

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT RONALD L. VAUGHN







# COVID-19 AND BEYOND

Despite a worldwide pandemic that required unprecedented decisions and actions, UT has remained committed to strengthening the educational and co-curricular experience for students. Here's a broad look at UT's varied accomplishments over the past academic year.

No matter how you look at it, the 2019-2020 academic year will forever be defined as the year we had to evacuate campus — not because of a hurricane — and provide remote instruction, as well as services, to students at home around the country and globe.

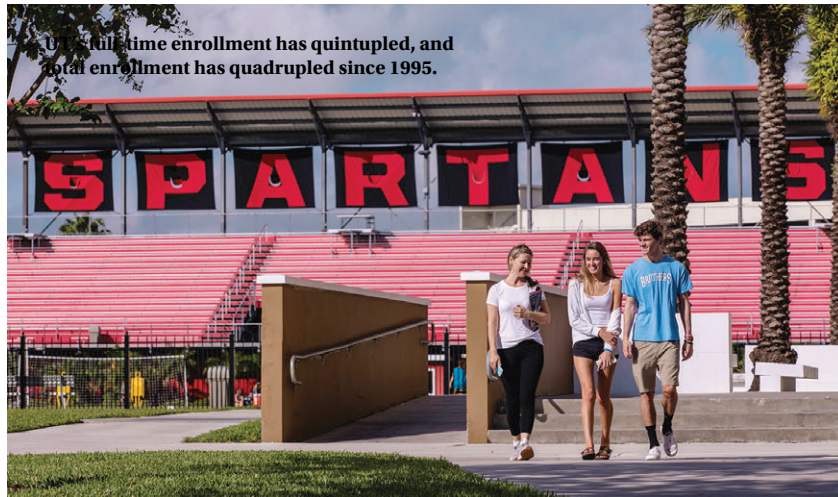
Fortunately, the UT community rose to the occasion with resiliency, adaptability and determination. It's very similar to how UT has faced many challenges throughout its history. While hurricanes, world wars and economic depressions have thrown obstacles in its path, UT has always stayed true to its mission to provide an excellent educational experience to deserving students. With continual development — and the commitment of so many faculty, staff, administrators, parents, alumni, students and friends — we've steadily built UT into a model, independent, metropolitan university.

But now we are challenged by a severe health and safety crisis combined with a dramatic economic downturn. Since March 16, when the University had to close the campus and pivot to remote learning, we have worked tirelessly to balance a return to campus with implementing important safety and health measures for the UT community.

Today we are all learning how to respond to COVID-19, and we will be learning together how to navigate this new normal. Learning can and does occur through multiple modalities, and our vibrant campus community will support those many ways of *learning by thinking and thinking by doing*, which are all part of the UT mission.

Despite COVID-19, there was plenty to boast about in 2019-2020. We have stayed focused on surviving, thriving, moving forward and improving our educational experience. While the 2019-2020 academic year came to a surprising conclusion, it was a successful year. No matter how long COVID-19 has the world in its grip, UT will persevere, and we will continue to adapt and improve, and provide students the education they need to be successful.

Face masks — part of UT's Spartan Shield Health Safety Initiative — can now be seen all over campus.



UT's full-time enrollment has quintupled, and total enrollment has quadrupled since 1995.

## NEW SPARTANS

UT began Fall 2019 with a new full-time enrollment record of 9,628. UT's full-time enrollment has quintupled, and total enrollment has quadrupled since 1995. We've had 23 successive years of

all-time enrollment records, and we've done this while so many schools are struggling and shrinking.

Of course, this past year has been quite a battle, as we have worked

within the dynamic pandemic environment. There has never been as much uncertainty in the college decision-making process, yet we hope to continue the University's steady enrollment growth as we help students achieve their educational goals.

UT was recognized as one of 77 universities accepted into the 2020-2021 cohort of First-gen Forward institutions. The First-gen Forward designation recognizes institutions of higher education that have demonstrated a commitment to improving experiences and advancing outcomes of first-generation college students.

UT was also included in Phi Theta Kappa's 2020 Transfer Honor Roll, which identifies the top four-year colleges and universities that create dynamic pathways to support transfer students. UT is one of only 122 institutions nationwide selected to receive this honor, and it is awarded to the top 25% of colleges that earned the highest transfer-friendliness ratings.

### UT'S REPUTATION SOARS IN RANKINGS

UT's quality educational brand continues to be recognized with many high rankings, recognitions and distinctions.

