

# TASSR Newsletter



## Message from the President

*Stacy Cummings Onks, East Tennessee State University*

Hello TASSR Membership!

We are excited as we prepare for the TASSR 2016 Conference “Building Bridges to Student Success.” We have a change of venue this year and will be conferencing in Chattanooga at The Read House. We are excited to have Vincent Windrow as our keynote speaker this year. The Call to Conference and Call for Proposals are available on the TASSR website! Please take a look and register today!

As TASSR continues to grow, our efforts to promote student success and retention will continue to grow as well. The strength of our organization lies in the strength of the members. I encourage you to become active in TASSR in any way you can! As we once again move in to uncertain times with the TBR changes, TASSR wants to be the vehicle for maintaining our connections and support of each other in the work we do with students. The Executive Board is always open to your suggestions to improve connectivity and service to the membership.

I look forward to hearing from you with any suggestions and if you would like to be involved in conference planning, please contact us! I look forward to seeing you on October! ■

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## Editor's Note

*Daryl Stephens, East Tennessee State University*

As times change, organizations change with them. We have held the TNADE or TASSR Conference at the Renaissance Center in Dickson annually since 2009. Our move there originally was a cost-saving move. When we first began holding our conferences there, we were able to use the building for free – a significant savings which held the cost of our conference down for several years. Hotel rooms in Dickson are cheaper than in the larger cities, and people living in parts of middle Tennessee could just drive there from home. A couple of years ago, the Jackson Foundation turned over the Center to Freed-Hardeman University. The classrooms are now in heavier use by FHU for their courses, so scheduling rooms for us to use became a little more problematic. We also began having to pay for use of the rooms, and that cost has risen in recent years as well. Some TASSR members

in their conference evaluations were also expressing a desire to move our conference somewhere else with more to do in a short driving distance. So your Board voted in our January meeting to hold our conference in Chattanooga this year. We were able to get a very good deal (including attendees paying the state government rate of \$95 per night) from the historic Read House Hotel, which is within walking distance of many attractions and restaurants. Those who have been in our organization for years may remember that we have met there before in the past (1998, 2003, and 2005). Since then, the building has been renovated, and the characteristics that people disliked about the hotel in the past have been fixed. Several board members have been there recently and say it is wonderful.

Some other changes you will see in the October conference will be a different schedule of concurrent sessions and keynote speakers, and a return to a printed conference program book because people kept having so many problems with Topi the last two years.

(Guidebook, the app used at the NADE conference, works well, but is too expensive for an organization of our size.)

More information about the fall conference can be found elsewhere in our newsletter.

We have had more changes and transitions in our TASSR family. You will see articles in the newsletter about four of our long-time, very active members who are retiring this academic year: Johnanna Grimes from TSU retired in December; and at MTSU, Carolyn Hopper, Terry Sundeen, and Annette Williams. We wish them well and thank them for their service to their universities and to the profession. We also mourned the passing December 10, 2015, of former president Ed Smith from Roane State. An article on Dr. Smith wasn't available when the newsletter was published; look for one in the next issue. The Board donated money on behalf of the TASSR membership to the Roane State scholarship fund in his memory. ■

## Upcoming Conferences

<p><b>TASSR 2016</b>  <b>October 12-14,</b>  <b>2016</b>  <b>Read House</b>  <b>Chattanooga, TN</b>  <b>"Building Bridges to Success"</b>  <a href="http://www.tassr.org/conferences.html">http://www.tassr.org/conferences.html</a></p> 	<p><b>NADE 2017</b>  <b>March 1-4, 2017</b>  <b>Cox Convention</b>  <b>Center</b>  <b>Oklahoma City, OK</b>  <b>"Winds of Change"</b>  <a href="http://www.nade2017okc.com">www.nade2017okc.com</a></p> 	<p><b>NADE 2018</b>  <b>Gaylord</b>  <b>National</b>  <b>Resort and Convention</b>  <b>Center</b>  <b>National Harbor, MD</b>  <b>(Washington, DC area)</b></p> 
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What other organizations' conferences should we highlight? Send your suggestions to the newsletter editor, Daryl Stephens ([stephen@etsu.edu](mailto:stephen@etsu.edu)).

