UT proposes no tuition increases across all campuses

Monica Kast  
Knoxville News Sentinel  
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

The University of Tennessee System is proposing no tuition increase at all campuses because of financial hardship caused by the coronavirus. If approved, there would be no increase for undergraduate and graduate students for the 2020-21 academic year. This would be the first time in the system’s history that all four campuses — at Knoxville, Chattanooga, Martin and the Health Science Center in Memphis — did not increase tuition.

“Our students and their families are struggling right now, many financially,” said System President Randy Boyd. “Our chancellors and I strongly believe that we need to do everything we can to provide them the support they need to continue their education at UT, and to make our university as affordable as possible for our incoming students.”

Advisory boards at each campus will meet in early May to discuss tuition, then make recommendations to the Board of Trustees for their June meeting. The vote on tuition will be taken at the June 26 meeting.

The trustees already approved a 0% tuition increase for the Health Science Center in Memphis at the February meeting. Last year, UT campuses had a slight tuition increase. The Knoxville campus had a 2% increase and the Chattanooga and Martin campuses each had a 2.5% increase, amounting to increases between $216 and $258. Last week, East Tennessee State University announced it would not raise tuition or fees for next year. “One of the best investments someone can make in their future is to attain a college degree,” ETSU President Brian Noland said. “During these uncertain times, students and their families should be afforded the opportunity to plan ahead. We want to do everything we can to ensure prospective students feel like ETSU is the best choice for them.”
MARTIN, Tenn. (KFVS) - UT Martin delivered commencement to graduates on Saturday, May 2, through the university's first-ever virtual commencement streamed on Facebook Live and YouTube.

The live event was produced by the UT Martin Office of Intercollegiate Athletics and Department of Communications in cooperation with other areas of the university.

The event was closed to the public and was led by Chancellor Keith Carver, Provost Philip Acree Cavalier and the university's academic deans.

Campus Minister Amanda Crice, of the UT Martin Wesley Foundation, was also present to deliver the invocation.

Participants engaged in social distancing in compliance with Centers of Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 control guidelines.

The event drew 722 YouTube views, approximately 1,700 live views and 36,000 views on Facebook, and also generated 538 shares.

More than 700 students were eligible to receive degrees, and more than 400 submitted photos were streamed following the conferral of degrees by Carver.
The 10 a.m. ceremony was on the quadrangle side of the Hall-Moody Administration building.

Mace Bearer Doug Cook, retiring Department of Visual and Theatre Arts chair, closed his UT Martin career by serving in the honorary role during the virtual event.

Carver also delivered a brief commencement address.

"In life, disruption happens," stated Carver. "What we've learned through all of this is the University of Tennessee (at) Martin is tough, and our people are resilient, and resourceful and creative, and we persevere."

Three other speakers joined the virtual commencement celebration through pre-recorded video segments.

University of Tennessee President Randy Boyd expressed personal words of encouragement and congratulations to graduates:

"We are literally rewriting history right now as we journey together through the COVID-19 pandemic," said Boyd. "Your flexibility and frankly, your courage, throughout these unprecedented times is inspiring."

"Regardless of your path forward, you're now set to achieve even more and are well positioned to use the knowledge you've gained while at UT Martin," Boyd added. "You will soon be working to develop solutions for the world's most challenging and complex problems. And, you'll be making a difference in your communities, your state and your world."

Devin Majors, of Nashville, a two-term Student Government Association president and future University of Tennessee College of Law student, also congratulated the class for completing degrees under challenging circumstances. "Just like many of your college journeys, this road has been filled with many ups and downs, moments of doubt, and times that you felt that you just couldn't continue," said Majors. "And with your strength and your perseverance, you proved to the world - most importantly, you proved to yourself - that you can adapt and overcome."

Amy West, a 1997 UT Martin graduate and president of UTM's alumni council, offered final congratulations on behalf of all alumni. "A university is only as good as its graduates," said West. "From this point forward your accomplishments, achievements and the way in which you live, will reflect on the educational values of the University of Tennessee at Martin. ... On behalf of the UT Martin Alumni Council, congratulations, and I wish you much success in the future." The UTM Virtual Choir then performed the Alma Mater, recorded and edited by 2010 graduate Joseph Sam, to close commencement.

Remembered during the event was Kirk Maddox, of Huntingdon, who died April 20. He received his Bachelor of Science in Health and Human Performance posthumously. Also remembered was Dr. Hyungiu Hur, UT Martin assistant professor of history, who died April 26.
UT Martin honors May graduates with virtual commencement

Leanne Fuller
May 2, 2020

MARTIN, TN — Like many universities, the University of Tennessee at Martin got creative to hold its May commencement while protecting graduates from COVID-19.

UT Martin held a virtual graduation ceremony Saturday via Facebook Live and YouTube. It was conducted like a typical graduation, except students did not gather in person.

The event was led by Chancellor Keith Carver, Provost Philip Acree Cavalier and the university’s academic deans. Campus Minister Amanda Crice, of the UT Martin Wesley Foundation, delivered the invocation. The university says everyone involved practiced social distancing in keeping with guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“What we’ve learned through all of this is the University of Tennessee Martin is tough, and our people are resilient, and resourceful and creative, and we persevere,” Carver said during his address.

The graduating seniors were named later on in the program. That includes Local 6 web editor Jillianne Moncrief.

Congratulations Jillianne, and congratulations to the entire UT Martin class of 2020!
UT campuses proposing no tuition increases next year

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — The University of Tennessee campuses are proposing no tuition increases for the upcoming academic year.

The Board of Trustees has already agreed to not increase tuition at the UT Health Science Center in Memphis, according to a news release from UT. The advisory boards for the Knoxville, Chattanooga and Martin campuses will meet in early May, and their recommendations will be submitted to the trustees for a final decision in June.

If approved, it will be the first time in the university's history that all four campuses had no tuition increase, according to the release.

UTM Chancellor Keith Carver visited graduating senior Lexie Bolin at home in McKenzie to congratulate her for her accomplishment, wish her well and see how her mother, Stephanie, decorated their front yard in her honor. UT MARTIN
Urum Chancellor Keith Carver and graduating senior Lexie Bolin take a picture in front of a banner at Lexie's home in McKenzie.

Dr. Carver’s house calls create connections

Brandon Shields, Jackson Sun | USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

A video released by UT Martin and its Chancellor, Keith Carver, of his visit last week with a graduating senior at her home isn't out of the ordinary for the leader of UTM’s campus.

Since coming to UTM in 2017, Carver has made a point to be visible on campus to students, faculty and staff as well as on social media to those outside the campus community.

But making this video had an extra significance for Carver because of the circumstances of the situation at school in which the video was shot.

"It seriously has been rough for me at times not being able to be with the people of UTM with an almost empty campus, a few students still living here with nowhere else to go, a skeleton crew still working and no functions to attend," Carver said. "We went and did this video and had an actual in-person conversation with a student, and I called my wife on the way back and said I felt like I was actually getting stuff done and back at work again."

For the student in the video and her family, it meant a lot for them too.
Carver

Continued from Page 1A

iors across the country are being honored by their schools.

"Even here in McKenzie, we're doing it for the seniors here that are graduating because it is a big accomplishment and a big event they're missing out on," Stephanie said. "But I have a senior who is missing out on a big event too, so I wanted to do something for her."

What Stephanie did was make sure no one driving by their house would be ignorant of the fact that there is a senior at UTM graduating this week living in their home. Stephanie decorated their front yard including displaying Lexie's graduation cap and gown on the front porch and homemade posters throughout the yard with UTM's brand of orange and blue prominent throughout the display.

"When I finished that, I just thought I'd send an e-mail to Dr. Carver just to show that we're proud of Lexie for completing her degree at UTM and thank the college for all they've done for her," Stephanie said. "I didn't expect a reply or anything else, but it wasn't long after he replied and said he wanted to come by and do something special for Lexie."

That "something special" was to set up a time when Lexie would be home and Carver could come and surprise her with an in-person congratulations while practicing social distancing.

Stephanie's plan was to get Lexie home for a picture for the local newspaper in McKenzie, The McKenzie Banner, after she'd turned in her final paper for her lab project earlier that afternoon.

"I'd gone back to my apartment to get some quiet to finish the work, and my mom told me I needed to be home in time for a picture in The Banner at 3 Friday (April 24) afternoon," Lexie said. "So I turned the paper in, got home about 2:30 and waited for (Banner editor) Joel Washburn to come by.

"Then I got a call from Dr. Carver asking if I was home and about taking a selfie with the decorations in my yard for a thing UTM was doing on social media."

It was when she stepped outside to take a selfie when Carver pulled into the driveway dressed as he would the following week to hand out diploma's to UTM's Class of 2020.

Carver offered her a congratulations and a word of encouragement and took a few pictures with the decorations and a few selfies as well that were posted both on his and her social media accounts.

Honoring Lexie's accomplishment

For Lexie and the rest of the Class of 2020, getting to the final destination of graduation was made even more significant because of school being shut down for the final few weeks of the spring semester because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

But simply graduating is an accomplishment for her for what she's dealt with growing up.

"When Lexie was born, she was diagnosed with hearing loss and then a speech delay at 6 months old," Stephanie said about her daughter. "So working with her through Head Start and other ways was important for her to be able to get through school and get an education."

That wound up not being a problem for Stephanie since she graduated from McKenzie High School in 2016 with honors, was accepted into a number of colleges and even got to explore her inclination into pediatrics by being a teacher's aide in her final semester of high school at McKenzie Elementary.

She also dealt with the sudden loss of her father when she was a high school freshman, and dealing with that solidified her desire to get into medical school.

"Going to medical school was never something I ever seriously considered," Lexie said. "It was my plan before I got into college, I planned to be a cell and molecular biology major and I never wanted to do anything else except for maybe a few of the late nights I spent studying before early morning classes.

"Going to medical school was something my dad and I talked about a lot before he died, so me graduating and going to medical school is for him almost as
much as it is for me.”

Lexie also mentioned graduating college is an accomplishment for her mother too, as she's been the anchor for her and her younger sister, UTM freshman Emily, as a single mother.

“I was glad she was there with me last week when Dr. Carver drove up because I know she’s proud of me, but I’m just as proud of her too for getting us through all this and getting my sister and me to where we are,” Stephanie said.

While the shutdown of college campuses seems like another obstacle to overcome to get to graduation, Lexie did say her major did give her a different perspective while watching the effect of COVID-19 on a larger scale.

“As it was beginning to spread in January and February, we were talking in my immunology class about the virus, how it was acting, the research into learning about it and how to fight it,” Lexie said. “It was a real-life scenario for us to really look into and learn from.

“I just never thought that when we came back from spring break that we’d have three days of classes, get sent home and not come back. If I’d known that I would’ve appreciated that 8 a.m. class more that morning than what I did.”

Enjoyment for Carver

While the video accomplished multiple objectives for Carver and UTM – honoring a graduate, posting something positive on social media and marketing for the college – it accomplished more for him.

“I miss seeing people on campus,” Carver said. “I miss having athletic competitions, club events, Greek organization events and even staff meetings in person.”

Carver has tried to stay engaged online as he did a video with a virtual senior walk through campus, which is an annual tradition at UTM. He’s also reached out to individual students.

“I made a pitch online asking students to let me know if they know of anybody who may be struggling and might could benefit from a kind word or something like that,” Carver said. “And within a few days I had a couple hundred suggestions, and I sent a video to each one through Instagram just to tell them we miss them, we’re thinking about them and they will get through this.”

Lexie said that kind of interaction from the Chancellor isn’t out of the ordinary.

“He came to UTM during my freshman year here, and he made a point to get to know everyone he could,” Lexie said. “I doubt he knows every student by first and last name, but he knows most of us by at least a first name he can call us by when he sees us on campus.

“And he’s at every event – even for the smaller organizations. And when he’s at the big events, he doesn’t come in looking like a Chancellor with his fancy name tag. He comes in looking like one of us and gets a sticker name tag like everyone else and just writes Keith Carver on it. I couldn’t tell you who our Chancellor was before Dr. Carver got here, but I bet nearly every student knows who Dr. Carver is.”

Carver said that kind of interaction is something he enjoys about being at UTM and being able to connect on a personal level like that.

“I’m from West Tennessee, and so is my wife. I grew up in Crockett County,” Carver said. “And we have so much of our student population from the region, so when I talk with a student to get to know them and they tell me they’re from Selmer or Somerville or Dyersburg or wherever, I’ve been to those places and know people there either personally or know their mayor from doing this job.

“So I honestly may see a face and may not remember a name, but I’ll probably remember where they’re from and may even identify them that way. And they seem to appreciate that, and I think that’s one thing that really makes UTM unique from any other college in the country – that local connection a lot of us are able to enjoy. And if I can be a part of that and market our school at the same time, I’m glad to do it.”
College grads face challenges landing jobs during pandemic

Abisola Adeyemo
May 4, 2020

MARTIN, TN — With record unemployment nationwide, finding a job is difficult during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For graduating college students, starting their careers is now even more challenging. Charleston Yanders graduated from the University of Tennessee Martin this weekend. The university held a virtual commencement ceremony for the May graduates.

"This pandemic is taking a toll on everybody," Yanders said.

The psychology major is dealing with the challenges of his post-graduation job search during a pandemic. "It is hard to find a job and get into those programs, because a lot of people aren't reaching back out," Yanders said. "Some people are, I will say that. But it's kind of hard not being able to go to a campus for your master's program to see what it looks like."

Murray State University Career Services Director Matt Purdy said students should be flexible and open to other industries, promote themselves on LinkedIn, network and build their skill set, even if it is through temporary jobs.

"This will absolutely make them stronger and help them out in terms of their future prospects, and their future attitudes, and so on and so forth," Purdy said. "And that matters, not only professionally, but personally as well."
Murray State graduate Zoie Markman landed a job through a previous internship, before the pandemic.

"For finding a job, uncertainty has been eliminated. That's just the greatest feeling," Markman said. "Knowing that I at least have a job when this rises, and all that."

Yanders is hopeful he will eventually land a job.

Experts say industries in technology, consumer packaging, retail and health care are in demand. And more virtual and remote opportunities are likely to follow in the future.

University Outreach offers free, self-paced courses

The University of Tennessee at Martin is offering 10 free, non-degree self-paced courses through University Outreach that include both hard and soft skills relevant to the current job market. The courses are open to the public and will be available for free until June 30.

(Continued on page 8)

University Outreach...

(Continued from page 3) Participants have three months to complete the courses.

For course descriptions and registration, visit utm.edu/spe. For more information, contact Non-Degree programs at nondegree@utm.edu or Mount at dmount@utm.edu.
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The event was closed to the public and was led by Chancellor Keith Carver, Provost Philip Acree Cavalier and the university's academic deans. Campus Minister Amanda Crice, of the UT Martin Wesley Foundation, was also present to deliver the invocation. Participants engaged in social distancing in compliance with Centers of Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 control guidelines.

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The 10 a.m. ceremony was held in perfect weather conditions on the quadrangle side of the Hall-Moody Administration building. This marked the first outdoor UT Martin commencement since 1977 spring commencement was held at what is now Hardy M. Graham Stadium. Mace Bearer Doug Cook, retiring Department of Visual and Theatre Arts chair, graduated in the 1977 commencement and closed his UT Martin career by serving in the honor-
“Regardless of your path forward, you’re now set to achieve even more and are well positioned to use the knowledge you’ve gained while at UT Martin,” Boyd added. “You will soon be working to develop solutions for the world’s most challenging and complex problems. And, you’ll be making a difference in your communities, your state and your world.”

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UTM celebrates 25 years of Skyhawk logo
The University of Tennessee at Martin celebrated 25 years of being the Skyhawks on April 25, after the Skyhawk logo and caricature were originally introduced to UT Martin in 1995.

UT Martin is the only Division I university to boast the Skyhawk mascot. While a Skyhawk is a mythical creature, its origin is deeply intertwined with the roots of the university and West Tennessee.

The Skyhawk derives part of its name from the term ‘sky pilots’; the nickname of the athletic teams at Hall-Moody Institute, which was the first educational institution on the site of the present university before UT Junior College was established in 1927.

'Sky pilot' is a frontier description of preachers who traveled in the early 1900s.

UT Martin's logo was fashioned from not only the red-tailed hawks indigenous to West Tennessee, but also after World War II, pilots who were trained at the UT Junior College through a partnership with the Naval War Training Services.

Pilots received initial flight training in the 1940s at Gill-Dove Field, which is where the Martin Recreation Complex is now located. The goggles, as pictured on the logo, are a dedication to the pilots who served during the war.

After the University of Tennessee Martin Branch became the University of Tennessee at Martin in 1967, the university has had three mascots: The Pacers, which featured a horse and sulky, before evolving into Pacer Pete and Pace-Her Polly, and then Captain Skyhawk.

The mascot re-brand began in 1994 with the 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’ and 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.

UT Martin's 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.

Information for this story was taken from the book, The University of Tennessee at Martin: The First One Hundred Years, by Bob Carroll, Assistant Professor Emeritus of History and member of the UT Martin Athletics Hall of Fame.
VIRTUAL GRADUATION — The Hall-Moody Administration Building served as the backdrop Saturday for the University of Tennessee at Martin’s first-ever virtual commencement. The event also served as the university’s first outdoor commencement since 1977. The virtual commencement was in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

UT Martin brings commencement to grads

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Mace bearer Doug Cook, retiring Department of Visual and Theatre Arts chair, graduated in the 1977 commencement and closed his UT Martin career by serving in the honorary role during the virtual event.

Among his duties, Carver also delivered a brief commencement address in which he acknowledged the challenging semester that just ended but noted, “In life, disruption happens.”

He recalled how the university and its predecessors struggled during different points in history.

“What we’ve learned through all of this is the University of Tennessee (at) Martin is tough, and our people are resilient, and resourceful and creative, and we persevere,” he said.

Carver talked about the pedestrian-friendly reputation of the campus and community and how he often walks from campus to downtown Martin. One of his favorite downtown locations is Virginia
Weldon Park, where an Adopt-A-Spot location features plants and flowers cared for by volunteers. “Graduates, today I want to challenge you to adopt your own spot in this world,” he said, explaining it could be a person, a community cause or a global issue. “There's all sorts of pain, and suffering and confusion, especially right now, but graduates, I want you to respond to that in your spot with love, attention and care.”

Three other speakers joined the virtual commencement celebration through pre-recorded video segments. UT President Randy Boyd expressed personal words of encouragement and congratulations to graduates.

“We are literally rewriting history right now as we journey together through the COVID-19 pandemic,” Boyd said. “Your flexibility and frankly, your courage, throughout these unprecedented times is inspiring. Regardless of your path forward, you’re now set to achieve even more and are well positioned to use the knowledge you’ve gained while at UT Martin,” Boyd added. “You will soon be working to develop solutions for the world’s most challenging and complex problems. And, you’ll be making a difference in your communities, your state and your world.”

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Remembered during the event were Kirk Maddox of Huntingdon, who died April 20 and received his bachelor of science in health and human performance posthumously; and Dr. Hyungju Hur, assistant professor of history, who died April 26.

Self-paced, non-degree courses available

The University of Tennessee at Martin is offering 10 free non-degree self-paced courses through University Outreach that include both hard and soft skills relevant to the current job market.

The courses are open to the public and will be available for free until June 30.

