GREAT

## PEOPLE

# MAKE A GREAT UNIVERSITY

FISCAL YEAR 2023-24 IMPACT REPORT



666 every great university is supported by great people.

Because of generous donors like you, we've been able to make the investments we need to accomplish extraordinary things—from creating new facilities and programs to providing more scholarships and professorships. UT is graduating more students, conducting more research, and developing more partnerships than ever before—all with the goal of creating a better experience for our students and better outcomes for our state."

-DONDE PLOWMAN, CHANCELLOR



## CURRENT VOLS ARE

## SHAPING THEIR FUTURE

## BECAUSE OF YOU.

Our students are changing campus for the better, lighting the way forward, and emerging as leaders in their fields to meet the challenges of our state and world. His experience was so impactful that he became a team lead for the program, working to help other students like him build community.

"It's hard to underscore how much students appreciate the generosity from donors of the university," says Fox. "There are so many students that wouldn't be able to attend UT without monetary assistance. There are such amazing, valuable experiences and unique opportunities that wouldn't happen without donor support or alumni involvement."

#### LAUNCHING CAREER PIPELINES

In the College of Communication and Information (CCI), students like Ellie Warchus-Simms ('24) are gaining valuable experience that will set them up for successful careers after graduation through the newly endowed Office of Career Development, led by Devan Lane. "This office has built up my courage and taught me how to present my skills and value

and to be proactive," says Warchus-Simms. "Things like informational interviews, where I learned to answer questions in a professional manner, have helped me grow. It's been an amazing experience that resulted in new opportunities."

Through Lane's office, Warchus-Simms interned at Yee-Haw Brewing Company and LEO Events and participated in a CCI trip to Washington DC, where students networked with alumni, toured top employers, and learned more about a variety of career paths. This is just very special work, to see how students make their dreams a reality. I enjoy encouraging them to craft a path forward so they can make the most of their careers."

- DEVAN LANE, DIRECTOR OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT, COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION



#### FINDING A BIG ORANGE WELCOME

After starting out as an unsure first-year student from a small Tennessee town, Connor Fox (Class of 2026) has become a highly involved campus leader, from his accounting studies and the Heath Integrated Business and Engineering Program to the UT Ambassadors and Student Alumni Associates. What is the game-changer that helped him find his place? Donor-supported programming. Through the Clay and Debbie Jones Center for Leadership and Service, Fox participated in Ignite, which helps firstyear students acclimate to university life with opportunities to develop leadership skills, learn how to become involved, and understand what it means to be a Volunteer.



UT has shown me that an open mind is so important because you never know what doors an opportunity might open. Orange changed my life."

-AZARIA BOYD ('24)

Lane leads efforts such as these to develop career pipelines for students through corporate partnerships, employer spotlights, industry networking nights, a career fair, and curated student programming. Her office piloted a unique alumni mentorship program using Connect UT, a system-wide networking, mentoring, and connection platform for alumni, faculty, and staff.

"The program launched with 39 successful partnerships between alumni and seniors," Lane says. "As part of the program, we ask the student and alumnus to complete three meetings and track the outcomes through Connect UT.

"This is just very special work, to see how students make their dreams a reality. I enjoy encouraging them to craft a path forward so they can make the most of their careers."

#### LIFE-CHANGING POWER OF ORANGE

Azaria Boyd ('24) spent her senior year with the UT Behavior and Learning Lab, which supports research in ADHD. With the lab, she helped run an after-school program in partnership with the Shora Foundation, a nonprofit serving East Knoxville through youth and entrepreneurship programming.

"We used cognitive therapy techniques and worked with the mind and thoughts to see how that translated to the kids' behavior," says Boyd. "I loved seeing the kids grow. I also saw what the lab's graduate students experience in their coursework research, internships, theses."

Because of donor-supported scholarships, Boyd could pursue her lab work and studies in developmental psychology, as well as internships, summer jobs, and study abroad experiences. She spent part of her junior year in London and Madrid, which clarified her future and motivated her to become a study abroad peer advisor with the Center for Global Engagement.

