

addenda

The University of Tennessee at Martin Faculty and Staff Newsletter | April 27, 2026

Potential grads make traditional Senior Walk



Faculty, staff and students line the sidewalks between the Boling University Center and Brehm Hall on April 23 for the annual Senior Walk, where seniors take the traditional final walk through the quad as students. In the photo above, onlookers are shown cheering and blowing bubbles as Student Alumni Council seniors walk past.

Parson to deliver commencement address

Tonya Parson of Passport Health in Memphis will deliver the commencement address Saturday, May 2, during morning and afternoon commencement ceremonies.

The ceremonies will be held at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center.

Tickets are not required to attend either ceremony. Doors will open 45 minutes before each event begins.

According to the company website, Passport Health is the largest and leading provider of travel medicine and immunization services in North America.



Parson

Before Passport Health, Parson worked for Saint Francis Hospital in Memphis, was the coordinator of the medical response team, and led the

Tenet Hospital Group in spreading this initiative to all other hospitals in the system.

In 2006, she was voted among the “Top 100 Nurses in Shelby County,” “Caregiver of the Year” by the Tennessee Hospital Association and also received the “Nurse of Distinction Award.”

A 1993 UT Martin graduate with a bachelor’s degree in biological sciences, Parson also holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees in nursing from the Baptist College of Health Sciences and the UT Health Science Center, respectively.

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Spring 2026 Commencement

Times
10 a.m., 2 p.m.

Site
Kathleen and Tom Elam Center

Commencement Address
Tonya Parson, 1993 UT Martin graduate, Passport Health of Memphis

Livestream
[YouTube](#)

More Information
Campus Calendar, Page 8

YoUTMs

highlighting the excellence of our faculty and staff

Dr. Julie Floyd, professor of nursing, was selected to serve on both the Annual Awards and Recognition Committee and the Board of Directors Student Scholarship Committee for the American Psychiatric Nurses Association.

In these roles, she will help review national applications for scholarships, nursing awards and recognitions honoring exceptional service to the community and the nursing

profession. The American Psychiatric Nurses Association is a national organization dedicated to advancing psychiatric-mental health nursing. Its mission focuses on promoting health and wellness through the identification of mental health needs, prevention of mental health challenges and the care and treatment of individuals living with mental health disorders.



Floyd

A poster submitted by UT Martin students at a state symposium won first place in the undergraduate division.

The symposium, the annual Tennessee Water Resources Symposium, met April 15-17 at Montgomery Bell State Park near Dickson.

The poster session included high school, undergraduate and graduate divisions running concurrently in the large meeting room.

The six UT Martin students, all civil engineering majors, were Macy Carman, Ellee Hopkins, Ian Hopkins, Jace Littlefield,

Carter Scott and Dalton Webb. The project from which this poster originated is the Beech River Flood Hazard Study, which is the ENGR 410-411 senior design project for Dr. Greg Nail, professor of engineering, who also attended the symposium.



Students of ENGR 410-411 – taught by Dr. Greg Nail (far left) – who received first place in the undergraduate division poster competition at the Tennessee Water Resources Symposium on April 16 at Montgomery Bell State Park are (l-r) Carter Scott, Dalton Webb, Ian Hopkins, Ellee Hopkins, Macy Carman and Jace Littlefield.

The news at news.utm.edu

[Dyersburg students consult with UT Martin on accessibility project](#)

[Captain's Challenge sets high marks in gifting, donors](#)

[Scholarship honors late radio personality Stewart Byers](#)

UT MARTIN | NEWS

Upcoming Skyhawk Home Events

Friday, May 1

- *Softball vs. Southern Indiana, noon (dh), Bettye Giles Softball Field.

Saturday, May 2

- *Softball vs. Southern Indiana, 1:30 p.m., Bettye Giles Softball Field.

Friday, May 8

- *Baseball vs. Little Rock, 5 p.m., Skyhawk Baseball Field.

Saturday, May 9

- *Baseball vs. Little Rock, 3 p.m., Skyhawk Baseball Field.

