

# WOMEN

UT DIVERSITY

## with BIG IDEAS

### MESSAGE FROM PROVOST SUSAN MARTIN



It is an honor and a pleasure to acknowledge the accomplishments of seven women with big ideas. They exemplify our commitment to recruiting Top 25-quality faculty, staff, and students. You will enjoy reading about them as much as I have.

Women have been a part of our community since the earliest days of the university. The fall class of 1804 included five female students, making the then

Blount College one of the first coeducational colleges in America. The University of Tennessee began admitting women on a regular basis in 1893. The first Dean of Women, Florence Skeffington, doubled the number of women students by 1903. The first graduate with a law degree was conferred in 1909. In 1954, Lilly Jenkins became the first African American woman to receive a master's degree and the first UG degree awarded to

a female African American came in 1964. UT's three Rhodes scholars in the recent era have all been women.

The representation of women in our community has increased steadily over the last few decades. While our student body hovers consistently at around 50% female, faculty representation has not been as robust. Even ten years ago, female faculty numbered only 38% of assistant professors and 16% of full professors with a total of 32.3% overall. As of fall, 2013, women represent 50.5% of assistant professors, 20.5% of full professors, and a total of 41% of the tenure-line faculty. There appears to be steady progress in terms of representation in faculty as well as in administration.

In these pages, we celebrate the contributions of women from across campus: Some have had an impact in teaching and scholarly achievement, others provide essential support to our students, and two students are already planting the seeds of future great ideas. All contribute to the collective impact of the University of Tennessee. As we progress towards our goal of an increasingly diverse campus, their stories will inform and inspire us all.

### LA VINIA DELOIS JENNINGS DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR IN THE HUMANITIES

"Literature is truly an art. I have enjoyed my time in this field," said La Vinia Delois Jennings, Distinguished Professor in the humanities at UT.

Jennings has focused her research interests on the study of twentieth-century American literature and the religion and philosophy of the African diaspora. Her most recent publication is *Zora Neale Hurston, Haiti, and Their Eyes Were Watching God*, a follow-up to her award-winning monograph, *Toni Morrison and the Idea of Africa*. Both works highlight the influence of African traditional religious beliefs on twentieth-century American literature and culture. Jennings, who has now authored five books, said the goal of her publications is to advocate for the humanity of people who have had it stripped from them.

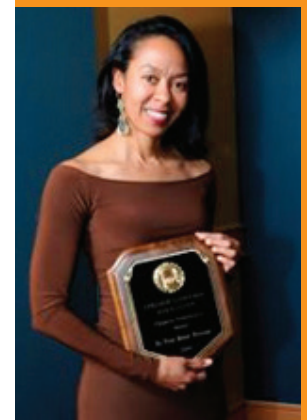
"It's about specializing in topical areas and accomplishing a greater task," she said.

While conducting research, Jennings has traveled across the world visiting, countries in Africa, South America, Europe, and the Caribbean. In 1998 Jennings was appointed a Fulbright Senior Lecturer at the University of Malaga in

Spain. She credits the English department's John C. Hodges Better English Endowment for allowing her the opportunity to mix her professional and personal interests.

Jennings said her focus remains on preparing her students to succeed both inside and outside the classroom. "My passion stems from seeing my students do well."

Jennings recently finished an edited collection on Toni Morrison's libretto, *Margaret Garner*, and is currently editing a 376-page writing on music and drama by H(arry) Lawrence Freeman, the Father of African American grand opera. She will then turn to compiling an anthology devoted to the African American libretti tradition. ■



## STELLA BRIDGEMAN-PRINCE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER



Working in the Student Success Center (SSC) and directing the UT Lead program, Stella Bridgeman-Prince, assistant director at the SSC, has over 12 years of experience in higher education. She has progressed from an academic advisor to an assistant director while broadening her scope of experiences through coordinating outreach for

the SSC, directing the tutoring program and teaching first year studies and counselor education.

