

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT MARTIN ADVISORY BOARD

Minutes of the Winter Meeting

The winter meeting of The University of Tennessee at Martin Advisory Board was held at 1:00 p.m. (CDT) on Friday, January 22, 2021, as a virtual meeting in accordance with Governor Lee's Executive Order #71. The virtual meeting was hosted from the Hall-Moody Administration Building, Room 328, on the campus of The University of Tennessee at Martin.

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

UT Martin Advisory Board Chair Art Sparks welcomed Advisory Board members and guests to the regular winter meeting of the UT Martin Advisory Board. Chair Sparks requested a roll call to bring the meeting to order. The roll was called by Edie Gibson, Secretary to the Board, with the following members present in-person or in attendance via Zoom:

Hal Bynum (joined by Zoom)
Philip Smartt (joined by Zoom)
Emma Hilliard (joined by Zoom)
Monice Hagler (joined by Zoom)
Art Sparks (joined by Zoom)

With five members of the Advisory Board in attendance, including Chair Art Sparks, via Zoom, a quorum was announced, as provided by Executive Order #71. All members participating via Zoom affirmed that each joined the meeting alone. Katie Ashley and Julia Wells were unable to participate. Pending legislative confirmation, Johnny Woolfolk was also in attendance. Others participating remotely included UT Martin administrative and leadership staff. The meeting was streamed live for the safety and convenience of the University community, the general public, and the media with a recording of the meeting uploaded to the UT Martin Advisory Board website, following the meeting.

II. Opening Remarks

Prior to the meeting, Chair Sparks and Chancellor Carver concurred that the UTM Advisory Board Winter meeting should be held via electronic means to protect the public health, as permitted under Executive Order #71. Specifically, the Executive Order temporarily suspends the requirements of the Tennessee Open Meeting Act (TOMA) to allow any governing body subject to TOMA requirements to meet and conduct essential business by electronic means, if the body determines that meeting electronically is necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of Tennesseans in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In compliance with Executive Order #71, the Winter meeting notices provided instructions for the public to electronically access the meeting and included the meeting agenda. Public access to the webcast and meeting materials are available at utm.edu/abmeeting. In keeping with the order, all Advisory Board votes were taken by roll call vote, and all members participating by electronic means are deemed to be present at the meeting for purposes of voting.

Chancellor Carver welcomed Mr. Johnny Woolfolk of Jackson, TN, to the meeting. Mr. Woolfolk was nominated by Governor Bill Lee, and his appointment is pending legislative confirmation. Woolfolk is a 1971 UTM alumnus with a degree in Agriculture.

III. Approval of Minutes

Chair Sparks directed the members to a copy of the minutes from the regularly scheduled meeting of the Advisory Board on September 18, 2020, for approval.

Motion: Hal Bynum moved to adopt the UT Martin Advisory Board meeting minutes for the September 18, 2020, meeting, as presented in the meeting materials, and Monice Hagler seconded the motion. A roll call vote on the motion was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

IV. Title IX and Clery Landscape 2021

Chair Sparks invited UT Title IX Coordinator, Ms. Ashley Blamey, to share an overview and update of the current Title IX and Clery Landscape 2021, as well as highlight UTM's status with implementing the new standards.

Ms. Blamey organized her presentation agenda and separated it into conversations related to – the definition of Title IX, the Title IX Commitment, Regulatory Update, Clery Overview, and The Future. In 2017, the UT System undertook an external evaluation, with one of the recommendations to apprise the UT Board of Clery reporting. With our Clery and Title IX groundwork happening at the campus-levels, it seems appropriate to ensure that the Advisory Boards be made aware of this work and of the campus' responsibilities for this work. The official statute of Title IX states that "No person in the United States shall, on the *basis of sex*, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education *program or activity* receiving federal financial assistance."

