

addenda

The University of Tennessee at Martin Faculty and Staff Newsletter | Sept. 15, 2025



New students are shown walking from Convocation 2025 on Aug. 22, led by PEP leaders and welcomed by students, faculty and staff lining the sidewalk. UT Martin announced its second-highest enrollment in university history on Sept. 12 with a fall 2025 enrollment of 8,101.

UTM announces second-highest enrollment ever

UT Martin tied its second-highest fall enrollment total in history as 8,101 students are enrolled for the fall semester at its main campus and six regional centers in Jackson, Parsons, Ripley, Selmer, Somerville and Springfield in Middle Tennessee. The university's highest fall enrollment reached 8,469 students in fall 2010. Enrollment numbers are official on the 14th day of classes and are confirmed by the university's Office of Institutional Research.

Fall 2024 enrollment reached 7,507 students, which then was the highest enrollment at the university since 2012. The fall-to-fall enrollment increase is 7.9%. Undergraduate student enrollment stands at 7,393 for fall 2025 for an 8.4% increase compared to fall 2024. UT Martin total enrollment numbers include students who

are auditing courses.

"We appreciate each student and family who has placed their confidence and trust in choosing to attend UT Martin," Chancellor Yancy Freeman said. "We believe 'every student, every day' best describes our commitment to offering the best higher-education experience possible."

Fall 2016 enrollment reached 6,705 students, which came at the end of a seven-year enrollment decline. Since then, UT Martin's total enrollment is up 21%.

The 2025 first-year class, the highest at UTM in 15 years, totaled 1,329 students for an 8.9% increase over fall 2024. The top-five majors for first-year, full-time students are nursing, veterinary science and technology, health and human performance, management and agricultural business.

"The first-year class has increased 40% in nine years," said Dr. Destin Tucker, assistant vice chancellor for enrollment management. "This is a significant accomplishment that includes coming through the COVID years, the opening of the Latimer-Smith Engineering and Science Building, and creation of a new strategic-enrollment plan."

UT Martin dual enrollment students total 2,111 for fall 2025. Dual enrollment courses allow high school juniors and seniors to take college courses and earn both high school and college credit. Returning undergraduate student enrollment is 3,412 for a 5.9% increase compared to fall 2024. Student retention is the second-highest retention rate in the last 10 years and reached 75.2%. Total retention for full-time undergraduate

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YoUTMs

highlighting the excellence of our faculty and staff

Dr. Saman Sargolzaei, associate professor of engineering, had an article titled "Exploring Brain Network Dynamics in Human vs. AI-Controlled Virtual Driving Using Graph Theory Metrics" accepted for presentation at the IEEE-EMBS International Conference on Biomedical and Health Informatics, Oct. 26-29 at the Georgia Institute of

Technology in Atlanta.

The study found that the brain functions most efficiently when humans and artificial intelligence (AI) share control during virtual driving, an exciting preliminary finding that warrants further investigation, offering new insights into how we might better design smart, human-friendly systems for future self-driving cars.



Sargolzaei

UTM has suicide prevention walk



Chancellor Yancy Freeman (left front) takes part in the Wings of Hope suicide prevention walk and butterfly release Sept. 9 on the Boling University Center's north patio. Freeman also signed a proclamation naming September as Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. The event was sponsored by the UTM Care Team and the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network. Suicide is the second-most common cause of death among college students.

Freemans, UTM Women's Club to host welcome reception for newcomers

Chancellor Yancy and first lady Rafielle Freeman, along with the UT Martin Women's Club, are hosting a welcome reception for all newcomers to the UT Martin family on Saturday, Sept. 27.

The gathering will take place from 3:30 to 5 p.m. at the Dunagan Alumni Center, where faculty and staff will have the opportunity to meet campus leadership and connect

with members of the UT Martin Women's Club in a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere. Attendees are encouraged to show their school pride by wearing spirit wear to the event.

As an added bonus, everyone who attends the reception will receive two complimentary tickets to cheer on the Skyhawks at the 6 p.m. football game against Southeast Missouri that same evening, a perfect way to

cap off an afternoon of making new connections.

Those planning to attend should RSVP by Friday, Sept. 19, to either Amy Bates at 731-881-7507 or abates17@utm.edu or Annie Schommer at 731-514-6403 or aschommer216@gmail.com.

Everyone is welcome. Come as you are, bring your UT Martin spirit and get ready to feel at home in the Skyhawk family.

The news at
news.utm.edu

[UTM announces](#)
[2nd-highest enrollment](#)

[Sept. 15-19 marks](#)
[Free Application Week](#)

[UTM's library learning](#)
[commons opens at PML](#)

[Smith, Rasool named](#)
[Featured Faculty Scholars](#)

UT MARTIN | NEWS

Upcoming Skyhawk Home Events

Saturday, Sept. 20

- *Soccer vs. Southern Indiana, 7 p.m., Skyhawk Soccer Field.

