

2025

Annual Report



MTSU

Jones College of Business
**Business and Economic
Research Center**

2025 Annual Report

Business and Economic Research Center



Table of Contents

I. Letter from the Director.....	3
II. Engaging the Community.....	4
III. Building Connections.....	10
IV. Applying Research to Real-World Issues.....	12
V. Deepening Partnerships.....	18
VI. Appendix.....	22



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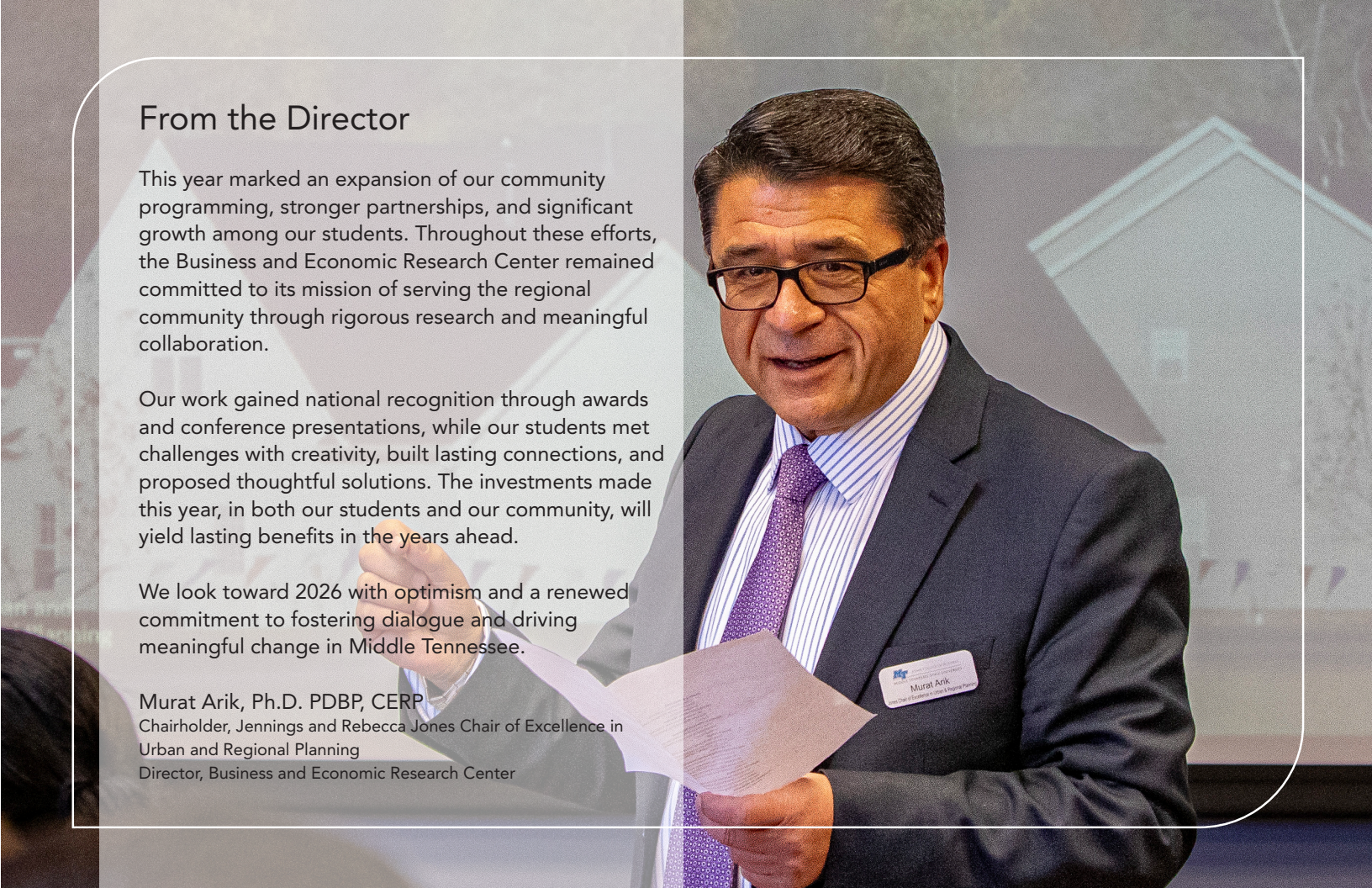
From the Director

This year marked an expansion of our community programming, stronger partnerships, and significant growth among our students. Throughout these efforts, the Business and Economic Research Center remained committed to its mission of serving the regional community through rigorous research and meaningful collaboration.

