

addenda

The University of Tennessee at Martin Faculty and Staff Newsletter | June 16, 2025

Council honored with Congressional certificate



U.S. Rep. David Kustoff (R-Tenn. 8th District) spoke May 23 during the university's annual Memorial Day Commemoration ceremony. While the congressman's visit was announced as part of the commemoration program, Kustoff made a surprise stop to Crisp Hall following the event for a presentation to Ted Council, UTM environmental health and safety officer. Kustoff presented Council with a Certificate of Congressional Recognition for his 56 years of service to the university. Friends and colleagues joined Kustoff and Council for the special recognition. The Obion County native came to UT Martin in 1968 as a lieutenant and supervisor of university security officers, was promoted to assistant director of security in 1970, and was named department director in 1976. Council retired from the university in 1999 and has worked part-time in environmental health and safety since then.

Captain Skyhawk appears at Kid College

Captain Skyhawk, the greatest fan of all things UT Martin, paid a visit to Kid College on June 6 at the Boling University Center. Kid College is for students rising to the third grade through those going into fifth grade. Students choose from a wide variety of classes for each hour. Kid College is a program provided through the Office of University Outreach, which is preparing to host the Skyhawk Discovery Camp, held June 23-27, and the Minecraft Camp, held June 30-July 3. Athletics camps are also going on this summer. For more information about Office of University Outreach programs, visit www.utm.edu/outreach or email nondegree@utm.edu.



YoUTMs

highlighting the excellence of our faculty and staff

Three named to June Skyhawk Spirit Award

Three UT Martin employees – **Marisa Burton**, **Teresa Martin** and **Beth McAlister** – were recipients of the Skyhawk Spirit Awards for the month of June.

Each of the award winners will receive a commemorative plaque and a \$50 cash prize.

Burton, a member of the custodial staff with the Physical Plant, was nominated for the award for her efforts in recovering a \$500 donation to a non-university organization that was intended to go to an award winner that had been inadvertently thrown away at an event held on campus.

According to Burton's letter of nomination, leaders of the organization were in a panic when they returned to the office and discovered that the donation was accidentally discarded after the event.

They returned to campus, and the Office of Student Life staff connected them with Burton.

Burton found that all of the trash from the event was taken to outside dumpsters. She put on gloves and began searching through the dumpsters for the



Burton

missing check.

"Throughout this challenging task, she maintained her kindness and professionalism," stated her letter of nomination. "She even showed concern for others getting their clothes dirty while she herself was doing the heavy lifting."

The envelope holding the check was found and was delivered to the award winner.

Martin and McAlister, both members of the custodial staff with the Physical Plant, were nominated together for their work and extra effort to bolster students' spirits.

"First, these two women do an excellent job keeping the building clean," stated the letter



Martin

of nomination. "But the real reason for the Spirit Award is what these women have done over 18-plus months for the geoscience students who are often in (the Joseph E. Johnson Engineering and Physical Sciences Building) during the fall and spring semesters until late at night.

"These women have brought them snacks and drinks; they leave them encouraging notes; they decorate and help them celebrate birthdays and graduation. They have become almost like surrogate mothers or older sisters to not one, not two, but multiple students."

The Skyhawk Spirit Award and Skyhawk Innovation Award



McAlister

were begun in February 2024 as a means of recognizing employee contributions that exceed expectations. The Innovation Spirit Award seeks to recognize employees who achieve beyond the status quo who implement an idea, initiative, process or system that improves efficiencies or outcomes.

All regular full-time faculty and staff up to the level of director are eligible for these awards.

Nominations for these awards should be sent by the first Friday of the month to skyhawkspiritaward@utm.edu.

Nominations for the month of July are due by Friday, July 4.

Conrad Pegues, assistant professor and public services librarian, has a book chapter titled "Libraries of Cosmic Proportions in the Marvel Universe," included in *Drawn to the Stacks Essays on Libraries, Librarians and Archives in Comics and Graphic Novels*.

The collection of edited essays, published by McFarland & Company, is the first academic volume to examine the library and archival professional



Pegues

through the lens of graphic publications.

***Promote a faculty
or staff member by
sending a YoUTM to
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UTM creates SAIL program through state grant

UT Martin is one of five recipients of a Tennessee Believes grant, as announced April 9 by the Tennessee Department of Disability and Aging. That grant funding will go toward starting a new program for students with intellectual disabilities.

UT Martin will receive \$126,252 this year and a total of \$387,751 over three years.