Sept. 26-27

- Equestrian, Blue and Orange Scrimmage, Ned McWhirter Agricultural Complex.

Saturday, Sept. 27

- *Football vs. Southeast Missouri, 6 p.m., Hardy M. Graham Stadium (Family Weekend).

Sunday, Sept. 28

- *Soccer vs. Eastern Illinois, 2 p.m., Skyhawk Soccer Field (Family Weekend).

* - conference competition.
Full athletics schedules can be found at utmsports.com.

Dates and times are subject to change.



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

UT Martin Advisory Board to meet Sept. 19

The UT Martin Advisory Board will meet at 1 p.m., Friday, Sept. 19, in Room 206AB of the Ed and Carolyn Boling University Center. The meeting is open to the public and available for viewing via livestream at www.utm.edu/abmeeting. The video of the full meeting will be archived for later viewing.

Agenda items include:

- Call to Order and Roll Call
- Opening Remarks
- Approval of Minutes
- Recognition of UT President Award

winners

- Enrollment and Retention Update
- Strategic Plan Update
- Comments by Chancellor Yancy Freeman
- Closing remarks by Chair Art Sparks
- Adjournment

The agenda and associated meeting materials are available at www.utm.edu/advisoryboard or by contacting Bud Grimes, Office of University Relations, at rgrimes@utm.edu or call 731-881-7615.

Anyone with a disability or otherwise

needing assistance related to this meeting can contact Grimes to request auxiliary aids or services needed to facilitate attendance. Contact can be made in person; by writing, email, telephone or otherwise; and should be received no later than 5 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 17.

UT Martin also distributes this notice to all faculty and staff as part of its compliance with providing adequate public notice. For more information, contact the Office of University Relations at 731-881-7615.

ENROLLMENT from PAGE 1

students is 85.2% and is the highest overall undergraduate retention number since 2018.

In other fall enrollment numbers, transfer students total 385 students or a 0.3% increase over last fall. Transfer retention for full-time undergraduates is 78.1%.

A total of 708 graduate

students are enrolled for a 2.6% increase compared to fall 2024.

UT Martin's fall enrollment includes students from 87 of the 95 Tennessee counties along with students from 40 states and 29 countries, including Tennessee and the U.S., respectively.

UT Martin is a primary

regional campus in the University of Tennessee System offering 23 bachelor's degree programs that feature 142 specialized concentrations.

The university offers eight graduate degrees that include 30 specialized concentrations.

In addition to the main campus and six regional centers,

UT Martin Online offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees, including the online Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies degree for working adults.

The university's 125-year celebration of its higher-education history begins at homecoming in October.

UT MARTIN FALL 2025 *by the numbers*

8,101 *total enrollment*

87
tennessee counties represented

1,329
first-year skyhawks

TOP 5 MAJORS
among newest skyhawks

1. NURSING
2. VETERINARY SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
3. HEALTH & HUMAN PERFORMANCE
4. MANAGEMENT
5. AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS

40
states represented

28
countries represented

Read more UT Martin news at news.utm.edu!

Aviators on parade



Members of the UT Martin Aviators Marching Band take to the streets Sept. 3 in the annual Tennessee Soybean Festival Parade. The festival, which celebrates the agricultural successes of West Tennessee – particularly in the production of soybeans – was held Sept. 2-6 and is a product of teamwork between the city of Martin, the University of Tennessee at Martin and several area sponsors.

JOI announces Erina Toyama as new coordinator

The Japan Outreach Initiative is in its 23rd year at the University of Tennessee at Martin of introducing and teaching Japanese culture to students and community members alike.

Erina Toyama comes to UT Martin this year as the coordinator of the JOI, a two-year position. Originally from Okinawa, Toyama studied English culture and literature at the University of the Ryukyus, where she also studied Chinese language.

Toyama said the Japan Outreach Initiative, or JOI, will bring Japanese culture to the UTM campus at a number of events and through the Japanese class taught by **Kyoko Hammond**, who supervises JOI.

Toyama plans to have a “talk table” for Japanese students who want to improve their language skills. She will call it “Hatake Club,” because “hatake” is Japanese for “farm,” and she hopes to use the club to help her students grow.

Toyama said she wants to promote Japanese culture off-campus through the Martin Public Library and having a booth at the Martin Farmers Market.

Toyama has already taken part in an event at the Martin Library, joining with the UTM Japanese Language and Culture Club in celebrating Japan Day on Sept. 2.

