UT Martin celebrates 25 years of Skyhawk mascot

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UT Martin will hold a virtual commencement at 10 a.m., Saturday, May 2, in lieu of the traditional in-person ceremony. The event is closed to the public and all participants will engage in social distancing in order to comply with CDC COVID-19 control guidelines.

The commencement will feature remarks from UT President Randy Boyd, UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver, UT Martin Provost Philip Acree Cavalier, UT Martin SGA President Devin Majors, Campus Minister Amanda Crice and UT Martin Alumni Association President Amy West. Andy Lewter, vice chancellor for student affairs, will announce the recipients of the Paul and Martha Meek Award, and Doug Cook, chair of the Department of Visual and Theatre Arts, will serve as the Mace Bearer during the procession.

The ceremony will be live-streamed via Facebook Live at www.facebook.com/utmartin and YouTube at www.youtube.com/utmartin. The ceremony will be archived on YouTube with closed captioning included for later viewing.

In recognition of the more than 700 undergraduate and graduate students receiving degrees, the name and photo of each graduate will be aired during the ceremony.

An in-person graduation ceremony is currently being planned for August 2020 in the Elam Center. More information will be released about this event as further decisions are made.

For more information, contact the Office of University Relations at 731-881-7615.
Dr. Harriette Spiegel, faculty member in the Educational Studies Department in the College of Education, Health, and Behavioral Sciences, is the recipient of a 2020-2021 Fulbright Scholar research and teaching award. Her research will explore questions about digital accessibility, and she will deliver training on creating accessible digital materials. Spiegel has been studying digital accessibility since writing her doctoral dissertation on the experiences of individuals with visual disabilities while using the Internet. She is looking forward to expanding awareness of digital accessibility among educators, and will be using her experience as an online instructor with UT Martin to inform her research. She will serve at St. Mary’s University in Nova Scotia, Canada, beginning January, 2021. The Fulbright Scholar Program is named after J. William Fulbright, and is one of the most prestigious international exchange programs dedicated to seeking out individuals of achievement.

Destin Tucker, director of undergraduate admissions, and Dr. Andy Lewter, vice chancellor for student affairs, responded to media requests for interviews regarding UT Martin’s response to the COVID-19 crisis. Tucker spoke with WBBJ reporter Corallys Ortiz about changes in the university’s Summer Orientation and Registration schedule in a story that aired April 21. Lewter spoke with Jackson Sun reporter Lasherica Thornton about students still living on campus during the current crisis. The story published April 23.

Students, faculty and staff have, for the most part, left campus as the COVID-19 crisis continues to disrupt UT Martin’s normal spring semester routine. However, one resource that the UT Martin community has consistently depended upon to deliver news is still producing news daily, just in a new location.

WUTM FM 90.3 “The Hawk,” student radio station programmed out of Gooch Hall, has continued to air news and entertaining programs even though its employees now have restricted access to working in the station. These student journalists are facing new obstacles every day and are learning to overcome them using creative measures.

While working from home, News Director Kayla Brooks, of Dickson, who believes disseminating current news is just as important now as ever, has resorted to producing newscasts from the most acoustically-sound space in her home: the bathtub.

“I am having to write my own broadcast stories, ... going into my bathroom, closing the door, sealing myself into the bathtub as acoustically as possible and recording it on my phone, then sending it to my computer, editing it, and sending it to our engineer (Brian Thomas),” Brooks said. “Then he is having to do all of this work to make it sound good because it was from my bathtub and then putting it on air.”

Brooks says while the process is unlike any she ever expected to experience as a journalist or even a student-journalist, she appreciates the opportunity to cover such an important event in history. The ability to be flexible, even if that means producing a newscast from her bathroom, is a lesson she knows she will take with her as she pursues her communications career after graduation.

Continued on page 3
Mascot continued from page 1

hiring of Benny Hollis, the first athletics director for both men’s and women’s programs, who wanted a distinguished, gender-neutral, marketable mascot that could easily be associated with UT Martin.

In 1995, the Skyhawk mascot’s first public appearance occurred during the historic football game featuring the first-ever Skyhawk-named football team and Bethel University, in which UT Martin defeated Bethel 97-7. That fall, students and faculty held a mascot-naming election and eventually decided on “Captain.” Captain Skyhawk has continued to serve at university and athletic events since then.

In 2019, UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver appointed a university committee to expand the enthusiasm and recognition of the Skyhawk brand. Intercollegiate athletics announced the first of two new alternative logos in January, which were voted on by students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members during the 2019 fall semester. Almost 4,000 participants were included in the decision process before the alternate and competitive marks were chosen.

