



*for your*

SPRING 2023

# BENEFIT

NEWS AND INFORMATION ABOUT  
YOUR UNIVERSITY BENEFITS

# Authentically



# BE ONE UT

## Greetings UT faculty and staff across the system!

The Cambridge dictionary states that if something is authentic, it is real, true, or what people say it is. The Collins English Dictionary defines authentic as that which can be believed or accepted; trustworthy; reliable. Lastly, vocabulary.com further describes authenticity as something that is real or genuine and not counterfeit. As we think about UT's enormous presence in all 95 counties, these definitions help us articulate our shared values that highlight both our oneness and our uniqueness that make us authentically Be One UT.

Core values support the University mission while shaping culture across the system, build purpose, improve team cohesion and reinforce the shared sense of commitment at UT. During this issue, we will highlight ways we partner and collaborate across our campuses, institutes and the state to uphold our Be One UT values.

Employee engagement is one measure to determine how we are "walking the talk" in the authenticity of the Be One UT values. Research shows that engaged employees feel energized, passionate and dedicated to their organizations. Our engaged employees are highly involved with their work at the University and have optimal performance. Some demonstrated characteristics of engaged employees include:

- Helping others for the betterment of the organization
- Recommending improvement opportunities
- Having a sense of purpose and pride in their work
- Staying at the institution because of what they give to it

A positive employee experience promotes strong employee engagement. We are pleased to have a 6% increase in our 2021 staff response rate from 44% to 50% for the 2022 employee engagement survey. The great news is that our employee experience score (percentage of supporters - percentage of detractors) is 26.3, far above McLean and Company, which conducted the survey, education benchmark of 11.3.

For the first time, the University of Tennessee System has earned its certification as a great place to work. The Great Place to Work® certification is determined by random sampling of about 40% of our current employees and what they say about their experience working at the UT System, its campuses and institutes. With 72% of responding employees rating the UT System as a great place to work, this certification indicates that we are successfully living out our values.

Among the top statements garnered from UT employees, this survey found:

- 83% of employees feel good about how the UT System contributes to the community
- 82% of employees take pride in telling others they work for the UT System

We are excited to be on a great trajectory toward making UT the employer of choice for all Tennesseans. It is said that feedback is the breakfast of champions, and our work continues as we take action across the state in response to the voices of our employees.

Join us as we explore our various pathways to authentically Be One UT!

BRIAN K. DICKENS

WELCOME



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*The University of Tennessee is an  
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programs and services.*

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# VOL ACCESS COLLABORATIVE

BY TYRA HAAG



The new Vol Access Collaborative (VAC) is a pilot program designed to expand admission options to students interested in enrolling at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and increase access to a UTK education. Some students not admitted to UT Knoxville will be

to UT Knoxville to complete their undergraduate study.

The VAC program encourages students to utilize UT's statewide presence to access an affordable, top-rated, educational experience through the UT System.

***Each campus is distinctive while unified in its commitment to student experience, discovery and outreach to positively impact communities across the state and beyond. This pilot program framework reflects the efforts and contributions from enrollment and admissions teams across the UT System - a true Be One UT mentality.***

offered the opportunity to begin their first year at another UT System campus (Chattanooga, Martin or Southern). After satisfying program requirements during their freshman year, these students may transfer

Select students not offered first-year admission to UT Knoxville have the opportunity to enroll at another UT System campus if they meet campus-based admission requirements. Program participants are guaranteed

transfer admission to UT Knoxville or an alternative UT System undergraduate campus following the successful completion of 24 or more transferable credit hours while earning a 3.0 or higher GPA based on a 4.0 scale. These students must indicate interest by May 1, 2023.

Increasing the number of college graduates benefits our state and the Drive to 55 initiative, which is the drive to get 55 percent of Tennesseans equipped with a college degree or certificate by the year 2025. Each campus is distinctive while unified in its commitment to student experience, discovery and outreach to positively impact communities across the state and beyond. This pilot program framework reflects the efforts and contributions from enrollment and admissions teams across the UT System - a true Be One UT mentality.

# UTC SCHOOL OF EDUCATION STRENGTHENS OUTREACH TO RURAL SCHOOLS, EDUCATORS

BY CHARLIE REED

With a strong track record of supporting rural schools and education, UT Chattanooga (UTC) recently partnered with Rural Schools Collaborative (RSC) to further that good work.

UTC will serve as the organization's Appalachia Regional Hub and work to improve the K-12 education workforce throughout the region.

