

OUR TENNESSEE

U N I V E R S I T Y o f T E N N E S S E E S Y S T E M M A G A Z I N E

KNOXVILLE | CHATTANOOGA | MARTIN | HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER | INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE | INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

WINTER
2021



O N E U T





THE SCENE

Bria McKay paints during an art class in front of Brehm Hall at UT Martin.

PHOTO BY STEVEN MANTILLA

features

- 6** Making Space
- 10** Three Sisters
- 16** Opening Doors
- 20** Serving Those Who Have Served Us
- 26** Reflecti e of the Population
- 30** Consejera. Apoyodora. Amiga.
- 34** Dignity of Risk
- 38** Two Pennies and a Pledge
- 39** Calling for Philanthropy

in every issue

- 3** A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT
- 4** IN THIS ISSUE
- 5** UT BY THE NUMBERS
- 41** CAMPUS NEWS *Briefs from across the UT System*
- 48** LAST WORD *Diversity: A Good Start, Not the Finish Line*

ON THIS PAGE

A scene from Pacer Pond at UT Martin. PHOTO BY STEVEN MANTILLA

ON THE COVER

Collage created by Laura Barroso

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OUR TENNESSEE

Magazine for the alumni, friends and supporters of the University of Tennessee System, including campuses in Knoxville, Chattanooga and Martin; the Health Science Center based in Memphis; and the statewide Institute of Agriculture and Institute for Public Service.

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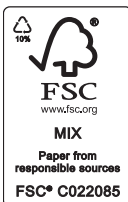
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A message from the president

Diverse as One

Diverse but together—two words that combined bring new opportunities. Our community and nation have talked about diversity as we experience new ways to come together.

As the president of the University of Tennessee System, one of my main goals is to make the university a strong and welcoming community for everyone. What makes a university great are its people—students, faculty, staff—and the opportunities to impact the future. Our experiences and our differences make us stronger together than we could ever be separately.

Our campuses are fortunate to have students, faculty, staff and alumni with different backgrounds and life experiences. These differences help us learn and grow. At UT, we are committed to creating an environment that helps every member of our community feel valued, respected and welcomed on our campuses. In helping to create this environment, our UT leadership teams are actively working on approaches that meet the needs of their communities. UT Knoxville is developing action plans for a campus where everyone is respected, valued and included. At UT Chattanooga, unique events are being planned which are aimed at having critical conversations around equity and inclusion. The UT Health Science Center has created a Diversity Certificate Program to connect participants to the foundational concepts of diversity and inclusion. These are just a few examples of how we are defining our “OneUT” culture.



UT President Randy Boyd laughs with TVA President and CEO Jeff Lyash, ORNL Director Thomas Zacharia and Great Smoky Mountains National Park Superintendent Cassius Cash during the Mayors' Leadership Luncheon in Knoxville. PHOTO BY SAM THOMAS

In these pages, you will read some of the incredible and diverse experiences of individuals who are part of the University of Tennessee family. There are lessons to learn from all of them.

Together can we make UT the best it can be on our way to the greatest decade ever. I hope you'll join me in that effort.

Randy Boyd, Knoxville '79

IN THIS ISSUE

Welcome to *Our Tennessee*.

After years of letters protesting the *Tennessee Alumnus* name, as it signified a single male graduate, as well as letters in support of maintaining a more than 100-year tradition, this spring we decided to survey the readers of our print magazine to obtain their thoughts. We emailed the survey to 16,000 randomly selected alumni readers and received about 1,600 responses. More than 50 percent approved changing the name, with 16 percent against it. The remainder signified the name of the magazine didn't matter or they were unsure. As more than one respondent noted, as long as the content and quality remained the same, the name didn't matter.

Strong opinions were written on both sides, but with a clear majority, we decided to continue weighing the matter.

We formed a committee with alumni from each campus, asked them to consider other names for the magazine or to keep *Tennessee Alumnus* as the name. Several survey respondents suggested we consider magazine names that would represent all of our campuses as well as be a strong identifier of the UT System. In the same survey regarding the name change, we also requested name suggestions. After removing the names that were campus specific we still had a lengthy list of suggestions and brainstormed

some more. The committee narrowed the list to its top three, with *Our Tennessee* obtaining the top votes.

Our Tennessee includes all campuses and everyone within—UT is for all, and so this is *Our Tennessee*. It also alludes to the impact UT has on the state. As goes the University of Tennessee, so goes the state of Tennessee. It is our state, and we change it—and the world—with each degree awarded. In fact, this year we graduated a record number of 12,277 students—and 57 percent were female. As you can see from our graphic on Page 5, the majority of students enrolling are female.

Additionally, retaining the word Tennessee pays homage to the magazine's 104-year history and the part of the name that continues to serve its readers well. We are Tennessee. And this is *Our Tennessee*. This magazine will continue to reflect UT and our alumni in Tennessee and around the world because this is still *Our Tennessee*, as you were forever changed by your time here.

Thank you to the alumni and many others who contributed their time and thoughtfulness as we contemplated this change. We exist to serve you, and we want to serve all of you well. We will continue to strive to tell well the stories of our alumni, faculty, students, institutes, campuses and research. For this is *Our Tennessee*.



Social distancing and wearing masks were the norm at UT Chattanooga and all of the campuses this fall. PHOTO BY ANGELA FOSTER

UT BY THE NUMBERS



UT System
had a record
52,559
students
41,184
undergraduate
and
11,375
graduate
enroll this fall.

UNDERGRADUATES

55 % female
45 % male

GRADUATE STUDENTS

58% female
42% male

TENNESSEE RESIDENTS

80%

OUT OF STATE

20%

UT MINORITIES

(Black, Hispanic/Latino,
Asian, American Indian
or Alaskan Native)

UT SYSTEM

19.61%

UT KNOXVILLE

18.07%

UT CHATTANOOGA

21.32%

UT MARTIN

20.16%

UT HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER

27.51%





Evann Bailey, a UTC senior, studies urban bee wings and whether warmer weather is affecting the insects.

Making Space

Increasing Diversity of Ecologists at UTC and Beyond

BY SARAH JOYNER | PHOTOS BY ANGELA FOSTER

DeAnna Beasley's career in ecology didn't start until she was a few months away from her college graduation at Wofford College in South Carolina. "I had plans, like most people who go into the sciences, of going to medical school and becoming a doctor," she says. "Over the years of my college experience, that didn't feel right to me, but I also didn't know what options were available to me."

Something clicked when she took an elective course in ecology.

"I thought it was incredible, this opportunity to think about the environment and its impact on organisms and how organisms are interacting with that space. It was very satisfying for me to think about those concepts."

But, throughout graduate school and while attending conferences, she felt alone and isolated as a Black woman.

"Throughout my graduate studies and post-doc training, I didn't see too many ecologists who look like me," Beasley says. "It is just mentally exhausting to be the only one in the room all the time."

Those feelings shifted when she joined an information session for the Black Ecologists Section (BES) at an Ecological Society of America conference. BES is an international association providing academic, social and cultural support for individuals of ethnicities and nationalities underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields.

"It became this place of home within the conference," Beasley says. "I felt like I had a purpose."

"In addition to presenting my work, I was working with

this group to help increase our presence and hope that the students following behind us don't feel so isolated and alone when they come to these events."

"...there is space for you"

Now, as a UT Chattanooga assistant professor in biology, geology and environmental science, she wants to change the view of the conference room for her students.

Fewer than 1 percent of American ecologists identify as Black. Add in American ecologists who identify as Native American and Hispanic, and still only 9 percent of the country's ecologists are accounted for, according to a study by the Ecological Society of America.

Beasley coauthored an article recently published in the Ecological Society of America Bulletin. Titled "Human Dimensions: Raising Black Excellence by Elevating Black Ecologists Through Collaboration, Celebration, and Promotion," the article describes those efforts and the why.

The article's seven authors agree that, to increase the diversity of ecologists, students of color in science need





support and mentors who can identify with their specific experiences.

Beasley thinks many Black students are unaware of ecology.

“A number of studies have shown that (Black) students don’t feel comfortable in the outdoors. They don’t see that exposure, and because of the lack of diversity in ecology, they don’t see themselves being represented in that field.”

Beasley provides students opportunities in her own Integrative Ecology Lab, which explores the relationship of insects and their urban environments.

“I try to engage with students who work in the lab and get experience in the field,” she says. “My goal is to create a space where they can at least come away from the experience saying, ‘I could see myself doing this.’ That is my role as a mentor—to kind of show them that there is a space for you. The discipline needs you, needs your perspective, needs your insight.”



Evann Bailey

Senior and UTC Honors College student Evann Bailey is working with Beasley this year in the lab for a research experience.

As an integrated studies major, Bailey is concentrating in two fields: biology and entrepreneurship. With a customized degree, she plans on attending medical school and opening her own private practice as an obstetrician-gynecologist someday.

She was drawn to Beasley’s lab research studying



DeAnna Beasley

the morphology—or physical form—of urban bee wings and whether warmer temperatures are affecting the insects.

“I didn’t even know that, studying their wings, that they could be an indicator of stress,” Bailey says.

Bailey learned about ecology when she came to UTC.

“I didn’t really know much about ecology before I came to college because, at least at the high school I went to, environmental science and ecology just weren’t promoted. They were elective classes, and nobody really talked about it.”

Instead, she was introduced to the science through friends who were participating in their own ecology research, and it grabbed her attention.

As far as diversity among ecologists is concerned, Bailey agrees with her mentor: There’s not enough promotion of ecology to young, budding scientists.

“I definitely think that if there was more outreach early on—maybe as early as middle school and definitely high school—that would bring attention to this field as an option you can go to besides the three standards of chemistry, biology and physics,” she says. ①





*DeAnna Beasley provides research opportunities
in her Integrative Ecology Lab.*



Diane Garcia plans to graduate with her electrical engineering degree from UT Knoxville in 2021. She will be the third in her family to graduate with that degree.
PHOTO BY YASMIN MURPHY



SISTERS


*Blazing a Trail for First-Generation
Latina Women in Electrical Engineering*

BY BROOKS CLARK | PHOTOS BY TONY CAMPBELL, YASMIN MURPHY AND SANDY SCHAEFFER

When Frances Garcia was a sophomore at Lenoir City High School, she received a letter asking if she would like to apply for the Tennessee Governor's STEM High School, then a boarding school on the Tennessee School for the Deaf campus in South Knoxville. Frances told her mother, Ines, that it was probably junk mail.