■ For the 13th year in a row, UT's Sykes College of Business was named as an outstanding business school by The Princeton Review and recognized as one of the 248 best business schools in the world. For the fourth year in a row, UT has also been named to *Bloomberg Businessweek's* Best U.S. Business Schools of 2019-2020.

■ UT's speech communication program was considered the nation's top undergraduate communications program this year after receiving the Rex Mix Program of Excellence Award at the 2019 annual convention of the National Communication Association.

■ UT was also named to *Kiplinger's Personal Finance's* list of the 400 Best College Values for 2019, based on objective measurements of academic quality and affordability.

■ In 2018, UT was one of only about 100 select institutions invited to join the Coalition of Access, Affordability and Success. This elite membership continues to positively impact UT's student academic profile.

■ More than 40 million visitors a month use [study.com](https://www.study.com) to research potential schools. The site selected UT's finance program as No. 4 in the U.S. based on academic and career resources for finance students, the quality of education and program accessibility, among other factors.

■ UT was named as one of the top 50 schools in the country for entrepreneurship studies by The Princeton Review and *Entrepreneurship* magazine.

■ UT's RN program was ranked No. 1 in Florida out of 154 programs by [RegisteredNursing.org](https://www.registerednursing.org), a nursing advocacy organization.

■ Several UT programs were recently recognized in the inaugural 2020 PLEXUSS Global Rankings:

- No. 3 in Florida for Best Marine Science Program (In addition, [BioExplorer.net](https://www.bioexplorer.net) recently ranked our marine science program in the top 10 for marine biology within the U.S.)
- No. 4 in Florida for Best Criminology Program
- No. 4 in Florida for Most Prestigious Private College or University Offering a Political Science Program





UT created new undergraduate-level academic programs in actuarial science, and communication and speech studies.



## ACADEMICS

UT remains focused on advancing existing programs, developing new academic programs, improving educational facilities, recruiting talented faculty members, pursuing the highest program accreditations, supporting faculty innovation and making enhancements to the academic environment.

For Fall 2019 we added 22 full-time faculty positions, and over the past academic year, we also recruited 18 new full-time faculty members who will begin this fall. This large infusion of intellectual talent bodes well for UT's future.

As always, we've continued to focus on education quality improvements and accreditation initiatives. In Fall 2019 we received new accreditation approval from the National Association of Arts and Design (NASAD). This new accreditation positively impacts 10 of our academic programs, and UT is only the second private university accredited in Florida by NASAD. We also received new accreditation for our teacher education programs from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), and for our forensic science program from the Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission (FEPAC). Only 49 of these programs are accredited nationally.

Importantly, we continued our efforts to develop new academic programs for a more secure enrollment future for students and the institution. We created new undergraduate-level academic programs in actuarial science, as well as

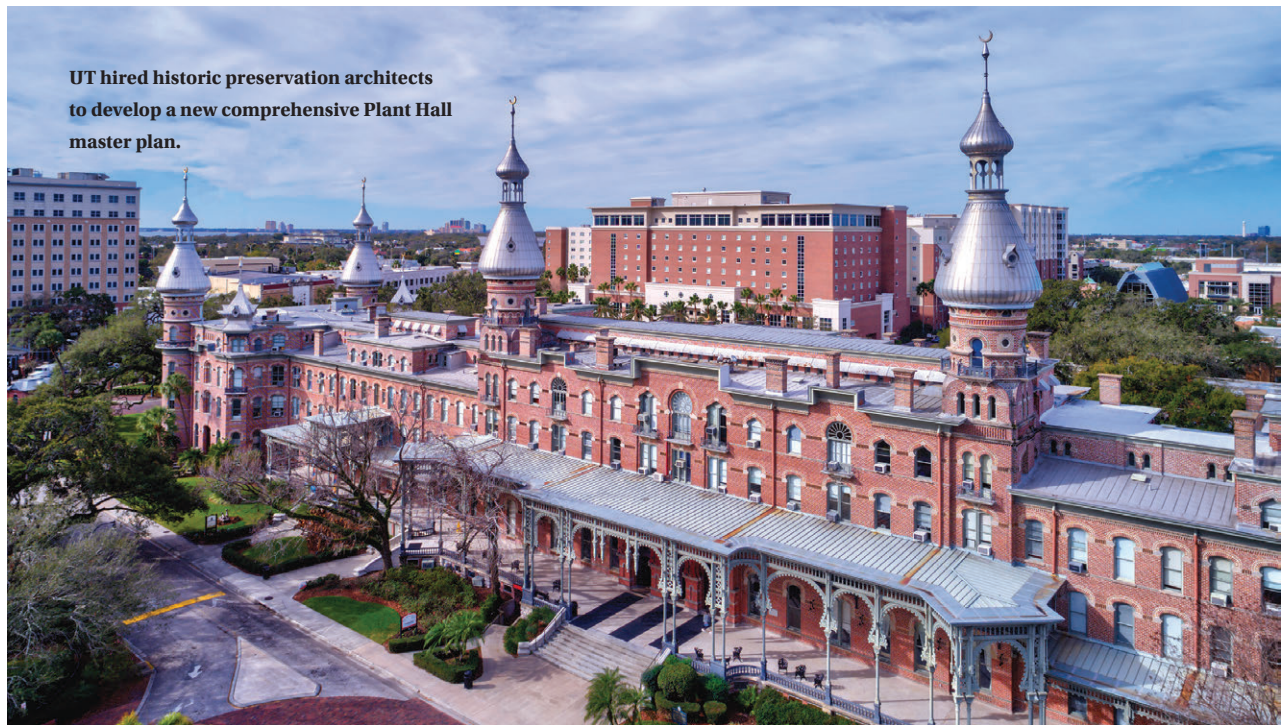
in communication and speech studies, and we also created new graduate-level academic programs in business analytics and professional communication.

