



Strategic Plan

IGNITING EXCELLENCE

2023-2028

Small Campus, ***BIG OPPORTUNITIES***



Message from the Chancellor

I am extraordinarily excited to introduce the University of Tennessee Southern's inaugural strategic plan, a vision that will guide us toward a future of purposeful growth and positive transformation. This plan is more than just words on paper; it's a testament to our collective aspirations, a reflection of our shared commitment to excellence, a pledge to champion innovation and creativity, and a promise to honor our highest priority, students first.

Consistent with our mission and values, we have created a roadmap that draws inspiration from our rich history while embracing exciting opportunities for our future. It is a roadmap that captures the passion of our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and communities we serve, and exemplifies the collaborative spirit that is the hallmark of UT Southern.

Every goal, objective, strategy, and performance indicator is a reflection of our dedication to exceeding expectations of academic excellence and student success. We remain dedicated to serving Southern Middle Tennessee and to educating students to meet the current and future workforce needs of the region and of our state. Preparing students for a rewarding future and supporting them in their academic journey is the driving force behind all that is UT Southern.

This plan captures the spirit of our institution, from the pursuit of excellence to the enrichment of the student experience, and the deepening of our pledge to foster meaningful partnerships. We are dedicated to nurturing an environment that empowers members of our campus community to excel, discover, and serve. It is our people who make the difference.

Join me as we embark on this transformational journey, one that will change lives, ignite excellence, and forever impact the future of UT Southern. We remain unwavering in honoring our promise to those we serve – a promise to put students first in all we do.

Thank you for your steadfast dedication, deep commitment, and unfailing confidence. Together, we are poised to secure a bright and successful future for both our students and the University of Tennessee Southern.

Think big. Be bold. Inspire others.



Linda C. Martin
Interim Chancellor



Developing Our Strategy

In December 2022, UT Southern began a strategic visioning process to define the future of the next five years. The committee, comprising 24 members, included five staff and eight leadership members, 10 faculty members, and one student member. The university engaged an outside facilitator to guide an inclusive and informed process.

The approach was designed to ensure a comprehensive, forward-thinking, transformational vision for the future, one that will position UT Southern among the most distinguished universities of its kind in the nation. The creation of this vision included input from a broad range of stakeholders, both internal and external to the University of Tennessee Southern.

Input was collected during 11 listening sessions. Seven sessions held at UT Southern were attended by 211 UT Southern faculty, staff, and students. The four public sessions (three in Southern Middle Tennessee and one in North Alabama) engaged 105 stakeholders (private citizens, industry, non-profits, and municipal and state government). Sessions resulted in over 9,000 individual data points related to issues, trends, and external forces affecting the campus and stakeholders, strengths and weaknesses of the university, and visions for transforming UT Southern.

In addition, members of the committee conducted approximately 85 one-on-one interviews. Those interviewed included legislative and executive branch leaders; state and community leaders; local, state, and regional stakeholders; students, alumni, and influencers; representatives of funding agencies; members of UT Southern leadership, UT System leadership, and members of peer and comparable universities. These interviews yielded over 1,000 data points.

Data were carefully analyzed by the committee. This comprehensive effort resulted in the following goals and objectives that will guide the University of Tennessee Southern during the next five years.



Values

Integrity & Transparency

- Champion ethical choices.
- Honor commitments.
- Foster trust, honesty, and openness.

Excellence & Distinctiveness

- Pursue quality.
- Establish ambitious benchmarks.
- Aspire to exceed expectations.

Respect & Civility

- Embody professionalism.
- Lead with empathy and kindness.
- Welcome diverse perspectives; listen for understanding.

Connectedness & Collaboration

- Serve with purpose.
- Build partnerships.
- Create unity through teamwork.

Innovation & Transformation

- Think big.
- Be bold.
- Inspire others.



Trends

1 // Technology

In the face of rapid technological change, we must modernize infrastructure, ensure equitable technology access, and proactively address emerging threats such as cyberattacks and the potential misuse of artificial intelligence.

2 // Affordability

We must be unwavering in our commitment to provide a high-quality education at an affordable cost, recognizing the pivotal role the cost of attendance can play in student success.