"This partnership will allow us to bring opportunities to rural districts in the area



that they may not have seen from UTC in a while. That ability to meet their needs and what they're looking for fits into how we're sharing this work as a rural teacher hub," said

Allen Pratt, interim co-director of the UTC School of Education and executive director of the National Rural Education Association based at UTC. "The teacher shortage is a big issue and we have to make sure that current and future teachers are ready to meet the needs schools are facing right now.

The biggest thing is making sure people are exposed to those needs and are ready to go out and help."

One program poised to significantly impact southeastern Tennessee's rural communities is the University of Tennessee System's Grow Your Own (GYO) Center, which establishes GYO hubs at four UT campuses.

With 17 rural districts surrounding UTC, Pratt is excited for how collaborating with RSC and other institutions in the Appalachian Region will enhance this work.

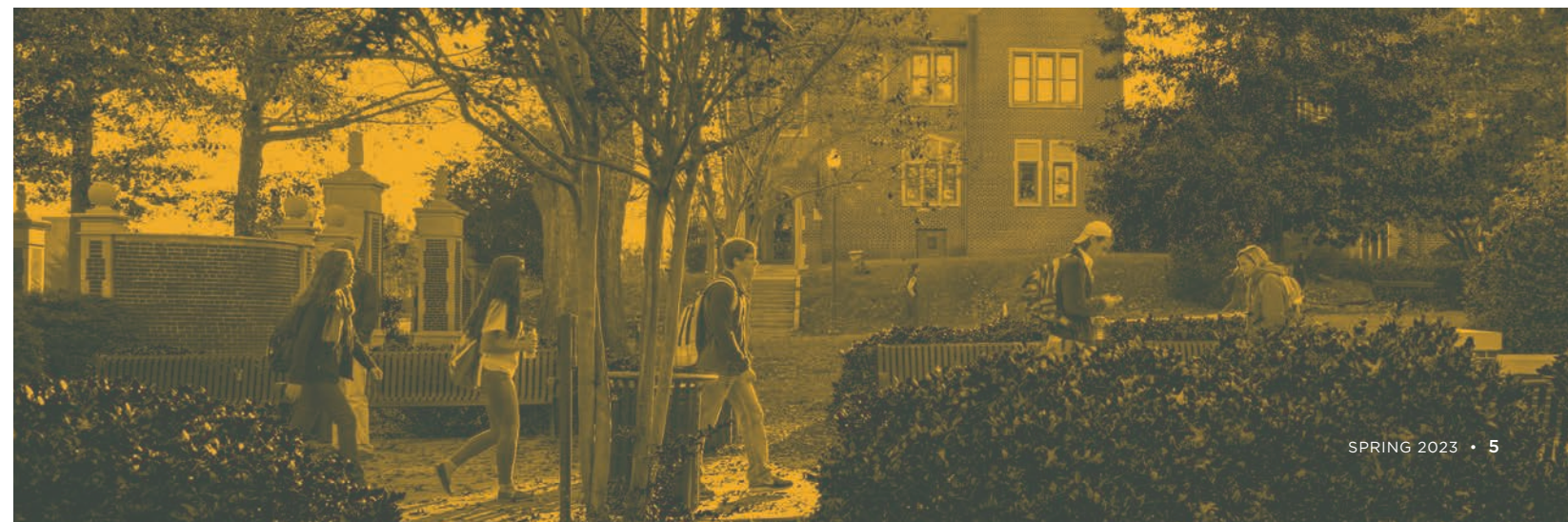
"Being a rural teacher hub makes sense with this new GYO teacher apprenticeship work in terms doing outreach and offering resources to rural districts," Pratt said. "We're not standalone; we're here for the collaboration to help rural Appalachia.

***"This partnership will allow us to bring opportunities to rural districts in the area that they may not have seen from UTC in a while. That ability to meet their needs and what they're looking for fits into how we're sharing this work as a rural teacher hub,"***

We're just one part of the whole. As our country has changed, we need to change as an institution to be able to meet the needs of rural districts. We've always been out in those districts, so I think this outreach—and what we can do for rural schools—is a natural fit for us."

Another element strengthening UTC's growing role in the rural education landscape will come later this year when the National Rural Education Association hosts its annual National Forum to Advance Rural Education on Nov. 16-17 at the Chattanooga Marriott Downtown. The forum convenes rural education scholars, administrators, advocates and practitioners, drawing attendees from 48 states last year.

