



for your FALL 2021

BENEFIT

NEWS AND INFORMATION ABOUT
YOUR UNIVERSITY BENEFITS

EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK, **UT**

IN THIS ISSUE:

UTHSC BOLD AND IMPACTFUL

UTM COON CREEK SCIENCE
CENTER OPENS

UTC EMBRACES DIVERSITY

A UNITED APPROACH TO
STUDENT SUCCESS AT UTK



UT HUMAN
RESOURCES

DEAR UT SYSTEM EMPLOYEES

welcome



BRIAN DICKENS
Chief Human Resources Officer

Salutations, colleagues! Thank you all for ensuring a thoughtful and safe return to the workplace and in-classroom instruction. It has been a process, and we are excited about the energy and buzz generated by our in-person engagements, while remaining vigilant at combating COVID-19 and its variants. Our focus continues to emphasize workplace behaviors that reinforce our mutual concern for workplace health, safety and wellness.

In this issue, we are excited to share our vast resources to support employee choice during our benefits open enrollment, our wonderful engagement during our HRO Retreat in Memphis, our new and exciting employee discount program, ways our campuses and institutes embody the Be One UT values and much more.

In August 2021, our human resources officer leadership team from across the UT System came together as One UT in a retreat to connect, re-energize, assess the past and look to the future. During our time together, we discussed our collective approach to flexibility, retention strategies and recruitment opportunities for the UT System, as the options for how people work have expanded. We evaluated steps to becoming an employer of choice, and by adding that level of employer/employee flexibility balances the needs of the organization and the employee during these tumultuous times. We grounded ourselves and our collective work around the Be One UT values to help center us as organizational leaders who are charged to lead with humanity throughout the next decade at UT.

As we gear up for this year's open enrollment at UT, we are excited to announce a few enhancements that should greatly improve your employee experience with the process. As we continue to align our efforts with the Be One UT values of being nimble and innovative, we are proud to announce the new addition of "ALEX, the virtual benefits counselor" for all UT employees. It is a year-round, interactive benefits and savings guidance platform that helps employees make smarter, wallet friendlier choices about their health, wealth, retirement and wellness benefits. This software will accelerate the UT System's HR-function transformation by shifting our highly personalized, white-glove approach to a more intuitive, user-friendly experience. ALEX will allow HR to continue its culture of caring for our people's individual needs and health, while adjusting for the new world in which we live, all while positively impacting the bottom-line.

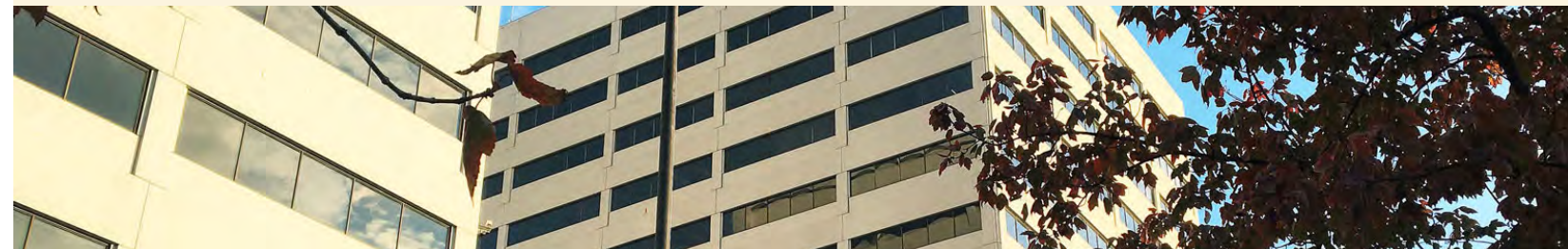
Lastly, as we continue our quest toward becoming the "employer of choice," as well establishing this as the greatest decade in the history of UT, we have added Perkspot, the Tennessee Employee Discount Program, to our portfolio of employee benefits. Please refer to the announcement on the following pages of this issue on how to sign up and reap your benefits. System HR continues to reimagine itself, and we continue to explore ways to enhance our employee value proposition and improve the overall experience for our workforce across the System. I hope you enjoy this issue of For Your Benefit.

—Brian K. Dickens

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focus
Be One UT
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EXCEL IN ALL WE DO
CONNECT SUPPORT DISCOVER



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The University of Tennessee is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/
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**UT HUMAN
RESOURCES**

OPEN ENROLLMENT

OCTOBER 1 – 15, 2021

Annual Enrollment 2021-2022

Each year, annual enrollment allows you to choose benefits or make benefit changes that will be effective on Jan. 1. The annual enrollment period for state and higher education employees is Oct. 1 – Oct. 15. Even if you don't make changes during this time, it's good to review your enrollment selections each year.

IMPORTANT FOR 2021

- **Health options** and **network options** are changing
 - You can now choose from four carrier networks for your medical care.
 - Narrow Networks (remaining the same as last year)
 - BlueCross BlueShield Network S
 - Cigna LocalPlus
 - Broad Networks (additional \$65 for employee only and employee + child(ren) tiers and \$130 for employee + spouse and employee + spouse + child(ren) tiers per month)
 - BlueCross BlueShield Network P (new 2022 network option)
 - Cigna Open Access Plus
- Health **premiums** are changing for all plan members. Premium increases depend on the tier and plan you choose:
 - State and higher education active employees in narrow networks premiums will increase \$2-\$16 per month
 - State and higher education retirees in narrow networks – premiums will increase \$2-\$32 per month



- Voluntary products premium
 - No premium increases for vision or dental DHMO (Prepaid Provider) plans.
 - Dental DPPO (Preferred Provider) monthly premiums will decrease depending on the coverage tier you choose.

