

addenda

The University of Tennessee at Martin Faculty and Staff Newsletter | May 4, 2026

Three receive Meek Leadership Awards



Taking part in the spring 2026 Meek Leadership Awards presentation May 2 at the UT Martin commencement exercises were (l-r) recipients Anthony Lain of Pegram; Taylor Burke of Altona, Illinois; and Callie Holloway of Jackson and Dr. Andy Lewter, vice chancellor for the Division of Student Affairs. The three students were among the 711 graduates attending the spring 2026 commencement exercises.

First CLA cohort graduates



Members of the first cohort of the Chancellor's Leadership Academy include (front row, l-r) Tammy Stanford, Dr. Margaret Lewis, Dr. Kelli Deere, Dr. Brittany Cole, Ashley Bynum, Dr. Henri Giles, (back row, l-r) Dr. Saman Sargolzaei, Will Gibson, Dr. Jamie Mantooth, Jennifer Schlicht, Callie Smithson, Dr. Steve Elliott and Chancellor Yancy Freeman Sr. Not pictured are Dr. Austin Ferrell and Chad Worley. The Chancellor's Leadership Academy is a program to bolster the abilities of university leaders, and was part of the UT Martin 2025-2030 Strategic Plan.

YoUTMs

highlighting the excellence of our faculty and staff



Foltz

Dr. Bryan Foltz, professor of information systems and Dr. Cooper Johnson and Dr. Jamye Long, both professors of management, co-authored a peer-reviewed journal article titled "[Leadership Styles as a Strategy in Addressing Information Security and Cybersecurity](#)

UT Martin served as a regional testing site April 27 for the 68th annual Statewide High School Mathematics Contest, sponsored by the Tennessee Mathematics Teachers' Association.

A total of 287 students from 15 high schools across Carroll, Gibson, Henry, Madison, Obion and Weakley counties participated in the competition.

Students competed in six divisions: Algebra I (72 students), geometry (58 students), Algebra



Johnson

[Concerns](#)" in the Feb. 20 issue of Journal of Applied Business and Economics (Vol. 28, No. 2).

This article explores the value of various leadership styles in developing an organizational strategy as related to information and cybersecurity concerns.

The article is a 2026

II (63 students), statistics (32 students), pre-calculus (37 students) and calculus (25 students).

The contest is designed to promote interest in mathematics and recognize outstanding student achievement through regional and statewide competition.

Dr. Robert Niedzialomski, professor of mathematics and statistics, served as the local coordinator for the UT Martin site.



Long

publication for Foltz, Long and Johnson, and meets the faculty qualification criteria for scholarly academic with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, which currently accredits the College of Business and Global Affairs.



Niedzialomski



Garcia-Fernandez

Dr. Anton Garcia-Fernandez, professor of Spanish, has been acting as Spanish language consultant for a theater play at the Ned R. McWherter West Tennessee Cultural Arts Center in Jackson.

It's a bilingual version of "The Velveteen Rabbit/El Conejo de Terciopelo," directed by David

McCall with a cast of high schoolers and middle schoolers.

The production will tour the local elementary and middle schools in and around Jackson in early May and will also be performed at the Ned McWherter Cultural Arts Center at 2 p.m., Saturday, May 9. Admission is free.

The news at news.utm.edu

[Evelyn C. Johnson](#)
Conference of
Excellence set
for May 19

UT MARTIN | NEWS

Upcoming Skyhawk Home Events

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.

After this week, Addenda will begin its summer schedule of publishing every other Monday. The next issue is scheduled to be published Monday, May 18.

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

YoUTMs

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Dr. Shalmali Bandyopadhyay, assistant professor of mathematics and statistics, co-organized and facilitated an Association for Women in Mathematics (AWM) panel Jan. 5 titled “Shattering the Myths: Hiring Women in Mathematics,” alongside Keta Henderson of Elon University at the Joint Mathematics Meetings in Washington, D.C. Panelists included (l-r) Bandyopadhyay, Maya Chhetri of the University of North Carolina Greensboro, Nsoki Mavinga of Swarthmore College, Nicole Panza of Francis Marion University, Stephanie Salomone of Portland State University and Christine Kelly of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The panel addressed persistent misconceptions surrounding the hiring of women in mathematics, including issues related to merit, productivity, and the “pipeline problem.” Drawing on extensive hiring committee experience, the panelists offered practical strategies for promoting fair and equitable evaluation processes. The session drew strong audience engagement, reflecting the broader mathematical community’s commitment to fostering inclusive and equitable hiring practices.