Students in UT's academic programs continue to excel. While I can't list all of the departmental accomplishments, the following are a couple of examples:

■ UT's nursing program continues to shine. UT had a 100% pass rate on the national NCLEX nursing licensing exam for the past two years — one of only 87 nursing programs out of 2,123 in the U.S. to achieve this in 2019.

■ UT was again ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* in the top tier in the category Best Regional Universities (South) in its "Best Colleges 2020" guidebook. The Sykes College of Business was also named as a top undergraduate business program. Noteworthy this year is that UT was named in six lists, including: 1) Best Value Schools; 2) Most Innovative College; 3) A+ Schools for B Students; 4) Top Performers on Social Mobility; 5) Best Colleges for Veterans; and 6) Best Undergraduate Teaching.

Due to COVID-19, we prepared for and implemented the sudden shift to remote learning, which included remote student support and services. We also successfully executed four virtual commencement programs (one for each University college), which included a personalized virtual message and students' virtual diplomas presented in a minaret.



UT hired historic preservation architects to develop a new comprehensive Plant Hall master plan.

## CAMPUS TRANSFORMATION

The University continued with physical campus transformations that eliminated more of the old, hand-me-down buildings and improved our overall education and service environment.

Construction of the Ferman Center for the Arts continues, and completion is targeted for late fall. This 90,000-square-foot facility is a game changer for the College of Arts and Letters and its 50 major, minor and certificate programs. They'll soon have one of the best facilities in the country.

The new Science Research Laboratories building — located on West Kennedy Boulevard — was designed and constructed this past academic year, just in time for the 2020-2021 academic year. These labs will accommodate growth and development in the natural sciences.

We also continued planning for upcoming building projects, including phase II of the Fitness and Recreation Center, a proposed new parking garage and a new technology building. Despite economic and pandemic disruptions, we were ultimately successful with our bond issues. In fact, our bond offerings were over-subscribed and investors made numerous comments about the UT success story. These new bonds, along with financial support from donors, will help secure our future for important new facilities and eliminate the 100-year-old fairground buildings that still exist on campus.

Lastly, we hired historic preservation architects to develop a new comprehensive Plant Hall master plan. This plan will provide a thorough review of Plant Hall and a prioritization of the numerous restoration aspects needing attention in this almost 130-year-old building. This plan is critical to the preservation of this signature building for both the institution and the community.

I'm also pleased to report that this year we continued our transformation of Information Technology and Security (ITS), which began more than five years ago when we reorganized the ITS department and began rebuilding much of our campus technology infrastructure. UT added international certification for excellence (ISO/IEC 22301) in maintaining an effective and resilient business continuity program. UT is the only U.S. university to hold this distinction. We're excited to add this to our international certification for cybersecurity (a unique certification we've held since 2015).

This past year also saw the modernization of Wi-Fi coverage in several campus buildings and areas, as well as upgrades of audiovisual equipment in classrooms, voice-over IP phone systems and installation of additional remote printing stations in multiple areas of campus.



