

addenda

The University of Tennessee at Martin Faculty and Staff Newsletter | Sept. 22, 2025



Dr. Destin Tucker, assistant vice chancellor for enrollment management, discusses the fall 2025 enrollment at the UTM Advisory Board on Sept. 19. The fall 2025 enrollment of 8,101 is the second-highest enrollment in university history.

UTM Advisory Board holds fall meeting Sept. 19

UT Martin's successful 2025 fall enrollment – the second-highest enrollment in university history – was among the agenda items presented during the UT Martin Advisory Board's fall meeting Sept. 19 in the Boling University Center.

Dr. Destin Tucker, assistant vice chancellor for enrollment management, reported 8,101 total students enrolled, a fall-to-fall increase of 7.9%. UT Martin students are 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 total enrollment includes students who are auditing courses.

"Fall 2025 enrollment is up in every category compared to fall 2024," Tucker said. "We exceeded our enrollment model's

projections in both total enrollment and in undergraduate students."

Only graduate enrollment was slightly below the 2025 benchmark at 0.1%.

The university's full-time equivalency, or FTE, is up 8.1% compared to fall 2024. FTE is determined by dividing undergraduate student credit hours by 15 and graduate hours by 12. Public colleges and universities are funded by the Tennessee General Assembly based on FTE.

"This [higher FTE] really suggests that we don't just have more students, but more students are enrolling in fuller courseloads, which is a positive indicator for that engagement and retention that we're tracking," Tucker said.

First-year students totaled 1,329 for an 8.9% increase over fall 2024 and exceeded

the enrollment-goal benchmark by 3.7%. Out-of-state students represent 10% of the total, with Illinois and Kentucky providing the most UT Martin students.

Tucker also noted strong ongoing student retention as a contributor to enrollment success, which indicates students who remain enrolled at the university year to year. Returning undergraduate enrollment is 3,413 students for a 6% increase compared to fall 2024.

First-year student retention is the second-highest retention rate in eight years at 75.2%. Total retention for full-time undergraduate students is 85.2% and is the highest overall undergraduate retention number since 2018.

Tucker closed by reminding board members of the university's commitment to student success and retention. **Continued on PAGE 2**

YoUTMs

highlighting the excellence of our faculty and staff

Brown named UTM's first ombudsperson

Merry Brown, a former faculty member at the University of Tennessee at Martin, was announced as the university's first ombudsperson Sept. 4 by **Chancellor Yancy Freeman**.

Brown will oversee the Office of the Ombuds Services, which was established to provide an informal channel for conflict resolution and to assist people in navigating organizational concerns, challenges and conflicts that may arise in the workplace.

The office will be independent, impartial and informal and will work with faculty and staff to:

- Provide a safe and confidential space to talk about issues or concerns
 - Explore options to help resolve conflicts
 - Bring systemic concerns to the attention of the university
- "This is an added service

for UT Martin faculty and staff to support healthy work environments," Brown said. "Conflict is normal and expected, so let's deal with it. A lot of people don't know how to deal with conflict, so I'm here to help them help themselves."

Brown worked at UT Martin for 17 years as a lecturer in philosophy, leaving in 2021 to start her own business in conflict resolution, called Third Party Workplace Conflict Restoration Services LLC.

She is a board member with the Tennessee Association of Professional Mediators, a Rule 31 Mediator (civil) in the state of Tennessee, and a member of the International Ombuds Association, which is still ongoing. She also has a podcast, "Project Managed."

Brown received her Bachelor



Brown

of Arts degree in philosophy and psychology from Azusa Pacific University and her Master of Arts degree in humanities (emphasis on philosophy) from Western Kentucky University.

For more information about the Office of Ombuds Services, visit [this site](#). To make an appointment, call 731-881-7056, email ombuds@utm.edu or visit [this site](#).

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members that the fall 2026 goal is 8,348 students as the university moves toward 10,000 students by 2030.

Jake Bynum, UT Martin chief of staff, provided the other major board report with an update about the university's strategic plan and a demonstration of the plan's dashboard.

Goals for the plan include for it to be a transparent, living document that will be monitored for progress through data-driven assessment, Bynum said.

The plan, approved by the UT Board of Trustees in February, includes five goals, 24 strategies and more than 30 faculty, staff and community leaders who are responsible for following up on strategies and achieving the plan's goals.

Freeman closed the meeting with final comments about the university's enrollment growth and credited many at the university for two consecutive years of 8% growth.

In other updates, Freeman previewed the university's 125th celebration of the university's founding in 1900 that will begin with an opening ceremony Oct. 10 during Homecoming Week.