Faculty and staff from the Paul Meek Library participated in the Tennessee Library Association’s 2026 annual conference April 21-23 in Knoxville.

Ronne Cox, electronic resources and discovery librarian, presented a session “Rolling for Success: Building Connections through Dungeons & Dragons.”

Heidi Busch, public services librarian, presented a session, “Bridges for Childrens and Young Adult Literature: Children’s Book Awards in the Southeast United States.”

Busch also served as a panelist on two sessions titled “Stepping into Leadership” and “Bridging Access: Creative Approaches to Community Connection.”



Cox



Busch

Ben Jones, assistant vice chancellor for development, and Dr. Erik Nordberg, dean of the Paul Meek Library, participated in the 2026 conference of the Academic Library and Development Network held April 12-14 in Murfreesboro.

Their presentation, “Using a Focus Group Luncheon to Improve Donor Engagement Strategies at a Small Academic Library,” reported on a focus

group event they organized on campus last November.

Nordberg served as co-host and sponsorship chair for the biannual national conference, which attracts library leaders and development officers to discuss fundraising and donor strategies for academic libraries. Copies of their presentation slides are available on the conference website.



Dr. Erik Nordberg (left) and Ben Jones are shown at the Academic Library and Development Network conference held April 12-14 in Murfreesboro.

Showing support for sexual assault victims



Several people across campus and around the world wore denim April 29 – known as Denim Day – to show support for victims of sexual assault and to promote awareness of sexual assault. Denim Day is a tradition that started in Rome, Italy, following a rape case there where the verdict was overturned Feb. 10, 1999, in favor of the accused person because the victim was wearing tight jeans, and so must have given consent. Women in the Italian parliament protested by wearing jeans, and the protest soon came to the United States, starting in Los Angeles in April 1999. Showing support in the Hall-Moody Administration Building in the top photo were (clockwise from lower left) Sara Jane Kendall, senior auditor for the University of Tennessee System; Hannah Stewart of the Office of University Relations; Jake Bynum, chief of staff in the Chancellor's Office; Samantha Mayo of the Department of Human Resources; and Emma Bruner of the Office of University Relations. In the center left photo are (l-r) Shannon Dowdy and Anna Chapman of the Office of University Relations, Jahnae Johnson of the WestStar Leadership Program and Bud Grimes, vice chancellor for communications and marketing. In the center right photo are (l-r) Sarah Cornwell, David Snow and Dylan Ingram of the Office of University Relations; Ann Joiner, associate general counsel; and Nathan Morgan of the Office of University Relations. In the bottom left photo, showing their support are Shannon Perry (left), director of the Office of Student Conduct and Care, and Ashley Mayton of the United Way's Greater Jackson Financial Empowerment Center. In the bottom right photo, from the Office of Regional Centers and Online Programs are (l-r) Melanie Parham, Selena Pearce, Audrey Cochran, Jenny Camacho-Salgado, Destiny Alexander, Alyssa Pettit and Adrian Harding.





Pictured following the Weakley County Chamber of Commerce Membership Banquet on April 23 were (l-r) Ahsan Chaudhry, MD; Penny Harding, chief nursing officer; Tammy Bivens, hospital administrative assistant; Gina Lattus, physical therapy; Kevin Decker, hospital CEO; and Bud Grimes, UT Martin university relations and hospital advisory board chair. Also serving on the board from the university but not pictured are Jake Bynum and Dr. Bonnie Daniel. West Tennessee Healthcare Volunteer Hospital was named Large Business of the Year by the chamber.

WTHVH named Large Business of the Year

West Tennessee Healthcare Volunteer Hospital was named Large Business of the Year by the Weakley County Chamber of Commerce on April 23 during the 2026 membership banquet held in the Boling University Center's Duncan Ballroom.