State/Higher Education members: Disability premiums will be lower.

State and higher education: During annual enrollment, state employees using health savings accounts **MUST** choose their election amounts. All state and higher education employees **MUST** choose flexible spending account election amounts if they want to put money in them for 2022. Important: 2021 into 2022, FSA and limited purpose FSA carryover rules are different.

- 2021 Vendor (insurance Carrier) Updates:
 - DPPO plan carrier will change to Delta Dental.
 - All other insurance carriers remain the same in 2022.

Your health, dental and vision choices are effective Jan. 1 until Dec. 31, 2022, subject to eligibility. After annual enrollment ends, you won't be able to change plans or networks for 2022. You may be able to make changes allowed by the plan if you have a qualifying event. A provider or hospital leaving a network is not a qualifying event.

BENEFIT IMPROVEMENTS

Meet ALEX, the virtual benefits counselor!

The University of Tennessee System is excited to offer ALEX, a service that provides personalized guidance and education during annual enrollment and ongoing engagement throughout the year to make benefits decisions as easy and confusion-free as possible.

Meet
alex®

ALEX is available anytime through a smartphone, tablet or computer. Talk to ALEX to find out if you're saving enough to cover your medical, dental and vision expenses—and see how much you could save on taxes by possibly changing plans.

Talk to ALEX to learn about your benefits and make the best choices for you and your family.



Exclusive Discounts for UT Employees

As a member of Partners for Health, UT employees qualify to take advantage of exclusive discounts from more than 900 merchants. We hope you enjoy the cost-saving and special benefit offerings that merchants have made available exclusively for UT employees.



Here's how it works:

- Visit https://stateoftennessee.formstack.com/forms/member_discount
- Choose your plan – Higher Education
- Choose your agency – University of TN
- Input your employee email address
- The Employee Discount Program portal will be sent to your email with instructions for creating your PerkSpot account **(if you do not receive an email right away, please check your spam/junk folder – please allow 24 hours to receive this email)**

Once logged into PerkSpot, browsing all discount offerings will be available. You will be able to select from more than 25 savings categories, including tickets and entertainment, apparel, food, travel and more.

Please contact PerkSpot at 866-606-6057 if you have any questions.



Across the University of Tennessee System, feedback regarding programs and practices is critical to making UT a great place to work.

McLean & Company, an independent human resources research firm, administered the 2021 Employee Engagement survey this fall to gather insights and feedback regarding the overall work environment at UT.


The feedback provided on what works well and what needs improvement helps shape the programs and initiatives that have the potential to significantly improve all UT campuses and institutes. This full employee engagement survey will help establish an engagement baseline and will be continuously useful as UT strives to reach its greatest decade in history as proposed by UT President Randy Boyd.

While an engagement baseline, the survey will gather feelings of energy and purpose, benefits, diversity, equity and inclusion, satisfaction, employee empowerment, culture, learning and development, work-

life balance and more. The results will be used by the UT Board of Trustees, System Human Resources and additional UT entities to steer employee benefits and office culture decisions going forward.

To ensure timely and accurate engagement monitoring, the one-question, quarterly Employee Experience Monitor (EXM) survey will return to employee inboxes this winter. The EXM survey asks one question, “How likely are you to recommend the University of Tennessee to a qualified friend or family member as a good place to work?” Distributing the EXM survey quarterly enables frequent feedback, allowing for a more agile approach to making adjustments according to feedback.

As a third-party provider, McLean & Company ensures the confidentiality of responses and shares aggregate results of the survey with UT.

Contact McLean & Company directly at survey@mcleanco.com for questions concerning the full engagement survey. 



Above: Left to right: U.S. Congressman Tim Burchett; TVA President and CEO Jeff Lyash, Knox County Schools Superintendent Bob Thomas, Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs, UT System President Randy Boyd.

UT Tower is Underway


The University of Tennessee System will soon find a new home in downtown Knoxville, overlooking the historic Market Square. UT Tower, previously known as TVA East Tower, will unite and connect about 400 UT System employees across divisions, offices and departments into collaborative workspaces.

“I’m excited about the opportunity to bring our teams together in a space that embodies who we are and how we work. Our move to the new UT Tower on the northeast end of Market Square truly is an opportunity for us to create greater collaboration, synergy, efficiency and sense of community,” said UT System President Randy Boyd.

UT has partnered with Baskin Strategies and BarberMcMurry Architects to design the space to increase efficiency and collaboration. The state-of-the-art workspaces have been intentionally tailored to fit departmental needs and functions. All workspaces will also feature an adjustable standing desk.

Moving to the UT Tower will also present new opportunities to partner with TVA, Knox County Schools, the Great Schools Partnership, the City of Knoxville, Knox County government, Market Square merchants, the Knoxville Chamber and area businesses. Knox County Schools will also be housed in the tower.

This move has been in process for more than two years, allowing time for multiple necessary approvals and planning to take place. The move was first unanimously approved by the UT Board of Trustees in November 2019, followed by approval from the state building commission in June 2020.

Andy Holt Tower, the former location of many UT System employees, will undergo extensive renovations for other uses in the future. 



Human Resources Leaders Come Together as One UT

By Peggy Reisser

Brian Dickens joined the University of Tennessee System as the chief human resources officer in December 2019, just before the COVID-19 pandemic gripped the world and changed the workplace possibly forever.