"My scholarships really impacted me and enabled the things I've done at UT," says Boyd. "I basically had a full ride with UT's Flagship Scholarship and other support. Without it, I can't say if I would've even been in college. "UT has shown me that an open mind is so important because you never know what doors an opportunity might open. Orange changed my life."

Boyd plans to attend graduate school, but for now she continues working with neurodivergent children who have developmental disabilities through a job she secured after graduation—all thanks to her student experience.



**96% of firstyear students** are receiving scholarships or financial aid.



privately funded

scholarships have

been awarded.



retention rate.



#### DONOR-CULTIVATED COMMUNITY

Without the UT Success Academy (UTSA), some of its 400-plus participants may have left UT, depriving the campus of leaders and volunteers—and of the power grid security research completed by junior Semilore Abiodun-Adeniyi through his internship at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL).

"Without UTSA and recommendations from the program's director, I wouldn't have

my high-profile internships," says Abiodun-Adeniyi. "Without UTSA I would've been more isolated from people and resources." UTSA welcomes all students but was originally developed for men of color, who in the past had told the Division of Student Success that they felt they didn't belong on Rocky Top. **The cohort-based program follows students through all four years with a curated curriculum and academic, social, and career development programming.** Since its 2021 launch, retention rates for students in its target demographic rose from 82 to 87 percent, edging close to UT's record-breaking 91 percent rate. Impressively, 77 percent of second-year, students continued to their third year, compared to 60 percent before UTSA's creation.

Thanks to donor funds, the program can offer critical support for students to overcome financial hardship during an emergency. Such was the case for Abiodun-Adeniyi.

"The most important thing I've learned from my time in the program is that no matter how you feel, there are always people that care about you," says Abiodun-Adeniyi.

"The impact UTSA has had on these scholars is immeasurable," adds Amber Williams, vice provost for student success. "Their potential was always limitless, but with the right support structures in place and knowing there is a whole community cheering them on—they now better understand that each dream and goal they set is in reach. I've been so inspired by their journey and am excited for all the positive change UTSA will continue to drive on campus."





#### FUELED FOR THE FUTURE

On a visit to campus, Ronald T. Morris ('69) heard from three female engineering students who told him what they needed to succeed in school and what they would like to see happen within the Tickle College of Engineering. The newly named Jessica M. Morris Women in Engineering Program is the result.

The Morris family gift will facilitate student attendance at conferences, seminars, and workshops related to engineering. Those opportunities will empower students to showcase their research, connect with industry professionals, and gain exposure to the latest developments in their fields. It will also enable virtual and onsite visits by accomplished women in engineering, outreach efforts to high school students who are considering engineering as a career path, and support for staff dedicated to the program. Not many students I knew were pursuing engineering majors, and none of them were women. Fellow Vols quickly erased any of the worries that I had. Tickle is a college that welcomes all and provides the resources needed for success."

-ABIGAIL LEE, CLASS OF 2025, CHEMICAL ENGINEERING MAJOR

#### SUPPORT FOR FUTURE SERVICE MEMBERS

Army and Air Force ROTC students excel on campus and in their military roles after graduation thanks to support from scholarships, study abroad opportunities, and enriching experiences tailored to their unique career tracks and demanding program requirements. UT's Army ROTC program predates that of any other state university, and support for premilitary students is embedded at every level. From college-specific study abroad opportunities to scholarships for a head start on flight school, these students are appreciated for their future service and offered every support in becoming the best they can be. Supply chain management senior and ROTC cadet Cassandra Rozman spent last summer studying in Greece:

"I was given so many resources [at UT] with applying to different scholarships to help fund the whole trip. Being abroad showed me I'm going to have to learn how to adapt culturally if I were to be deployed overseas."



*3 students named Goldwater Scholars,* the most prestigious undergraduate STEM award in the US.

**UT named a top producer of Fulbright students** for the sixth consecutive year, ranking second among SEC schools, with 13 students and recent graduates receiving awards. **8 graduate students** awarded National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships.



## YOU ARE HELPING MAKE

UT A DESTINATION

## FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE.

#### EDUCATION REIMAGINED

To answer the needs of our students, faculty, and the state's changing workforce landscape, UT altered its academic structure for the first time in 50 years.