The university will use the grant to create the Skyhawks Achieving In Life (SAIL) program to provide students with intellectual disabilities access to the college experience.

The SAIL program will be directed by **Dr. Clinton Smith**, chair of the UTM Department of Educational Studies, and **Dr. Will Gibson**, the manager of UTM's disability and testing services, until a full-time director begins this August.

Smith said the program would affect participating students in four ways:

- Provide access to higher education, where those pathways were previously inaccessible. The SAIL program will combine academic, vocational and social learning.
- Bolster improved life outcomes. Research has shown that students in similar postsecondary programs have higher rates of employment, independent living and self-determination.
- Develop social integration and a sense of belonging through participation in campus life, such as clubs, classes and events, building their social-emotional growth, confidence and support networks.

- Aid in the transition to independence by emphasizing daily living skills, self-advocacy and decision-making.

"Inclusive higher education programs foster an environment that goes beyond mere representation of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) on college and university campuses," Smith said. "These programs help to remove barriers and provide students with IDD an opportunity to achieve their desired outcomes in a manner similar to students without disabilities."

The SAIL program is scheduled to begin Aug. 1, 2026, with applications opening this November for the 2026-27 school year.

Alisha Melton, executive director of the Office of Research, Outreach and Economic Development, said participating students would qualify for internships and Work-Study opportunities.

"What's exciting about this program is that it will bring in individuals who might never otherwise have the opportunity to experience life on a college campus," she said. "They will be able to work with other college students; they're going to be involved in student organizations and clubs. They will be able to interact in a way they've never done before."

UT Martin will enhance its mission and visibility through the SAIL program. The program will also contribute to diversifying the university's student body.



The university may also attract partnerships with school districts, vocational rehabilitation services, nonprofit organizations and employers through the SAIL program. UTM faculty may receive training in inclusive teaching and universal design for learning, improving educational practice campus-wide.

The SAIL program can also improve the strong ties the university has with the community by helping prepare students with intellectual disabilities to live and work in their hometowns, which supports rural workforce sustainability.

The Tennessee Department of Disability and Aging officially launched the Tennessee Believes program in 2021, intending to increase opportunities for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities at colleges and universities across the state.

Since its inception, the Tennessee Believes grant has provided nine Tennessee colleges and universities with over \$2 million in funding. Based on 2024 reports, 164 students benefited from Tennessee Believes-supported programs.



Smith



Gibson



Melton

Submit a YoUTM or question to addenda@utm.edu!



Shown taking part in the Tennessee Rural Nurse Scholars program are (front row, l-r) Madeline Young, UT Martin, Gates; Sophia Iacobelli, UT Southern, Campbellsville; Kaylee Knight, UT Southern, Fayetteville; Emmalee Bruner, UT Martin, Troy; (middle row, l-r) Dr. Mary Radford, chair, UT Martin Department of Nursing; Keidra Gardner, UT Southern, Goodspring; Dr. Randi Tuten, assistant professor of nursing, UT Southern; (back row, l-r) Dr. Wendy Likes, dean, UT Health Science Center College of Nursing; Ansley Pfeffer, UT Martin, Ashland City; Natalie Taylor, UT Martin, Huntingdon; and Emily Watson, UT Southern, Cornersville.

Three UT-based nursing programs work together

The UT Health Science Center College of Nursing and the nursing programs at UT Martin and UT Southern are working to increase access to health care and expand the nursing workforce in rural West Tennessee.

A \$300,000, 17-month grant from the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development will fund the Tennessee Rural Nurse Scholars program for eight nursing students: four at UT Martin and four at UT Southern. The students will receive financial support in their final year of nursing school, a paid student nurse internship experience, and additional training through an online rural health medallion program.

A \$500,000 UT Grand Challenge Grant will launch three One UT-branded rural health units to provide outreach, education and training to the community and the health care workforce. One unit will be sent from each of the campuses: UT Martin, UT Southern, and UT Health Science Center. Strengthening rural communities is one of the three Grand Challenges – complex, interconnected, large-scale problems that create uncertain futures.

The Tennessee Rural Nurse Scholars program was modeled on a \$1.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor that supports nursing graduates in their transition to work in rural or underserved hospitals.



Radford

Students from this program, called the Delta Nurse Scholars Program, joined the students from UT Martin and UT Southern for the day of rural health care learning.

Dr. Mary Radford, chair of the UTM Department of Nursing, and UT Southern assistant professor Randi Tuten

are the lead instructors for the program.