## Kellogg Institute 2016 – July 16-29

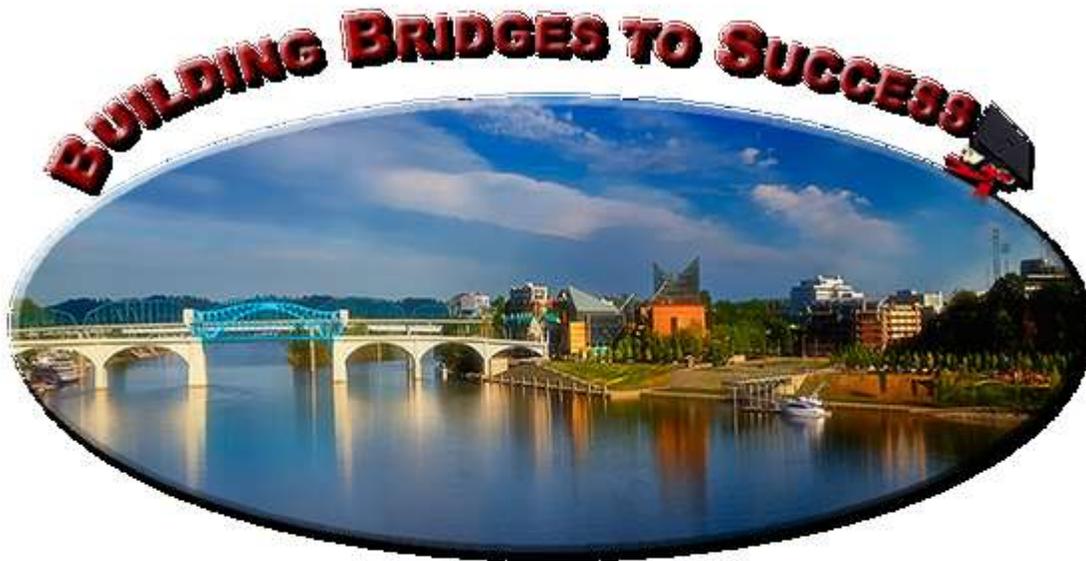
Applications for the 2016 Kellogg Institute at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC, are now being accepted. For more information, visit [www.ncde.appstate.edu/kellogg](http://www.ncde.appstate.edu/kellogg), e-mail [kellogg@appstate.edu](mailto:kellogg@appstate.edu), or call (828) 262-2805.



The *TASSR Newsletter* is published online every winter, spring, and fall, a few weeks after each board meeting (unless no articles are received). Deadline for the next newsletter will be September 13, 2016. Submissions of articles or announcements of any length (one paragraph to about 7 pages) related to student success or retention in Tennessee are welcome. Email submissions to Daryl Stephens, newsletter editor, at [stephen@etsu.edu](mailto:stephen@etsu.edu). These can be in the text in the body of the email or attachments in any of the following formats: TXT, DOC, DOCX, RTF, WPD, ODT. Photographs of TASSR or NADE-related events are welcome also.

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## Announcing: TASSR Conference 2016



**6th Annual Conference**  
**October 12 - 14, 2016**

**Read House Hotel**  
**Chattanooga, Tennessee**

**When:** October 12-14, 2016

**Where:** [Read House Hotel Historic Inn and Suites, Chattanooga, TN](#)

**Please use this link to make your reservations in the group block of rooms.**

The hotel has been completely renovated to provide us with an enjoyable stay and appropriate space for the conference. The hotel rate for state employees will be honored.

**Keynote Speaker:** Vincent Windrow, Middle Tennessee State University

### **Call for Proposals**

We encourage you to submit proposals for presentations. We are aware of all the fantastic work being done by people in higher education in the spirit of promoting student success and retention. Share your ideas, accomplishments and strategies during this conference via an informative session. If you have any questions, please contact Mary Monroe-Ellis at [mmonroeellis@pstcc.edu](mailto:mmonroeellis@pstcc.edu) or Suzanne Etheridge at [scetheridge@pstcc.edu](mailto:scetheridge@pstcc.edu). We look forward to reviewing your proposals. Be aware of the due date of **June 1<sup>st</sup>** for submission. Please [click here](#) to download the proposal form.