The transformed Natalie L. Haslam College of Music elevates music students in the rapidly changing music economy, one deeply rooted in Tennessee. It is the only public college of music in Tennessee and the Southeastern Conference. In June, the college was named in honor of alumna Natalie L. Haslam and became the fourth named college in UT's history.

The new **College of Emerging and Collaborative Studies** (CECS) furthers UT's mission as a modern land-grant university by fostering interdisciplinary programs, removing academic silos by encompassing scholars of all disciplines, nurturing new degree programs in emerging fields, and partnering with industry to build in-demand skills for students.

The **Howard H. Baker Jr. School of Public Policy and Public Affairs** remains focused on the importance of civil service and accessible government, with first-inclass programs like Baker Scholars and collaborative research centers like the Institute for American Civics. But now it deepens its investment in educating future leaders, offering undergraduate degrees for the first time and producing public servants who will improve lives in Tennessee and our nation.

New student-focused and workplacedirected degree programs and opportunities include the following:

- Music degrees: music advertising and public relations, music journalism and media, music business administration
- CECS degrees: data science; applied artificial intelligence; innovative transdisciplinary studies, plus workplaceready stackable certificates in areas such as applied cybersecurity, AI, medicine, and game craft
- Baker School: public affairs, five-year bachelor's-to-master's degrees in public policy and public administration
  New programs also emerged in the Tickle
  College of Engineering, from environmental engineering to a minor in nuclear engineering.



UT's faculty and students produce research and solutions to answer the challenges of an evolving world. You are helping them bridge the gap between today and tomorrow through new facilities and modern degree programs that will equip them to be leaders in their fields and in the industries of the future.





**Expanded online degree options** through a UT partnership with Arizona State University are making a UT education more accessible than ever for all types of students.





#### MAKING SPACE

Increased capacity through new and updated facilities means more students can access UT degrees; more responsive, innovative degree programs with fully enabled learning environments; a supportive space equipped for researchers providing solutions that improve lives; and retention of top faculty talent.

"To meet our vision of educating more Tennesseans and building the state's future workforce, we must invest in our campus," says Chancellor Donde Plowman. "That means both building more capacity and creating the kind of dynamic and supportive learning environment that will help our students succeed."

- A state-of-the-art simulation and learning lab opened fall 2023 at the UT Research Park through a partnership between the College of Nursing and UT Medical Center.
- The Innovation South building at the UT Research Park is expected to open in October and will house the Fibers and Composites Manufacturing Facility and headquarters for IACMI—The Composites Institute, a 130-plus-member consortium of companies focused on composites manufacturing.
- The Agriculture and Natural Resources Building on the UT Institute of Agriculture campus opens in the fall.
- Two new residence halls are expected to open fall 2025.
- The Croley Nursing Building at the corner of Volunteer Boulevard and Peyton Manning Pass is on track to open fall 2025.
- A new Haslam College of Business Building off Volunteer and Cumberland Avenues is expected to open fall 2027.

#### REFOCUSING ON HUMANITIES

UT celebrated the naming of the Denbo Center for Humanities in April. A generous gift from former Vol football player Don Denbo ('71) highlights and fuels the encompassing power of arts and humanities to address all fields of study. Our world exhibits challenges that require multifaceted transdisciplinary approaches. Graduates who can incorporate a humanities-based critical perspective will be well prepared to meet those challenges. The center will continue to promote transdisciplinary research, offer fellowships, and facilitate public outreach. Denbo's classical education, UT degree in psychology, and subsequent studies in economics enabled him to thrive as a founding member of one of the largest insurance brokers in the country, Commercial Insurance Associates.



The deep desire for current and subsequent constituencies of UT to have the benefits of the same education which grounded me in the humanities is the reason my family and I have made this commitment. The conviction that this enterprise, now the Denbo Center, will aid in that endeavor is the reward of a life committed to the basics of a classical humanities education."

## **UT IS LEADING**

## **RESEARCH THAT CHANGES**

## **TENNESSEANS' LIVES.**

At its best, a land-grant research university solves the problems and provides the answers to the challenges of its state. From professorships to faculty awards, you are the driving force that makes lives better in this state and outside its borders.

