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The Middle Tennessee State University Information Technology Division Newsletter

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Classroom Skype sessions offer "powerful opportunities" for educators. *Story on page 2*
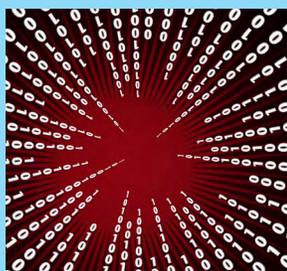
Banner upgrade to bring record-keeping improvements. *Story on page 5*

More news

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Educators offer tips for learning with Lynda

After a semester of open access to Lynda.com last fall, professors across the MTSU campus are beginning to incorporate the video training website into their curriculum.

Several educators who have used it even before the MTSU site license was acquired in August offer their advice on how to learn with Lynda.

Professor Charles Apigian, chair of the Computer Information Systems Department, has been using Lynda.com for his web development course (INFS 2400) since he started teaching it in the summer of 2014.

"I create my own videos for the class, but I also use several courses to fill in the gaps of knowledge," he said. "For example, I assign courses and videos that explain the basics of HTML and CSS and then in class and in my videos, I get into the how-to portion of developing a website.

"I then also assign an entire course as a homework assignment, which allows my students to develop an entire website with step by step instructions."

That Lynda course is "Creating a First Website in Dreamweaver CC 2015."

"There are good management tools within Lynda.com that allow me to assign playlists and also track their usage, per course and per video," Apigian said.

Apigian said Lynda.com is a

Professor Charles Apigian of the CIS Department is one of several MTSU educators who have been using Lynda.com in their classrooms.

A Lynda.com "playlist"

Computer Information Systems Department Chairman Charles Apigian said the following playlist is incorporated into his curriculum.

(The first two are considered essential for his class:)

- Dreamweaver CC Essential Training
- Creating a First Website in Dreamweaver CC 2015
- Web Design Fundamentals
- Bootstrap 3 Essential Training
- HTML Essential Training
- Dreamweaver: 2015 Creative Cloud Updates
- Responsive Design with Bootstrap and Dreamweaver CC 2015

MTSU history professor encourages more use of Skype in classes

History professor Sean Foley touts the value of education in "creating windows where there were walls."

When he encountered challenges in bringing an expert speaker to his MTSU classroom this fall, he consulted with ITD on another way to open such a "window."

Foley conducted his first interactive classroom Skype For Business session in mid-October, featuring Manav Jain, a 15-year veteran of the U.S. Foreign Service. Since then Foley has done several more and said it will become a regular feature of his courses.

> *"If we do this right, there are a lot of very powerful opportunities for faculty as a way of transforming how we teach, how we reach our students. We can bring different voices to the classroom."*
>
> MTSU History Professor
> Sean Foley

He had previously done small Skype sessions with students huddled around a computer. But this was to be for a full classroom.

Because his class was in Peck Hall, a building that had not yet been migrated over to Skype For Business, ITD staff worked with him over a two-month period to set up his classroom for the videoconference and prep him to conduct it.

The one-hour session with an integrated PowerPoint presentation "worked out perfect," and he did it again in December with a Syrian scholar from the United Kingdom.

"The point of technology is to allow me to be a better teacher," Foley said. "(Students) are not going to remember a lot of the basic facts . . . but you can open up the idea of creating windows where there have been walls and say, 'OK I can go there.'"

He said he's always felt that quote from French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault—"My job is making

Professor Sean Foley has been using Skype for Business to allow experts on various topics to speak to his history classes. He hopes this can be a more common occurrence at MTSU and encouraged colleagues to give it a try, with technical advice from ITD.

windows where there were once walls"—applied to the teaching profession.

Educators can sometimes be "technologically averse," whether due to their workloads or past experiences, Foley said. But he encouraged colleagues to consider using Skype For Business more in their classrooms.

"If we do this right, there are a lot of very powerful opportunities for faculty as a way of transforming how we teach, how we reach our students," Foley said. "We can bring different voices to the classroom."

Skype, continued from page 2

Bringing in expert speakers is expensive and time-consuming. Videoconferencing allows faculty members with connections around the nation and world to bring that expertise into the classroom more quickly and cheaply.

