Longtime sheriff named director of public safety

Longtime law enforcement professional and Henry County Sheriff Monte Belew has joined UT Martin as the new director of public safety. The UT Martin criminal justice graduate has served as Henry County sheriff since 2006 and previously served as a Tennessee State Trooper and as a patrolman, school resource officer and teacher for the Jackson Police Department.

“We’re excited that Sheriff Belew has joined the UT Martin community,” said Petra McPhearson, UT Martin vice chancellor for finance and administration, in a statement. “His background in law enforcement, training and community relations make him an incredible leader for our public safety team.”

In his new role, Belew is responsible for directing UT Martin’s efforts to provide a safe, secure and orderly environment for members of the university community and campus visitors. He will also lead crime prevention activities and education, enforcement activities and interact extensively with students, faculty, staff members and others who are associated with or impacted by the university.

“I am honored and excited about becoming a part of the University of Tennessee at Martin family,” Belew said in a statement. “I look forward to working with all students and faculty as public safety director. My number-one goal is the safety and security for everyone at UTM, and I want to continue making UTM a great place to be.”

Belew’s law-enforcement experience includes completion of professional-development opportunities with the Federal Bureau of Investigation National Academy, the Tennessee Law Enforcement Training Academy and the Tennessee Highway Patrol Cadet School. He was honored as the Henry County 4H Outstanding Service Award recipient in 2004, the Tennessee Constables Sheriff of the Year in 2009 and with the Woodmen of the World Community Leadership Award in 2010.

Belew is also a member of the current WestStar leadership class.

Officials sign ‘Skyhawk Creed’

UT Martin officials, including Chancellor Keith Carver and interim Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Mark McCloud, signed the “Skyhawk Creed” into effect Friday, Aug. 21, at the Boling University Center.

The creed, based on “respect,” “responsibility” and “right choices,” symbolizes the values and mission of UT Martin in its effort to assure a welcoming and diverse university. The document was created in response to students’ concerns of social injustices on campus.

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Shelia Patterson is now serving as the interim director for the Student Success Center. Patterson has worked for the UT Martin Student Success Center for 10 years.

Dr. Stephanie Kolitsch will serve as the interim director of institutional research. Kolitsch is the director of accreditation and the SACSCOC liaison and has worked for UT Martin for 26 years.

Dr. Shadow JQ Robinson, dean of the College of Engineering and Natural Sciences, graduated from the 2020 Executive Leadership Institute. Robinson represented UT Martin in the second leadership class.

Dr. John Collins, professor of biology, died Aug. 23, at the age of 71. Collins has taught biology at UT Martin since 1994 and received the 2002 Outstanding Educator Award. A private graveside service will be held for Dr. Collins.

Pictured (l-r): Dr. Keith Carver, Dr. Mark McCloud, Dr. Sean Walker, Dr. Philip Acree Cavalier and Dr. Andy Lewter.

Creed, Continued from page 1

The Skyhawk Creed states, “The University of Tennessee at Martin is an educational community committed to excellence in personal integrity and intellectual growth in a diverse and inclusive environment. As a voluntary member of this community: I will respect the rights and property of all persons and treat them with dignity and civility. I will take responsibility for my actions and hold others accountable for theirs, while demonstrating a concern for others, their feelings, and their sense of belonging. I will make right choices that will demonstrate academic integrity, discourage bigotry and hate, and strive to learn from the unique differences of people and opinions. I pledge to model these principles and values and encourage others to follow my example.”

“While we can’t always control what other people say, we can control who we are, and we want the world to know who we are as an institution and individuals,” said McCloud.

Dr. Sean Walker, Faculty Senate president, Dr. Andy Lewter, vice chancellor for student affairs, and Kaylin Bailey, president of the Black Student Association, also signed the “Skyhawk Creed.”

For the full story, visit utm.edu/news.

Faculty/Staff Town Hall Meeting via Zoom

Join Chancellor Keith Carver in this meeting to learn the latest pandemic-related information for UT Martin.

10 a.m., Wednesday, Aug. 26.

Send your questions in advance to social@utm.edu by noon, Tuesday, Aug. 25.

Click here to join the Zoom call.
Congratulations to the UT Martin faculty members who earned tenure this summer!