Sunday, May 10

- *Baseball vs. Little Rock, 1 p.m., Skyhawk Baseball Field.

** - conference competition; dh - double-header (baseball and softball); full athletics schedules can be found at utmsports.com. Dates and times are subject to change.*

Read more UT Martin news at [news.utm.edu!](https://news.utm.edu)

YoUTMs

highlighting the excellence of our faculty and staff



Blanchard

Dr. Tom Blanchard, Dr. Kevin Pitz, Dr. James Smart and Dr. Dawn Wilkins, all professors of biology, and **Dr. Jaycob Warfel**, assistant professor of biology – along with 14 UT Martin students – attended the 87th annual meeting of the Association of Southeastern Biologists, held March 25-28 in Mobile, Alabama.

Seth Hatchett, a senior biology, chemistry and electrical engineering triple-major, gave an oral presentation co-authored by Smart titled “A frameshift mutation in BMP4 is responsible for the spider phenotype in Ball Pythons (*Python regius*).”

Sydne Hopkins, a senior ecology and conservation biology major, presented a poster co-authored by Pitz titled “Parasitic Hymenopteran diversity on a college campus in northwest Tennessee.”

Hopkins also presented a poster based on her summer REU (National Science Foundation-funded research experiences for undergraduates) titled “Understanding resource, connectivity, and edge effects with *Opuntia mesacantha* and *Dactylopius coccus*.” This poster was co-authored by Jori Ray of Tusculum University and Thomas A.H. Smith of

the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Savannah River Site.

Pitz presented a poster co-authored by Ella Willis, a senior ecology and conservation biology major, and Blanchard titled “Assessing prevalence of snake fungal disease in two populations of Western Cottonmouth (*Agkistrodon piscivorus leucostoma*) in northwest Tennessee.”

Dylan Hembree, a senior ecology and conservation biology major, gave a talk about his research with Warfel titled “Analysis of Microplastic content in Fishes from a northwestern Tennessee river system.”

Samantha Upshaw, a senior cell and molecular biology major, presented a poster co-authored with Warfel titled “Metabolic health is improved in lethal yellow mice during inhibition of lipid oxidation in skeletal muscle.”

Elizabeth Lattus, a senior ecology and conservation biology major, gave an oral presentation co-authored by Blanchard titled “The effects of stream restoration on assemblage structure and seasonal variability in aquatic macroinvertebrates in two first-order tributaries of the Middle Fork Forked Deer River in West

Tennessee.”

Easton Walker, a senior ecology and conservation biology major, and Noah Hickman, a senior ecology and conservation biology major, presented a poster co-authored by Blanchard titled “A survey of amphibians and reptiles across different habitat types at the ‘Natural Area’ of the Reelfoot Lake Environmental Field Station in Obion County, Tennessee.”

Mickey Rodriguez, a senior natural resources management major, and Kat Ryan, a junior ecology and conservation biology major, presented a poster co-authored with Wilkins titled “Who visits nest boxes meant for Barred Owls and Eastern Screech-Owls in northwest Tennessee?”

Landon Dukes, a senior organismal biology major, and Evan Street, a senior cell and molecular biology major, presented a poster co-authored by **Dr. Joaquin Goyret**, professor of biology, titled “Associative learning of the *Manduca sexta*.”

Hickman presented a poster co-authored by **Dr. Lisa Krueger**, professor of biology, titled “Characterization of the vegetative community within the riparian zone of a channelized stream in West Tennessee.”