3 // Access

We must expand access through diverse modalities, multiple locations, online platforms, micro-credentialing, and prior learning assessment to attract new learners and more effectively meet their needs.

4 // Demographics

Changing demographics and evolving workforce dynamics, along with the evolving higher education landscape and emerging needs of high school graduates, will influence enrollment and persistence.

5 // Value Proposition

As higher education's value is scrutinized, we must clearly demonstrate our proven and measurable value and impact, regardless of the prevailing national narrative.

6 // Political Landscape

Local, state, and federal stakeholders have direct influence on funding and the urgency with which institutional priorities can be pursued.

7 // Workforce Needs

Programs must align with industry needs and workforce demands, reflecting our responsiveness to evolving societal needs.

8 // Mental Health & Wellbeing

Recognizing its crucial role in overall wellbeing and academic success, we must proactively address mental health needs and foster a supportive and resilient community.

9 // Social Media

Acknowledging the impact of social media on student interaction, communication, and engagement, we must think creatively and purposefully about ways to foster connectedness, mattering, and belonging.





Strengths

1 // Empowered Faculty & Staff

Highly credentialed faculty and staff, dedicated to student success.

2 // Academically Focused Student-Athletes

The success of our student-athletes transcends classrooms, courts, and fields, and is a testament to the collaborative efforts of athletics and academics to support student success.

3 // Diverse Academic Portfolio

A rich portfolio of unique academic programs that demonstrate our commitment to regional and state workforce needs.

4 // Transformational Student Experience

We inspire and empower students to achieve greatness within a highly personalized academic experience and supportive campus environment.

5 // Small Campus, Big Opportunities

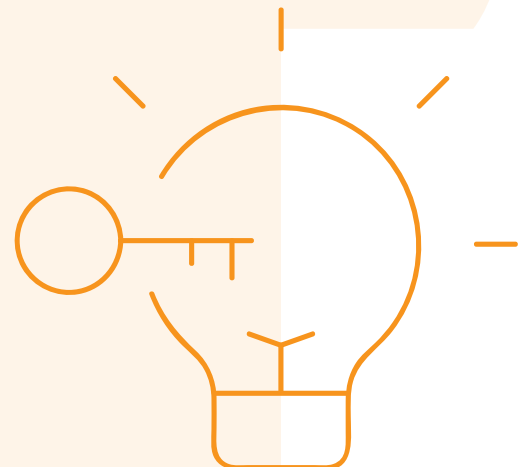
UT Southern's novel positioning as both the smallest and newest campus in the UT System provides the opportunity for intimate campus charm with substantial growth potential and support.

6 // Inclusive Culture

A culture of care and support that welcomes all, regardless of background, reflecting an ethos of access and engagement.

7 // Leadership

Strength of campus leadership is the cornerstone for UT Southern's sustained growth, success, and impact.



Mission & Vision

Our Mission

The University of Tennessee Southern provides an inspiring student-centered and transformative academic experience that empowers our students to excel in their chosen fields, nurtures intellectual inquiry and critical thinking, and instills a commitment to lifelong learning. With a profound sense of responsibility to our community, we strive to foster engagement and collaboration with all stakeholders to advance effectual change in the region and beyond.

Our Vision

At UT Southern, we engage minds, transform lives, and illuminate a bright future, all while contributing to the success of our community, state, and nation through innovative educational opportunities and meaningful connections.

Students **FIRST**



UT Southern Pillars

Pillar One

Enhance Academic Excellence & Promote Innovation

Our commitment to academic excellence is demonstrated through creating high-quality, student-centered, educational experiences that enhance our students' lives and equip them for successful careers.

Pillar Two

Create Transformational Student Experiences & Foster Student Success

Our commitment to a transformational student experience is achieved by providing high-quality and customized educational opportunities to every student at UT Southern.

Pillar Three

Establish Greater Connectedness & Facilitate Campus and Community Engagement

Our commitment to campus and community engagement is grounded in the goal of fostering robust partnerships, establishing strong relationships with stakeholders, and cultivating purposeful collaborations.



SPARK YOUR PASSION



Pillar One

Enhance Academic Excellence & Promote Innovation

UT Southern will provide high-quality, student-centered academic and educational experiences designed to enrich the lives of our students, successfully prepare them for rewarding careers, and establish UT Southern as a destination campus.

