Annual Report
2019-2020

May 15, 2020
Executive Summary

Perhaps one of this year’s greatest contributions in support of Middle Tennessee State University’s (MTSU) information systems students was the launch of a new academic student organization within the Information Systems and Analytics department. This new organization operates under the auspices of the Association for Information Systems (AIS), which is one of the premier scholarly associations for the Information Systems discipline. This alignment brings credibility to our organization and presents additional recognition opportunities to our student members. As part of this initiative, the officers along with our advisor, Dr. Erskine, had to craft strategic goals, recruit members, and develop bylaws to meet thresholds for inclusion and recognition by the AIS national organization as well as MTSU’s student activities organization. Since launching in August of 2019, the new AIS Student Chapter held many events. A major focus was on careers preparation for the annual IT Connect Career and Internship Fair. These activities included three resume workshops, six interview workshops, and presentations on popular internship programs such as Brooksource’s Elevate. Additionally, officers organized study sessions to explore the Amazon Web Services (AWS) suite of products. In these sessions, members learned to integrate identify management, load-balancing, as well as a myriad of best practices in the context of Amazon’s cloud computing platform. Our members also held cybersecurity meetings to practice penetration testing and to review various technologies to prevent and combat security breaches.

We entered the HackMT hack-a-thon with our primary goal being to learn how to work with the Flask framework. We also hosted a series of social events, including a Back-to-School Bash event where students had an opportunity to meet all Information Systems and Analytics faculty in an informal setting. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic we did not have an opportunity to attend the annual AIS Student Chapter Leadership Conference. However, one of our workshop proposals had been accepted, and two MTSU student teams were set to demonstrate their skills in competitions. While the on-ground conference was cancelled, we were able to compete virtually, and both student teams were finalists. One of our teams decided to develop a solution to support efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural music heritage. Specifically, the team proposed a Python-based web platform that could capture, classify, analyze, and preserve audio files which are an often-neglected cultural artifact. Being finalists at an international competition that we had never before participated in certainly demonstrates the caliber of our student members to the greater information systems community. Over the past year my work with the AIS Student Chapter helped me win the Nashville Technology Council’s Student of the Year award. Furthermore, we nominated Dr. Erskine for MTSU’s Student Organization Advisor of the Year award, which he was awarded.

With so many success in the first year, this organization will undoubtedly go far.

Sincerely,

Luis Lange
AIS Student Chapter President (2019-2020)
Middle Tennessee State University hosts several important business and technology related career and internship fairs. We feel that our organization is partly responsible for ensuring that students seeking careers and internships are fully-prepared. In order to accomplish this, we apply three strategies: 1) we actively seek hiring organizations to interact with our students, 2) we strive to ensure that our members are fully-prepared for the college-to-workforce transition, and 3) we encourage the development of specific technical skills that may not be available to all students.

To meet the first of our goals, we actively seek collaborations with regional industry leaders that regularly hire MTSU students. For example, we started the academic year with a panel discussion featuring executives from Bridgestone, Tenncare, and DaTalent, in addition to experts on technology jobs from the Greater Nashville Technology Council as well as the Nashville Software School. AIS Student Chapter members had over an hour to meet and mingle with these individual’s after the event, an opportunity that many students sought. Whenever we are aware of guest speakers representing organizations who actively hire in the Middle Tennessee area, we look for opportunities to meet with them.

To ensure that our members are fully-prepared for the college to workforce transition, we focus on developing ever important soft skills. Particularly, we prepared a series of resume and interview workshops. The resume workshops were well-attended and presented by hiring managers from Brooksource, the Tractor Supply Company, and Cigna. In most cases, the representatives included alumni to discuss their transitions to the workforce. Our interview workshops were held in the form of mock interviews. These were structured much like real-life situations in that multiple candidates waited in the lobby and met in small conference room with multiple hiring managers. We thank Tractor Supply Company, Brooksource, and Formos Consulting for participating and helping create this opportunity. A total of 14 AIS Student Chapter members participated in these mock interviews. Additionally, we host presentations that aim to share information about competitive internship programs. These presentations were often facilitated by former MTSU students who candidly discussed their perspectives of the internship programs.

