

addenda

The University of Tennessee at Martin Faculty and Staff Newsletter | June 30, 2025

Cavalier bids UTM farewell



Dr. Philip Cavalier (left), former provost and senior vice chancellor for academic affairs, speaks to those in attendance at his farewell reception held June 11 at the Dunagan Alumni Center. He holds cards given to him by Chancellor Yancy Freeman, sharing a laugh during a lighthearted moment. Cavalier will be the next president of Kutztown University in Pennsylvania, effective July 6. Dr. Stephanie Kolitsch is the transitional provost and senior vice president for academic affairs. The nationwide search for a new provost will begin July 1 when the position is officially posted.

WestStar Leadership Program marks 1,000th graduate

The UT Martin WestStar Leadership Program held its graduation reception and ceremony June 17 at the Jackson Country Club in Jackson.

A class of 34 aspiring leaders participated in the program this year.

WestStar was established in 1989 and now has 1,009 program graduates with the addition of the newest class. Legon Roberson was recognized as the 1,000th graduate.

Jake Bynum, UT Martin chief of staff and WestStar executive director, emceed the graduation, welcomed the class and guests and introduced **Chancellor Yancy Freeman**, who added his own welcome and

congratulations for completing WestStar.

Freeman asked the class to do two things as WestStar graduates.

“Go back to your communities and get more involved than you were,” Freeman said. “Second, make sure that you send us more people (to participate in WestStar).”

The Hon. Judge Mark Norris, U.S. District Court for the Western District of Tennessee and a 1999 WestStar graduate, was the evening’s featured speaker.

Norris, a former Republican state senator who represented Tennessee District 32 from 2001 to 2018, reminded class members that “your leadership at the end of the day depends on your ‘followship.’”

In addition to recognizing graduates, Bynum announced several awards, including the C.P. Boyd Leadership Award. The award is presented to a class member who demonstrates the compassion, leadership and love for West Tennessee exemplified by the late Haywood County educator for whom the award is named.

Madison Endres of Carroll County was voted by her classmates to receive the award.

Also, the 27th Jimmy Daniel Make-A-Difference WestStar Leadership Alumni Award was presented to Melinda Goode of Dresden, a 2009 WestStar graduate and executive director of the Northwest

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YoUTMs

highlighting the excellence of our faculty and staff

Dr. Changrui “Charlie” Liu, assistant professor of statistics, presented a poster at the Southern Regional Council On Statistics at its conference June 9-11 at Jekyll Island, Georgia.

According to the abstract, In the context of linear regression, we compare several subsampling algorithms in terms of their actual, rather than theoretical, computational time, while also considering their statistical effectiveness. Our goal is to assess

whether relatively sophisticated leverage-based methods provide as much information as random subsampling, when accounting for the time it takes to both select and analyze the subsample. For the set of simulation scenarios specified in which only linear associations are considered, we find that analyzing a small fraction of the data using leverage-based methods takes at least as long compared to analyzing the entire dataset.



Dr. Changrui “Charlie” Liu is shown at the SRCOS conference held June 9-11 at Jekyll Island, Georgia.

Goode earns WestStar alumni award



Melinda Goode of Dresden, a 2009 WestStar graduate and executive director of the Northwest Tennessee Development District, received the 27th Jimmy Daniel Make-A-Difference WestStar Leadership Alumni Award during the WestStar Leadership Program’s graduation June 17 at the Jackson Country Club. Goode was selected for the award by the WestStar Board of Trustees. Named for the late Jimmy Daniel of McNairy County, the award is presented to a person who has made a positive impact during the past five years and has a strong record of leadership in West Tennessee during that same period. Goode is pictured with Jake Bynum, chief of staff and WestStar executive director.

Dr. ZeVida A. Jones, assistant professor of counseling, has been appointed treasurer-elect for the Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (SACES).

Jones brings over 25 years of financial management and accounting experience in government and educational settings to this leadership role.

With a history of managing multi-million-dollar budgets, leading financial audits and

directing comprehensive reporting systems, Jones’ expertise will play a vital role in supporting the fiscal health of SACES.

In addition to her new role with SACES, Jones currently serves as president of the Tennessee Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (TACES), further reflecting her dedication to the advancement of counselor education across the region.



Jones

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Chief of staff Bynum attends Kiwanis Club meeting



Jake Bynum (center), chief of staff to Chancellor Yancy Freeman, gave a presentation June 18 for the Kiwanis Club of Martin. Earl Wright (left), Kiwanis program chair for June, introduced Bynum, and Kiwanis President Laura Taylor presented him with a certificate of appreciation. Bynum is starting his second year as chief of staff after serving for more than 10 years as the mayor of Weakley County. He stated that his current responsibilities still involve public service and politics where he works in cooperation with senior leadership, the UT System and constituents across the campus and community. Bynum, a UT Martin graduate, discussed goals for enrollment at UT Martin, ongoing building projects and planning, and his gratitude for being able to do this work for the university and community he loves.