## this first year, I'm planning on using funding to shore up that effort."

The heart of Johnston's work will be the SmoQy Suite, a collection of codes that simulate the quantum materials that will shape technology's future. Its open-source nature means students can get involved with researchers from other UT colleges and departments and those outside the university.

While Johnston's group is spearheading the SmoQy effort, he seeks to involve more students and partner with UT's Min H. Kao Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science on code development. He's already working with Physics Professor and Department Head Adrian Del Maestro (who holds a joint appointment with EECS) to add codes to the SmoQy library.

"Professor Johnston has an incredible impact across the teaching, research, and service mission of the department," Del Maestro said. "I look forward to his transformative contributions to quantum materials research that will help shape future technologies for Tennesseans and beyond."

Advances in technology depend on the development of quantum materials, the properties of which are not fully understood, and it is fitting that Elizabeth Bains's legacy contributes to progress in this revolutionary area. She was one of exceedingly few women in her field at the time and created a successful career with NASA that spanned the entire length of the American space shuttle program. Before attending UT, she put her undergraduate physics degree from Lebanon Valley College in Pennsylvania to work for the Navy by hand calculating the trajectories of missiles and projectiles and comparing them to the results of early computer programs.

> 265 faculty received donor support

UT Research Reaches New Heights in 2023— \$428 million in sponsored project awards and \$339 million in research expenditures

#### BREAKTHROUGHS AT THE QUANTUM LEVEL

Steve Johnston was appointed the inaugural Bains Professor this year with funding provided by the estate gift of Elizabeth and James Bains, who both earned their PhDs from UT in the 1970s. The Bainses' gift will now make it possible for Johnston to explore new lines of research into quantum materials.

"What I'm really looking forward to is using this support for exploratory work," Johnston said. "If I'm interested in pursuing some new line of research, this gives me a little bit of flexibility to do that. My group is investing a lot of time and effort in developing some open-source software and, at least for

#### POWERING TENNESSEE FOR THE FUTURE

Thanks to a generous \$1 million investment from the Tennessee Valley Authority, Charles Sims, director of the Center for Energy, Transportation, and Environmental Policy at the Baker School of Public Policy and Public Affairs, has been named the inaugural TVA Distinguished Professor of Energy and Environmental Public Policy. "As our landscape, technology, and customer expectations shift and evolve, the Baker School faculty's core commitment to educational innovation will produce graduates poised to navigate and lead the everchanging world of energy and environmental policy," says Jeff Lyash, president and CEO of the Tennessee Valley Authority. "TVA is proud to see Dr. Sims selected for this inaugural distinguished professorship."



**UT Institute of Agriculture Leads the Way in Turf Research:** UT and Michigan State University are working together to create perfect natural grass pitches for the FIFA World Cup 2026.

Katherine Ambroziak Named James R. Cox Professor: Ambroziak was awarded the campuslevel professorship, which honors faculty members for excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service. Her work with area projects like the Odd Fellows Cemetery Reclamation Initiative has enriched the local community while melding undergraduate design coursework and teaching with her scholarship.

**Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering Uses AI to Improve Sepsis Detection:** The project demonstrates the potential power of AI in medical applications, and researchers are teaming up to apply their expertise and tools to solve problems like faster detection of sepsis,

which threatens tens of millions globally every year.









#### FORENSICS TO SOLVE THE UNSOLVABLE

Faculty at the Forensic Anthropology Center are initiating two new research programs with funding from the National Institute of Justice. One project will help law enforcement locate clandestine graves, and the second will help inform how relic DNA in the soil affects forensic investigations. This research is made possible through the support of additional private funding.



-DEBORAH CRAWFORD, VICE CHANCELLOR FOR RESEARCH, INNOVATION, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



6 faculty members were named to *Clarivate's* 2023 list of highly cited researchers—placing them among the top 1 percent of researchers in their fields worldwide.

183 faculty members were included in *Stanford University's annual list* of the top 2 percent of scientists cited.



4 faculty members were named SEC Academic Leadership Development Program Fellows.