The self-paced courses include tutorials in creating web pages and WordPress websites; the fundamentals of supervision and management; conducting a successful job search; keys to effective communication; marketing a personal business online; personal finance and individual excellence. Participants have three months to complete the course.

“We believe that having the right skills and knowing how to utilize them is vital for both job seekers and those currently employed,” said Debbie Mount, director of non-degree programs.

“The courses can help an individual enter the workforce or advance their career or use as a professional development opportunity.”

For class descriptions and registration, visit utm.edu/spsc. For more information, contact non-degree programs at nondegree@utm.edu or Mount at dmount@utm.edu.
Re-entry task force appointed at UTM

A re-entry task force has been appointed by University of Tennessee at Martin chancellor Dr. Keith Carver to recommend processes for moving the university forward amid the COVID-19 crisis.

The pandemic caused the university to complete spring semester classes online, and Maymester and summer semester classes will continue online.

Decisions are pending for the resumption of events and activities, as well as how fall classes will be conducted.

"This is a broad-based task force that’s following the evolving coronavirus situation and the potential scenarios that could develop as we look to fully reopen the university," Carver said.

The task force is divided into subcommittees that will forward recommendations for consideration by the university’s senior leadership team.

The task force will consider possible scenarios, including fully opening the university in August, a delayed opening with an online start to fall semester and a physical return mid-semester. Also being considered is a completely online operation.

Carver charged the task force to consider the following when making recommendations: teaching and student success, residence halls and public gathering places, research, employee safety, visitors, outreach and programs, and infrastructure and processes.

"I’m pleased with the university’s response to this unprecedented situation," Carver said. "I’m especially impressed how our faculty and students adjusted quickly to the online learning environment. We’ll persevere together and emerge stronger on the other side of this crisis."

Members of the task force are chairs Philip Smartt, faculty/agriculture; and Shannon Deal, student health and counseling. Advisers to the chairs are Holly Rowan, emergency management protocols; Laura Foltz, budget considerations and assignments.

The members of the task force includes John Blue, student affairs/Boling University Center; Emalee Buttrey, faculty/agriculture; Ashley Bynum, intercollegiate athletics; David Carithers, faculty/English Department chair; Kiara Castleman, academic records; Bonnie Daniel, Information Technology Center/Canvas course delivery; Olivia Fernandez, Information Technology Services; Deb Gibson, faculty/health and human performance; Katie High, interim dean, College of Business and Global Affairs; Bud Grimes, University Relations; Ryan Martin, residence life; Tim Nipp, facilities; Ali Sabahi, faculty/biological sciences; Anderson Starling, faculty/political science; Mike Swaim, alumnus/pharmacist; Destin Tucker, undergraduate admissions; Michael Washington, human resources; and Erin Weber, Paul Meek Library.

In addition to the main campus, UT Martin manages centers in Jackson, Parsons, McNairy County/Selmer, Ripley and Somerville.

Information about UT Martin’s response to the COVID-19 crisis is available online at www.utm.edu/coronavirus.
One lesson University of Tennessee at Martin political science graduate Devin Majors learned early in his experience at college is that in order to fully become his own person, he had to be willing to try new opportunities.

When Majors first arrived at UT Martin from Nashville in 2016 as a freshman, he knew he wanted to graduate and attend law school, but never thought the journey to achieving those goals would include such unique experiences while expanding his comfort zone.

"You can make a plan in life ... but I've learned during my time at UT Martin that you've got to be open-minded of where you're going to end up," Majors said. "I never expected, being from the city, to go to a rodeo. I never expected to go to a rodeo pull. I had no idea what any of those things were, but by being open-minded and having that 'yeah, I'll try it' mindset, I have seen so many different types of stuff here at this school."

In his time at UT Martin, Majors became the fifth African-American student to serve as SGA president and was elected for two terms; joined Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc.; served on the UT Martin Advisory Board as the student representative; earned internships with the Bank of America Student Leaders Program and the Metro Nashville Public Defender's Office; and was involved with the Black Student Association and Multicultural Activities Council.

While there were times Majors believes he was over-involved in organizations on campus, his senior year in-person classes being cut short because of the coronavirus outbreak makes him thankful for the opportunities he capitalized on while still on campus.

Like many others, Majors was disappointed that his senior year ended without him being able to experience many of the traditional events hosted by UT Martin, like the senior walk and commencement, but is proud to be recognized with the graduating class of 2020 who overcame the challenges and uncertainty this semester brought.

"To be honest, it's sad," Majors said. "All of those (events) have either been taken away completely or postponed, so it is a bummer for myself and anybody who's graduating this spring."

In the grand scale of things, this just shows the world what the class of 2020 is capable of.

That's the sunshine in all of the darkness. It may seem like everything has gone wrong, but it really shows you don't know how strong you are until you are put in a situation where you have to overcome a difficulty." Majors represented the spring graduating class of 2020 at the UT Martin virtual commencement by sharing his final words with his classmates, to whom he feels he has grown closer during his time in college.

"It almost brings me to tears, it's such a huge honor," Majors said about his role in the commencement ceremony. "It is a huge honor because as a member of the class of 2020 ... we've been on this huge journey together. I've shared so many memories with them, and it allows me to get that final moment with the student body, even though it is virtual."

"I think they should recognize the whole class of 2020 as some people who could really take what life threw at them and make something out of it."

In his parting words to his fellow classmates, Majors reminded the graduates to "Continue to dream, remain youthful and soar like a Skyhawk."

Majors will be attending the UT College of Law in the fall to study civil rights law.

He said it was important to him to stay in the UT System for law school because of his experiences these past four years at UT Martin.

When asked in a previous interview what advice he has for new students, Majors said, "Don't let your comfort be your downfall. It can be very scary to go try something new or join a new organization or take on a leadership position or get a title, but ... if you're comfortable, you're not growing."

As he continues in life, wherever it may lead him, Majors plans to take the lessons he learned and experiences from UT Martin with him as a reminder to always be open to new opportunities.
University of Tennessee campuses plan for Fall semester

May 6, 2020 by WBBJ 7 Eyewitness News Staff

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. – The University of Tennessee System plans to welcome students back to each of its campuses this fall.

"We are planning for a safe return to campuses in the fall and will do everything possible to protect the health of our students, faculty and staff," said UT System President Randy Boyd. "We will continually monitor the local and state health data and policies and be prepared to adjust and communicate our plans when needed."

The UT System created a systemwide task force in April, led by Dr. Jon McCullers, professor and chair of infectious disease at the UT Health Science Center, to advise on policies and procedures that would prioritize the safety and wellbeing of UT's students, faculty and staff. In addition, each campus has created a local task force to look at specific needs for their campus community. The campus task forces are analyzing various scenarios, specifying campus needs, and recommending guidelines and actions.

The UT System announced the transition of in-person spring classes to an online platform on March 11, growing UT's online semester credit hours (SCH) from less than 60,000 on March 1 to more than 567,000 by March 23.

"The faculty and staff have been heroic in their efforts," Boyd told the UT Board of Trustees at a special meeting on April 24. "It's been inspiring to see how hard they've worked to make sure the students are successful."

The UT System has a comprehensive resource guide that provides information and resources surrounding COVID-19: [https://tennessee.edu/coronavirus/](https://tennessee.edu/coronavirus/)

In December 2019, the global health care community identified a new respiratory virus that originated in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, and has since been labeled 2019 Novel Coronavirus Disease or COVID-19 by the World Health Organization. Spread of coronavirus is correlated with circumstances of close and sustained contact with others who are infected.

The University of Tennessee System has campuses in Knoxville, Chattanooga, Martin and Memphis; the UT Space Institute in Tullahoma; the UT Institute of Agriculture with a presence in every Tennessee county; and the statewide Institute for Public Service. The UT System manages Oak Ridge National Laboratory through its UT-Battelle partnership; enrolls about 50,000 students statewide; produces about 10,000 new graduates every year; and represents more than 387,000 alumni around the world.
PURYEAR SENIOR WINS OUTSTANDING STUDENT EMPLOYEE AWARD AT UTM

May 6, 2020 @ 3:16 pm Shannon McFarlin

Martin, Tenn.—The University of Tennessee at Martin has named Justin McElroy as the recipient of the Spring 2020 Beth Maloan Outstanding Student Employee Award for his outstanding job performance, commitment to the university and exemplary work ethic.

McElroy is a senior education major from Puryear and has worked for the Office of Environmental Health and Safety on campus for 3½ years. As a student worker, he is responsible for maintaining the approximately 880 portable fire extinguishers, verifying the exit and emergency lights, checking emergency eyewashes and showers, and ensuring that AEDs are operating, and performing monthly and yearly inspections of safety equipment on campus.

McElroy has continued working at UT Martin as an essential employee during the COVID-19 crisis, further proving his qualifications for the award, according to Ted Council, McElroy’s supervisor and Environmental Health and Safety officer for UT Martin.

"Mr. McElroy has demonstrated a true commitment to the university by realizing the importance of ensuring that UTM’s safety equipment is maintained in proper working condition," said Council. "He has shown leadership abilities by taking it upon himself to provide on-the-job training and close direction for new student employees, which goes above and beyond what his job requirements are. He sure leaves big shoes to be filled once he moves on to an exciting career in education."
Rachel Stephens, assistant director of student life, says McElroy "has been invaluable during his time working to ensure the safety and security of the campus." Examples she gave of his key responsibilities included assuring safety protocols are being followed and that safety equipment is in good working order.

The award is given in honor of the late Beth Maloan, UT Martin director of budgeting and dedicated student employee advocate. A plaque and check are presented to a student each spring and fall semester.

"From my past experience of having the opportunity to work alongside Beth Maloan, I am positive she also would be proud for Mr. Justin McElroy to receive this Outstanding Student Award in her honor," said Council.

For more information, contact the UT Martin Office of University Relations at 731-881-7615.

UT Martin to have in-person classes this fall

Jillianne Moncrief
May 6, 2020

MARTIN, TN – The University of Tennessee System plans to welcome students back to each of its campuses this fall.

UT System President Randy Boyd says the system will do everything possible to protect the health of students, faculty, and staff.

"We will continually monitor the local and state health data and policies and be prepared to adjust and communicate our plans when needed," says Boyd.

The UT System says there was a system-wide taskforce created in April, led by professor and chair of infectious disease at the UT Health Science Center Dr. Jon McCullers, to advise on policies and procedures that would prioritize the safety and wellbeing of UT's students, staff, and faculty.

Additionally, each campus has a local task force to look at specific needs for their campus community.

For the UT System comprehensive resource guide that provides information and resources surrounding COVID-19, click here.
UT Martin joins other UT campuses opening in-person classes this fall


UT Martin will welcome back students to campus this fall, after University of Tennessee President Randy Boyd announced Wednesday that all UT campuses will go back to in-person classes this fall.

For the safety of students and faculty in the midst of the growing COVID-19 pandemic, the UT system announced the transition of in-person spring classes to an online platform on March 11.

UT Martin will welcome back students to campus this fall, after University of Tennessee President Randy Boyd announced Wednesday that all UT campuses will go back to in-person classes this fall.

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UT Martin Chancellor Dr. Keith Carver tells Thunderbolt Radio News...

(AUDIO)

UT Martin's summer classes will still be online-only.

Last month, UT Martin created a task force to look at specific needs for the campus community to safely re-open the campus and transition back to in-person classes.

The Lauderdale Voice, Wednesday, May 6, 2020

UTM holds graduation ceremony

May graduates at the University of Tennessee at Martin had no commencement to attend because of the COVID-19 pandemic. So, the university delivered commencement to them May 2 through UT Martin's first-ever virtual commencement streamed on Facebook Live and YouTube. The ceremony will be archived on YouTube with closed captioning included for later viewing. The live event was produced by the UT Martin Office of Intercollegiate Athletics and Department of Communications in cooperation with other areas of the university.

The event was closed to the public and was led by Chancellor Keith Carver, Provost Philip Acree Cavalier and the university’s academic deans. Campus Minister Amanda Crice, of the UT Martin Wesley Foundation, was also present to deliver the invocation. Participants engaged in social distancing in compliance with Centers of Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 control guidelines.

The event drew 722 YouTube views, approximately 1,700 live views and 36,000 views on Facebook, and also generated 538 shares. More than 700 students were eligible to receive degrees, and more than 400 submitted photographs that were streamed following the conferral of degrees by Carver.

The ceremony was held in perfect weather conditions on the quadrangle side of the Hall-Moody Administration building. This marked the first outdoor UT Martin commencement since 1977 spring commencement was held at what is now Hardy M. Graham Stadium. Mace Bearer Doug Cook, retiring Department of Visual and Theatre Arts chair, graduated in the 1977 commencement and closed his UT Martin career by serving in the honorary role during the virtual event.
Martin

...From Front Page

The event drew 722 YouTube views, approximately 1,700 live views and 36,000 views on Facebook, and also generated 538 shares. More than 700 students were eligible to receive degrees and more than 400 submitted photographs that were streamed following the ceremonial degree conferral.

The 10 a.m. ceremony was held in perfect weather conditions on the quadrangle side of the Hall-Moody Administration building. This marked the first outdoor UT Martin commencement since 1977 and was streamed via Facebook Live and YouTube. The ceremony was archived on YouTube with closed captioning included for later viewing.

Three other speakers joined the virtual commencement celebration through pre-recorded video segments. University of Tennessee President Randy Boyd expressed personal words of encouragement and congratulations to graduates.

"We are literally rewriting history right now as we journey together through the COVID-19 pandemic," said Boyd. "Your flexibility and frankly, your courage, throughout these unprecedented times is inspiring."

"Regardless of your path forward, you're now set to achieve even more and are well positioned to use the knowledge you've gained while at UT Martin," Boyd added. "You will soon be working to develop solutions for the world's most challenging and complex problems. And, you'll be making a difference in your communities, your state and your world." Devin Majors, of Nashville, a two-term Student Government Association president and future University of Tennessee College of Law student, also congratulated the class for completing degrees under challenging circumstances. "Just like many of your college journeys, this road has been filled with many ups and downs, moments of doubt, and times that you felt that you just couldn't continue," said Majors. "And with your strength and perseverance, you proved to the world—most importantly you proved to yourself—that you can adapt and overcome."

Amy West, a 1997 UT Martin graduate and president of UTM's alumni council, offered final congratulations on behalf of all alumni. "A university is only as good as its graduates," said West. "From this point forward your accomplishments, achievements and the way in which you live, will reflect on the educational values of the University of Tennessee at Martin...On behalf of the UT Martin Alumni Council, congratulations, and I wish you much success in the future." The UTM Virtual Choir then performed the Alma Mater, recorded and edited by 2010 graduate Joseph Sam, to close the commencement.

Remembered during the event was Kirk Maddox, of Huntingdon, who died April 20 and received his Bachelor of Science in Health and Human Performance posthumously. Also remembered was Dr. Hyungju Hur, UT Martin assistant professor of history, who died April 26.
UT music programs set

The University of Tennessee at Martin’s Department of Music has the following Keeping the Beat programs hosted by TNMEA planned for this week. They will be livestreamed on Facebook at 7 nightly.

- Tonight — John Mlyncezak, managing director of Noteflight

For a full calendar listing of events, visit utm.edu/musicevents.

Colleges offer reduced rates for online summer classes

Area colleges are offering reduced rates for online summer courses, including Bethel University and University of Tennessee at Martin. Below are details of the summer offerings at each school.

Bethel University

Bethel has announced that all Summer 2020 courses will be offered online. Keeping with its usual summer friendly rates, Bethel's per hour fee for summer courses is half the price of the normal hourly rate.

"We are especially glad to be offering all of our summer courses online this year so that our students feel comfortable registering for class knowing that they can stay safe at home by taking online courses," said Bethel President Walter Butler.

"While we surely miss having our students here as they are the heartbeat of our McKenzie campus, we are glad we can offer so many different courses to enable them to continue learning over the summer."

Two terms are being offered, with 44 course options available. The first term is June 1-26, and the second is July 6-31. For more information, visit www.BethelU.edu/Academics/Summer or contact the Admissions Team at 844-238-4351 or admissions@bethel.edu.

"To encourage summer learning, Bethel offers a reduced rate to students every year who are either already attending Bethel or simply taking advantage of the summer to get ahead in their education," said Butler. "We have been doing this for many years and are happy to continue to offer this at such an important time in our students' lives."

UT Martin

UTM will charge on-campus tuition and fees for online summer courses in response to the UT System's decision to conduct all summer classes online, saving students additional fees for online courses.

On April 1, UT System President Randy Boyd announced that all UT campuses would transition to online courses for summer 2020 in response to COVID-19. Since moving to an online platform in March, UT campuses have provided an estimated 9,300 classes online.

"Our faculty and staff have done an incredible job of moving to an entirely digital platform for the spring semester," Boyd said. "I am confident they will continue to provide an inspired learning experience for our students who are enrolled in summer classes."

All students registered for either on-campus or online summer courses will pay on-campus rates regardless of the designated course location. While on-campus tuition for out-of-state students usually is more expensive than online courses, the university will reduce all charges to the online rate.

Three summer sessions are available: May 11-29, June 1 - July 2, and July 6 - Aug. 7. For more information about tuition, fees, and course options, visit utm.edu/tuition.
Congratulations Benton County College Graduates!

Makenzi Brewer  
B.S. in Health/Human Performance, UT Martin

Jacob French  
B.S. in Nursing, UT Martin

Cody Fry  
B.S. in Chemistry, UT Martin

Katelynn Lambdin  
B.S. in Education, UT Martin

Baylee Pafford  
B.S. in Nursing, UT Martin

Blake Parker  
B.S. in Business Administration, UT Martin

Suzanna Spencer  
B.S. in Nursing, UT Martin

Hayden Stanford  
B.S. in Business Administration, UT Martin

Rachael Wade  
B.S. in Psychology, UT Martin
MARTIN, TN -- The University of Tennessee at Martin is working with the UT System to plan a safe reopening of the campus to students.

"We are looking to reopen in the fall. However, we got a task force on campus," said UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver. "We're actually preparing for three different scenarios. We're looking at a full return, obviously, and starting up in August, having our students back. We're also looking at sort of a hybrid of that, with maybe starting online and transitioning to more of an on-campus position. And then finally, we're looking at also what happens if we were to continue online."

Carver said UT Martin's task force is comprised of 17 faculty and staff members who are looking at the health care, academics, safety and policies related to reopening the university to students. The campus task force is in constant communication with the UT System's task force, led by Dr. Jon McCullers, the chair of infectious disease at the UT Health Science Center.

"We're in daily contact with officials from the commissioner of health's office, Dr. Lisa Piercey. Obviously, working with University of Tennessee System. But also using the system-wide task force, with the resources they have through the medical center and research center to help guide us," said Carver.
The UT System had announced earlier this week that it plans to welcome back students to all its campuses this fall. Carver said should the UT Martin campus reopen to students, safety measures will be implemented.

"How do you make those classes smaller? How do you really set up processes that social distancing can be enforced? And what measures do you do when you're looking at large lectures? How do you deliver those? So while we would love to be back together in the fall, even if that happens, the campus will look very different in terms of how we're delivering instructions and even how we're eating on campus, how are students hav(ing) recreational activities," said Carver "Everything will be very different moving forward."