Still, Ines took the letter to work at Monterey Mushrooms and showed it to her manager, Bob Moore, who knew Frances and her younger sisters, Christine and Diane, from refereeing youth soccer games with them. Moore said, "She should do it."

"I did it," says Frances. "And it was all because of my mom taking an active role. It was a mindset that became a part of our family."



In her two years at the Governor's School, which focuses on science, technology, engineering and math, Frances took classes on the UT Knoxville campus, including introductory courses in physics and chemistry, and did a project on accelerator physics at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. She majored in physics at UT, graduated in 2015 and then earned her master's degree in electrical engineering in 2018. She now works as an electronics electrical engineer for the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Crane, Indiana.

Following her sister's path, Christine graduated with a Bachelor of Science in electrical engineering in 2020 and is now an electrical engineer for Bechtel's Nuclear and Security Division in Reston, Virginia. Diane works part time for Jacobs Engineering in Oak Ridge, running power simulations on the electrical engineering team. She plans to graduate with her Bachelor of Science in electrical engineering in 2021.

The Garcia sisters' successes began with their parents, Ines and Herminio, naturalized citizens who emigrated from Panama and Mexico, respectively.

"From the very beginning," Diane says, "you knew that academics were a priority for my mom. If you brought home a report card with a B on it, you'd show it to my dad, and he'd say, 'Great.' You'd show it to my mom, and she'd say, 'What?' The message was, 'This is important. We need to get 100s.' They came here for us to have a better life, and we know how difficult it was for them. Excelling academically is the least we can do, in a sense."

"They made many sacrifices," agrees Christine, "and we don't want them to go to waste."

The sisters' stories also highlight the impact of programs that encourage underrepresented populations—women, Latino students, first-generation college students—to enter and succeed in STEM disciplines. And they show the importance of teachers, mentors and peers in organizations like the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) and Sisters: Women in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science.

Latino students represent 4 percent of UT Knoxville students. First-generation college students make up nearly a quarter of the campus' undergraduates. Although the percentage of women studying electrical engineering and computer science in UT Knoxville's Tickle College of Engineering has doubled in the past five years, it still hovers just under 12 percent.

"It was a little challenging," says Frances about her college years. "None of my family had been to college. It's so subtle, but the lack of diversity made it hard to click with the campus and connect with everyone. It was difficult to be authentic and feel at home."

UT Knoxville Chancellor Donde Plowman often stresses that meeting the needs of first-generation students is an essential part of the mission of a land-grant institution.

"Sometimes, when you are the first in your family to go to college, you feel a little bit out of place when you get here," she says. "We want our first-generation students to know that they aren't alone, that there are resources available to them and people on this campus who are cheering for their success."

The Garcia sisters' successes began with their parents, Ines and Herminio, naturalized citizens who emigrated from Panama and Mexico, respectively.



Christine Garcia works as an electrical engineer for Bechtel's Nuclear and Security Division in Reston, Virginia. PHOTO BY SANDY SCHAEFFER

THREE JOURNEYS

Frances was born in Willimantic, Connecticut, where her parents met. When Frances was 18 months old, Ines and Herminio moved to Lenoir City to work for Monterey Mushrooms. Ines now works in the Morgan Olson truck and van factory in Loudon. Herminio works at Denso Manufacturing in Maryville. All three sisters played soccer at Lenoir City High School, played intramurals at UT and continue to play in adult leagues.

“I always
loved physics
because
it was so
beautiful.”

—FRANCES

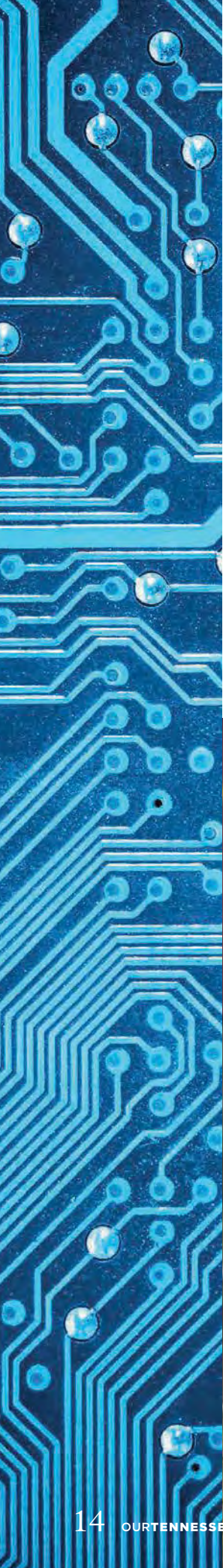
“Growing up, we watched the Discovery Channel every Friday night,” Frances says. “I was curious at a young age about STEM in general.”

As part of the Governor's School program, she did a project at ORNL on accelerator physics, programming mechanical optical design with a senior researcher and leader of the Beam Science and Technology Group at ORNL's Spallation Neutron Source Project.

“I always loved physics because it was so beautiful. I was drawn to answering the big questions, seeing how everything worked—from the smallest atoms to space,” she says.

She earned a handful of research assistant fellowships at ORNL.

“I met a lot of great scientists,” she says, “both women and men, and I was able to do what I liked and learned what opportunities there were. Electrical engineering was work that I found interesting and challenging. I liked that it enabled you to be versatile, and it was safe in being able to get employment. I told one of my mentors that I thought I'd wait to get my master's, and his advice was to do it now because it would be harder to go back later.”



At UT, she benefited from the camaraderie of peers in Systers and SHPE. At ORNL, she had a mentor, senior research and development engineer Curt Maxey (Knoxville '88). "He is one of the best advisors who really cared about his students," she says. "If I had a problem or a question, I could ask him." Her thesis focused on developing simulation, analytical and empirical modeling of wide-bandgap semiconductor devices.

"Approaching my thesis, I was having imposter syndrome," she says. "It's very common. I knew I could do well in classes, since every problem had a solution. But in a master's thesis, here's a problem that may not have a solution. I said to myself, 'I guess I'll have to do this. This is kind of what science is.'"

Diane also grew up enjoying math and science. In high school she took a digital electronics course.

"The light bulb in my head was that I was enjoying it when my peers absolutely hated it," she says.

In her sophomore year, she attended the Tennessee Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation at the UT Conference Center and a summer engineering

Frances Garcia works as an electronics electrical engineer at the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Crane, Indiana. PHOTO BY TONY CAMPBELL



program—then named INSTEP and now known as eVOL9—in the Tickle College of Engineering.

In her first year at UT Knoxville, she was a recruiting officer for SHPE. She took some semesters at Mississippi State Community College and then returned to UT, paying her own way. Her favorite course was power systems with Assistant Professor Hector Pulgar, a native of Chile.

“It sealed the deal of how I wanted to use my major,” she says, “looking toward power distribution. On my internship, I’m working on running power simulations for buildings.”

In the summer after seventh grade, Christine spent a week on campus through the Minority Introduction to Engineering and Science program through the Tickle College of Engineering’s Office of Diversity Programs. “I thought, ‘This is definitely some thing I like,’” she says. “It piqued my interest. I went every summer.”

The summer after her junior year of high school, she completed the four-week Young Scholars program in the Center for Ultra-Wide-Area Resilient Electronic Energy Transmission Networks—an engineering research center headquartered at UT Knoxville—where she worked on a project on power systems.

“I thought, ‘I definitely want to work more on electronics.’”

At UT Knoxville, Christine became involved in SHPE and served as president her sophomore year.

“It gave me a sense of community, getting to know fellow Latino engineers,” she says.

After graduating in August, she took the job with Bechtel and moved to Virginia, where she plays in two soccer leagues.

“I feel the advantage of being able to go to those resident camps,” she says. “When I arrived as a freshman, I felt a connection with the people in the diversity programs. Travis Griffin, the director of diversity programs, made me feel at home. There was a specific room in Perkins Hall he used as a resource center. It was a home where we

could go, and Mr. Griffin was there. I’d get my lunch, sit there and eat it. Mr. Griffin would ask how we’re feeling. It made me feel valued and heard within the college.” **T**



PHOTO BY YASMIN MURPHY

Diane Garcia works part time for Jacobs Engineering in Oak Ridge while she finishes her degree.

“It gave me
a sense of
community,
getting
to know
fellow Latino
engineers.”

—CHRISTINE

Opening Doors

Shared Values, Desire for Change Drives Friendship Between IPS Employees



BY SUSAN ROBERTSON | PHOTO BY STEPHEN AUSTIN

Institute for Public Service (IPS) employees Kenny Smith and Elisha Hodge normally wouldn't have many opportunities to interact.

Smith is a solutions consultant with the Center for Industrial Services in Johnson City, and Hodge is a legal consultant with the Municipal Technical Advisory Service in Nashville. However, the two have forged a friendship built on an appreciation of each other's differences, shared values and the desire to be a part of positive change.

"I think what makes our friendship so authentic is that we are not afraid to have the critical and long-overdue conversations around privilege, power and inequity," says Hodge, who is Black. "When you have a friend like Kenny who you know does not have a disingenuous bone in his body, you don't get offended when certain questions are asked. I've really appreciated him asking questions."

Smith, who is white, and Hodge knew of each other through work but got to know each other better when Hodge helped Smith's daughter with a speech by connecting her to Cristine Darden, one of the NASA mathematicians featured in *Hidden Figures* who was the keynote speaker for the 2019 IPS Annual Conference.

Several months later, Smith attended Opening Doors, a workshop hosted by IPS that provided training and education related to all dimensions of diversity, inclusion and equity. After attending the training, he asked to join the IPS Diversity Committee, which Hodge chaired at the time.

"I wanted to learn what I don't know," Smith says.

What he realized after the training and through his friendship with Hodge is that, when given the opportunity, he has always tried to help open doors to employment for everyone, not just those who look like him. He was being an ally, even before he knew what that word meant.

In a graduate class of five at East Tennessee State University, Smith befriended two African classmates and worked to help them find employment after graduation. Smith helped one, from Togo, get interviews with four manufacturers, but he only had one offer. The other felt defeated and left Johnson City, hoping for more opportunities elsewhere.

