

# addenda



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## 345 grads take part in Fall 2023 commencement

UT Martin held two Fall 2023 commencement ceremonies on Saturday, Dec. 9, at the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center with 345 graduates taking part.

Among the graduates were three University Scholars, 42 summa cum laude graduates, 65 magna cum laude graduates and 64 cum laude graduates.

“Everyone graduating today has faced unique challenges and disruptions to their daily lives,” said Chancellor **Yancy Freeman** in the opening address in his first UTM commencement as chancellor. “And yet, they persisted and made it through those trying times to reach this day and this moment.

“...I want to share with you a quote from one of my favorite actors, Denzel Washington. He said, ‘Dreams without goals are just dreams, and they ultimately fuel disappointment. In order to achieve your goals, you must apply discipline but, more importantly, consistency.’”

Freeman said there were graduates from 50 Tennessee counties, 25 other states and the nations of Canada and France.

**Kim Seymour**, a 1992 UT Martin graduate and the chief human resources officer for



**Chancellor Yancy Freeman gives a diploma to a Fall 2023 graduate during his first commencement ceremony as chancellor on Dec. 9. Some 345 graduates took part in both commencement ceremonies held in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center.**

Etsy.com, delivered the commencement addresses.

Seymour said traditional commencement

addresses inspire students to live their dreams and to conquer the impossible, but she told graduates that they may have to go through real life before reaching for their stars.

“Live your best life,” she said. “Be who you are; do you – but maybe not right now. Right now – I’m kind of the pragmatic sort, so I’m focusing on that job that you’re trying to get or that next degree that you’re trying to get.

“I believe in understanding the world that you are about to go in, so if you will forgive me, I’m not going to so much talk about living your best life right now.”

Seymour said she was not interested in winning any oratory awards, but in helping the graduates be successful on the road they are about to embark upon.

“What do I wish someone had told me when I was sitting where you are?” she said.



**UTM alumna Kim Seymour gave the commencement address in the Saturday ceremonies. Seymour is the chief human resources officer for Etsy.com.**

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# Cap & gown grabs: Photos from commencement



Graduating senior Caroline Oldfather sang "Laudamus te" (Mozart's Mass in C Minor) and the UT Martin alma mater at the commencement ceremonies, accompanied by Dr. Elaine Harriss on the piano.

Graduates applaud after several UTM students were recognized for academic achievement. There were a combined 345 graduates walking the line at the two commencement ceremonies on Saturday.



Graduates smiled and waved at family members and friends during the two commencement ceremonies in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on Saturday. Fall 2023 graduates came from 50 different Tennessee counties, 25 other states and the nations of Canada and France.

## UT Martin Skyhawks Home Events through Jan. 7

Wednesday, Dec. 13

Women's basketball vs.

Freed-Hardeman, 11 a.m.,  
Kathleen and Tom Elam  
Center

Saturday, Dec. 16

Women's basketball vs.

South Dakota, 1 p.m.,  
Kathleen and Tom Elam  
Center

Wednesday, Dec. 20

Men's basketball vs.

William Woods, 2 p.m.,  
Kathleen and Tom Elam  
Center

Thursday, Jan. 4

Women's basketball vs.

Eastern Illinois, 5:30  
p.m., Kathleen and Tom  
Elam Center

Men's basketball vs.

Eastern Illinois, 7:30  
p.m., Kathleen and Tom  
Elam Center

Full athletics schedules can  
be found at [utmsports.com](http://utmsports.com).



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or question to  
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### GRADUATION from PAGE 1

"...First, no one told me that the purpose of these four years – or however long it took you to get here; I'm not judging – was not a (grade-point average).

"Beyond the first job you get or the graduate schools you apply to, no one, for the rest of your life, is going to ask you what your GPA is. Some of you are really happy to hear that. GPA is a measure; it is an outcome. It is what happened along the way and what you learned along the way and what you demonstrated along the way that is valuable to someone like me trying to optimize talent for the goals of the company."