Carver said UT Martin will also look into changes for the student health center, including the possibly of establishing testing. In addition, university leaders and the campus task force will look into changes related to residence halls and cleaning schedules.

"I think the biggest thing we're looking at is keeping health and safety in the forefront," said Carver. "Everything's being examined right now to try to prepare for when we do have some migration back."
UT Martin has had no in-person classes since March 11. Instead, like all other UT campuses, lessons have been fully online.

Carver said not having students on campus was difficult.

"It's sad. I get my energy from people," said Carver. "I love our 7,300 students."

To stay engaged with students during the campus closure, Carver said faculty members have invited him to drop in on classes that were held using the video-conferencing service, Zoom. Carver said he also recorded about 200 motivational messages that he sent to individual students via Instagram. Carver said other faculty members have done that as well to help support students.

UT Martin held its first-ever virtual commencement ceremony on Saturday, May 2.

UT Martin Advisory Board discusses COVID-19, enrollment plans

May 8, 2020 by Clint Eiland

MARTIN, Tenn. — The University of Tennessee at Martin Advisory Board brought up important issues during its virtual summer meeting on Friday.
The topics included the COVID-19 campus report, a review of their enrollment plan and discussions about the annual operating budget.

Chancellor for the university, Keith Carver, said that the university is closely monitoring the COVID-19 situation and whether or not to have on-campus sessions in the fall.

Carver says even if students are back on campus, things will be very different.

"Certainly more online offerings, especially in larger classes. Even looking at how people do office hours and advising," Carver said.

They also mentioned that six UTM students tested positive for the coronavirus, but none of the six had contracted it on campus. All were cases in their home counties.

Carver mentioned that the number of incoming students set to enroll for next year is only up by less than 2 percent from last year. Typically, it's closer to four percent.

Summer Nicole Conley graduates from University of Tennessee at Martin

From staff reports
May 11, 2020

MARTIN, Tenn. – Summer Nicole Conley of Jackson was among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during spring commencement held May 2.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a virtual commencement was held in lieu of the traditional in-person ceremony and was live-streamed via Facebook Live and YouTube.

An in-person graduation ceremony is currently being planned for August in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin campus.

Conley is a 2016 graduate of Piedmont Academy in Monticello. She is the daughter of Trey and Carol Conley.

While at UT Martin, Conley competed in barrel racing for the girls rodeo team. She graduated from UT Martin with a major in Marketing.

UT Martin is a comprehensive regional institution in the University of Tennessee System offering 18 bachelor’s degree programs and five master’s degree programs. The main campus in northwest Tennessee is one of four primary UT campuses. For more information, visit utm.edu.
Local students graduate UT-Martin

May 12, 2020

Two Overton County residents were among students who received degrees from University of Tennessee at Martin during spring commencement held Saturday, May 2.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a virtual commencement was held in lieu of the traditional in-person ceremony and was live-streamed via Facebook Live and YouTube. An in-person graduation ceremony is currently being planned for August 2020 in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin campus.

Livingston students receiving undergraduate degrees were Brittany Dawn Dyer and Mary Rachel Gean.

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The Messenger, Union City, Tennessee, Tuesday, May 12, 2020

UT music programs set

The University of Tennessee at Martin’s Department of Music has the following Keeping the Beat programs hosted by TNMEA planned for this week. They will be livestreamed on Facebook at 7 nightly.

- Tonight — Jeff Nelsen, professor of horn, Indiana University Jacobs School of Music.
- Wednesday — Tim Rice, saxophonist, and Bernard Fowler, singer, The Rolling Stones.
- Thursday — Andre Dowell, chief of artist engagement, and Aaron Dworkin, founder, Sphinx Organization.

For a full calendar listing of events, visit utm.edu/musicevents.
UT System to welcome students back this fall

The University of Tennessee System — including UT Martin — plans to welcome students back to each of its campuses this fall. "We are planning for a safe return to campuses in the fall and will do everything possible to protect the health of our students, faculty and staff," UT System president Randy Boyd said. "We will continually monitor the local and state health data and policies and be prepared to adjust and communicate our plans when needed."

The UT System in April created a system-wide task force — led by Dr. Jon McCullers, professor and chair of infectious disease at the UT Health Science Center — to advise on policies and procedures that would prioritize the safety and wellbeing of UT’s students, faculty and staff. In addition, each campus has created a local task force to look at specific needs for their campus community. The campus task forces are analyzing various scenarios, specifying campus needs and recommending guidelines and actions.

The UT System announced the transition of in-person spring classes to an online platform on March 11, growing UT’s online semester credit hours (SCH) from less than 60,000 on March 1 to more than 567,000 by March 23. “The faculty and staff have been heroic in their efforts,” Boyd told the UT Board of Trustees at a special meeting on April 24. “It’s been inspiring to see how hard they’ve worked to make sure the students are successful.”

Several Obion County residents were among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during spring commencement recently. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a virtual commencement was held in lieu of the traditional in-person ceremony and was livestreamed.

An in-person graduation ceremony is currently being planned for August in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on campus.

Among those who received undergraduate degrees, listed by hometown, were:

- Hornbeck — Brianna Maryia Hinton, Matthew Grant LaMastus and Marli Margaret McMillin.
- Kenton — Haley Jo Horner.

The students receiving undergraduate degrees were:

- Bruceton — Delaina Brooke Norval; Alexis M. Reynolds; Colin Michael Roberts; Michael Elihu Wilson Jr.; Allison LaLine Young.
- Cedar Grove — Jace Wallace Williams; Blake William Wright.
- Clarksburg — Faith Marie Douglas; Madison Lynn McClure; Amanda Christine Steele.
- Clarksville — Molly Elizabeth Brewer; Nathaniel Scott Burris; Robert Hadley Ott; Jessica A. Roberts; Miles Hunter Wilbur.
- Hollow Rock — Ashley Celeste Stockdale; Kayla Marie Woods.
- Huntington — Carson Elise Hatch; Austin Kyle Hill; Kirk Maddox; Kelsey Marie Mann; Jacob Todd Sisk.
- Lavinia — Ashleigh T. Todd.
- McKenzie — Lexie Nicole Bolin; Anna Carol Comer; Morgan Alicia Kihnzing; Breanne Nichole Lipford; Logan Priestley; Nathan David Smith; Alejandro Zaragoza.
- McLemoresville — Morgan Ashley Lawrence; Jillianne Dionne Moncrief.

The students receiving graduate degrees were:

- Clarksville — Kaylyn Kristine Campbell.
- McKenzie — Bryant Wade Comer; Jacob Harrison Owen.

South Fulton — Aalia Shy Bivens, Sarah Katherine Hester and Erin Paige Tucker.

Troy — Helen Elizabeth Kendall, Kathryn Grace Kerr, Anna Danielle Logan and Olivia Beth Naifeh.


Recipient of graduate degrees included:

- South Fulton — Ashton Fleming.

Local Residents Receive Degrees from UT Martin

MARTIN — Several Carroll County residents were among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during spring commencement held May 2, 2020. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a virtual commencement was held in lieu of the traditional in-person ceremony and was livestreamed via Facebook Live and YouTube. An in-person graduation ceremony is currently being planned for August 2020 in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin campus.

The students receiving undergraduate degrees were:

- Bruceton — Delaina Brooke Norval; Alexis M. Reynolds; Colin Michael Roberts; Michael Elihu Wilson Jr.; Allison LaLine Young.
- Cedar Grove — Jace Wallace Williams; Blake William Wright.
- Clarksburg — Faith Marie Douglas; Madison Lynn McClure; Amanda Christine Steele.
- Clarksville — Molly Elizabeth Brewer; Nathaniel Scott Burris; Robert Hadley Ott; Jessica A. Roberts; Miles Hunter Wilbur.
- Hollow Rock — Ashley Celeste Stockdale; Kayla Marie Woods.
- Huntington — Carson Elise Hatch; Austin Kyle Hill; Kirk Maddox; Kelsey Marie Mann; Jacob Todd Sisk.
- Lavinia — Ashleigh T. Todd.
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- McLemoresville — Morgan Ashley Lawrence; Jillianne Dionne Moncrief.

The students receiving graduate degrees were:

- Clarksville — Kaylyn Kristine Campbell.
- McKenzie — Bryant Wade Comer; Jacob Harrison Owen.
Local residents receive degrees from UT Martin

MARTIN, Tenn. – Several Gibson County residents were among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during spring commencement held May 2, 2020. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a virtual commencement was held in lieu of the traditional in-person ceremony and was live-streamed via Facebook Live and YouTube. An in-person graduation ceremony is currently being planned for August 2020 in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin campus.

The students receiving undergraduate degrees were:
- Bradford – Austin L. Barber; Alexander Hayden Cantrell; Hannah Nichole Moore; Fredrick Jerome Spain.
- Dyar – Alyson Taylor Horner; Erin Taylor Lannom.
- Gibson – Hannah Rose Mooney; Humboldt – Krystal Dawn Boggs; Gerrard Eugene Cox; Jennifer Lee Kudla; Natalie Nicole Lindsey; Keaton B. Wilson.
- Medina – Alyssa Nicole Burrous; Charles Benjamin Coleraine; Karen Michelle Gantt; Cody Andrew Kinniburgh; Elizabeth Nicole Matney; Amy Ann Polk; Rachel Katerine Smith; Kyle Martin Trompower.
- Milan – Sydney Christian Blackburn; Jennifer Nicole Byrd; Samuel Ross Stinson; Tanya Beth Thomas.
- Rutherford – Robert Jason Eddlemon; Jessica Carol Rogers.
- Trenton – Karen Nicole Allen; Adair Michael Rodriguez.
- Yorkville – Eli Matthias Todd.

The students receiving graduate degrees were:
- Bradford – Sumner Rae Tyler.
- Humboldt – Brandi Nicole Martz.
- Milan – Christy Marie Cunningham; Wendi Michelle Ford.

UT Martin is a comprehensive regional institution in the University of Tennessee System offering 18 bachelor's degree programs and five master's degree programs. The main campus in northwest Tennessee is one of four primary UT campuses. For more information, visit utm.edu.
Williams, an education graduate, served in many capacities as a member of Chi Omega Xi Zeta in the College Panhellenic Council as the vice president of Judicial and Education. In these roles, she organized and maintained standing rules to ensure the safety of and benefit sorority women on campus. A recruitment counselor, and even hosted two women’s self-defense classes during Panhellenic Pride Week and Women’s Health Week. In addition to her sorority service, Williams worked as a resident assistant for two years before being promoted to student assistant for Residence Life. She was also the 2018 recipient of the University Service Award.

“As an education major, Savannah has consistently been in placements that required her to go into local schools. While in the schools, she was able to find ways that allowed her to give back. … Her presence in local schools has allowed her to give back to the Weakley County community regularly,” Ryan Martin, assistant director of Housing, said in Williams’ nomination material. “Because of her varied service and academic excellence, I truly believe that Savannah Williams meets all of the criteria for this award and would make an outstanding candidate for the Paul and Martha Meek Leadership Award.”

Majors, a political science graduate, served as the president of the Student Government Association for two terms in which he led the 60 student-members of SGA and oversaw five standing committees; executive vice president of the Black Student Association; vice president and Northwest Area assistant director of Alpha Phi Alpha Inc. Fraternity; first student on the inaugural UT Martin Advisory Board and was a founding member of the Multicultural Activities Council. He is also the recipient of the 2019 Student Leader of the Year award.

“Devin has been a strong student leader that has spoken for those that have not spoken for themselves. He has faced adversity at many turns yet kept working to make a difference. I admire his resilience more than anything else,” wrote John Abel in Majors’ nomination material.

“It is without a doubt that Devin Majors has left an impact on this campus,” Anthony Prewitt wrote in Majors’ nomination. “Most times he put the students first and has always been someone who I have admired.”

Dr. Paul Meek served the UT Martin campus as executive officer, dean, UT vice president or chancellor from 1934 to 1967. This award was originally established and funded by the three Meek children to honor their parents.

For more information, contact the UT Martin Office of University Relations at 731-881-7615.
Receive Meek Leadership awards

Savannah Williams of Newbern and Devin Majors of Nashville were recognized as the recipients of the Paul and Martha Meek Leadership Awards during the University of Tennessee at Martin’s virtual commencement May 2. These awards showcase outstanding community and campus service by graduating students and are the only awards given during commencement each semester.

Williams, an education graduate, served in many capacities as a member of Chi Omega Xi Zeta in the College Panhellenic Council as the vice president of Judicial and Education. In these roles, she organized and maintained standing rules to ensure the safety of and benefit sorority women on campus, a recruitment counselor, and even hosted two women’s self-defense classes during Panhellenic Pride Week and Women’s Health Week. In addition to her sorority service, Williams worked as a resident assistant for two years before being promoted to student assistant for Residence Life. She was also the 2018 recipient of the University Service Award.

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For more information, contact the UT Martin Office of University Relations at 731-881-7615.
Twins excel at UT Martin and now prepare for graduate schools

From the womb to commencement, the five sets of twins who graduated from the University of Tennessee at Martin May 2, have spent very little of their lives apart from each other. However, one pair is about to embark on their own journeys to graduate schools over 800 miles away from each other.

Emma Fieser, a UT Martin philosophy graduate, will be attending the University of Illinois at Chicago’s philosophy Ph.D. program with the aspirations to teach, while her sister Michelle Fieser, a UT Martin history graduate, will be attending the University of South Carolina’s history Ph.D. program to work in public history. Even though this is the farthest apart the sisters will have ever been for an extended period of time, their experiences together at UT Martin have prepared them for their respective adventures ahead.

For the Martin natives, if they ever doubted their decision to stay at home and attend UT Martin, the opportunities they received through multiple departments on campus reassured them UT Martin was the right college to build their educational foundation, Michelle said. From participating in multiple travel studies, playing in the UTM Orchestra, being presidents of multiple organizations, to finding support for their goals from friends and faculty alike, Emma and Michelle believe UT Martin fostered their academic creativity through their studies and extracurricular activities.

“It’s been a very good experience. I don’t think we would have had such a positive experience at any other university,” Emma said.

“We’ve always had very good interactions with different departments around campus. The professors in our department, especially, are all so generous and kind with their time and really supportive of everything you do.”

One of those professors even happens to be their father, Dr. Jim Fieser, professor of philosophy, who has always encouraged all four of his children to capitalize on opportunities like the ones offered at UT Martin. Jim also had the chance to teach Emma in his upper-division philosophy courses this past semester, making the classroom “feel homey” to him.

“We did indeed want them to attend UT Martin since we knew the quality of instruction and the variety of character-building opportunities such as travel studies, internships, skilled campus employment, and club leadership,” said Jim.

Emma and Michelle participated in multiple organizations, such as the League of Striving Artists, Philosophy Forum club, the International Honor Society for Philosophers, French club, History club, and Phi Alpha Theta Honor Society, many in which the pair served as organization or club president; attended travel studies to France, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, Italy, and along the coast of New England; and completed internships throughout UT Martin and the state.

Both sisters expressed their confidence in their respective undergraduate degree programs, saying their upper-division classes prepared them for their next step toward graduate school and their future careers.

“As they leave UT Martin, I hope they will seek out rewarding opportunities the way that they have here,” said Jim. “Also, after living for so long within UT Martin’s small yet diverse community, I hope that they will take with them an appreciation of the uniqueness and value of each person that they encounter within their future professional lives.”
Local residents receive degrees from UTM

Several Weakley County residents were among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during spring commencement held May 2. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a virtual commencement was held in lieu of the traditional in-person ceremony and was live-streamed via Facebook Live and YouTube.

An in-person graduation ceremony is currently being planned for August 2020 in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin campus.

The students receiving undergraduate degrees were:

• Dresden – Cody Lee Boone, Kaitlyn Elizabeth Courtney, Lauren Troutt, Brince Lee Woods II, and Gerald Presley Yates.

• Gleason – Colby Suzanne Brooks, Will Colin Clark, Daniel Isaac Grisson, Timothy Mark McKenzie, Taylore Jo Melton, Graylon Douglas Perkins, and Carson Andrew Stafford.


• Palmersville – Victoria Grace Todd.


The students receiving graduate degrees were:

• Dresden – Heather Nicole Adams and Tesa E. Finch.

• Gleason – Amanda Sue Mansfield.

• Martin – Joyce Washington.

UTM is a comprehensive regional institution in the University of Tennessee System offering 18 bachelor’s degree programs and five master’s degree programs. The main campus in northwest Tennessee is one of four primary UT campuses. For more information, visit utm.edu.

https://www.mainstreetnews.com/

Giannetta earns degree from University of Tennessee

May 13, 2020

A Jackson County resident was among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during spring commencement held May 2.

Teyah Giannetta, of Jefferson, received an undergraduate degree.
UT MARTIN RECEIVES $500,000 DONATION FOR FINE ARTS CENTER

May 13, 2020 @ 3:03 pm Shannon McFarlin

Martin, Tenn. – The University of Tennessee at Martin received a $500,000 donation from Bill Blankenship, 1955 UT Martin alumnus and noted university donor, to continue Phase II of the Fine Arts Performance Center project.

The facility will be used by the Fine and Performing Arts programs at UT Martin, as well as host guest performers, academic speakers, fundraising events, conferences and regional competitions.

"The new concert hall will provide the venue sorely needed to give all UTM students access to the highest-caliber touring acts, while also providing a large-audience capacity space with great acoustics for our own UTM music ensembles," said Dr. Julie Hill, chair of the Department of Music.

The construction of Phase I of the Fine Arts Building was finished in 2013, completing the first half of the project. Construction for Phase II will cost $40 million overall and requires a six percent match, or $2.4 million, to receive state funding. The university has already raised over $595,000 for Phase II, which is 23 percent of the goal.

Blankenship, who also contributed to the Fine Arts Building Phase I construction and for whom the Blankenship Recital Hall in the Fine Arts Building is named, believes it is important to give back to the university that gave him so many opportunities while he was a student.

"It's only reasonable to give back to the place that gave you so much," Blankenship said in an interview for Tennessee Alumnus magazine. "I want to be at the forefront of giving back, especially if it means the leaders of tomorrow will gain all that they can while at UT Martin and be prepared to go out into the world and be positive forces of change."

For students and faculty, a new performance center would provide practice and performance spaces that are not currently readily available or adaptable to each specific department.
"Outside of the music department, the new Concert Hall will provide increased programs for experiential learning and internships to all UTM students across a variety of disciplines on our campus combining opportunities in marketing, business, and much more," said Hill.

The performance center is expected to contribute over $400,000 annually to the Northwest Tennessee economy through programs and partnerships in music, visual arts, children's programming, dance and film.

"A new concert hall will provide our students, faculty and guests with a modern facility to showcase growth and talent. Having a concert hall of this caliber will contribute to social and economic growth within the region and will bring community pride and revenue to the area," said DaeShuana Aldridge, a junior music major from Paris. "With this new 'big-city' concert hall, UTM will provide a cultural gem, impacting a far greater region than the borders of our campus."

For more information, contact Dr. Charley Deal, vice chancellor for university advancement, at cdeal@utm.edu.

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**THE CURRENT, MAY 13, 2020**

**Area residents among UTM grads**

Several area residents were among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during spring commencement held May 2.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a virtual commencement was held in lieu of the traditional in-person ceremony and was live-streamed via Facebook Live and YouTube.

An in-person graduation ceremony is currently being planned for August 2020 in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin campus.