"It's frustrating being in factories and seeing how employers can't find employees and at the same time seeing the struggles of these great, qualified candidates," Smith says. "I realize it's difficult to hire international students, but I asked, 'How do we get more doors to open for them?'"

The events of this past year also are a topic the pair frequently discusses.

"After the death of George Floyd, I saw all the unrest and divisiveness and wanted to know how to get involved and use what I recognize as my privilege to help people in my community. Elisha was the obvious person to go to with my questions. I can ask her anything and know we can have an open and honest discussion about it," Smith says.

"I wanted to learn what I don't know."

—KENNY SMITH

One of the first things they did was read and discuss works such as "My America," a poem by Langston Hughes, and the July 5 speech from Frederick Douglass.

"I'm as patriotic as anyone, with a big American flag flying in my front yard. When I hear *The Star-Spangled Banner*, I visualize those bombs bursting over Fort McHenry, and I think about those who fought and still fight



Elisha Hodge

Elisha Hodge and Kenny Smith have forged a friendship through diversity discussions.

for our freedom. But reading those two works made me think differently about those who kneel for the national anthem. Honestly, I used to get offended, too, but Douglass' speech made me realize that, on July 4, 1776, Blacks were not freed," Smith says. "I hadn't thought about it like that before—that July 4 wasn't their independence day."

Smith and Hodge have also listened to and discussed the audio version of *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates and *How to Be an Anti-Racist* by Ibram X. Kendi. As part of an IPS Diversity Committee project, both Hodge and Smith watched the movie *Just Mercy* and participated in a group Zoom discussion.



Kenny Smith

"One of the things that I made clear to Kenny early on in this journey was that I am neither the voice of nor the authority on all things related to people who identify as Black, brown or minority. Each of us have different backgrounds and lived experiences. But, through exposure to the works of different authors from underrepresented and marginalized groups,

we could explore voices from these groups together," Hodge says.

Smith has attended meetings of a diversity and inclusion group in the Tri-Cities and joined its book club, and at Hodge's suggestion he has scheduled lunches with individuals who are members of that group and with minority leaders in the manufacturing sector in the area.

"Listening to Kenny talk, you quickly pick up on the fact that he has a sincere interest in social issues and injustice—but he doesn't just talk about these issues; he turns words into intentional action. That is rare, and that is why I value our friendship," Hodge says.

Smith says, "I value my friendship with Elisha so much, and I have to say she's opening doors for me. She helped me see the importance of really getting to know people on a deeper level by encouraging me to ask about their experiences. This journey of learning is one I'm glad to be on, especially with Elisha to consult with along the way." **T**

"I am neither the voice of nor the authority on all things related to people who identify as Black, brown or minority. Each of us have different backgrounds and lived experiences. But, through exposure to the works of different authors from underrepresented and marginalized groups, we could explore voices from these groups together."

—ELISHA HODGE



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SERVING THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED US

*UT Extension helps veterans who choose to farm as well as farmers
who continue farming after debilitating injuries*

BY PATTY McDANIEL | PHOTOS BY DAVID YATES AND LEE MADDOX

The world's inhabitants have bid 2020 good riddance and are hopeful the new year will bring more settled times. They pray for the pandemic to fade away, for a return to normalcy for their families as they continue to grapple with new workplace situations and new expectations of how to divvy up work and home life.

Then there are farmers and ranchers.



*Dameon Berry with his wife, Jamie,
and their children Kendall and Isaac with
the Action Trackchair that lets Dameon
continue to farm. PHOTO BY DAVID YATES*





A lift on Frank Beard's tractor allows him to continue his career after losing his legs in a farming accident. PHOTO BY LEE MADDUX

For generations, their commute has been a simple walk out the back door to the barn. Facing the uncertainty of floods droughts, freezes or crushing heat, in many ways they face 2020 every year as they battle nature to bring home enough income to sustain their family, land and way of life.

Many farmers are also veterans. Some farmers are combat-wounded, with visible or invisible wounds. Other farmers have been wounded while engaged in farming activities or through accidents of everyday life. Regardless, sometimes their commute is not so easy. Sometimes it involves a wheelchair or other assistive technology.

The Tennessee AgrAbility Project helps them all pursue economic independence through growing food

and fiber while also nourishing their souls.

AgrAbility is a USDA-funded program represented in Tennessee by UT Extension, Tennessee State University Cooperative Extension and Tennessee Assistive Technology Centers. For the past 26 years, the Tennessee

program has helped any farmer with a functional disability—including veteran farmers and beginning farmers—says Eileen Legault, a University of Tennessee Extension Tennessee AgrAbility specialist.

“A lot of veterans and beginning farmers did not grow up in Tennessee or on the farm, so they do not know about all the available Extension services offered or the resources within the state,” Legault says. “AgrAbility is a point of contact for helping farmers with disabilities



find the assistive technology—like tractor lifts—or other resources they need.”

Legault works throughout East Tennessee, and together with Joetta T. White (Knoxville '95), who is located in West Tennessee at the UT Extension Gibson County Office, the two serve clients throughout the state. Extension offices, available in every county in the state, are additional sources for referrals for AgrAbility.

In 2020, a coalition of Tennessee veterans formed to help themselves and other veterans who farm or who want to give the occupation a try. The Tennessee Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) was recognized as an official chapter of the national FVC, a nonprofit that helps veterans pursue careers in agriculture. Headquartered in Davis, California, FVC represents a network of more than 20,000 veterans nationwide.

“When soldiers return from overseas or a tour of duty, whether combat or noncombat, it can be difficult finding

the relationships or available resources needed to farm,” says Legault. “Some have issues that prevent them from being successful in a regular 9-to-5 job.”

The national FVC can help with small grants. Legault was awarded the first Distinguished Service Award from the Tennessee Farmer Veteran Coalition for the many hours she dedicated (along with partners, she notes) to the Tennessee FVC as it worked to become an official chapter. The Tennessee FVC already boasts more than 1,000 members.

Among them is Dameon Berry from Union County, Tennessee. Berry is a third-generation cattle farmer, a U.S. Army veteran and dog trainer. Tennessee AgrAbility helped him with assistive technology to be more independent around his farm after a motorcycle accident left him unable to walk.

“AgrAbility opened a lot of doors. I didn’t know there was so much assistance out there for farmers with



From left, Jamie Berry, son Isaac, Dameon Berry, daughter Kendall and Eileen Legault, UT Extension Tennessee AgrAbility specialist.

PHOTO BY DAVID YATES



disabilities and assistance for people without disabilities,” he says. “I would recommend everyone go to your local Ag Extension office for any type of farm assistance.”

Legault adds that AgrAbility recommended the Trackchair and Track Loader that Berry uses to assist with his mobility, then FVC enabled a \$500 discount toward the cost of the Track Loader. The Action Trackchair was generously donated by the Independence Fund.

Dameon says, “It was a game changer.” His wife, Jamie, says, “It is a lot of little things that all add up. For example, the cattle system that AgrAbility recommended was funded by the FVC Fellowship fund. I was pretty happy before when Dameon got outside in his normal wheelchair, but now he’s farming. He’s checking cattle, he’s fixing fence, he can clear out the pond. It’s given him a whole new lease on life.”

Of course, for those facing disabilities, attitude can win the day.

“It’s good to have hope, but don’t let hope cripple you. I don’t just hope something is better for me,” Dameon says. “You have to make things happen for yourself.”

Long before farmer veterans were part of Tennessee AgrAbility, organizers focused on assisting those who sustained injuries that prevented them from farming—sometimes injuries that occurred while they were working their land or livestock.

Early efforts were led by Tim Prather, UT Extension biosystems engineer and safety specialist, who worked for more than 25 years with the project prior to his retirement in December 2019.

Frank Beard, of Rutherford County, Tennessee, is one of the long-time beneficiaries of the program. In 1982, Beard was working on his tractor in his cornfield when his jeans got caught in a power implement that chewed up his legs. He didn’t give up on farming. Amidst his struggles to maintain his lifestyle, he met White with UT Extension. Through White’s

efforts, Tennessee AgrAbility helped Beard get funding to get back on the tractor with a tractor platform lift, bought with assistance from the Tennessee Division of Rehabilitation Services/Vocational Rehabilitation.

Other partners have helped Tennessee AgrAbility over the years, too. For farmer veterans, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture has partnered with the Pick Tennessee Products and the national brand FVC/Homegrown by Heroes (HBH) since 2016.

Products featuring the HBH logo are produced by military veterans. Look for the Pick TN Products/HBH logo at farmers’ markets.

Tennessee AgrAbility helps Beard continue to live by his motto, “I believe in working.” He’s still working cattle today.

“Mr. Frank is pretty special to me,” says White. “I helped install his first tractor lift in January of 2000.” The pair have kept in touch, with White helping to ensure that Beard can maintain his livelihood.

The Extension specialist explains that these human connections are what make AgrAbility special. “When they have a disability due to an accident or illness, we don’t want them to have to give up their lifestyle and something that they love.” ①

Additional content available online.



Help from AgrAbility has allowed Frank Beard to continue farming and raising cattle for decades.

PHOTO BY LEE MADDUX

A Trackchair allows Dameon Berry to continue to raise cattle. PHOTO BY DAVID YATES

A photograph of a University of Tennessee campus. In the background, there are several large, multi-story brick buildings with many windows. One building on the right has a large orange 'UT' logo on its facade. In the foreground, there is a green lawn and a paved walkway. A white metal railing runs across the middle ground.

Reflective of the Population

Determined to be a Doctor Someday Mentors Minority, Underrepresented Students



BY PEGGY REISSER
PHOTOS BY BRANDON DILL

Jasmine Jefferson is a third-year student at UT Health Science Center College of Medicine.



Christina Rosenthal

The path to medical school began in high school for Memphis native Jasmine Jefferson when she met a woman who would become her mentor, her cheerleader and, soon, her colleague in health care.

Jefferson, now a third-year student in the UT Health Science Center College of Medicine, was considering a future in medicine or engineering in high school. But Christina Rosenthal, a Memphis dentist, UTHSC alumna and founder of Determined to be a Doctor Someday (DDS), a mentoring program for high school-age minority and underrepresented students, tipped Jefferson's scales in favor of a career in medicine.

