The Martin Chair of Insurance oversees the largest collegiate insurance program in Tennessee, which has turned out more than 500 graduates and boasts one of the largest scholarship programs and one of the most viable internship programs in the country.
The insurance industry in Tennessee has been very generous in providing scholarships to insurance students at MTSU.

Instruction

Dr. Kenneth W. Hollman holds the Martin Chair of Insurance, through which the program is administered. He came to MTSU in January 1982 as the first endowed professor at MTSU. He holds the CLU (Chartered Life Underwriter), ChFC (Chartered Financial Consultant), CIC (Certified Insurance Counselor), CEBS (Certified Employee Benefit Specialist), and CPCU (Chartered Property and Casualty Underwriter) designations.

Dr. Emily Norman Zietz also teaches insurance and risk management courses. She holds the CPCU designation. Porter Nelms, J.D., teaches insurance courses on an adjunct basis most semesters.

MTSU places priority on excellence in teaching at the undergraduate level. In that light, the primary objective of the insurance program is to provide quality instruction for students who wish to achieve an understanding of the theory of insurance and the various policies and financial instruments used in the field. The chair strives to provide training for those students who wish to sit for the qualification examinations for agents’ and brokers’ licenses as well as the professional designations such as CLU, ChFC, and CPCU. Many Jennings A. Jones College of Business students in other majors and students from other colleges take insurance courses to gain an understanding of the important issues in this area as well as to explore the employment opportunities therein.

Students who complete the required 132 hours (soon to be 120 hours) receive a B.B.A. degree in finance with a concentration in insurance. The carefully constructed insurance curriculum provides credit through 10 courses, including an internship course and a problems course. Students desiring a concentration in insurance take five of the courses and enjoy considerable latitude in course selection depending on their career interests. Students with a minor in insurance select four insurance courses plus two other required courses.

The insurance program enjoyed a record enrollment in spring 2003. Five insurance courses were offered: General Insurance (two sections), Insurance in Estate Planning, Risk Management (two sections), Insurance Law, and Employee Benefits. One hundred forty-five students from across campus were enrolled in these courses (including internship enrollees). More than 300 students were enrolled in insurance classes in 2002-03.

An encouraging number of students have chosen the insurance concentration or a minor in the field. The total in early spring 2003 stood at about 115 students. Although more and more students are taking advantage of these options, class sizes remain small enough for insurance instructors to give individual attention to students and for the students to form strong bonds with the majority of their classmates.

Student Support

A major objective of the Chair of Insurance is to provide a scholarship to every deserving insurance student. To date, we have realized that goal. Fifty-two majors or minors in insurance at MTSU earned scholarships of $500-$750 each in 2002-03. This makes the MTSU insurance program either the largest or among the largest providers of scholarships among all insurance programs in the country. Students are selected for scholarships on the basis of

continued on page 12
The internship program provides students with additional marketability by increasing the amount and variety of their work experience and, at the same time, enables them to receive three hours of college credit.

Internships

Internships give students an opportunity to practice classroom learning in the workplace while still in school. Internships have proven to be an excellent vehicle to expose students to the real-life insurance world and have become an important feature of the insurance program at MTSU. Both the students and their employers appreciate its value. The internship program provides students with additional marketability by increasing the amount and variety of their work experience and, at the same time, enables them to receive three hours of college credit. It also provides an opportunity for the sponsoring company to evaluate potential employees at little cost and with no commitment to future employment.

Three hundred twenty-five students have finished internships (including 23 in 2002) with agents, carriers, or educational/trade associations. Most of these on-the-job experiences were with firms in Tennessee but a few were out of state. The interns usually work in sales, research, underwriting, or claims-adjusting jobs with insurance companies or agencies.

Interns are required to pass an agent’s licensing examination or an accepted alternative examination wherever they work. It is gratifying that many have later accepted full-time positions with their intern sponsors. The internship has proven to be an excellent mechanism to facilitate transition to a career position upon graduation.

Insurance Fraternity

An important instruction-related goal of the chair is to make the insurance industry aware of our program and the students who complete it. To achieve this goal, a local chapter of the national scholastic insurance fraternity, Gamma Iota Sigma (GIS), was created on the MTSU campus in 1983-84. The chapter was created to help facilitate communication between college membership and industry leaders. The fraternity fosters the early professional development of future insurance employees and assists their transition to responsible industry positions upon graduation. Currently, 60 students at MTSU are members of GIS.

The local chapter has been very active from its inception. In competition with students from 40 other chapters, MTSU students have won the Warren L. Weeks award as the “Most Outstanding GIS Student” in the country for five different years. The chapter itself was voted “Most Outstanding GIS Chapter” in the country in two different years. It has won 48 awards altogether since 1984.

Licensing and Credentialing

Students enrolled in insurance courses at MTSU may receive pre-licensing or continuing education credit as well as direct credit for selected professional designations. Each offers cost advantages to the student.