Jain is an example. Foley has known him for years and knew he had served as immigrant visa chief in several posts around the world. So he wanted him to speak to his students on the topic of "How Does the U.S. Government Issue Visas?"

Starting in August, he began planning to bring Jain in as a guest speaker. But when scheduling conflicts arose, he began working with ITD to do the Skype session instead.

"Visas are a hot topic and that allowed me to bring in that subject in a way I wouldn't have otherwise," he said.

The ITD training was "done very quickly and efficiently," he said, and involved practical advice in addition to technological talk. That preparation involved determining what level of interaction Foley wanted to have, what equipment he needed, and some testing.

He said History Department executive aide Tara Hayes was closely involved in the process as well.

"Not only did they provide me with technology, but their advice to me was the type of advice you want—which is something that doesn't just tell you what to do, but to take what you already have and take it to the next level," he said of ITD.

They recommended putting a small tripod camera next to where he was speaking, in front of the video screen facing the classroom. That allowed Jain to look out onto the classroom while the students looked back at him.

"I could create an environment that was as close as I could to a classroom experience," Foley said.

A U.S. and World History teacher, Foley specializes in the
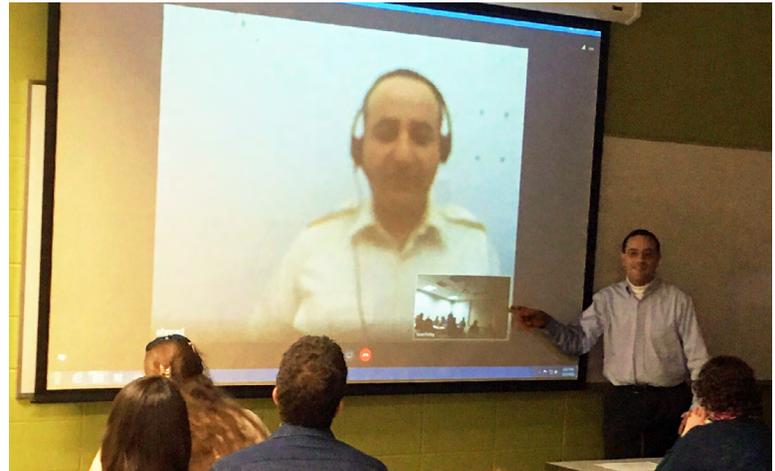
MTSU History Professor Sean Foley has had several other Skype sessions since that first one in October. This one in November shows how ITD helped him set up the videoconference so that the guest speaker is looking directly at the class, and students are looking back at him.

contemporary history and politics of the Middle East and the wider Islamic world.

He is a frequent visitor to Asia and the Middle East, following events in both regions closely, and speaks Arabic and Bahasa Malaysian.

And he envisions using Skype one day the other way around, bringing lectures to his class from foreign locations—for example, the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul.

"Not a picture, not a video, but talking to students directly from there—that is what I envision Skype being able to do," he said.

Digital Signage Corner

Digital signage can be used to herald upcoming events by providing a countdown clock.

Here students can look forward to celebrating the end of the semester.

For more information about MTSU's digital signage network or for content suggestions, contact **digicontent@mtsu.edu**.

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Lynda.com, continued from page 1

tremendous resource for MTSU students who might not be able to afford a personal account.

"This enables one of the keys aspects to a good education—The ability to 'learn on your own.' Too often classes only ask students to repeat what they have been taught in the classroom. With tools like Lynda.com, students can learn a vast array of topics and technologies," he said.

And it goes beyond subject matter, teaching on such post-college topics as "resume writing, how to interview, and other soft skills."

According to usage reports, tutorials related to the recording industry are among the most popular at MTSU right now. Recording Industry Department Professor Tammy Donham is one of the reasons why.

Donham worked 16 years for the Country Music Association, overseeing its marketing and digital efforts. She discovered

Donham

Lynda.com during that time and began incorporating it into her teaching when she joined MTSU faculty in 2013.

"I am a life-long learner, so I find the courses extremely valuable," Donham said. "If I need to get up to speed quickly on a new technology or platform, I turn to Lynda for quality course options. You can generally find random videos that cover similar topics on YouTube, but with Lynda I know the instructor is going to be qualified and the course will be well produced."

For students in her Digital Strategies class, Lynda is a "core support element." Donham refers students who need additional support on a particular topic to Lynda so they can quickly acquire the skills they need to catch up to the rest of the class, or for additional support on a specific subject.

"Before we had campus-wide access I tried requiring them to subscribe to the service, but just like with textbooks some students just simply couldn't afford to keep up the $25 per month subscription. I'm so thankful all students now have access to this amazing resource," she said.

Donham uses Lynda in her marketing class as well, but only when covering social media.

Lynda.com access for MTSU faculty/staff

Log in at **myapps.microsoft.com**. Under Work/School Microsoft Account credentials, enter your FSA **username@mtsu.edu**. (If you sign in to your work computer with the FSA username jjones, then enter **jjones@mtsu.edu**.) Type in your FSA password.

Find more resources at **mtsu.edu/itd/lynda.php**.

"Lynda has great classes on best practices on every major platform—Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, and more," she said. "Being able to link to the courses allows the student the opportunity to learn the basics in an environment that is comfortable, then I can spend our in-class time working with them on applying what they've learned."

She doesn't incorporate tutorials directly into her grading system, but a student's completion of an assignment is dependent upon learning from the course they viewed.

"If they choose not to complete the Lynda course and jump directly into the assignment, I almost always can tell because there are elements missing or not handled correctly; their grade on the overall project suffers as a result," Donham said. "I include test questions from the courses, but I also have them place a PDF of their Certificate of Completion in the appropriate dropbox on D2L."

Trevor de Clercq, an assistant professor in MTSU's Department of Recording Industry, also has been using Lynda.com since 2014 in his RIM 4200 class. He said it was a great resource even before it was offered free to students.

"It allows the instruction of the 'nuts and bolts' of how to use the software to be moved out of the classroom, so that class time can be spent applying this knowledge to real-world projects," de Clercq said. "It allows the students to get more hands-on time in the classroom, which encourages deeper learning I think."

Since that Digital Audio Technology class is centered around learning Pro Tools and audio signal processing, there are many relevant resources on Lynda.com.

"I use Lynda in a 'flipped classroom' manner, where the students watch videos for homework and answer questions about the content of those videos as a written portion for the daily homework," he said. "In class, we can quickly go over the assigned questions at the beginning of class, which then frees up most of the class time for lab work."

MTSU Lynda.com Stats

From the time campus-wide access began in August, through the end of January, 2,510 active users viewed 3,877 hours of video tutorials, according to a usage report.

A total of 56,356 videos were viewed, the report states. The top three courses were "Excel 2013: Pivot Tables in Depth," "Excel 2016 Essential Training," and "Pro Tools 12 Essential Training."

Banner upgrade to bring record-keeping improvements in 2017

ITD is working on an upgrade to the underlying infrastructure for MTSU's Ellucian Banner system, which is MTSU's primary information system for student records, admissions, financial aid, finance, human resources, and course scheduling.

The new infrastructure will improve data-loading times and scalability, while providing better resiliency and redundancy in the event of a catastrophic disruption.

This project will require a data migration and conversion from the existing system into the new infrastructure, which is being installed and tested in a parallel environment.

ITD plans a cut-over to the new system from 8 p.m. Friday, Feb. 10, to 7 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 11.

Known as a hyper-convergence, this infrastructure system uses software-centric architecture that tightly integrates computing, storage, networking, and virtualization resources.

A hyper-converged system enables the integrated technologies to be managed as a single system through a common administrative toolset.
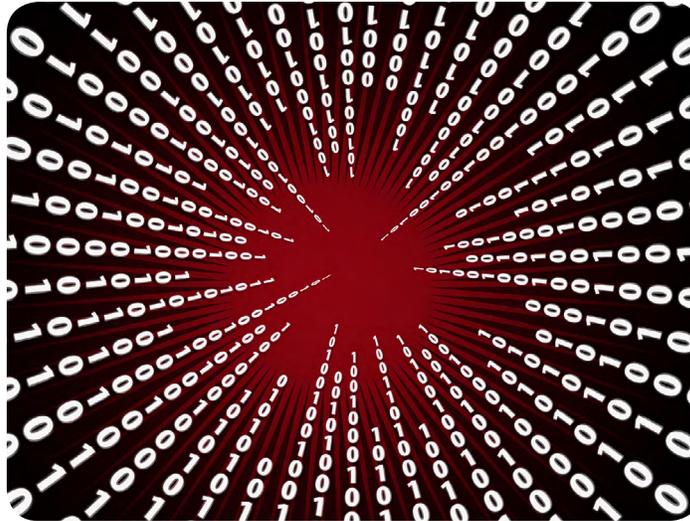
This upgrade will replace outdated, proprietary computer equipment with state-of-the-art, commodity-based hardware running software-defined workloads.

The project involves replacing Banner Sun M5000 host servers running Sun Solaris as physical machines with Dell servers powered by Nutanix running Red Hat Enterprise Linux as VMware virtual machines.

Upgrading the data center network was also part of this project. ITD will convert the University's data center network to Cisco's ACI software-defined networking platform with 10Gbps switching for server connectivity and 80Gbps connectivity between data centers.

On top of the data center network, ITD upgraded to new Palo Alto firewalls with 10Gbps connectivity between the campus and the data centers.

This upgrade will also lay the foundation for additional improvements in the future, such as improved Banner access from mobile devices as ITD upgrades the Ellucian Banner software itself.

ITD Staff News: Whittenberg attends EDUCAUSE conference

Albert Whittenberg attended the EDUCUASE annual conference in Anaheim, California, Oct. 25-28.

EDUCAUSE is a nonprofit association that advances higher education through information technology.

"I had the opportunity to attend a number of very informational sessions while there that I hope to share with not only my colleagues in ITD but the entire MTSU community," said Whittenberg, director of Academic and Instructional Technology Services for ITD.

Some of the sessions he attended included:

- Quiet: How to Harness the Strengths of Introverts to Change How We Work, Lead and Innovate
- Changing the Conversation: The Faculty Voice in Tool Development, Deployment and Evaluation
- Living in Harmony: Technology and Academic Objectives
- Practicing What We Teach: Evaluation Online Faculty Training Programs

- Virtual Reality in the Classroom
- The Flipped Learning Academy: Preparing Faculty to Create Flipped College Courses
- Meeting Student Needs in Introductory Courses through Personalized Learning Technologies
- Rethinking Academic Technology for 21st-Century Teaching and Learning

This year's conference had more than 7,000 attendees from all over the world.

"Along with this, I was able to see a number of demonstrations of new advancements in software and hardware we are currently using at MTSU or investigating for the future," he said.

"For example, I had the chance to sit down and talk with representatives from both Desire2Learn (our current learning management system) and FourWinds Interactive (our digital sign provider) about how their new products and features may help our campus."

New VPAT form helps MTSU ensure products are accessible

Lance Alexis

As part of its commitment to ensuring that all tech programs are fully accessible for University users with disabilities, ITD began nearly a year ago requiring vendors to complete a VPAT form.

The Vendor Product Accessibility Statement and related documentation is part of MTSU's overall accessibility strategy.

While it is a relatively new part of MTSU's bid requirements, most companies seeking to do business with MTSU were already familiar with the VPAT, said Tom Wallace, associate VP for information technology. He said the University's VPAT was based on a template that is a nationally recognized assessment for self-reporting on accessibility.

"It provides relevant information on how a vendor's product or service claims to conform to the Section 508 Standards," Wallace said. "The primary goal of the VPAT is to have a standardized measurement of the accessibility of a product or service."

It includes the following key components:

- A clear statement of commitment to ensuring equal access for all users.
- A summary of the overall level of conformity with accessible information and technology standards.
- Information for users with disabilities regarding product/service accessibility features and gaps.
- A mechanism that allows users to provide accessibility feedback.
- Links to resources (internal or external) that provide additional or related information.

The form can be accessed as part of the bid package at **mtsu.edu/procurement/forms.php**.

"We have required a VPAT since early 2016. This came about after the creation of a campus accessibility plan in March (2016). The plan is rooted primarily in digital accessibility and has the goal of creating a more digitally accessible campus for students with disabilities," said Lance Alexis, director of the MTSU Disability & Access Center and interim director of ADA compliance.

"The primary goal is for vendors to provide information related to the accessibility of their products. With that information, MTSU purchasers can make an informed decision on how to move forward."

The form not only reminds potential vendors that accessibility is a priority, but also advises them how to offer accessible products.

"The form lets it be known that accessibility is key in doing business with MTSU, and if they want to sell their products to the campus they have to take it seriously and either make their products accessible or have a plan in place to make it accessible in a reasonable time frame," Alexis said.

The commitment statement clearly conveys awareness of Information Material and Technology (IMT) accessibility requirements. The compliance status portion offers standards and guidelines and asks vendors to describe any formal testing process used to determine accessibility support.

In Product Usage Information for Users with Disabilities, the form gets more detailed by asking companies to "describe any product features that may improve accessibility for users with disabilities."

These include:

- Accessibility-specific features (such as the ability to adjust font size and color/contrast settings for text or the availability of closed captions for videos)
- General product features that may especially benefit users with disabilities (e.g. an HTML 5 mode optimized for mobile platforms that also improves keyboard-only navigation)

Documentation is required in areas such as accessibility testing results and how the IMT product/service meets applicable technical accessibility standards.

"I think it is safe to say that everyone at MTSU wants what they provide to the campus to be experienced by as many students, employees, and other university patrons as possible," Alexis said.

VPAT helps vendors work around "gaps"

VPAT doesn't completely shut out a vendor whose product doesn't immediately offer the required features. Vendors can highlight "product accessibility gaps" and identify suggested interim work-arounds that allow users to complete key tasks until the gaps are resolved.

For example, if a technical support website isn't compatible with screen readers used by the blind, appropriate interim workarounds might include:

- Alternative business processes that bypass the accessibility barrier (for example, providing phone-based support until the web-based support site is accessible)
- Use of a third-party product to replace or supplement inaccessible product functions (i.e. indicating that users may submit or check the status of technical support tickets via email)

Communication at MTSU has been a big part of her life in several ways

Stacey Tadlock

Stacey Tadlock graduated with a major in communications from MTSU in 2004.

Nearly 10 years later, she was back on campus, this time "majoring" in resolving communications problems for students and employees.

Tadlock, secretary in the Telecommunications Services Department, is the first point of contact for anyone who needs help with their phone or cable service. She also is in charge of account reconciliation for the department, which is an auxiliary operation charging and paying for its services.

"I am the first line of troubleshooting, to get people up and running again. If I can't help them I'll send out a technician," said Tadlock, who has been with ITD two years this month. Nearly 99 percent of the calls and emails to the department are routed to her.

She said she enjoys working on a "large campus that still seems like a small hometown."

"In this office we celebrate each other's birthdays and we all know each other," Tadlock said.

The challenges of the job are the ebb and flow of the workload, which hits peaks in August as the year begins and again this time of year after the holiday break. Recently, she has been heavily involved in handling work orders for the Skype For Business migration, which is about halfway completed.

MTSU has been a huge part of her life in another way.

Not only did she earn her degree here, she met her husband, Lee, when they were both Mass Communications students. She later worked for Cummins Inc. in Nashville for several years before becoming a stay-at-home mom.

Their daughter, Brenna, is now 3, and they enjoy watching her play soccer and spending time together on Tadlock's parents' quarter-century-old farm in Clarksville, where Tadlock grew up.

Her hobbies also include photography, which is attested to by the professional-quality photos of her family adorning her cubicle.

The family lives in Christiana and attends New Vision Baptist Church in Murfreesboro.

S4B migration continues in 2017

Projections are that all telephone users will be on the Skype for Business system by Summer 2017. Below is the tentative schedule for January and February:

January

Alumni Memorial Gym
Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building
Bayer Travis Maintenance Building
Central Utility Plant/Cogeneration Plant
Tennessee Center for Study and Treatment of Dyslexia
Forrest Hall
MTSU Boulevard Garage
Hastings Maintenance Complex
Haynes-Turner Maintenance
Holmes Parking Garage
McFarland Building
Project Help
Soccer and Track Complex
Science Building
Satellite Chiller Plant
Storage Warehouse
Woodmore Cybercafe

February

Holmes Building (Maintenance Complex)
Student Services and Admissions Center
Floyd Stadium
Student Union Building

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Pontia joins ITD as Instructional Technology Specialist in FITC

Pontia

A mathematician by education and vocation, Jan Pontia said her move to Middle Tennessee has added many positives to her life's equation.

Pontia jointed ITD on Jan. 3, 2017, as an Instructional Technology Specialist in the Faculty Instructional Technology Center. Originally from Ohio, Pontia has lived in Alabama and Destin, Florida, where she was able to enjoy a lifelong love of water.

"Any water activity interests me, including fun at the beach, fishing, boating, and swimming. I swam with the dolphins in Cozumel," Pontia said. "Traveling has been an exciting part of my life and I've traveled to shorelines from Nova Scotia to Key West; from Key West over to Texas, from Ensenada to Alaska and of course Hawaii! Riding in/on any vessel that floats always brings me smiles."

But living in this area now has a special benefit.

"All three of my daughters have chosen the Nashville area as home. I'm thrilled to be closer as their families grow," she said.

Pontia earned a master's degree in math and science education from Wheeling Jesuit University in West Virginia. She holds a bachelor's degree in math education from West Liberty University, also in West Virginia.

"I started off my career as a math teacher. I've taught preschool through college level courses throughout my career," she said. "One year while I worked for a NASA Teacher Resource Center at Wheeling Jesuit University, one of my job responsibilities was to do workshops with preschool children to help teach them about the space shuttle missions; it was such a delight to work with them.

"While working for Wheeling Jesuit, I also taught in the Math, Computer Science and Education divisions."

She later moved into IT, first at Wheeling Jesuit, then at Birmingham-Southern College, then at Northwest Florida State College in Niceville, Florida.

"Through the years, I've dealt with Blackboard, Moodle and also (Desire2Learn) D2L when helping faculty. Helping instructors use technology to assist with teaching and learning has always been a passion of mine," she said.

"I'll be working with faculty who use D2L and other technologies in the classroom. I'm sure the evolution of technology in the classroom will continue to change as will the work that I do with that technology in helping faculty."

Register Online for Spring ITD Workshops

- **INTRODUCTION TO ARGOS (Budget and Student Reporting)**
- **CREATING ADA ACCESSIBLE CONTENT**
- **DISCUSSION BOARDS/ GROUPS, RUBRICS & DROPBOX**
- **GRADEBOOK AND QUIZZES**
- **INTRODUCTION TO DESIRE2LEARN (D2L)**
- **LYNC FOR MAC**
- **SKYPE FOR BUSINESS (Basic and Advanced)**
- **TELEPHONE TRAINING**
- **OTHERS SCHEDULED ON REQUEST**

For details on workshops and to register, visit www.mtsu.edu/itd/ workshops.php

ITD Service Award Recipients for 2016

The Information Technology Division honored nine employees with the Service Award in December:

10 Years (2006)
- Jeff McMahan—Systems Administrator 2/Enterprise Server Services
- Jeremy Wayne Stanley—Help Desk Technician/Client Services
- Tom Wallace—Associate Vice President for IT Projects and Portfolio Management
- Albert C. Whittenberg—Director of Academic & Instructional Technology Services

15 Years (2001)
- Joann Nolan Batson—Systems Analyst 1/Enterprise Application Services

20 Years (1996)
- Gary Redmon—Systems Administrator 2/Enterprise Application Services

25 Years (1991)
- Debbie Warren—Systems Analyst 2/Enterprise Application Services

30 Years (1986)
- Barbara J. Draude—Assistant Vice President of Academic and Instructional Technologies

35 Years (1981)
- Gary Thomas Gardner—Computer Operations Coordinator/Data Center Services

IT Tips & Tricks

People are multi-taskers. We like to do a bunch of stuff all at the same time.

So it should come as no surprise that we do this while on our computers. However, sometimes this multi-tasking can lead to bunch of clutter on our desktops. Then we are faced with the dilemma of trying to sort through it all and make sense of it.

Wouldn't it be great if we could make all that clutter disappear without having to close or minimize every single item we have open? Well, in Windows 7, 8, and 10 you can. There are two quick ways to do this, both of which will take you straight to your desktop.

The first is to right-click on your taskbar and click on the Show the Desktop option.
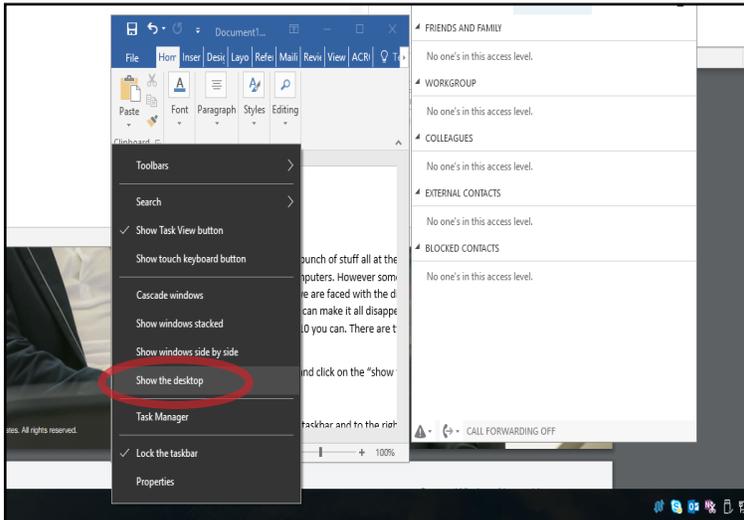
The second option is to go down to your taskbar and simply click on the rectangle area to the right of where the time is displayed.
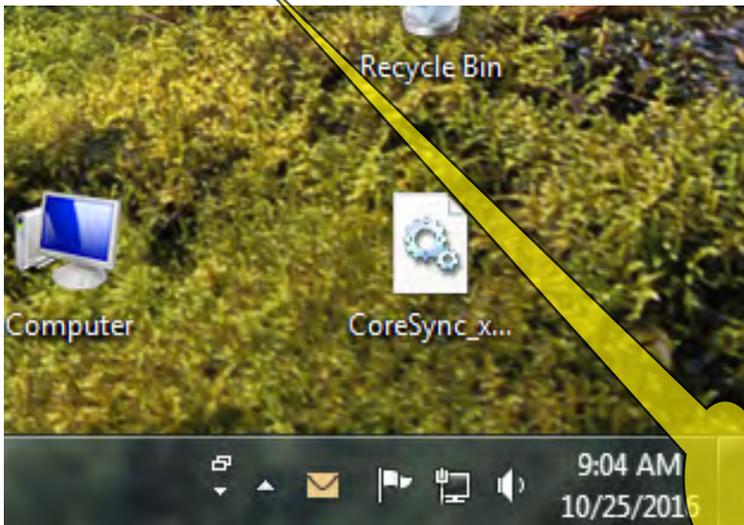
Telephone Tidbits: Sharing with S4B

With Skype for Business, sharing and collaboration with one or more parties has never been easier.

Skype for Business allows a user to share his or her desktop, program, presentation, files, notes, or even a whiteboard with other parties on a phone call, all with the click of the mouse.

While sharing and collaboration have never been easier, users must remain cognizant of the information they are sharing, especially if it is sensitive in nature.

To share your desktop or program:
▪ In the meeting window, click the Present button.
▪ Click Present Desktop to show the entire contents of your desktop, then click Present Programs and double-click the program you want to share, or click Present PowerPoint Files to share a PowerPoint presentation.
▪ To stop sharing, click Stop Presenting on the bar at the top of your screen or at the top of the conversation window.

For more information visit: **mtsu.edu/itdtele/PDFs/SkypeforBusinessQuickStartGuide-SharingandCollaboration.pdf**.

To watch a short video tutorial, please visit **www.mtsu.edu/itdtele/skype-video.php**.