Residents of South Fulton who received undergraduate degrees were Aalia Shay Bivens, Sarah Katherine Hester, and Erin Paige Tucker.

Chelsea Babette Anderson, of Cayce, and Drew Preston Worley and Candie Jo Hunter, both of Hickman, received an undergraduate degree.

Ashton Fleming, of South Fulton, and Austin S. Ferrell, of Fulton, received a graduate degree.

UT Martin is a comprehensive regional institution in the University of Tennessee System offering 18 bachelor’s degree programs and five master's degree programs. The main campus in northwest Tennessee is one of four primary UT campuses. For more information, visit utm.edu.
A Puryear man has been named as the University of Tennessee at Martin's outstanding student employee for the spring semester.

Justin McElroy has been awarded the Spring 2020 Beth Maloan Outstanding Student Employee Award for his outstanding job performance, commitment to the university and exemplary work ethic, according to the university.

A 2016 graduate of Henry County High School, McElroy is a senior education major from Puryear and has worked for the Office of Environmental Health and Safety on campus for 3 1/2 years.

As a student worker, he is responsible for maintaining the approximately 980 portable fire extinguishers, verifying the exit and emergency lights, checking emergency eyewashes and showers, and ensuring that AEDs are operating, and performing monthly and yearly inspections of safety equipment on campus.

McElroy has continued working at UT Martin as an essential employee during the COVID-19 crisis, further proving his qualifications for the award, according to Ted Council, McElroy's supervisor and the university's environmental health and safety officer. "Mr. McElroy has demonstrated a true commitment to the university by realizing the importance of ensuring that UTM's safety equipment is maintained in proper working condition," Council said. "He has shown leadership abilities by taking it upon himself to provide on-the-job training and close direction for new student employees, which goes above and beyond what his job requirements are. He sure leaves big shoes to be filled once he moves on to an exciting career in education."

Rachel Stephens, assistant director of student life, says McElroy "has been invaluable during his time working to ensure the safety and security of the campus." Examples she gave of his key responsibilities included assuring safety protocols are being followed and that safety equipment is in good working order.

The award is given in honor of the late Beth Maloan, UT Martin director of budgeting and a dedicated student employee advocate. A plaque and check are presented to a student each spring and fall semester.

"From my past experience of having the opportunity to work alongside Beth Maloan, I am positive she also would be proud for Mister Justin McElroy to receive this Outstanding Student Award in her honor," said Council.
**UT-Martin to open with other Tennessee system schools**

The University of Tennessee system plans to welcome students back to each of its campuses this fall.

“We are planning for a safe return to campuses in the fall and will do everything possible to protect the health of our students, faculty and staff,” said UT System President Randy Boyd. “We will continually monitor the local and state health data and policies and be prepared to adjust and communicate our plans when needed.”

The UT system created a system-wide taskforce in April, led by Dr. Jon McCullers, professor and chair of infectious disease at the UT Health Science Center, to advise on policies and procedures that would prioritize the safety and wellbeing of UT’s students, faculty and staff. In addition, each campus has created a local task force to look at specific needs for their campus community. The campus task forces are analyzing various scenarios, specifying campus needs, and recommending guidelines and actions.

The UT system announced the transition of in-person spring classes to an online platform on March 11, growing UT’s online semester credit hours from less than 60,000 on March 1 to more than 567,000 by March 23.

“The faculty and staff have been heroic in their efforts,” Boyd told the UT Board of Trustees at a special meeting on April 24. “It’s been inspiring to see how hard they’ve worked to make sure the students are successful.”

In December 2019, the global health care community identified a new respiratory virus that originated in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, and has since been labeled 2019 Novel Coronavirus Disease or COVID-19 by the World Health Organization. Spread of coronavirus is correlated with circumstances of close and sustained contact with others who are infected.

The University of Tennessee System has campuses in Knoxville, Chattanooga, Martin and Memphis; the UT Space Institute in Tullahoma; the UT Institute of Agriculture with a presence in every Tennessee county; and the statewide Institute for Public Service. The UT system manages Oak Ridge National Laboratory through its UT-Battelle partnership; enrolls about 50,000 students statewide; produces about 10,000 new graduates every year; and represents more than 387,000 alumni around the world.

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**UT-Martin names students who earned degrees**

Several Lauderdale County residents were among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during spring commencement held May 2. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a virtual commencement was held in lieu of the traditional in-person ceremony and was live-streamed via Facebook Live and YouTube.

An in-person graduation ceremony is currently being planned for August in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin campus.

The students receiving undergraduate degrees were Brianna Boone Burse, and Charles Robert Walton of Halls, Erin N. Young of Hening, Hollis LeeGree Bonds, Charneshia La’Vonshe Brown, Wesley Allyn Helton, Janel Lafaye Jones, Myeisha Nicole Lee, Bethany Nicole McCaslin, Bretteane Chisholm Mires, Jennifer L. Prater, Tammy Michelle Umbra, James Hilton Vaughn, and Linda Diane West of Ripley.

The students receiving graduate degrees were Samantha Wills Crifield and Brianna Patrick of Halls.
Fieser Twins Excel at UT Martin, Prepare for Graduate School

MARTIN — From the womb to commencement, the five sets of twins who graduated from the University of Tennessee at Martin on May 2 have spent very little of their lives apart from each other. However, one pair is about to embark on their own journeys to graduate schools over 800 miles away from each other.

Emma Fieser, a UT Martin philosophy graduate, will attend the University of Illinois at Chicago's philosophy Ph.D. program with aspirations to teach, while her sister Michelle, a UT Martin history graduate, will attend the University of South Carolina's history Ph.D. program to work in public history. Even though this is the farthest apart the sisters will have ever been for an extended period of time, their experiences together at UT Martin have prepared them for their respective adventures ahead.

For the Martin natives, if they ever doubted their decision to stay at home and attend UT Martin, the opportunities they received through multiple departments on campus reassured them UT Martin was the right college on which to build their educational foundation, Michelle said. From participating in multiple travel studies, playing in the UT Martin Orchestra and being presidents of multiple organizations to finding support for their goals from friends and faculty alike, Emma and Michelle believe UT Martin has fostered their academic creativity through their studies and extracurricular activities.

"It's been a very good experience. I don't think we would have had such a positive experience at any other university," Emma said. "We've always had very good interactions with different departments around campus. The professors in our department especially are all so generous and kind with their time and really supportive of everything you do."

One of those professors even happens to be their father, Dr. Jim Fieser, professor of philosophy, who has always encouraged all four of his children to capitalize on opportunities like the ones offered at UT Martin. Jim also had the chance to teach Emma in his upper-division philosophy courses this past semester, making the classroom "feel homey" to him.

"We did indeed want them to attend UTM since we knew exactly the quality of instruction here and the variety of character-building opportunities such as travel studies, internships, skilled campus employment and club leadership," said Jim.

Emma and Michelle participated in multiple organizations, such as the League of Striving Artists, Philosophy Forum Club, the International Honor Society for Philosophers, French Club, History Club and Phi Alpha Theta Honor Society, many in which the pair served as organization or club president; attended travel studies to France, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, Italy and along the coast of New England; and completed internships through UT Martin and the state.

"If you reach out into your departments, you can really kind of craft what kind of education you want," Emma said. "We were able to really do well in the Department of History and Philosophy, we put a lot of effort into it and we got out of it what we put into it," said Michelle. "... It is really one of the high points of UTM. It's really flexible and it depends on you. You can make out of it what you want. There are just endless opportunities at UT Martin if you look for them."

Both sisters expressed their confidence in their respective undergraduate degree programs, saying their upper-division classes prepared them for their next step toward graduate school and their future careers.

"As they leave UTM, I hope they will seek out rewarding opportunities the way that they have here," said Jim. "Also, after living for so long within UTM's small yet diverse community. I hope that they will embrace the uniqueness and value of each person that they encounter within their future professional lives."

Emma and Michelle Fieser graduated from UT Martin May 2.

• Dresden Enterprise • Dresden, Tenn. • Wednesday, May 13, 2020 • Dresden, Tenn. • Wednesday, May 13, 2020
UT Martin Opening In-Person Classes This Fall

MARTIN — The University of Tennessee System plans to welcome students back to each of its campuses this fall.

"We are planning for a safe return to campuses in the fall and will do everything possible to protect the health of our students, faculty and staff," said UT System President Randy Boyd. "We will continually monitor the local and state health data and policies and be prepared to adjust and communicate our plans when needed."

The UT System created a system-wide task force in April, led by Dr. Jon McCullers, professor and chair of infectious disease at the UT Health Science Center, to advise on policies and procedures that would prioritize the safety and wellbeing of UT’s students, faculty and staff. In addition, each campus has created a local task force to look at specific needs.

The UT System announced the transition of in-person spring classes to an online platform on March 11, growing UT’s online semester credit hours (SCH) from less than 60,000 on March 1 to more than 567,000 by March 23.

"The faculty and staff have been heroic in their efforts," Boyd told the UT Board of Trustees at a special meeting on April 24. "It’s been inspiring to see how hard they've worked to make sure the students are successful."

The UT System has a comprehensive resource guide that provides information and resources surrounding COVID-19: tennessee.edu/coronavirus/.

In December 2019, the global health care community identified a new respiratory virus that originated in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, and has since been labeled 2019 Novel Coronavirus Disease or COVID-19 by the World Health Organization. Spread of coronavirus is correlated with circumstances of close and sustained contact with others who are infected.

The University of Tennessee System has campuses in Knoxville, Chattanooga, Martin and Memphis; the UT Space Institute in Tullahoma; the UT Institute of Agriculture with a presence in every Tennessee county; and the statewide Institute for Public Service. The UT system manages Oak Ridge National Laboratory through its UT-Battelle partnership; enrolls about 50,000 students statewide; produces about 10,000 new graduates every year; and represents more than 387,000 alumni around the world.
County students receive degrees from UTM

Several Benton County residents received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during the spring commencement held Saturday, May 2. There were 22 undergraduates and one graduate student who completed their studies at UTM this spring.

Students receiving undergraduate degrees included Carson Richardson and Rachael Wade, of Big Sandy; Samantha Grainger and Dylan Kelley, of Eva; and Dylan Furr, Kayla Joyner, and Shelby Wood, of Holladay.

Camden students who completed undergraduate degrees this semester were Hunter Baker, Sarah Florence, Jacob French, Cody Fry, Abigail Holladay, Katelynn Lambdin, Bradi Latendresse, Gavin Miller, Baylee Pafford, Blake Parker, Delilah Presson, Jacob Scott, Luke Spencer, Suzanna Spencer, and Hayden Stanford.

Carlin Bush, also of Camden, completed a Master of Science in Education degree, graduating with a 3.93 GPA while working full-time as a teacher and battling kidney disease.

In response to the pandemic, a virtual commencement was held in lieu of the traditional in-person ceremony and was streamed via Facebook Live and YouTube. An in-person graduation ceremony to be held on the UTM campus currently is being planned for August. For more information, visit www.utm.edu.

Congratulations to all of these UTM graduates! If you know a graduate who would like to be recognized by the paper, send photos of technical school or college graduates to copy@thecamdenchronicle.com. Be sure to include the student's full name, major or field of study, and the school attended. For more photos of recent Benton County graduates, see the May 7, 2020, edition of The Camden Chronicle.
In-Person Classes Set To Open This Fall

The University of Tennessee System plans to welcome students back to each of its campuses this fall.

"We are planning for a safe return to campuses in the fall and will do everything possible to protect the health of our students, faculty and staff," said UT System President Randy Boyd. "We will continually monitor the local and state health data and policies and be prepared to adjust and communicate our plans when needed."

The UT System created a system-wide task-force in April, led by Dr. Jon McCullers, professor and chair of infectious disease at the UT Health Science Center, to advise on policies and procedures that would prioritize the safety and well-being of UT's students, faculty and staff. In addition, each campus has created a local task force to look at specific needs for their campus community. The campus task forces are analyzing various scenarios, specifying campus needs, and recommending guidelines and actions.

The UT System announced the transition of in-person spring classes to an online platform in March, growing UT's online semester credit hours from less than 60,000 on March 1st to more than 567,000 by March 23rd.

"The faculty and staff have been heroic in their efforts," Boyd told the UT Board of Trustees at a special meeting on April 24th. "It's been inspiring to see how hard they've worked to make sure the students are successful."

The UT System has a comprehensive resource guide that provides information and resources surrounding COVID-19: tennessee.edu/coronavirus/.

The University of Tennessee System has campuses in Knoxville, Chattanooga, Martin and Memphis; the UT Space Institute in Tullahoma; the UT Institute of Agriculture with a presence in every Tennessee county; and the statewide Institute for Public Service.
Local resident earns degree from UT Martin

From Contributed Reports
May 17, 2020

MARTIN, Tenn. - A Hamblen County resident was among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during spring commencement held May 2, 2020. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a virtual commencement was held in lieu of the traditional in-person ceremony and was live-streamed via Facebook Live and YouTube. An in-person graduation ceremony is currently being planned for August 2020 in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin campus.

The student receiving undergraduate degrees was:

• Talbott - Hunter Ryan Hall.

UT Martin is a comprehensive regional institution in the University of Tennessee System offering 18 bachelor's degree programs and five master's degree programs. The main campus in northwest Tennessee is one of four primary UT campuses. For more information, visit utm.edu.
Several Chester County residents were among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during spring commencement held virtually May 2, 2020. An in-person graduation ceremony is currently being planned for August 2020 in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin campus.

Local students receiving undergraduate degrees were Mercedes Dawn Tomlin from Enville and Britney Leigh Ballard; Hannah Elizabeth Carson; Brayden Lane Faulkner; Maison Major Gray; Christopher Alan Ray; Caitlin Jenee Sanchez; and Cullen Ray Williams, all of Henderson.

Receiving a graduate degree was Gregory Owen Nies of Henderson.
IN HONOR, IN REMEMBRANCE — Volunteers and members of the American Legion Post #55 Riders, including director Jackie Laird (above), spent Saturday morning driving stakes and mounting nearly 250 flags to PVC pipes for the non-profit organization’s annual Field of Flags fundraiser. Sponsors donate $20 in honor or in memory of veterans, service members and patriots. A placard is placed at the base of the flag until they are taken down the weekend after Memorial Day, folded and given to the sponsor. UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver gave the group the blessing to carry through with this year’s project and once again, place the flags in a chevron pattern on the campus beside University Street. To sponsor a flag, contact Laird at 731-364-5766 or any Rider member. Photo by Jennifer Cross

SPIRIT OF VOLUNTEERISM — The 3rd annual Field of Flags event sponsored by the American Legion Post #55 Riders brought volunteers and organization members to the field on the UT Martin campus along University Street in Martin Saturday morning to display 250 flags. The chevron-pattern display of flags allows donors to contribute $20 in honor or memory of a patriot. The display will be up until May 30. On hand for the set up were (front, seated) Lilly Cross, Parker and Bradley Davis, JJ Golt, (middle, kneeling) Nathan Cross, Sherry Wilkerson, Stephanie Seamans, Gracie Wilkerson, (standing, from left) Nelson Davis, Jason Golt, William Witherton, Randy Edwards, Rick Paulin, Elton Wilkerson, Jackie Laird, Thomas Kalberer, Ronnie Phillips, David Paschall, Jordan Davis and Kenny Barner. Not pictured is Lynsey Davis and Sabrina Bates. More photos can be found on The Press’ Facebook page. Photo by Jennifer Cross
UTM to host virtual ceremony Friday

The University of Tennessee at Martin will hold its annual Memorial Day Commemoration Ceremony virtually at 9 a.m., Friday, in lieu of the traditional in-person service.

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 Memorial Day Commemoration Ceremony will be live streamed on the UT Martin Facebook and YouTube and will be archived for later viewing. The program will also be broadcast on WUTM FM 90.3 “The Hawk.”

Army Master Sgt. Conrad Begaye, senior military science instructor at UT Martin, will serve as this year’s keynote speaker.

As an Airborne Ranger, Begaye served in Operation Freedom’s Sentinel in Afghanistan (2016-17), Operation Enduring Freedom in campaigns V and VIII in Afghanistan (2005-07) and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq (2003-04). Before coming to UT Martin in January, he had previously been assigned to Fort Campbell, Fort Benning and the Caserma Ederle Army base in Vicenza, Italy.

In his service since 1999, Begaye has been awarded the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal with Valor, the Army Commendation Medal (3 Oak Leaf Cluster), the Ranger Tab, Parachutist Badge, Combat Infantryman’s Badge and the Expert Infantrymen’s Badge.

Lt. Col. Rodric McClain, professor of Military Science, will serve as the master of ceremonies, and Kerri Arnold, Miss Tennessee Volunteer, will sing the national anthem at the start of the program. Begaye will speak after the invocation by Dale Willis and comments by UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver are given. At the conclusion of the ceremony, Dana Hagan will offer the benediction, and Chloe Lollar, a UT Martin alumna, will play taps.

Memorial Day is observed annually on the last Monday in May and serves to honor those who have died in the protection of the United States of America. Originally known as Decoration Day, it was renamed upon becoming a federal holiday in 1971.

For more information, contact Dorothy Gillon, UT Martin coordinator of public occasions, at dgillon@utm.edu.

ACT prep courses offered at UT Martin

The University of Tennessee at Martin Office of University Outreach is hosting two ACT prep classes from 5-7 p.m., June 1 and 3, via Zoom for students preparing for the test.

The first session, June 1, will focus on math and science reasoning, while the session on June 3 will work on English and reading. The lessons are two hours and will teach students time-saving strategies and comprehension tips.

Alex Beene, UT Martin Adjunct instructor and author, will instruct the course. Beene has mentored more than 1,000 students and continues to work as a lead instructor for Tennessee Adult Education in three counties.

Each course costs $25 and students can register at www.utm.edu/actprep.

For more information, contact Debbie Mount, director of non-degree programs, at dmount@utm.edu.
UTM evaluates budget, enrollment

The University of Tennessee at Martin Advisory Board met Friday during the annual summer meeting to discuss the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the campus, the strategic enrollment plan, the proposed budget for the 2020-21 fiscal year and an update on the improvements made to the university's Clery Act compliance.

UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver addressed the board concerning the recent UT System announcement to reopen all UT campuses in the fall, reassuring the members that the university will continue to monitor the pandemic and take all precautionary measures needed to ensure the safety of students, faculty and staff. Carver referenced three scenarios the reentry task force has been challenged to weigh including a return to all in-person classes in the fall, a hybrid semester involving online courses at the beginning with a transition to residential classes later or continuing all classes online.

"President Boyd announced that we would be working to being open as a residential college experience in the fall, certainly that would be ideal, but only if it's safe and only if we see things improving," Carver said. "Even if we do return residential in the fall, things will look a lot different here."

Carver also addressed feedback he has received from UT Martin students, saying the transition to online classes during the spring semester worked for the emergent need to social distance but has also reinforced the need for a residential college experience, which student representative Lauren Carter agreed with. So far, six UT Martin students have tested positive for COVID-19, contracting the disease after leaving campus, but are now recovering.

The board also discussed struggles students have endured while having to work from home, including solutions to problems like internet connectivity. Through a grant made possible by the CARES Act, UT Martin was able to purchase Verizon hotspots for UT Martin students to borrow to complete online classes.

Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Dr. Philip Acree Cavalier, and Vice President of Buffalo Noel Levitz, enrollment and fundraising management organization, Dr. Lew Sanborne, presented the third phase of the strategic enrollment plan, which involves finalizing the written strategic enrollment plan and estimating cost projections before implementing the strategic plan. The plan will focus on student recruitment, retention and success in order to help the university's enrollment and budget through undergraduate and graduate development plans.

"We have a very thoughtful plan that is based on data and market research that allows us to get ahead of what might be coming with somehow of the downturns with the COVID-19 pandemic," said Cavalier.

According to Sanborne, the strategic plan created for UT Martin reflects the university's unique mission and commitment to student success. The plan includes new graduate and undergraduate programs on the main campus and centers.

SEE UT MARTIN PAGE 13

UT MARTIN FROM PAGE 1

"It's been a crazy time, we're really working hard to make this as normal as we can for our students, but even given all of the challenges that we're undergoing, I am still excited about the strategic enrollment plan, still encouraged about the development of these new academic programs and the hopes for getting folks back together for the fall if it is safe," said Carver.

Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Petra McPhearson presented the proposed budget for the 2020-21 fiscal year; however, the base budget does not reflect any adjustments for the effects from COVID-19 or the $5.1 million awarded through the CARES Act.

Of the $5.1 million, $2.5 million is required to assist students for any disruption expenses incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The university is currently receiving guidance from the state to determine how the remaining $2.5 million can be awarded.

The advisory board approved the annual operating budget, including the proposal to not increase student tuition for the 2020-21 academic year.

The board also introduced two new members: Dr. Philip Smartt, faculty representative, and Emma Hilliard, student body representative, as well as reelected Art Sparks as the board chairman for an additional two years.

Smartt, professor of natural resource management, is the current Faculty Senate president and will begin his term on as the faculty representative on July 1. He will replace Dr. Chris Caldwell who has served on the advisory board since its inauguration. Smartt has taught at UT Martin since 2003.

Hilliard is junior health and human performance major from Bells, whose term will officially begin July 1. She will represent the student body on the advisory board for the 2020-21 academic year and replace Lauren Carter.

The next scheduled meeting of the UT Martin Advisory Board will be held Sept. 18. Agenda information will be distributed one week prior to the meeting date.

For more information, contact the UT Martin Office of University Relations at 731-881-7615.
Majors reminds students to be hopeful and open-minded

While there were times Majors believes he was over involved in organizations on campus, his senior year in-person classes being cut short because of the coronavirus outbreak makes him thankful for the opportunities he capitalized on while still on campus.

Like many others, Majors was disappointed that his senior year ended without his being able to experience many of the traditional events hosted by UTM, like the senior walk and commencement, but is proud to be recognized with the graduating class of 2020 who overcame the challenges and uncertainty this semester brought.

"To be honest, it's sad," said Majors. "All of those events have either been taken away completely or postponed, so it is a bummer for myself and anybody who's graduating this spring. In the grand scale of things, this just shows the world what the class of 2020 is capable of. That's the sunshine in all of the darkness. It may seem like everything has gone wrong, but it really shows you don't know how strong you are until you are put in a situation where you have to overcome a difficulty."

Majors represented the spring graduating class of 2020 at the UT Martin virtual commencement by sharing his final words with his classmates whom he feels he has grown closer to during his time in college.

"It almost brings me to tears, it's such a huge honor," said Majors about his role in the commencement ceremony. "It is a huge honor because as a member of the class of 2020, we've been on this huge journey together... I've shared so many memories with them, and it allows me to get that final moment with the student body, even though it is virtual."

"I think they should recognize the whole class of 2020 as some people who could really take what life threw at them and make something out of it."

In his parting words to his fellow classmates, Majors reminded the graduates to "Continue to dream, remain youthful and soar like a Skyhawk."

Majors will be attending the University of Tennessee College of Law in the fall to study Civil Rights law to fight for the underprivileged and underrepresented. Majors said it was important to him to stay in the UT System for law school because of his experiences these past four years at UT Martin.

When asked in a previous interview what advice he has for new students, Majors said, "Don't let your comfort be your downfall. It can be very scary to try something new or join a new organization or take on a leadership position or get a title, but... if you're comfortable, you're not growing."

As he continues in life, wherever it may lead him, Majors plans to take the lessons he learned and experiences from UT Martin with him as a reminder to always be open to new opportunities.
The University of Tennessee at Martin has named Justin McElroy as the recipient of the Spring 2020 Beth Maloan Outstanding Student Employee Award for his outstanding job performance, commitment to the university and exemplary work ethic.

McElroy is a senior education major from Puryear and has worked for the Office of Environmental Health and Safety on campus for 3 1/2 years. As a student worker, he is responsible for maintaining the approximately 980 portable fire extinguishers, verifying the exit and emergency lights, checking emergency eyewashes and showers, and ensuring that AEDs are operating, and performing monthly and yearly inspections of safety equipment on campus.

McElroy has continued working at UT Martin as an essential employee during the COVID-19 crisis, further proving his qualifications for the award, according to Ted Council, McElroy’s supervisor and Environmental Health and Safety officer for UT Martin.

“He has shown leadership abilities by taking it upon himself to provide on-the-job training and close direction for new student employees, which goes above and beyond what his job requirements are. He sure leaves big shoes to be filled once he moves on to an exciting career in education,” said Council.

Rachel Stephens, assistant director of student life, says McElroy “has been invaluable during his time working to ensure the safety and security of the campus.”

The award is given in honor of the late Beth Maloan, UTM director of budgeting and dedicated student employee advocate. A plaque and check are presented to a student each semester.

“From my past experience of having the opportunity to work alongside Beth Maloan, I am positive she also would be proud for Justin to receive this Outstanding Student Award in her honor,” said Council.

For more information, contact the UTM Office of University Relations at 731-881-7615.
Health pandemic cancels annual festivals

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to raise concerns about social gatherings and hindered businesses in the last few months, Martin and Dresden have announced the cancellations of two annual events.

The award-winning Tennessee Soybean Festival Board of Directors has made the decision to cancel the 27th Annual Tennessee Soybean Festival planned for Sept. 5-12, due to the uncertainties that still lie ahead from the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to TSF Executive Director David Belote, “The information we are currently receiving from state and federal governments indicates that we should discontinue our efforts to host festivals, fairs, or other special events that have the capacity to draw large numbers of people until further notice. The Tennessee Soybean Festival requires advance planning in the form of securing agreements with carnivals, street vendors, entertainment acts and other attractions. From a planning perspective, we simply cannot take the financial risk given the uncertainty of the future. We are dealing with a pandemic and the obvious restrictions that it imposes.”

“Also, the Tennessee Soybean Festival relies solely on sponsorships and contributions from local businesses to operate,” Belote stated.

“The safety and well-being of our citizens is paramount. Our board of directors has emphasized that ensuring the safety of Martin residents, attendees, entertainment acts, and vendors is of utmost importance. The inherent risks involved with this pandemic are self-evident. Given all of the factors that it takes to produce a festival and the current uncertainties surrounding the pandemic, at this point in time we strongly feel that it is not in the best interest of our community to continue the pursuit of the 2020 Festival.”

Martin Mayor Randy Brundige was asked for comment regarding the significance of what the TSF means to the Martin community.

“Not only does the Tennessee Soybean Festival contribute to the city's economy but also puts us on the map. We will miss making people smile and making Martin a destination to celebrate the soybean this year,” Brundige shared.

He stated that in his travels across the state, the Tennessee Soybean Festival has become one of the premier associations with the city.

If you visit the TSF website, one will see that Martin truly becomes a destination during this week. Documented and identified are those who travel to Martin to attend the festival from all parts of the United States and throughout the world,” board members noted.

Following Friday morning’s announcement of the cancellation of the Soybean Festival, the City of Dresden announced the annual Iris Festival event, which was postponed from April to July, has been cancelled as well. The city does plan to host a drive-in fireworks event to celebrate Independence Day.

The Executive Committee of the Tennessee Iris Festival has announced that the 2020 festival, which was originally scheduled for April 25 to May 2, and then rescheduled for July 4-11, has now been cancelled due to the continuing Covid-19 pandemic.

The Executive Committee regrets that the decision had to be made to cancel this year’s festival, but notes that the decision was made in consideration of the safety of all citizens of our community in light of the projections that the pandemic is expected to continue on until a vaccine is found and a significant number of citizens are immunized to prevent the spread of the virus,” organizers noted in a press release.

The City of Dresden plans to have an Independence Day fireworks show July 4.

This will be a driveup show to be held at Wilson Park beginning at 9 p.m. Spectators can drive their cars to the area of the park to view the show and park at either of the Civic Center parking lots, in the park parking areas on Gaylord Street, or in the walking trail parking spaces. Parking will also be available in the parking area behind the girls softball and T-ball fields.
The University of Tennessee at Martin received a $500,000 donation from Bill Blankenship, 1955 UT Martin alumnus and noted university donor, to continue Phase II of the Fine Arts Performance Center project.

The facility will be used by the Fine and Performing Arts programs at UT Martin, as well as host guest performers, academic speakers, fundraising events, conferences and regional competitions.

"The new concert hall will provide the venue sorely needed to give all UTM students access to the highest-caliber touring acts, while also providing a large-audience capacity space with great acoustics for our own UTM music ensembles," said Dr. Julie Hill, chair of the Department of Music.

The construction of Phase I of the Fine Arts Building was finished in 2013, completing the first half of the project. Construction for Phase II will cost $40 million overall and requires a six percent match, or $2.4 million, to receive state funding. The university has already raised over $595,000 for Phase II, which is 23 percent of the goal.

Blankenship, who also contributed to the Fine Arts Building Phase I construction and for whom the Blankenship Recital Hall in the Fine Arts Building is named, believes it is important to give back to the university that gave him so many opportunities while he was a student.

"It's only reasonable to give back to the place that gave you so much," Blankenship said in an interview for Tennessee Alumni magazine. "I want to be at the forefront of giving back, especially if it means the leaders of tomorrow will gain all that they can while at UT Martin and be prepared to go out into the world and be positive forces of change."

For students and faculty, a new performance center would provide practice and performance spaces that are not currently readily available or adaptable to each specific department.

"Outside of the music department, the new Concert Hall will provide increased programs for experiential learning and internships to all UTM students across a variety of disciplines on our campus combining opportunities in marketing, business, and much more," said Hill.

The performance center is expected to contribute over $400,000 annually to the Northwest Tennessee economy through programs and partnerships in music, visual arts, children's programming, dance and film.

"A new concert hall will provide our students, faculty and guests with a modern facility to showcase growth and talent. Having a concert hall of this caliber will contribute to social and economic growth within the region and will bring community pride and revenue to the area," said DueShuana Aldridge, a junior music major from Park. "With this new 'big-city' concert hall, UTM will provide a cultural gem, impacting a far greater region than the borders of our campus."

For more information, contact Dr. Charley Deal, vice chancellor for university advancement, at cdeal@utm.edu.
2020 Tennessee Soybean Festival Canceled

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"Truly, these are difficult times for all of us and as stewards of our festival, we would be hard-pressed to ask our local retailers and businesses to contribute to the festival this year while their own financial futures are uncertain due to the many closures and restrictions as a result of COVID-19."

The Tennessee Soybean Festival was awarded in February 2020 the Best Festival in the Southeast by the Southeast Festivals and Events Association. The festival last year attracted over 24,000 people to Martin, Tennessee. Currently, the State of Tennessee Economic Recovery Group is asking local governments to not plan events that encourage close contact and the assembling of large groups.

Director Belote emphasized that public safety is one of the most important planning components of the Tennessee Soybean Festival.

"The safety and well-being of our citizens is paramount. Our board of directors has emphasized that ensuring the safety of Martin residents, attendees, entertainment acts, and vendors is of utmost importance. The inherent risks involved with this pandemic are self-evident. Given all of the factors that it takes to produce a festival and the current uncertainties surrounding the pandemic, at this point in time we strongly feel that it is not in the best interest of our community to continue the pursuit of the 2020 Festival."

Mayor Randy Brundige was asked for comment regarding the significance of what the TSF means to the Martin community. Mayor Brundige stated, "Not only does the Tennessee Soybean Festival contribute to the city's economy but also puts us on the map. We will miss making people smile and making Martin a destination to celebrate the soybean this year." Mayor Brundige stated that in his travels across the state the Tennessee Soybean Festival has become one of the premier associations with the city. If you visit the TSF website, one will see that Martin truly becomes a destination during this week. Documented and identified are those who travel to Martin to attend the festival from all parts of the United States and throughout the world."
The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic was among the items recently addressed by the University of Tennessee at Martin Advisory Board.

The board — chaired by Art Sparks of Union City — met last week during the annual summer meeting to discuss the pandemic’s effects on campus, as well as the strategic enrollment plan, the proposed budget for the 2020-21 fiscal year and the improvements to the university’s Clery Act compliance.

During the session, Sparks was again unanimously re-elected as board chairman for an additional two years, and he said he was “humbled” by their support.

“It is an honor to be on this board, much less the chair, and I am grateful for the opportunity,” he said.

Sparks reflected on his first term while focusing on the future.

“During my first term, the board spent much of its time learning the inner-workings of the university, covering such topics as safety and security and recruitment efforts,” he said. “We also discussed the budget at length as one of the responsibilities of the board is to review the annual budget and tuition costs in an effort to control those costs.”

UT Martin chancellor Dr. Keith Carver addressed the advisory board concerning the recent UT System announcement to reopen all UT campuses in the fall, reassuring the members that the university will continue to monitor the pandemic and take all precautionary measures needed to ensure the safety of students, faculty and staff.
Carver referenced three scenarios the re-entry task force has been challenged to weigh, including a return to all in-person classes in the fall; a hybrid semester involving online courses at the beginning with a transition to residential classes later; or continuing all classes online.

"(UT) President (Randy) Boyd announced that we would be working to being open as a residential college experience in the fall, certainly that would be ideal, but only if it’s safe and only if we see things improving,” Carver said. “Even if we do return residential in the fall, things will look a lot different here.”

Carver also addressed feedback he has received from UT Martin students, saying the transition to online classes during the spring semester worked for the emergent need to social distance but has also reinforced the need for a residential college experience, drawing agreement from student representative Lauren Carter.

So far, six UT Martin students have tested positive for COVID-19, contracting the disease after leaving campus. They are now recovering.

The board also discussed struggles students have endured while having to work from home, including solutions to problems like Internet connectivity. Through a grant made possible by the CARES Act, UT Martin was able to purchase Verizon hotspots for UT Martin students to borrow to complete online classes.

Dr. Philip Acree Cavalier, UT Martin provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs, and Dr. Lew Sanborne, vice president of the enrollment and fundraising management organization Ruffalo Noel Levitz, presented the third phase of the strategic enrollment plan.

The plan involves finalizing the written strategic enrollment plan and estimating cost projections before implementing the strategic plan. It will focus on student recruitment, retention and success in order to help the university’s enrollment and budget through undergraduate and graduate development plans.

“We have a very thoughtful plan that is based on data and market research that allows us to get ahead of what might be coming with some of the downturns with the COVID-19 pandemic,” Cavalier said.

According to Sanborne, the strategic plan created for UT Martin reflects the university’s unique mission and commitment to student success. The plan includes new graduate and undergraduate programs on the main campus and centers.

“This has been crazy time, we’re really working hard to make this as normal as we can for our students, but even given all of the challenges that we’re undergoing, I am still excited about the strategic enrollment plan, still encouraged about the development of these new academic programs and the hopes for getting folks back together for the fall if it is safe,” Carver said.

Petra McPhearson, vice chancellor for finance and administration, presented the proposed budget for the 2020-21 fiscal year. However, the base budget does not reflect any adjustments for the effects from COVID-19 or the $5.1 million awarded through the CARES Act.

Of the $5.1 million, $2.5 million is required to assist students for any disruption expenses incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. The university is currently receiving guidance from the state to determine how the remaining $2.5 million can be awarded.

The advisory board approved the annual operating budget, including the proposal to not increase student tuition for the 2020-21 academic year.

In addition to re-electing Sparks, the board introduced two new members: Dr. Philip Smartt, faculty representative; and Emma Hilliard, student body representative.

Smartt, professor of natural resource management at UT Martin, is the current Faculty Senate president and will begin his term as the faculty representative on July 1. He has taught at UT Martin since 2003. He will replace Dr. Chris Caldwell, who has served on the advisory board since its inauguration.

Hilliard is a junior health and human performance major from Bells whose term will officially begin July 1. She will represent the student body on the advisory board for the 2020-21 academic year, replacing Ms. Carter.

The next scheduled meeting of the UT Martin Advisory Board will be held Sept. 18. Agenda information will be distributed one week prior to the meeting date.
Annual Memorial Day ceremony going to virtual format Friday

The University of Tennessee at Martin will hold its annual Memorial Day Commemoration Ceremony virtually — in lieu of the traditional in-person service — at 9 a.m. Friday.

The event is closed to the public and all participants will engage in social distancing to comply with Centers for Disease Control COVID-19 guidelines.

The Memorial Day ceremony will be livestreamed on the UT Martin Facebook page and YouTube and will be archived for later viewing. The program will also be broadcast on the student radio station, WUTM FM 90.3 "The Hawk."

Army Master Sgt. Conrad Begaye, senior military science instructor at UT Martin, will serve as this year’s keynote speaker.

As an Airborne Ranger, Begaye served in Operation Freedom’s Sentinel in Afghanistan (2016-17), Operation Enduring Freedom in campaigns V and VIII in Afghanistan (2005-07) and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq (2003-04). Before coming to UT Martin in January, he had previously been assigned to Fort Campbell (Ky.), Fort Benning (Ga.) and the Caserma Ederle Army base in Vicenza, Italy.

In his service since 1999, Begaye has been awarded the Silver Star, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal with Valor, Army Commendation Medal (3 Oak Leaf Cluster), Ranger Tab, Parachutist Badge, Combat Infantrymen’s Badge and Expert Infantrymen’s Badge.

UT Martin professor of military science Lt. Col. Rodric McClain will serve as master of ceremonies for the Memorial Day program, which will start with Miss Tennessee Volunteer Kerri Arnold singing the national anthem.

Begaye will speak after the invocation by Dale Willis and comments by UT Martin chancellor Dr. Keith Carver. At the conclusion of the ceremony, staff member Dana Hagan will offer the benediction and UT Martin alumna Chloe Lollar will play "Taps."

Memorial Day is observed annually on the last Monday in May and serves to honor those who have died in the protection of the United States of America.
UT Martin returning to in-person classes

The University of Tennessee System plans to welcome students back to each of its campuses this fall. "We are planning for a safe return to campuses in the fall and will do everything possible to protect the health of our students, faculty and staff," said UT System President Randy Boyd. "We will continually monitor the local and state health data and policies and be prepared to adjust and communicate our plans when needed."

The UT System created a system-wide taskforce in April, led by Dr. Jon McCullers, professor and chair of infectious disease at the UT Health Science Center, to advise on policies and procedures that would prioritize the safety and wellbeing of UT's students, faculty and staff. In addition, each campus has created a local task force to look at specific needs for their campus community. The campus task forces are analyzing various scenarios, specifying campus needs, and recommending guidelines and actions.

The UT System announced the transition of in-person spring classes to an online platform on March 11, growing UT's online semester credit hours (SCH) from less than 60,000 on March 1 to more than 567,000 by March 23.