"With experts and allies from across the rural landscape converging in UTC's backyard later this year, the opportunity is ripe to showcase the collaborative and innovative spirit with which Pratt and his team at the School of Education are charging forward in the region," Rural Schools Collaborative Partnerships Manager John Glasgow said.



# UT MARTIN CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAM CELEBRATES 50 YEARS, FIRST MASTER'S GRADUATE

BY NATHAN MORGAN



The 2022-23 academic year has been a monumental one for UT Martin's criminal justice program. Not only is the program celebrating its 50th anniversary as part of the College of Education, Health and Behavioral Sciences, the master's degree in criminal justice program also had its first graduate cross the commencement stage in December. Cpt. Wesley Stafford, director of training for the Tennessee Highway Patrol, has added a UT Martin degree to his impressive list of credentials and degrees.

*"As I look toward the end of my career in law enforcement, I wonder what life looks like afterwards. Maybe, along with my other credentials, this (his master's degree) will make me more marketable in the private sector."*

Stafford began his law enforcement career as a reserve deputy at the Cheatham County Sheriff's Department in 1996. After nearly two years in that role, he accepted a full-time position with the department.

"I don't mean to sound corny, but law enforcement – just the whole idea of protecting and serving – just really felt like a calling," he said. In 2005, he

became a trooper with the Tennessee Highway Patrol. Stafford eventually transitioned into the role of teacher. He became a member of the Tennessee Highway Patrol Training Division because of a desire to help other law enforcement officers better themselves. This opportunity allowed him to continue doing the job he loved but also educate future generations of troopers. While in his role as an instructor, he earned his bachelor's degree from Bethel University.

The chance to return to school for his master's degree presented itself when UT Martin added a new master's degree in criminal justice in spring 2022.

"As I look toward the end of my career in law enforcement, I wonder what life looks like afterwards. Maybe, along with my other credentials, this (his master's degree) will make me more marketable in the private sector," Stafford said. "But

at this point, I've got it, and nobody can take that away. So, I am proud to have completed it."

For 50 years, the UT Martin criminal justice program has produced police officers, state troopers, forensic scientists, judges, lawyers and many other law enforcement specialists.

In addition to academic courses tailored for the classroom, the criminal justice program offers hands-on learning to students to better prepare them for the real world. Through internships and summer programs, such as the National Collegiate Forensics Academy in Oak Ridge, the faculty prepare students for their next steps.

Brian Donavant, UT Martin professor of criminal justice, has been with the program since 2006. As the program heads into its 51st year, Donavant hopes to see the undergraduate and master's degrees grow.

"They say there's an art to being small, and as a regional public university I think we've found our niche in that," he said. "We don't need to be small in our thinking, but we need to stay true to the applied approach that gives folks real hands-on useful tools for when they are out there working to serve the public."

# UTHSC ADDRESSES DENTAL CARE GAP BY TREATING KIDS FOR FREE

BY CHRIS GREEN

The UT Health Science Center's College of Dentistry filled cavities and offered other free dental care to schoolchildren as part of its annual Give Kids A Smile day in February.

Under the supervision of College of Dentistry faculty, dental students performed free procedures such as examinations, cleanings, fillings, extractions and fluoride applications for 97 students from Freedom Preparatory Academy in Memphis. Give Kids A Smile is a 20-year-old project of the American Dental Association, and UTHSC has participated in it for about a decade.

According to the Tennessee Department of Health, Tennessee ranks 38th for dental health in the nation, and 70% of people cite cost as the top reason they do not go to the dentist. By addressing this issue with events like Give Kids A

Smile, the UTHSC College of Dentistry embodies the Be One UT value of being bold and impactful, serving the state by tackling grand challenges.

Orpheus Triplett, assistant dean of community oral health and outreach, said "The event allows us to increase access to care to children from neighborhoods where that access may be limited. At the same time, it increases our visibility in the city and in those neighborhoods represented by the schools and children engaged in the program. It is a win-win for all and the student interaction from both entities is invaluable."

In years past, the event has served students from sixth through eighth grade. This year it expanded to include high school students.

"This later teen age group is preparing to transition to adulthood, and their oral

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hygiene techniques need to evolve from their childhood practices," said Cassandra Christiansen, associate professor and director of school-based programs and community outreach for the College of Dentistry. "This is a perfect time to provide individualized oral hygiene instruction that meets the specific needs of each student."