UT has a remarkable connection to the Title IX timeline, which can be historically illustrated by the life of UTK Women's Basketball Coach and UTM alumnae Pat Head Summit. In recent history, Title IX is often associated with the sexual harassment landscape, however, another aspect of Title IX, which is responsible for strong contributions to athletics, has a foundation in Tennessee and a connection with Coach Summit. To provide context, Pat Summit was born in 1952 in Clarksville, TN. In 1967, a Syracuse University junior because the first woman to participate in the Boston Marathon. In 1972, Title IX was signed into law by President Richard Nixon. In 1974, Pat Summit graduated from UT Martin and became coach at UT. Women's basketball was not an NCAA sanctioned sport. In 1976, Coach Summit makes a big impact on women's basketball by serving as an expert witness during the Cape v. TSSAA trial, where Victoria Cape sued TSSAA for the right to play full-court basketball. In her expert testimony, Coach Summit stated that she could not recruit to play college basketball a young lady (from Tennessee) who has never run a full-court game. Coach Summit stated that she would have to go out-of-state.

In 1976, Women's Basketball becomes an Olympic Sport. In 1980, Alexander v. Yale incorporated sexual harassment as sexual discrimination under Title IX. Additionally, in 1980, the Department of Education established and gave oversight of Title IX through the Office of Civil Rights (OCR). In 1982, Women's Basketball became an NCAA sport, and in 1984, the US Women's Basketball team wins a gold medal at the Olympics under Olympic Coach Pat Summitt. A trailblazer, Pat Summitt's contributions to athletics and Title IX were immense, and in 1998, she achieved another first, becoming the first female coach to be on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*.

As we move forward in time, the evolution of Title IX continues. In 2001, significant guidance by the Department of Education revised Sexual Harassment Guidance to clarify that harassment of students may involve school employees, other students, or third parties. In the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter issued by the Office of Civil Rights and in the 2013 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Reauthorization, guidance broadened University expectations. One of the authors of this Act was President Joe Biden:

therefore, we should anticipate additional Title IX changes with his administration in the White House. In 2017, under the Trump administration, the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter was withdrawn and a rule-making process was announced. In 2020, Title IX regulations were issued May 6th with an implementation deadline of August 14th.

Under current federal regulations, five areas of emphasis are outlined (1) Policy, (2) Prevention & Education, (3) Support Measures, (4) Investigation & Resolution, and (5) Patterns & Trends. UT Martin's commitment is mirrored by all of the campuses in the UT System. Although regulations changed significantly, UT's model didn't change with the 2020 regulations, because our model still applies and complies, as a due process model that looks at both individuals as members of the community, and the process reflects that model.

Ms. Blamey recognized UTM's 12-member, Title IX Transition Team, who represented a broad segment of the campus and honored the tight transition timeline. Summarizing, the clock began ticking on May 6th, when the Department of Education released the new Title IX regulations. Eight meetings were held over the summer gaining broader buy-in from the campus, and the work was completed by August 13th. UTM hosted a virtual Town Hall to share the new campus guidelines and answer questions prior to the federal implementation deadline on August 14, 2020. UTM's policy is similar, but not identical, to UTK and UTC with the same definitions and much the same process, since each campus was complying with the same regulations and worked together to develop a more seamless system strategy. UT campus Title IX Coordinators participated in weekly meetings to address issues and share solutions.

Key provisions of the new regulations included a Title IX Sexual Harassment definition. The definition is included in UTM's policy and highlights three prongs prohibiting: (1) employees of the University conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the University on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct; (2) unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the University's education program or activity; or (3) sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking. In addition, under the new guidance, Title IX only applies to incidents that occur within the school's education program or activities and does not apply outside the United States. In other words, campus polices must comply with the new guidance related to international travel and off-campus locations that are not associated with campus organizations or educational programming. UTM's Policy is broader than Title IX covering Title IX and non-Title IX allegations. The regulations apply to students, faculty, and staff; identify a standard of evidence; require the right to an advisor for the Complainant and the Respondent; outline investigation requirements; require a live hearing, unless another resolution is accepted, except in the case of faculty involvement; provides for cross examination (by advisors, but not by involved parties); and outline the appeals process (which corresponds with the Student Handbook procedures).