"The faculty and staff have been heroic in their efforts," Boyd told the UT Board of Trustees at a special meeting on April 24. "It's been inspiring to see how hard they've worked to make sure the students are successful."

The UT System has a comprehensive resource guide that provides information and resources surrounding COVID-19: tennessee.edu/coronavirus/.

In December 2019, the global health care community identified a new respiratory virus that originated in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, and has since been labeled 2019 Novel Coronavirus Disease or COVID-19 by the World Health Organization. Spread of coronavirus is correlated with circumstances of close and sustained contact with others who are infected.

The University of Tennessee System has campuses in Knoxville, Chattanooga, Martin and Memphis; the UT Space Institute in Tullahoma; the UT Institute of Agriculture with a presence in every Tennessee county; and the statewide Institute for Public Service. The UT system manages Oak Ridge National Laboratory through its UT-Battelle partnership; enrolls about 50,000 students statewide; produces about 10,000 new graduates every year; and represents more than 387,000 alumni around the world.
MARTIN, Tenn. (KFVS) - The University of Tennessee at Martin's four-year graduation rate has increased 10.8 percent since proposing "Soar in Four."

"Soar in Four" is a tuition model that encourages students to take at least 15 hours per semester in order to graduate in four years.

The program began in the fall 2016 semester and saw its first four-year graduating class May 2, 2020.

Graduation and retention rates, when compared to institutions such as the University of Memphis, Middle and East Tennessee State Universities and Tennessee Tech, are greater by at least 5 percent.

"When you look at a four-year window, we are 10.8 percentage points better. I like that trend and we have to keep pushing and improving that," said UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver. "It's really exciting to think about."

When originally implemented, the "Soar in Four" program increased tuition and mandatory fees to fund extracurricular programs that promote graduating within four years and student well-being.

Before 2016, UT Martin did not charge for additional hours taken exceeding the full-time minimum of 12 credit hours.

While 12 hours is still the minimum number of credit hours a student can take to be considered full-time, "Soar in Four" mandated a flat rate tuition which charges for 15 hours to encourage students to take the average number of credit hours needed to graduate in four years.

The funding allowed for more faculty and staff hires in departments with bottlenecks and prerequisite courses that could not account for the number of students who were required to take the course; student success counselors who are responsible for providing resources to help students achieve academic excellence; living-learning communities, which group freshmen in residence halls by major; and an upgraded Career Planning and Development office to assist students' transition from college to employment through interview training, resume building and job fairs.

Ivana Cherry, a recent UT Martin management graduate from Memphis, says her college experience wouldn't have been the same without programs like the Student Success Center funded by Soar in Four.

"Being involved with the Student Success Center has helped me grow as a person and a student," said Cherry. "Being a student athlete, along with my many involvements on campus, the Student Success Center provided me with many resources that help me achieve my goals... It has given me the confidence to ask for help when I need it and talk about my problems."

Riley Allison, a sophomore accounting major from Jackson, has taken advantage of the services offered by Career Planning and Development and believes the skills he has learned through the program will help him succeed in his future career.

"The CPAD services have made me want to be more intentional with my time as a college student. (They) have helped me apply content knowledge I have gained within my classes to the skills needed to attract potential employers," said Allison.

In 2015, UT Martin's four-year graduation rate was 23.5 percent increasing to 34.3 percent in 2019, and while Carver says "Soar in Four" cannot take complete responsibility for the increased rate, it is a major factor when evaluating the success of retention in the past four years.

"Soar in Four" is reevaluated every summer in order to distribute funds where support is most needed and to reassess the effectiveness of the programs implemented by the initiative.

"UT Martin really is committed to retention and graduation; we want our students to persist and graduate," said Carver.
UTM to host pair of ACT prep classes via Zoom

The University of Tennessee at Martin Office of University Outreach is hosting two ACT prep classes from 5-7 p.m., June 1 and 3, via Zoom for students preparing for the test. The first session, June 1, will focus on math and science reasoning, while the session on June 3 will work on English and reading. The lessons are two hours and will teach students time-saving strategies and comprehension tips.

Alex Beene, UT Martin Adjunct instructor and author, will instruct the course. Beene has mentored more than 1,000 students and continues to work as a lead instructor for Tennessee Adult Education in three counties.

Each course costs $25 and students can register at www.utm.edu/actprep. For more information, contact Debbie Mount, director of non-degree programs, at dmount@utm.edu.

UTM to hold virtual Memorial Day service

The University of Tennessee at Martin will hold its annual Memorial Day Commemoration Ceremony virtually at 9 a.m., Friday, May 22, in lieu of the traditional in-person service. 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 Memorial Day Commemoration Ceremony will be live streamed on the UT Martin Facebook and YouTube and will be archived for later viewing. The program will also be broadcast on WUTM FM 90.3 “The Hawk.”

Army Master Sgt. Conrad Begay, senior military science instructor at UT Martin, will serve as this year’s keynote speaker. As an Airborne Ranger, Begay served in Operation Freedom’s Sentinel in Afghanistan (2016-17), Operation Enduring Freedom in campaigns V and VIII in Afghanistan (2005-07) and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq (2003-04). Before coming to UT Martin in January, he had previously been assigned to Fort Campbell, Fort Benning and the Caserma Ederle Army base in Vicenza, Italy.

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For more information, contact Dorothy Gillon, UT Martin coordinator of public occasions, at dgillon@utm.edu.
Four Students Graduated from UT Martin Somerville Center on May 2nd

Four students attending the University of Tennessee at Martin Somerville Center graduated during the virtual commencement held at the UT Martin main campus May 2.

Abbey Gail German, of Somerville, graduated Summa Cum Laude, and earned her Bachelor of Science in Education degree; Mercy Madeline Switzer, of Somerville, graduated Magna Cum Laude, and earned her Bachelor of Science in History degree; Jacob Greene, of Somerville, graduated Cum Laude, and earned his Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies degree; and Julian G. Wilson III, of Eads, earned his Bachelor of Science in Agriculture Business degree.

Students who graduate with the honors designation of Cum Laude, meaning "with honor," earned a GPA of 3.2 to 3.49; with honors designations of Magna Cum Laude, meaning "with great honor," earned a GPA of 3.5 to 3.79; and with the honors designation of Summa Cum Laude, meaning "with highest praise," earned a GPA of 3.8 to 4.0.

The UT Martin Somerville Center offers general education and undergraduate courses supporting bachelor's degree requirement in more than 80 specialized programs, including agriculture, business, criminal justice, history, social work, political science, psychology and interdisciplinary studies.

 UT Martin Joins Other UT Campuses Opening In-Person Classes This Fall

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For more information, contact Dorothy Gillon, UT Martin coordinator of public occasions, at dgillon@utm.edu.
The 3rd Annual Field of Flags is on display through the end of this month near the UT Martin campus on University Street.

UTM Chancellor Dr. Keith Carver gave the American Legion Post #55 Riders the blessing to carry through with this year’s project.

Members of the organization and volunteers spent last Saturday putting up the 250 flags.

The chevron-pattern display of flags allows donors to contribute $20 in honor or memory of a patriot. The display will be up until May 30.

A placard is placed at the base of the flag until they are taken down the weekend after Memorial Day, folded and given to the sponsor.

To sponsor a flag, contact Riders Director Jackie Laird at 731-364-5766 or any Rider member.
ACT Prep Classes Offered Via Zoom

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Alex Beene, UT Martin Adjunct instructor and author, will instruct the course. Beene has mentored more than 1,000 students and continues to work as a lead instructor for Tennessee Adult Education in three counties.

Students can register at www.utm.edu/actprep.

For more information or questions about fees contact Debbie Mount, director of non-degree programs, at dmount@utm.edu.
UT Martin hosts annual Memorial Day ceremony virtually

May 22, 2020 by Josh Robinson

MARTIN, Tenn. — Because of COVID-19, UT Martin held their annual Memorial Day ceremony online for the first time Friday morning.

Memorial Day was first celebrated as Decoration Day in 1868 to honor soldiers killed in the Civil War.

“lt is a day to reflect on the sacrifices of the 1.2 million service members, who have lost their lives defending this great nation of ours,” said U.S. Army LTC Rodric McClain.

Each Memorial Day, the American flag is raised to the top of the staff, then lowered to half staff to remember the men and women who gave their lives.

“At noon their memory is raised,” McClain said. “But the living, who resolve not to let their sacrifice, be in vain.”

Army Master Sergeant Conrad Begaye was the keynote speaker. He's been serving for 21 years.

“I'm proudly one of the many Native Americans who have served this great country,” Begaye said.

He says his uncle is the man who convinced him to join, but it's not just those out fighting that he's thankful for.

“From the cooks to the mechanics, it takes an army to be an army. Many of these soldiers find themselves in harms way in outposts, not know if today will be the last,” Begaye said.

They ended the ceremony with a gun salute and the playing of “Taps”.

Memorial Day became an official federal holiday in 1971.
UT-Martin Program Creates Four Year Graduation

Posted on May 26, 2020 by Charles Choate

The University of Tennessee-Martin has seen an increase in on-time graduations, due to a new program.

In the fall of 2016, "Soar in Four" was implemented to increase the four year graduation rate.

With the first graduating class from the program in May, university officials say the four year graduation rate increased 10.8-percent.

"Soar in Four" encouraged students to take at least 15 hours per semester to achieve the goal.

In 2015, UT Martin’s four-year graduation rate was 23.5 percent, which increased to 34.3 percent in 2019.

University Chancellor Dr. Keith Carver says “Soar in Four” cannot take complete responsibility for the increased rate, but it is a major factor when evaluating the success of retention over the past four years.

Local residents receive degrees from UT Martin

May 26, 2020

Several Robertson County residents were among students who received degrees from the University of Tennessee at Martin during spring commencement held May 2. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a virtual commencement was held in lieu of the traditional in-person ceremony and was live-streamed via Facebook Live and YouTube. An in-person graduation ceremony is currently being planned for August in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center on the UT Martin campus.

The students receiving undergraduate degrees were: Cedar Hill – Cierra Grace Barker; Coopertown – Peyton Shawn Hix; Cross Plains – William Tyler Gregory and Springfield – Ashlee M. Heinlein, Timothy Chase Minton, Jennifer Brooke Rice and Paige Allison Sanders.

The student receiving a graduate degree was: White House – Kimberly Ogan.

UT Martin is a comprehensive regional institution in the University of Tennessee System offering 18 bachelor’s degree programs and five master’s degree programs. The main campus in northwest Tennessee is one of four primary UT campuses. For more information, visit utm.edu.
TWO DECADES OF SERVICE — Army Master Sgt. Conrad Begaye, senior military science instructor, served as the guest speaker for the University of Tennessee at Martin virtual Memorial Day Commemoration Ceremony conducted Friday morning and spoke of his proud service as an Airborne Ranger from the Navajo Nation.

‘Honor their sacrifice daily’
By SARAH KNAPP
UTM University Relations

"There is nothing quite like the bond created being in combat with soldiers who would lay their lives down without hesitation for you."

Army Master Sgt. Conrad Begaye, senior military science instructor, served as the guest speaker for the University of Tennessee at Martin virtual Memorial Day Commemoration Ceremony conducted Friday morning and spoke of his proud service as an Airborne Ranger from the Navajo Nation. Begaye also observed his 21-year anniversary in the Army on May 21.

"Personally, my Army story began yesterday," Begaye said. "I celebrated 21 years in active service. I am proudly one of many Native Americans to serve this great country," Begaye said.

During his speech, Begaye recognized other Native American service members who were killed in action during his service, such as U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Alejandro Jay Yazzie and Army Spc. Lori Morel family.

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FROM PAGE 1

Piestewa. He also paid tribute to 1999 UT Martin alumnus U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Brent Morel, who was killed in action in Iraq in 2004, and the Morel family.

"Today and every day, I am reminded of the men who fought and died alongside me in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan ... I got to know these men personally: their likes, dislikes, weird music they listened to and their future plans when they would eventually leave service," he said.

"There is nothing quite like the bond created being in combat with soldiers who would lay their lives down without hesitation for you."

Begaye reminded the audience that Memorial Day should be a celebration and a reminder of the service and sacrifice of the 1.2 million service members who lost their lives in defense of the United States, not a day to mourn their loss.

"I am constantly reminded that freedom is not free, and we are guaranteed that privilege from the lives that are given. Sometimes we forget the sacrifice made for the freedom we have. These young men and women stood up for our rights, stood up for those who can't and stood up for those who are not willing to. The lives laid down for this great country are not forgotten," Begaye said.

"Let us not mourn them but celebrate their lives with honor; honor the flag that they fought for (and) the nation of freedom, which we enjoy," he added.

Lt. Col. Rodric McClain, professor of military science and master of ceremony during the service, encouraged viewers to remember the service members who "have given the ultimate sacrifice as they solemnly swore to defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic."

The ceremony was live-streamed on the UT Martin Facebook account, archived on the UT Martin YouTube account and broadcast by WUTM-FM 90.3 "The Hawk."

For more information, contact the Office of University Relations at 731-881-7615.
Dr. Clinton Smith named Kiwanis Teacher of the Year

Dr. Clinton Smith was awarded the Martin Kiwanis Teacher of the Year Award. Dr. Smith is also a Kiwanis District Award recipient. In 2014-2017, he was named the Special Olympics Teacher of the Year for Upper West Tennessee. Over the course of the past six years, he has helped raise over $100,000 for the athletes of Upper West Tennessee through organizing events such as the Polar Plunge, the Unity 5K, and collaborating with the Tennessee Soybean Festival.

Dr. Smith has been at UTM since spring 2012. Previously, he served as a middle school special education teacher and a high school special education teacher. He also served as a minister of youth and education at various churches in Arkansas, Mississippi, and Tennessee.

In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Smith is very active in the Martin community:
- Member of the Martin Kiwanis Club
- Area Director for Upper West Tennessee Special Olympics
- Coach at Martin Middle School (assistant varsity, head coach for sixth grade boys)
- Member of the Northwest Tennessee Photography Club
- Leadership Weakley County, class of 2020
- Volunteer photographer (local school sporting events, FCA, UTM Athletics, Martin Housing Authority)
- We Care Food Drive (during the pandemic)
- Volunteer Relay Coordinator for UTM Basketball

He is also involved with the Martin Kiwanis Club serving as the assistant secretary, a past Kiwanis adviser for the Aktion Club (a service group for adults with disabilities) and for the Martin Middle Builder’s Club. He also served as secretary from 2014-2017.

Smith has worked tirelessly to build the Special Olympics program in Upper West Tennessee. Over the course of the past six years, he has helped raise over $100,000 for the athletes of Upper West Tennessee through organizing events such as the Polar Plunge, the Unity 5K, and collaborating with the Tennessee Soybean Festival.

Through the hard work and dedication of Dr. Smith, Special Olympics has received a $1,500 grant from the Louisiana-Mississippi-West Tennessee Kiwanis District of Kiwanis and three $2,500 grants from Modern Woodmen of America.

The impact of the work that Smith has done has touched many lives of both Special Olympics athletes and children in the Martin area.

There are more than 300 Special Olympics athletes across Lake, Obion, Weakley, Carroll, and Henry counties that have been involved in the events coordinated by him.

Not only are Special Olympics athletes provided with opportunities for sports competition and training in multiple events and opportunities for free physicals.

Smith also coaches basketball at Martin Middle School. Since 2012, he has served as the head coach for the sixth-grade boys (2012-present) and girls (in 2017) basketball teams and serves as an assistant coach for the varsity basketball team. The varsity team has won six county and six area championships as well as being the West Tennessee sectional runner up in 2017. He has also helped coach a local AAU team for Westview High School in 2013.
UTM provides PPE for health care organizations

As Reelfoot Rural Ministries prepares to reopen in early June, the doctors in its dental clinic knew they needed to take additional precautionary measures to ensure the safety of their staff, patients and themselves against the threat of COVID-19. After hearing the news about the University of Tennessee at Martin creating medical face shields during the shortage of personal protective equipment, UT Martin alumnus and dentist at the clinic, Dr. Greg Moore, reached out to the university to see if they could help.

"The ability of UTM and many other entities to produce needed PPE has enabled not only frontline health-care providers to continue but has also enabled other health-care providers like dentists to return to work and practice in the face of this virus," said Moore.

UT Martin provided the 3D technology and labor to produce the face shields for Reelfoot Rural Ministries for the cost of the materials. According to Amy Belew, UT Martin chief information officer, the university "wants to help out the community as much as we can," and the services donated to Reelfoot Rural Ministries, "(provided) us with a great opportunity to do that."

"The face shields that UTM fabricated for us are one of the additional layers of protection that is advised along with much thicker masks," Moore explained. "The oral cavity provides one primary vector of transmission of this virus through coughing and aerosol or water/saliva generated in having dental procedures. Therefore, the face shields from UTM help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. In essence, they may save a life."

Reelfoot Rural Ministries is a religious nonprofit organization that serves those in need the counties of Dyer, Lake, Obion and Fulton, as well as senior citizens from any county in Tennessee. From low-cost dental and vision care, for the uninsured and underinsured provided by volunteer doctors, to grocery distribution and home repairs, Reelfoot Rural Ministries seeks to help those who qualify for financial need in one of the most poverty-ridden areas in Tennessee.

"Reelfoot Rural Ministries mission has been always been based upon Christian love. As an outreach of the Memphis Conference of the United Methodist Church for over 50 years, this ministry has been a neighbor to the community that it serves. So many churches, individuals and businesses have offered help to (Reelfoot Rural Ministries) through the years," Moore said.

"Reelfoot Rural Ministries has received that benevolence and thus has offered assistance in many ministries to people across Northwest Tennessee and Southwest Kentucky for over half a century."

The Reelfoot Rural Ministries dental clinic will reopen June 2 in order to continue serving the dental needs of Northwest Tennessee residents.

"I know that we're looking forward to going back and continuing our work there at the clinic, but we have to make sure that we're protected as much as we can in order to do that," Moore said.

The West Tennessee Healthcare Volunteer Hospital purchased face masks for use in direct patient care. Two UTM graduates, Garrett Hay and Grayson Lambert, delivered the shields to the hospital May 7.

For more information about the medical face shields, contact Belew at 731-881-7901. For more information about Reelfoot Rural Ministries, contact Rev. Robert Craig, executive director, at 731-538-9970.
LSA earns multiple awards

UT Martin’s student group, League of Striving Artists, had a big night during the university’s recent Registered Student Organization award ceremony. Advisor Jason Stout thanked the members and LSA officer team for their hard work and dedication.

Stout also acknowledged numerous community partners who help by volunteering and promoting the organization’s events throughout the year. Those mentioned include Whitney Stover, Brittany Mitchell, Chris Williams, Dee Pritchett, Josh Sanders, Brad Thompson, Christy Dane, Bryan Harding, David Boucher, Susie Sadler, Amanda Stout, Alan Laderman and Lynette Wagster for supporting projects at homecoming and the holiday bazaar. This year’s LSA Scholarship award winner is Anna Hinton.

“Special thanks to Chancellor Keith Carver for supporting the LSA arts on campus initiative. Thank you also to former LSA officers and members who spent time encouraging and mentoring this team to great success,” Stout added.

RSO awards include Gold Level Service award, Student Organization Event of the Year and Advisor of the Year awards.

