



*for your* SPRING 2024

# BENEFIT

NEWS AND INFORMATION ABOUT  
YOUR UNIVERSITY BENEFITS

# HARMONY



## Fostering Employee Engagement: The Key to Unlocking Organizational Success

Employee engagement is akin to orchestrating a symphony, where each employee's voice represents a unique instrument contributing to the harmonious melody of organizational success. Just as a conductor meticulously listens to every section to ensure coherence and brilliance, effective and influential leaders tune into the diverse perspectives of their workforce to gather valuable feedback. In this analogy, the workplace becomes a grand stage where every individual, like a skilled musician, plays a crucial role in creating a vibrant and resonant composition. Just as a symphony thrives on collaboration and unity among its players, fostering an environment where every employee feels heard and valued is essential for cultivating engagement and unleashing the organization's full potential. In today's rapidly evolving higher education landscape, colleges and universities continuously seek ways to thrive and stay competitive.

Recognizing the critical role of employee engagement, the University of Tennessee System is dedicated to creating an environment that fosters engagement at all levels. Employee engagement reflects an employee's willingness to give discretionary effort and commitment to the organization's vision and values. Engaged employees are emotionally connected to their work, feel a sense of purpose and fulfillment, and are more likely to stay motivated, productive and innovative. We believe engaged employees are more flexible, adaptable and resilient in facing challenges and are essential for creating a vibrant, inclusive, collaborative workplace culture that drives productivity and satisfaction, positively impacting the organization's overall success. They also exhibit higher levels of loyalty and advocacy for their organizations.

As evidenced during our post-employee engagement survey action planning visits to all five campuses and two institutes learning of their collective action plans based on the feedback in our recent 2023 engagement surveys, the University of Tennessee System is actively championing employee engagement initiatives across its campuses. These initiatives, including professional development programs, leadership development, mentorship opportunities and robust communication channels, highlight the University of Tennessee System's focus on empowering its employees. We strive to foster an environment where employees feel valued, supported and connected to the University's mission, values and strategic goals.

By prioritizing and investing in employee engagement initiatives, the University of Tennessee System is positioning itself as a leader in creating a highly engaged workforce. Through its commitment to fostering a culture of engagement, the University lays the foundation for enhanced productivity, innovation, and overall organizational and academic excellence. UT is poised to create a transformative impact on its campuses and the broader community by nurturing an engaged workforce.

**BRIAN K. DICKENS, CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER**  
UT SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION



WELCOME

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**OVERALL ENGAGEMENT RESULTS**



**58.9%**

**Engaged employees** consistently exceed expectations. They are energized and passionate about their work, putting in extra effort to drive organizational performance.

**20.9%**

**Almost engaged employees** sometimes exceed expectations and are generally passionate about their work. At times, they exert discretionary effort to help achieve organizational goals.

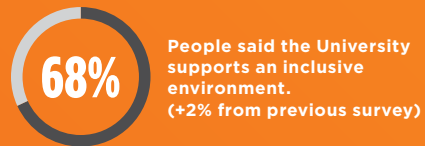
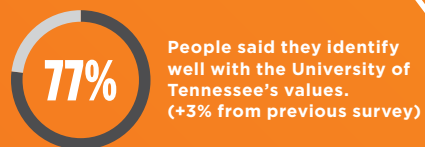
**20.2%**

**Indifferent or Disengaged employees** generally meet minimum expectations or fail to do so. They see their work as “just a job,” expressing little interest in organizational goals, putting in time rather than effort.

**Survey Says:**

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY**

**AREAS OF EXCELLENCE**



The UT System recently conducted its annual employee engagement survey, and the results are in! With a response rate of 48%, we heard from 4,239 employees across our campuses and institutes, providing us with valuable insights into our workplace culture and environment.

We are grateful to all the employees who took the time to share their feedback through the survey. Your voices are essential in guiding our journey toward a more supportive and dynamic workplace. Together, we will continue to build on our strengths and address our challenges, making the UT System a place where everyone can thrive.

This year's survey highlighted several key areas where the UT System shines, including strong coworker relationships and a positive organizational culture. Employees expressed feeling valued by their colleagues and appreciated the efforts made to create a welcoming and respectful work environment.

Scan the QR code below to view the complete 2023 employee engagement survey results.

**AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

**51%**

Respondents said they understand the rationale behind the business decisions made by their executive leadership.

**48%**

Respondents said their department has sufficient funds to support robust professional development.

**40%**

Respondents believe that the departments communicate effectively with each other.

However, the survey also shed light on areas where we can grow and improve. Some employees are seeking more opportunities for professional development and clearer communication from leadership about organizational changes and future directions. These are areas we are committed to addressing as we strive to make this the greatest decade in UT history.

The feedback from this survey is instrumental in shaping our strategies and initiatives for the coming year. We are dedicated to using these insights to implement changes that will enhance the employee experience. This includes creating more opportunities for professional development, improving communication channels and ensuring that all employees feel empowered and engaged in their roles.







## MAKING A DIFFERENCE: THE BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING IN THE COMMUNITY



Volunteering is more than just giving back to the community; it's an opportunity to grow, connect, engage and find fulfillment. At the UT System, we understand the value of volunteering and encourage employees to take part in this rewarding experience. To support this, full-time employees are entitled to up to eight hours of paid leave each year specifically for volunteering.

### Personal Growth and Development

Volunteering allows you to develop new skills and gain experiences that can be beneficial in both your personal and professional life. It's a chance to step out of your comfort zone, take on new challenges and grow as an individual.

### Building Connections

Volunteering brings people together and helps build a sense of community. It's an opportunity to meet new people, strengthen existing relationships and work collaboratively towards a common goal.

### Enhancing Well-being

Giving back has been shown to boost mental and emotional well-being. Volunteering can provide a sense of purpose, reduce stress and increase feelings of happiness and satisfaction.

### Making a Difference

The impact of volunteering extends beyond the individual. By donating your time and skills, you're contributing to positive change and making a meaningful difference in the lives of others and the community as a whole.

Employees are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to volunteer. Whether it's a cause close to your heart or a new area you'd like to explore, your contribution is important and valued. Examples of community volunteer activities can be found at the state of Tennessee's Volunteer Tennessee website: [tn.gov/volunteer-tennessee.html](https://tn.gov/volunteer-tennessee.html).

For more information about your campus or institute's protocol for requesting volunteer hours, please contact your supervisor.



## RAISING THE BAR: 1 MILLION CIVIL CONVERSATIONS

Every day, millions of conversations take place in the workplace. And, in a world that seems to move faster by the minute, it's easy for the little things—like civility in the workplace—to fall by the wayside.

According to the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), nearly two-thirds of U.S. workers have experienced or witnessed incivility in their workplaces within the last month. Additionally, one-third of U.S. workers believe workplace conflict will increase over the next 12 months.

Civility isn't just a 'nice to have,' it's the glue that holds an organization together, creating an environment where everyone feels respected, valued and heard.

UT System Administration is seeking to do its part in civility by participating in the **1 Million Civil Conversations** initiative spearheaded by SHRM. How do you get involved? Simply grab a cup of "civili-tea" and chat with a colleague. Share your commitment to civility by sharing your tips of turning tough talks to teamwork on social media and tagging the UT System. Use the hashtag #CivilityAtWork so that others can benefit from your tips!

### As you chat, ask yourself:

- Am I a catalyst for civility?
- Do I value different viewpoints and opinions in my conversations with others?
- Do I encourage openness and honesty through my words and actions?
- Do I actively and empathetically listen?
- Do I model kindness and respect during difficult conversations?

### How can we raise the bar on civility in our workspace? Here are some tips to get us started:

- **Respect** – Treat others with dignity and value their perspectives.
- **Active Listening** – Pay attention to what the other person is saying without interrupting.
- **Empathy** – Try to understand the other person's feelings and viewpoint.
- **Open-mindedness** – Be willing to consider different perspectives and ideas.
- **Clarity** – Communicate your thoughts and feelings clearly and directly.
- **Patience** – Allow the conversation to unfold without rushing or forcing an outcome.
- **Politeness** – Use polite language and maintain a calm tone.
- **Self-awareness** – Be mindful of your own biases and emotions during the conversation.
- **Honesty** – Speak truthfully without being hurtful or offensive.
- **Focus** – Stay on topic and avoid bringing up unrelated issues.