Next, Ms. Blamey provided highlights of the Clery Act (Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act), which applies to all colleges and universities that participate in federal student aid programs and is monitored by the Department of Education. This Act aligns closely with Title IX regulations and is included in UTM's Annual Security and Fire Safety Report. A 9-member team (6-UTM campus members with 3-UT System administrators) meet weekly to discuss campus Clery, Title IX and VAWA reports (representing certain categories of crimes, crimes committed in specific geographic locations, and crimes reported to a Campus Security Authority, as well as any campus community alerts related to threats to safety and crimes recorded in a Daily Crime Log and the Annual Security Report). Ms. Blamey complimented UTM's team for its work to improve data collection and recordkeeping, enhance CSA program, change the website, update reporting forms, enhancement tracking and training of CSAs, improve Student Conduct and Title IX processes, clarify protocols for student support, increase support staffing related to hearing officer, add a Care Team Case Manager, develop online reporting capabilities, and modify UTM Police Response Tracker. All of these improvements were either in support of the recent audit findings or in support of a more robust reporting system.

The key to future success is combining prevention and compliance. Under prevention, we are identifying higher risk populations, setting expectations, changing the culture/climate (including retraining long-term faculty and staff), addressing the known secrets and low-level behaviors, educating new faculty about requirements, and increasing campus-level training. In support of Title IX compliance, several funding organizations (i.e.: National Science Foundation, USDA, NASA, NIH, and Department of Education) are also holding our institution accountable. These external agencies are applying pressure to align with their stated values, which require institutions to report allegations against PI and Co-PI, then working with the institutions to address the concern with the PI or Co-PI.

In response to a question regarding transgender issues and compliance standards, Ms. Blamey stated that at present, we don't really have a definitive answer. Future guidance will come from the NCAA, regulatory agencies, and court cases. A second topic was posed related to concerns among faculty members for a fair harassment hearing/investigation, if falsely accused, by a student as a means to get special consideration or to influence a grade. Ms. Blamey reaffirmed that the new process is incredibly transparent and rooted by an expectation that the investigator is a neutral factfinder. The process involves an evidentiary standard that is well-defined to lead to a conclusion. She recommended addressing the allegation; however, an important part of the process remains an appeal procedure. Additionally, she noted that a false accusation is also a violation. She further encouraged faculty to not put themselves in positions of risk (i.e.: drinking or socializing with an individual student). Chair Sparks concluded the presentation by expressing appreciation to Ms. Blamey for an informative presentation.

V. Meet the Class of 2024 and Fall 2020 Undergraduate Infographics

Chancellor Carver presented infographics to introduce the UTM Class of 2024 and offer a snapshot of the Fall 2020 undergraduate populations. He noted that enrolling high school seniors in the midst of a pandemic challenged most institutions to think creatively.

Highlighting characteristics of the 7,119-student body, the Class of 2024 represents 1,110 new freshmen, for a slight decline (compared to other institutions experiencing a 6-8% enrollment drop). Other metrics reveal a 99% fulltime enrollment status with the top three majors of Agriculture, Nursing, and Engineering, a diversity representing three countries and 24 states with the majority of whom are from 68 Tennessee counties. This entering class includes 18 ROTC cadets, 99 student-athletes, and is 62% female.