Jefferson, 24, says the DDS program exposed her to the possibility of a career in health care in a way she had not been before.

"It definitely helped provide a support system," she says. "During the program, we had a lot of different speakers come in and talk to us about their experiences in the health-care field and about becoming a doctor. And then we also had some activities that were geared toward medicine. We had one activity where we learned how to suture, which was really cool."

She recalls walking on the UTHSC campus in Memphis for the first time.

"We were actually on the campus learning about medicine from people who were prominent figures in the medical field.

And she remembers that Rosenthal, herself a product of great mentors, continued to encourage her during high school, through college at Vanderbilt University and into medical school.

"Even after the program, she has kept in touch with us," Jefferson says.

Rosenthal knows from personal experience how

important such encouragement and direction helps guide young minority and underrepresented students toward health care. She was born in North Memphis in an area that she describes as inner city and poor. She grew up in a single-parent home where money was scarce.

The mentors in her life, including the principal who encouraged her to study, family friends who helped care for her, and her church family, guided her along the way. She eventually graduated magna cum laude from the University of Memphis and went on to graduate from the UTHSC College of Dentistry in 2005. Now a wife and mother of three sons, she owns Paradigm Dental Center near the Hickory Hill area of Memphis.

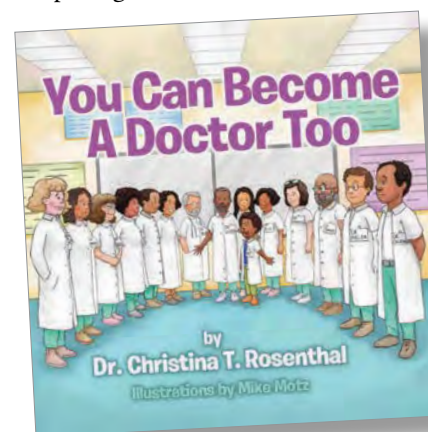
In 2011, Rosenthal, with the help of UTHSC, created DDS to introduce promising minority and underrepresented students to opportunities for careers in health care. She was participating in the American Dental Association's Institute for Diversity in Leadership and had to create a project to benefit the community in order to complete the institute. DDS, a yearly six-month educational and mentoring program for youths ages 14-18, has evolved since then, always with a focus on increasing the number of minorities in health

care. Some of Rosenthal's early participants, including Jefferson, now are making their way through professional school in various health-care fields and moving toward graduation.

"This was something that I've always wanted to do," Rosenthal says. "Once I started it, it has just been such a passion, one that I didn't realize was so embedded within me, to see other people become successful."

As the numbers of students have grown, she realizes it is time to begin moving from anecdotal measures of success to metrics in order to plot the program's impact.

"Now we're trying to really beef up our tracking and data because we have students who are becoming professionals," she says. "I never could have imagined it would have lasted this long. But I'm so grateful that the circumstances allowed me to create it and to keep it ongoing."



Christina Rosenthal wrote a book to encourage young children to become doctors.

Always mindful of the “angels” who have guided her own path, Rosenthal credits UTHSC with helping her program become established and grow. The university has supported DDS, offered locations for its annual summer symposium, experts to talk to the students and financial



Jasmine Jefferson accepts a scholarship check from Christina Rosenthal and the Determined to be a Doctor Someday program.

support. Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Operations Officer Ken Brown has been a champion of DDS. He has spoken at many symposiums that bring the students to campus, and in August during the 2020 symposium held virtually,

he gave the welcoming address on what to know when applying to professional schools. “It has been an honor and privilege to be associated with and a champion for Dr. Rosenthal and DDS,” Brown says. “Dr. Rosenthal possesses an unparalleled passion and enthusiasm for the success of the young people of our community, and UTHSC shares her commitment.”

Delta Dental of Tennessee’s President and CEO Philip Wenk (UTHSC ’77), chair of the UTHSC Advisory Board, has been a supporter of the program since he read about Rosenthal several years ago. Delta Dental of Tennessee has contributed to the program from its philanthropic arm, the Smile 180 Foundation, to help support the symposium and aid in planning of future DDS programs.

“From the second you meet Dr. Rosenthal, you are inspired. She is truly opening doors for young people and helping them find paths that enable them to pursue—and succeed in—health care-related fields,” Wenk says. “While there are a lot of programs that support STEM learning opportunities, Dr. Rosenthal shares her experience and shows high school students how they can turn their dreams into realities.”

Rosenthal is keenly focused on helping her students achieve to affect a larger issue, the low numbers of minorities in health care and the impact that has on health outcomes.

“I think the practitioners that we see should be reflective of the population,” she says. “And research

has proven that people like to go to people that mirror them, that mirror their culture, where they can feel a level of comfort. And I just think, in order to best serve Americans, we need to have doctors, including African American doctors, that can be representative of the population.”

“I think the practitioners that we see should be reflective of the population.”

—CHRISTINA ROSENTHAL

While Jefferson comes from economic and social circumstances different than Rosenthal’s, she agrees with the urgency of finding ways to help minority and underrepresented students find their way to medical school and other health-care professional schools.

“I think it (the lower numbers for minorities in health care) is probably due to the fact that there are not a lot of Black physicians to begin with,” Jefferson says. “They (students) seem not to think that they can actually go that far, like they could even reach that potential, because they don’t see that many Black faces.”

DDS, she says, opened her mind to all the possibilities available to her and connected her to people in the community she could see as role models.

And for that, she has a personal message for Rosenthal: “I would say just thank you for continuing to support me throughout all the years and believing in me.” **T**



Jasmine Jefferson



CONSEJERA.

COUNSELOR

APOYODORA.

SUPPORTER

AMIGA.

FRIEND

Sanchez provides support, community for Hispanic students

BY SARAH KNAPP | PHOTOS BY STEVEN MANTILLA

“Helping Hispanic families is something that I really enjoy just because I know they’re struggling,” Nancy Sanchez says. “I know they need help. If there is something I can do, I’m going to help them.”

Nancy Sanchez

When Nancy Sanchez (Martin '16) applied to UT Martin in 2011, Hispanic students accounted for only 1.6 percent of the total undergraduate population, and she quickly found there were very few resources available to help her succeed as a minority student.

As the daughter of Hispanic immigrants who did not go to college and, for the most part, only speak Spanish, Sanchez knew higher education would be a challenge that she and her older sister would have to face on their own. From struggling to understand her parents' tax documents for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid to not receiving the academic support she needed to find a major she was passionate about, Sanchez and her sister relied on each other to navigate challenges.

"I don't remember coming on a campus tour, honestly, when I came to UT Martin. I didn't know what questions to ask. I relied on my sister, she relied on me, and we just had to navigate everything together without the help of my parents," Sanchez explains. "Even looking at their tax documents was difficult, but we were like, 'Hey, we're going to do this. We're going to make it.' I feel like having (a bilingual counselor) would have helped tremendously and would have taken a lot of the stress away from us."

Now in her second year as the first bilingual admissions coordinator in the UT System, Sanchez has become the resource and support for prospective and current Hispanic students that she and her sister wanted as students. While she is still young in her professional career at UT Martin, the impact of Sanchez's warmth, authenticity and desire to see her students succeed has changed the collegiate experience for Hispanic and Latino students.

"She is very passionate about working with all students but just has a special heart for Hispanic students," Destin Tucker, director of undergraduate admissions, says.

Sanchez takes the time to ensure the needs of every Hispanic student on campus are met. Through creating Spanish resource guides that document available financial aid with important deadlines, acting as a translator for parents during campus tours, organizing events with the Latino/Hispanic Student Association or just being available for counseling at any hour, Sanchez has helped foster a community for Hispanic students on campus.

"Helping Hispanic families is something that I really

enjoy just because I know they're struggling," Sanchez says. "I know they need help. If there is something I can do, I'm going to help them."

When students don't know what questions they need to ask or who to ask for help, Sanchez advocates for them with every office on campus.

"Some of the students have questions that they do not want to ask just anyone because of the fear they will be criticized or looked down on," she says. "I am constantly telling them that I am here to ask the questions they need (for them). There is information out there for them and just to make sure to ask questions."

Sanchez knows how difficult it can be to overcome the challenges many minorities face and has found ways to relate to each student she mentors.

Sanchez grew up in a Hispanic community in California and, before moving to Tennessee, lived in Mexico for several months with family. Being raised in a Spanish-speaking household came with many responsibilities Sanchez had to handle at a young age, such as acting as a translator for her parents, including at doctors' appointments and business meetings.

"I believe my experiences have prepared me well because I understand their background. I have experienced very similar issues and have been a part of very similar lifestyles.

I can relate to these students through family stories, background, music, food and so much more, which leads these students to view me as not only the person with knowledge about scholarships or the admissions process but also as an ally and, most importantly, a friend," Sanchez says.

Sanchez came into this position with a love for helping students and their families understand the processes of being admitted and attending UT Martin. While she focuses on enrolling the student, she also understands how important it is to gain the parents'

**Nancy Sanchez
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trust and does so by sharing her testimony in their own language to reassure them their child will not only succeed but also be safe.

One prospective student with whom Sanchez worked was concerned about how her parents would react to the idea of her going to college. After meeting Sanchez, they were sold.

"They were relieved that they could speak with someone in Spanish and even expressed how comfortable they were to allow their daughter to come to UTM after speaking with me," Sanchez says. "They knew that there were good people here but felt better knowing that I relate to them and would be an advocate for their daughter."

Trevor Smith (Martin '11), campus visit coordinator, says, through Sanchez's guidance, the university is becoming more aware of how important it is to reach Hispanic students and provide equal opportunities for them.

"She's very passionate about helping this population of students, frankly, because Nancy has experienced it herself and has seen firsthand that minority students do not get the same opportunities that other students do," Smith says. "Having her on board has really helped all of us see that and come to understand it in a way that now we can actually combat it. We can be proactive."

As of fall 2020, Hispanic students now make up 3.5 percent of the Skyhawk population with more than

200 students on campus. These statistics also reflect Tennessee's growing Hispanic population, which accounted for 5.7 percent of Tennesseans in 2019 and is an increase from the 4.6 percent population in 2012. A study conducted by the University of Tennessee Center for Business and Economic Research in 2012 showed the Hispanic population in Tennessee was the third-fastest Hispanic growing population rate in the nation and has continued to increase through the years.

