

# THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT MARTIN ADVISORY BOARD

## Minutes of the Fall Meeting

The fall meeting of The University of Tennessee at Martin Advisory Board was held at 1:00 p.m. (CDT) on Friday, September 18, 2020, as a virtual meeting in accordance with Governor Lee's Executive Order #60. 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 fall meeting of the UT Martin Advisory Board. He announced that, earlier in the morning, the UT Martin campus celebrated the official Groundbreaking Ceremony of the Latimer Engineering and Science Building, a new \$65 million STEM building. Marking the occasion, Governor Bill Lee, UT President Randy Boyd, and several members of the Tennessee Legislature, joined together to celebrate and honor Bill Latimer. Chair Sparks remarked that this day will go down in university history.

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 (in attendance onsite)  
Julia Wells (joined by Zoom)

With six members of the Advisory Board in attendance, Art Sparks on site and five members via Zoom, a quorum was announced as provided by Executive Order #60. All members participating via Zoom affirmed that each joined the meeting alone. Katie Ashley was unable to participate. Others participating remotely included UT Martin administrative and leadership staff. The meeting was streamed live for the 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**

Chair Sparks began the meeting with a review of requirements established under Executive Order #60. He explained that Executive Order #60, like the previous order #17, temporarily suspends the requirements of the Tennessee Open Meeting Act (TOMA) to the extent necessary to allow any governing body subject to TOMA requirements to meet and conduct essential business by electronic means, if the body determines meeting electronically is necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of Tennesseans in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chair Sparks clarified for the record that he and Chancellor Carver discussed the benefits of Executive Order #60 and deemed it appropriate that members of the AB participate by electronic means to protect the public health, safety, and welfare in light of the coronavirus. For the record, Chair Sparks stated that annual 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 remain available at [utm.edu/abmeeting](http://utm.edu/abmeeting).

In keeping with the order, all Advisory Board votes will be taken by roll call vote and, all members participating by electronic means are deemed to be present at the meeting for purposes of voting.

After reviewing helpful tips regarding virtual meeting protocol, the meeting proceeded with a few introductions. Chair Sparks welcomed two new members to the Advisory Board, Dr. Philip Smartt, Professor of Natural Resources Management, serving a two-year term (2020-2022) as Faculty Member to the Advisory Board. Next, he introduced Ms. Emma Hilliard, a junior in Health and Human Performance from Bells, TN, serving a one-year term (2020-2021) as the Student Member to the Board. Chair Sparks, taking executive privilege, introduced Mr. Johnny Woolfolk of Jackson, TN. Governor Bill Lee nominated Woolfolk, a 1971 UTM alumnus with a degree in Agriculture to fill the AB's membership opening, created from Katie Ashley's expired term. Woolfolk Farms is a third-generation, family-operated farm located in Madison County with more than 150 years of continuous family ownership and agricultural production by the same family. Johnny Woolfolk noted that his association with UTM began in 1967 as a freshman, and his relationship has continued with the campus hosting annual Governor's School for Agriculture student visits, Future Farmers of America initiatives, as well as engaging in scholarship opportunities for young farmers. He further noted his enthusiasm at the prospect of beginning a new association with UTM by serving on the UTM Advisory Board.

### **III. Approval of Minutes**

Chair Sparks directed the members to a copy of the minutes from the regular scheduled meeting of the Advisory Board on May 8, 2020, for approval.

**Motion: Julia Wells moved to adopt the UT Martin Advisory Board meeting minutes for the May 8, 2020, meeting, as presented in the meeting materials, and Hal Bynum seconded the motion. A roll call vote on the motion was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.**

### **IV. Student-Athlete Overview**

Chair Sparks invited UTM's Athletic Director, Kurt McGuffin, to share a campus overview of student-athletes. The presentation agenda was separated into conversations related to student health and wellness – COVID-19, fall competition postponement, academics and compliance updates, organizational structure of the department, and budget. Kurt emphasized that reintegration of UTM Athletics complies with CDC, state, federal, OVC, and NCAA guidance and mirrors UTM's campus recommendations. Educational documents are regularly posted and dispersed to student-athletes and coaches promoting health and safety supported by temperature and wellness checks, capacity limits of indoor facilities (locker rooms closed), social distancing and small group practices, sample testing and symptom monitoring, in addition to mandatory masks at all activities.