Objective 1.1

Recruit, retain, and support academically talented students from across Tennessee, surrounding states, and internationally.

STRATEGY 1.1.1

Strengthen collaborations among academic affairs, student affairs, faculty, and staff to successfully recruit and retain students, and grow enrollment.

STRATEGY 1.1.2

Increase brand awareness and establish UT Southern as a destination campus with a reach extending beyond its current regional footprint.

STRATEGY 1.1.3

Develop a comprehensive student support network to actively promote student wellbeing and proactively support the personal, professional, and academic success of our students.

Objective 1.2

Establish new and enhance existing academic degree programs and/or credentials that serve students and prepare them for current and emerging high-demand careers in Tennessee and across the country.

STRATEGY 1.2.1

Actively support faculty development, foster classroom innovation, promote instructional creativity, and bolster the development of learning environments that meet our students' needs and provide meaningful experiential learning opportunities.

STRATEGY 1.2.2

Seek and/or maintain appropriate institutional and programmatic accreditation, conduct periodic program reviews, and ensure rigorous assessment of teaching and learning.

Metrics

STRATEGY 1.2.3

Engage internal and external stakeholders, advisory boards, and alumni in identifying emerging career opportunities, needed degree programs and/or certificates/endorsements, minors, and opportunities for internships and experiential learning.

Objective 1.3

Recruit and retain highly talented, student-centered faculty, coaches, and staff who are deeply committed to student success.

STRATEGY 1.3.1

Ensure applicants for faculty, coaching, and staff positions possess a broad set of skills and experiences and have a demonstrated commitment to students and student success.

STRATEGY 1.3.2

Provide resources for professional development and embrace a culture of continuous quality improvement.

STRATEGY 1.3.3

Ensure faculty and staff are supported in pursuing intellectual discovery and scholarly endeavors.



- ▶ Total number of students enrolled:

Baseline: 978

Target: 1250

- ▶ Number of new transfer students enrolled:

Baseline: 115

Target: 155

- ▶ Number of academic programs offered (graduate, undergraduate, & online):

Baseline: 28

Target: 30

- ▶ First-year retention, reflecting the university's success in providing a supportive and engaging environment that facilitates student success and persistence:

Baseline: 64%

Target: 72%

- ▶ Four- and six- year graduation rates, respectively:

Baseline: 23%; 36%

Target: 33%; 46%

Pillar Two

Create Transformational Student Experiences & Foster Student Success

UT Southern will provide a high-quality, transformational student experience through athletics, innovative programming, leadership development, and expanded cocurricular activities that are customized to meet the unique needs and/or interests of every student.

Objective 2.1

Redefine the student experience as a continuation of classroom learning.

STRATEGY 2.1.1

Ensure a transformational student experience (FYE; education abroad, undergraduate research, leadership, service-learning, internship, creative/artistic endeavor, and/or athletics) for every UT Southern student.

STRATEGY 2.1.2

Develop a framework and establish an expectation for students to define and design a unifying signature “UT Southern Experience.”

STRATEGY 2.1.3

Provide students with opportunities to engage in rich learning experiences that extend beyond the traditional classroom.

Objective 2.2

Expand educational opportunities, student engagement experiences, and student support services to fully serve the needs of student populations that have not historically engaged.

STRATEGY 2.2.1

Identify populations that have not historically engaged on campus and develop programming and support services that are more responsive to their needs.

STRATEGY 2.2.2

Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to engage off-campus students in campus events and activities.

Metrics

STRATEGY 2.2.3

Fully establish UT Southern as a residential campus that intentionally builds community and fosters participation in events/programming that engages students seven days a week throughout the academic year.

Objective 2.3

Embrace athletics as the face of the campus and promote the seamless integration of academic and athletic endeavors to support the success of our student-athletes.

STRATEGY 2.3.1

Align course scheduling and sequencing to provide access to degree programs, promote student success, and ensure timely degree completion.

STRATEGY 2.3.2

Embrace a culture that promotes integrity, respect, servant leadership, sportsmanship, and character development of student-athletes, coaches, and staff.

STRATEGY 2.3.3

Fully integrate student-athletes into the fabric of the campus and deliver programming responsive to their needs.