A snapshot of the entire student body shows 5,151 undergraduate degree-seeking students and features a 53.7% 6-year graduation rate. UTM's graduation rate increased 6% over the past four years, which is a noteworthy achievement. Chancellor Carver stated that the university needs to improve the 60th percentile ranking quickly and is working toward that attainment. The top undergraduate majors mirror that of the freshmen class with Agriculture and Nursing; however, Health and Human Performance rounds out the third place while Engineering moves a little further down the listing. In conjunction with the Latimer Engineering and Science Building, which remains on schedule for completion by April 2022, we anticipate that the Engineering enrollment will take a leap similar to the popularity in the freshmen class. Other notable data points include a population that is 47% Pell-Eligible (often considered an at-risk indicator, possibly requiring additional support), a student age range from 16 to 72, and an increase in the percent of graduates graduating debt-free (38% for 2019-20, up from 34% the previous year). Chancellor Carver ended his comments by acknowledging the reduction in student debt has been a University focus, which includes educating students and families about limiting loan funds to the actual needs coupled with the institution's efforts to maintain low tuition rates. The campus commitment to reduce student debt continues and should result in greater increases in students graduating debt-free.

Comparing UTM to OVC peer institutions, UTM is on par with conference graduation rates, and a little better than local OVC peers.

VI. Campus Enrollment Management Update

Chair Sparks called on Ms. Sylvia Ewell, Associate Vice President, Ruffalo Noel Levitz, to update the Board on UTM's Enrollment Management Plan. Ms. Ewell highlighted UTM's and RNL's five-year partnership focusing on our financial aid and scholarship strategies in support of UTM's growth mode goals.

Current landscape and financial aid trends reflect a collapse in the birthrate of high school seniors, which began in 2017 and is projected to continue for the next decade. A closer look at the demographics predicts growth (of ~46%) in minority/students of color enrollments (historically, associated with greater completion gaps), greater sensitivity to college affordability (associated with increasing college costs, decreasing amount of available aid, with stationary family incomes growing), discount rate/cost to students tied to limited institutional funds or external funding (4.2% overall discount rate increase between 2013-2018), and rising institutional costs associated with declining enrollments (~\$8,624 at 4-yr public institutions). From a financial perspective, institutions realize the price differential of recruiting a student and the benefits of retaining rather than replacing a student.

During this past year, RNL pivoted its research focus as a means to support institutions in managing the COVID landscape and capture data to define the impact and better understand the student decision-making process. Utilizing its partnership ~300 higher education institutions, RNL grabbed a three-year data set, representing over a million records for each year, to explore yield rates and melt rates for first-year and transfer students. "Yield Rate" is defined as the percentage of students who apply then enroll at an institution. Nationally, the average yield rate of incoming students was in the 25% range, but that average has been dropping for the past two years with an enhanced application process enabling students to apply to multiple schools. "Melt Rate" is defined by students, who reported they plan to attend an institution, but then did not enroll. The national melt rate is ~3.6% and falls into a similar declining rate pattern. Yield rates for Transfer students have dipped below the ~55% rate, while melt rates grew almost 3% points.

RNL grabbed national student data from the top 10 states with the highest reported COVID-19 cases, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, North Carolina, New York, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin. Almost all of these states saw a drop in yield rates with the exception of Texas, California, and Wisconsin. UTM's enrollment was relatively stable; the campus experienced a ~2% drop in its yield rate this past fall. Overall transfer enrollment data saw a mixed bag of responses but a larger drop than freshmen enrollment. A few states did better with their transfer yield rates, including Florida, North Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin. The national percentage of students enrolled in two-year schools declined 10% from fall 2019 to 2020, coupled with 20% fewer new students in the enrollment drop making the recruitment market even more competitive. No doubt this trend will trickle down to UTM and other local institutions.

Drilling down into national yield and melt rates by institutional size, RNL concluded that in Fall 2020, the yield rates saw a 1.63% decrease from 2019 while melt rates increased slightly at 0.45% in response to COVID-19. Campus location appears to have played into the aftereffects of the pandemic with student yields down for institutions located in urban or city settings. UTM fits under the urban grouping definition of Town, which nationally saw better yield rates and more stable melt rates.