Almost overnight, organizations, including those in the UT System, went from in-person to remote or a hybrid of the two. A year and a half later, it is anybody's guess how organizations will eventually emerge. However, one thing is for certain, human resources departments will continue to manage the workplace, map its future and keep everyone and everything operational as that evolves.

Dickens and the nine human resources officers from each campus and institute in the UT System met recently in Memphis on the University of Tennessee Health Science Center's campus for a retreat that was the first under his tenure. The purpose was to connect, reenergize each other, assess the past and look to the future.

"We have really been operating as crisis managers," Dickens said of this pandemic period. "We have been driving so fast over the past two years, that we have not taken the time as HR leaders across the system to simply pause and recharge, read and develop ourselves and get aligned as to the future of work, including alternative work

arrangement schedules, post-pandemic employment strategies, all of those kinds of things that are upon us in HR roles to help our respective campuses and institutes navigate."

"In many ways, we can never go back to the way we were pre-pandemic," UT System President Randy Boyd said. "Instead, we are moving ahead in a profoundly better way. How our team has responded and overcome is inspiring, and how our team continues to rise to the challenge will be how we will be defined forever. Because of this, not in spite of it, is why this will still be the greatest decade in the history of the University of Tennessee."

Chandra Alston, UTHSC associate vice chancellor for human resources, said while the HR office continually prepares for and responds to changes in the work environment, "No challenge has been greater than the workplace disruptions brought on by COVID-19 in 2020. HR led the efforts with policy and practice adjustments, tracking outbreaks, managing leave and supporting remote work strategies." Alston had volunteered to host a retreat in Memphis at UTHSC in 2020, but that had to be postponed because of COVID-19.

"HR offices often work behind the scenes as the backbone of an organization," she said. "The responsibilities are often essential for a university or institute to operate effectively, and they're at the front lines of some core operational functions—from staffing and recruiting to ensuring that the needs of existing employees are capably met and more."

In light of the changing workplace, Dickens said the HR leaders discussed a framework that provides

flexibility, retention strategies and recruitment opportunities for the UT System, as the options of choice for how people work have expanded.

"What we really talked about in general was how do we become an employer of choice and add that level of employer/employee flexibility that really balances the needs of both the organization and the employee during these really tumultuous times," he said. "This is a changing, dynamic workforce that's evolving every day as we speak, but what we do know is that the old model doesn't work."

These discussions support Boyd's objective to make UT the workplace of choice for Tennesseans, Dickens said.

"How do we make this the greatest decade in the history of UT right across our system, and then, how do we really support, engage and reimagine HR service delivery, so it is viewed as value-added, as opposed to just traditional notions of transactional function," he said. "In order for us to be perceived as a great place to work, as an employer of choice, we've got to care about our people, and doing that means taking the time to be abreast of current trends, to stay relevant and to stay responsive. And so, I think, that's what these retreats offer us the opportunity to do, and to really share and determine best practice with shared visions and ways forward."

The group focused on Boyd's **"Be One UT"** initiative.

"Values help center us as an organization and establishing a clear set of values will help us build our culture, and in turn, that culture will help us build the greatest decade in UT history—together," Boyd said.


"A lot of work is being done to create and sustain a 'Be One UT' culture, where everyone can make a contribution, where every voice can be heard, and everyone feels like they belong," Alston said.

"This retreat is representative of what it means to be a system in the state of Tennessee," Dickens said. "It's not just that we have a flagship, but it is our way of also celebrating and engaging that uniqueness, the niche characteristics of each of our campuses, the uniqueness of the populations that we all serve differently, as well as our outreach and the institutional impact that we have across the state."

The retreat also examined how HR can partner with campus diversity officers across the system to advance discussions and reimagine the approach to diversity and inclusion and engagement.

"We know that it permeates everything we do from onboarding, to recruiting, to job advertisement, performance management, compensation. It is so layered, it's got to be embedded into the very fabric of what we do to give all employees a sense of belonging, make room for various diverse thought leadership, and emphasize that diversity goes well beyond, race and ethnicity. HR is responsible for really pushing that message forward throughout the system."

In addition to Dickens and Alston, HR Officers attending were: Patricia Burks-Jelks, UT Space Institute; Doug Bohner, UT Institute of Agriculture; Carol Houser, UT Foundation; Jamie Hlubb, UT Southern; Laure Pou, UT Chattanooga; Tomi Rogers, UT Institute for Public Service; Mary Lucal, UT Knoxville; Michael Washington, UT Martin.

"As HROs, we set the tone for collaboration, integration and inclusion," Alston said. "Our responsibility is to demonstrate being 'One UT'. We take that seriously and are starting with our own statewide team to strengthen trust, increase collaboration, decrease competition, and demonstrate inclusion. At the UT Health Science Center, we want to continue to support the campus mission, while overlapping the 'Be One UT' values to enhance our outcomes." 

"A lot of work is being done to create and sustain a 'Be One UT' culture, where everyone can make a contribution, where every voice can be heard, and everyone feels like they belong,"

—CHANDRA ALSTON



A United Approach to Student Success

KNOXVILLE – The University of Tennessee, Knoxville’s Division of Student Success is working to ensure every incoming first-year student gets connected to personalized support the moment they arrive on campus. Assigned prior to the start of classes, each student is paired with a Vol Success Team consisting of an academic coach, academic advisor and One Stop counselor.