SERVICE AWARDS —
During the recent University of Tennessee at Martin Registered Student Organization award ceremony held virtually, the student group League of Striving Artists earned multiple awards, including accolades for leadership. Chosen as the Advisor of the Year is UTM Fine Arts professor Jason Stout. Named as Student Leader of the Year is Bailey Radnitzer, who serves as leader of the League of Striving Artists campus group.

UTM RSO GOLD LEVEL SERVICE AWARD — Annually, the University of Tennessee at Martin honors student organizations for their levels of service, events, and leadership. This year’s Registered Student Organization award ceremony bestowed several awards to the student group, League of Striving Artists. The LSA earned the Gold Level Service Award. Pictured are (from left) Dylan Shaeffer, Anna Sison, advisor Jason Stout, Jordan Copeland, Brandy Gaul, Brianna Hinton, Mia Upchurch, student leader Bailey Radnitzer and Dillon Faith.
UTM RSO ORGANIZATION OF THE YEAR — Chosen this year during the University of Tennessee at Martin’s annual Registered Student Organization virtual award ceremony for Organization of the Year was the League of Striving Artists. Pictured are (front, from left) Mia Upchurch and Sarah Haig, (back) Dillon Faith, Dylan Shaeffer, Isaiah Kennedy, Jordan Copeland, advisor Jason Stout, Brannon Kelly, UTM Chancellor Keith Carver, Bailey Radnitzer and Brandy Gaul. The LSA’s Charger Scholar Art Immersion Illustration Workshop Day was chosen as the UTM RSO Event of the Year.

University Outreach offers Zoom ACT Prep class

The University of Tennessee at Martin Office of University Outreach is hosting two ACT prep classes from 5 to 7 p.m., June 1 and 3, via Zoom for students preparing for the test. The first session, June 1, will focus on math and science reasoning, while the session on June 3 will work on English and reading. The lessons are two hours and will teach students time-saving strategies and comprehension tips.

Alex Beene, UT Martin adjunct instructor and author, will instruct the course. Beene has mentored more than 1,000 students and continues to work as a lead instructor for Tennessee Adult Education in three counties.

Each course costs $25 and students can register at www.utm.edu/actprep.

For more information, contact Debbie Mount, director of non-degree programs, at dmount@utm.edu.
REMEMBERING THE FALLEN — U.S. Army Master Sgt. Conrad Begaye, senior military science instructor, served as the guest speaker for the University of Tennessee at Martin virtual Memorial Day Commemoration Ceremony Friday and spoke of his proud service as an Airborne Ranger from the Navajo Nation.

**Begaye: Celebrate lives of fallen service members**

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Begaye also observed his 21-year anniversary in the Army on Thursday.

"Personally, my Army story began yesterday," Begaye said. "I celebrated 21 years in active service. ... I am proudly one of many Native Americans to serve this great country."

During his speech, Begaye recognized other Native American service members who were killed in action during his service, such as U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Alejandro Jay Yazzie and Army Spc. Lori Piestewa. He also paid tribute to 1999 UT Martin alumnus U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Brent Morel, who was killed in action in Iraq in 2004, and the Morel family.

"Today and every day, I am reminded of the men who fought and died alongside me in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. ... I got to know these men personally: their likes, dislikes, weird music they listened to and their future plans when they would eventually leave service," he said. "There is nothing quite like the bond created being in combat with soldiers who would lay their lives down without hesitation for you."

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After hearing the news about the University of Tennessee at Martin creating medical face shields during the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), UT Martin alumnus and clinic dentist Dr. Greg Moore reached out to the university to see if they could help.

"The ability of UTM and many other entities to produce needed PPE has enabled not only frontline health-care providers to continue but has also enabled other health-care providers like dentists to return to work and practice in the face of this virus," Moore explained. "The oral cavity provides one primary vector of transmission of this virus through coughing and aerosol of water/saliva generated in having dental procedures. Therefore, the face shields from UTM help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. In essence, they may save a life."

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The Reelfoot Rural Ministries dental clinic will reopen June 2 in order to continue serving the dental needs of northwest Tennessee residents.

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The West Tennessee Healthcare Volunteer Hospital also purchased face masks for use in direct patient care. Two recent UT Martin graduates, Garrett Hay and Grayson Lambert, delivered the shields to the hospital May 7.

For more information about the medical face shields, contact Ms. Belew at (731) 881-7901. For more information about Reelfoot Rural Ministries, contact the Rev. Robert Craig, executive director, at 538-9970.

MEETING A NEED — Reelfoot Rural Ministries executive director the Rev. Robert Craig (left) was joined by University of Tennessee at Martin chief information officer Amy Belew and UT Martin alumnus and dentist Dr. Greg Moore in displaying the medical face shields produced by UT Martin. Reelfoot Rural Ministries purchased face masks to use in its dental clinic when it reopens June 2.
Club nominates Dr. Smith for honor

Dr. Clinton Smith has been nominated by the Martin Kiwanis Club for the Kiwanis Teacher of the Year Award.

Therefore, he will also be nominated for the Louisiana-Mississippi-West Tennessee District Teacher of the Year Award.

Dr. Smith is an associate professor of special education at the University of Tennessee at Martin. He is also a board-certified behavior analyst at the doctoral level and a licensed behavior analyst in Tennessee.

He has been at UT Martin since the spring of 2012. Previously, he served as a middle school special education teacher at Shadowlawn Middle School in Arlington from 2002-12 and as a special education teacher at Central High School in Helena-West Helena, Ark., from 1990-93.

In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Dr. Smith is very active in the Martin community and the surrounding area.

He is a member of the Martin Kiwanis Club; area director for Upper West Tennessee Special Olympics, which includes Obion County; a coach at Martin Middle School (assistant varsity and head coach for sixth-grade boys); and a member of the Northwest Tennessee Photography Club.

In addition, he is a 2020 graduate of Leadership Weakley County; a volunteer photographer for local school sporting events, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, UT Martin Athletics and the Martin Housing Authority; a volunteer with the We Care food drive (during the COVID-19 pandemic); and volunteer replay coordinator for UT Martin basketball.

Dr. Smith is also involved with the Martin Kiwanis Club, serving as the assistant secretary, a past Kiwanis advisor for the Aktion Club (a service group for adults with disabilities) and with the Martin Middle School Builder's Club. He also served as secretary from 2014-17.

He has worked tirelessly to build the Special Olympics program in the Upper West Tennessee region. Over the course of the past six years, he has helped raise over $100,000 for the athletes of Upper West Tennessee through organizing events such as the Polar Plunge and the Unity 5K and collaborating with the Tennessee Soybean Festival.

Through his hard work and dedication, Special Olympics has received a $1,500 grant from the Louisiana-Mississippi-West Tennessee District of Kiwanis and three $2,500 grants from Modern Woodmen of America.

Dr. Smith organizes several Special Olympics events throughout the year, such as bowling tournaments. He created an Athlete Training Night program where athletes meet twice a month during the school year at UT Martin to engage in activities to emphasize physical fitness. This required collaboration with several student organizations and UTM Athletics.

He also coordinates the annual All Ball season. All Ball is a six-week baseball season for students with disabilities and recruits volunteers from UTM and local schools.

Additionally, he visits local elementary and middle schools to share the message of inclusion and respect by asking students not to use the “R” (retard) word. Over 200 students have taken the Spread the Word to End the Word pledge.

He speaks to local civic groups about the importance of Special Olympics as well.

Dr. Smith coaches Special Olympics athletes for basketball and track and field. He has taken basketball teams from Upper West Tennessee to a regional tournament in Memphis and has taken track and field athletes to the Special Olympics State Games in Nashville. He also has coached in three USA Special Olympics National Games for track and field and basketball (2006, 2010 and 2014).

The impact of the work Dr. Smith has done has touched many lives of both Special Olympics athletes and children in the Martin area, according to the Martin Kiwanis Club.

“There are over 300 Special Olympics athletes across Lake, Obion, Weakley, Carroll and Henry counties that have been involved in the events coordinated by him. Not only are Special Olympics athletes provided with opportunities for sports competition and training in multiple events, but also opportunities for free physicals,” club officials shared.

Dr. Smith helped coordinate a health fair by collaborating with the UT Martin Nursing Department to provide 100 free physicals to Special Olympics athletes.

Through the transformative power of sports, the Special Olympics athletes of Upper West Tennessee have improved confidence and health as well as inspire a sense of competition. These athletes are seeing themselves for their abilities, not disabilities, and their world is opened with acceptance and understanding. They are empowered by their accomplishments through sports.

Special Olympics events bring together a large and inclusive community of athletes, supporters and families, coaches, volunteers and many others.

Through tireless collaboration, Dr. Smith has worked with the UTM SHAPE Club, UTM HHP Faculty, UTM Athletics, local schools and athletic teams and businesses to spread an awareness of Special Olympics, as well as recruit volunteers and support for these events, club officials said.
**UT Martin Four-Year Graduation Rates Increase After ‘SOAR In Four’**

*Courtesy UT Martin*

MARTIN — The University of Tennessee at Martin’s four-year graduation rate has increased 10.8 percent since proposing “Soar in Four,” the tuition model that encourages students to take at least 16 hours per semester in order to graduate in four years. In 2015, the “Soar in Four” tuition program began in the fall 2016 semester and saw its first four-year graduating class May 2, 2020.

During the February 19 University of Tennessee Board of Trustees meeting, a presentation concerning graduation and retention rates for the UT System showcased UT Martin as having the highest graduation rate not only in the UT System, but also when compared to aspirational peers and locally governed institutions such as the University of Memphis, Middle and East Tennessee State Universities and Tennessee Tech, by at least 8 percent.

“When you look at a four-year window, we are (10.8) percentage points better. I like that trend and we have to keep pushing and improving that,” said UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver. “It’s really exciting to think about.”

When originally implemented, the “Soar in Four” program increased tuition and mandatory fees to fund extra-curricular programs that promote graduating within four years and student well-being. Before 2016, UT Martin did not charge for additional hours taken exceeding the full-time minimum of 12-credit hours. While 12 hours is still the minimum number of credit hours a student can take to be considered full-time, “Soar in Four” mandated a flat rate tuition which charges for 15 hours to encourage students to take the average number of credit hours needed to graduate in four years.

“I was able to get more faculty and staff hired in departments with bottlenecks and prerequisite courses that could not account for the number of students who were required to take the course; student success counselors who are responsible for providing resources to help students achieve academic excellence; living-learning communities, which group freshmen in residence halls by major; and an upgraded Career Planning and Development office to assist students’ transition from college to employment through training, resume building and job fairs,” said Carver.

Ivana Cherry, a recent UT Martin management graduate from Memphis, says her college experience wouldn’t have been the same without programs like the Student Success Center funded by Soar in Four.

“Being involved with the Student Success Center has helped me grow as a person and a student,” said Cherry. “Being a student athlete, along with my many involvements on campus, the Student Success Center provided me with many resources that help me achieve my goals... It has given me the confidence to ask for help when I need it and talk about my problems.”

Riley Allison, a sophomore accounting major from Jackson, has taken advantage of the services offered by Career Planning and Development and believes the skills he has learned through the program will help him succeed in his future career.

“The CPAD services have made me want to be more intentional with my time as a college student. (They) have helped me apply content knowledge I have gained within my classes to the skills needed to attract potential employers,” said Allison.

In 2015, UT Martin’s four-year graduation rate was 23.5 percent increasing to 34.3 percent in 2019, while Carver says “Soar in Four” cannot take complete responsibility for the increased rate, it is a major factor when evaluating the success of retention in the past four years.

“Soar in Four” is reevaluated every summer in order to distribute funds where support is most needed and to reassess the effectiveness of the programs implemented by the initiative.

“UT Martin really is committed to retention and graduation, we want our students to persist and graduate,” said Carver.

For more information about “Soar in Four,” visit utm.edu/departments/careers/soarinfour.
Captain Challenge Sets Goal of $325,000 for UTM

MARTIN, Tenn. (May 26) — The University of Tennessee at Martin hosts its sixth-annual Captain's Challenge fundraising event June 3 with the goal to raise $325,000 in 24 hours. This year's theme is "Captain's Challenge—Back to the Future Edition" to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Skyhawk.

Contributors can direct their donations toward any campus office, department, athletic organization, scholarship fund, special program or another fundraiser at challenge.utm.edu. Each college will have a thermometer to track its real-time fundraising progress on the donation website.

Donors are asked to consider the Chancellor's Academic Excellence Fund, the Fine Arts Building Phase II fund, the Innovation and Product Realization Building "The Garage" fund, the Athletics-Victory fund or the Ned Ray McWherter Institute fund if unsure of which program to donate to specifically.

Those interested in helping to promote the event on social media and through other channels are encouraged to register as "Captain's Challenge Pilots" at alumni.utm.edu/pilot.

Last year, with the goal of $300,000, UT Martin raised over $319,000 in 24 hours.

For more information, contact the UT Martin Office of Alumni Relations at 731-881-7610 or alumni@utm.edu.

UT Martin Provides PPE For Local Health Care Organizations

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For more information about the medical face shields, contact Belew at 731-881-7901. For more information about Reelfoot Rural Ministries, contact Rev. Robert Craig, executive director, at 731-538-9570.
Local Students Receive UT Martin Honors Day Awards

MARTIN — Four Carroll County students received awards from the University of Tennessee at Martin in recognition of their achievements in scholarship and citizenship during the 2019-20 academic year.

Haidyn McLemore of Huntington received the Alpha Omicron Pi Mothers’ Club Scholarship Award and the William H. Baker Scholarship Award.

Amanda Steele, of Yuma received the American Association of University Women Margaret Weaver Award of Excellence.

Dawson Cremmets of Huntington received the Cunningham Outstanding Freshman Award.

Joseph Richardson of Huntington received the Outstanding Freshman Engineering Award.

UT Martin hosts an annual Honors Day Program in the spring to recognize each award recipient. However, due to the COVID-19 crisis, the in-person ceremony was canceled, and students were notified of their awards by the Office of the Chancellor. For more information, visit utm.edu.

UT Martin Receives $500,000 Donation for Phase II Renovation of Fine Arts Building

MARTIN (May 13) — The University of Tennessee at Martin received a $500,000 donation from Bill Blankenship, 1965 UT Martin alumnus and noted university donor, to continue Phase II of the Fine Arts Performance Center project.

The facility will be used by the Fine and Performing Arts programs at UT Martin, as well as host guest performers, academic speakers, fundraising events, conferences and regional competitions.

"The new concert hall will provide the venue sorely needed to give all UTM students access to the highest-caliber touring acts, while also providing a large-audience capacity space with great acoustics for our own UTM music ensembles," said Dr. Julie Hill, chair of the Department of Music.

The construction of Phase I of the Fine Arts Building was finished in 2013, completing the first half of the project. Construction for Phase II will cost $40 million overall and requires a six percent match, or $2.4 million, to receive state funding. The university has already raised over $255,000 for Phase II, which is 23 percent of the goal.

Blankenship, who also contributed to the Fine Arts Building Phase I construction and for whom the Blankenship Recital Hall in the Fine Arts Building is named, believes it is important to give back to the university that gave him so many opportunities while he was a student.

"It's only reasonable to give back to the place that gave you so much," Blankenship said in an interview for Tennessee Alumnus magazine. "I want to be at the forefront of giving back, especially if it means the leaders of tomorrow will gain all that they can while at UT Martin and be prepared to go out into the world and be positive forces of change."

For students and faculty, a new performance center would provide practice and performance spaces that are not currently readily available or adaptable to each specific department.

"Outside of the music department, the new Concert Hall will provide increased programs for experiential learning and internships to all UTM students across a variety of disciplines on our campus combining opportunities in marketing, business, and much more," said Hill.

The performance center is expected to contribute over $400,000 annually to the Northwest Tennessee economy through programs and partnerships in music, visual arts, children's programming, dance and film.

Bill Blankenship donated $500,000 for the Phase II renovation of the Fine Arts Building Performance Center. Blankenship, and his late wife Roberta, are notable university donors and UT Martin alumni.

"A new concert hall will provide our students, faculty and guests with a modern facility to showcase growth and talent. Having a concert hall of this caliber will contribute to social and economic growth within the region and will bring community pride and revenue to the area," said DaeShuana Aldridge, a junior music major from Paris. "With this new 'big-city' concert hall, UTM will provide a cultural gem, impacting a far greater region than the borders of our campus."
UTM to hold orientations, registration online due to COVID-19

May 27, 2020 by WBBJ 7 Eyewitness News Staff
(https://www.wbbjtv.com/author/wbbj7eyewitnessnewsstaff/)

MARTIN, Tenn. — The University of Tennessee at Martin announced plans Wednesday to hold all summer orientation and registration programs, as well as transfer orientation programs, online this summer.

The SOAR sessions are currently scheduled for June 22, June 24, July 10, July 28 and Aug. 7, according to a news release.

Transfer orientation sessions are scheduled for June 23 and July 16, the release says.

Each session is scheduled to start at 8:30 a.m., and students will be able to participate in informational meetings, student panels and other meetings.

The university will send SOAR packets to all students registered to attend the programs, including a book with information for their sessions, a UT Martin t-shirt and a student ID.

For more information, contact Destin Tucker at dtucke13@utm.edu or admissions at admitme@utm.edu.

UT MARTIN HISTORY PROF APPEARS ON “GRANT” MINI-SERIES

May 27, 2020 @ 9:23 am Shannon McFarlin

Martin, Tenn.—UT Martin faculty member Dr. Timothy Smith brings his Civil War expertise and knowledge of U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant to the three-part series “Grant” that airs through May 27 on The History Channel.

Excerpts from a November 2018 interview with Dr. Smith were used throughout the first episode that aired May 25. Smith said that much of his two-hour interview in New York City for the series focused on the Battle of Shiloh.

Smith has taught history at UT Martin since 2007. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Mississippi and a doctorate from Mississippi State University. He is the author of several books about the Civil War.
Soar in Four working well at UTM

The University of Tennessee at Martin's four-year graduation rate has increased 10.8 percent since proposing "Soar in Four," the tuition model that encourages students to take at least 15 hours per semester in order to graduate in four years, in 2015. The "Soar in Four" tuition program began in the fall 2016 semester and saw its first four-year graduating class May 2.

During the Feb. 19 University of Tennessee Board of Trustees meeting, a presentation concerning graduation and retention rates for the UT System showcased UT Martin as having the highest graduation rate not only in the UT System, but also when compared to aspirational peers and locally governed institutions such as the University of Memphis, Middle and East Tennessee State Universities and Tennessee Tech, by at least five percent.

"When you look at a four-year window, we are (10.8) percentage points better. I like that trend and we have to keep pushing and improving that," said UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver. "It's really exciting to think about."

When originally implemented, the "Soar in Four" program increased tuition and mandatory fees to fund extracurricular programs that promote graduating within four years and student well-being. Before 2016, UT Martin did not charge for additional hours taken exceeding the full-time minimum of 12 credit hours. While 12 hours is still the minimum number of credit hours a student can take to be considered full-time, "Soar in Four" mandated a flat rate tuition which charges for 15 hours to encourage students to take the average number of credit hours needed to graduate in four years.