# NAVIGATING THE NEXT STEPS: LIFE AFTER THE PERFORMANCE REVIEW

By now, most if not all employees have received their annual performance reviews. Performance reviews should never be viewed as a once-a-year event, but rather as part of a continuous feedback process that occurs throughout the year. Regular check-ins and ongoing communication between supervisor and employees are essential for fostering growth and development.

Here's how you can make the most of the post-review period:

### Reflect on the Feedback

Take some time to process the feedback you received. Consider both the positive aspects and the areas for improvement. Understanding your strengths and weaknesses is key to your professional development.

### Set Clear Goals

Based on the feedback, set specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) goals. These goals should align with your career aspirations and the organization's objectives. Refine these goals as needed throughout the year.

### Create an Action Plan

Develop a plan outlining the steps you need to take to achieve your goals. This might include additional training, seeking mentorship or taking on new projects. Be proactive in seeking the resources and support you need.

### Schedule Regular Check-ins

Don't wait for the next annual review to assess your progress. Schedule regular check-ins with your supervisor to discuss your progress, address any challenges and adjust your action plan as needed.

### Embrace Continuous Learning

View your professional development as an ongoing journey. Stay open to feedback, seek out learning opportunities and continuously strive to enhance your skills and knowledge. The UT System has robust offerings through workshops, seminars, conferences and through K@TE (Knowledge and Training Excellence), our comprehensive learning management system for professional development.

### Celebrate Achievements

Recognize and celebrate your achievements along the way. This will keep you motivated and reinforce the positive behaviors and outcomes you're working towards.

Remember, the performance review is just the beginning. It's what you do after the review that truly shapes your career trajectory and professional fulfillment. Embrace the opportunity for growth and take proactive steps to build on your strengths and address areas for improvement. Your future self will thank you!



# MUSIC HAS THE POWER TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER!



We've curated a collection of tunes from across the UT System for you to jam out to. Enjoy classics that have brought crowds to their feet, along with contemporary hits that remind us of the importance of unity and shared goals.

### Scan the Spotify Code to Find Our FYB Engagement Playlist

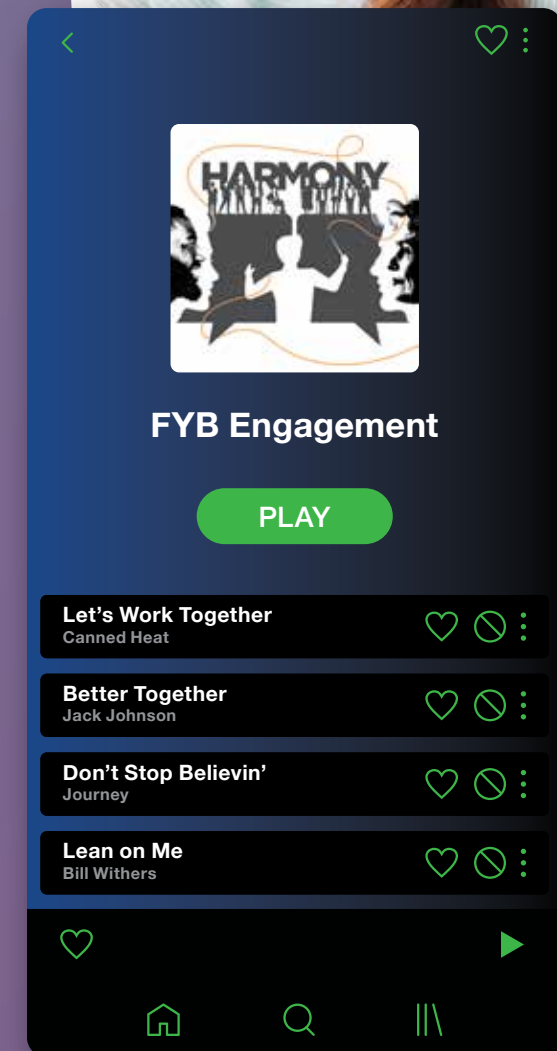
Open your Spotify app.

Tap the  Search icon.

In the search bar, tap  the camera.

Tap **SCAN**.

Scan the spotify code below.





# DASHING ON

To successfully rollout DASH, UT's new enterprise resource planning (ERP), requires more than technical preparation—it's a collective leap forward in how UT operates and will require ensuring everyone using the system is ready and able to embrace the new technology. UT will begin the DASH transition in January 2025.