Academic coaches help students maximize their strengths and develop semester goals, which support a student’s academic path and personal well-being. Academic advisors provide professional advising and help students explore majors and careers that best suit their interests. One Stop counselors provide information about financial aid, important deadlines and enrollment processes.



This collaboration across divisions connects students to resources that are vital to their successes inside and outside of the classroom. By collaborating internally, UT creates a team atmosphere that better supports students through their transitional year. Each student’s Vol Success Team travels with them throughout their journey at UT to help them set and reach their academic, personal and professional goals.

Students’ feedback expressed that their engagement with their Vol Success Teams lowered stress, increased sense of belonging and strengthened their confidence in academic success.

Student success expands beyond academic excellence and Vol Success Teams are one of the many ways the Knoxville campus demonstrates Be One values like **staying united and connected**. Not only do teams help students capitalize on their strengths, but the structure also encourages staff to think collaboratively and creatively about how to provide the best, positive Volunteer experience. **UT**

BOLD AND IMPACTFUL UT Martin Coon Creek Science Center



A ribbon-cutting ceremony April 30 officially announced the newly acquired UT Martin Coon Creek Science Center in McNairy County. Pictured are (l to r) Dr. Charley Deal, vice chancellor, UT Martin University Advancement; Erica Bell, director, Office of Regional Centers and Online Programs; Larry Smith, mayor, McNairy County; Dr. Todd Winters, dean, College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences; Alan Youngerman, director, UT Martin McNairy County Center/Selmer; Randy Boyd, president, the University of Tennessee; Dr. Michael Gibson, professor of geology and director, UT Martin Coon Creek Science Center; Dr. Keith Carver, chancellor, UT Martin; John Smith, mayor, Selmer; Rep. Ron Gant (R-94th District); and Kara Hill, city administrator, Adamsville.

MARTIN – The UT Martin Coon Creek Science Center, located in rural McNairy County, is UT Martin’s newest resource for hands-on education and opportunities for student and faculty research, as well as the latest example of UT Martin’s commitment to providing **bold and impactful** experiences for all.

The center’s 240 acres are located on land that was part of the Gulf of Mexico 72 million years ago, when earth’s sea level was the highest in its history. As a result, fossils of more than 700 species of invertebrates and shells have been preserved at the center, making Coon Creek one of the most important fossil sites in North America. Fossils can be viewed and excavated at the museum, which also features telescopes for astronomical observations, field labs and an on-site weather station. These resources allow visitors to build a wealth of knowledge in multiple subjects.

The center promotes learning for all ages, allowing anyone from children to teachers to paleontology

experts to learn something new. The UT Martin Coon Creek Science Center has a variety of programs suitable for different ages and levels of experience, such as children’s summer camps, college courses with the UT Martin McNairy County Center/Selmer, and educator-training courses. A variety of options for student and faculty research are also offered, which can provide experiential learning and new discoveries.

Coon Creek also builds relationships with West Tennessee organizations. The center plans to collaborate with local 4-H programs and will host on-site summer camps by using the center’s bunk spaces and mess hall. The center has also been used as a venue for local class field trips, allowing participants to explore concepts they learn in class. Volunteer internships are also available.

By providing educational opportunities for visitors, the UT Martin Coon Creek Science Center helps participants build an interest in geology as well as a love of learning to last an entire lifetime. **UT**

EMBRACE DIVERSITY: UTC



Stacy Lightfoot

CHATTANOOGA – Embracing diversity at UT Chattanooga has a new leader in Stacy Lightfoot, and she has a plan to hit the ground running. A 100-day plan, that is.

On July 1, Lightfoot joined UT Chattanooga as the institution's first vice chancellor for diversity and engagement. She's put together what she calls a roadmap for learning and leading during her first few months in the new role. Her findings will serve as a guide for a long-term vision and strategic direction.

And it all starts with networking on campus, putting together names and faces.

"To me, relationship building on campus is critical to the success of this work. One of the first things I'll be doing is meeting the people of UTC and getting to know the key stakeholders, the students and what people are working on," Lightfoot said. "It's genuinely about hearing and listening to all the excellent work that departments are doing or want to do and finding ways to support that."

Lightfoot, the first woman of color to hold a cabinet-level position at UTC, said she doesn't want people to think of diversity and engagement as a department.

"I want people to think about diversity and engagement as the culture and a mindset that UTC can embrace and embed into the fabric of the institution," she said. "The success of this work should not rest on one person; it will be a collective effort and the collective energy of supporters in and outside of UT."

Along with holding introductory meetings and putting together a staff, other vital components of her early days on campus include gaining a deeper understanding of UTC data and working with senior leadership on the new strategic plan that's about to launch.

"Committed faculty, staff and leadership have been working on UTC's new strategic plan. It is imperative that the institution's leadership stay committed and actively involved in the implementation of the strategic plan with an intentional focus on achieving the diversity, equity and inclusion metrics and outcomes that have been set," Lightfoot said. "As vice chancellor for diversity and engagement, I plan to lift up this work daily and support campus leaders and students in meaningful ways." **UT**

Excel in All We Do: IPS Commits to Continuous Improvement, Excellence

By Susan Robertson, IPS

From collecting performance measures to surveying customers to adopting the Tennessee Center for Performance Excellence's Baldrige quality philosophy, the Institute for Public Service (IPS) has a history of reflecting the Be One UT value of **Excel in all we do**.

