

addenda

The University of Tennessee at Martin Faculty and Staff Newsletter | Jan. 19, 2026



Discovery Park of America held its Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day program Jan. 19 in its Dinosaur Hall. The keynote speaker for the program was Dr. Mark McCloud (left), vice chancellor for access and engagement, while the emcee was UTM first lady Rafielle Freeman. Also shown is Discovery Park of America CEO Scott Williams.

MLK Day program features UTM connection

Discovery Park of America held its Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day program Jan. 19, featuring two people with UT Martin connections.

The keynote speaker was **Dr. Mark McCloud**, vice chancellor for access and engagement, and the emcee of the program was UTM first lady **Rafielle Freeman**, who also serves on the DPA Board of Directors.

McCloud opened his address by quoting the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights—that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

He then quoted the first lines of “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee” and the last phrase from the Pledge of Allegiance.

McCloud then cited Patrick Henry’s

famed speech given to the Second Virginia Convention: “Give me liberty or give me death.”

“Words have meaning,” he said. “Words have power, but they also have responsibility and obligation.

“When I think about the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., I think of a man who fought, who lived and died for liberty and justice for all.”

McCloud said King’s greatest legacy was not attached to a speech or a monument, but was attached to people who fought willingly for liberty and justice for all.

“In ‘A Letter from a Birmingham Jail,’ Dr. King reminds us that darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can,” McCloud said. “He reminds us that hate cannot drive out hate; only love can. He reminds us that a threat to justice anywhere is a threat to

justice everywhere.

“He reminds us that the time for change is now.”

The program included musical selections by the newly-formed Discovery Park Community Choir.

The choir opened the program with “Lift Every Voice and Sing” and later sang an a capella version of “Wade in the Water.”

Following McCloud’s address, the choir sang a stirring rendition of “We Shall Overcome,” followed by “I Need You to Survive.”

The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday is celebrated on the third Monday of January and has been a federal holiday since 1986.

King was born Jan. 15, 1929, and was a prominent voice in favor of nonviolent activism for civil rights.

YoUTMs

highlighting the excellence of our faculty and staff



Walker

Dr. Sean Walker, professor of management, wrote an opinion for Coworking Cafe about living in smaller cities.

He answered the question “In your view, which quality-of-life factors have become the strongest economic drivers for cities looking to attract high-skilled workers?”

His response, which can be seen in its entirety [at this site](#), was, “Each generation is moving to smaller cities in significant numbers, but for different reasons.”

Emma Bruner, social media coordinator in the Office of University Relations, recently became president of the Weakley County Young Professionals. She previously served as vice president.

Nathan Morgan, assistant director for news and visuals in the Office of University Relations, became treasurer



Bruner

Dr. Mahmoud Haddad, professor of finance, presented his co-authored paper with Dr. Sam Hakim titled “The Impact of the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank Policies on the GCC Banks” at the 2026 ASSA-MEEA annual conference held Jan. 2-5 in Philadelphia.

Haddad was elected to serve for two years as the treasurer of the Middle East Economic Association MEEA).

Dr. Janet Yellen, former U.S. Secretary of the Treasury and

Dr. Laura Hatch, assistant professor of accounting, was featured in the Jan. 7 WalletHub online story titled “[Best Credit Cards for Bad Credit.](#)”

WalletHub is based in Washington, D.C., and is a financial website that offers information such as credit-improvement advice and personalized savings alerts.

The site’s features are supplemented with information from subject-matter experts.

after serving as secretary. Both will serve one-year terms.

The positions are rotated on a yearly basis.

Weakley County Young Professionals is sponsored by the Weakley County Chamber of Commerce and brings together emerging leaders to network, collaborate and engage in community initiatives.



Morgan



Haddad

Chair of the Federal Reserve, attended the conference.



Hatch

Members participate in professional development, service projects and events that foster leadership and career growth.

Hannah Stewart, assistant director for marketing in the Office of University Relations, is the current chamber president and serves on the chamber’s board of directors.