“This marks the 25th year since the Skyhawk name and logo were introduced, and the timing is right to add an alternate mark to the logo family,” UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver said when the first new mark was unveiled in January. “The Skyhawk logo is easily associated with UT Martin, so I see this as an opportunity to boost enthusiasm for our athletics identity. The design and communication of sports graphics have changed in the decades since the Skyhawk logo was first released, and we are proud to introduce these alternate marks as a way to bring our athletic brand into 2020.”

The alternate and competitive marks are not replacing the traditional Skyhawk logo, but offer a more aggressive and dimensional profile for the UT Martin Athletics logo package.

The new logos were designed by Finn Partners, a full-service advertising, marketing and public relations agency in Nashville who are best known for their logos designed for the Nashville Predators, Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders and Belmont Bruins. The original Skyhawk logo was designed by Dye Van Mol and Lawrence, now DVL Seigenthaler, which is the Nashville office of Finn Partners. The new logos will be available on licensed merchandise this fall.

Radio continued from page 2

“I didn’t come into working at the radio station thinking, ‘oh wow, I’m definitely going to get to cover a pandemic,’ because that’s not how your brain works; that’s not what you expect. It’s a much more serious situation that I have this not only responsibility but privilege to cover,” Brooks said.

“It is a privilege because getting news to a group of people who need reassurance and need that confidence (is) really important.”

Dr. Richard Robinson, faculty adviser of WUTM FM 90.3 “The Hawk” and communications professor, believes the crisis is a real-life teaching moment for all student-journalists at UT Martin, a thought Rodney Freed shares.

“While this is awful, and it is, it’s still great training for students,” said Robinson. “They are getting the same experience, at least to some degree, of these professional journalists.”

“(The pandemic has taught) students how to work under not the most favorable conditions, when you don’t have all of your tools right in front of you and still have to figure out how to make those things work with the tools that (you) have now to still be able to put a product together,” Freed, director of the broadcast sequence, said. “That’s been a challenge for everyone in the media, not just us.”

While the radio station is capable of operating autonomously, Freed says the FCC licensed station is not just a “jukebox,” and what differentiates its status as such is the continuance of newscasts produced by Brooks.

“We’re more than just a music station. We try to serve the community in more ways than just playing music,” Freed said. “I think it’s important for us to constantly evaluate our programming and see what we can do to help others and to pass along information that we have. It is part of our responsibility as a licensed station to do that.”

While Brooks is responsible for writing and producing newscasts for “The Hawk,” she, Robinson, and Freed all said it is because of the station’s senior broadcast engineer, Brian Thomas, that the station is running as well as it is. Thomas is responsible for maintaining the transmitter, keeping all programming on-air and to make sure the automation is working no matter what time of the day it is.

The biggest challenge the staff has faced so far is not being able to physically be in the radio station to operate as effectively as possible. They have learned how to work from home, albeit producing programs in an untraditional way, while relying on Thomas to take care of the technical work that comes with airing.

Thomas, who has spent 20 years working in commercial broadcasting and only a year working at WUTM, is incorporating new ways to improve on-air programs for “The Hawk” and believes a challenge such as not having access to the radio station itself is not a big enough obstacle to stop the station from serving the community.

“I get a little more involved with the students when it comes to live programs because they don’t always have the facilities to do it, so that’s why I step in and help them out too. We keep our programming going and our mission going even though we can’t be in the building,” said Thomas.

According to WUTM FM 90.3 “The Hawk’s” mission statement, the radio station’s purpose is to “train students at The University of Tennessee at Martin in the field of radio broadcasting while serving the public in both the academic and outlying communities.”

The journalists working at “The Hawk” during this time, while still students, are dedicated to producing informative, ethical programs to benefit the community, just as other professional radio stations are doing.

“We are dedicated to getting information that needs to be heard out. We have the same capabilities as anyone else to continue disseminating truth and objective stories … to an audience that needs it,” Brooks said. “We have the same dedication as those professional journalists who are out there and they finished school. I think whenever we come back, we will be a lot more confident in what we can offer.”

For more information about WUTM FM 90.3 “The Hawk” or to tune in, visit wutmradio.com.
Martin community joins We Care Ministries to pass out groceries to families in need

You Tell Me

• **Question** – What resources are available for faculty and staff to check in on the wellbeing of our students?

• **Answer** – Even though classes have transitioned online, the Care Team is still accepting Hawk Alerts in order to conduct wellness checks on students who may be struggling. According to John Abel, assistant vice chancellor for student affairs, when the Care Team receives a Hawk Alert, the situation is reviewed by a member of the team and a “How Can We Help” message is sent to the student. The needs of the student are then evaluated and the student is connected to counseling resources, tutoring options or sent encouragement, unless the situation proves more dire. Hawk Alerts can be submitted at www.utm.edu/departments/hawkalert/.

Submit your questions anonymously to the Suggestion Box link at www.utm.edu/suggestionbox.