Dr. Shadow Robinson  
Dean  
College of Engineering and Natural Sciences

Dr. Jamye Long  
Associate Professor of Management  
College of Business and Global Affairs

Dr. Patrick Baker  
Associate Professor of Business Law  
College of Business and Global Affairs

Dr. Anderson Starling  
Assistant Professor of Political Science  
College of Business and Global Affairs

Dr. Kathleen Ericson  
Assistant Professor of Computer Science  
College of Engineering and Natural Sciences

Dr. Robert Niedzialomski  
Assistant Professor of Mathematics and Statistics  
College of Engineering and Natural Sciences

Dr. Amy Richards  
Assistant Professor of Food and Nutrition and Dietetics  
College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences

Dr. Taeuk Kang  
Associate Professor of Management  
College of Business and Global Affairs

Dr. Benton Cooper Johnson  
Chair, Department of Management, Marketing and Information Systems  
College of Business and Global Affairs

Dr. Aaron Rowland  
Associate Professor of Sociology  
College of Education, Health and Behavioral Sciences

Dr. Cindy Boyles  
Associate Professor of Criminal Justice  
College of Education, Health and Behavioral Sciences
The Ohio Valley Conference Board of Presidents has announced fall competition and championships in the sports of football, men’s and women’s cross country, women’s soccer and women’s volleyball will be postponed because of the concerns and uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic.

The decision also includes the fall competitive schedules for men’s and women’s golf and men’s and women’s tennis, as well as the non-traditional competition seasons for baseball and softball.

OVC football-playing institutions that are able to demonstrate a team’s willingness and readiness to compete based on the NCAA’s Resocialization of Collegiate Sport: Developing Standards for Practice and Competition and the NCAA’s mental health guidance are approved to play up to four nonconference scheduled games.

In making its determination, the Board asked the conference membership to develop plans for conference competition and championships in the spring semester for the impacted sports.

“After careful deliberation, weighing all the factors as presented, and given the current uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, the OVC Board of Presidents voted to postpone the conference’s fall sports to the spring, said Beth DeBauche, OVC commissioner.

With the focus on student-athletes, the conference leaders made this value-based decision with a commitment to continue to monitor the evolving situation and to strive to establish meaningful competitive opportunities in the spring for our fall sport student-athletes.

“While we understand there are many student-athletes, families, and communities that are disappointed by the lack of conference competition this fall, and we deeply share that disappointment; it is the OVC’s ardent intention to ensure seasons postponed are not seasons canceled if the facts support it. I want to thank our student-athletes and coaches for their resilience during these trying times, our staff and administrators for all their hard work and planning over the past five months, and the presidents and chancellors for their strong and principled leadership over this outstanding conference.”

UT Martin Chancellor Keith Carver and Director of Intercollegiate Athletics Kurt McGuffin released the following joint statement. “Today’s decision by the Ohio Valley Conference was the correct and necessary move. It is our responsibility to prioritize the safety of not only our student-athletes but everybody around them – including coaches, staff, fans and the general campus population. It has been a grueling process where several scenarios were considered, but the unfortunate reality is that the fall season presented many risks moving forward as scheduled.”

Athletically-related activities for enrolled student-athletes will be evaluated consistent with NCAA legislation and guidance, as well as state, local and institutional parameters and communicated to OVC institutions and its student-athletes accordingly.

The plans to play scheduled winter and spring sports remain unaffected at this time.
Legacy laid in tile: bricklayer’s history uncovered

“James R. Vinson, Box 98 Sharon Tenn., 5-27-57, Bricklayer,” reads the tile in red ink. For 63 years, this tile laid in a bathroom in Clement Hall on UT Martin’s campus unbeknownst to all but the bricklayer who signed it, James R. Vinson.

However, after recent infrastructure renovations to Clement Hall, Vinson’s signature was recovered from the construction debris, bringing light to the now 90-year-old Union City resident and the legacy he literally built at UT Martin.

Vinson began working at UT Martin as a bricklayer in 1957 when he was 27 years old with his father who taught him the trade. With Clement Hall as his first project, Vinson was later contracted to help build and repair at least seven buildings on campus including the Paul Meek Library, the Student Recreation Center, multiple residence halls as well as the Hall-Moody Administration Building brick sign.

“I was just responsible for laying the brick and tile,” said Vinson. “I wasn’t the boss or nothing, I was just a hired hand doing my job. What they told me to do, I’d do it.”

Even if Vinson had never done what they asked him to do before, he said he’d try to do it to the best of his abilities, and if the lead contractor didn’t approve of it, he’d tear it down and try again.

After finding the tile, Kent Cook, the superintendent for Barger Construction, the company responsible for the renovations to Clement Hall, contacted Dana Hagan, project coordinator for the Physical Plant, to let her know he found something she should see. Much to Hagan’s surprise, when Cook handed her the tile, she quickly recognized the name as a man she had gone to church with for 40 years.