To encourage the development of specific technical skills we formed two teams, a cybersecurity team and an Amazon Web Services (AWS) team. The cybersecurity team met 3 times and the AWS team met weekly throughout the entire fall 2019 semester. Both groups performed deep-dives using specific tools or technologies that are not covered in specific courses. The cybersecurity team even attracted alumni to attend and actively engage in the workshops. Students that participated in the workshops gained valuable and targeted technical skills that should help them place in competitive jobs.

We encourage next year’s officers to expand on these important strategies. Specifically, we encourage looking into providing digital badges or other credentials to verify participation. Also, similar to other organizations at MTSU and across the United States, future officers should consider developing an electronic resume book showcasing the high-quality resumes that were created in the workshops.

Thank you!
Community Service

The AIS Student Chapter officers sought to give back to the university, local, and regional communities that we cherish. Thus, our members were encouraged to give back by volunteering at two regional conferences and by supporting a local half marathon.

On September 13, 2019 MTSU’s chapter of AIS sent 13 volunteers to the Music City Center in downtown Nashville, TN to volunteer at Infosec Nashville. InfoSec Nashville is the leading security conference in the region. InfoSec Nashville brings technologists and security professionals together for a full day of speakers and networking opportunities. Our volunteers were able to support this event in various ways while also being able to benefit from the keynote speakers and breakout sessions. In particular, our volunteers helped scan people into the keynote speaker sessions in both the morning and afternoon, as well as work the registration desk.

Our student organization was also able to send volunteers to the Nashville Analytics Summit. Nashville Analytics Summit was created in 2013 by the Greater Nashville Technology Council. With 488% growth since inception, the Summit continues to expand as one of Nashville’s largest, locally grown tech events in the region. It focuses on fundamental issues in organizations today: how to effectively leverage big data and analytics. This two-day Summit alternates between hands-on workshops and speaker presentations, presented by experts from various industries and backgrounds. Our volunteers helped out in various ways across the two-day Summit. This summit is sponsored by the Nashville Technology Council (NTC), and one our president, Luis Lange, won the Nashville Technology Council’s 2020 Technology Student of the Year award on January 24, 2020.

Our student chapter was also proud to send six volunteers to the Middle Half Marathon on October 12, 2019. This event, held in Murfreesboro, TN is the largest race held in the same city as MTSU’s campus. Our volunteers helped with the manual backup timing system at the half marathon’s finish line.

While we did not participate in the AIS Student Chapter Ambassador Program, we encourage future officers to consider doing so. Furthermore, our officers should consider working with other MTSU student organizations as various synergies exist.
Fiscal Responsibility

While our new chapter was thrilled to receive starting capital and support from the Information Systems & Analytics academic department and the College of Business, we sought to break even. Our primary sources of revenue were fundraising through volunteer work at events and membership dues. Membership dues are currently $20 per student. While we did not break even this year, we will attempt to recoup losses stemming from non-refundable travel due to the Covid-19 pandemic as well as lanyard and T-shirt purchases that built an inventory to last at least one more year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starting Balance</td>
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<tr>
<td>IT Connect Fundraiser</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle Half Fundraiser</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jones College Support</td>
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<td>Membership Dues</td>
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<td><strong>Total Revenue</strong></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
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<td>AIS Chapter Fee</td>
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<td>General Meetings</td>
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<td>Member T-Shirts</td>
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<td>Member Lanyards</td>
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<td>AIS Conference Travel Reimbursements</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ending Balance</strong></td>
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Membership

In our inaugural year as an organization at MTSU and an AIS Student Chapter, we focused heavily on marketing and recruitment. We implemented multiple recruiting incentives to promote new membership and to foster member retainment. Our AIS Student Chapter opened the 2019–20 academic year up by holding an open social event during the first week of the fall semester. This event was a huge success as it provided an opportunity for all ISA majors to attend, play games, as well as socialize with other ISA majors, AIS Student Chapter officers, and Jones College of Business faculty. Our organization provided a plethora of incentives for member retainment and involvement. For instance, all new members received a shirt and lanyard promoting the AIS Student Chapter. This apparel helped create a shared identity among members who could identify each other through the with organization apparel.