# CAMPUS LIFE AND STUDENT AFFAIRS

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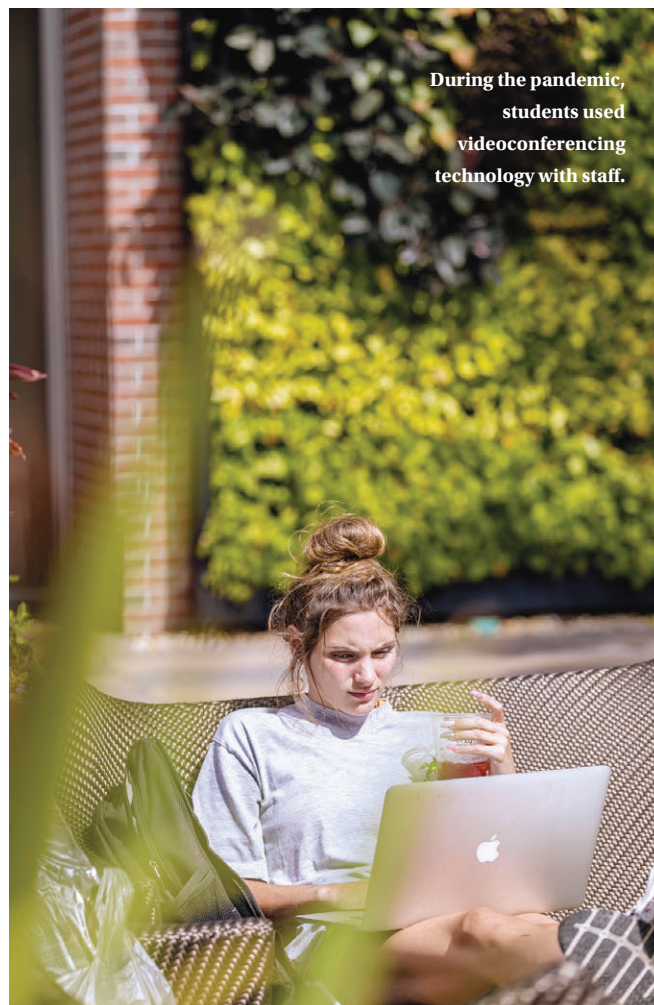
The Student Affairs division quickly pivoted in March to a full-service remote division based on the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff continued to serve students individually through videoconferencing technology, turned face-to-face programs into virtual offerings and fully utilized social media to educate, engage and entertain students.

Medical services within the Dickey Health and Wellness Center led the health response to the COVID-19 crisis and continues to be at the center of our ongoing health initiatives. Our partnership with Tampa General Hospital, the area's only trauma hospital, is extremely valuable. The Office of Residence Life quickly created processes for quarantining and isolating students during the pandemic. This tough and unprecedented situation was handled professionally and smoothly.

Even before the COVID-19 crisis, UT was already moving into virtual spaces through its online orientation. Due to UT's enrollment growth and space constraints, we transitioned to a hybrid orientation model that encompassed an online orientation along with an 11-day Week of Welcome that featured numerous programs and events.

This year, we added several new student organizations and club sports. Student organizations, clubs and teams now total about 300. One of those organizations — *The Minaret*, UT's student newspaper — was one of five student newspapers in the country to be given a green seal of approval by NewsGuard, a company that evaluates websites for their credibility and transparency. We also expanded the Fraternity and Sorority Life community to 27 by adding the national sorority Delta Phi Epsilon.

Finally, we completed the second year of our partnership with the Jed Foundation, a leading nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting emotional health and preventing suicide among young adults. This year, the partnership focused on researching and assessing UT's mental health programs. Through this collaboration we reviewed best practices as we prepared for the launch of a new strategic plan to address student mental health needs, which have increased nationally.



During the pandemic, students used videoconferencing technology with staff.



UT's Fraternity and Sorority Life community continues to thrive.





UT won three Sunshine State Conference championships in the past year: one in women's basketball, one in women's cross country and one in men's swimming.

## ATHLETICS

Even with a shortened and disrupted athletics season, UT did well. This can be seen through a variety of athletics recognitions.

UT won three Sunshine State Conference championships: one in women's basketball, one in women's cross country and one in men's swimming. The UT men's swimming team went undefeated this regular season for the first time in school history. Six teams were either in NCAA postseason competition or were selected for the postseason and unable to compete due to COVID-19.

UT had three Division II National Players of the Year: Kiira Riihijarvi (women's golf), Ross Dickerson (men's lacrosse) and Claire Swanson (women's lacrosse). We also had 34 athletic All-Americans, and numerous SSC conference awards were given to both athletes and coaches.