Three new professional staff members represented UT Martin at the NASPA Region III/SACSA New Professionals Institute in Columbia, South Carolina, from June 7-12.

Kassidy Harris, coordinator of student life; Luke Love, career coach; and Danielle Moody, administrative specialist attended the annual institute hosted by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.

The organization is designed to support new professionals as they begin their careers in higher education.

More information about the new professionals institute can be found [at this site](#).

The three UTM representatives said that it was an invaluable experience that deepened their understanding of the field and provided meaningful networking opportunities with peers across the region.



Shown with their certificates of completion from the MASPA New Professionals Institute are (l-r) Luke Love, Danielle Moody and Kassidy Harris.

Callie Croom Smithson, business manager for the Department of Agriculture, Geoscience, and Natural Resources, and Hannah Stewart, assistant director for marketing in the Office of University Relations, are among others at the university who are active with the Weakley County Chamber of Commerce.

Smithson has completed a year of service as chamber president, and Stewart is following her in the same role as president for the coming year.

The chamber supports member businesses and county economic development through educational and networking opportunities and many other services. UT Martin is a longtime chamber member.



Smithson



Stewart

Paul Meek, Martin Public libraries host day camp

The Paul Meek Library and Martin Public Library welcomed 19 kindergarten through fifth-grade students for Camp Discovery: Library Edition, held June 16-18.

Throughout the three days, campers got an exclusive, behind-the-scenes look at the inner workings of academic and public libraries.

On the first day, they went to the Martin Public Library, where they explored a wide range of services and resources, created their own short stories and bookmarks, learned traditional Japanese bookbinding and basic book repair and participated in a resource scavenger hunt.

The second day gave them a full academic library experience at the Paul Meek Library on the UT Martin campus. Campers became "Data Diggers" in an information literacy session, learned how books are cataloged and processed, discovered how collections are built and shared through Interlibrary Loan and investigated the library to find



Nineteen students from kindergarten through fifth grade attended Camp Discovery: Library Edition, held June 16-19 at the Paul Meek Library and the Martin Public Library.

popular areas and track in-house use.

On the final day, they took part in a poster workshop, where each camper shared what the library means to them, giving voice to

their new knowledge and love for libraries in a creative and personal way.

More information about the camp can be found [at this site](#).

News & Notes

■ Dr. Deborah "Debbie" Stairs has been named the next director of human resources at UT Martin. She will begin her duties Aug. 1.

Stairs comes to UT Martin from DRG Technology Solutions with more than 20 years of leadership experience in human resources and organizational development.

Stairs earned a Ph.D. in experimental psychology with an emphasis on industrial and organizational psychology from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology from Murray State University with a minor in chemistry.

The announcement was made June 27 by Petra McPhearson, senior vice chancellor for finance and administration.

In the announcement,

McPhearson thanked Dr. Laura Foltz for her leadership in the Office of Human Resources over the last several months.

■ The deadline to nominate UT Martin faculty or staff for a Skyhawk Spirit Award for the month of July is the end of the day Monday, July 7.

The deadline to submit a nomination for the Skyhawk Spirit and Skyhawk Innovation awards is usually the first Friday of each month, but was moved to Monday due to the national holiday falling on the same day.

The Skyhawk Spirit Awards seek to recognize employee contributions that go beyond expectations of performance.

Letters of nomination with the reason for the nomination can be sent to skyhawkspiritawards@utm.edu.

Young Scholars Academy held



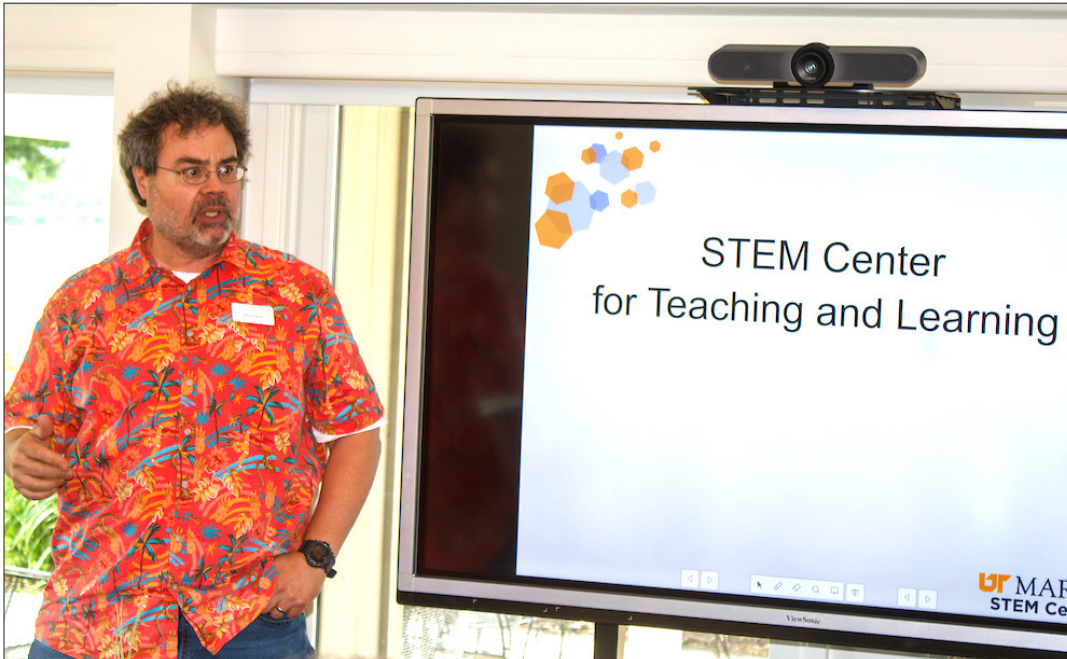
Twenty-two high school students spent a week on the UT Martin campus, taking part in the UT Martin Young Scholars Academy