Goyret



Krueger



Pitz



Smart



Warfel



Wilkins

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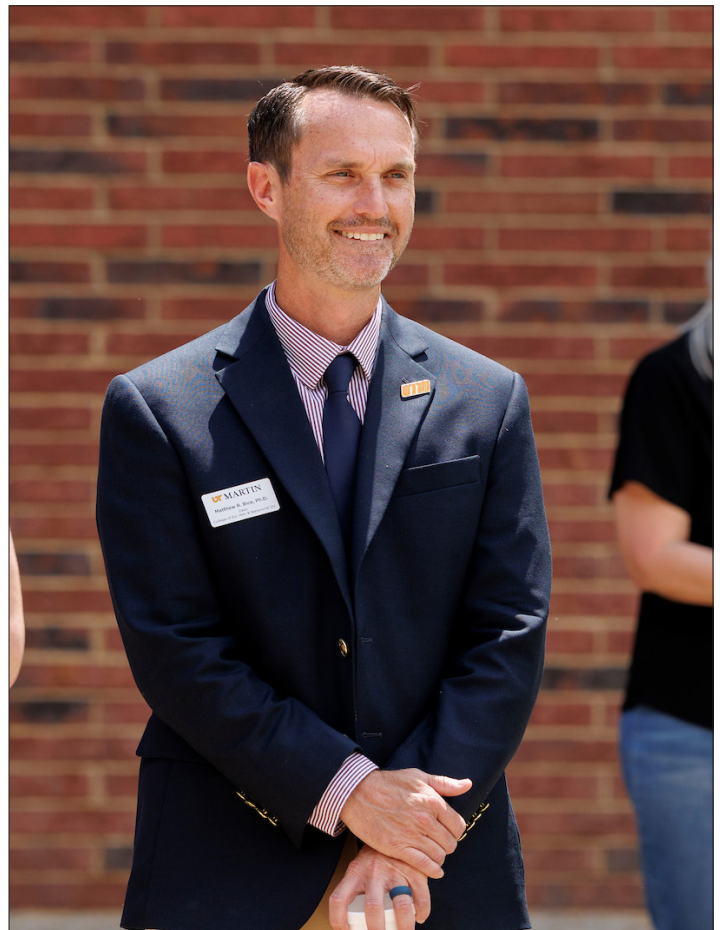
Toyama brings JOI to Tennessee universities



Erina Toyama (at far right in the top photo and holding the sanshin, a traditional Okinawan musical instrument, in the bottom photo), coordinator of the UT Martin Japan Outreach Initiative, visited Vanderbilt University on April 13 and 14 (above photo) and Belmont University on April 15 (bottom photo). During the three-day special cultural session, more than 150 students enjoyed learning about various aspects of Japanese culture, especially the music session featuring the sanshin. In the above photo, students are making goheimochi, a type of mochi (rice cake) made in the Chubu region of central Japan. In the bottom photo, students at Belmont show postcards with a Bingata pattern and Japanese calligraphy. Toyama said it was a good opportunity to meet students motivated to learn about different cultures. She hopes to connect with students from different schools through Japanese culture, helping each other expand future opportunities. Toyama is completing the first year of her two-year tenure as the Japan Outreach Initiative coordinator.



Couch, Bice welcomed to UT Martin campus



Dr. Laurie Couch (left), provost and senior vice chancellor for academic affairs, and Dr. Matt Bice, dean of the College of Education, Health, and Behavioral Sciences, were honored with a reception April 23. Couch was officially named to her position Dec. 16 by Chancellor Yancy Freeman Sr., and Bice was named to his position by Freeman Jan. 5. The reception was held in the courtyard of the Latimer-Smith Engineering and Science Building.

Reception honors Grubaugh's retirement

Dr. Jack Grubaugh, professor of biology, greeted well-wishers at a retirement reception held in his honor April 24 in the Tennessee Room of the Holland McCombs Center. The event was hosted by the Department of Biological Sciences and the Department of Agriculture, Geosciences, and Natural Resources. Grubaugh has been an instructor at UT Martin since 2010. The note posted with red tape reads "I'm at the Beetle Barn," a note he would put on his office door when he went to tend to the beetles he enjoyed so much. There was also a jar at the reception so people could write down their favorite "Grubaughism" or favorite memory and put it in the jar for the retiring professor to read later.