Stewart

The news at
news.utm.edu

UTM Advisory Board
[to meet Jan. 23](#)

SAIL program
[applications now](#)
[available](#)

WestStar Elevate
[registration now open](#)

UTM MARTIN | NEWS

Upcoming Skyhawk Home Events

Saturday, Jan. 24

- *Women’s basketball vs. Little Rock, 1 p.m., Kathleen and Tom Elam Center.
- *Men’s basketball vs. Little Rock, 3:30 p.m., Kathleen and Tom Elam Center.

Friday, Jan. 30

- Equestrian vs Georgia, tba, Ned McWherter Agricultural Complex.

Saturday, Jan. 31

- Equestrian vs. Auburn, tba, Ned McWherter Agricultural Complex.

Thursday, Feb. 5

- *Women’s basketball vs. Southern Indiana, 5 p.m., Kathleen and Tom Elam Center.
- *Men’s basketball vs. Southern Indiana, 7:30 p.m., Kathleen and Tom Elam Center.

* - conference competition.
Full athletics schedules can be found at utmsports.com.
Dates and times are subject to change.

Retirees honored after years of service



UT Martin honored retired faculty, exempt staff and non-exempt staff with a University Service Luncheon held Nov. 6. Shown with Chancellor Yancy Freeman Sr. (center) are Larry Holder of Information Technology Services (at left, 38 years of services) and Steve Barnett of the Department of Music (seven years). Not pictured are Debi Adcock of the Office of Student Affairs (21 years of service); Leon Allen of the UTM Somerville Center (eight years); Dr. Trisha Capansky of the Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages (13 years); Valerie Dean of Custodial Services (23 years); Kathleen Donnenworth of the UTM Selmer/McNairy County Center (14 years); Danny Duncan of Custodial Services (14 years); Roger Elmore of Telecommunications (33 years); Dr. Sam Faught of the Department of Management, Marketing and Information Systems (17 years); Jerry Garcia of the Department of Public Safety (30 years); Finnis Halkias of Custodial Services (26 years); Lisa Hamilton of Housing (11 years); Jenny Harrison of Student Health and Counseling (17 years); Dr. Elaine Harriss of the Department of Music (24 years); Sarah McCormick of the Department of Visual and Theatre Arts (17 years); Tracey Mires of the Office of Research, Outreach and Economic Development (31 years); Dr. Ahmad Tootoonchi of the College of Business and Global Affairs (five years); Debbie Travis of Custodial Services (16 years); Michael Washington of Human Resources (six years); Dr. Janet Wilbert of the Department of Health and Human Performance (25 years); Becky Wilson of the Office of Regional Centers and Online Programs (20 years); and Susan Winters of the Department of Nursing (six years).

Lemond honored for 45 years of service



UT Martin honored faculty, exempt staff and non-exempt staff who have reached career milestones with a University Service Luncheon held Nov. 6. Shown with Chancellor Yancy Freeman Sr. (left) is Steve Lemond of the Office of Information Technology Services, who has worked at UT Martin for 45 years.

Faculty, staff honored for 40 years of service



UT Martin honored faculty, exempt staff and non-exempt staff who have reached career milestones with a University Service Luncheon held Nov. 6. Shown with Chancellor Yancy Freeman Sr. (left) is Dr. Louis Kolitsch of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, who has worked at UT Martin for 40 years. Not pictured is Mike Bivens of Transportation Services.

Faculty, staff honored for 35 years of service

UT Martin honored faculty, exempt staff and non-exempt staff who have reached career milestones with a University Service Luncheon held Nov. 6. Those honored for 35 years of service shown with Chancellor Yancy Freeman Sr. (center) are Judy Sandefer (left) of the Office of the Chancellor and Cindy West of the College of Education, Health and Behavioral Sciences.