Evaluations of the data by institution size demonstrated that, as school size increases, yield rates drop noticeably. Institutions with a headcount of less than 5,000 saw an increase in yield. Similarly, melt rates increased in all categories following yield rate trends. Institutions with enrollment levels greater

than 5,000 students experienced more pronounced melt rates from the prior year, compounding the decline in yield rates. In a comparison of public and private institutional yield and melt rates, first-year students at publics and privates had a lower than normal yield; meanwhile, melt rates were up across both sectors. Public transfer yields aligned with first-year yields, while privates experienced a significant drop. Melt rates for transfers were significantly higher than historical years.

Comparison of yield and melt rates based on distance from home indicate that students were likely to select an institution less than 250 miles from home. Typically, UTM students average 99 miles between campus and home. National yield rates by income indicated a decrease in the number of full Pell recipients (family income under \$44,999) and an increase in students with a family income of >\$75,000. As of December 31, 2020, the percentage of students submitting a FAFSA declined overall by ~11%, by ~12% in the South, and ~15% in Tennessee. The FAFSA is used to determine a student's federal, state, and institutional gift aid eligibility. The estimated decline in filings is higher than anticipated; however, the numbers are improving in recent weeks. About half of UTM students have filed this year's FAFSA, which is slightly behind last year, but better than many other institutions.

RNL, in conjunction with other organizations is compiling feedback from high school junior and senior parents. Data revealed 54% of parents prefer students to attend a college close to home; 32% prefer for their student to live at home and commute; 58% participated in a virtual campus tour rather than travel to a campus visit; 56% expressed concern about the family's ability to pay for college; 46% have concerns about colleges' handling of emergency-type situations; and 51% indicated concerns about safety. Key issues tied to affordability revealed: 95% of families stated the importance of financial aid and scholarships to selecting a college, 96% expressed a difficulty in paying for college, ~50% shared an uneasiness about loans and amounts, and 50% think post-COVID colleges will be even more expensive. The pandemic also deeply affected athletic opportunities beyond cancelling high school sports by limiting the ability of high school recruits to connect with college coaches and by reducing the availability to receive college offers due to many college athletes choosing to utilize an additional year of NCAA eligibility with their teams .

Admissions staff are set to recruit in the midst of the continuing pandemic, but things will be different. UTM Admissions teams have not traveled since last fall and are not permitted to travel with the same intensity as in the past. Large scale campus visits are limited by smaller capacity. The challenge is two-fold, trying to yield students in a pandemic, and to attract more applicants, which is complicated by a smaller market derived from a smaller funnel with fewer students taking entrance exams. With reduced national entrance testing opportunities, institutions must enhance financial aid communications, especially related to any criteria changes for awarding scholarships (based solely on high school GPA), and with a recent change to file the FAFSA based on PPY (prior-prior year income). Additionally, students, whose family income were significantly impacted by COVID closures, may benefit from a financial aid (professional judgement) review.

In explaining discounting formulas, Ms. Ewell clarified the two basic discount models of Overall Discount Rate, which refers to the unfunded gift aid divided by gross revenue (includes room and board) and Tuition and Fee Discount Rate, which refers to all institutional aid (includes tuition exchange, but excludes employee benefits) divided by tuition and fees. Among four-year public institutions, the overall discount rate is 14.4%. Categorizing the data by resident and non-resident allows a deeper analysis of financial implications. Based on campus proximity to other states, UTM has done a good job of increasing its non-resident enrollment during the past four years, which becomes a significant factor aligned with parental priority of keeping students close to home. UTM's maintenance fee revenue average is ~\$5,800 per student. UTM's overall discount rate is lower at 11%. Transfer students have a different price sensitivity than freshmen, with the guiding factors related to ability to transfer classes, graduate quickly, then followed by cost. A transfer student generates more revenue with an average tuition revenue ~\$6,500 at UTM.