Hannah Stewart, chamber president and assistant director of marketing in university relations, emceed the banquet. Also participating was **Callie Smithson** from agriculture, geoscience and natural resources, the chamber's past president.

To be eligible for membership awards, nominees must meet specific criteria, including active chamber membership, community engagement, and alignment with the chamber's mission of driving economic prosperity.

"This honor means a lot because it speaks to the people behind it," said Kevin Decker, hospital CEO. "Our team members are more than health-care workers, they're our neighbors, friends and familiar faces throughout Weakley County. They care for this community both inside and outside our

hospital walls, and this recognition belongs to every one of them."

Volunteer Hospital stays actively involved across Weakley County through partnerships with local schools, UT Martin, community organizations and events that help strengthen the region. In fiscal year 2025 alone, the hospital provided approximately \$13 million in compensation and \$2 million in employee benefits, while also supporting local businesses through an estimated \$1.3 million in annual local spending.

The hospital has also been recognized for excellence in patient care, including designation as an accredited Chest Pain Center, Zero Harm recognition, and awards across wound care, stroke care and other key service lines.

The hospital provides clinical experience for the university's nursing students, some of whom are hired by the hospital following graduation. Penny Harding, a UT Martin graduate and the hospital's chief nursing officer, serves on the university's

Department of Nursing Advisory Board.

Also, three university staff members serve on the hospital's advisory board: **Jake Bynum**, Office of the Chancellor; **Dr. Bonnie Daniel**, Instructional Technology Center; and **Bud Grimes**, Office of University Relations.

In another recognition, the following UT Martin employees graduated from Leadership Weakley County: **Payton Morrison**, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs; **Casey Bohr**, Office of Undergraduate Admissions; **Lollie Adams**, Office of University Outreach; **Holly Dethloff**, Office of Development; and **Victoria Sims**, Department of Management, Marketing and Information Systems.

Also, **Ashley Bynum**, senior associate athletic director for internal operations, received the 2026 Emerging Leader Award. The award was presented by Stewart on behalf of the Weakley County Young Professionals. The award recognizes a member of the Weakley County Young Professionals organization.

Student team demonstrates sprayer vehicle

The UT Martin Brain Autonomy and Resiliency Lab recently welcomed Amy McNeil, executive director of the Tennessee Corn Promotion Board, for a visit and project

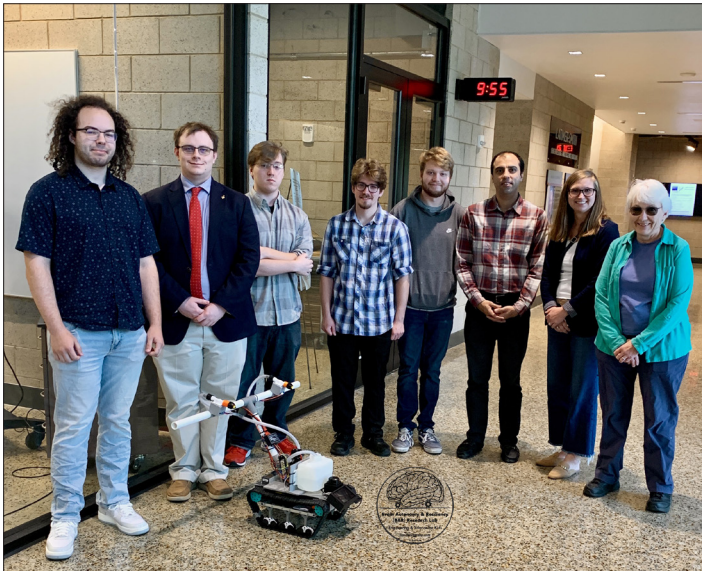
demonstration highlighting the lab's latest work in sustainable agriculture.

Supported by the Tennessee Corn Promotion Board, the UT Martin team is advancing

a project that blends robotics, artificial intelligence and environmental stewardship.

Led by **Dr. Saman Sargolzaei**, associate professor of engineering, the team has developed an autonomous ground vehicle that detects weeds in real time and applies pesticides only where needed, reducing chemical use, costs and environmental impact.