### **Call to Conference**

Conference registration is now open. The cost of the conference is \$150 through **September 12th**. The late registration fee is \$160. Please [click here](#) to register for the 2016 TASSR Annual Conference.

### **What You Can Do While Visiting Chattanooga**

[101 Things to Do in Chattanooga](#)

[The 10 Best Things to See in Chattanooga](#)

For questions, please contact Stacy Cummings Onks at [onkss@etsu.edu](mailto:onkss@etsu.edu).

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## TASSR to Honor Outstanding Members, Students

The 2016 TASSR Conference will begin October 12, 2016, in Chattanooga, and during the conference the Awards Committee will present two prestigious awards!

The **TASSR Award for Outstanding Service to Students in Learning Support Programs** recognizes long-term contribution of time and energy to students in Learning Support Programs by a TASSR member. Criteria for evaluation include the following: (a) nominee will have spent approximately half or more of their time serving learning support students through teaching and/or administration for at least five years; (b) evaluation will include both the nominee's record of service and recognition by others; (c) nominee must be a member of TASSR at the time of nomination.

The **TASSR Award to an Outstanding Alumnus of a Learning Support Program** recognizes a student who has been in a Learning Support Program and who has distinguished him/herself in other areas of life. Criteria for evaluation include the following: (a) the nominee must have completed at least two learning support courses or participated in at least two of the following support program activities: TRIO Upward Bound, TRIO Student Support Services, high school-to-college bridge program, special admissions program, enrollment in learning support classes (e.g., math, writing, learning strategies, reading); (b) the nominee must have outstanding accomplishments outside the classroom.

Watch the TASSR website for the deadlines for nominations. ■

Meredeth McCoy, Awards Chair  
Columbia State Community College  
[mmccoy@columbiastate.edu](mailto:mmccoy@columbiastate.edu)

## Highlights from the TASSR Board Meetings of February and April

The TASSR board met on February 5 and April 1, 2016, in the Miller Education Center at MTSU. Conference evaluations expressed positive responses to the keynote speaker and negative responses to the Topi app we used for our conference program information. Members expressed an interest in moving the conference out of Dickson. Gatlinburg was the first choice, but no suitable venues were available in October 2016. Chattanooga's Read House Hotel had the best proposal. The theme for the conference was chosen to be "Building Bridges to Success." We may organize evening group excursions. The Board voted to move the conference to an earlier date (October 12-14) because late October is a particularly busy time for advisors, keeping them from attending the conference.

Our goals for the year include increasing our membership to 150, doubling the number of published articles in the *Journal of Student Success and Retention*, and creating SPINs (Special Professional Interest Networks)—initially for reading, English, math, advising, and student support/retention.

We would like to have a diversity track in conference presentations this year to include international students, students with disabilities, ELL, accessibility of classroom materials, millennials, generation Y, adult learners, veterans, black male at-risk students, growth mindset, and relating to students despite individual personalities.

Financially, we are still in good shape. Total assets as of March 31 were \$16,385.54.

Nominations are needed this year for president-elect and treasurer. Details are elsewhere in the newsletter. We will also need a new nominations chair (this is an appointed position) due to Annette Williams' retirement.

Political liaison reports: TBR task forces will address a replacement for COMPASS (which is going away) and revising the A-100 Guidelines. ■

## Grit and Growth Mindset in a First-Year Experience Course

*Ryan Korstange and Marva Lucas, MTSU*

Many first-year students, even though successful in high school, are not prepared for the requirements necessary for success in a higher education setting. In many instances, they have had to put forth minimal effort to earn grades sufficient enough to receive their diplomas, but they find at the college level that they are called upon to learn much of the material independently and to do so in a manner that goes beyond a simple recall of facts. Ideally, this requires the students to evaluate their strategies for learning, for retaining key concepts, for communicating what they have learned, and recognizing appropriate opportunities for application. It is now obvious that first-year students benefit greatly from intentionally structured first-year experience (FYE) courses which incorporate high impact instructional strategies. It is our contention that such an FYE course which integrates grit and growth mindset theories is designed to better equip students with meeting the demands necessary for success in the college setting and will allow students to develop new paradigms to be used when they encounter the inevitable challenge or failure.