During the next decade, national projections predict a decline in the number of high school graduates in Tennessee by 2% as well as declines in some surrounding states, as did the Northeast and Midwest, earlier. Future forecast models, based on birth rates, census data, and high school completion rates, project a growing number of states will experience a similar graduate cliff. As we dive deeper into the data, we see data trends that indicate students of color will represent most of any positive growth change, reinforcing UTM decisions to deliver additional support for these students. Projections for the South propose small increases in graduates for the next three years, and in 2025 the cliff arrives. Demographic changes in the South will see an increase in Hispanic students, followed by Black students. Similarly, in Tennessee, projection forecasts the largest increase in graduates represent Black students, followed by Hispanic students. Typically, families of students of color earn median incomes 61% lower than white families, which make the Tennessee Promise and the UT Promise appealing to even more families. A crucial recruitment focus becomes communicating with families, helping students to realize it's likely that they already qualify for these grant programs. When the forecasted enrollment cliff arrives after 2025, the decrease in students will dip below current levels by ~4,000 count.

A second marker projects differences in average ACT scores by Ethnicity/Race. The national average ACT is 20.8, in comparison to an average of 22.2 for white students and 24.5 for Asian students. Historically, students of color tend to score somewhat lower for the students we serve. With reduced access to ACT testing, many institutions are beginning to move away from using national standardized tests. An additional impact of this decision will be associated with placement testing of college readiness. In fact, nationally ACT scores already reflect a decline in college readiness of high school graduates, as documented by the declining percent of students meeting three or more of the four ACT benchmarks. Only one-third of all students tested nationally are considered college-ready. The challenge is to help all students to become successful in the classroom in support of their graduation goals. Data on the other end of the spectrum of the ACT score distribution reveals only ~2% of students taking the ACT are scoring between 33-36, with the ACT score growth occurring at the more moderate levels 20-23, 16-19, and less than 15.

In the past decade, Tennessee enrollment at two-year institutions has seen a ~10% decline, equally divided between full- and part- time students. Fulltime two-year enrollments have seen a slight decrease the past few years, which is good news, since this is the typical market-pool for four-year institutions. Putting a numerical perspective on this competitive factor, in 2019-20, Tennessee had 65,892 high school seniors and 101 institutions of higher education. On average, 62% (40,853) of high school students persist to college (ranking Tennessee 27th in college continuation rates), and 16.4% (6,687) left the state to go to college (ranking Tennessee 30th among the states). Doing the math, Tennessee has 34,166 high school students / 101 institutions, divided equally, would provide 338 students per institution, putting recruitment in context and confirming why it is so critical to the enrollment process.

Retention adds another critical factor in the enrollment process. To explain, based on entrance scores, UTM's selectivity level hovers between selective and traditional, with UTM retention rates at the high end of traditional. When comparing first-to-second-year retention rates for public institutions, the traditional retention rates hover in the lower 70% range, and selective institution retention rates firmly hold in the low 80% range. Although increasing, UTM has some work to increase its retention rate from 76% to the selective level.

Top retention management practices, many of which UTM has established, include tracking persistency and progression by term and specific academic programs, identifying high withdrawal and failed courses as well as courses difficult to complete for discussions, and using incoming student assessment to identify needs. Other effective practices include use of management systems to monitor at-risk students, track credit hour production, modeling incoming student persistency to completion, usage of academic support services, and academic probation.

Chancellor Carver noted three recent retention-related developments at UTM. First, the campus hired a new Director of Financial Aid, which will usher in an enhanced focus on student debt management, which also aids in retention. Secondly, the campus received a \$100,000 cash gift to support African American retention in the first year, with plans to utilize best practice techniques with mentoring, out-of-class activities to foster community, and academic and advising support. This project could be the beginning of retention programs dedicated to other groups, adult learners and veterans. Lastly, just over a year ago, UTM hired a bi-lingual recruitment counselor, Nancy Sanchez, who supports families with communication needs, but also has become a friend and counselor to our Latino students. Our campus will be monitoring its service gaps for the gains and improvements associated with these three ventures.