She is responsible for putting in place student success initiatives and best practices to provide first-year students with access to academic resources. Prince also leads the SSC's UT Lead Summer Institute, a five-week summer program designed to give incoming freshmen a jump-start to the freshman year.

"This program helps students gain a better understanding of what is expected of them as UT Students," Prince said. "We try to prepare them for a successful and holistic first-year experience."

In addition to Prince's day-to-day duties at the SSC, she remains heavily involved in campus committees including the Appeals Committee, the Life of the Mind Committee, the Graduate School of Education Student Recruitment Committee, and the Advising Committee.

"I try to stay involved so that I am aware of the needs of the campus community and to provide input that will enhance our students academic experience," she said.

Recently, Prince began working on a pilot program geared towards mentoring first-generation college students. The program, which started with fifteen student participants, gives students an opportunity to work with faculty and staff members who were also first-generation college students.

Currently, Prince is working on bringing an Academic Coaching certification program to the Student Success Center. She is a certified advanced level academic coach. My goal for this academic year is to become a certified academic coach trainer through the National Tutoring Association, stated Prince. Not only is she working to bring new initiatives to the institution she is very much an advocate for all students. "I had a great mentor and she assisted me in so many ways, because of that I want to position myself to give back" Prince said.

"If I can impact at least one student in the way that I was impacted, then I think I have succeeded in my role." ■

## STEPHANIE TERMAATH ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

"Teaching is something that I have always wanted to do; it's my dream job," said Stephanie TerMaath, assistant professor in the College of Engineering.

After a twelve-year venture across the country, TerMaath returned to academia in 2012 when she joined UT's faculty. Prior to her current position, TerMaath worked in North Carolina managing a physics-based computing group at Applied Research Associates. Before moving to North Carolina, TerMaath lived and worked in California and Texas.

"Having worked at different places and in several cities, I was able to build a network which has been beneficial to my students," she said.

In 2013, TerMaath took a group of students to California to visit Boeing, where TerMaath previously worked. While there, students toured the facility and learned about the operations of Boeing and available job opportunities. TerMaath plans to continue to take her students on field trips that will expose them to a variety of career opportunities in engineering.

"There is nothing more important than exposing students to available opportunities and helping them to realize their dreams and goals," TerMaath said. "I tell students that they need to be an expert in a core area while concurrently developing a broad understanding of engineering. This educational background will enable them to be a valuable member on the multidisciplinary teams that will solve the challenges facing our world."

TerMaath's commitment to her students' success led her to develop a pilot project that provides an integrated education

encompassing hands-on training and professional preparation for women pursuing advanced degrees in engineering. In early 2014, TerMaath helped lead three of her students to compete and place in national and regional research conferences.

"Having a support network is crucial," TerMaath said. "Several of my students have decided to receive advanced degrees because of the mentoring relationship I was able to build with them."

In February TerMaath helped lead three of her students to compete and place in national research and writing conferences. At the 2014 TSLAMP (Tennessee Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation) Undergraduate Research Conference in Nashville, one of her students won second place for best engineering research.

"She was only a sophomore. Mentoring and support really does work," TerMaath said. "It's truly exciting to watch my students blossom. There is nothing more rewarding." ■



## JACQUELINE JOHNSON ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING

Jacqueline Johnson, an Associate Professor of Biomedical Engineering at the UT Space Institute, is working to enhance the quality of services dentists are able to provide to their patients.

For the past twelve years Johnson has focused her research on medical imaging and medical device development in which she and her students are redesigning medical imaging plates used in the dental industry. Johnson is looking at commercialization projects with hopes of getting the new plate design on the market within the next two years.

“I try to do projects that are useful to the students,” Johnson said. “My student researchers have really enjoyed this project.”

Johnson joined the UT faculty in 2007 after having worked for twelve years as a staff scientist with Argonne National Laboratory. Prior to her position at Argonne, Johnson served on the faculty of John Moore University in the United Kingdom. Johnson says UT was the perfect opportunity for her to return to academia.