Freeman also reviewed major capital projects, including the current planning stages for a new College of Business Administration Building, with a projected opening in 2029; construction of the new Tennessee Entrepreneurial Science and Technology (TEST) Hub that is expected to begin in spring 2026; and a new 400-bed residence hall to replace Browning Hall that will be

closed following the spring 2026 semester. The new residence hall is expected to open in fall 2028.

Also, work on the second phase of Hall-Moody Administration Building improvements is expected to be completed in spring 2026.

Members of the UT Martin Advisory Board are Art Sparks, board chair, Union City; Hal Bynum, Dresden; Darby Self, student representative, Fayette County; Dr. Dan McDonough, faculty representative, Martin; Stefan Maupin, Dyersburg; and Dan Strasser, alumni representative, Chapel Hill.

The full board meeting is archived for viewing [at this site](#).

The UTM Advisory Board's next meeting will be Jan. 23 in Martin.

The news at
news.utm.edu

[Norris to speak at Parker Speaker Series](#)

[UTM Fall Preview Day to be held Oct. 4](#)

[UTM Family Weekend set for Sept. 26-28](#)

[Local pageant winners crowned Sept. 19](#)

UT MARTIN | NEWS

Upcoming Skyhawk Home Events

Sept. 26-27

- Equestrian, Blue and Orange Scrimmage, Ned McWherter 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.



Scenes from the UTM Advisory Board's fall meeting



Jake Bynum, UTM chief of staff, speaks at the UTM Advisory Board meeting Sept. 19 in the Boling University Center. Bynum provided an update about the university's strategic plan and a demonstration of the plan's dashboard. Goals for the plan include for it to be a transparent, living document that will be monitored for progress through data-driven assessment.

Chancellor Yancy Freeman speaks to the UTM Advisory Board at its Sept. 19 meeting. Freeman spoke about the university's enrollment growth and credited many at the university for two consecutive years of 8% growth. He also spoke about the university's 125-year celebration of the university's founding in 1900 that will begin with an opening ceremony Oct. 10 during Homecoming Week.



Members of the 2025-26 UTM Advisory Board are (l-r) Dan Strasser, Dr. Dan McDonough, Art Sparks, Chancellor Yancy Freeman, Darby Self, Stefan Maupin and Hal Bynum. The advisory board's remaining scheduled meetings for this school year will be on Jan. 23 and May 15.

Ag faculty host field school for smallholder farms

Faculty members from the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences hosted a field school in August for smallholder farms in Tennessee and Pennsylvania as part of a three-year multi-institutional sustainability-focused initiative with The Global Teach Ag Network at Penn State University.

The project was led by **Dr. Rachna Tewari**, professor of agricultural economics, and is titled “Empowering Small Farmers and Agriculture Students: FSAS (Farmers’ School for Agricultural Sustainability) and Experiential Learning Programs.”

Collaborators from the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences are **Dr. Isaac Lepcha**, **Dr. Eric Pelren**, **Dr. Bethany Wolters**, **Dr. Stan Dunagan**, **Dr. Joey Mehlhorn** and **Dr. Will Bird**.

Funding for the project is provided by the Capacity Building Grants for Non-Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture Program (NLGCA), U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Institute of Food and

Agriculture.

With a primary focus on promoting sustainable production and inspiring the next generation of leaders in agriculture, the project created opportunities for travel-study-based farmer field schools between Tennessee and Pennsylvania to benefit small vegetable and livestock producers through training, resources and networking to improve profitability and sustainability in their enterprises.

The initiative also supported a faculty-led, course-based student travel-study to Belize last summer, high school student internships with local growers, and research projects on vegetables and forage production at the UT Martin student farm.

Participants in the August field school included vegetable and livestock producers, UT Martin faculty and students and visitors from Penn State University.

Highlights from the field school were site tours for vegetable production and farmers’

markets, followed by an applied workshop on agroforestry by Belizean conservationist and educator Rudy Aroldo Aguilar, the director of horticulture at Belize Botanic Gardens.

The concluding event to the project was the 2025 Small Farm Sustainability and Local Foods Conference on Aug. 14 at The Discovery Park of America in Union City, co-hosted by the Northwest Tennessee Local Food Network, UT Martin and Penn State University.

With over 70 attendees, the conference provided a platform for smallholder producers, students, educators and community members in the Mid-South to explore regenerative farming techniques, climate-smart practices, local food systems, value-added production and market access strategies.

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



Dr. Rachna Tewari (left), professor of agricultural economics, is joined by Dr. Elsa Sanchez (center), professor of horticultural systems management at Penn State University, on stage at the field school hosted Aug. 14 by the UTM College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences.