DASH (Dynamic Administrative System for Higher Ed) will replace UT's 20-year-old ERP known as IRIS, where employees enter working time and absences, book travel, process payroll, pay invoices and more.

While UT would be technically ready for the DASH transition on July 1, the DASH executive team determined that an extension would ensure the University is organizationally ready to adopt the change and will yield dividends with long-term success for the transition.

- This extension will allow time for:
- Comprehensive user education and hands-on training sessions,
  - Building a solid foundation of support within the organization, and
  - Developing tailored communication strategies to manage significant change effectively.

"We cannot adequately express our gratitude to the hundreds of people across the system who are giving time, energy and expertise above expectations to make DASH successful," said David Miller, senior vice president and chief financial officer. "In honoring their contributions, we are committed to ensuring that everyone is prepared, confident and ready for this change."

To learn more about DASH, join Friends of DASH through [dash-erp.tennessee.edu](https://dash-erp.tennessee.edu), which includes a wealth of information, including town hall recordings. The Friends of DASH website is the ultimate source, including timelines, for all things DASH.



# BECOME A UT PROMISE MENTOR: ENGAGE, EMPOWER AND ELEVATE THE NEXT GENERATION OF TENNESSEANS

As One UT, our commitment to engagement extends beyond our daily roles. Whether you're faculty or staff, consider becoming a UT Promise mentor today.

UT Promise is a last-dollar undergraduate scholarship guaranteeing free tuition and mandatory fees for qualifying Tennessee residents, benefiting more than two-thirds of Tennessee's high school seniors and offering students a path to the UT school of their choice.

But UT Promise isn't just a scholarship program that advances access to higher education; what truly sets UT Promise apart is the human connection it fosters.

This is where you come in. As a UT Promise mentor, you have the privilege to impact students, one relationship at a time.

"Being a 'helper' is one of my core values, and helping others reach their full potential is something that brings me joy," said Heather Morgan, UT Promise mentor and internal consultant at UT Knoxville. "Volunteering to mentor through the UT Promise program was a natural fit for me."

At the end of this semester, Morgan will have served as a mentor to Hope Jeffery, an art studio major at UT Chattanooga, throughout Jeffery's entire college career.

Being a UT Promise mentor is rewarding, as Morgan discovered when she received a message shortly after supporting Jeffery's efforts to apply for and embark on a study abroad program.

"To me, that WhatsApp message from Italy represented courage, determination and hard work," Morgan said. "I smiled for at least a week because I was so inspired by Hope."

Let's make a difference, not just in the workplace, but in the lives of the students we serve. Starting fall 2024, UT Promise will increase the income threshold to \$75,000 a year, up from \$60,000 previously, to help even more Tennessee students attend college. In addition, UT Promise is also guaranteeing a minimum \$500 award per semester, up from the previous minimum of \$100.

Begin your journey as a UT Promise mentor by visiting [tennessee.edu/ut-promise/mentoring](https://tennessee.edu/ut-promise/mentoring).

# BY THE NUMBERS

**91%** Percentage of employers increasing investment in mental health. Key benefits include boosting productivity, improving overall well-being, increasing job satisfaction and effectively attracting and retaining talent. (Source: Wellable)

**21%** Companies with high employee engagement record 21% better profitability. Such companies also have 17% higher productivity. (Source: Gallup)

**69%** Percentage of employees are more likely to remain in the company for three years when they have a positive onboarding experience. (Source: Octanner)

**81.9%** Percentage of employees who agree that recognition for their contributions improves their engagement. (Source: Vantage Circle)

**60%** Percentage of human resources leaders who say developing their management team's effectiveness is a part of their strategy to improve the future of work in 2024. (Source: Gartner)



 *for your*  
**BENEFIT**

**UT** HUMAN  
RESOURCES

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EVERYWHERE  
YOU LOOK, **UT**



Where in Tennessee can you go to find the presence of the University of Tennessee? Everywhere!

From fertile farms to new fields of study, we're there. And we're telling our story of statewide impact in a big way—by painting murals on barns and buildings across Tennessee. We're on a mission to paint one in each of Tennessee's 95 counties by 2030, and we're making good progress. Murals are complete and/or scheduled for paint in 51 counties so far!

If you or someone you know is interested in partnering with us, reach out to Ellie Dougherty at [dougherty@tennessee.edu](mailto:dougherty@tennessee.edu).