## YOU ARE BUILDING THE

## **BEST ATHLETICS OPERATION**

## IN THE COUNTRY.

At its core, this pursuit prioritizes the studentathlete, a Vol who can achieve comprehensive excellence in any arena and who will go on to light the way in their field—turf-covered or not. Developing a championship mindset takes time, but the momentum at UT is undeniable, and it's succeeding because Vols like you are giving their all to make it a reality.



#### NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

Tennessee baseball captured its first national championship in 2024. It marked the 24th team national title in Tennessee Athletics history and the first since women's indoor track and field in 2009. Tennessee also made history as it became the second No. 1 overall seed to win a national title since 1999. In the lead-up to their championship victory, the Vols won 60 games—the first SEC team in history to reach 60 victories in a single season and just the fourth conference team to win the SEC regular season title, SEC Tournament title, and the Men's College World Series in the same season.

The Volunteer family turned out in an unprecedented display for the team's return home to Knoxville following their win, and it is this same passion that paved their way to a title. Your support has made and continues to make a difference for all student-athletes and their ability to thrive on Rocky Top and in any field they enter. With a groundbreaking held in fall 2023, the \$100 million renovation to the Vols' home field will add thousands of new seats and modern amenities to Lindsey Nelson Stadium.

Because of what you've contributed from facilities to programming needs to scholarships—players of all sports can focus on athletic and academic priorities, and now UT has seen the first fruits of the championship mindset.





#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS ACROSS ATHLETICS

UT experienced an extraordinary year in athletics. Most teams made major strides with best-in-program finishes to their seasons—not to mention overwhelming numbers of individual accolades, from player-of-the-year awards to MVPs to All-American players. Thanks to Vol Nation's support, Tennessee Athletics is on the rise.

Tennessee finished **third nationally in the Learfield Directors' Cup**, the best finish in school history and just the third Top 10 ranking since the award began in 1993.

Tennessee is the **first SEC school to win regular season conference titles in men's basketball, softball, and baseball** in the same year and the second school ever to capture three consecutive SEC All-Sports titles presented by USA Today Network. Since 2021, UT has picked up 12 SEC titles.

All 20 UT sports reached NCAA postseason. Eleven reached top-10 finishes nationally and seven reached top five.

Knoxville lived up to its name of America's College Sports City as Tennessee posted the highest overall attendance of any school in the nation across football, men's and women's basketball. A total of 1,161,218 people attended the Volunteers' 38 home events in those three sports.

Three Tennessee coaches were named the National Coach of the Year in their respective sports (Tony Vitello, baseball; Kim Cupini, rowing; Alison Ojeda, women's tennis).

The spring 2024 semester was another record-breaking term for Tennessee Athletics, as **the student-athlete population achieved a cumulative 3.37 GPA**, the second-highest GPA for a spring semester in UT history, with 221 students recognized the dean's list.

## YOU ARE HELPING VOLUNTEERS

## SHAPE OUR COMMUNITIES,

## NEAR AND FAR.

The Volunteer community has a deep-rooted dedication to improving life and lives across the state and around the world through student learning opportunities that impact local communities, alumni leading the way in their fields, and faculty who drive innovation and solutions that address global challenges.



## HOSPITAL PLAYROOM

In a heartwarming initiative, UT students reimagined playrooms at East Tennessee Children's Hospital as healing spaces. Their designs, developed as part of their Design for Health course, aimed to create comforting environments for patients while promoting growth and development.

The "Tree Room" proposal featured murals, space dividers, and Montessori-inspired play elements, while "tHe pOp" utilized vibrant colors, geometric graphics, and inclusive design principles. The students' concept development was made possible through the course's interdisciplinary approach, where students of many academic backgrounds explored a wide array of interactive, immersive play models in the area, including Zoo Knoxville, and other health care facilities.

The students' imaginative design concepts will positively impact young patients during some of their most vulnerable moments. Hospital staff and potential donors to the playrooms appreciated such a meaningful contribution to the Knoxville community and applauded the students' dedication and thoughtful creativity.