A demonstration of hydroponic techniques and equipment is shown being given at the Blackberry Pond farm in Martin as part of the field school for smallholder farms in Tennessee and Pennsylvania. The field school was hosted by UT Martin on Aug. 14.



Empowering education conference set for Sept. 29

The UT Martin Educator Preparation Program in the College of Education, Health and Behavioral Sciences will host its Empowering Educators Conference from 1 to 3:30 p.m. on Monday, Sept. 29, in the Boling University Center.

This year's conference topic is "Changing Latitudes, Changing Attitudes: Facing the Ever-Changing Environment in Today's K-12 Classrooms," and will feature workshops from various local education professionals, centered on supporting students with disabilities and helping education students traverse the ever-changing educational world.

This conference is specifically geared toward Education Residency 1 students, but all are invited and welcome to attend.

The keynote speaker for this year's conference is Laney Rogers, the director of special



Plunk

education and early childhood for Union City Schools. Her topic is "Focus on Changing the World, Instead of Changing Your Roster."

The conference will also feature multiple workshops, which include:

- **Laura Plunk**, a UT Martin lecturer for educational studies who specializes in special education, will be leading a workshop titled "F.A.M.I.L.Y.: Partnering Beyond the Classroom."



Stewart

- **Darian Harris**, a math teacher at Dyersburg High School, will lead a workshop focused on supporting students with disabilities, titled "Supporting Students with Disabilities."

- **Dr. Michael Morris**, a principal at Jackson Academic STEAM Academy, will lead a workshop that considers professional responsibilities and working with students, families and schools from an administrator perspective, titled

"From Chalkboards to Chatbots: The Top 10 Challenges in Modern Education."

- **Kari Harold**, Metro Nashville Public Schools, will offer closing remarks in her keynote speech "Connecting the DOTS: Creating Access Through Connection."

The UT Martin Educator Preparation Program aims to prepare and guide students to be effective and professional educators, capable of making a meaningful impact on students, families and communities.

For more information about the Educator Preparation Program or the annual Empowering Educators Conference, contact **Dr. Cheryl Stewart** at cstewa72@utm.edu or 731-881-7201. She is a Department of Educational Studies faculty member and serves as conference chair and coordinator.

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. 24

- DASH reporting for grants, 3 p.m., Room 229 Boling University Center.

- 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.

Monday, Sept. 29

- Empowering Educators

Conference, 1 p.m., Boling University Center.

Wednesday, Oct. 1

- Building Coffee and Conversations with Chancellor Yancy Freeman, 3:15 p.m., Norman Campbell Lecture Hall, Room 121 Holt Humanities Building.

- Domestic Violence Awareness Month self-defense class, 5:30 p.m., Russell Duncan Ballroom, Room 224 Boling University Center.

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

You Tell Me

• **Question** – Bricks are being removed from the south outer wall of the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center. What is this project and when will it be completed?

• **Answer** – This is a capital maintenance project that replaces the brick on the north and south ends of the Elam Center due to shifting of the brick. The project is scheduled to be completed in early summer 2026. The west side was completed approximately seven to eight years ago for the same reason.

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

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

UT research officers visit UTM



Dr. Maha Krishnamurthy (pictured), UT Research Foundation president, was among research officers who visited the university Sept. 8. The visit and program were to better connect research ideas and teams across UT campuses, identify opportunities for mentoring and grant team additions, strengthen collaborative work and increase faculty visibility. Also presenting were Dr. Kari Babski-Reeves, UT System associate vice chancellor for research, and Dr. Deborah Crawford, UT Knoxville vice chancellor of research, innovation and economic development. The event was sponsored by the Office of Research, Outreach, and Economic Development.

Nominations sought for Outstanding Employees

The deadline for nominations for the Fall 2025 Outstanding Employee Awards is Friday, Sept. 26.

Nomination forms were emailed from the Office of the Chancellor. They may be submitted via email to chancellor@utm.edu.

The award will be given to two staff members who have been employed by

UT Martin in regular status for at least six months of continuous service.

The recipients should demonstrate outstanding job performance and human relations skills and a commitment to UT Martin.

One representative from the administrative/professional (exempt) staff and one from the clerical/support (non-

exempt) staff will be chosen. Recipients cannot be awarded twice within a 10-year span.

The awards will be presented at the Fall Clerical and Support Staff Coffee on Oct. 16.

Winners will be recognized with an honorary plaque, monetary award and local media coverage.

Recycling hours change

Saturday hours at the university's Recycling Facility, located next to Transportation Services on Moody Street, have changed to 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Staffing challenges have necessitated this schedule change. The regular Saturday operating hours will resume once a part-time position is filled.

Recycling Facility hours on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. remain unchanged.

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

addenda

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