# THE UT SOUTHERN PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAM EXPANDS INTO THE COMMUNITY

BY SUSAN CARLISLE



Graduating its second cohort this spring, the UT Southern public health education program prepares students to serve the whole person and to understand how life can affect people and a community.

Karen Ferguson, program founder and coordinator, designed assignments that require students to develop and implement a community service project related to assisting public health. These projects, in many instances, developed

*“Assisting the community with meeting basic needs is an integral part of the public health education program,”*

from clinical experiences, assist the underserved and give students experience dealing with nonprofit public health programs.

“Assisting the community with meeting basic needs is an integral part of the public health education program,” she said.

Emily Crone, a senior from Buffalo, New York, developed a successful program in response to a need she identified during her clinicals in Lawrenceburg at A Kid’s Place, which advocates for and assists sexually and physically abused children.

She noticed groupings of items—ranging from toothbrushes, deodorant, diapers, shampoo and more—made available free to those who attended A Kid’s Place. She collected donations of hygiene items, warm clothes for cold weather, coloring books and crayons.



“It truly opened my eyes to the number of families who unfortunately go without these items and don’t know where to turn,” she said.



From a young age, Crone watched her father work 40 hours a week and then volunteer as a fireman/EMT. Following in his footsteps, she decided to pursue the bachelor’s degree in public health education and then continue her education by completing a master’s degree in epidemiology and then specializing in cancer research.

# CONFERENCE REGISTRATIONS ARE OPEN!

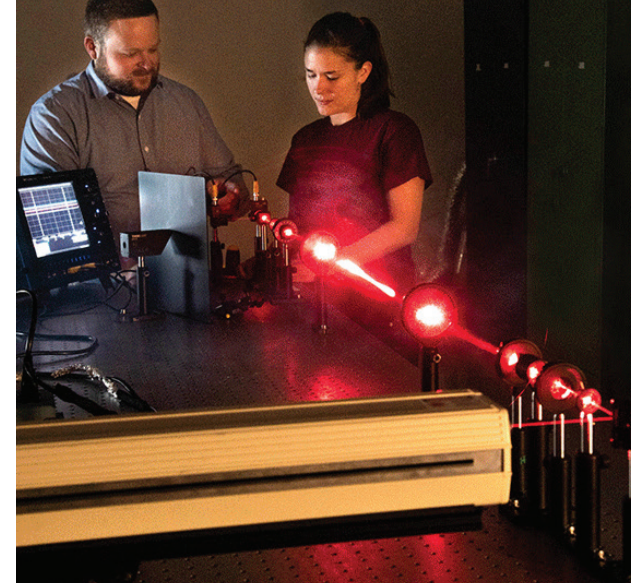
Employee and Organizational Development hosts several conferences throughout the year.



To learn more and register for an EOD conference, scan the QR code or visit [hr.tennessee.edu/eod/conferences](http://hr.tennessee.edu/eod/conferences).

# WORKING WITH AIR FORCE RESEARCH LABORATORY CONGRESSIONAL ADDS

BY MEGHAN MORRIS



UT Knoxville’s Space Institute has been participating in federally funded Air Force Research Laboratory Congressional Adds since 2018. The Congressional Adds are multidisciplinary and intercampus research efforts in hypersonic and materials. A total of \$24 million has been awarded through five Congressional Adds with two more awaiting contracts.

UTSI, in partnership with UT Knoxville and UT Chattanooga, are working together on these research efforts. Students from all three campuses have partnered to learn and develop into the next generation of engineers and scientists.



UT has partnered with the University of Dayton Research Institute, Purdue University, Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) and Carbon-Carbon Advanced Technologies (C-CAT) to lead cutting edge research in hypersonic environments and the effects on materials through novel experimentation and characterization techniques. Together more than 70 faculty, staff and students work collaboratively to push boundaries in the field.

*“UTSI in partnership with UT Knoxville and UT Chattanooga are working together on these research efforts. Students from all three campuses have partnered to learn and develop into the next generation of engineers and scientists.”*



From fertile farms to new fields of study, we are there.