Our work gained national recognition through awards and conference presentations, while our students met challenges with creativity, built lasting connections, and proposed thoughtful solutions. The investments made this year, in both our students and our community, will yield lasting benefits in the years ahead.

We look toward 2026 with optimism and a renewed commitment to fostering dialogue and driving meaningful change in Middle Tennessee.

Murat Arik, Ph.D. PDBP, CERP
Chairholder, Jennings and Rebecca Jones Chair of Excellence in Urban and Regional Planning
Director, Business and Economic Research Center





Engaging the Community

A driving force in the mission of the Business and Economic Research Center is community engagement that combines academic insight with public discourse. In 2025, this mission was advanced through the Chair of Excellence in Urban and Regional Planning's second annual Forum on Growth and Regional Challenges, convening over 300 students, faculty members, and community leaders from across Middle Tennessee.

This year's theme, Livability in Middle Tennessee, included thoughtful dialogue on the urgent challenges and opportunities brought about by the region's rapid growth.

A highlight of the event was a keynote address by Douglas Kreulen, A.A.E., CEO of the Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority. Kreulen shared critical insights into how the airport is strategically planning for expansion and innovation in

response to the region's increasing population. His remarks emphasized the connection between infrastructure planning and regional vitality.

The forum also featured a mayoral panel, moderated by David Plazas of *The Tennessean*, which brought together Chaz Molder (Columbia), Randall Hutto (Lebanon), Paige Brown (Gallatin), and Michael Skipper (Greater Nashville Regional Council). The panelists shared reflections and strategies on

how their communities are navigating growth while striving to maintain livability and a strong sense of place.

The continued success of the forum illustrates a growing public appetite for collaborative, informed conversations about Middle Tennessee's future.



THE FORUM ON
GROWTH
 AND
REGIONAL CHALLENGES

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
 SIGNATURE ANNUAL FORUM

Building Connections

At the heart of our mission is the belief that education extends far beyond the classroom. In today's world, cultivating strong relationships with business and community leaders is not just beneficial but essential. This year, we continued to invest in opportunities that connect our students with industry professionals, civic leaders, and entrepreneurs who provide real-world perspectives, mentorship, and career guidance.

Through networking events, guest speaker series, internships, and community engagement initiatives, our students gained critical insights into their fields of interest and expanded their professional networks.

These connections help bridge the gap between academic learning and practical application, creating a culture of collaboration and ambition. Whether it's a student making connections between their studies and the workplace or receiving career advice from a local CEO, the outcomes speak for themselves.

By facilitating these relationships, we're not only preparing students to enter the workforce with confidence, we're strengthening our community as a whole. The partnerships forged today are shaping the leaders of tomorrow.

Miguel Vega, president of the Nashville Mortgage Bankers Association, speaking with COE-URP Scholars and faculty mentors





24 Guest Speakers

From CEOs to economic development officials, these experts brought real-world experience into the classroom.

Kendrick Curtis, executive director of Middle Tennessee Industrial Development Association, presenting to our students during an economic development session

11 Scholars Program Networking Events

Our students had the opportunity to interact with business and community leaders at 11 events throughout the Scholars Program, creating pivotal connections outside the college campus.

Michael Skipper, executive director of Greater Nashville Regional Council, speaking during our Forum on Growth and Regional Challenges





676 Total Event Registrants in 2025

This year our guest speaker events doubled in attendance. This increase in participation highlights the timeliness of the conversations centered around our region's growth and the organizations working

toward sustainable growth. As we continue to provide forums for discussion of these pressing issues, we are encouraged by the response from both the campus and the community.