- ▶ Percentage of first-time, full-time students participating in the First-Year Experience program:

Baseline: 90%

Target: 100%

- ▶ Percentage of students engaging in internships:

Baseline: 10%

Target: 25%

- ▶ Percentage of undergraduate students engaged in research:

Baseline: 2%

Target: 10%

- ▶ Percentage of undergraduate students participating in leadership programs:

Baseline: 4%

Target: 20%

- ▶ Annual percentage of undergraduate students actively involved in cocurricular activities:

Baseline: 75%

Target: 95%

Pillar Three

Establish Greater Connectedness & Facilitate Campus and Community Engagement

UT Southern will cultivate robust campus engagement and community partnerships, establish strong stakeholder and community relationships, and foster purposeful and mutually beneficial collaborations.

Objective 3.1

Promote collaborations and initiatives that contribute to the success of the campus, University of Tennessee, local community, region, and the state of Tennessee.

STRATEGY 3.1.1

Create engagement opportunities, including volunteer programs and events, to promote interaction and collaboration with a focus on leveraging impact.

STRATEGY 3.1.2

Establish partnerships with industry, organizations, local government, and educational institutions to better serve the region and the state of Tennessee.

STRATEGY 3.1.3

Provide mechanisms for sustaining both existing and creating new opportunities for partnerships, engagement, and collaborations.

Objective 3.2

Leverage collaborations with other UT campuses and statewide constituents.

STRATEGY 3.2.1

Continue to establish, foster, and sustain collaborations with other UT campuses for faculty, staff, and students.

STRATEGY 3.2.2

Continue to establish, foster, and sustain partnerships and initiatives with external organizations, state agencies, and stakeholders to leverage resources and collective expertise.

STRATEGY 3.2.3

Systematically assess initiatives and projects that drive shared objectives and prioritize impactful engagements.

Objective 3.3

Engage alumni that fully embrace, advocate, and contribute to the future success of UT Southern.

STRATEGY 3.3.1

Foster and facilitate networking opportunities for alumni to connect, collaborate, and strengthen their relationship with UT Southern, enabling them to serve as advocates for the institution.

STRATEGY 3.3.2

Encourage active involvement and participation of alumni in university events, programs, and initiatives, cultivating their sense of belonging and investment in UT Southern's success.

STRATEGY 3.3.3

Facilitate meaningful connections between alumni and current students, creating mentorship and support networks that enhance the overall student experience and encourage lifelong engagement with the university.



- ▶ University of Tennessee's most collaborative campus, emphasizing impactful partnerships, engagements, and resource-sharing both within our campus and across the entire UT System:

Baseline: 2

Target: 10

- ▶ Level of relationships established with external entities, including local industries and community organizations, reflecting efforts to enrich education and contribute to local development:

Baseline: 2

Target: 5

- ▶ Staff satisfaction, involvement, and commitment as assessed through the McLean survey, providing insights into the effectiveness of internal collaboration and the work environment (Overall Employee Experience Score):

Baseline: 28.1

Target: 45

- ▶ Number of successful connections established and maintained with graduates (Alumni):

Baseline: 2500

Target: 3250

- ▶ University's contribution to the local community, quantified in volunteer hours, reflecting active engagement and a positive influence on community well-being through collaborations:

Baseline: 25% of employees

contribute 8 volunteer hours/year

Target: 50% of employees contribute 8 volunteer hours/year

SPECIAL THANKS

Acknowledgements

Ashley Allison

Director of Campus & Student Engagement
Students Interview Session Subcommittee,
Students Listening Session Subcommittee

Gennifer Baker (co-chair)

Assistant Professor of Nursing
Contributors Interview Session Subcommittee,
Public Listening Session Subcommittee

Evan Beech

Vice Chancellor of Advancement
Contributors Interview Session Subcommittee,
Public Listening Session Subcommittee

Michael Cathey

*Associate Professor of Education, Human
Performance & Physical Education*
Peer & Comparable Institution Interview
Session Subcommittee, Faculty & Staff
Listening session subcommittee

George Cheatham

*Chair, Martin School of Arts & Humanities,
Professor of English*
Peer & Comparable Institution Interview
Session Subcommittee, Faculty & Staff
Listening Session Subcommittee