George Kuh (2008) classifies first-year seminar courses as high impact learning practices, and comments that: "the highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop student's intellectual and practical competencies" (p. 9). The centrality of effective FYE courses has also been noted by Dr. Tristan Denley, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Tennessee Board of Regents, who sent the following correspondence to system Presidents and Chief Academic Officers on Dec. 11, 2014: "Earlier this semester the First Year Seminar Task-force expressed the impact of a first-year seminar course experience on student success. The task-force recommended that institutions be provided the ability to require incoming students to take such a class where this is not already the case, even if that entails extending the curriculum past the 60 or 120 hour mark at schools."

Many higher education institutions have an FYE course in place. However, efforts need to be made to assure that the course is "high impact," in the ways articulated by Kuh and Denley. To this end, these courses can be restructured around the acquisition of what C. Dweck (2006) terms "growth mindset" and what A. Duckworth (Perkins-Gough, 2013) calls "grit." These paired concepts can form the conceptual nucleus around which the pedagogical strategies Kuh (2008) identifies can be employed.

Dweck's and Duckworth's theories speak similarly about student mindset: students who are grittier are better able to adapt to change, and learn from their mistakes, and therefore are more likely to succeed in an academic context. Gritty students are those who regularly employ Dweck's idea of growth mindset.

Any FYE course occurs at a critical crossroads in the student experience. Through the process of applying to college, students are conditioned to think of their grades as accomplishments, and often interpret these grades as indicative of their relative intelligence (or lack thereof). Dweck and Duckworth both suggest that intelligence is not equivalent with success, but emphasize that success comes through the establishment of effective processes that will maximize student effort, and thereby, will also maximize learning. The implications of this research is still in its infancy, but even this brief survey shows clearly that there is great benefit to helping students become gritty and to develop a growth mindset. ■

### *Works Referenced:*

- Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: the new psychology of success*. New York: Random House.
- Kuh, G.D. (2008). *High impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter*. AAC&U.
- Perkins-Gough, D. (2013). The significance of grit: A conversation with Angela Lee Duckworth. *Educational Leadership*, 71(1), 14-20

## Dr. Johannanna Grimes Retires After 40 Years of Service

*Barbara Kannard, Tennessee State University*



When Shakespeare said, “One man in his time plays many parts.” he must have foreseen the career of Dr. Johannanna Grimes. During her 40-year professional career at Tennessee State University (TSU), she served as Director of the Writing Center, instructor, tutor, and advocate for retention and success. In addition to her TSU classroom duties, she served as a Regents Online Degree Program instructor and mentor, a TSU mentor/trainer for Compliance Assist, and an active participant in various TSU committees. Her retirement in December 2015 leaves a void that will be difficult to fill.

Her zeal and enthusiasm for student success made the Tennessee Association for Developmental Education (TNADE) a perfect outlet for her to share teaching/retention/success strategies with like-minded teachers and administrators. During her long-time membership within the organization, she served as an Executive Board Member as Cultural Diversity Chairperson, President-Elect, President, and Past President. She was also a regular TNADE Conference presenter and an encourager to newer members who needed a little extra support to overcome the shyness that held them back from making their first conference presentation. She was there with support, ideas, and encouragement when the time for Developmental Studies ended, Learning Support began,

and TNADE transitioned to the Tennessee Association for Student Success and Retention (TASSR). She remained active in the organization and had most recently served on the TASSR Executive Board as the Middle Tennessee Area Representative. She was among the first group of collaborators and editors when TASSR’s professional journal, the Journal of Student Success and Retention (JoSSR) was developed.

The TSU Writing Center Staff greatly admired and respected Dr. Grimes as a leader and administrator. Staff members indicated that she was always supportive and encouraged them to grow, improve, and follow their dreams. Dr. Grimes was always willing to listen to their ideas of ways to improve the Center and facilitate student learning. When administrative decisions regarding the Center were made, Dr. Grimes always asked for the Staff’s input and used that input to formulate her final decision. She was depicted as a worthy role model and mentor.