Ralph Perrey
Tennessee Housing Development Agency

Ralph Perrey, executive director of THDA, speaking to our students on affordable housing in February



Monique Little
Tennessee Small Business Development Center

Monique Little, TSBDC strategy and development manager, organized a panel on small businesses in September.



Steve Bland
WeGo Public Transit

Steve Bland, CEO of WeGo Public Transit, speaking to our students during our regional mobility session in November

Applying Research to Real-World Issues

Applied research lies at the core of our commitment to our students and our community. Through this year's Scholars Program, our faculty guided our students as they researched topics ranging from traffic congestion to foreign direct investment in Middle Tennessee. By aligning academic inquiry with the needs of the community, we ensure that our research is relevant and that students can directly apply what they are learning to issues facing our community.

The research our students conducted throughout this nine-month program equipped them with practical skills and a deeper understanding of how their education can be a force for positive change. As we look ahead, we remain dedicated to using research as a tool for social good—transforming challenges into opportunities and working toward stronger, more resilient communities.

10 Scholars Program Graduates



“Participating in this program has inspired me to explore further research opportunities in not only my academic studies but also in my career.”

Hannah Osborne



9 Commissioned Studies

The Business and Economic Research Center at Middle Tennessee State University continued to support data-driven decision-making through a series of commissioned studies in 2025. These studies provided valuable insights on key regional issues including workforce development, housing affordability, economic resilience, and infrastructure needs. Conducted in partnership with public and private sector stakeholders, the research highlighted BEREC's commitment to informing policy and planning across Middle Tennessee. Each study contributes to a broader understanding of the region's economy and provides organizations with insights into their contribution to the economy.



Deepening Partnerships

Through our partnerships with various organizations, we were able to offer five conference opportunities to our students in 2025. In addition to the opportunity to learn from speakers and network with

professionals, students were also given mentorship and presentation opportunities at these events. The investment our partnering organizations are making in these students' lives will impact not only their education but the future workforce.



Sam Zaza, Andrea Lawrence, Kathleen Caldwell, Melisa Temiz, Murat Arik, Semih Yucekan, Morgan Paris, Brenton Harden, Rubi Devi, and Aoi Uozumi attending the Cumberland Region Tomorrow's Power of Ten Summit.

5 Conference Opportunities



Students Ashna Goel, Isabella Gilbert, and Lohitha Mamidi attended the Tennessee Housing Conference to learn about work across the state to provide affordable housing.



Ryan Egly, Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce president and CEO, with Joshua Allen, Supply Chain Management student



"I had a great experience! I learned how closely politics and economic development are connected to supply chain management."

Joshua Allen

12 Student Interns

Our longstanding partnership with the Tennessee Small Business Development Center provided 12 students with internship experience throughout 2025. Highlighted here are seven who have completed their internships this year.



Zach Burgess

Data Science

"I learned that there is no one-size-fits-all solution; the way to make things better is to chip away at problems wisely."



Ashna Goel

Accounting

"As a future accountant, I will deal with tons of data daily, so being able to organize the data, provide context, provide credibility, and identify gaps in the data is crucial."



Andrew Hair

Construction Management

"Upcoming students I believe will see how much of an opportunity something like this can be to further their career goals and aspirations."



Alican Ibacik

Sociology

"This experience exceeded my expectations in every aspect. The level of responsibility given to me helped me develop new skills—especially in research and data analysis."



Esrat Jahan

Biostatistics

"Besides project work, Dr. Devi taught me how to succeed in interviews and shared some tips that are helpful."



Kalistah Lawrence

Biochemistry

"What I've learned will help me achieve my goals by trying to better understand how things work in our communities and what I can do to make a difference."



Hannah Osborne

Mathematics

"I found it very interesting how the skills I have learned in my classes can be connected to a real-life application."

Throughout their internships, these students have applied core research principles, strengthened their analytical abilities, and gained practical experience that will carry forward into their professional fields upon graduation.



Southeast U.S./Japan Annual Joint Meeting

In 2025, the Business and Economic Research Center began a global engagement through the 47th Annual Joint Meeting of the Southeast U.S./Japan Association, held in Tokyo. BERC Director Murat Arik represented the research center as one of approximately 80 members of the Tennessee delegation, supporting the center's role in advancing international collaboration, applied research, and innovation-driven partnerships.