The system combines lidar (laser image detection and ranging)-based navigation with a camera vision model powered by YOLO (You Only Look Once) deep learning to identify and localize weeds with high accuracy. Early results show effective weed control while minimizing unnecessary spraying.



Shown at the project demonstration for an autonomous ground vehicle that detects weeds in real time and applies pesticides only where needed are (l-r) Connor Viana; Seth Hatchett; autonomous sprayer team members Jesse Warren, Justin Finn and Thomas Paxton; Dr. Saman Sargolzaei; Amy McNeil, executive director of the Tennessee Corn Promotion Board; and Dr. Barbara Darroch, professor of plant and soil science. Not pictured is Arden Stanley, a member of the autonomous sprayer team.

Reception set May 13 for Jones' retirement

A reception will be held from 2 to 4 p.m., Wednesday, May 13, to honor and celebrate **Janie Crews Jones**, library specialist, who announced her retirement.

The reception is an open, public event, to be held at the North Windows of the Paul Meek Library.

Jones has worked 48 years in higher education, with more than 30 of those years at UT Martin. She began at UT Martin, then went to Georgia Tech before returning to UT Martin.

Her work has supported thousands of students, teaching faculty, co-workers, student assistants and community patrons.

Community band seeks local performers

The Martin Community Band is putting out a call for people who play musical instruments to take part in the band this summer.

The MCB is in its 14th year and is open to musicians of all ages and levels; the band routinely has middle-schoolers through retirees students, amateurs and a few professionals.

The Martin Community Band rehearses on Tuesday evenings in the UTM Fine Arts Building Band Rehearsal Hall (Room 136) from 7 to 9 p.m. from May 26 to July 2. It plays three concerts June 4, June 18

and July 2), each with a new program.

Performances are at The Stage at the Martin Public Library, and they have become a staple of the summer in Martin.

Participation in the band is free. To register to participate complete the Martin Community Band Registration Form found [here](#). Current and past programs as well as frequently asked questions are [at this link](#).

For more information, contact Dr. John Oelrich, professor of music, at joelrich@utm.edu.

2026-27 Reagan Leave recipients announced

UT Martin has selected three faculty members to receive support through the Alma and Hal Reagan Faculty Leave Program, a long-standing university program designed to help faculty become more effective teachers and scholars through focused academic and renewal experiences.

Recipients of the 2026-27 Reagan Leave awards are **Dr. Nathan Howard**, professor of history; **Dr. Daniel McDonough**, professor of history; and **Dr. Daniel J. Nappo**, professor of Spanish.

Howard's leave project, titled "The Voice, the Self, and the Senses in Early Christian Worship," explores why early Christians emphasized vocal music in worship.

Drawing on theological, literary and liturgical sources, Howard will investigate how ancient understandings of the voice and the senses shaped early Christian practice. His project will contribute to a larger book manuscript and includes research travel, writing, and presentation of findings at the International Conference on Patristic Studies at Oxford.

McDonough's leave project will support completion of research for two book-length



Howard

studies on Boston during the American Revolution.

One project focuses on William Molineaux, a Sons of Liberty leader whose role in revolutionary Boston has received limited biographical treatment. The second examines the town of Boston between the Boston Tea Party of December 1773 and the Declaration of Independence in July 1776, including the period of British occupation.

McDonough's work aims to deepen scholarly understanding of Boston's revolutionary movement and the individuals who shaped it, while also informing his teaching in colonial America and the American Revolution.

Nappo's Reagan Leave project centers on a book-length study of Mexican cinema in the post-



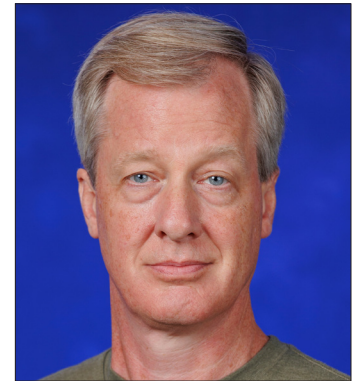
McDonough

Revolutionary era, especially the period widely recognized as the country's cinematic "Golden Age" from 1936 to 1950.