For more than 20 years, IPS has collected data from each of its agencies to measure contacts, requests for assistance, training participants and economic impact. That data feeds into the overall university performance measures and is used by IPS to help measure its outreach success in Tennessee. Even before data collection began, IPS created a customer satisfaction survey that is distributed to its agencies' customers every other year. The survey polls customers on such topics as the quality of the service they received from the IPS agency, how responsive the agency was in getting back to the customer after the initial request and the knowledge and ability of the staff member who assisted them.

For the first time in its history, IPS created a position to measure, analyze and review data to help the institute with its continuous improvement. Macel Ely, who previously served as executive director of the Naifeh Center for Effective Leadership, was selected in July to serve as the director of organizational improvement.

"Striving for organizational excellence is an ongoing passion of those who work at IPS. We recognize that merely collecting performance data is not enough," Ely said. "That data must be leveraged to support our organization in making important decisions, as well as used in telling our organization's story to customers and stakeholders. I am excited for this new opportunity to tell the IPS story and to continue the IPS legacy, which seeks to always excel and improve upon the essential services we provide to Tennesseans."

In the last decade, IPS and its agencies have periodically submitted applications through the Tennessee Center for Performance Excellence (TNCPE). TNCPE is an organization that uses the Baldrige Excellence framework, a guide to performance management, assessment and excellence, to strengthen the state's economic and organizational health. Applicants complete a self-assessment in seeking one of the four award levels. In 2017, IPS received the Commitment Award, and in 2020 the Center for Industrial Services also received the Commitment Award. Other IPS agencies have received Interest Awards in the past, and all of the agencies plan to continue to submit applications in the next couple of years. **UT**

UTSI Makes Bold and Impactful Addition

TULLAHOMA – The University of Tennessee Space Institute (UTSI) and Motlow State Community College signed a partnership in June that brings a mechatronics degree to Tullahoma with two classes this fall and a plan to offer the full mechatronics associate degree at UTSI by Fall 2022.

Motlow is a national leader in development of a two-year mechatronics degree. Mechatronics—a blend of mechanical, electrical, fluid power, computer and automation technology—is a high-demand and high-wage career field that is helping transform the local economy, and through this partnership, Motlow’s mechatronics associate degree is now available locally to those in the Tullahoma area.

UTSI Interim Executive Director James Simonton and Motlow President Michael Torrence began discussing the new partnership in the fall of 2019. By Spring 2020, UTSI proposed a location for a mechatronics lab at the UTSI Research Park in Tullahoma.

“Situating the Mechatronics Lab in UTSI Research Park offers an excellent environment for student engagement and learning, and is a feather in the cap for Franklin County and the state of Tennessee,” said Simonton.

Students can begin their associate degree in mechatronics through Motlow at the UTSI site. Completing an associate degree can move graduates directly into high-demand, high wage jobs, and Motlow has a greater than 95 percent job placement rate for its mechatronics program.

Students can also choose to continue their education through Motlow’s agreements with Tennessee State University, Middle Tennessee State University and the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

Graduates will be available to local companies struggling to fill much-needed technical jobs. It expands the opportunity for those wanting to obtain skills by putting a training facility close to home. [UT](#)



Motlow President Dr. Michael Torrence, Keith Hamilton, retired corporate manager of Bridgestone North America, and UTSI Interim Executive Director James Simonton ink a deal that will bring a mechatronics degree to Tullahoma.

BOLD AND IMPACTFUL

Shelby County Relative Caregiver Program Continues Decades of Service to the Community

By Amber Carter

MEMPHIS – For 20 years, the Shelby County Relative Caregiver Program (RCP) at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center has provided



RCP Staff at the Hearts of Gold event

bold and impactful support and services to children who are being cared for by a grandmother, aunt, uncle or other extended family members. While the pandemic has changed how each day looks for the program, it has not prevented team members from prioritizing the needs of the children and families it serves.

This year, 151 families have been assisted through the RCP. Team members provide services, including child and teen mentoring programs, caregiver support groups and community resource assistance.

“I am so thankful for the staff and community partners who stepped in and assisted us as we helped families to maintain daily living,” said Teresa English, program administrator for the Relative Caregiver Program. “Through unemployment, death and all the aftereffects of COVID, our families were able to persevere with assistance and support. It is a blessing to be able to give hope to our families, as we continue to adjust to the new normal.”

Events for caregivers and children are hosted throughout the year.

The Hearts of Gold appreciation event for caregivers on March 5 was themed “Drive Thru Basket of Love.” Adhering to social distancing guidelines and wearing masks, team members passed out baskets filled with hygiene items and household items, other gifts and a case of water to caregivers who stayed in their cars.

RCP children also participated in a virtual cooking class through the Floating Kitchen 901, a program of Couture Cares, a nonprofit agency that focuses on the needs of children in Memphis.

During the Zoom class, the children learned how to cook a chicken pot pie from scratch.



Ashley Basquez, RCP client, with her token of appreciation

Even with all the program has achieved, English praises the caregivers. “They are the real heroes who keep showing up no matter how hard life gets,” she said. “Not even COVID-19 can stop that.”