Held under the theme "Shaping the Future with Partnership, Innovation, and Growth," the conference brought together more than 400 delegates from business, government, and higher education. The event expanded the research center's mission to cultivate interdisciplinary collaboration and translate academic research into real-world impact by providing global partnerships.

Conference sessions emphasized the value of bilateral business partnerships and highlighted emerging opportunities in the new space economy, underscoring the importance of collaboration among government, industry, and academia. At the conclusion of the conference, Gov. Bill Lee formally accepted the baton to host the 48th SEUS/Japan Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, in October 2026.

"MTSU's continued partnership with SEUS/ Japan will ensure our university remains an active contributor to strategic international efforts."

Murat Arik



Murat Arik with Gov. Bill Lee, at the SEUS/Japan Joint Annual Meeting in Tokyo

Appendix

JANUARY

1/12/2025 Rutherford County Mayor Joe Carr highlighted BERC's 2024 Alumni Impact Report in an article by *The Tennessean*, "MTSU Mondays: Media college premiers animated film, mayor touts alumni impact."

1/14/2025 BERC published online "Tracking Tennessee's Economy: November Update" in partnership with Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations.

1/16/2025 Murat Arik gave a presentation titled "The Evolution of the Middle Tennessee Economy, Recent Trends and Issues" to Leadership Middle Tennessee.

1/24/2025 BERC hosted the Chair of Excellence in Urban and Regional Planning Scholars Program Module 5, during which students heard from Corey Pendleton, assistant professor of Business Analytics at Lincoln Memorial University, about analyzing data. The session included guest speakers and panelists on rural economic development. Kendrick Curtis (guest speaker), executive director of Middle Tennessee Industrial Development Association (MTIDA); Matt Von Lunen (moderator), assistant executive director at MTIDA; and panelists Greg Lowe, business development specialist at TNECD; Denny Wayne Robinson, county executive for White County; Lorie Fisher, director of economic and community development at SCTDD.

1/31/2025 BERC submitted the visual report for "The Landfill in Rutherford County: Economic and Fiscal Impact" to Murfree, Goodman, & Rosado PLLC.

FEBRUARY

2/7/2025 Steven Livingston was featured in an article by *The Tennessean* titled "Tennessee whiskey, auto are among industries most vulnerable to Trump tariffs."

2/8/2025 Steven Livingston was featured in an article by the *Chattanooga Times Free Press* titled "Tariffs against China could aid Novonix plans in Chattanooga."

2/11/2025 Murat Arik gave a presentation titled "Crafting a Data and Research Agenda to Drive Investment, Engagement, and Partnerships" for session four of the Clean Energy and Infrastructure series.

2/13/2025 BERC's study "The Landfill in Rutherford County: Economic and Fiscal Impact" was featured in media pieces by WGNS Radio and WKRN News Channel 2.

2/19/2025 BERC published online "Tracking Tennessee's Economy: December Update" in partnership with Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations.

2/21/2025 BERC hosted the Chair of Excellence in Urban and Regional Planning Scholars Program Module 6. This event included a lecture on testing hypotheses, interpreting findings, and drafting papers by Steven Livingston. Ralph Perrey, executive director of the Tennessee Housing Development Agency, spoke on creating livable communities through affordable housing.

2/27/2025 BERC published online, *The Journal of Urban and Regional Perspectives*, Volume 1, Issue 2.

MARCH

3/3/2025 Murat Arik was featured in an article by *The Commercial Appeal* titled "Tennessee layoffs, buyouts impact thousands in 2025, more to come."

3/5/2025 Steven Livingston was quoted in "Les conséquences inattendues de la guerre commerciale de Trump" in *Le Point*.

3/5/2025 Steven Livingston was featured in an article by *The Leaf-Chronicle* titled "Governor Lee backs Trump tariff plan as Tennessee whiskey, auto industries brace for impact."

3/20/2025 Steven Livingston was interviewed regarding tariffs on "This is Nashville" WPLN.