"We have a growing Hispanic population, and so I think it's the right time to have her position," Tucker said. "If we have a growing Hispanic population, we need to be ready to serve them, and that's what we're trying to do."

Before Sanchez arrived at UT Martin, Audeliz Figueroa Guzman, a junior secondary education major from Puerto Rico, says she wasn't sure the school was right for her. After working with Sanchez, she can't imagine going anywhere else.

"I was pretty alone. Really nobody speaks Spanish here—well, just a couple of people—so after I met her, my life completely changed," Guzman says.

Sanchez led Guzman to the Latino/Hispanic Student Association. "That helped me not feel alone. That helped me to know that, if I need help, I have her to help me."

"After I talk a little about my history, it is interesting to see how these students open up," Sanchez says. "Once they open up, I can see their strengths, and I can see how they can fit into different organizations or events and



Nancy Sanchez leads a tour of the UT Martin campus.


simply how I can help them while they are at UTM to get the best experience that they can receive.”

Having Sanchez advocate for her has been a source of comfort when she needs help working with administrative offices on campus or even when another student made insensitive comments toward Guzman about her citizenship. Sanchez fights for the Hispanic students on campus “with a righteous fury,” says Smith, to make sure each person feels safe and a sense of belonging.

“I feel like someone cares about me at this school. Somebody really wants me to achieve my goals here,” Guzman says. “She’s my angel here at UT Martin.”

The bilingual admissions coordinator position was created in response to the Coleman Opportunity Scholarships funded by Martha Coleman Edinger (Martin ’84), now a resident of Sarasota, Florida, but formerly of Weakley and Obion counties, to celebrate and encourage diversity on campus and offer financial support to Hispanic, Asian and African American students.

After establishing the new resources for minority students, admissions and the Office of Student Life and Multicultural Affairs created a coordinator position to recruit Hispanic students to UT Martin and continue supporting their academic and personal goals throughout their college education.

“This position, I feel like, is a huge step forward because education is important,” says Sanchez. “By having someone here who is able to communicate with Hispanic families, it shows that the university cares for these families—not only cares for the students but also their families and making sure that those students are cared for while they are here. It’s a great step.” 

**As of fall 2020,
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Nancy Sanchez works with a growing Hispanic population in Tennessee to encourage potential students to attend UT Martin.





Ben Kredich relaxes in his apartment near the UT campus. He is part of the UT FUTURE program.

Dignity of Risk

UT FUTURE Helps Students to Independence

BY JENNIFER SICKING | PHOTOS BY PATRICK MURPHY-RACEY

“To deny the right to make choices in an effort to protect the person with disabilities from risk is to diminish their human dignity.”

—ROBERT PERSKE, ADVOCATE FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES



Alyssa Sasport learns job skills working at a UT Knoxville dining hall.



Alyssa Sasport serves slices of pizza in UT Knoxville's Presidential Court, she's figuring out what she wants in life.

It's the same for Ben Kredich living in an apartment bedecked with Beatles posters.

They're discovering just what is possible through the UT FUTURE Program, and along the way they're surprising their parents and even themselves. FUTURE allows students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to attend UT Knoxville and learn to live independently.

Established in 2011 through a federal grant, the program has 21 students for the 2020-21 school year and has a goal to enroll 25 students in 2021-22.

"I think you'll see that they're some of the most engaged individuals because they have been given so many barriers and told that they can't do this, they can't do that," says UT FUTURE Director Emma Burgin. "When they're given the opportunity to do something, they usually come at it full force and with all the enthusiasm that many other college students lack."

From auditing UT Knoxville classes such as a public speaking, sign language, chorus, history, musicology and food science to attending FUTURE classes such as digital literacy, career and life planning, and life skills, the program prepares its students for life. In auditing the classes, UT FUTURE students still complete homework

and take tests, just modified for their abilities. Students participate in internships, such as working at the dining hall, UT System president's office or printing and mail office. Two years ago, FUTURE began a pilot program allowing the students to live in a residence hall.

"It's actually the beginning of me being more independent," Alyssa says.

Ben agrees.

"I'm preparing for independence and job discovery," he says.

When Ben was young, his mom, Kim Kredich, says she thought he would always live at home.

"Ben just matured, absolutely matured into this experience, through this experience, and we were very persistent in what we knew that we needed to see, which was him living independently," Kim says.

Ben and his family advocated for FUTURE students to live on campus. "As I begin my third decade, I am excited for opportunities that will help me grow into the best adult I can be. Living in a residential hall at college will teach me skills to live on my own later on," he wrote in a letter. UT Knoxville then offered to pilot the residential living program.

Each year about 80 UT Knoxville students act as mentors for FUTURE students, helping teach them to clean, cook and launder clothes, as well as being tutors, lunch and workout buddies.

"This is independent living with a safety net," says April Sasport, Alyssa's mother. "Her living on campus is more important to me than any class she can take. We're not just tossing her out into the world. This is getting her prepared."

From doing chores and working to hanging out with her friends, Alyssa says she knows she has matured through her time in FUTURE.

"Perspective-wise, it's honestly made me more reliable," she says.

That's a step in the program's overall goal, which is to make UT FUTURE students who graduate with a vocational certificate employable and help them find a job that pays at least minimum wage, but preferably \$10 per hour. In Tennessee, people with disabilities can be paid far less than their peers because of their disabilities.

"Competitive integrated work is what we say is the ultimate goal, but then I always add increased quality of life," Burgin says. "I think that getting work that you find

valuable and meaningful to you, as well as learning how to be more independent, whether it's living on campus or just navigating around, all of these things lead to increased independence and social engagement, inclusion for our students."

And the program is working. With more than 40 graduates, it has averaged an 85 percent employment rate within 90 days of graduation. The national average ranges between 19 and 35 percent.

"You have a dream for usually all your kids that they're happy, that they live a meaningful life, that they're safe, they have many positive experiences and also the dignity of risk," Kim says. "We all look to be supported and challenged. A program like UT FUTURE not only helps the actual people with disabilities live a better life but their families live a better life, and everybody else lives a better life in the university community who has gotten a chance to see that progress within our society."

Widening the scope of who can attend a university benefit more than just those invited to be a part of UT FUTURE.

"I just think the diversity that my students provide to this campus is just invaluable for the people that they interact with on a daily basis," Burgin says. "I just think it would be such a shame to not have these students here. I think that they should be on every campus because they just make us think differently, they make us see things differently." **T**



Ben Kredich with his parents UT Swim Coach Matt Kredich and Kim Kredich.

About UT FUTURE

Just as UT Knoxville students arrive on campus to learn and prepare for a job, so too do UT FUTURE students, who have intellectual and developmental disabilities.

There's a subset of that population ready to make a jump to independence, and that is who UT FUTURE targets, according to Director Emma Burgin.

"They're coming to college to be pushed," says Burgin. "In terms of their independence and what's expected of them, we have pretty high standards."

UT FUTURE students undergo a rigorous admissions process. They must graduate from high school and submit an application along with three recommendations regarding their vocational, academic and social lives. Teachers and parents fill out inventories regarding the potential students' independence level. Then the applicants interview with four different committees, including one made up of current UT FUTURE students. With 21 students during the 2020-21 academic year and a goal of 25 students for 2021-22, not all applicants are admitted.

While the UT FUTURE students audit UT Knoxville classes, an academic support specialist works with course professors to adapt syllabi for all the classes in which the UT FUTURE students enroll to make content and assignments accessible.

While UT FUTURE students can graduate with a vocational certificate after two years, they also can elect to remain up to four years. Burgin hopes in the future it will be a four-year program.

"In my mind asking them to do in two years what college students are doing in four doesn't really make sense," she says. "Hopefully, we can get the support to give them the ample amount of time that they deserve."

Students can qualify for financial aid, much like other students, through filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. In addition to Pell grants, they could receive Tennessee Promise, UT Promise and Step Up scholarships. They also receive support for two years from Vocational Rehab of Tennessee.

"I think it's really important overall to the university's diversity and inclusion mission," Burgin says of the program.

Two Pennies and a Pledge

Mike Littlejohn Issues Challenge to Graduates

BY JACKIE WISE | COURTESY PHOTOS

BETWEEN HIS SOPHOMORE AND JUNIOR YEAR, MIKE LITTLEJOHN (KNOXVILLE '73) LIVED PAYCHECK TO PAYCHECK, TRYING TO MAKE ENDS MEET THROUGH A WORK-STUDY PROGRAM.

But when a paycheck delay caused the ends not to meet, Littlejohn found himself with two pennies to live on for two weeks.

While he found help from friends during that time, Littlejohn also found inspiration that he would draw upon as an alumnus.

"I made a pledge to myself as a student that, if I ever got a chance to help a college student that might have financial difficulties like I experienced, that I wanted to do it," he says.

He has done just that through the Mike Littlejohn Scholarship Endowment. Since 2000, this endowment has helped 74 students in the Haslam College of Business fulfill their dreams of an education.



Mike Littlejohn

he was living in Pittsburgh. From there he began engaging with the local alumni chapter and has remained involved as he continues to try to give back to the university.

"It's one of those things that I have recognized, that my success in business, in terms of my career, a lot of that success can be attributed obviously to the way I was raised, having great parents, but also the fact that I have a degree from the University of Tennessee," he says.

His work with the alumni chapter in Pittsburgh allowed him to connect with more alumni than he could have imagined and also gave him the opportunity to help recruit students to the university through events at local high schools. From there, his involvement moved to the UT Alumni Association Board of Governors, a systemwide board working to engage alumni from all UT campuses.



Former Chancellor Jimmy Cheek presents the 2015 UT Knoxville Alumni Service Award to Mike Littlejohn.

Littlejohn continued to serve on the UT Development Council while remaining active with local events. He currently serves as immediate past chair of the UT Foundation Board of Directors and served as chair of that board during the 2019 and 2020 fiscal years. In addition, he was a commencement speaker for the UT Knoxville Haslam College of Business in 2011 and in 2015 received the UT Knoxville Alumni Service award.

In the immediate years following his graduation, Littlejohn remained engaged with the university through friendships and football, but as time passed, his passion for helping students reignited. He has challenged others to get involved and led through example since that personal visit back in Pittsburgh in the late 1980s.

