



Martin Methodist Acquisition Included in Governor's Budget Proposal

KNOXVILLE – The future of Martin Methodist College (MMC) and its possible merger with the University of Tennessee System took an important step forward as Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee included the measure in his proposed budget to the Tennessee General Assembly.

Lee's proposed budget requests \$5.1 million recurring/\$1 million nonrecurring for the acquisition and necessary start-up costs to incorporate the 150-year-old private college into the UT System. The budget proposal must be passed by Tennessee lawmakers, and the measure must still be approved by the regional accreditor Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, the United Methodist Church of Tennessee and the Tennessee Building Commission. Additionally, the UT Board of Trustees must give its final approval.

If the acquisition is approved, Martin Methodist would become the fourth undergraduate campus in the UT System and the first new campus since UT Chattanooga joined 50 years ago. It would be the only public four-year institution of higher education between Chattanooga and Memphis along Tennessee's southern border.

"I applaud Gov. Lee for his commitment to helping ensure our rural counties have affordable access to education," UT President Randy Boyd said. "An acquisition of Martin Methodist College will improve the college-going rate in southern middle Tennessee and address unmet labor needs, especially in areas such as nursing, education and business. These graduates will be vital to the long-term economic success of southern middle Tennessee."

"In Gov. Lee's first executive order he prioritized the development of rural communities in Tennessee. This budget aligns the necessary resources with a key priority," MMC President Mark La Branche said. "For more than 150 years, our mission has been providing access to higher education to the citizens of southern Middle Tennessee. We have made it a priority to educate students from rural communities, in rural communities, for rural communities. As a campus of the University of Tennessee, our capacity to fulfill our mission would expand exponentially, also expanding the potential of our region dramatically."

In September 2020, the UT Board of Trustees signed a letter of intent which formalized the commitment of both parties to discuss the possible transfer of Martin Methodist's assets to the UT System, where they would be governed by the UT Board of Trustees. Martin Methodist would become a new campus of

UT and continue to offer professional and pre-professional preparation that is accessible and affordable with the personal attention of a small campus.

The University of Tennessee is a statewide system of higher education with campuses in Knoxville, Chattanooga, Martin and Memphis; the UT Space Institute in Tullahoma; the UT Institute of Agriculture with a presence in every Tennessee county; and the statewide Institute for Public Service. The UT system manages Oak Ridge National Laboratory through its UT-Battelle partnership; enrolls about 50,000 students statewide; produces about 11,000 new graduates every year; and represents more than 400,000 alumni around the world.