3/21/2025 BERC hosted the 2025 Forum on Growth and Regional Challenges with speakers Alan Thompson, RaganSmith; David Plazas, USA Today Network Tennessee; Provost Mark Byrnes, MTSU; Stephanie Coleman, Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce; Doug Kreulan, Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority; Michael Skipper, Greater Nashville Regional Council; Mayor Chaz Molder, Columbia, TN; Mayor Randall Hutto, Wilson County, TN; and Mayor Paige Brown, Gallatin, TN. With over 300 attendees, the event focused on Livability in Middle Tennessee.

3/21/2025 BERC was featured in an article by *The Daily News Journal* titled "Landfill politics heats up: 'Should Rutherford County be Nashville's trash can?'"

3/22/2025 Murat Arik served as a panelist for the Horizon Group's Community Engagement Collaborative at Patterson Park Community Center.

3/23/2025 BERC was featured in "The Future of Waste in Rutherford County" by WGNS Radio.

3/25/2025 Steven Livingston published online "Tennessee International Trade Report: 4th Quarter 2024" on Global Commerce: Tennessee and the International Economy.

3/26/2025 BERC co-hosted the Human Resource Advisory Panel for the upcoming 2026 Wage and Benefit Survey in partnership with Middle Tennessee Industrial Association. Kristie Abston; Kendrick Curtis, executive director of MTIDA; Murat Arik presented and facilitated discussion. Over 40 human resource professionals attended, and Middle Tennessee Electric hosted the event.

3/27/2025 BERC published online "Tracking Tennessee's Economy: January Update" in partnership with the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations.

3/27/2025 BERC published online "Housing Tennessee: Q4 2024" in partnership with the Tennessee Housing Development Agency.

3/28/2025 BERC hosted the Chair of Excellence in Urban and Regional Planning Scholars Program Module 7 with a lecture by Richard Tarpey on finalizing papers, creating posters, and preparing presentations.

APRIL

4/9/25-4/10/25 Riza Bayrak and Murat Arik presented the papers "Investigating Pro-Environmental Behavior: A Cross-Cultural Study" and "The Antecedent of Pro-Environmental Behavior: An Empirical Study in USA" at the Institute of Global Business Research (IGBR) spring conference in Nashville.

4/9/25-4/10/25 Aykut Iri, COE-URP Scholar, presented her paper "What Attracts Foreign Direct Investment to the US: The Impact of Partnership 2020 in Attracting International Business to Nashville Metropolitan Statistical Area" at the Institute for Global Business Research spring conference in Nashville, April 9-10, 2025. Aykut Iri is mentored by Murat Arik, COE-URP chairholder.

4/9/25-4/10/25 Isabella Gilbert, COE-URP Scholar, presented her paper "Assessing Heat Vulnerability in Nashville: The Role of Building Value, Tree Canopy, and Socioeconomic Factors" at the Institute for Global Business Research spring conference in Nashville, April 9-10, 2025. Isabella Gilbert is mentored by Ugur Orak, assistant professor of Sociology and Anthropology.

4/9/25-4/10/25 Sreehari Sreejith, COE-URP Scholar, presented his paper "Trapped in Traffic: The Socioeconomic and Behavioral Barriers to Transit

Adoption” at the Institute for Global Business Research spring conference in Nashville, April 9-10, 2025. Sreehari Sreejith is mentored by Steven Livingston, professor of Political and Global Affairs.

4/9/25-4/10/25 Hannah Osborne, COE-URP Scholar, presented her paper “Analysis of Strategies Used by Rural Counties in Middle Tennessee to Attract Professionals” at the Institute for Global Business Research spring conference in Nashville, April 9-10, 2025. Hannah Osborne is mentored by Richard Tarpey, assistant professor of Supply Chain Management.

4/10/2025 Riza Bayrak with Murat Arik received the IGBR Distinguished Research Award for the papers “Investigating Pro-Environmental Behavior: A Cross-Cultural Study” and “The Antecedent of Pro-Environmental Behavior: An Empirical Study in USA.”

4/15/2025 BERC published online “Tracking Tennessee’s Economy: February Update” in partnership with Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations.