The Shelby County Relative Caregiver Program, funded by the Tennessee Department of Children Services, operates under the Center on Developmental Disabilities in the College of Medicine at UTHSC. [UT](#)

UTIA PROMOTES BE ONE UT VALUES

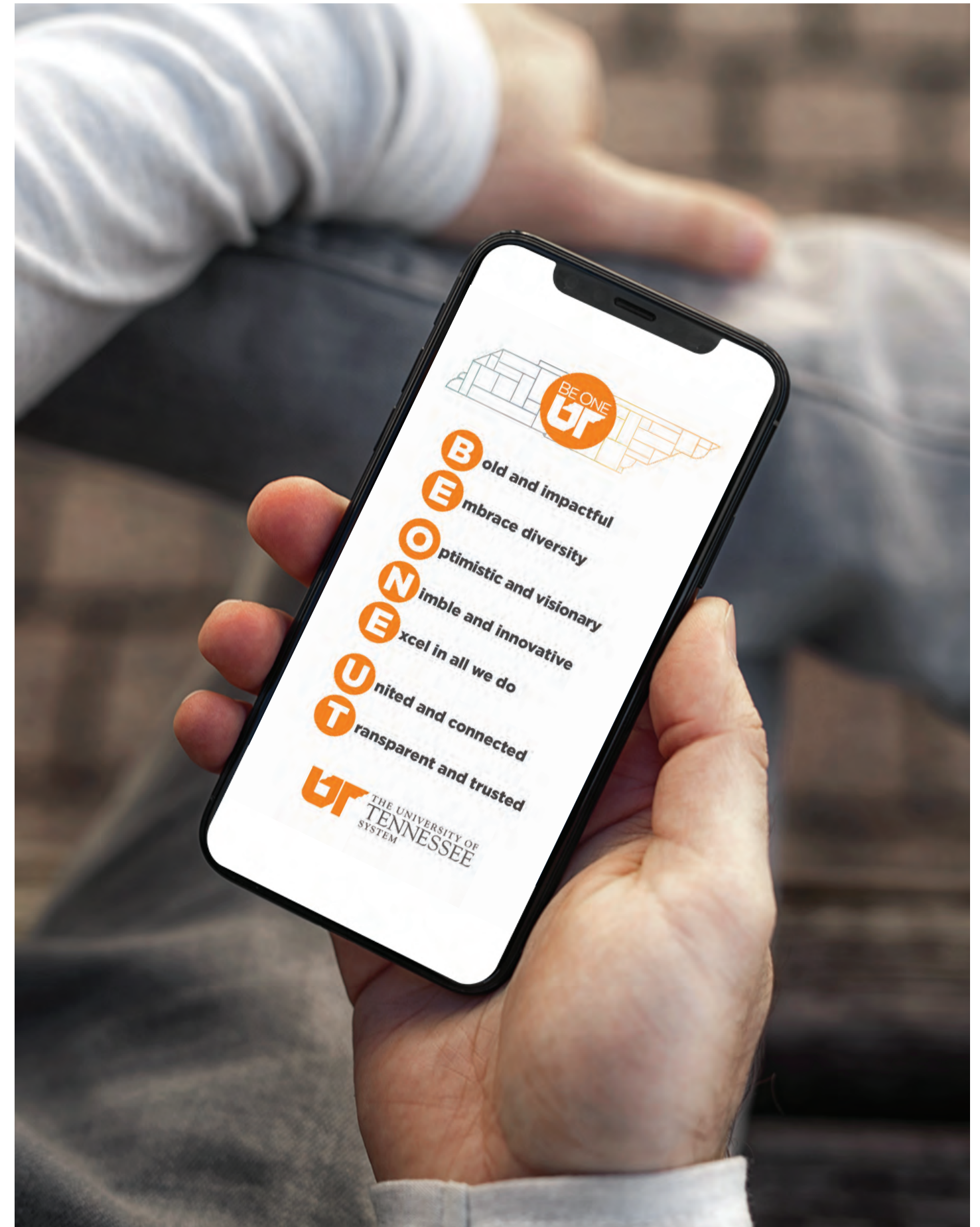
What is the one item almost everyone carries with them daily and, according to reviews.org, checks at least 262 times per day on average? If you guessed a cell phone, you are correct! Cell phones are part of our daily lives, serving as a connection to work, family and play, and just a few taps on these handheld supercomputers can create global connections. At the UT Institute of Agriculture (UTIA), cell phones also mean greater productivity for many faculty members and staff whose responsibilities include field work or substantial time spent in the outdoors.

What better vehicle to share the Be One UT values than a cell phone? This information served as a catalyst for the UTIA Marketing and Communications team in developing its internal campaign for sharing these values with faculty

and staff statewide. The team produced a series of mobile device screen backgrounds with the Be One UT values prominently displayed. These handy backgrounds can be downloaded to a mobile device from the UTIA website with versions available for both cell phones and tablets.

During one of the Fireside Chats hosted by then-Senior Vice President/Senior Vice Chancellor Tim Cross, the special guest was UT President Randy Boyd. Boyd shared the System's new values, and the new Be One UT backgrounds were revealed to him as well. Boyd was extremely excited and his first question was "Where can a guy get those?" Needless to say, he immediately received a link to the downloadable backgrounds! 

If you would like to download these backgrounds onto your devices, please visit the UTIA Brand site at utiabrand.tennessee.edu/be-one-ut-backgrounds.



WELCOME, UT SOUTHERN!

PULASKI – Perhaps the biggest step toward bold and impactful in recent UT history is the addition of the University of Tennessee Southern (UTS).

UTS joined the UT System officially on July 1 and became the first new UT campus in more than

50 years. Located in Pulaski, Tennessee, UTS now provides the only public four-year institution of higher education between Chattanooga and Memphis along Tennessee’s southern border and serves a southern middle Tennessee region of 13 counties near the Alabama border.