Faculty, staff honored for 30 years of service



UT Martin honored faculty, exempt staff and non-exempt staff who have reached career milestones with a University Service Luncheon held Nov. 6. Those honored for 30 years of service shown with Chancellor Yancy Freeman Sr. (center) are Tara Tansil-Gentry (left) of the Department of Health and Human Performance and Roger Roney of Information Technology Services. Not pictured are Dr. Craig Darroch and Dr. Jeff Rogers, both of the Department of Agriculture, Geosciences and Natural Resources.

Faculty, staff honored for 25 years of service



UT Martin honored faculty, exempt staff and non-exempt staff who have reached career milestones with a University Service Luncheon held Nov. 6. Those honored for 25 years of service shown with Chancellor Yancy Freeman Sr. (at right) are (l-r) Dr. Mary Radford of the Department of Nursing; Robert Jimerson of Custodial Services; Sherry Shanklin of Physical Plant Operations; Dr. Lionel Crews of the Department of Chemistry and Physics; and Dr. Barb Darroch of the Department of Agriculture, Geosciences and Natural Resources. Not pictured are Chris Brinkley of the Office of Intercollegiate Athletics; Lori Donavant of the Office of Business Services; Tim Henson of Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning; Nathan Tanklin of the Office of Information Technology Services; and Tara Woods of the Department of Agriculture, Geosciences and Natural Resources.

History initiative set up with UTM connections

UT Martin faculty and staff helped convene a recent meeting of the West Tennessee Heritage Initiative.

More than 30 individuals, representing 22 heritage organizations from nine counties participated in the event.

Hosted by the First Presbyterian Church of Jackson, the day included presentations concerning the preservation and use of church records in historical research and public engagement.

Dr. Alice-Catherine Carls, professor emerita from UT Martin's Department of History

and Philosophy, helped to build the program, drawing upon her own work as volunteer archivist at First Presbyterian.

Dr. Erik Nordberg, dean of the Paul Meek Library, coordinates the consortium and its activities.

The initiative began with an April 2023 convening of institutions that the Paul Meek Library surveyed for collections of historical records in the West Grand Division.

That project and the initial convening event were funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and support from Tennessee

Humanities.

Since the first meeting, the consortium of archives, museums, historical societies and libraries has held four meetings in different West Tennessee communities.

Single-day events provide a low-cost alternative to statewide meetings.

In addition to presentations and training activities, the events include the opportunity for each organization to report on recent activities.

For instance, Linda Hayes, a participant from Haywood County, indicated at one of the

early consortium meetings that they were looking to establish a formal county archive in Brownsville, but didn't know the procedures required by the state.

Hayes and other community volunteers are now completing work on their new archival facility with a grand opening planned later this spring.

The next meeting of the West Tennessee Heritage Initiative is tentatively scheduled for May 9 in Selmer. Individuals may join the mailing list by contacting the consortium via e-mail at westtennheritage@gmail.com.

Faculty, staff honored for 20 years of service



UT Martin honored faculty, exempt staff and non-exempt staff who have reached career milestones with a University Service Luncheon held Nov. 6. Those honored for 20 years of service shown with Chancellor Yancy Freeman Sr. (at left) are (l-r) Dr. James Smart of the Department of Biological Sciences, Dr. Chris Hill of the Department of Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages, Jennifer Martin of Enrollment Communications and Operations, Will Turner of Telecommunications Auxiliary, Dr. Ann Gathers of the Department of Biological Sciences and Dr. Steve Elliot of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics. Not pictured are Dr. David Barber of the Department of History and Psychology, Mike Davis of Custodial Services, Stacie Evans of the Office of Intercollegiate Athletics, Dr. Tina Lee of the Department of Behavioral Sciences, Ryan Martin of Housing, Courtney Mosley of the Margaret N. Perry Children's Center, Chris Rennison of Custodial Services, Dr. David Williams of the Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages and Lori Wilson of the Infant Stimulation Program.

You Tell Me

• **Question** – At one point, faculty and staff were asked to have a photo taken to place with their information in the directory. It appears that the faculty and staff hired since then are not required or do not know to do so. It's helpful to put a face with a name.

