongs to my predecessors, my faculty, my students, and to those who have provided and who continue to provide for us. Any honors befalling me are illusions, but the challenges are real. Thank you for supporting the MTSU College of Business as we work together to meet these and all the challenges that come our way.

Sincerely,

E. J. Burton

E. James Burton became dean of MTSU's College of Business August 1. Also at MTSU he has served as an accounting professor, Executive Director of the Jones Chairs of Excellence, and assistant dean of the College of Business.