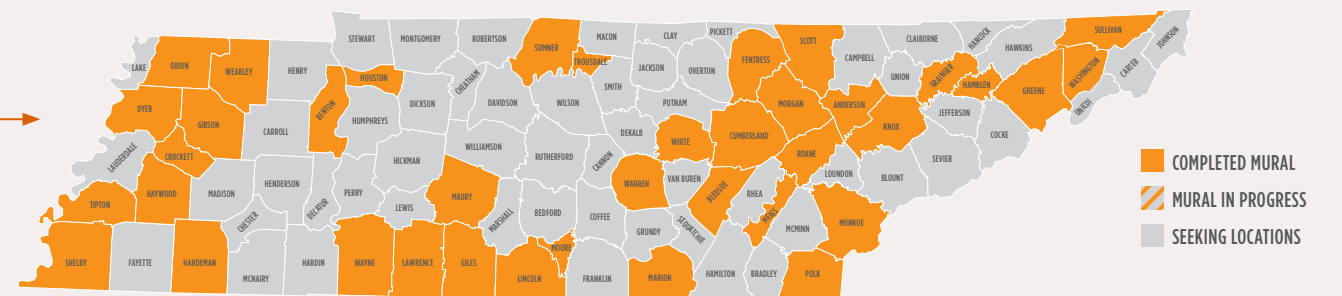
We’re telling our story of statewide impact in a big way—by painting murals on barns and buildings across Tennessee. In fact, we’re on a mission to paint one in each of Tennessee’s 95 counties by 2030! Each location has a unique story, and we’re glad for the opportunity to celebrate the many ways our partners are shaping their communities. Currently, we have 29 murals in 29 counties that proudly showcase Everywhere You Look, UT. Follow along with our progress as we work towards 95 murals.



[everywhere.tennessee.edu](http://everywhere.tennessee.edu)

DISCOVER MORE STORIES

MURAL LOCATIONS BY COUNTY





## UTIA ESTABLISHES NEW SCHOOL OF NATURAL RESOURCES

BY BETH HALL DAVIS

*“The creation of the school will provide new opportunities and increased visibility for the great work students and faculty in these disciplines are doing.”*

The first values listed in the Be One UT values are Bold and Impactful. No two words better describe the recent launch of the School of Natural Resources at the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture (UTIA). This most recent development converts the Department of Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries into UTIA's first school, effective Jan. 1, 2023.

The school will continue to offer bachelor of science degrees and master of science degrees in forestry or wildlife and fisheries, a master's program in forest business and a doctoral program in natural resources. School administrators are currently reviewing other programs of study to add.

The creation of the school will provide new opportunities and increased visibility for the great work students and faculty in these disciplines are doing, like that of Patrick Keyser, the director of the Center for Native Grasslands Management.

In fall 2022, Keyser and his team of extension specialists and researchers received a \$30 million grant funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help grassland farmers enter the

emerging carbon economy while enhancing operation resiliency and optimizing profitability, soil health and biodiversity. Even modest changes in management practices across large farm operations can have a tremendous impact on soil carbon, greenhouse gas emission and associated economic implications for producers.

Grasslands are the single largest agricultural land use in the U.S. and agriculture's largest and most effective carbon-storage system. They naturally offer the greatest opportunity to make a strong, positive impact on agriculture and on the environment.

The research team is partnering with 28 entities across the southeastern U.S. to collaborate with 245 working farms. The project is one of 70 selected projects funded by USDA for climate-smart commodities and communities research.

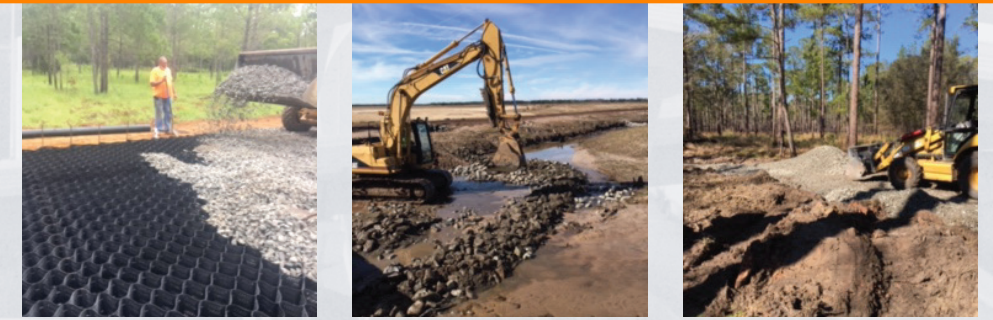
Whether it's changing the economy and the climate or changing the future for an individual student interested in disciplines like forestry or wildlife and fisheries, the Be One UT values are easy to spot at UTIA.

### Code of Conduct Revisions

The University of Tennessee is committed to facilitating a workplace culture that promotes responsible and ethical behavior.