FLAME THE FIREHAWK

Joining the University of Tennessee System allowed UTS leaders to reimagine its mascot and athletic colors. After hosting focus groups to listen to students, faculty, alumni and community members, university leadership opted to add orange to its color palate of red and black. It also embraced a new mascot – Flame the Firehawk.

With fire in its eye and thunder in its wings, Flame the Firehawk will lead the way as the new school’s mascot. The mythical creature represents the fifth mascot for the university in its 150-year history. Knoxville-based illustrator Danny Wilson developed the concept and logo for the Firehawks, which will represent the university’s 20 teams. Uniforms were debuted in late August during welcome week festivities.

“I am excited about the new feel of UT Southern athletics, and starting out with a new mascot will bring excitement to the entire campus,” Brandie Paul, athletic director, said. “Flame the Firehawk will be a sure ‘fire’ hit.”



BY THE NUMBERS

200 Employees

800 Students

**More than 38 areas
of study**



Giles County, Tennessee



MARK LA BRANCHE – CHANCELLOR

Mark La Branche serves as the first chancellor for UT Southern, after being appointed by the UT Board of Trustees. La Branche has served as president of Martin Methodist College since July 1, 2017. Prior to joining Martin Methodist College, La Branche served as the president of Louisburg College in North Carolina where he oversaw the school’s 22 percent increase in enrollment, 58 percent increase in graduates and a five-year, \$18 million fund-raising campaign that exceeded its goals by 20 percent. La Branche has also previously served as senior vice president of external affairs at Huntingdon College in Montgomery, Alabama.



Mark La Branche

“Chancellor La Branche has a unique understanding of the opportunities that exist in the southern Middle Tennessee region,” Boyd said. “His exceptional leadership at the helm of Martin Methodist will be an asset in providing even more access to higher education in the region as he leads UT Southern.” **UT**



Left to right, Tennessee Speaker of the House Cameron Sexton, UT Southern Chancellor Mark La Branche, UT System President Randy Boyd, Gov. Bill Lee, Giles County Executive Melissa Greene, and Pulaski Mayor Pat Ford celebrate Martin Methodist College becoming UT Southern.

PRESIDENT'S AWARDS



President Boyd stands with four employees recognized during the summer Board of Trustees meeting.

University of Tennessee President Randy Boyd recognized six employees from across the UT System during the summer Board of Trustees meeting in Memphis.

The President's Awards were established in 2016 to annually consider the exceptional achievements of employees across the UT System in the areas of the University's three-part mission to educate, discover and connect as well as to acknowledge outstanding contributions in the areas of support and diversity. The awards spotlight success and inspire excellence.

"It is a privilege to work alongside these inspiring individuals who intentionally lead in our efforts to serve the people of Tennessee," Boyd said.

"They represent our best-in-class thinking and strategic work across our great state and remain an essential part of building the greatest decade in UT history."

President's Awards are the highest honor a UT employee can receive from the University. Honorees are selected each year from a system-wide pool of candidates nominated by campus and institute leaders. Winners receive commemorative plaques and \$3,000.

This year's winners represent UT Martin, UT Health Science Center, UT Chattanooga and UT System administration. Discover more about each winner and their contributions to the University, the state of Tennessee and the world below.

EDUCATE HONOREE: Ray Witmer



Ray Witmer, associate professor of engineering, has made a lasting impact on the UT Martin Department of Engineering, as well as countless students and staff members. As a civil engineer, Witmer's real-world experiences have benefitted the department in numerous ways. He created courses not offered at many other schools to provide his students state-of-the-art knowledge and experiences. He constantly modifies and updates his courses to ensure his students are getting lessons they can apply later to larger challenges. He focuses his recruitment efforts in middle schools and high schools across the region. One of his favorite aspects of his position is getting to visit local schools to show students demonstrations of what a career in STEM can offer. As a result of his efforts, the UT Martin engineering program has seen a tremendous increase in students studying STEM. In addition to his educational endeavors, Witmer assisted in the design of the Latimer Engineering and Science Building, the first academic building to be constructed at UT Martin in more than 40 years.

EDUCATE Nominees

- **Bradley Boucher**, professor of clinical pharmacy and translational science/associate dean for strategic initiatives, College of Pharmacy, UT Health Science Center
- **Johanna Owenby**, training consultant, Municipal Technical Advisory Service, Institute for Public Service
- **Han Park**, associate professor, Department of Chemistry, UT Chattanooga
- **John Sorochan**, distinguished professor, Department of Plant Sciences, UT Institute of Agriculture
- **Gregory Stuart**, director of clinical training, Clinical Psychology Graduate Program, Psychology, UT Knoxville

DISCOVER HONOREE: Colleen Jonsson



Colleen Jonsson is a UT Health Science Center Van Vleet Chair of Excellence in Virology, director of the Regional Biocontainment Laboratory director of the Institute for the Study of Host-Pathogen Systems and professor in the Department of Microbiology, Immunology and Biochemistry. After receiving her Ph.D. in biochemistry at Purdue University, Jonsson completed a postdoctoral fellowship in biochemistry-virology at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. In 2017, she transitioned from Beaman Distinguished Professor of Microbiology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, to her current position at the UT Health Science Center. Jonsson is a world-renowned expert in infectious diseases with more than 120 peer-reviewed publications, 19 invited book chapters and review articles and six patents, most of which are for novel anti-viral agents. Jonsson has continuously been funded as a principal investigator (PI) on multiple simultaneous federal grants for more than 25 years, and currently, is the PI of a five-year National Institutes of Health Center of Excellence grant of more than \$21 million. The NIH center is developing medical countermeasures against multiple pathogens that will enable a rapid response capability to an outbreak or an intentional exposure scenario. When the COVID-19 pandemic began, Jonsson immediately pivoted to studying the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, adopting an all-hands-on-deck approach.