Postponing fall sports was a tough decision based on the safety of our students, fairness, and several financial factors. COVID-19 testing costs run \$14,000 per week, inclusive of testing supplies and processing costs, as well as requiring a half day of staffing to complete. The campus hopes to start competition with Rifle in October, followed by Basketball on November 25, which coincides with a time when most institutions are out-of-session. In spring, the campus is planning to schedule Football, Volleyball, Track, and Soccer, along with our spring sports. Sport restrictions have been hard on our athletes.

Recently, UTM unveiled several new academic initiatives and enhanced one of its facilities to focus on academic improvements. Kurt highlighted the completion of an expanded and enhanced academic lab, funded through a \$100,000 NCAA grant written by Ashley Bynum, requiring a \$20,000 match fundraised

by Laura Suiter. In addition to access to 22 computer workstations and nutritional support in the form of milk, water, and healthy snacks, an unexpected advantage was realized in how the space has brought our teams together.

Forming new partnerships is a win-win, when UTM's Honors Programs and Athletics joined together to create a Tutoring Program. Approximately, 90 student-athletes, upon request, have been matched with some 20 Honors students through this program, who collect community service hours for the time spent tutoring. Participation is expected to grow in the upcoming year.

As a result, UTM student-athletes have excelled academically, achieving a record-breaking year with 285 student-athletes named to the Athletic Director's Spring 2020 Honor Roll, recognizing a 3.00 term GPA, with 191 student-athletes earning the Commissioner's Spring 2020 Honor Roll, achieved by a 3.25 term GPA. Especially noteworthy, 21 student-athletes received an OVC Medal of Honor, earning a perfect 4.0 term GPA, setting the second highest record in school history. Kurt acknowledged, in the midst of dealing with the challenges of cancelling their spring sports and realigning to online courses during mid-semester in response to COVID-19, UTM's 491 student-athletes rallied to exceed all expectations by earning a 3.26 GPA average, UTM set a school record term GPA.

Applying for a McLendon Foundation Minority Leadership Initiative provides opportunities for needed staff and minority leadership experience. UTM has applied and received a grant, allowing the department to hire Tony Bufford in support of academic advising for football, creating a ripple effect throughout the academic support staff and more efficient distribution of academic and compliance duties. Kurt stressed that a major focus of Skyhawk Athletics is helping our students to graduate, which is also emphasized through the NCAA's development of academic standards. Hitting these goals is recognized by \$500,000 in unrestricted NCAA funds.

To enhance departmental efficiency, Intercollegiate Athletics Administration has realigned its reporting structure and tiered its organizational chart under administration and SWA, Compliance and Academics, Marketing and Promotions, External Operations, and Sports Medicine. Additionally, this week, UTM hired Julius McNair to fill the Assistant Director of Athletic for Development, a shared staff position with the UT Foundation.

Offering a snapshot into the 2019-2020 Intercollegiate Athletics budget, the majority of the campus' \$6.4 million line for Direct Institutional Support (DIS) funds student-athlete aid. Other funding sources include ticket sales, corporate sponsorships, rodeo ads and stall rent, concessions, campus-wide Student Fees, equestrian course fees, game guarantees, and NCAA/OVC funds. Expenses include athletics student aid, coaching salaries and benefits, staff salaries and benefits, sports operating budget, administration operating budget and potential bonuses. The primary differences between budgeted and actual revenue lines resulted from decreases in Student Fees (tied to the decline in campus enrollment), corporate sponsorships, game guarantees (resulting from cancelled competitions), Rodeo revenue loss (without a spring event), and NCAA/OVC distribution funds. Increases were realized in ticket sales, the equestrian course fee, and concessions. Athletics debt service remains low with only the baseball/softball facility and lighting project still in a repayment cycle. During the current year, Athletics will be challenged to address an \$875,000 loss of funds (from the Alabama football game cancellation), loss of basketball revenue, and funding cuts from the NCAA; however, Athletics anticipates savings from restrictions associated with recruitment travel and official visits.