• **Answer** – All new staff have an official headshot taken with the Office of University Relations as part of the orientation process, and this captures a majority of new employees. For faculty, the responsibility falls to the department or the individual faculty member to schedule an appointment for an official headshot. Headshots at UT Martin are free for all faculty and staff, and University Relations typically offers headshot days at least once a week on Mondays or Thursdays, depending on the week. Each session takes about five minutes. If someone in an office, department or college needs an official headshot, please encourage them to contact University Relations to schedule one. Anyone needing a headshot can reach the Office of University Relations at utmphoto@utm.edu. After headshots are made, they are stored at www.utm.edu/photo and shared with Information Technology Services to be uploaded to the website. If an official headshot is not appearing in the website directory, reach out to University Relations at 731-881-7615 to help resolve the issue. When contacting us, please include your 960 number with your request.

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

Faculty, staff honored for 15 years of service



UT Martin honored faculty, exempt staff and non-exempt staff who have reached career milestones with a University Service Luncheon held Nov. 6. Those honored for 15 years of service shown with Chancellor Yancy Freeman Sr. (at right) are Deanean Smith of the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships, Tina Harris of the Office of Access and Engagement, Dr. Harrisette Spiegel of the Department of Educational Studies, Dr. Phillip Shelton of the Department of Chemistry and Physics, Dr. Jared Teague of the Department of Engineering, Dr. Renee LaFleur of the Department of History and Philosophy and Amy Lee of the UTM Parsons Center, all of whom have worked at UT Martin for 15 years. Not pictured are Dr. Jack Grubaugh of the Department of Biological Sciences, Tammy Hall of the Department of Engineering and Natural Sciences, Dr. Susan Hamilton of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Bill Kaler of Custodial Services, Dr. Lisa Krueger of the Department of Biological Sciences and Todd Sherman of the Department of Health and Human Performance.

Employee Engagement Town Hall set for Jan. 22

An Employee Engagement Town Hall meeting will be held at 2 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 22, in the Phillip W. Watkins Auditorium in the Boling University Center.

Dr. Debbie Stairs, director of human resources, will share the full university-wide results of the Employee Engagement Survey issued last year as well as plans based on the survey's responses.

"We'll celebrate what's working well, openly discuss remaining gaps – including feedback on recent changes – and outline clear, prioritized actions to strengthen our strengths and

address challenges," Stairs said in an email sent out to faculty and staff Jan. 7.

According to Stairs, engaged employees rose from 64.1% to 67.2%.

There were also strong improvements in department leadership, executive leadership and inter-departmental collaboration, she said.

According to surveys from last year and the year before, the statement "The University of Tennessee takes actions to improve employee engagement" jumped 8 percentage points in the most recent survey.



Stairs

Concerns indicated by survey participants included DASH software implementation (usability, training, support needs) and pay equity,

communication and training opportunities.

"These are real and important – and we're already listening," Stairs said in the Jan. 7 email. "Recent system-wide efforts (including enhanced DASH training/resources and targeted reviews) are helping, but we know more work is needed."

The town hall meeting will include specific action plans with timelines, owners and success measures (such as expanded DASH support, communication improvements and equity initiatives).