Dr. Johannanna Grimes was the consummate professional and mentor to both her colleagues and students alike. Her smiling face, cheerful manner, ethics, experience, and knowledge are deeply missed at TSU and TASSR. Her retirement will no doubt be met with the same zeal and enthusiasm she exhibited in her professional life. All who know her send fond wishes for a long and happy retirement. Abraham Lincoln said, “Whatever you are, be a good one.” Dr. Johannanna Grimes was certainly that and so much more. ■

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## TASSR Members Retire from MTSU

*Meredith Anne S. Higgs, MTSU*

Middle Tennessee State University has three members of TASSR retiring this academic year. The MTSU University Studies Faculty and Staff salute the contributions of these wonderful teachers, professional leaders, and friends.

*Dr. Carolyn H. Hopper* began work at MTSU on August 1, 1986; she retired in December of 2015. Dr. Hopper, a leading authority on learning practices and strategies, has traveled around the country and internationally promoting her ideas and the many editions of her textbook, *Practicing College Learning Strategies*. Dr. Hopper has been very active in numerous professional organizations including NADE, CRLA, and TASSR, and her work was recognized with the Carnegie Professor of the Year Award in 1997. She served for decades as the MTSU Learning Strategies Coordinator. Dr. Hopper enjoys spending time and traveling with her family. Thank you for your many years of service to the profession and to the organization, Dr. Hopper. Enjoy your retirement.

*Dr. Terrence (Terry) Sundeen*, a physicist by trade, began his career at MTSU in 1988; he plans to retire at the end of the spring 2016 semester. He was nominated for the MTSU Outstanding Teacher Award. He made numerous presentations at Developmental Education state and national conferences. Dr. Sundeen is an

avid world traveler who is known for venturing into far-reaching locales during any school holiday. He plans to continue traveling after his retirement and to explore the tropical paradise of Maui on a more permanent basis. Thank you, Dr. Sundeen, for your service, sense of humor, and excellent travel tales. *Bon Voyage!*

*Mrs. Annette Williams* truly defines a hard-working member of the TASSR organization. Mrs. Williams began work at MTSU in 1985; she also plans to retire at the end of the spring 2016 semester. Mrs. Williams has served MTSU as a Mathematics Area Coordinator and on Faculty Senate. She has been recognized with numerous awards and nominations. For example, she was nominated for the MTSU Outstanding Teacher Award and received both the 2011 TASSR Award for Outstanding Service to Students in Learning Support Programs and the 2012 inaugural NADE Gladys R. Shaw Award for Outstanding Service to Developmental Students. She has several decades of service to TASSR and TNADE including over 8 years of experience as the Webmaster and TNADE Newsletter editor and more years of service as the TASSR Nominations Chair. Mrs. Williams enjoys horse-back riding and spending time with her family. Mrs. Williams, you are appreciated and will be missed as you ride into the mathematical sunset. ■

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## TASSR Officer Nominations

TASSR is seeking nominations for the offices of President-Elect and Treasurer. The Treasurer will serve for 2 years. The President-Elect will serve 2 years in that office then 2 years as President of TASSR. Please consider nominating a fellow member of TASSR or yourself. Self-nominations are welcome. As a member of the Executive Board of TASSR you will be expected to meet with the Board twice during the spring semester in the middle Tennessee area and twice in the fall at the conference location. One of these is in preparation for the conference and the other is during the conference. Fill out the linked Nominations Form and email it along with the requested vita to Dr. Stacy Onks, president of TASSR at [onkss@mail.etsu.edu](mailto:onkss@mail.etsu.edu). The deadline is **September 30, 2016**.

### TASSR Officer Nomination Form 2016-2017

TASSR Office: \_\_\_\_\_

Information needed for the Nominee:

Nominee's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Is the nominee currently a TASSR member? \_\_\_\_\_

Nominator Information:

Nominator's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Is the nominator currently a TASSR member? \_\_\_\_\_

Deadline: September 30, 2016

Send the completed form and a short (300-word) vita for the nominee via email to:

Dr. Stacy Onks, TASSR President

[onkss@mail.etsu.edu](mailto:onkss@mail.etsu.edu)

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## Scenes from the October 2015 TASSR Conference Renaissance Center, Dickson, Tennessee



*More Scenes from the 2015 Conference*



*More Scenes from the 2015 Conference*



*All photos by Daryl Stephens*

**Journal of Student Success and Retention**

Look for issues of TASSR's own peer-reviewed publication, the *Journal of Student Success and Retention*, as well as manuscript guidelines, at [www.jossr.org](http://www.jossr.org).