UT Martin student Emmalee Bruner of Union City said she appreciates the rural emphasis of the program because she has seen first-hand the problems of health care access in rural areas. Bruner is committed to rural nursing. “I was born at Baptist in Union City, and I hope to work there when I graduate,” she said. Dr. Radford said the daylong program gave her students “an appreciation of all of the activities going on in the health science center to prepare them as rural nurses to go out and help rural Tennesseans. Nursing is so special. We can teach; we can treat; we can help in so many ways.”

Dr. Stephanie Kolitsch, associate provost and director of SACSCOC at UT Martin, was named the transitional provost and senior vice chancellor for academic affairs by Chancellor Yancy Freeman, effective June 14. She assumes the role as Dr. Philip Cavalier leaves the provost position to become the president of Kutztown University in Pennsylvania. Kolitsch held the interim provost position in 2023 when Cavalier was named interim chancellor during the search for a full-time chancellor. The nationwide search for a provost will begin July 1.



Kolitsch named to transitional administrative position

Dr. Stephanie Kolitsch has been named the transitional provost and senior vice chancellor for academic affairs, effective June 14.

The announcement was made in a university-wide email by **Chancellor Yancy Freeman**.

Kolitsch, the university's associate provost and director of Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges accreditation, held the interim provost position during the UT Martin chancellor search in 2023.

She will assume the temporary post again as **Dr. Philip Cavalier** leaves the provost position this month to become the new president of Kutztown University in Kutztown, Pennsylvania.

The nationwide search for a new provost

will begin July 1 when the position is officially posted.

"Faculty and staff consistently recognize her for clear communication, structured problem-solving that considers both policy and human impact, and a student-centered approach to decision-making," Freeman said in his university message. "Her previous interim service earned widespread campus support, reflecting her collaborative and equitable leadership style."

Kolitsch came to UT Martin in 1994 after earning a bachelor's degree at East Texas State University (now East Texas A&M University) and a doctorate at the University of Texas.

A mathematics and statistics faculty member who holds the rank of professor, Kolitsch said she is honored to serve in

the position and will build on the progress made under Cavalier's leadership.

"Dr. Cavalier is leaving a legacy of growth that includes new programs, increased enrollment and retention, and better overall experiences for our students," she said. "I am looking forward to continuing the work he started and finding new ways to support our students and the institution."

In her administrative role, Kolitsch led the university's successful reaffirmation of accreditation process in 2023 with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

Kolitsch also led the development of the university's Quality Enhancement Plan, which is part of the SACSCOC review process, and the Foundations of Excellence self-study.

You Tell Me

• **Question** – The university purchased the former fraternity house at the corner of Lee and Jeffress streets. What are the plans for the vacant house?

• **Answer** – A designer has been selected to plan for the structure's demolition, which is required for state building projects. The red door and some brick will be preserved for fraternity members to have; otherwise, all else will come down, and the space will be used to build a new parking lot. The project is funded, but there's no timetable yet for completion.

Submit your questions to Addenda at addenda@utm.edu.

Ribbon-cutting opens Guy Robbins Hosta Garden



Family members and friends gathered June 11 to officially name the Guy Robbins Hosta Garden at Discovery Park of America in Union City. The new plant feature, named for longtime UT Martin horticulturist Guy Robbins, is located within DPA's larger American Garden near the park's familiar chapel. Pictured are (l-r) Stacey Hicks, Guy Robbins' daughter; Shelley and Scott Robbins, Guy Robbins' son; Guy Robbins; John Watkins, DPA director of grounds; and Marti Nonemaker, Guy Robbins' daughter. Tessa Ann Maloney, granddaughter of Scott Robbins, is pictured lower left. Robbins is a 1958 UT Martin Branch graduate with a degree with agriculture. He retired in 1995 after 25 years as UT Martin horticulturist.

Governor's School students set off 'trashcano'



Students taking part in the Governor's School for the Agricultural Sciences react as the "trashcano" erupts June 16, spewing water, balls, plastic Easter eggs and balloons into the UT Martin air. Originally developed at Colgate University, the "trashcano" is a safe way to demonstrate an explosive volcanic eruption and to simulate ejecta. It was part of a series of interactive geoscience presentations. Students noted how ball size and material density impacted the ejecta distribution. Other students noted the asymmetric distribution produced by the wind on the ejecta. No trash cans were harmed in the "trashcano" demonstration.

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