Faculty, staff honored for 10 years of service



UT Martin honored faculty, exempt staff and non-exempt staff who have reached career milestones with a University Service Luncheon held Nov. 6. Those honored for 10 years of service to the university shown with Chancellor Yancy Freeman Sr. (back row center) are (front row, l-r) Alisha Melton of the Office of Research, Outreach and Economic Development, Jennifer Smiley of the WestStar Leadership Program, Dr. Keith Dooley of the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, Hannah Stewart of the Office of University Relations, Shannon Perry of the Office of Student Affairs, Kimberly Fisher of the UTM Parsons Center, Dr. Henri Giles of the Department of History and Philosophy, (back row, l-r) Dave Chambliss of Grounds, Dr. Verna Baron of the Department of Chemistry and Physics, Linda Rinker of the REED Center, and Martha Barnett of the Office of Academic Records, all of whom have worked at UTM for 10 years. Not pictured are Matt Borden of the UT Foundation, Shelby East of the Department of Social Work, David Fortson of Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning, Andrew Larkins of the Office of Academic Records, Dr. Jamie Mantooth of the Office of the Chancellor, Dr. Daniel Morris of the Department of Agriculture, Geosciences and Natural Resources, Selena Pearce of the Office of Regional Centers and Online Programs, Sheila Scott of the Department of Education, Health and Behavioral Sciences, Dr. Elizabeth Stratton of the Department of Educational Studies and Jaclynn Wilson of the Office of Intercollegiate Athletics.

Deadline to apply for Reagan Faculty Leave is Feb. 1

The UT Martin Alma and Hal Reagan Faculty Leave Program is designed to enable participants to become more effective teachers and scholars by engaging in a variety of academic or renewal experiences.

The deadline to apply for this leave is Sunday, Feb. 1.

Tenured faculty members with six or more years of full-time service at UT Martin are encouraged to apply for a one-year Reagan Faculty Leave at one-half salary or a half-year Reagan Faculty Leave at full salary.

Typically, the half-year leave will be awarded for the spring semester. However, in unique situations, a fall semester award may be considered. A faculty member who has been awarded a leave must wait a minimum

of three years from the end of a previous leave before applying for a subsequent leave.

Faculty Development Grant monies may be used to supplement activities engaged in during the Reagan Leave period, only as the travel relates to specified goals and objectives of the Reagan Leave. However, a faculty member is ineligible for a Faculty Development Grant for one fiscal year following culmination of the leave.

Faculty are eligible for only one Faculty Development Grant in the International Trust category, either individual or group (when funds are available) during an academic year.

Faculty are encouraged to apply for supplementary external grants or other

awards while on leave, as long as the additional resources do not interfere with the stated purpose of the Reagan Leave Program.

To apply, send one original and an email attachment of the signed application, cover sheet, proposal and current curriculum vitae detailing activities for the past five years. The electronic copy of the proposal should be submitted as a Microsoft Word attachment, and other supporting documents may be submitted as .pdf documents.

The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs oversees this leave program. Send questions about the Alma and Hall Reagan Faculty Leave to orsp@utm.edu.

Faculty, staff honored for 5 years of service



UT Martin honored faculty, exempt staff and non-exempt staff who have reached career milestones with a University Service Luncheon held Nov. 6. Those honored for five years of service to the university shown with Chancellor Yancy Freeman Sr. (in the back row at left) are (front row, l-r) Emily Wiley of the Office of Enrollment Communications and Operations, Traci Crawford of the Dunagan Chair of Excellence in Banking, Makala Sitzes of the UT Foundation, Dr. Michael Mathenia of the Department of Music, Pat McKnight of the Paul Meek Library, Dr. Saman Sargolzaei of the Department of Engineering, Dr. Adnan Rasool of the Center for Teaching and Learning, (back row, l-r) Julie Kissiar of the Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages, Marissa Burton of Custodial Services, Bridgette Whitt of the Paul Meek Library and Ronne Cox of the Paul Meek Library. Not pictured are Matthew Adams of Information Technology Services, Dr. Ali Behfamia of the Department of Engineering, Lindsey Brewer of the Healthy Start Program, Sarah Falstrom of the Office of Enrollment Communications and Operations, Jordan Fischer of the Margaret N. Perry Children's Center, Dr. Laura Hatch of the Department of Accounting, Economics and Finance, Briana Jimenez of the Margaret N. Perry Children's Center, Barbara Kunkel of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Robert Lacy of the UTM Ripley Center, Dr. Conrad Pegues of the Paul Meek Library, Dr. Danny Pirtle of the Department of Behavioral Sciences, Austin Swafford of the Office of Intercollegiate Athletics, Charita Warren of the Office of Enrollment Communications and Operations and Brett Whitson of Information Technology Services.