Additionally, free food, including snacks and pizza, was offered at many events. Events which offered free food consistently drew larger crowds.

In the fall of 2019, our AIS Student Chapter offered multiple resume workshops and mock interviews to assist members in finding jobs and internships. As an organization, we took on the initiative of learning the basics of working with the AWS platform through weekly meetings. The AIS Student Chapter at MTSU intends to continue providing these opportunities to its members in order to promote personal and professional development. The chapter also offers networking opportunities both inside and outside of MTSU further promoting the professional skills of its members.
2019-2020 Meetings Held

MTSU Presidium* (president only)
Back-To-School Bash Social Event (approx. 30)
August Leadership Meeting (approx. 4)
September Leadership Meeting (approx. 4)
WiTT Panel Discussion (approx. 20)
Kirk Borne Presentation (approx. 50)
HackMT Hack-a-thon* (approx. 5)
MTSU Student Org Fair* (approx. 5)
IT Connect Career Fair* (approx. 50)
Cybersecurity Team (approx. 10)
Cybersecurity Team (approx. 10)
Cybersecurity Team (approx. 10)
DynamoDB AWS Team (approx. 5)
Cloud9 AWS Team (approx. 5)
CodeCommit AWS Team (approx. 5)
SageMaker AWS Team (approx. 5)
Amazon S3 AWS Team (approx. 5)
Amazon AIM AWS Team (approx. 5)
Amazon EC2 AWS Team (approx. 5)
Amazon Lightsail AWS Team (approx. 5)
Amazon Elastic Beanstalk AWS Team (approx. 5)
Amazon Lambda AWS Team (approx. 5)
Amazon Fargate AWS Team (approx. 5)
Resume Workshop hosted by Tractor Supply (approx. 10)
Resume Workshop hosted by Cigna (approx. 10)
Resume Workshop hosted by Brooksource (approx. 10)
Interview Workshop by Tractor Supply (approx. 5)
Interview Workshop by Brooksource (approx. 5)
Interview Workshop by Formos Consulting (approx. 5)
Middle Half* (6)
ISSA Annual Conference* (13)
NTC Analytics Summit* (approx. 5)
Analytics Challenge Team (approx. 5)
Analytics Challenge Team (approx. 5)
Software Challenge Team (approx. 5)
Software Challenge Team (approx. 5)
Officer Elections (approx. 20)
Officer Transition #1 (approx. 8)
Officer Transition #2 (approx. 8)
October Leadership Meeting (approx. 4)
January Leadership Meeting (approx. 4)
Virtual Resume Workshop (approx. 10)

* Denotes non-AIS Student Chapter meeting, however, the AIS Student Chapter had a significant presence at these events.
Communications

As a new AIS Student Chapter, we sought to actively engage our members using a variety of channels. While all major announcements and official communications were distributed via email, all members could also communicate more frequently using our dedicated Slack channel. Furthermore, we engaged members using the Discourse platform. This platform serves as our communications hub, by hosting member information and allowing for frequent polling and surveys. As with most organizations that faced disruptive change due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we held meetings during this unprecedented time using Zoom.
Advancing IS as a Profession

The Student Chapter’s primary method for engaging and advancing the IS profession was through active partnerships with Nashville’s premiere professional organizations.

Working with Women in Technology of Tennessee (WiTT) we encourage mentorship opportunities and co-hosted a career panel discussion.

We engaged with the Information Systems Security Association | Middle Tennessee Chapter through volunteering at the Nashville Infosec annual conference.

We engage with the NTC by volunteering and participating in the Nashville Analytics Summit. Furthermore, Luis Lange was named NTC’s Technology Student of the Year.
Chapter Operations

With a new student chapter come new challenges, and on the bright side, a white canvas to showcase our creativity. From the start, our new student chapter decided to place technology at the forefront of our operations, from member applications, handling finances, recruitment, member management, communications, and process management.

The first technical goal was to automate membership application and management process. Thus, when a student wants to join, they can learn more about our organization through a modern online presence. Subsequently, interested students can visit a link or QR code which will initiate a multi-step information-gathering process including an electronic payment gateway to collect dues. The outcome of this process has allowed us to maintain accurate and up-to-date records, membership roster, reports, and an instant source of information regarding the growth of the chapter.