Students recognize Child Abuse Prevention Month



Students in Dr. Cayce Batts' SWRK 290: Social Work Program Orientation class set out blue pinwheels in front of the Sociology Building on April 21 to recognize Child Abuse Prevention Month. Shown in the photo are social work majors (l-r) Layla Williams, Ellie Baker, Kaitlyn Egbert, Kasha Whitworth, Jess Colvin and Briyelle Pearson. Pinwheels were provided by CASA (Court-Appointed Special Advocates) of Southwest Kentucky. Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer with CASA can contact Kelly Cox at childadv2@calldialog.net.

UT Martin students attend Miami conference



Selected students from UT Martin investment and portfolio management classes attended, participated and presented their investment strategies at the Students Managed Investment Fund Consortium - South conference April 10-11 in Miami, Florida. At the conference, Dr. Mahmoud Haddad, professor of finance, moderated a session on one of the best student portfolio return metrics. Those who attended the conference from UT Martin were (l-r) junior accounting and finance major McCoy Lattus of Martin; junior finance and agribusiness major Wyatt Carroll of Linden; Haddad; junior finance and management information systems major Sindy Martinez of Obion; sophomore accounting and finance major Owen Richards of Morgan Hill, California; junior finance major Ryan Lockett of Cross Plains; junior finance major Jayson Ritz of Dresden; and graduate finance major Nicole Gallagher of Dresden.

Mehr named to leadership roles at Selmer, Coon Creek

Jonathan Mehr has joined UT Martin as the new director of the UT Martin McNairy County Center/Selmer. He will also provide administrative oversight of the UT Martin Coon Creek Science Center.

Mehr succeeds Alan Youngerman in both positions following Youngerman's recent retirement.

The announcement was made by the Office of Regional Centers and Online Programs.

A McNairy County native, Mehr is a graduate of McNairy County Schools, the UT Martin McNairy County Center/Selmer and UT Martin Online Programs.

He brings experience as an educator and military veteran,



Mehr

along with a strong commitment to student success, community engagement and regional growth.

"Jonathan's strong ties to the community, combined with his passion for student success and regional engagement, make him an excellent fit for this role," said



Youngerman

Erica Bell, executive director of Regional Centers and Online Programs. "We are excited to see his leadership strengthen and expand the impact of both the Selmer center and the Coon Creek Science Center."

The UT Martin McNairy County Center/Selmer is one

of six regional centers that extend the university's reach across Tennessee. Serving as gateways to higher education, the regional centers transform lives by expanding access to degree programs, delivering comprehensive student support and fostering meaningful community partnerships.

The UT Martin Coon Creek Science Center is a nationally-recognized natural history site and outdoor classroom, offering unique educational experiences focused on paleontology, geology and environmental science. It serves K-12 students, university classes and visitors from across the region, supporting academic learning and public outreach.

ADDRESS from PAGE 1

Dr. Yancy Freeman Sr., UT Martin chancellor, will preside over the two ceremonies and confer degrees.

Brian Daniels, University of Tennessee System chief audit and compliance officer, will bring greetings and represent UT President Randy Boyd at the ceremonies. A sign-language interpreter will provide services for the hearing impaired during both commencement events.

The 10 a.m. ceremony will include undergraduate and graduate-degree candidates

from the colleges of agriculture and applied sciences, business and global affairs, engineering and natural sciences, and humanities and fine arts.

The 2 p.m. ceremony will include undergraduate and graduate-degree candidates from the College of Education, Health and Behavioral Sciences. Each ceremony will be livestreamed at www.facebook.com/utmartin and www.youtube.com/utmartin and archived on YouTube for later viewing.

UT TENNESSEE UTM UT MARTIN

A CELEBRATION OF FIRST-GENERATION GRADUATES

THURSDAY, APRIL 30TH, 2026
4:00PM
UNIVERSITY CENTER BALLROOM

REGISTER HERE:

UT MARTIN OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

UTM AT Night

Join us at Beau Monde Vineyards for an unforgettable **end-of-year celebration** filled with food, fun, fellowship, and exciting giveaways for **UTM faculty and staff!** Bring your lawn chairs and **enjoy great BBQ and good vibes** in a beautiful outdoor atmosphere.