4/18/2025 BERC hosted Module 8 of the COE-URP Scholars Program, including lectures on finalizing presentations and submitting to conferences and journals by Ugur Orak, associate professor of Sociology, and Senali Amarasuriya, assistant professor of Supply Chain Management.

4/22/25-4/23/25 BERC staff and COE-URP Scholars attended the Tennessee Housing Conference in Nashville. (Staff: Murat Arik, Rubi Devi, Andrea Lawrence and Lohitha Mamidi. COE-URP Scholars: Sreehari Sreejith, Ashna Goel, Isabella Gilbert, Aykut Iri, and Sydney Panak.)

4/23/2025 Murat Arik presented at the Tennessee Small Business Development Center on the state of the Tennessee economy.

MAY

5/1/2025 Steven Livingston provided information for the booklet “Tennessee History for Kids: Across the Ocean.”

5/7/2025 Murat Arik, Andrea Lawrence, and COE-URP Scholar Ashna Goel participated in the Nashville Mortgage Bankers Association Loan Officer Summit.

5/9/2025 BERC hosted the COE-URP Scholars Presentations during which the second cohort of scholars presented their research on urban and regional challenges in Middle Tennessee.

5/9/2025 BERC published online “Tracking Tennessee’s Economy: March Update” in partnership with Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations.

5/9/2025 BERC hosted the COE-URP Spring Advisory Committee Meeting to discuss recent activities and upcoming initiatives for the Chair of Excellence in Urban and Regional Planning.

5/14/2025 Murat Arik was interviewed by News Channel 2 for a segment titled “Smyrna Airport could be new home for TN Air National Guard’s 118th Wing.”

5/15/2025 COE-URP graduate assistant Josh Narrell was featured in *The Tennessean’s* coverage of MTSU’s Spring Commencement: “MTSU Celebrates Class of 2025 during 3 ceremonies, features House Speaker Sexton as keynote.”

5/19/2025 Murat Arik began representing MTSU in a cohort for Mobilizing Data for Talent Development led by Sarah Edwards, research associate at the Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness, and Allison Forbes, CREC vice president of research, which will include eLearning modules, quarterly webinars and follow-along exercises from June 24, 2025, to June 23, 2026.

5/27/2025 COE-URP graduate assistant Josh Narrell was selected for the Fulbright 2025-26 US Student Program.

5/28/2025 Murat Arik and Andrea Lawrence presented a poster on the Middle Tennessee Wage and Benefit Survey at the C2ER Annual Conference.

5/29/2025 Murat Arik moderated the session Exploring Economic Transitions at the C2ER Annual Conference.

5/29/2025 Murat Arik received the Economic and Workforce Development Applied Research Award for the Tracking Tennessee’s Economy

dashboard in partnership with the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations at the annual C2ER Conference.

5/29/2025 Murat Arik received the Certified Economic Research Professional designation at the C2ER Annual Conference.

JUNE

6/1/2025 Andrea Lawrence was promoted to BERC coordinator.

6/10/2025 BERC published online “Tracking Tennessee’s Economy: April Update” in partnership with Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations.

6/11/2025 Josh Narrell, COE-URP graduate assistant from 2023-2025, was featured in the MTSU News article “MTSU Fulbright-Germany recipient bridging cultures one conversation at a time.”

6/12/2025 BERC published online, “Housing Tennessee: 2025 1st Quarter Housing Report” in partnership with Tennessee Housing Development Agency.

6/16/2025 BERC interviewed 12 students and accepted 10 to the Chair of Excellence in Urban and Regional Planning Scholars Program for the 2025-26 academic year

6/20/2025- 6/27/2025 BERC’s Housing Report was featured in articles from MTSU News, *The Lebanon Democrat*, and *The Cheatham County Exchange*.

JULY

7/14/2025 BERC published online “Tracking Tennessee’s Economy: May Update” in partnership with Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations.

7/23/2025 Murat Arik served on a panel for the Get to Know Your MTSU session on community engagement.

7/25/2025 Murat Arik began hosting virtual interviews and opened an online survey as a part of the research project “Pathway Lending Strategic Plan: Stakeholder Survey and Interviews” in partnership with Pathway Lending.