Students enrolled in the General Insurance course fulfill the education requirements to sit for either the Life-Health or Property-Casualty licensing examinations in Tennessee. Students taking the Life Insurance and Health Insurance, Property and Casualty Insurance, Insurance in Estate Planning, Insurance Company Operations, or Insurance Law courses receive 25 hours of continuing education credit. Many students pass licensing exams as juniors and then receive continuing education credit to update their licenses prior to graduation.

Students in the insurance program also have the opportunity to receive credit for specified courses at the American College in Bryn Mawr, Penn., for the CLU and ChFC designations. Students who pass the Life-Health course can receive direct credit from the American College for HS 323 (Individual Life Insurance); those who pass the Estate Planning course can get direct credit for American College HS 330 (Estate Planning). Matriculation fees are very low for students who decide to participate in the program. About 20-25 students per year avail themselves of the opportunity to receive CLU or ChFC credit.

Insurance Liaison Committee

An Insurance Liaison Committee (ILC) was created in 1983-84 with the overall purpose of promoting interest in and offering professional guidance to the Chair of Insurance. The 25-person committee, which meets quarterly in Murfreesboro, has proven to be very helpful to the chair.

The primary duty of the ILC is to provide
input, feedback, and advice to the chairholder on methods of financing the program and to facilitate interrelationships between the chair and the industry. Committee members have been invaluable sources for contacts with agents and companies who wish to provide financial support. The ILC has been particularly supportive of and active in the highly successful Chair of Insurance Golf Tournament, which has generated $325,000 for scholarships and other purposes over the past 19 years. In addition, the committee has provided valuable program and academic content information to insurance instructors and served as a source for summer internships. It has reviewed guidelines for the chair and served as an intermediary between the chair and the industry in other ways.

Input from the ILC is considered vital to the long-term growth and development of the Chair of Insurance. The chair receives very few donations without the involvement of an ILC member.

Funding

One reason for the growth of the insurance program at MTSU is the positive attitude toward education and dedicated support of the insurance industry in Tennessee. Individuals, agencies, and carriers help underwrite the program through support for scholarships, student and faculty travel, and other student services. Their donations are making a permanent contribution to the welfare of the insurance industry in Tennessee and enhancing the value of an insurance degree from MTSU.

The original money to endow the chair was raised from local contributors, and the state’s insurance community continues to provide financial support in numerous ways. The total endowment of the Chair of Insurance currently stands at $1,120,000, considerably more than the $500,000 goal originally set in 1982 by the (then) president of MTSU. About $360,000 of the total endowment is in endowed scholarship accounts.

The endowment has grown significantly over the past 20 years, partially due to the industry-sponsored golf tournament held each year in April. Interest from the corpus of the endowment is used to support the insurance program in various ways. More is used for student financial assistance than for any other purpose. Lesser amounts are used to supplement the chairholder’s salary, pay a part-time secretary’s salary, and provide money for the insurance instructors to travel to conferences and meetings.

Insurance Hall of Fame

The Chair of Insurance has nurtured relationships with the insurance industry in other ways. With heavy involvement from and under the aegis of the Martin Chair of Insurance, the Robert E. Musto Tennessee Insurance Hall of Fame was officially created at MTSU in 1999-2000. Funded by a generous gift from a single donor and smaller contributions from others, the Insurance Hall of Fame is the ideal platform from which to honor those professionals who have made outstanding contributions to the insurance industry in Tennessee.

A 12-person selection committee that meets biannually in Murfreesboro or Nashville selects those insurance professionals who are enshrined annually in the Musto Insurance Hall of Fame. The committee is chosen to reflect all facets of the insurance industry and the major geographic regions of the state.

Seventeen insurance professionals have been inducted into the Musto Insurance Hall of Fame to date. The first five were installed in ceremonies held in Murfreesboro in August 1999, and four have been inducted in each subsequent year. A bronze profile of each inductee is posted on a 36-by-72-inch memorial plaque located in the south first floor lobby of the Business and Aerospace Building at MTSU. The handsome display helps focus favorable attention on the institution of insurance and its most outstanding practitioners in our state.

Future

The future for MTSU’s insurance program is bright as we look forward with great anticipation to the opportunities and challenges that await us. Enrollment is strong, communication with the industry is cordial, the curriculum is firmly established, and relations with the University community are excellent. Our alumni are performing meritoriously and bringing credit to the program. To maintain our margin of excellence, we must continue our quest for nonpublic and nonstate dollars. As the endowment grows, more emphasis can be placed on strengthening the quality of instruction, which will help students to more fully realize their potentials. An enhanced endowment will also enable insurance instructors to discover new knowledge and improve the level and quality of services they render to Tennessee’s insurance industry.

Anyone interested in more information about the insurance program at MTSU may contact Dr. Kenneth W. Hollman, Martin Chair of Insurance, MTSU, P.O. Box 165, Murfreesboro, TN 37132. The telephone number is (615) 898-2673.

Kenneth W. Hollman holds the Martin Chair of Insurance.