“I liked the technical setting here. It was a great fit for my goals as a professor.” Since joining the faculty, Johnson

has also served on several national boards, including the review boards for the National Institute of Science and Technology and the National Science Foundation. Recently, Johnson was selected to help organize the 2015 Conference for the Physics of Non-Crystallizing Solids, scheduled to take place in Niagara Falls. Several of Johnson’s students will accompany her to the conference.

“It will serve as a good experiences for our students,” said Johnson. ■



## JULIET MEGGS DOCTORAL STUDENT, COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY



Juliet Meggs, a doctoral student in counseling psychology at UT, has taken on a role that she considers to be bigger than herself.

“It’s never just about me. I wanted to give transgender people a space for others to learn more,” she said.

In the fall of 2011 Meggs began hosting seminars entitled Trans 101. The

seminars, which are geared towards informing the Knoxville community about transgender identities, were inspired by what Meggs saw as a lack of discussion surrounding gender identities.

“People just didn’t know that transgender people existed and I wanted to provide that space for people to learn,” Meggs said.

In addition to her roles as a doctoral student, graduate assistant, and practicum therapist with the Student Counseling Center, Meggs continues to visit classrooms to give presentations on transgender identities. Meggs has also

given Trans 101 presentations to student and community organizations. Although Meggs admits the many roles she has can be a lot to juggle, she has given over sixty presentations for classes, colleges, community groups, and conferences. These presentations cover information on diverse transgender issues including basic questions about gender identity, explorations of transgender sexuality, and transgender representations in the media.

“I feel like I have been able to help create space for transgender people on campus. I hope these sessions will continue even after I graduate,” said Meggs.

Meggs, now a fourth-year doctoral student, has proposed a dissertation topic on the study of the transgender community and internalized transphobia. Through her research she hopes to understand the internalized messages that transgender persons hold about themselves and how they are able to overcome negative signals sent to them by society. Upon graduation Meggs is committed to continuing her work as a therapist on a college campus. It’s easy to see that Meggs has dedicated her life to serving others. ■



## SAVANNAH HICKS PRESIDENT, NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENT ASSOCIATION



As the former president of the Native American Student Association (NASA), Savannah Hicks, a senior, has played an active role in exposing the campus to Native American culture.

“Our programs helped to demystify a lot of stereotypes about our [Native American] culture. Serving in that role allowed me to really think about programs that would

best benefit the campus community,” Hicks said.

The NASA focuses on supporting the advancement of Native Americans on campus and in the community. It hosts a variety of campus discussions, movie nights, and presentations, all focusing on the prevalent issues faced by the

Native American community. November is Native American Heritage Month. NASA hosts Heritage Night, an annual event that brings to campus several Native American speakers to share their own personal experiences. Hicks believes that the campus community is better able to relate when NASA members and guests are able to speak from their own experiences.

“As the president, I talked about my experiences growing up on a reservation and some of the challenges I have faced. I think NASA has done a great job of educating the campus,” she said.

Hicks plans to return to North Carolina upon graduation, and continue to advance the Native American community: “I plan to return to my reservation and work as an RN [Registered Nurse] at the local hospital.” ■

## GINGER GRIESINGER COLLEGE OF LAW CAFE

Since Ginger Griesinger began working at the College of Law’s Café in 2013, she has made it a priority to provide “quality service with unlimited smiles.”

“I always smile because I want the students to leave my store smiling. I know how important friendly service is,” said Griesinger.

Coinciding with her customer service goals, Griesinger designed a store theme for each day, encouraging students to remain optimistic and make the most of the day.

“Every Monday is Magnificent Monday and every Friday is a Fantastic Friday. I think it’s fun and it’s a good way to keep students in good spirits.”

Griesinger’s passion for her work has not gone unnoticed. Law students have visited the café’s web page to “wow” Griesinger. “Wow” is a website feature used to recognize café employees for outstanding customer service.

“It feels great to know that my service is important to the students here. The students really brighten my day too,” she said.

Before her current position, Griesinger worked as a customer service representative for Food City. She said that UT has been a very special highlight of her career.

“I love it here. It has truly been one of the best experiences of my life.” ■



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