DISCOVER Nominees

- **Mina Sartipi**, professor, Department of Computer Science, UT Chattanooga
- **Frank Loeffler**, Governor's Chair for Microbiology & Civil and Environmental Engineering, UT Knoxville
- **Rachna Tewari**, associate professor of agricultural economics, Department of Agriculture, Geosciences and Natural Resources, UT Martin
- **John Schmisser**, H.H. Arnold Chair and B.H. Goethert Professor, Department of Mechanical, Aerospace, and Biomedical Engineering, UT Space Institute

CONNECT HONOREE: Dr. Altha Stewart

Altha Stewart is the UT Health Science Center senior associate dean for community health engagement, associate professor and director of the division of social and community psychiatry and director of the Center for Health in Justice Involved Youth. After receiving her Doctor of Medicine degree at Temple University Medical School, Stewart completed her residency in general psychiatry at Drexel University Medical School serving as chief resident. In 2015, Stewart was recruited by UTHSC to establish and direct the Center for Health in Justice Involved Youth, which aims to reduce the number of young people in the juvenile justice system. Stewart also started the "Healthy Lifestyle Initiative," which partners with community organizations to establish local gardens with an accompanying physical activity program. This pilot program offers health and wellness screenings as well as care in an extremely underserved Memphis neighborhood. Stewart's honors and awards include numerous national and local recognitions. She is a local advocate for justice system improvements and serves on the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, Governor's Juvenile Justice Implementation Task Force and the Shelby County Juvenile Justice Board. From 2018 to 2019, Stewart served as the president of the American Psychiatric Association. Stewart directs eight annually funded projects budgeted at more than \$3 million.



CONNECT Nominees

- **Kim Denton**, program manager, Center for Industrial Services, Institute for Public Service
- **Susan Davidson**, professor, School of Nursing, UT Chattanooga
- **Justin Crowe**, director, State 4-H Program Leader, UT Institute of Agriculture
- **Brad Collett**, associate professor, Department of Plant Sciences, UT Institute of Agriculture
- **Clinton Smith**, associate professor, Department of Educational Studies, UT Martin

SUPPORT (EXEMPT)
HONOREE: *Valara Sample*



Valara Sample, UT Chattanooga executive director for residential education and campus life, exemplifies relentless commitment to the safety and success of students. Sample makes all students feel welcome and integrated into campus life. Throughout the challenges presented by COVID-19 in the past year, Sample has taken on more duties and mentored those who report to her to become more effective in their own positions. Sample's leadership and engagement with UTC students and the campus community transformed thinking in regard to residential resources being used to bring people together. She helped to develop UTC's first faculty-in-residence program and residential colleges in four of the five degree granting academic areas. She assisted in the mission to create an intentional residential education experience through active learning and leadership in a supportive environment that appropriately challenges students inside and outside the classroom.

SUPPORT (EXEMPT) Nominees

- **Derek Wilcox**, senior evaluation and assessment analyst, College of Medicine, UT Health Science Center
- **Jane Burns**, director, Department of Research Integrity Compliance, UT Knoxville

SUPPORT (NONEXEMPT)
HONOREE: *Tammie Cole*



Tammie Cole serves as an outstanding statewide resource through her role as an administrative coordinator for the UT System. She has more than 30 years of experience in providing executive assistance, accounting and office management. She goes above and beyond to make sure those around her are taken care of and willingly takes on extra tasks to ensure deadlines are met with efficiency. One of Cole's many qualities includes an ever-present smile; Cole's colleagues repeatedly make note of her positive attitude and willingness to make everyone she meets feel special. Cole is vital in preparing materials for UT Board of Trustees meetings and many other systemwide group meetings. Cole is the first introduction to the UT System for many, and she has the remarkable gift of making each person feel unique.

SUPPORT (NONEXEMPT) Nominees

- **Corey McGraw**, UT Chattanooga
- **Leslie Wereszczak**, UT Institute of Agriculture
- **Sarah Hoel**, UT Knoxville

DIVERSITY HONOREE: *Anthony Prewitt*



Anthony Prewitt, UT Martin interim director for multicultural affairs, has been a driving force in diversity for many years. Prewitt is a consistent voice for all students, and in the past year, he has ensured COVID-19 would not keep UT Martin from celebrating those who fight for equal rights. Since assuming his role, Prewitt has led more than 50 programs aimed at celebrating diversity, promoting thoughtful discussion, addressing tough issues and creating a sense of belonging for his students. Prewitt helped establish the Black Student Mentoring Collaborative to connect Black students with faculty and staff members from the same background who can share and understand their experiences as students of color. Prewitt was the driving force behind Captain's Pantry—stocked by students, faculty, staff and community members—for all students in need. Prewitt ensures every student has a voice regarding their ethnicity, religious differences, lifestyle choices or other cultural characteristics.

DIVERSITY Nominees

- **Dustin Fulton**, assistant dean for admissions, College of Medicine, UT Health Science Center
- **Elisha Hodge**, legal consultant, Municipal Technical Advisory Service, Institute for Public Service
- **Michelle Rigler**, executive director, Disability Resource Center, UT Chattanooga
- **Dorian McCoy**, associate professor, associate department head, Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies, CEHHS director of diversity and engagement, UT Knoxville



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