The unethical behavior of just one employee can detract from the excellent contributions of thousands. For this reason, it is important that compliance, with rules and regulations and respect for fellow employees, are taken seriously and infractions are reported promptly to appropriate officials. UT's Code of Conduct, effective Feb. 1, 2023, is intended to assist employees and their departments in creating a responsible and ethical workplace. It outlines the basic expectations for employees, directs them to policy requirements and training resources and provides instructions for reporting concerns and violations.

For more information about the revisions, scan the QR code or visit [conduct.tennessee.edu](https://conduct.tennessee.edu).



## IPS' ECONOMIC IMPACT

BY SUSAN ROBERTSON

When representing the UT value of Bold and Impactful, the Institute for Public Service (IPS) meets its mark, having averaged more than \$1.4 billion in customer-reported economic impact during the past seven years; and reporting a record-setting \$1.9 billion in economic impact in fiscal year 2022.

Much of the impact is a result of the APEX Accelerator government

Herb Byrd. “We're privileged to carry out a part of the outreach mission of the University of Tennessee and are dedicated to sharing University resources and knowledge with public service entities, businesses, and citizens of Tennessee.”

The Naifeh Center for Effective Leadership also contributes to the institute's overall economic impact

money. The recently completed class presented its capstones in December and reported an economic impact of more than \$217 million.

While not part of the reported IPS economic impact metric, additional economic impact comes from other CIS programs as well as the county technical assistance service and municipal technical advisory service

*“We're privileged to carry out a part of the outreach mission of the University of Tennessee and are dedicated to sharing university resources and knowledge with public service entities, businesses, and citizens of Tennessee.”*

contracting program within the Center for Industrial Services (CIS), one of IPS's six agencies. APEX counselors advise businesses, many of which are veteran or minority-owned, on how to secure contracts with government agencies. Since 2020, APEX counselors have assisted with more than 6,945 contracts, totaling \$5.8 billion. It results in more than 114,400 jobs created or retained.

“The expertise, hard work and dedication of our employees across the state results in tremendous impact for all Tennesseans,” said IPS Vice President

through its certified public manager program. The purpose of the program is to provide a comprehensive, competency-based, nationally certified development program for all managers from state and local government organizations, universities and those from business and industry who desire this training and certification.

At the conclusion of the certified public manager program, participants present a capstone project. Many of these projects end up saving or earning participants' organizations a significant amount of

consulting with local governments in such areas as public works, highway services, public safety and financial services. By using one of these agencies instead of private consulting companies, counties and municipalities are able to save money, resulting in economic impact for their organizations.

To put the reported economic impact of IPS programs into perspective, each \$1 million of IPS revenue results in a return to Tennessee of over \$53.5 million of additional income or savings. Now that's Bold and Impactful!



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# BE ONE UT VALUES

## **BOLD & IMPACTFUL**

Serving the state by tackling grand challenges.

**THINK BIG**  
**MAKE A DIFFERENCE**  
**SERVE WITH PURPOSE**

## **OPTIMISTIC & VISIONARY**

Empowering courageous leadership.

**FIND THE POSITIVE**  
**INSPIRE OTHERS**  
**LEAD BY EXAMPLE**

## **UNITED & CONNECTED**

Collaborating internally and externally for greater collective impact.

**BE A TEAM PLAYER**  
**SEE YOURSELF AS PART OF THE LARGER PURPOSE**  
**SHARE EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE**

## **EMBRACE DIVERSITY**

Respecting our individual and organizational uniqueness that makes us stronger.

**LISTEN WITH EMPATHY**  
**EXPECT CIVILITY AND COLLEGIALITY**  
**MODEL INCLUSIVE BEHAVIORS**

## **NIMBLE & INNOVATIVE**

Inspiring creative and transformational action.

**TRY NEW THINGS AND KEEP WHAT WORKS**  
**EMBRACE CHANGE**  
**REMOVE BARRIERS**

## **TRANSPARENT & TRUSTED**

Fostering integrity through openness, accountability and stewardship.

**BELIEVE IN THE GOOD INTENTIONS OF OTHERS**  
**BE HONEST**  
**PROACTIVELY COMMUNICATE**

## **EXCEL IN ALL WE DO**

Committing to continuous improvement and outstanding performance.

**SET HIGH STANDARDS**  
**PURSUE LEARNING AND GROWTH**  
**RECOGNIZE AND CELEBRATE QUALITY**

Submit what Be One UT value you incorporate into your day-to-day work. We will pick some submissions to appear in the next issue of For Your Benefit!

**Scan the QR code to submit your statement.**