One significant change impacting the future of sports is the extension of an extra year of eligibility for current collegiate student-athletes to return to competition and to retain their scholarships. The ripple effect will be felt by high school seniors and juniors, who will experience reduced opportunities for college openings.

As reported in a recent announcement several weeks ago, Kurt McGuffin's contract was extended to 2025 in acknowledgement of academic performance achievements and increased donor contributions ahead of last year, especially noting his work during the Captain's Challenge to raise \$350,000 to off-set a budgeting shortfall and efforts to find creative ways to save money. The next Skyhawk Club membership newsletter will be mailed out closer to the opening of sports schedules.

## **V. Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan**

Chair Sparks next introduced Dr. Mark McCloud, Interim Director of the Diversity and Inclusion office. Dr. McCloud noted that although he is not new to the campus, he has only served in his new role for 6 weeks. He shared his 90-day plan of high-priority action items including the public adoption of the Skyhawk Creed, built on the pillars of "Respect, Responsibility, and Right Choices," which include respecting people and their property, being responsible for our actions, and making the right choices in terms of academic integrity and denouncing racism, hatred, and bigotry. Never before in our recent history have we faced a global pandemic and a national racial epidemic at the same time. Dr. McCloud hosted a campus-wide virtual forum, Beyond Colorblind Tour, to have a conversation around race and talk about the things we need to do moving forward. Meeting with the Campus Equity and Diversity Officer, Joe Henderson, and HR Director, Michael Washington, the team has developed a listing of training needs and a corresponding timeline. He has a strategy outlined for crafting a Campus Diversity Plan to include policy statements and strategies to address attrition rates, etc. To ensure sustainability, the campus will establish an Inclusive Excellence Council, ensuring Diversity Plans for internal and external stakeholders.

As part of a campus-wide introduction, Dr. McCloud plans to share a diversity manifesto, which will help identify views of the shadow culture experience, transparent to media and students. Resources and information will be shared on a Diversity website.

Dr. McCloud continues a listening tour with campus administrators, students and student leadership, academic community leaders, alumni, and community partners. From these diverse conversations and cultural discussions, he plans to incorporate the feedback into a Campus Report Card, providing a basis for the campus to "assess the trauma and make space for self-awareness to own where we are." As part of these plans, he will establish alliances to address some small wins, identifying quick fixes, and proposed the creation of a Black Faculty and Staff Association and a Women's Faculty and Staff Association developing partnerships to build our team.

The campus plan will identify annual goals and create actionable items around each goal in association with corresponding key stakeholders to ensure our success. Metrics and data will inform each decision as UTM seeks to become a recognized leader in this area. We want our campus to stay ready and not get ready. The tasks ahead will require campus support, including administrative support, and exploring additional staffing needs. Dr. McCloud responded to a question that his primary challenge will be in the number of students, staff, and faculty with diverse attitudes. To address these challenges, he will promote better communication of the resources we have in place, expand plans with each of the five regional centers, and engage the university enterprise. He noted that UTM's curriculum needs to reflect our differences. A diversity website will be a great resource for disseminating information to the campus.

Chancellor Carver complimented UTM alumnus, Dr. McCloud, for hitting the ground running. He further stated that students love Dr. McCloud since his return to UTM more than three years ago to serve as Director of Career Planning and Development. His role in CPAD has prepared him well for his new duties and will serve him in opening communication channels with industry, private business, student internships and graduate schools, and in working with the community. Dr. McCloud has the skills to advance these new campus initiatives and promote our fundraising needs. Currently, he has two spaces available, one office in the Hall-Moody Administration Building and his office in the Boling University Center.