We also heavily relied on technology to manage our communications. For instance, apart from having a presence on Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook, the chapter decided to develop an official website (available at mtsuais.com). On this website, we cover topics including general news and announcement for related events, members information, employment opportunities, technology news, tips and tricks, and a section devoted to our subgroups formed in the areas of cybersecurity and cloud technology, specifically AWS. Furthermore, any activity happening inside this exclusive area for members is also transmitted automatically to the Slack channel, our main chat platform.

For day-to-day operations, our chapter opted for frequent informal meetings that occurred ad hoc. This is because the nature of the day-to-day activities for all of the board members allowed for frequent in-person interaction. This created a dynamic flow of information between leaders, our faculty advisor, and collaborative daily duties. This strategy worked well considering the amount of time spent in shared common spaces in the Jones College of Business.

Our officers became better leaders through MTSU programs. For instance, every MTSU student organization president or vice president must participate in the annual Presidium retreat. This program is a prime opportunity for all student organization presidents and leaders, to connect, learn, and improve leadership and organizational skills to more effectively lead their respective society.

Additionally, to transition between elected officers, every current officer is paired with a future elected officer for the transitional period. During this period, organizational knowledge and resources are passed to future leaders helping to ensure continuation and success of our chapter’s objectives. Future officers are also encouraged to reach out to other AIS Student Chapter officers through the AIS Ambassador program.
Membership Roster

Leadership

Luis Lange  
President

Robert Mepham  
Interim Vice President

Erik Manger  
Treasurer

Dennis Yarizadeh  
Secretary

Michael Erskine  
Faculty Advisor

Active Members

Kamal Adhikari  
Kesharra Ambrose  
Surafel Asemerie  
Berhane Ashenafi  
Vanessa Ashford  
Tanya Bak  
Kurtis (Lyle) Baker  
Kevin Barrett  
Kevin Bradley  
Charlotte Braswell  
Zachary Carr  
Ian Carson  
Cameron (Billy) Chapman  
Ronaldo Cruz de la Cruz  
Bradley Cunningham  
David Darden  
Jason Davidson  
Fatemeh Ebrahim  
Bishouhia Fahim  
Jacob Farmer  
Taylor Flagg  
Jarod Gates  
Peggy Gjeci  
Brianna Halley  
Shaun Hardy  
Aaron Harris  
Rachel Holmes  
Shiteya Jackson  
Darren Johnson  
Jacob Jones  
Keerthi Kalidindi  
Stephen Keesee  
Elizabeth Kinser  
Leonard Kiprono  
Ebenezer Lamptey  
Stephen Landon  
Luis Lange  
Mitchell Lawrence  
Dianesha Majors  
Erik Manger  
Nicholas Matala  
Andrew Matthews  
Samuel Meagher  
Robert Mepham  
Joshua Mitchell  
Hayat Mohamed  
Patrick Nance  
Sesan Ojelade  
Dravidi Pasha  
Dhruvi Patel  
Charmi Patel  
Trynia Pillow  
Thomas (Logan) Roberts  
Yuliia Romanchuk  
John Santana  
Cayson Seipel  
Sumayyanaz Ahmed  
Caleb Sissom  
Adrian Sosa  
Alex Sonuthneovichit  
Cory Stephenson  
Cheryl Summers  
Chun-I (Joyce) Tang  
Leland Jordan Tate  
Craig Thomas  
Jordan Tran  
Yiting (Judy) Tsai  
Grant Vis  
Henry Walker  
Katelyn Wallls  
Arniyah Williams  
Taylor Woodard  
Dennis Yarizadeh

Incoming Officers (elected February 2020):

Hirani Thyagaraja  
President  
ht3j@mtmail.mtsu.edu

Darren Johnson  
Vice President  
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Robert Mepham  
Vice President of Outreach  
rgm3a@mtmail.mtsu.edu

Dravidi Pasha  
Treasurer  
dqp2a@mtmail.mtsu.edu

Yuliia Romanchuk  
Secretary  
yr2n@mtmail.mtsu.edu

Michael Erskine, Ph.D.  
Faculty Advisor  
michael.Erskine@mtsu.edu