7/31/2025 Murat Arik, Rubi Devi, along with students, Hannah Osborne and Gulnur Ashyrnepesova, attended Middle Tennessee Industrial Development Association’s annual seminar to strengthen partnerships and prepare for the upcoming Wage and Benefit Survey.

AUGUST

8/1/2025 Murat Arik completed a consulting project that included conducting interviews in conjunction with an online survey of Pathway Lending’s key stakeholders to aid in developing Pathway Lending’s strategic plan.

8/2/2025 Steven Livingston published online “Global Commerce: Tennessee International Trade Report, 1st Quarter 2025.”

8/12/2025 BERC published online “Tracking Tennessee’s Economy: June Update” in partnership with Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Affairs.

8/13/2025 Murat Arik was interviewed by Stephen Elliott of the *Nashville Banner* to discuss the Nashville housing market dynamics.

8/18/2025 Murat Arik, Rubi Devi, and Andrea Lawrence submitted the final report “Ayoku Healing Retreat Center: Economic and Fiscal Impact,” with its accompanying visual report, to the Ayoku Healing Retreat Center.

8/22/2025 BERC hosted the Chair of Excellence in Urban and Regional Planning Advisory Committee for their biannual meeting to discuss recent activities and upcoming initiatives.

8/22/2025 BERC hosted Module 1 of the COE-URP Scholars Program, including a program introduction and orientation for students, faculty mentors, and advisory committee members.

8/25/2025 BEREC became the hosting center for the Tech Vision: People and Technology Shaping Tomorrow conference.

8/25/2025 BEREC welcomed Sam Zaza as BEREC associate director, in which she will coordinate and oversee all Tech Vision-related activities.

8/28/2025 Murat Arik was featured in a *Nashville Banner* article and WPLN segment titled “One South Nashville Neighborhood’s Fight Against Development Mirrors Citywide Debate.”

SEPTEMBER

9/5/2025 BEREC facilitated a site visit for BEREC and COE-URP students and staff to Middle Tennessee Electric with COE-URP Advisory Committee member Brad Gibson.

9/9/2025 BEREC published online “Tracking Tennessee’s Economy, July 2025 Update” in partnership with Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations.

9/12/2025 Rubi Devi and Andrea Lawrence attended Ayoku Healing Retreat Center’s event Introducing Ayoku, during which the BEREC’s economic and fiscal impact report was highlighted.

9/19/2025 BEREC hosted Module 2 of the Chair of Excellence in Urban and Regional Planning Scholars Program with training in Python by Keith Gamble and a lecture on the research process with Steven Livingston.

9/19/2025 BEREC hosted a panel from the Tennessee Small Business Development Center on Small Businesses and Economic Competitiveness. Panelists included Sarah Callender of Mainstreet Murfreesboro, Greg Lowe of Tennessee Economic Development, and Kayla Miller of the TSBDC, with moderator Monique Little of the TSBDC.

9/22/2025 BEREC published online “Housing Tennessee, Q2 2025” in partnership with Tennessee Housing Development Agency.

9/30/2025 BEREC’s Housing Tennessee report was featured in an article by WGNS titled “Home Prices Rise as Construction Permits Fall in Tennessee’s Q2 Housing Report.”

OCTOBER

10/1/2025 Murat Arik and Andrea Lawrence participated in the Wage and Benefit Partner Workshop at the South Central Tennessee Development District, organized by Middle Tennessee Industrial Development Agency. The purpose of the workshop was to train economic development professionals in recruiting participants for the 2026 Wage and Benefit Survey.

10/8/2025 Murat Arik presented the following papers at the Institute for Global Business Research fall conference in New Orleans: “The Impact of Terrorism on FDI: A Meta-Analytical Approach” with Riza Bayrak, Necmettin Celik, and Alper Akpinar, and “How Does Education and Human Capital Affect Economic Welfare: Empirical Research from the Resources-based Perspective” with Corey Pendleton and Riza Bayrak.