Now he has a challenge for other graduates.

"I would challenge graduates of the University of Tennessee to think back to those days and think about things that they might be passionate about," he says. "Think about what they can do that would enrich the lives of current students and future students of the University of Tennessee." **T**



Mike Littlejohn Scholarship recipients (from left) Dadrien Barnes, Quinton Thompson, and Shelitha Ferraro with Mike Littlejohn

Littlejohn served as a senator in student government representing Melrose and Hess halls and was the vice president of the African American Student Liberation Force. Coming from Memphis, he enjoyed meeting people from different parts of the state and different countries.

"I found the University of Tennessee (Knoxville) just to be an exciting and vibrant campus, full of different people," he says as he reflects back on his time as a student.

His involvement as an alumnus started with a personal visit with a UT employee while



Mike Littlejohn and his son Karl Littlejohn (Knoxville '02) attend a UT Knoxville football game.

Calling for Philanthropy

Helping Others Find Acceptance

BY JACKIE WISE | COURTESY PHOTOS

WHEN CHAD GOLDMAN (KNOXVILLE '93) ARRIVED ON THE UT KNOXVILLE CAMPUS, HE FELT LIKE THE WORLD HAD OPENED UP FOR HIM. He had felt stifled in what he referred to as a homogeneous environment in high school and was ready to find a place he could thrive.

Goldman refers to himself as a joiner in that he joined everything. He took his schoolwork seriously and dove deep into all UT Knoxville had to offer. At the same time, underneath that spirited enthusiasm, was a young man coming to terms with his sexuality.



Chad Goldman

"This was before the internet, this was before anything," he says. "We had the phone hanging on the wall in North Carrick—that was our communication device. I didn't have any resources; I didn't have anyone to talk to. I felt like the only gay person on Earth, or in Knoxville at least."

The Pride Center didn't exist on campus at that time, but Goldman knows it would have offered fellowship and resources to help him figure things out with less turbulence.

"It's (Pride Center) not a club; it's a vital function of the university. It is a guidance

and resource center for students going through a unique experience," he says.

Students arriving on campus are coming from a variety of environments, cultures and backgrounds. Goldman saw that as a student, and it excited him to live in a diverse world. But he also knows, as those students come to Knoxville for an education, many also are coming from a deficit of acceptance and are looking for answers. Finding those answers and acceptance is a major factor to whether a student stays in school.

"All students deserve a chance to fit in and feel like they belong," he says.

Two decades after graduation, Goldman received an email from the university and made the decision to make a donation. From there, he got involved with the UT Knoxville College of Arts and Sciences and began funding an undergraduate travel-abroad scholarship. As a student, Goldman spent a year in Argentina through the study-abroad program in what he says was a transformational and eye-opening experience.

His involvement and philanthropic efforts with the university grew, and he was challenged with a goal of building a \$3 million endowment that would fund the Pride Center in perpetuity. Since that time, he has held fundraisers in Nashville; Atlanta; Washington, D.C.; and Knoxville, raising well over \$500,000.



Chad Goldman has helped to raise more than \$500,000 to support the UT Knoxville Pride Center.

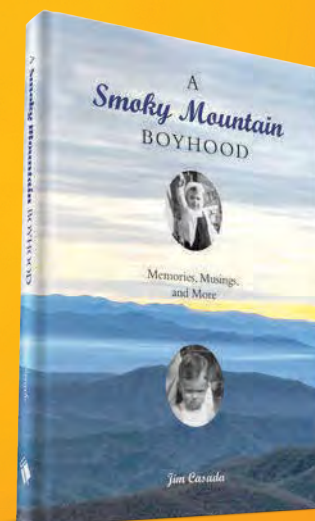
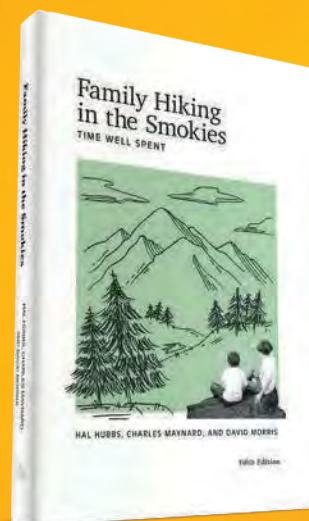
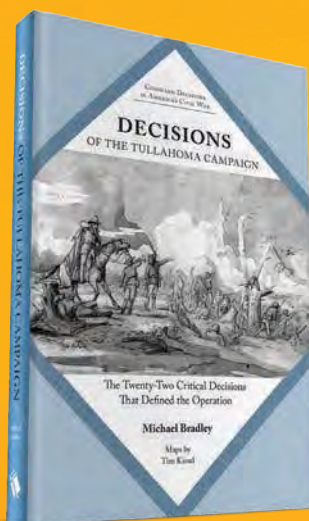
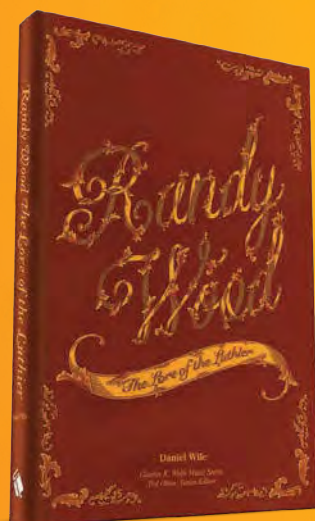
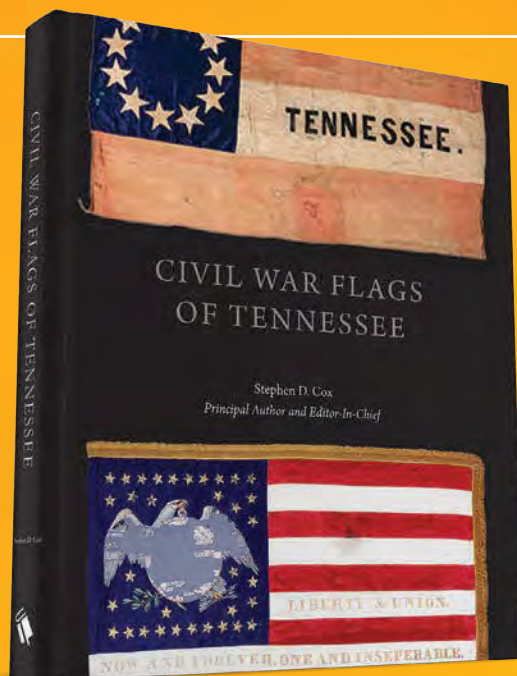
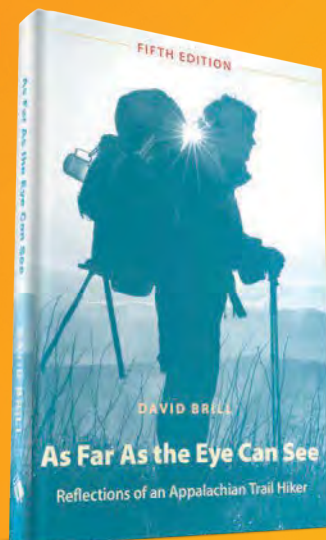
Goldman is passionate about the work being done each day at the Pride Center and the resource it provides for the UT Knoxville students. Knowing what the Pride Center would have meant for him as a student and what it will mean for future students continues to push him in fundraising efforts.

"I might have been walking through the dark, but I did have some light coming from people in front of me that were bearing the torch, and now it's my time to pick it up and shine the way for the other students coming in," he says. **T**



In 2015, a ceremony was held in the Language Resource Center to acknowledge a gift from Chad Goldman. From left, Distinguished Professor of Humanities Adrian Del Caro, Brian Pendleton, College of Arts and Sciences Dean Theresa Lee, Chad Goldman and Center Coordinator Douglas Canfield

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Some instructors, like Billy Weeks at UTC, moved classes outside on nice days. PHOTO BY ANGELA FOSTER

Record Enrollment Set

The UT Board of Trustees celebrated new enrollment records during its annual fall meeting.

Records set in the fall 2020 semester:

- Overall enrollment across the system increased 1.9 percent to an all-time high of 52,559 students.
- More than 41,100 students enrolled as undergraduates.
- More than 8,800 first-year students enrolled.
- More than 11,300 students enrolled in graduate and professional schools.

Not only are more students enrolling but UT President Randy Boyd also celebrated a record of more than 8,600 degrees conferred in 2020.

“Any time we can set a record, it’s great, but in these difficult times, it’s remarkable,” he says, while noting that college enrollment declined 16 percent across the nation.

UT Launches SMART Policy Network

UT System President Randy Boyd announced the formation of the Substance Misuse and Addiction Resource for Tennessee (SMART)

Policy Network during the fall Board of Trustees meeting. The network aims to assist Tennesseans affected by substance misuse each year and transform UT’s



UT System President Randy Boyd

approach to combating the current opioid epidemic. “Having traveled to every county several times in the past few years, I knew the opioid epidemic was a problem we needed to harness our full force and collaboration behind,” says Boyd. “I have already seen significant change from all the great work happening across the state, and I am eager to see what happens when we’re all working collaboratively.”

The group plans to provide evidence to communities and decision makers on best practices by delivering written reports, directed consultations and public forum presentations. It is a

collaborative effort involving thought leaders from multiple units across the UT System as well as the ETSU Addiction Science Center, the state judicial system, private treatment providers, the Knox Metro Drug Coalition and many others.

Spark Innovation Center Wins DOE Incubator Prize

The Spark Innovation Center at the UT Research Park at Cherokee Farm was one of 20 incubators selected by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) for a \$50,000 award as part of the Energy Program for Innovation Clusters (EPIC). The EPIC prize is the \$1 million debut effort in a two-part, \$5 million program sponsored by DOE’s Office of Technology Transitions.



The EPIC prize seeks to recognize the most innovative and impactful incubators focused on developing strong regional innovation clusters for energy-related technology and entrepreneurship.

Delphia Howze was hired as the UT System’s executive director of equity and diversity. Howze will consult and partner with UT campuses and institutes to advance efforts to identify and



remove social, financial and health disparities that impede diversity, equity and inclusion.