Judy Cheatham

Provost & Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs
Contributors Interview Session Committee,
Public Listening Session Subcommittee

Tyler Cox

Associate Vice Chancellor of Admissions
Students Interview Session Subcommittee,
Students Listening Session Subcommittee

Pat Ford

Instructor of Business
End Users Interview Session Subcommittee,
Public Listening Session Subcommittee

Jim Greene (co-chair)

Assistant Professor of Business
End Users Interview Session Subcommittee,
Faculty & Staff Listening Session Subcommittee

Shanna Hanes

Associate Professor of Biology
Peer & Comparable Institution Interview Session
Subcommittee, Faculty & Staff Listening Session
Subcommittee

Lorie Jones

Associate Professor of Business
End Users Interview Session Subcommittee,
Public Listening Session Subcommittee

Matthew Little

Student Success Coordinator
Peer & Comparable Institution Interview
Session Subcommittee, Faculty & Staff Listening
Session Subcommittee



Daniel N. McMasters

*Chair, Grace Grissom School of Education,
Professor & Coordinator of Human Performance
and Physical Education*

Students Interview Session Subcommittee,
Students Listening Session Subcommittee

Brandie Paul

Vice Chancellor of Athletics & Athletic Director
Peer & Comparable Institution Interview Session
Subcommittee, Faculty & Staff Listening Session
Subcommittee

Claire Paul

*Assistant Professor of Education,
Elementary Education & Special Education*
End Users Interview Session Subcommittee,
Faculty & Staff Listening Session Subcommittee

Carlie Pendley

Student, SGA President
Students Interview Session Subcommittee,
Students Listening Session Subcommittee

Cochran Pruett

Instructor of History
Students Interview Session Subcommittee,
Students Listening Session Subcommittee

Sarah Catherine Richardson

Dean of Students
Students Interview Session Subcommittee,
Students Listening Session Subcommittee

Aimee Rose

*Vice Chancellor of Strategic
Communications & Marketing*
Administrative position added after
sessions concluded

Julie Shelton

Director of Career & Vocational Services
End Users Interview Session Subcommittee,
Faculty & Staff Listening Session Subcommittee

Robby Shelton

*Vice Chancellor for Finance & Administration;
Chief of Staff*
Peer & Comparable Institution Interview
Session Subcommittee, Public Listening
Session Subcommittee

Justin Watson

Head Coach - Cross Country, Track & Field
Peer & Comparable Institution Interview
Session Subcommittee, Public Listening
Session Subcommittee

Carey Whitworth

*UT System Vice President of Government
Relations & Advocacy*
Contributors Interview Session Subcommittee,
Public Listening Session Subcommittee

Brent Wren

*Vice Chancellor of Enrollment
Management & Student Affairs*
Administrative position added after
sessions concluded

Glossary of Terms

Academic Program

An instructional program leading to a certificate or degree.

First-Year Retention Rate

A measure of the rate at which students persist in their educational degree program at an institution, expressed as a percentage. First-year retention rate is the percentage of first-time, full-time (FTFT), degree-seeking undergraduates from the previous fall who are again enrolled in the fall of their second year.

First-Time Student

A student attending any institution for the first time, since completing high school, at the undergraduate level.

Full-Time Student

A student enrolled in at least 12 credit hours as an undergraduate or 9 credit hours as a graduate student.

Graduate Student

A student who holds an undergraduate degree or above and is taking courses at the postbaccalaureate level (students may or may not be enrolled in a graduate program).

Graduation Rate

The percentage of first-time, full-time (FTFT) students who graduate within a specified timeframe in relation to their first fall (reported as 4-year and 6-year).

New Student

A student who is new to their respective university and/or degree level. A first-time, full-time (FTFT) freshman has no prior postsecondary experience attending any institution at the undergraduate level and is taking at least 12 credit hours. A new transfer student is new to their respective university and is transferring from another university or college.

Total Enrollment

The total number of students (headcount) enrolled on the census date each fall.





THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
SOUTHERN



University of Tennessee Southern
433 W Madison Street
Pulaski, Tennessee 38478
931.363.9804

utsouthern.edu

utsouthern 

ut_southern 