#### SERVING COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE SOUTH

The VOLbreaks program, through the Clay and Debbie Jones Center for Leadership and Service, empowers students to dedicate their breaks to serving communities and gaining new perspectives. Since 1993, VOLbreaks has facilitated immersive service opportunities, allowing students to interact with local leaders and community organizations, lead short-term projects, and transform their world views. **Last spring, four VOLbreaks trips spread** 

across the Southeast, each with a unique focus. Students learned civic values, leadership skills, and the value of lifelong social action while positively impacting the communities they served.

**Community Development in Asheville, North Carolina:** Students worked with local organizations to learn about underserved communities, addressing youth, education, homelessness, substance abuse, and inequity.

Animal Outreach and Welfare in Savannah, Georgia: Students engaged in hands-on animal welfare activities, learning about wildlife conservation and safety.

Youth Development in Charleston, South Carolina: Students made a lasting impact on Charleston's youth through service opportunities, enhancing leadership and teamwork skills.

Neurodevelopmental Differences in Moncure, North Carolina: Volunteers assisted at a camp for people with autism, supporting communication, social interaction, behavior, and self-care.

VOLbreaks engage our students in meaningful community service through a diverse array of opportunities. The program aims to instill civic values and leadership skills with learning outcomes like issue awareness, advocacy, and community engagement."

-NATALIE FRANKEL, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE JONES CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE



#### VOLS LEAD INTERDISCIPLINARY OPERATION

At the UT Creamery, open as of fall 2023, students create and market ice cream flavors like VOLnilla Bean and Go Big Orange. This experiential learning opportunity immerses students in research and development, branding, and supply and demand.

The creamery's revival of the original operation, established in 1915, prepares students for successful careers in a variety of fields, while utilizing area dairy farm products and nurturing the local economy. It operates through a partnership between the Herbert College of Agriculture's Department of Food Science and the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences' Rocky Top Institute program in the Department of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management and was jump-started by a gift from alumnae Sue Conley ('75) and Peggy Smith, entrepreneurs of James Beard Award-winning Cowgirl Creamery.

#### A LEGACY FELT ACROSS CAMPUS

James (Jim) Herbert ('62), a successful businessman and proud UT alumnus, passed away in 2024, but he left a powerful legacy through generosity that extended across UT—including agriculture, arts and sciences, Extension offices, Greek life, and substantial scholarship support.

In 2018, the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources was renamed the Herbert College of Agriculture in honor of a transformational gift from Herbert and his wife, Judi ('63), ensuring that future generations receive an exceptional agricultural education.

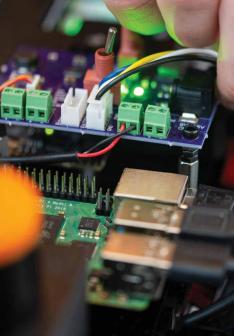
The Herberts also established the Jim and Judi Herbert Excellence in Writing Endowment, supporting tutoring services for students and workshops for faculty through the Judith Anderson Writing Center, renamed for Judi in 2019. Herbert's company, Neogen, was a pioneer in rapid diagnostic testing and food safety products, safeguarding global food supply. This success earned him honorary doctorates from multiple institutions, including UT, and recognition as USA Today Michigan Entrepreneur of the Year. His legacy truly thrives through the Volunteer lives he continues to impact and empower.





#### STATE IMPACT TITLE

As a key driver in Tennessee's economy, UT was tapped by the Council on Competitiveness to serve as a featured cohost for the national organization's inaugural Competitiveness Conversations Across America summit, where Chancellor Donde Plowman represented the university as a panelist to express UT's commitment as a land-grant institution to the betterment of the state and its people. Plowman shared about her optimism for the state's and university's future following her participation at the summit. "As the state's flagship R1 land-grant university, UT is focused on meeting the needs of our state," said Plowman. "That means contributing to and creating knowledge, developing a skilled workforce, and pursuing ambitious projects. We have enormous expertise and capabilities in mobility and energy, among other fields. I've never been more certain of the opportunity in front of us at UT and our ability to propel Tennessee's economy into the future."



**Thank you** for your generosity and changing the lives of current and future Vols.

T ADVANCEMENT

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