Responding to interest in recruiting more students from across state lines, UTM's strategy continues to be offering out-of-state scholarships. This year, UTM expanded scholarships to enable more students to qualify. The campus also increased recruitment in several areas (just hired a recruiter for the St. Louis area) to help establish relationships and shepherd students through the process. Instate tuition remains a legislated mandate with little interest in extending the state tax-base to fund education for non-Tennesseans. Some out-of-state students find UTM's out-of-state rate is more affordable than their state's in-state tuition rate.

In conclusion, Petra McPhearson, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration, reported that F&A staff is waiting for a final spring enrollment report to determine any adjustments necessary for current budget plans. At this point, the campus has utilized the CARES funding to assist with the purchase of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE). UTM's F&A staff is seeking clarification regarding an effective date of the second round of virus relief funds supporting revenue loss.

VII. Comments by the Chancellor

Chancellor Carver opened his comments with a report of his recent campus message addressing a campus incident involving inflammatory language which happened before the start of a virtual class. Chancellor Carver's message asserted that, just because a person has the right to make a comment, one still needs to think about those statements and realize the consequences of words and how words can hurt and separate/divide. UTM is working to foster a climate of civility and respect, where individuals can have different opinions and talk about those opinions on campus at a time that the nation is also addressing these issues. The challenge of COVID protocols makes it particularly difficult to gather people together to discuss issues. UTM has tried to be creative utilizing Town Halls to provide a virtual forum for these conversations. Chancellor Carver recognized Board member Monice Hagler for her assistance in identifying a prominent authority on Free Speech to facilitate a campus conversation. We need to know where the boundaries are and understand what constitutes hate speech, noting this is just one activity as the campus moves forward in an effort to build an inclusive campus and to foster a climate of cooperation.

UTM opened up classes on January 14th by suspending its in-person programming, offering only virtual classes the first week. The decision to open in a virtual format was based on Coronavirus surges, following holiday gatherings and with a realization that the country could see another surge following New Year's Day celebrations. The alternate start provided the campus time to monitor the situation and allowed our local healthcare providers time to receive the second round of the vaccine. UTM is off to a great start resuming face-to-face courses, yesterday. UTM hosts a campus-related COVID website, which provides the community access to monitor the number of our student and employee cases, the number of students in campus isolation rooms, and provides other information updates. Chancellor Carver recognized university staff for assisting the campus and centers with the additional cleaning protocols.

In other news, Chancellor Carver reported progress on the Latimer Engineering and Science Building construction is on schedule with the facility available to be occupied by April 2022. A second campus project is nearing completion. The Graham Football Stadium visitor bleachers required replacement, following a seismic event several months ago. The bleachers will be ready for football's spring schedule.

An additional capital project may be getting closer to construction as the Innovation and Project Realization Center (The Garage) advances forward on THEC's list as it awaits state funding. The proposed facility will provide maker space for new project design, dirty space for lab projects, and aligns workforce development and degree completion for three institutions, UT Martin, DSCC, and TCAT McKenzie. Two more future projects being planned are an Agriculture Research Building and the next phase of our Fine Arts Building. Both are in front of us with fundraising so you can expect to hear more about these needs. Chancellor Carver offered an update on fundraising at the next meeting.

VIII. Closing Remarks by Chair

In closing, Chair Sparks acknowledged that often we don't realize what UT Martin means to West Tennessee. Recently, he had an occasion to experience firsthand the significance of UTM's impact during a two-week stay at Jackson General Hospital, when, as he described it (to a person) the care providers, from RNs to Techs to Lab Specialists, attended UT Martin and had positive statements to say. It is important to remember how UT Martin impacts West Tennessee.

The next regular meeting of the Advisory Board is May 21, 2021.

VIII. Adjournment

With no further business to come before the Board, a motion to adjourn was made by Monice Hagler and seconded by Philip Smartt. The meeting adjourned at 2:44 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Eddie Gibson, Secretary