“My heart just immediately started pounding and my eyes welled up, and I was just like, ‘What in the world? I know him!’” said Hagan. “What are the chances? This is a miracle.”

Vinson said he never expected to see the tile he laid so many years ago again, and when Hagan returned the tile to him, he couldn’t help but tear up and hug her.

“I was shocked,” Vinson said when asked how he reacted to Hagan giving him the tile. “I didn’t realize I’d ever see it again.”

Hagan says the whole experience has been “overwhelming” as the renovations in Clement Hall are only happening in specific locations and “the chances of us cutting out the thing that held that (tile) ... is truly a miracle.”

Vinson currently has the tile on display in his home above his brick fireplace as a reminder of the life he built for himself through hard work.

Vinson grew up in the 1930s in a house near the Heating Plant on campus. He saw UT Martin grow from the wheat fields he and his brother used to play in to the university that would teach his children and grandchildren.

Vinson’s bricklaying legacy is best exhibited in the Hall-Moody Administration Building front sign, which he helped build in his 60s. His family loves to remind him of his work at UT Martin every time they drive by the university sign.

“Whoever’s in the car with me ... says, ‘There’s your sign!’” he said.

While Vinson enjoyed working at UT Martin and the surrounding area, he and his wife of 40 years, Glenda, often found themselves traveling across the country with a bricklaying team to build churches.

Just when the Vinsons and Hagan didn’t think the chances of finding the tile could get any more unbelievable, one church in West Tennessee Vinson helped rebuild happened to be Cook’s home church that burned down, which they discovered after meeting.

“That’s the best part of it to me,” said Cook regarding his church. “It’s pretty interesting to meet someone who built a building 62 years ago. ... I was surprised he was still living and that anyone knew who he was.”

Overall, they have traveled to 37 different states as well as the Philippines, St. Thomas, Puerto Rico, Colombia and Brazil to brick churches.

“It’s been an adventure,” said Vinson. “I’ve enjoyed every bit of the work I’ve done (at UT Martin) and around.”
Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame special to air Aug. 29

The “Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame Class of 2020 Special Presented by the Tennessee Titans,” featuring recent UT Martin inductee Bettye Giles, will air online Saturday, Aug. 29, at 7 p.m.

The event celebrating sports in the Volunteer State will be hosted by Mike Keith, the voice of the Tennessee Titans. Sports fans can hear stories and acceptance speeches of the 11-person induction class, along with candid interviews from those they mentored and inspired along the way.

The Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame’s Class of 2020 includes Tim Corbin, Terry Crisp, Tony Delk, Jeff Fisher, Giles, Dick Horton, Heath Shuler, Bruton Smith, Sonny Smith, Carl Torbush and DeAngelo Williams. While the traditional induction ceremony was canceled because of health concerns, plans are being made to honor the Class of 2020 in-person at a future event.

Giles, a national pioneer for women’s athletics, received her Class of 2020 award on Aug. 11 during a brief ceremony held at the Dunagan Alumni Center on the UT Martin campus. Brad Willis, Chief Advancement and Operations Officer of the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame, was on hand to present Giles with her award.

The two-hour special will be streamed online at tshf.net, on Twitter (@TheTSHF) and on Facebook (/TNSportsHallofFame) at 7 p.m.
UT Martin earns multiple national rankings

The UT Martin online Master of Science in Education degree with a major in counseling received national rankings for its affordable, accelerated program.

- Collegevaluesonline.com ranked the degree 11th for its rigorous and fast-paced program in the Top 20 Accelerated Master’s in School Counseling Online Programs for 2020 category.
- Online-Psychology-Degrees.org also ranked the program 11th in the Top 30 Master’s Degrees in Educational Psychology Online 2020 listing.
- Bestcounselingdegrees.net listed the degree 23rd in its Most Affordable Online Master’s in School Counseling Programs for 2020.

For more information about the university’s rankings, contact the Office of University Relations at 731-881-7615.

You Tell Me

**Question** – Now that students, faculty and staff are back on campus regularly, what precautions are being implemented to help protect employees from catching COVID-19?

**Answer** – Aside from wearing masks and social distancing, employees are now required to conduct a daily health self-screening survey before arriving at work each morning. The survey can be found on your myUTMartin portal under “COVID-19 Self Screening.” Once an employee has taken their temperature and filled out the survey, an email stating whether or not the employee can return to work is sent to them and their supervisor. The university asks that all employees answer honestly and check their temperature before arriving at work. For more information, contact Michael Washington, director of Human Resources and Payroll, at mwashi24@utm.edu.

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