The Haslam family, left to right, Crissy, Bill, Dee, Jimmy, Natalie and James

Haslam Family Makes \$40 Million Gift

Continuing a pattern of transformative philanthropy to UT Knoxville, Natalie and James Haslam, Dee and Jimmy Haslam, and Crissy and Bill Haslam made a \$40 million gift to the Haslam College of Business aimed at the continued elevation of its national reputation and mission of developing future leaders. The gift will directly support the hiring of preeminent faculty, enhanced faculty research excellence through additional named professorships and summer support, programmatic initiatives to increase diversity in the college's student body, the expansion of undergraduate honors programming, and an increase in graduate student fellowships.

First Cohort of Diversity and Engagement Fellows Announced

Six faculty and staff members have been selected inaugural fellows of UT Knoxville's Division of Diversity and Engagement for the 2020–21 academic year. Fellows embody the Volunteer spirit of inclusive excellence, service

and content expertise. This cohort will support and enhance the division by focusing on unit administration; advancing diversity, equity and inclusion; and deepening university-community partnerships that enhance relationships and help solve real world issues.

First-Year Students Participate in Let's Talk: Vol to Vol

During Welcome Week 2020, first-year students at UT Knoxville participated in a new initiative called Let's Talk: Vol to Vol, a partnership between Student Success, the Student Government Association and University Housing. The campus-wide intergroup dialogue brings together students from diverse identities, communities and social perspectives for a conversation about how to engage in meaningful, respectful dialogue.

Commission for Disabilities Established

UT Knoxville has expanded support and representation for those with disabilities through the newly formed

Commission for Disabilities. The commission brings together a group of experts representing many diverse groups dedicated to representing and extending the disability work being done on campus. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 26 percent of adults in the U.S. have some type of disability, and the percentage of people living with disabilities is highest in the South. Students from the Student Government Association and Graduate Student Senate played an instrumental role in the development of the commission.

Dean Shea Kidd Houze Recognized as SEC Trailblazer



Shea Kidd Houze

Earlier this year, the Southeastern Conference (SEC) recognized 14 noteworthy African American leaders as SEC Trailblazers. Vice Chancellor and Dean of Students Shea Kidd Houze was selected for her many years of experience in higher education and her work in compassionate care and student engagement. The honorees were from varying disciplines, including student affairs, academics, enrollment and athletics.

Beetle-Mania: Project IDs New Species in Tennessee Valley



Professor Stylianos Chatzimanolis and his students spent two years in the Tennessee Valley, capturing beetles for study.

More than two years of in-the-field research followed by more than two years of in-the-lab work.

More than 20,000 different beetles captured.

More than 50 species never before found in the Tennessee Valley.

That's the work and findings of research conducted by Stylianos Chatzimanolis, Guerry professor in biology, geology and environmental science at UT Chattanooga. When all was said and done, 53 beetle species were documented that never had been recorded in the past in the valley.

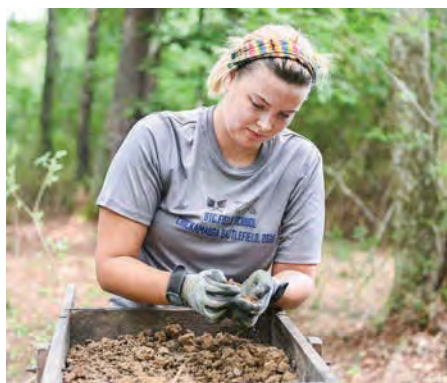
"In my mind, this is an important discovery because we still know so little about the insects that inhabit the Tennessee Valley," Chatzimanolis said.

Anthropology Students Burrow into the Past

Kingsley Kilgore dug into the Chickamauga National Military Park

outside of Chattanooga and found something far older than a 150-year-old battle relic.

The UT Chattanooga senior anthropology major found what's being called a projectile point because it's not clear whether it was the tip of a spear or an arrow or something else. Whatever the point, general consensus is that it's from the Paleo-Indian period, which ran 10,000 to 13,000 years ago.



Kinsey Kilgore sifts through dirt dug up from the Chickamauga Battlefield, searching for relics from the Civil War.

"Actually touching something that hasn't been touched in 11,000 or 12,000 years is pretty cool," Kilgore said. "Definitely sent a picture to Mom."

Over the course of several weeks, students in an anthropology class taught by Assistant Professor Morgan Smith have found, among other items, Minié balls—the bullets of the Civil War—pieces of fags, shards of 150-year-old glass, chunks of charcoal that indicate campfires and nails from wooden boxes soldiers burned for warmth.



This "projectile point," found at the Chickamauga Battlefield, is believed to be anywhere from 10,000 to 12,000 years old.



Sarah Canatsey was hired to teach business professors how to make professional videos for their classes.

Showing Teachers How to Teach Through Video

In the Gary W. Rollins College of Business, Sarah Canatsey helps teach the teachers.

Her title is instructional developer, but what it means is that she shows faculty members how to produce good videos, podcasts and PowerPoint presentations on whatever subject they're teaching. She also guides professors on how to livestream, teaching a class in real time, without seeming stodgy or uncertain or, worst of all, boring.

To help that happen, the College of Business built a small recording studio on the fourth floor of Fletcher Hall during its renovation.

"We offer a lot of online classes and didn't have a dedicated space for faculty to really come in and make good, quality videos. The idea is to give our faculty a way to make better instructional videos," says Canatsey, who has a background in studio work, multimedia programs and setting up technology for live theater performances.

UTM Breaks Ground on Latimer Engineering and Science Building

The UT Martin community, along with numerous notable Tennessee officials, gathered in front of the future site of the Latimer Engineering and Science Building to honor Bill and Carol Latimer for their \$6.5 million gift to the university. The Latimers, Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee, Lt. Gov. Randy McNally and UT President Randy Boyd were all in attendance to help break ground on the first academic building to be constructed at UT Martin in more than 40 years. The \$65 million, 120,000-square-foot, three-story STEM building is scheduled to open fall 2022. Classes in the building will focus on science, technology, engineering and math.



From left, UT Martin Provost Philip Acree Cavalier, Bill Latimer, Carol Latimer, Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee and UT President Randy Boyd break ground on the Latimer Engineering and Science Building.

UT Martin Introduces BSME

The UT Martin Department of Engineering has established a Bachelor

of Science in Mechanical Engineering degree that began accepting students in the fall 2020 semester. Previously, the department only had a Bachelor of Science in Engineering degree with a concentration in mechanical engineering.

Shadow Robinson, dean of the College of Engineering and Natural Sciences, says the new degree program is a result of the mechanical engineering industry-required qualifications students need to find careers in the field after graduating from UT Martin.



UT Martin engineering students test their aircraft's design.

UT Martin Earns Performance Funding

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission has recommended that UT Martin receive \$393,000 in additional outcomes-based formula funding in the next budget year based on established standards. The announcement was made by UT President Randy Boyd during the UT Board of Trustees fall meeting. Receiving performance funding reflects improvement in numerous areas related to recruitment and retention, especially in the marked improvement of UT Martin's six-year graduation rate. Boyd also announced



A rendering of shows UT Martin's proposed Innovation and Product Realization Facility.

that THEC has moved UT Martin's Innovation and Product Realization Facility, a \$17.5 million, 50,000-square-foot center, to the commission's Capital Projects Recommendation List.

McCloud Named Interim Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer

Mark McCloud (Martin, '92) has been named UT Martin's interim chief diversity and inclusion officer and will develop a comprehensive cultural competency



Mark McCloud

plan for faculty, staff and students to promote institutional diversity and inclusion. McCloud also will be responsible for providing oversight to the Chancellor's Cabinet concerning campus issues related to diversity, inclusion, equity and belonging, as well as partnering with the university community to implement programs, like the Multicultural Center for underrepresented student groups, to foster diversity and increase minority retention rates.

Chancellor Schwab Says UTHSC Has Stood Strong in Face of Pandemic

In his 2019-2020 State of the University Address in early November, Chancellor Steve Schwab said the UT Health Science Center is “weathering COVID in a lean but strong fashion.” Speaking via Zoom in his 11th annual State of the University Address, the chancellor said the university has “maintained our budget, maintained our workforce and expanded our mission.”



UTHSC Chancellor
Steve Schwab

He cited many successes achieved during the pandemic, including graduating all students, residents and fellows on schedule. “We have led people into the health-care workforce,” he said. “We have met all of our clinical obligations. We have put research on track and growing.” The chancellor said the Campus Master Plan continues to deliver “best-in-class facilities to make sure we, as an institution, don’t get left behind.”

Additionally, he said that, across all its missions, the university is committed to diversity and inclusion in its student body, faculty and staff. “We need a diverse campus that reflects Tennessee,” he said. “We need a health-care workforce that reflects Tennessee.”

New Dental Building at UTHSC Named for Delta Dental of Tennessee

The UT Board of Trustees approved a request from UTHSC to name the new dental building under construction on the Memphis campus the Delta Dental of Tennessee Building. During its fall meeting, which was held virtually, the board also approved naming the entire grounds of the College of Dentistry, located at 875 Union Ave., the Delta Dental of Tennessee Oral Health Complex.

The designations honor the outstanding support of Delta Dental of Tennessee and its President and Chief Executive Officer Philip Wenk (Knoxville ’73, HSC ’77). He chairs the UTHSC Advisory Board. Delta Dental of Tennessee is the largest donor to the UTHSC College of Dentistry.

Since 1997, Delta Dental of Tennessee has provided financial support to the college totaling more than \$16.5 million, including \$6.3 million for construction costs toward the more than \$45 million new building and \$1.4 million in equipment.



Philip Wenk



College of Nursing’s 2020 NightinGala Honors Nursing Profession

Alisa Haushalter, director of the Shelby County Health Department, received the COVID-19 Community Nurse Hero Award and gave the keynote address at the UTHSC College of Nursing’s fourth annual NightinGala.

The event celebrates the nursing profession and honors outstanding nurses in the Mid-South. More than 300 people viewed the Zoom event.

“This is an especially important year for nursing,” said Wendy Likes, dean of the UTHSC College of Nursing. “As 2020 has been designated the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife and as our communities continue to combat a global pandemic, we believe it is essential to celebrate the great work our nurses do this year.”