On Thursday, Sept. 18, from 5:30 to 7



People learned Japanese words and culture with help from the UTM Japanese Language and Culture Club at the Japan Day event Sept. 2 at the Martin Public Library.

p.m. at the Martin Public Library, the JOI will have a “washoku” program, which introduces people to Japanese cuisine and food traditions

On Wednesday, Sept. 24, the JOI is hosting a “Tea Time” event with the coordinator of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program, Tye Ebel. Toyama will present a tea ceremony with a variety of tea flavors, while Ebel will present a program about the Japan Exchange and Teaching program. The program begins at 5 p.m. in Room 230 of

the Boling University Center, and is open to all UTM students.

On Saturday, Sept. 27, JOI and the UTM Japanese Language and Culture Club will support a food booth and a culture booth at the Jackson International Food and Art Festival from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Jackson Fairgrounds.

For more information about the Japanese Outreach Initiative, email Toyama at joimartintn824@gmail.com or Hammond at khammon6@utm.edu.

11 faculty members earn FDGP funding

Eleven faculty members have received awards for the fall 2025 UTMartin Faculty Development Grant Program, which provides funding for faculty development opportunities for regular, full-time faculty.

The program is coordinated by the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and includes three rounds of funding annually.

Details and application link are available [at this site](#).

Dr. Amanda Burkhardt, assistant professor in the

Department of Chemistry and Physics, was awarded \$1,500 in the Conference Participation category. Funds will be used to present at the Southeastern Region of the American Chemical Society/Southwest Region of the American Chemical Society joint regional meeting in Orlando, Florida, in October.

Dr. Mercan Derafshi, associate professor in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, was awarded \$1,500 in the Conference Participation

category of the UTM Faculty Development Grant Program. Funds will be used to present at the 2025 International Textile and Apparel Association annual conference in St. Louis later this semester.

Dr. Austin Ferrell, assistant professor in the Department of Educational Studies, was awarded \$1,327 in the Conference Participation category of the UTM Faculty Development Grant Program. Funds will be used to attend and present at the Mid-

South Educational Research Association 2025 annual meeting in New Orleans in November.

Dr. Benjamin Guyer, lecturer in the Department of History and Philosophy, was awarded \$1,412 in the Conference Participation category of the UTM Faculty Development Grant Program. Funds will be used to attend and present at the 2025 Sixteenth Century Conference in Portland, Oregon, later this semester.

Dr. ZeVida Jones, assistant professor in the Department of Educational Studies, was awarded \$1,500 in the Conference Participation category of the UTM Faculty Development Grant Program. Funds will be used to present at the 66th annual European Branch of the American Counseling Association Conference in October.

Dr. Isaac Lepcha, lecturer in

Continued on PAGE 7



Burkhardt



Derafshi



Ferrell



Guyer



Jones



Lepcha



Lowe



Rasool



Spiegel



Tewari



Van Boening

Town & Gown meeting held Sept. 12

The new UT Martin Center for Rural Innovation was featured Sept. 12 during the breakfast meeting of the City of Martin and UT Martin Town & Gown Association.

Housed in the Department of Political Science and Global Studies, the center will serve as a catalyst for rural community development throughout West Tennessee and the broader American Heartland.

Strategically located within 50 miles

of Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri and Illinois, UT Martin is uniquely positioned to address the critical challenges facing rural communities while leveraging their distinctive assets and opportunities.

Rural communities today face unprecedented challenges including population decline, limited economic diversification, insufficient infrastructure and loss of cultural heritage. Simultaneously,

these communities possess rich traditions, strong social bonds and untapped potential for innovation.

The center will bridge these realities by connecting university resources with community needs through integrated programming that addresses both economic development and cultural preservation.

Learn more on the web [at this site](#).



Participating in the panel at the City of Martin and UT Martin town & Gown Association meeting Sept. 12 were (l-r at right) Dr. Carrie Humphreys, Department of Political Science and Global Studies chair; Dr. Adnan Rasool, associate professor of political science and director of the university's Center for Teaching and Learning; and Dr. Allan Sterbinsky, lecturer in political science and rural innovation center director. Erica Moore, Weakley County Chamber of Commerce director (left) visits with panel members following their presentation.

Campus Calendar

Ongoing

- Guitar as Art exhibition, 3-7 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 1-5 p.m., Friday through Sunday, art gallery, Fine Arts Building, through Sept. 28.

Wednesday, Sept. 17

- Mathematics and Statistics Colloquium Series, 3 p.m., 331 Latimer-Smith Engineering and Science

Building, Alisha Melton, "Grant-Related Research Opportunities."

Thursday, Sept. 18

- JOI "washoku" program, 5:30 p.m., Martin Public Library, Japanese cuisine and culture program.
- UTM Research Series, 4 p.m., Paul Meek Library, Dr. Clinton Smith, Featured Faculty Scholar.