The YSA is a week-long, non-credit summer residential program that is designed for West Tennessee high school juniors and seniors.

Students are provided tuition, room, board and instructional materials.

YSA provides students who are on the path to a collegiate career an intellectual atmosphere that they would otherwise be unable to experience in their ordinary academic settings.

Town and Gown Association meets June 3



One of the featured speakers for the Town and Gown lunch meeting June 3 in the Dunagan Alumni Center was Dr. Steve Elliott (left photo), chair of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics and director of the UTM STEM Center. Elliott talked about the work of the STEM Center for Teaching and Learning.

The other featured speaker for the Town and Gown Association lunch meeting was Bob Bradley (right photo), chair of the Department of Computer Science. Bradley provided information about the university's computer science major. The UT Martin and City of Martin Town and Gown Association provides a network of resources for students, faculty, staff, businesses and residents to collaborate services, events, programs, recreation, commerce and education. Martin Mayor Randy Brundige and Chancellor Yancy Freeman are regular Town and Gown Association meeting attendees, where they offer updates about the city and the university.



You Tell Me

- **Question** – New video cameras are being installed in both external and interior main-campus spaces. What's the purpose of this project, how many cameras are being installed, and when will the project be completed?
- **Answer** – This video installation project will greatly improve campus security by upgrading existing video cameras, many of which are 10 years or older. Some new cameras are also being added to areas previously lacking video coverage, including parking lots on the north side of campus around Graham Stadium. Also, aging servers are being refreshed to allow for greater video-recording capacity. This project is being funded by two grants from capital project money and should be completed by this fall semester.

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



Members of the 35th WestStar class are (front row seated, l-r) Margaret Taylor, Legon Roberson, Skye Prince, Chasity Burns, Chris Williams, Madison Endres, Timbo White, Sonya Covington, Kenra Simpson, Lindee McCurley, (second row, l-r) Rakaya Humphreys, Logan Rogers, Alisha Melton, James Sneed, Jerri Moore, Sheree Douglas, Darren Walker, Teena Jarmon, Erica Bell, Angela Inman, Jennifer Smiley (WestStar assistant director and honorary class member), Bethany Edwards, Amanda Walker, Jason Fleming, Keith Dooley, Terry Bell, Don McCorry, Dr. Mary Giles, (back row, l-r) Zach Bay, Bob Shutt, Derek Kissell, Jennie Keel, Terry McDade, Austin Kissell and Hayden Ellis.

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Tennessee Development District.

The Nick Dunagan Leadership Scholarship went to Betsy Mantooth, a UT Martin sophomore sociology major from Martin. Her parents are **Dr. Jamie and Katie Mantooth**, both UT Martin staff members.

The scholarship is named for **Dr. Nick Dunagan**, UT Martin chancellor emeritus, former WestStar executive director and also a WestStar co-founder.

The Vaughn RisingStar Leadership Scholarship, named for Cary and Lalanah Vaughn of Millington, longtime WestStar supporters, went to Alli Kate Frilling, a recent Union City High School graduate. Her mother, Lindsay Theobald, is a 2011 WestStar graduate. Cary Vaughn is a 2012 WestStar graduate.

The graduating class included five UT Martin faculty or staff members: **Erica Bell**, executive director of the Office of Regional

Centers and Online Programs; **Dr. Keith Dooley**, associate professor and department chair, UT Martin Department of Family and Consumer Sciences; **Dr. Mary Giles**, assistant professor and Call Me Mister coordinator; **Lindee McCurley**, assistant director of campus event services, UT Martin Boling University Center; and **Alisha Melton**, executive director, UT Martin Office of Research, Outreach, and Economic Development

Before concluding the program, Bynum announced that WestStar assistant director **Jennifer Smiley** was approved as an honorary 2025 class member by the WestStar Board of Trustees. Smiley, who lives in Martin, served as program coordinator before being named in 2024 as assistant director.

More information about the WestStar Class of 2025 and the WestStar Leadership Program can be found in the original article [at this site](#).

addenda

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