Seymour said one of the goals of college is learning how to think critically. She said she hoped that, at some point, the graduates had come across subject matter or philosophies or people that did not make sense to them.

"(I hope you found something) that was counter to your established world view and that you were curious enough and open-minded enough to explore and pursue knowledge and form your own ideas and challenge effectively when warranted." she said.

"I wish that I knew that I needed to be solution-oriented. I'm really good at telling you what the problem is I'll bet that you are, too, but you've got to have a formed opinion on a solution and be able to construct a good case, articulate it well, influence people around to your point of view and, at the end of the day, execute because

everyone has an opinion. What are you going to do with that opinion?"

Seymour added that she wished she knew that working life was not about going into her cubicle and putting her head down.

"I grew up believing in meritocracy, and to a certain extent, I still do," she said. "I know that it's not just that. It's not just working hard solo. It's not just getting it done individually. That will only get you so far.

"What I know now is you have to know how to work with and through other people. If you were ever in Student Government or a fraternity or sorority or worked on a group project, you've witnessed the good and the bad side of setting a goal, getting folks to agree what the goal is, figure out what the path forward is, holding people accountable to deliverables with no excuses, inspiring the laggards."

Seymour said those are "the unmotivated, uninspired, the uninformed, the unreliable, the ones who were supposed to do something on time."

"You remember those people," she said. "You know those people. Just make sure that you aren't those people."

Seymour encouraged the graduates to work with others at all levels "because those people are who you learn from."

"Those people will clear an obstacle for you, who will give you a piece of information that perhaps you did not have," she said. "They influence your

brand, which impacts your opportunities, which impacts your money, if that is what drives you.

"There are also the people that you can do the same for. On that point, don't be afraid to lift other people up as you go. Success isn't like pie, where the more someone else gets, the less you get. Cheer for others; celebrate others. You will benefit."

University of Tennessee System President Randy Boyd greeted the graduates on behalf of the UT System.

"At the University of Tennessee – across all of our campuses from Mountain City to Memphis – we believe in the power of education to transform lives," he said. "You are a testament to that belief. Each of you has shown resilience, dedication and an unyielding pursuit of excellence.

"You have not only gained knowledge, but also wisdom to apply it, the courage to challenge it and the vision to extend it to communities and industries across Tennessee and the world."

Student Government Association President **Faith Pilkington**, who is scheduled to graduate in May, also greeted the graduates on behalf of the student body.

**Caroline Oldfather**, who was among the Fall 2023 graduates with a bachelor of music degree, sang Mozart's Mass in C Minor, "Laudamus te," and the UT Martin alma mater accompanied by **Dr. Elaine Harriss** on the piano.

## You Tell Me

• **Question** – Where can I find UT Martin social media?

• **Answer** – UT Martin has social media platforms on Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram and TikTok. UT Martin has more than 65,000 followers on those social media platforms with almost 22 million impressions in the 2023 calendar year. (An impression is the number of times the content was displayed to users.)

Submit your questions to Addenda at [addenda@utm.edu](mailto:addenda@utm.edu).

## More scenes from commencement



Chancellor Yancy Freeman gives opening remarks at the morning commencement ceremony on Saturday. He quoted actor Denzel Washington from a commencement address he gave to Dillard College in 2015: “Dreams without goals are just dreams, and they ultimately fuel disappointment.”

Applauding students recognized for achievement are (front row, from left) Chancellor Yancy Freeman, UT System President Randy Boyd, commencement speaker Kim Seymour, (back row, from left) Interim Vice Chancellor for University Achievement Jeanna Curtis-Swofford, Dean of the College of Business and Global Affairs Ahmad Tootoonchi and Dean of the Paul Meek Library Erik Nordberg.



Having family and friends in attendance is a great part of a commencement ceremony. On Dec. 9, UT Martin graduates took the next step in developing a career or advancing their academic experience.

### addenda

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