Friday, Sept. 19

- UTM Advisory Board, 1 p.m., 223B Boling University Center.

Monday, Sept. 22

- Hawk Break, 11 a.m., Dunagan Alumni Center.
- Flu shot clinic, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., Boling University Center, [RSVP here](#) or just drop in.

Wednesday, Sept. 24

- Japan Outreach Initiative "Tea Time," 5 p.m., Room 230 Boling University Center.

Thursday, Sept. 25

- Benefits fair, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Duncan Ballroom, Boling University Building.

Events are subject to cancellation; dates, times and sites are subject to change.

You Tell Me

• **Question** – Which tree in the quad is the oldest, is there an estimated age for the tree, and how much longer could it live if it's not damaged by weather or disease?

• **Answer** – While we don't know the exact ages of the trees in the quad, it's easy to believe that several of them are over 100 years old. Many of the trees could potentially live to be over 400 years old. However, the champion is the maidenhair tree (also called ginkgo), that is thought to be able to live beyond 3,000 years old. There are several of these trees in the quad. (Courtesy of Dr. Philip Smartt, College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences.)

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

Tennessee state legislators visit UTM campus

Tennessee state Sen. John Stevens (R-District 24) and state Rep. Tandy Darby (R-District 76), both UT Martin graduates, visited with family and consumer sciences students Aug. 28 to present a civics overview about Tennessee state government.

They showed how a bill becomes law, explained how to find which elected officials serve on the different committees, advised how best to contact a legislator and other information.

Public policy is among more than 50 standards that the university's dietetics program must meet to maintain accreditation by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics.

Dietetic students and interns also travel to Nashville every spring to see Stevens and Darby as representatives for the Tennessee Academy of Nutritionists and Dietitians for the academy's annual Hill Day.

Among those later joining the lawmakers for lunch were Chancellor Yancy Freeman; Dr. Stephanie Kolitsch, transitional provost; Dr. Keith Dooley, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences chair; Dr. Joey Mehlhorn, College of Business and Global Affairs interim dean; Dr. Todd Winters, College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences dean; and Brian Carroll, Dietetic Internship Program director.



Pictured during a campus visit by state Rep. Tandy Darby and state Sen. John Stevens are (l-r) Dr. Joey Mehlhorn, Darby, Stevens, Dr. Todd Winters and Brian Carroll. The state legislators – both UTM graduates – came to campus Aug. 28 to present a civics overview about Tennessee state government.

GRANTS from PAGE 1

the Department of Agriculture, Geosciences, and Natural Resources, was awarded \$1,500 in the Professional Development category of the UTM Faculty Development Grant Program. Funds will be used to provide opportunities for faculty development in artificial intelligence and to incorporate new AI skills to enhance instruction and teaching effectiveness as well as design a curriculum to improve AI literacy for undergraduate students.

Dr. Robert Lowe, assistant professor in the Department of Computer Science, was awarded \$1,900 for his project titled

“Skyhawk HAB Workshop” in the Creative Activity category. Funds will be used to provide an opportunity for UTM students and area grade-school students to explore “near space,” the upper stratospheric region just below the mesosphere.

Dr. Adnan Rasool, associate professor in the Department of Political Science and Global Affairs and director of the Center for Teaching and Learning, was awarded \$997 for his project in the Conference Participation category. Funds will be used to present at the Ohio Valley History Conference in Frankfort, Kentucky, in October.

Dr. Harriette Spiegel,

lecturer in the Department of Educational Studies, was awarded \$375 in the Professional Development category of the UTM Faculty Development Grant Program. Funds will be used to attend the online Education Teaching and Learning Symposium Centering Accessibility in Teaching and Learning later this semester.

Dr. Rachna Tewari, professor in the Department of Agriculture, Geosciences, and Natural Resources, was awarded \$1,500 in the Professional Development category of the UTM Faculty Development Grant Program. Funds will be used to provide opportunities for faculty development in

artificial intelligence and to incorporate new AI skills to enhance instruction and teaching effectiveness as well as design a curriculum to improve AI literacy for undergraduate students.

Dr. Angela Van Boening, associate professor in the Department of Agriculture, Geosciences, and Natural Resources, was awarded \$1,500 in the Conference Participation category of the UTM Faculty Development Grant Program. Funds will be used to present at the Geological Society of America annual meeting in San Antonio in October.

addenda

Published weekly during the academic year and biweekly during the summer by UT Martin, Martin, TN 38238

Randy Boyd – President, University of Tennessee System • Dr. Yancy Freeman Sr. – UTM Chancellor • David Snow – Addenda Editor

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