10/9/2025 Murat Arik received the Distinguished Research Award from the Institute for Global Business Research for his paper “How Does Education and Human Capital Affect Economic Welfare: Empirical Research from the Resources-based Perspective.”

10/13/2025 BEREC published online “Tracking Tennessee’s Economy, August Update” in partnership with Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations.

10/14/2025 Rubi Devi and Andrea Lawrence participated in the Wage and Benefit Partner Workshop at the Upper Cumberland Development District, organized by Middle Tennessee Industrial Development Agency. The purpose of the workshop was to train economic development professionals in recruiting participants for the 2026 Wage and Benefit Survey.

10/20/2025 BEREC undergraduate researcher and 2024-25 COE-URP Scholar Hannah Osborne presented her poster “Analysis of Strategies Used by Rural Counties in Middle Tennessee to Attract Professionals” at the Tennessee Chapter of the American Planning Association’s fall conference.

10/21/2025 Murat Arik and Andrea Lawrence presented at the Tennessee Chapter of the American Planning Association’s fall conference on the COE-URP Scholars Program: “Bridging Education and Practice: Training the Next Generation of Planners through the COE-URP Scholars Program.”

10/24/2025 BEREC hosted Module 3 of the COE-URP Scholars Program, which included training in Python by Keith Gamble, a lecture from Richard Tarpey on literature review and conceptual framework, and a session led by Ralph Perrey, executive director of the Tennessee Housing Development Agency.

10/24/2025 BEREC published Volume 2, Issue 1 of the *Journal of Urban and Regional Perspectives*, “Connecting the Region.” This issue includes guest contributors from the Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority, the Tennessee Center for Family Business, and the COE-URP Scholars research articles.

10/26/2025 Murat Arik traveled with the governor’s delegation to Tokyo, Japan, for the 47th annual joint meeting of the Japan-U.S. Southeast Association.

10/29/2025 Rubi Devi and Andrea Lawrence participated in the Wage and Benefit Partner Workshop at the Greater Nashville Regional Council, organized by Middle Tennessee Industrial Development Agency. The purpose of the workshop was to train economic development professionals in recruiting participants for the 2026 Wage and Benefit Survey.

NOVEMBER

11/4/2025 Murat Arik spoke on a panel titled “Nature at Work: How Ecotourism Can Strengthen Workforce in Rural Communities” at the Tennessee Governor’s Conference.

11/4/2025 Andrea Lawrence and Matt Von Lunen, assistant executive director of MTIDA, facilitated seven student pairings with economic development professionals at the Governor’s Conference. Students included Freedom Williams, Hannah Osborne, Gulnur Ashyrnepesova, Kathleen Caldwell, Melisa Temiz, Ciin Kap, and Joshua Allen.

11/12/2025 Murat Arik chaired a session titled “Building the Workforce of Tomorrow” at Cumberland Region Tomorrow’s Power of 10 Summit.

11/12/2025 Murat Arik, Rubi Devi, and Andrea Lawrence brought COE-URP Scholars and BEREC students to attend the Cumberland Region Tomorrow’s Power of 10 Summit.

11/21/2025 BEREC hosted Module 4 of the COE-URP Scholars Program during which Keith Gamble led a Python training segment and Ugur Orak gave a lecture on research methods and data gathering. This session also included a panel on Regional Mobility and Economic Competitiveness with guest speakers including Mayor Ken Moore of Franklin, TN, Jessica Dauphin of the Transit Alliance, Steve Bland of WeGo Transit, and Michael Skipper of Greater Nashville Regional Council.

DECEMBER

12/3/2025 The Chair of Excellence in Urban and Regional Planning sponsored Greater Nashville Regional Council’s annual partner appreciation and awards event. Dean Joyce Heames and Andrea Lawrence represented BEREC at the event.

12/15/2025 Steven Livingston published the Tennessee Trade Report, Q2 2025, on the Global Commerce website.

12/19/2025 Murat Arik established a Faculty Advisory Committee for the Chair of Excellence in Urban and Regional Planning.

12/19/2025 BEREC submitted the report and visual booklet for the Tennessee National Guard Economic and Fiscal Impact.

MTSU

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I AM *true*
BLUE

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY.