



samples of the original banner designs



samples of finished banners



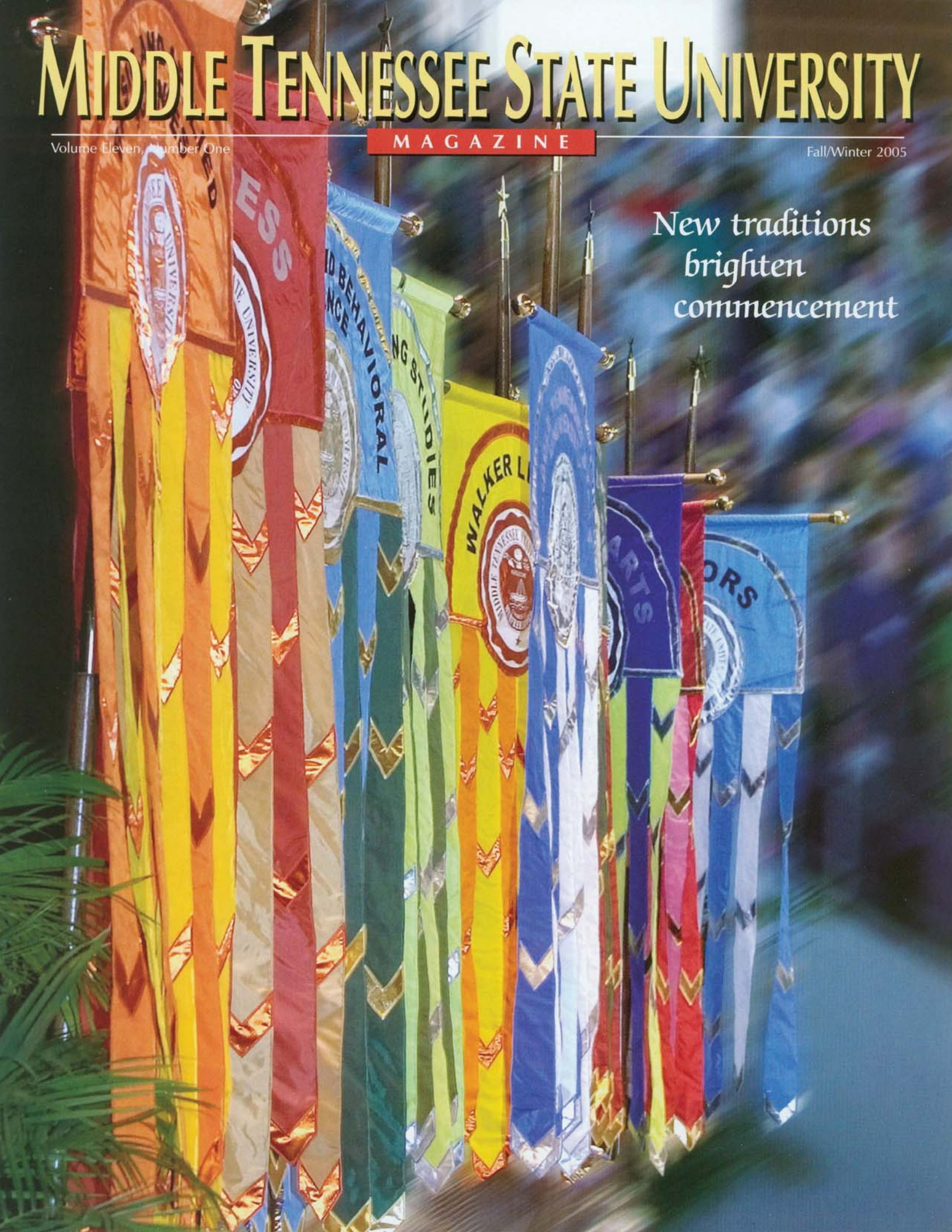
# MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

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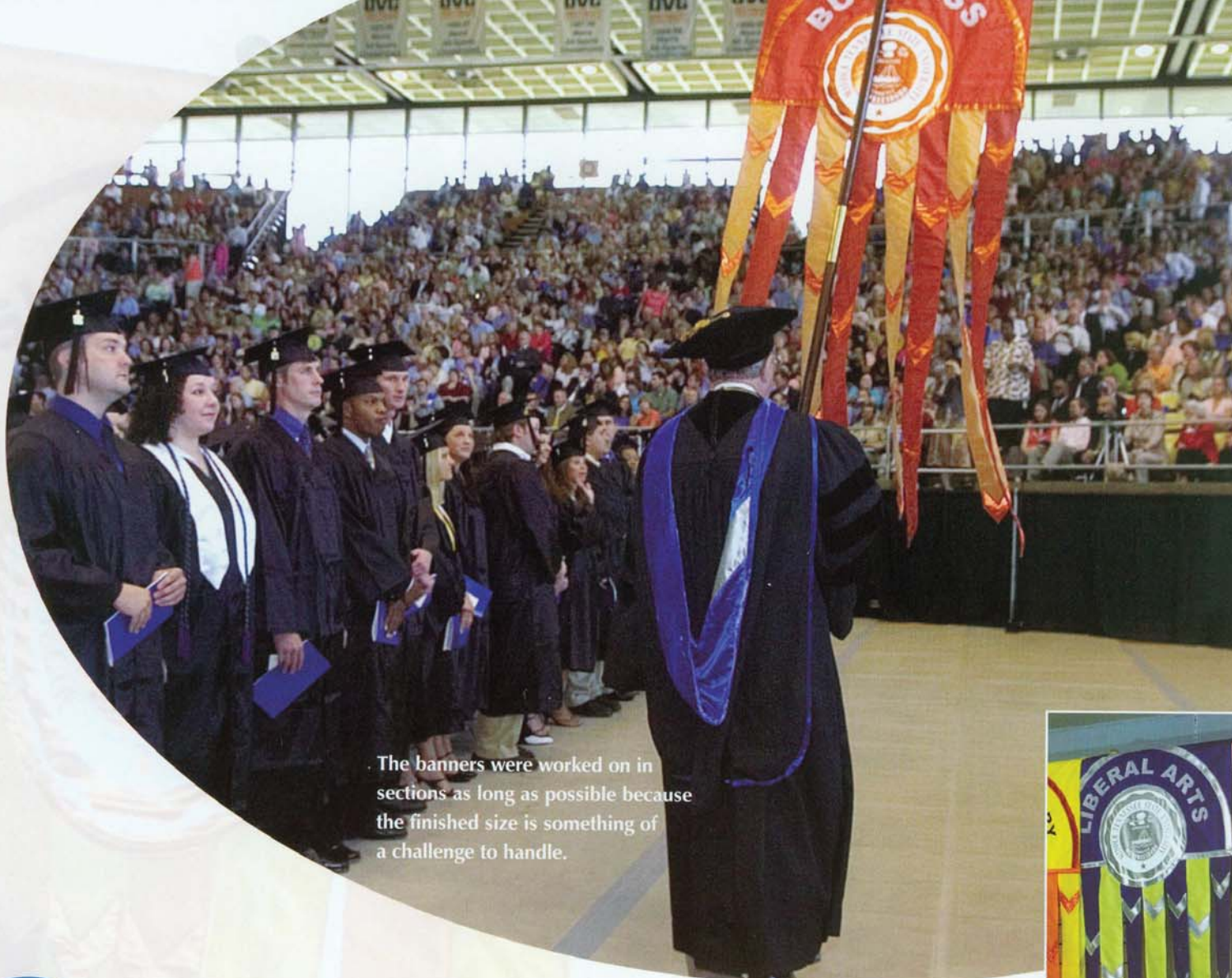
M A G A Z I N E

Fall/Winter 2005

*New traditions  
brighten  
commencement*







The banners were worked on in sections as long as possible because the finished size is something of a challenge to handle.

# Commencement gets a colorful facelift

It's graduation day and Murphy Center has a different look—as if it's been cleaned up and readied for company. The hardwood playing surface is covered with heavy canvas. Neat rows of blue chairs face a stage decorated with plants. There is a table loaded with blue diploma covers. Brass instruments and an organ generate solemn music. Faculty members and administrators are in academic regalia. Some carry colorful banners; one carefully balances a long scepter of rich cherry wood adorned with luminous silver and colorful stones. Two—sometimes three—generations eagerly wait for their graduate, dressed in a traditional cap and gown, to march in and occupy one of the blue chairs. A feeling of relief and joy mixed with some sadness is a typical reaction to this day, the culmination of years of concentrated effort, sometimes marked by unexpected adversity, often by life-changing growth. Graduation is one of the rituals that punctuate life; it's a time of tradition, symbolism, and hope.

New banners combining all three of these attributes added a bright dimension to May 2005 graduation. Ten ceremonial banners represent the University; its eight colleges (Basic and Applied







Sciences, Business, Education and Behavioral Science, Liberal Arts, Mass Communication, Graduate Studies, Honors, and Continuing Education and Distance Learning); and Walker Library. Design and execution was a collaborative effort among Janet Higgins, art professor; her student Kristi Baughman (B.F.A. '02); and Darrell Burks (B.F.A. '00), designer in MTSU Publications and Graphics. The colors used in each represent disciplines within that college. The University Seal centers each banner, symbolizing that the whole is greater than any of its parts. Creating the custom banners required both screen-printing and advanced sewing techniques such as appliqué and embroidery on an array of colored fabrics.

The banners weren't the only change at May graduation. Usually the largest of the three commencement ceremonies held annually, the anticipated crowd exceeded Murphy Center's capacity. Jack Thomas, vice provost for Academic Affairs and Graduation Committee chair, explains, "We're a student-centered university. We want graduation to be a good experience. As the institution has grown and the number of graduates increased, the ceremony became drawn out, and we had to limit the number of guests each student could have. The President asked the committee to look into enhancing graduation; we sought suggestions and looked at several options. This seemed to be the best solution."

The solution was to divide spring graduation into two sessions for the first time. Students from the colleges of Graduate Studies, Business, and Education and Behavioral Science graduated in the morning; an afternoon ceremony was held for Basic and Applied Sciences, Liberal Arts, and Mass Communication.

"The new banners go right along with the changes in graduation to move it to a new level," says Thomas. "They're like icing on the cake, highlighting the uniqueness of each college."

When the decision was made to replace the six faded banners that had been used for well over a decade, Higgins, who had designed the original ones, recommended that a commercial company be

found to construct the new banners. Companies all over the country were consulted. But when the day came for competitive bids to open, it was a local business that had the low quote. The Very Idea, owned and operated by Joan and David Kellerman for 14 years, regularly employs MTSU students and frequently does work for the University—items such as shirts, signage, tote bags, mugs, stickers, decals, and name badges. They had never attempted anything as intricate and large as the banners, however, for MTSU or any other client.

Since awnings are one of their specialties, David thought they could successfully make the banners. Joan says she reacted with, "David, you're nuts!" But one of the seamstresses, Betty Keaton, said she'd like the challenge, and that was enough encouragement for David.

The banners include 18 different fabrics; one of the vendors' first tasks was to locate fabrics in colors close to those specified. The next was digitizing the design and determining the best way to produce each part. Son Ben Kellerman did the screenprinting; Marsha Shaffer, another seamstress, did most of the embroidery. The hours and hours of sewing were shared by Betty and Marsha who, by the time the banners were completed, had cut and sewn 580 chevrons out of metallic fabric to create the streamers that give the banners—which are almost six feet long—a shimmering flutter as they are carried. In addition to graduation, the ceremonial banners are used at convocation.

Not only was it convenient to review progress while the banners were being manufactured, it was also an opportunity to partner with a community business in a unique endeavor.

"We've had good feedback," says Thomas. "Graduation is a meaningful time in every student's life." ~

**BY SUMA CLARK**

*photos by J. Intintoli and Jack Ross*



It was an exciting morning at The Very Idea when the banners were nearing completion, and Betty Keaton, Ben Kellerman, Marsha Shaffer, and Joan Kellerman checked them against the original designs.





# MIDDLE TENNESSEE

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photo by J. Intinioli