New Teaching/Learning Hub for CVM



UTIA administrators and CVM students, faculty and staff celebrate a physically distant groundbreaking for the new Teaching and Learning Center on Joe Johnson Drive.

Construction crews broke ground in

October for an extension to the UT College of Veterinary Medicine. Located on Joe Johnson Drive adjacent to the college complex, the \$10 million Teaching and Learning Center will contain the college's Clinical Skills Simulation Lab, a 130-seat central lecture hall, new teaching laboratory classrooms and informal group study areas. The center also will connect directly with Pendergrass Library, creating convenience for students and faculty. Made possible by the state of Tennessee and philanthropic gifts from John and Ann Tickle, the Teaching and Learning Center will be a state-of-the-art hub for current and prospective students. Completion of the center is targeted for spring 2022. The UT College of Veterinary Medicine is one of only 30 veterinary colleges in the U.S., and this addition will serve as one more reason for prospective veterinarians to choose Tennessee for their home and future.

College Roadshow Comes to Visit

UTIA was highlighted for a recent episode of "U.S. Farm Report"—part of its "College Roadshow" that aired in more than 150 television markets. UTIA is one of six schools featured this

fall. The segment included interviews with talented students in the Herbert College of Agriculture about their studies and future plans as well as how they're navigating academics during the pandemic. The program also includes a virtual roundtable with agricultural and resource economics faculty, and stories about food science. These stories include efforts to develop and market "Power T" cheese and the science behind the favor of Tennessee whiskey. Check out the show online at agweb.com/article/us-farm-report-road-university-tennessee.

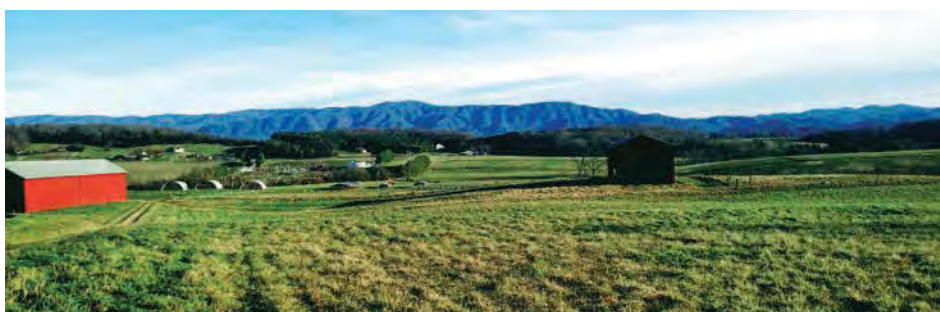
Outreach Expands with Regional Projects

Faculty with UT Extension received two U.S. Department of Agriculture grants to provide leadership and coordination to efforts to benefit regional rural

communities. Heather Sedges, associate professor of family and consumer sciences, is leading the effort to develop a Southern Region Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network to improve behavioral health by providing stress-management assistance for people in farming, ranching and other agriculture-related occupations as well as assistance for their families. The \$7.2 million effort spans 13 states and two territories. Liz Eckelkamp, the UT Extension dairy specialist, and Hal Pepper, a financial specialist with the Center for Profitable Agriculture, have received a \$6 million USDA grant to assist dairy producers in Tennessee, Kentucky and North Carolina with developing diversified income streams, including through innovative value-added products.



Herbert College of Agriculture students learn the value of on-farm creameries by working and learning at Sweetwater Valley Farm in Loudon, which is owned and operated by John Harrison (Knoxville '81). IMAGE BY TORY SALVADOR COURTESY UTIA



The AgResearch and Education Center at Greeneville is refocusing its efforts. Research is transitioning beyond tobacco to commodities of more interest to producers in the region, like forage, cattle and hemp. The name of the center has changed, too. It's now the Northeast Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center.

PHOTO BY JUSTIN MCKINNEY COURTESY UTIA

Law Enforcement Innovation Center Receives \$1.3 Million Grant

Rural law enforcement officers will see the benefits of a \$1.3 million grant awarded to the UT Law Enforcement Innovation Center (LEIC) by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. LEIC plans to use the funds to establish a rural law-enforcement training center, which will launch this fall.

"With the support from University of Tennessee and our talented team, the Law Enforcement Innovation Center has built a solid reputation across the country," says LEIC Executive Director Rick Scarbrough, who expressed appreciation for the grant. "We deliver quality, consistent and current world-class training."

The center aims to meet the training needs of rural law-enforcement agencies across the country using instructor-led and distance-based learning technologies to develop and implement training practices and modules that alleviate cost and travel burdens.

A 2018 report by the International Association of Chiefs of Police found that rural law-enforcement agencies make up 48 percent of all local law-enforcement agencies in the U.S, yet small departments lack funds for officer training and cannot afford to give officers time a way for training.

IPS Receives USDA Grants

The Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS), in collaboration with



From left, front row: UT President Randy Boyd, USDA State Director Jim Tracy, USDA Rural Development Area Director Marisol Torres, MTAS Grants and Training Specialist Chris Shults; from left, back row MTAS Executive Director Margaret Norris, MTAS Training Manager Abb Oglesby, Naifeh Center Executive Director Macel Ely, CTAS Environmental Specialist Kim Raia and MTAS Program Manager Sharon Rollins.

two fellow UT Institute for Public Service agencies, will offer two new training and technical assistance programs in 2021 with help from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

USDA Tennessee State Director Jim Tracy was in Knoxville in September to recognize MTAS for receiving a Solid Waste Management grant and a Rural Community Development Initiative grant to develop new training and technical assistance programs in 2021.

The USDA Solid Waste Management grant will allow MTAS, in conjunction with the County Technical Assistance Service, to develop a program aimed at improving pharmaceutical waste disposal systems in low-income rural Tennessee communities.

The Rural Community Development Initiative grant will allow MTAS, in conjunction with the Naifeh Center for Effective Leadership, to develop a rural community leadership program to provide a training academy and technical assistance program to low-income rural communities in the Appalachian region of Tennessee.



Language Center Recognized by Nashville Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

The Tennessee Language Center (TLC) received an award from the National Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (NAHCC) as part of its 2020 Business and Community Excellence Awards. TLC received the Bridges Leadership Service Award for its work in the Hispanic community.

During Hispanic Heritage Month, the NAHCC recognizes

professional, civic and business contributions of its members and highlights nonmembers whose involvement had a meaningful impact in the Nashville community throughout the year. Nominees are

selected from among those who have demonstrated commitment and leadership to the advancement of the organization, the Hispanic community and the city of Nashville.



Diversity: A Good Start, Not the Finish Line

By Robert Fisher

Through the window of my office in downtown Nashville, I can see an Alexander Hamilton quote etched into the façade of a government building. It reads, “The first duty of society is justice.” It is a daily reminder that our public institutions have a specific duty to the people they serve.

In these times, it calls on us to do even more.

I’ve spent the last several years exploring how public institutions can improve educational outcomes for young people. In graduate school, I studied how public universities could meaningfully support Black undergraduate women. Then I worked at a public-school district to deepen partnerships between schools and community-based organizations that provide anti-poverty services to students. Now I have the opportunity to advise the mayor of Nashville on matters of education policy and leadership.

If my work at the intersection of education policy and youth opportunity has taught me anything, it’s that diversity alone is not enough to realize justice for young people. Higher education institutions, including the University of Tennessee, have yet to fully internalize this insight.

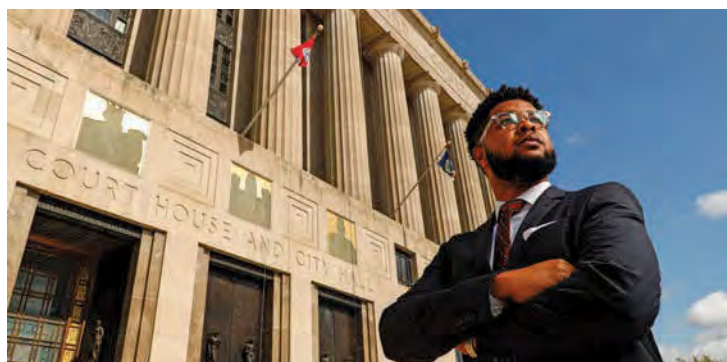
While universities fall short in pursuing justice across a range of indicators—gender, disability, immigrant status, class and more—given recent events, it seems apropos to focus on race. In the wake of police killings of unarmed Black folks and community uprisings over the last few years, we’ve seen many institutions rely on a diversity playbook of sorts: convene a task force, host town halls, draft a statement or report highlighting new initiatives, possibly identify indicators of success and maybe even hire a chief diversity office. But, so often, after all the campus conversations about race and racism have subsided, large racial disparities in student success persist, and all the reports and new hires become ends unto themselves. There are a variety of reasons this playbook comes up short, but chief among them is an overly wrought focus on diversity.

When I reflect on Hamilton’s quote, I arrive at the conclusion that universities struggle to deal with racism on their campuses because they myopically strive for *racial diversity* rather than *racial justice*. Public universities, like UT, are enmeshed

in a history of structural racism and systemic injustices that often date to their founding, and though it is difficult to accept, universities cannot solve historical inequities with diversity initiatives alone. Higher education institutions, like ours, must meet the challenges of race-based inequality with action plans rooted in systems change. Otherwise, they become complicit in the maintenance of oppressive systems, or worse yet, they exacerbate them.

Diversity and justice invite us to consider different approaches to change. Diversity may result in stand-alone programs that help students of color navigate barriers to graduation but change relatively few about how institutions actually operate. Justice, however, demands that universities make structural changes such that little to no barriers exist in the first place. This sort of change might manifest in a complete overhaul of first year experiences so that students of color have systematic and intentional access to the supports and opportunities they need to thrive, or it could mean fully redesigning teaching and learning practices so that students not only see themselves reflected in their professors but also in the texts they read and research questions they explore.

Irrespective of specific strategies, though, racial justice requires truth-telling and asks us to prioritize the voices of those who have been most marginalized in the search of that truth. That is a daunting proposition for a centuries-old institution, I know, but it is what Hamilton’s prescient call for justice demands. More importantly, it is what all UT students, faculty, staff, administrators and alumni deserve. **T**



Robert Fisher is a 2015 UT Chattanooga graduate and Rhodes Scholar. He is the senior advisor for education for Nashville Mayor John Cooper.

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