Chancellor Carver noted that within the next 18 months, several units in the Hall-Moody Administration Building will be relocated to Clement Hall providing a common space for student services. At that time, the Administration Building will undergo an HVAC renovation project and a facility space reorganization. Chair Sparks responded that it is refreshing to receive pass through information regarding Admissions updates and reports and requested that Chancellor Carver share similar information regarding the Diversity and Inclusion reports.

## **VI. Setting Future Dates for Regular Meetings of the Board**

Chair Sparks directed the Advisory Board to consider the proposal setting future meeting dates for regular meetings of the Advisory Board from 2021 thru 2023 for approval.

**Motion: Hal Bynum moved to adopt the UT Martin Advisory Board regular meeting dates from 2021 thru 2023, 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.**

## **VII. Comments by the Chancellor**

Chancellor Carver opened his comments by expressing his enthusiasm for Mr. John Woolfolk's attendance during the meeting and his pending confirmation. Chancellor Carver continued his remarks with encouraging news from Senator John Stevens, who shared a belief that institutions can look forward to some funding of maintenance projects. Additionally, Chancellor Carver reported he remains encouraged with the campus' fall enrollment numbers amid the challenges of a pandemic and during the nation's occurrences of social unrest. He stated that his biggest concern related to students is their willingness to continue their coursework in an online format. Based on national trends from April and May, the campus expected to be down ~500 students, rather than a drop of only 38 student FTE reported today. University enrollments are up and down around the state, but many regional institutions are reporting enrollment declines this fall. At UT Martin, courses are ~50% (completely) online with the remainder of courses offered as hybrid and only a few smaller classes in a face-to-face format. UTM faculty are prepared to deliver course content in a traditional format and, if needed, pivot to a fully-online format.

Chancellor Carver admitted that the campus is very different now in contrast to last year. In fact, if you walk around campus, you will not see as many students walking about. We house ~1,600 students living on campus, which represents a 7% decline in residential students from last year. The Housing staff is utilizing this reduced capacity in support of isolation rooms for COVID cases. For example, we currently have 4 students in our campus isolation area; any students, who test positive, can be moved into one of the reserved isolation rooms, where we furnish them with a TV and provide delivery of three meals a day and snacks. On a positive note, most of our students in isolation are not experiencing the more extreme COVID symptoms.

Our staff is not only concerned about the physical health of students but is equally focused on the emotional and mental health of our students. Our Counseling Center has doubled the number of counseling and telehealth sessions. The incidents of students reporting experiences of anxiety have increased. Our Student Affairs team is keeping Campus Rec open and working to provide additional social activities. Virtual activities include a rhythm and blues concert, artist K Camp private concert, a diversity speaker, online scavenger hunt, and we hope to schedule a movie on the lawn using a large inflatable screen to show movies and college football games.

In quick updates, Chancellor Carver noted that COVID-19 has not disrupted construction of the Latimer Engineering and Science Building. The \$65 million STEM facility, located at the southeast corner of the

Quad in between the Business Administration and Sociology buildings, remains on schedule at this time. He also noted that UT's second priority on the Capital Projects list is a UTM project. Although, this has been a crazy year, Chancellor Carver remains encouraged that the Football Stadium seating project, which was delayed by COVID-related production challenges, should be completed by October 15.

**VIII. Closing Remarks by Chair**

In closing, Chair Sparks stated that you cannot underestimate the positive influence of Chancellor Carver, Mark McCloud and Kurt McGuffin along with their staffs and the professional importance of what UTM is doing to get through a global pandemic. The faculty and staff have worked hard to engage students in unique ways throughout the pandemic.

He thanked John Woolfolk for attending today's meeting and looks forward to working with him following his confirmation. Chair Sparks expressed his appreciation for the role that Katie Ashley served and continues to perform, pending Mr. Woolfolk's House and Senate confirmation.

The next regular meeting of the Advisory Board is January 22, 2021.

**VIII. Adjournment**

With no further business to come before the Board, a motion to adjourn was made by Julia Wells and seconded by Monice Hagler. The meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Edie Gibson, Secretary