Expectations are high for additional awards for UT student-athletes, as 155 athletes made the Dean's List in a broad range of academic programs. The overall average cumulative GPA across all athletes was a 3.22 on a 4.0 grade scale. Two teams, women's swimming and women's rowing, had spring semester average team GPAs of 3.7. Thirteen swimmers on both the men's and women's teams were selected for the Scholar All-American team.

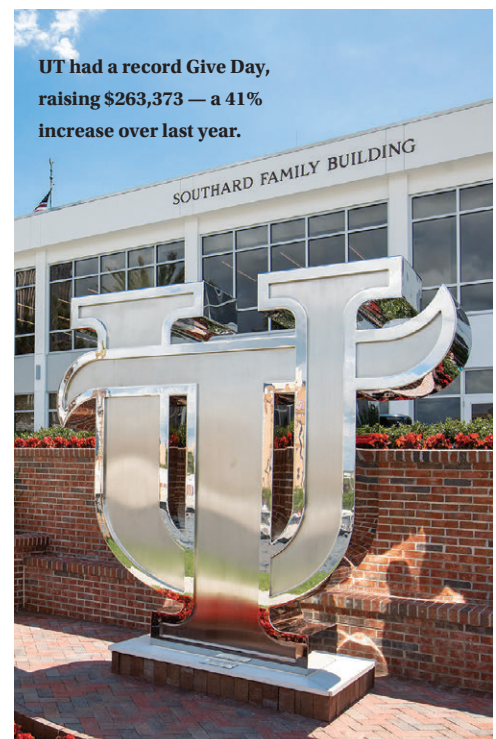
Lastly, UT completed a comprehensive review of athletics protocols and procedures for athlete concussion management.

## UNIVERSITY SUPPORT

UT continued to excel financially with a 25th year in the black. We worked on plans for our next capital campaign and continued to secure some leadership gifts, although our campaign launch has been slowed by the pandemic.

Thanks to the leadership of trustees and alumni, we ended the academic year with a record "Give Day" fundraising effort to provide additional support for students needing emergency financial aid. Despite being a virtual event, alumni, parents, faculty, staff, volunteer boards and friends contributed \$263,373 — a 41% increase over last year.

UT's online communications were transformed with a complete web redesign. The new website was launched in August, along with a new intranet — SpartanNet — for UT faculty, staff and students. The website also offers a news subscription service so the extended UT community can receive the latest news and developments from campus.



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# OPERATIONS

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UT Operations began the academic year with emergency management, focusing on hurricane preparations and threats. It ended the year working on the COVID-19 crisis. This emergency management required leadership from many groups and subgroups, including the Emergency Operations Team, the Emergency Communications Group, Night Operations, the COVID-19 Core Group, the COVID-19 Calendar Group, the Health Safety Task Force and the Tampa Bay Emergency Manager meetings. These various groups worked to enhance safety, ensure Clery Act compliance and facilitate training and operational preparations. Staff also underwent an active shooter mitigation program.

Campus Safety personnel dealt with the flood of rental scooters on UT property, North Boulevard traffic congestion and parking limitations. A new Campus Safety Security Assistant (CSSA) program was launched to incorporate student monitors at residence hall desks as extensions of safety department services.

Mail Services completed its first full year operating UT's new postal services with the innovative intelligent locker system. The onset of COVID-19 did not deter mail delivery, as the intelligent parcel lockers offered a safe way to transfer packages and letters.

Programs and services for veterans were further developed and improved as UT continued to be recognized as a military-friendly university by Victory Media and Military Advanced Education. A new veterans' honor society called Salute was also founded. The compliance audit from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs resulted in a rank of "Commendable." The auditor's letter said that "it is notable that the student veterans who provided feedback during student interview sessions expressed great satisfaction with their learning experiences at UT and with your certifying officials' handling of their VA education benefits."



**Mail Services handled more than 6,000 parcels in one recent week in August.**



**President Ronald Vaughn and his wife, Renée Vaughn**

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED COMMITMENT

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The activities highlighted are only a few examples of what we've accomplished this year. All in all, UT had an exciting year of achievement, and progress was not dimmed by the historic pandemic.

We thank all of our trustees, Chiselers, Fellows, Counselors, alumni, faculty/staff, students, parents and friends for your help and support. It is through our collective commitment to UT that we are able to transform lives of students for generations to come.