Using a cultural studies framework, Nappo will examine how filmmakers drew on popular imagery, folklore and shared traditions tied to Mexican identity, helping shape film culture and broader national identity.

His leave will support archival research, article development, conference presentations and preparation of a book manuscript intended for submission to an academic press.

The Reagan Leave Program encourages faculty to pursue intensive scholarly and professional projects that strengthen both teaching and research. Faculty are



Nappo

also encouraged to seek supplementary external grants or awards while on leave, provided those resources do not interfere with the stated purpose of the leave project.

Oversight of the program is coordinated through the Office of Research, Outreach and Economic Development, and applications are reviewed by the UT Martin Faculty Research and Development Committee, composed of faculty representatives from the university's five colleges.

The first Reagan Leave awards were presented during the 1989-90 academic year.

For more information about faculty research and development opportunities at UT Martin, contact the [Office of Research, Outreach and Economic Development](#).

You Tell Me

• **Question** – Are university employees still prohibited from accessing TikTok or other social media platforms that are operated or hosted by a company in China?

• **Answer** – Yes, Gov. Bill Lee signed a law April 23, 2023, that prohibits Tennessee public higher education institutions from allowing access to social media platforms operated or hosted by a company based in China on the institution's network. The law remains in effect and applies to internet services provided by an institution through a hard-wired or wireless network connection. This means that students, faculty, staff and the public will be blocked while using the university's IT network if they attempt to access TikTok or other social media platforms (WeChat, Sina Weibo, Tencent QQ, Tencent Video, Xiao HongShu, Douban, Zhihu, Meituan and Toutiao) that are operated or hosted by a company in China. The law does not prohibit students, faculty, staff or the public from accessing TikTok or other such Chinese social media platforms through an individual's own personal network connection or a third-party network. The law recognizes several key exceptions. It does not apply to institutions or employees of such institutions if downloading, accessing or using such a social media platform is necessary to perform: (1) law enforcement activities; (2) investigatory functions to carry out official duties for bona fide law enforcement, investigative or public safety purposes; or (3) audit, compliance or legal functions of the institution.

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

Cybersecurity students attend Embry-Riddle event

Two graduating senior cybersecurity majors from UT Martin – Molly Corgan of Cary, North Carolina, and Connor Gladish of Adamsville – represented the institution at the second annual CYBER-CARE Symposium, held April 13-15 in Daytona Beach, Florida, and hosted by Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

The symposium, themed “Safeguarding Transportation Cybersecurity in the AI Age,” brought together researchers to explore emerging challenges at the intersection of artificial intelligence and transportation systems.

With a mission to help ensure the safety and resilience of the nation’s transportation and infrastructure systems, the CYBER-CARE initiative convenes experts from academia, government and non-governmental organizations to address the growing complexities of transportation in today’s digital era.

Corgan and Gladish presented their undergraduate research project, “Machine Learning-Based Anomaly Detection in IoT-Enabled Transportation Networks.” Their work explores how machine-learning techniques can be leveraged to identify irregular patterns and potential security threats within increasingly connected transportation infrastructures.

As transportation systems continue to integrate IoT technologies, ensuring the integrity and resilience of these networks remains a critical concern.

Notably, Corgan and Gladish were the only undergraduate



UT Martin graduating seniors studying cybersecurity Molly Corgan and Connor Gladish are shown at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida.

presenters at the symposium, distinguishing themselves among a field composed of master’s and doctoral students, as well as faculty. Their presentation was well received, reflecting the quality of their research and their ability to communicate complex technical concepts effectively. The

students plan to submit their work for publication in the near future.

The project was conducted under the guidance of **Dr. Jian Wang**, assistant professor of computer science. **Dr. Lily J. Pharris**, assistant professor of computer science, and **Dawn Dill**, Department of Computer

Science administrative associate, accompanied the students to the symposium, providing mentorship and support throughout the event.

The trip was supported by the 2025-26 CENS Undergraduate Research Grant and the UT Martin Department of Computer Science.

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