Campus Calendar

Tuesday, Jan. 20

- "Navigating Dificult Conversations for Managers" (Part 1), noon-1 p.m., 206 Boling University Center. Part 2 is scheduled for Jan. 27. Register [at this site](#). Hosted by the UTM Office of Ombuds Services.

Thursday, Jan. 22

- "Collegiality: What It Is, Why It Matters and How To Practice It," third part of the series, noon-1 p.m., via Zoom, register [at this site](#). Hosted by UTM Office of Ombuds Services.
- Employee Engagement Town Hall, 2 p.m., Phillip W. Watkins Auditorium, Boling University Center.
- UTM Research Series, 4 p.m., Paul Meek Library, "Finding Balance in a Fragmented World: How Competition and Dispersal Shape Species Coexistence," Dr. Shalmali Bandyopadhyay.

Friday, Jan. 23

- UTM Advisory Board, 1 p.m., 206 Boling University Center.

Tuesday, Jan. 27

- "Navigating Dificult Conversations for Managers" (Part 2), noon-1 p.m., 206 Boling University Center. Register at this site. Hosted by UTM Office of Ombuds Services.

Monday, Feb. 2

- International Animal Care

and Use Committee, 4 p.m., 124 Gooch Hall.

Tuesday, Feb. 3

- Institutional Review Board, 4 p.m., 124 Gooch Hall.

Friday, Feb. 6

- WestStar Elevate, Russell Duncan Ballroom, Boling University Center.

Events are subject to cancellation; dates, times and sites are subject to change. Send free-admission, on-campus events to Addenda at addenda@utm.edu.

'Coffee and Conversations' program returns to campus

The "Coffee and Conversations with the Chancellor" program enabling faculty and staff to meet with Chancellor Yancy Freeman Sr. will return to UT Martin this semester.

There will be three programs during the spring 2026 semester:

- Friday, Feb. 20, 10:30 a.m., Clement Hall main lobby, Clement Hall and Student Health Center employees.
- Tuesday, March 3, 10 a.m., Center for Student Engagement Suite, Boling University Center, Boling University Center and Student Recreation Center employees.
- Tuesday, March 17, 9 a.m., ITS Presentation Room, Crisp Hall.

Freeman described the program as a time of fellowship and information gathering.

"This will be an informal hour of casual conversation over coffee and an opportunity for me to engage with you and co-workers



Chancellor Yancy Freeman Sr. (at right) speaks at a "Coffee and Conversations with the Chancellor" session last year.

in your building to discuss current issues you are experiencing, personally and professionally," he stated in a letter to faculty and staff in each host building.

"It will also give you an opportunity to share your achievements, ask questions,

network, voice concerns, explore innovative ideas and incentives for moving forward in building up our university, reaching our goal of 10,000 students, and becoming more involved in the teamwork of accomplishing UTM's mission."

Library provides guide for publishing discounts

The Paul Meek Library has created a guide to help UT Martin faculty and departments save on publishing costs.

Through continuing negotiations with publishers to increase open-access support, the library has secured discounts and fee waivers on article processing charges (APCs) as part of existing subscription agreements.

The opportunities are listed in the guide "[Library Open Publishing & APC Discounts](#)" and included in the larger collection of [Faculty Resources](#) maintained by the PML.

This resource makes it easier for researchers to navigate the growing open-access landscape while reducing out-of-pocket



Whitt

publishing expenses for individual faculty and their departments.

For further information, contact assistant professor **Bridgette Whitt**, the library's acquisitions and collection development librarian at bwhitt1@utm.edu.

ORSP Presents:

GRANT WORKSHOP SERIES SPRING 2026



FEB. 4TH MAR. 16TH APR. 13TH



3:00 PM



UC RM 229

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?
EMAIL: ORSP@UTM.EDU

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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