FEATURING FOOD TO PURCHASE FROM DONALD SOUTHERN FROM SIMPLY SOUTHERN BBQ!

APRIL 30TH | 6-8PM
📍 1300 Pleasant Hill Rd, Martin, TN 38237

Faculty recognized at Honors Day



Those present for faculty members receiving honors during UT Martin's Honors Day program April 12 were (front row, l-r) Dr. Saman Sargolzaei, associate professor of engineering, UTAA Outstanding Teacher Award; Dr. Phillip Shelton, professor of chemistry, Coffey Outstanding Teacher Award; Dr. Richard Garlitz, professor of history, OVC Outstanding Faculty Commitment to Student Success Award; Dr. Austin Ferrell, assistant professor of education, UTAA Outstanding Teacher Award; Chancellor Yancy Freeman Sr.; (second row, l-r) Dr. Joaquin Goyret, professor of biology, Cunningham Outstanding Teacher/Scholar Award; Dr. Sean Walker, professor of management, Outstanding Academic Adviser Award; Dr. Ashley Kilburn, professor of marketing, Cunningham Outstanding Teacher/Scholar Award; Bailey Parker, Student Government Association president; (back row, l-r) Dr. Andy Lewter, vice chancellor for student affairs; Dr. Tammie Patterson, associate professor of educational studies, UT Martin Parsons Center; Dr. Stephanie Kolitsch, associate provost and SACS-COC liaison; and Dr. Laurie Couch, provost and senior vice chancellor for academic affairs.

Campus Calendar

Wednesday, April 29

- DASH, compensation, 3-4 p.m., register [at this site](#).

Thursday, April 30

- First to Finish: Celebration of graduating first-generation students, 4 p.m.,

Duncan Ballroom, Boling University Center.

Saturday, May 2

Commencement, Kathleen and Tom Elam Center.

[Facebook link](#).

[YouTube link](#).

- 10 a.m., colleges of Agriculture and Applied Sciences, Business and Global Affairs, Engineering and Natural Sciences, Humanities and Fine Arts.

- 2 p.m., College of

Education, Health and Behavioral Services.

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.

Students, staff work at Special Olympics event



Several UT Martin health and human performance students and UT Martin staff turned out April 24 to work at the Special Olympics Upper West Tennessee Area 7 competition at Union City High School. Those turning out to assist the athletes were (front row, l-r) Hannah Stewart, assistant director of marketing, Office of University Relations; health and human performance students Analia King, Chloe Leal and Hailey Murphey; Shelley Stout, lecturer of health and human performance; health and human performance students Gracie Adams, Audrey Jackson, Carrington Lifsey and Ashlyn Willis; social work student Rachel Shaikh; Emma Bruner, social media coordinator for the Office of University Relations; (back row, l-r) Cayce Wain-Scott, administrative assistant in the Department of Educational Studies; Dr. Claret Onukogu, assistant professor of health and human performance; Lexie Meyners, graduate assistant in health and human performance; health and human performance student Autumn Taylor; Dr. Rick West, chair in the Department of Health and Human Performance; nursing student Emily Long; education students Emily Yucalevich and Leah Crosno; and Dr. Clinton Smith, chair of the Department of Educational Studies and Special Olympics organizer.

You Tell Me

• **Question** – How many UT Martin-branded license plates are currently on the road and in use?

• **Answer** – UT Martin released two alternate athletics marks in 2020 that coincided with the 25th year since the creation of the Skyhawk name for UT Martin intercollegiate athletics teams. A new redesigned UT Martin specialty license plate featuring one of the marks was first made available for sale Feb. 3, 2021, in Weakley County. As of April 2026, 249 of the redesigned plates have been sold compared to the 217 reported sold in November 2023. Add 13 UT Martin personalized plates and 105 of the former design that are still in use for a total of 367 active registrations. You can order your UT Martin plate online or at the Weakley County Clerk's office for a cost of \$35 to renew annually.

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

addenda

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