The funding allowed for more faculty and staff hires in departments with bottlenecks and prerequisite courses that could not account for the number of students who were required to take the course; student success counselors who are responsible for providing resources to help students achieve academic excellence; living-learning communities, which group freshmen in residence halls by major; and an upgraded Career Planning and Development office to assist students' transition from college to employment through interview training, resume building and job fairs.

Ivana Cherry, a recent UT Martin management graduate from Memphis, says her college experience wouldn't have been the same without programs like the Student Success Center funded by Soar in Four.

"Being involved with the Student Success Center has helped me grow as a person and a student," said Cherry. "Being a student athlete, along with my many involvements on campus, the Student Success Center provided me with many resources that help me achieve my goals. It has given me the confidence to ask for help when I need it and talk about my problems."

Riley Allison, a sophomore accounting major from Jackson, has taken advantage of the services offered by Career Planning and Development and believes the skills he has learned through the program will help him succeed in his future career.

"The CPAD services have made me want to be more intentional with my time as a college student. They have helped me apply content knowledge I have gained within my classes to the skills needed to attract potential employers," said Allison.

In 2015, UT Martin's four-year graduation rate was 23.5 percent increasing to 34.3 percent in 2019, and while Carver says "Soar in Four" cannot take complete responsibility for the increased rate, it is a major factor when evaluating the success of retention in the past four years.

"Soar in Four" is reevaluated every summer in order to distribute funds where support is most needed and to reassess the effectiveness of the programs implemented by the initiative.

"UT Martin really is committed to retention and graduation; we want our students to persist and graduate," said Carver.

For more information about "Soar in Four," visit utm.edu/departments/careers/soarinfour.

Young wins UTM award

A Lauderdale County student received an award from the University of Tennessee at Martin for their achievements in scholarship and citizenship during the 2019-20 academic year. Erin Young, of Henning, received the Outstanding Chemistry Student Award.

UT Martin hosts an annual Honors Day Program in the spring to recognize each award recipient.
Captain Challenge Sets Goal of $325,000 for UTM

MARTIN (May 26) — The University of Tennessee at Martin hosts its sixth-annual Captain's Challenge fundraising event June 3 with the goal to raise $325,000 in 24 hours. This year’s theme is “Captain’s Challenge: Back to the Future Edition” to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Skyhawk.

Contributors can direct their donations toward any campus office, department, athletic organization, scholarship fund, special program or another fundraiser at challenge.utm.edu. Each college will have a thermometer to track its real-time fundraising progress on the donation website.

Donors are asked to consider the Chancellor’s Academic Excellence Fund, the Fine Arts Building Phase II fund, the Innovation and Product Realization Building “The Garage” fund, the Athletics-Victory fund or the Ned Ray McWherter Institute fund if unsure of which program to donate to specifically.

Those interested in helping to promote the event on social media and through other channels are encouraged to register as “Captain's Challenge Pilots” at alumni.utm.edu/pilot.

Last year, with the goal of $300,000, UT Martin raised over $319,000 in 24 hours.

For more information, contact the UT Martin Office of Alumni Relations at 731-981-7610 or alumni@utm.edu.

UT Martin Four-Year Graduation Rates Increase After ‘SOAR In Four’

Courtesy UT Martin
MARTIN — The University of Tennessee at Martin’s four-year graduation rate has increased 10.8 percent since proposing “Soar in Four,” the tuition model that encourages students to take at least 15 hours per semester in order to graduate in four years, in 2015. The “Soar in Four” tuition program began in the fall 2016 semester and saw its first four-year graduating class May 2, 2020.

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For more information about “Soar in Four,” visit utm.edu/departments/careers/soarin-four.
**UT Martin Provides PPE For Local Health Care Organizations**

MARTIN (May 21) — As Reelfoot Rural Ministries prepares to reopen in early June, the doctors in its dental clinic knew they needed to take additional precautionary measures to ensure the safety of their staff, patients and themselves against the threat of COVID-19. After hearing the news about the University of Tennessee at Martin creating medical face shields during the shortage of personal protective equipment, UT Martin alumna and dentist at the clinic, Dr. Greg Moore, reached out to the university to see if they could help.

“The ability of UTM and many other entities to produce needed PPE has enabled not only front-line health-care providers to continue but has also enabled other health-care providers like dentists to return to work and practice in the face of this virus,” said Moore.

UT Martin provided the 3D technology and labor to produce the face shields for Reelfoot Rural Ministries for the cost of the materials. According to Amy Belew, UT Martin chief information officer, the university “wants to help out the community as much as we can,” and the services donated to Reelfoot Rural Ministries, “provided us with a great opportunity to do that.”

“The face shields that UTM fabricated for us are one of the additional layers of protection that is advised along with much thicker masks,” Moore explained. “The oral cavity provides one primary vector of transmission of this virus through coughing and aerosol of water/saliva generated in having dental procedures. Therefore, the face shields from UTM help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. In essence, they may save a life.”

Reelfoot Rural Ministries is a religious nonprofit organization that serves those in need the counties of Dyer, Lake, Obion and Fulton, as well as senior citizens from any county in Tennessee. From low-cost dental and vision care for the uninsured and underinsured provided by volunteer doctors, to grocery distribution and home repairs, Reelfoot Rural Ministries seeks to help those who qualify for financial need in one of the most poverty-ridden areas in Tennessee.

“Reelfoot Rural Ministries mission has always been based upon Christian love. As an outreach of the Memphis Conference of the United Methodist Church for over 50 years, this ministry has been a neighbor to the community that it serves. So many churches, individuals and businesses have offered help to (Reelfoot Rural Ministries) through the years,” Moore said.

“Reelfoot Rural Ministries has received that benevolence and thus has offered assistance in many ministries to people across Northwest Tennessee and Southwest Kentucky for over half a century.”

The Reelfoot Rural Ministries dental clinic will reopen June 2 in order to continue serving the dental needs of Northwest Tennessee residents.

“I know that we’re looking forward to going back and continuing our work there at the clinic, but we have to make sure that we’re protected as much as we can in order to do that,” Moore said.

The West Tennessee Healthcare Volunteer Hospital also purchased face masks for use in direct patient care. Two recent UT Martin graduates, Garrett Hay and Gregory Lambert, delivered the shields to the hospital May 7.

For more information about the medical face shields, contact Belew at 731-881-7901. For more information about Reelfoot Rural Ministries, contact Rev. Robert Craig, executive director; at 731-636-9970.

**Local Students Receive UT Martin Honors Day Awards**

MARTIN — Eighteen Weakley County students received awards from the University of Tennessee at Martin in recognition of their achievements in scholarship and citizenship during the 2019-20 academic year. All honorees are residents of Martin unless otherwise noted.

Marlee Wilson received the Outstanding Family and Consumer Science Graduate Student Award.

Amanda Mayo received the Outstanding Geosciences Major Student Award.

Brooklyn Snider of Dresden received the Outstanding Health and Human Performance Student Award.

Aalia Bivens received the Outstanding Agricultural Business Student Award.

Ian Gambo received the William H. Baker Scholarship Award.

Kyle Carter received the Outstanding Chemistry Major Award and the David S. Loebbaka Award.

Joseph Pelten received the Lower Division Chemistry Award and the Cunningham Outstanding Freshman Award.

Adam Wincechel received the Lower Division Chemistry Award.

Vivica Miller of Sharon received the James Byford Conservation Award.

Beth Moon received the Student Group of the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences Award.

Boone Brown received the Gallien Award.

Samantha Clayton received the Louise Kniffly Memorial Scholarship Award.

Shannon Merrell of Palmersville received the Robert G. Cowser Literary Award in Poetry and the John E. McCluskey Literary Award in the Scholarly/Critical Paper Award.

Djhsnon Elma received the Scholarly Essay in a Modern Foreign Language Award.

Enrico Zobell received the David S. Loebbaka Award.

Abigale Plunk received the Allison Nelson Award.

Michelle Fieseer received the Ernest and Wilma Newby Scholarship Award.

John Carr received the Norman Lillegard Outstanding Philosophy Student Award.

UT Martin hosts an annual Honors Day Program in the spring to recognize each award recipient. However, due to the COVID-19 crisis, the in-person ceremony was canceled, and students were notified of their awards by the Office of the Chancellor. For more information, visit utm.edu.
UTM Receives $500,000 Donation for Renovation of Fine Arts Building

MARTIN (May 13) — The University of Tennessee at Martin received a $500,000 donation from Bill Blankenship, 1955 UT Martin alumnus and noted university donor, to continue Phase II of the Fine Arts Performance Center project.

The facility will be used by the Fine and Performing Arts programs at UT Martin, as well as host guest performers, academic speakers, fundraising events, conferences and regional competitions.

"The new concert hall will provide the venue sorely needed to give all UTM students access to the highest-caliber touring acts, while also providing a large-audience capacity space with great acoustics for our own UTM music ensembles," said Dr. Julie Hill, chair of the Department of Music.

The construction of Phase I of the Fine Arts Building was finished in 2013, completing the first half of the project. Construction for Phase II will cost $40 million overall and requires a six percent match, or $2.4 million, to receive state funding. The university has already raised over $895,000 for Phase II, which is 23 percent of the goal.

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"It's only reasonable to give back to the place that gave you so much," Blankenship said in an interview for Tennessee Alumni magazine. "I want to be at the forefront of giving back, especially if it means the leaders of tomorrow will gain all that they can while at UT Martin and be prepared to go out into the world and be positive forces of change."

For students and faculty, a new performance center would provide practice and performance spaces that are not currently readily available or adaptable to each specific department.

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Bill Blankenship donated $500,000 for the Phase II renovation of the Fine Arts Building Performance Center. Blankenship, and his late wife Roberta, are notable university donors and UT Martin alumni.

UT Martin Remembers Fallen Troops During Virtual Memorial Day Ceremony

Army Master Sgt. Conrad Begaye, who serves as senior military science instructor at UT Martin, was the keynote speaker at Friday's virtual Memorial Day services.
BY DAVID FISHER
david@dredsenenterprise.com

MARTIN (May 22) — Army Master Sgt. Conrad Begaye, senior military science instructor for Skyhawk Battalion’s ROTC program at the University of Tennessee at Martin, was the keynote speaker at the university’s virtual Memorial Day services on Friday, May 22. The event was closed to the public, and all participants engaged in social distancing in order to comply with CDC COVID-19 control guidelines.

The tribute to American military service personnel was live streamed on the UT Martin Facebook page and on YouTube. It was also archived for later public viewing.

As the program got underway, Lt. Col. Rodric McClain, professor of Military Science, who served as the master of ceremonies, introduced Kerri Arnold, Miss Tennessee Volunteer, who sang the national anthem.

Next, Dale Willis gave the invocation.

Lt. Col. McClain said, “Memorial Day was first celebrated as Decoration Day in 1868, to honor soldiers killed in the Civil War. The day became more commonly known as Memorial Day after World War II. It was officially adopted in 1927, and became a federal holiday in 1971.

“It is a day to reflect on the sacrifices of 1.2 million service members that have lost their lives defending this great nation of ours — soldiers like Cpl. Thomas H. Mullins, from Harriman, Tennessee, who went missing on November 2, 1950, while serving with Company Lima, 3rd Battalion, 8th Calvary Regiment, 1st Calvary Division, in North Korea, during the Korean War. He was 18 years old. After the war ended, a former prisoner of war explained to American authorities that Mullins died of malnutrition and possibly pneumonia, while being held at POW Camp 5 in Ping-dong North Korea. The Army declared Mullins dead on March 29, 1951, and he was posthumously promoted to corporal.”

Lt. Col. McClain stated, on December 14, 1993, North Korea turned over 33 boxes of what were believed to be the remains of Americans killed during the Korean War. He said the Department of Defense POW-MIA Accounting Agency and Armed Forces Exhumation System used DNA from two cousins to positively identify the Harriman High School student. He noted Mullins, who was born March 28, 1932, was declared deceased on March 29, 1951, and was interred on March 28, 1953.

“On Memorial Day, the flag of the United States is raised briskly to the top of the staff, and then, solemnly lowered to the half-staff position, where it remains until noon,” Lt. Col. McClain said. “It is then, raised to full-staff for the remainder of the day. The half-staff position is in remembrance of the sacrifices of the most noble women who gave their lives in service to this country. At noon, that memory is raised by the living, who resolve, not to let their sacrifice be in vain, but to rise up in their stead and continue to fight for liberty and justice for all.”

UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver spoke next saying, “In May of 1968, Gen. John Logan founded Decoration Day, which was a true grassroots movement. He stated, ‘Gen. Logan hoped citizens all across the nation would go and decorate the graves of the fallen. ‘Recently, the country had experienced the Civil War — a time of great sadness and loss.’ Gen. Logan’s efforts were to make sure their sacrifices were not forgotten.

“As we fast-forward to today and look at our celebration, and what Gen. Logan started all of those years ago has become, it’s not a grassroots movement anymore. It’s a national celebration. It’s a day of remembrance. It’s a day of gratitude. And, it’s a day of celebration to remember those women and men that have fallen, we can be grateful for the freedoms that we enjoy on their behalf and by their sacrifice.”

Chancellor Carver invited those listening via the internet to visit the battlefield cross erected last year, located between the University Center and library. “Stop and think about it, as you see it. It’s a visual reminder of the great importance of this day, and the men and women who died fighting for our very freedom.”


He stated, as an Airborne Ranger, Begaye served in Operation Freedom’s Sentinel in Afghanistan (2016-17), Operation Enduring Freedom in campaigns V and VIII in Afghanistan (2005-07) and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq (2003-04).

Before coming to UT Martin in January, Master Sgt. Conrad Begaye was assigned to Fort Campbell, Fort Benning and the Caserma Ederle Army base in Vicenza, Italy.

During his service since 1999, Begaye was awarded the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal with Valor, the Army Commendation Medal (3 Oak Leaf Cluster), the Ranger Tab, Parachutist Badge, Combat Infantryman’s Badge and the Expert Infantryman’s Badge.

Master Sgt. Begaye said, “It’s an honor for me to speak at this Memorial Day service to honor the men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice for their country while in military service. We who live on tell their story.

“Master Sgt. Begaye spoke of his proud service as an Airborne Ranger from the Navajo Nation.

Begaye also observed his 21-year anniversary in the Army on May 21.

“Personally, my Army story begins yesterday,” Begaye said. “I celebrated 21 years in active service...I am proud one of many Native Americans to serve this great country.”

“I’m originally from a small town called Rock Point in New Mexico on the Navajo Nation, and I’m proud to be one of the men and women who have served this great country.” He stated nearly half of the people in Rock Point have served in the military. These military engagements include World War II, Korean War, Desert Storm and the current campaigns of today.

During his speech, Begaye recognized other Native American service members killed in action during his service such as U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Alejandro Jay Yazzie and Army Spc. Lori Piestewa. He also paid tribute to 1999 UT Martin alumnus U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Brent Morel, who was killed in action in Iraq in 2004, and the Morel family.

“Today and every day, I am reminded of the men who fought and died alongside me in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan...I got to know these men personally, their likes, dislikes, weird music they listened to, and their future plans about when they would eventually leave service,” he said. “There is nothing quite like the bond created in combat with soldiers who would lay their lives down without hesitation for you.”

“I am constantly reminded that freedom is not free, and we are guaranteed that privilege from the lives that are given Begaye said. “Sometimes we forget the sacrifice made for the freedom we have. These young men and women stood up for our rights, stood up for those who can’t and stood up for those who are not willing to. The lives laid down for this great country are not forgotten,” Begaye said. “Let us not mourn them but celebrate their lives with honor; honor the flag that they fought for (and) the nation of freedom, which we enjoy.”

As the ceremony drew to a close, Dana Hagan offered the benediction, which was followed by a 21-gun salute. Finally, Chloe Lollar, a UT Martin alumna, played taps.
Martin, Tenn.—The University of Tennessee at Martin will host its sixth-annual Captain's Challenge fundraising event June 3, with the goal to raise $325,000 in 24 hours. This year's theme is "Captain's Challenge—Back to the Future Edition" to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Skyhawk.

Contributors can direct their donations toward any campus office, department, athletic organization, scholarship fund, special program or another fundraiser at challenge.utm.edu. Each college will have a thermometer to track its real-time fundraising progress on the donation website.

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ERIN YOUNG, daughter of David and Kim Young, of Henning, received the Outstanding Chemistry Student Award from the University of Tennessee at Martin for her achievements in scholarship and citizenship during the 2019-20 academic year.

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Hayden Stanford

UTM honors student

A Benton County student received special recognition from UTM in honor of his achievements in scholarship and citizenship during the 2019-20 academic year.

Hayden Stanford, of Camden, received the Outstanding Management, Marketing, and Information Systems student award. Stanford completed his Bachelor of Science degree in business administration this spring, graduating summa cum laude.

Each spring, UTM hosts an annual Honors Day Program to recognize each award recipient; however, due to the COVID-19 crisis, the in-person ceremony was canceled, and students were notified of their awards by the Office of the Chancellor.
MARTIN, Tenn. (KFVS) - The fall semester at the University of Tennessee at Martin will begin on August 17 and finish classes by Thanksgiving.

The condensed semester will offer a combination of in-person and online classes and minimize travel to and from the main campus and five centers in Jackson, Parsons, Ripley, Selmer and Somerville.

In addition to the earlier start date of August 17, the semester will include classes on Labor Day, no fall break, classes to end Nov. 24 and final exams the week following Thanksgiving.

A study day for final exams will be observed Monday, Nov. 30, followed by online exams to close the semester.

Students will not return to the main campus or centers following the Thanksgiving holiday.

Plans for fall commencement are not known following the university's first-ever virtual commencement May 2.

UT Martin Summer Orientation and Registration and Transfer Orientation sessions will be held virtually as the response to the COVID-19 pandemic continues.

The SOAR sessions are scheduled June 22 and 24, July 10 and 28, and Aug. 7.

Transfer orientation sessions are scheduled June 23 and July 16.

"The safety of our students, faculty and staff remains our top concern," said Dr. Keith Carver, UT Martin chancellor. "The university's Reentry Task Force, along with our academic leadership, continue to plan for the best and safest educational experience possible under challenging circumstances."

Fall move-in and move-out plans for residential students are being finalized and will be managed to minimize grouping of students and families.

In-person classes will be offered with recommended spacing and appropriate safety measures in place.

Faculty members continue to refine online course delivery by participating in a series of summer online teaching methodology workshops offered by the university.

"I'm grateful for how our faculty and staff continue to rally and make a UT Martin education what our students and families expect," said Dr. Philip Acree Cavalier, provost and chief academic officer. "We're prepared to meet students online and in the classroom with whatever is needed to deliver a high-quality college experience."

Additional UT Martin fall semester information is available by calling the Office of Undergraduate Admissions at 731-881-7020 or the Office of Graduate Studies at 731-881-7012.
The University of Tennessee Martin Announces the Return to School this Fall

Posted on May 29, 2020 by Charles Choate in Local News

The University of Tennessee-Martin has announced the return of students to classes.

Students attending fall semester classes will begin on August 17th, and will finish by Thanksgiving.

The condensed semester will offer a combination of in-person and online classes and minimize travel to and from the main campus and five centers in Jackson, Parsons, Ripley, Selmer and Somerville.

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On May 6th, UT President Randy Boyd announced that all University of Tennessee campuses would reopen with in-person classes this fall, after transitioning to online classes in the spring because of the COVID-19 pandemic.