

# WOMEN

*with* **BIG IDEAS**



## INTRODUCTION FROM PROVOST SUSAN MARTIN

It is an honor to recognize the achievements of seven women with big ideas. These extraordinary individuals have enriched UT's diversity and elevated its stature through their accomplishments as faculty, staff, and students. I know you will enjoy reading about them as much as I have.

As a group, these women come from a diverse array of backgrounds and have made

a significant impact in all areas of our campus mission as a brief overview will suggest.

Two of our honorees are students and each has improved our campus through strong leadership: one, a second-year undergraduate, serves as president of the Black Student Union and the other, a doctoral student in the Bredesen Center, was a leader in the Women in STEM Research Conference. Our

three staff honorees include UT's first female and African American dean of students and current assistant vice chancellor, the UT Space Institute's Director of Contracts and Sponsored Projects the Office of Research, and a member of the staff of the Haslam College of Business' Office of Diversity and Community Relations who plans to join the Peace Corps. The two faculty members honored represent diverse areas of endeavor, one is an acclaimed author whose book will be our Life of the Mind selection for 2016, and the other a successful researcher on sustainable tourism.

These women share many traits: persistence, vision, intelligence, and hard work. These qualities have helped them to break down barriers to their success. Most credit a network of family and UT mentors as a key element to their achievement. As the representation of women in our university community continues to increase, we are richer for all of their work, whether as students, by their teaching and research, or through their essential work supporting students or faculty. I hope that you will find their stories inspiring and will recognize their key contributions to the success and strength of the University of Tennessee.

## RACHEL CHEN PROFESSOR & DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS & DEVELOPMENT

Rachel Chen, professor in the Department of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management and founding director of the Center for Sustainable Business and Development (CSBD), has mentored more than 150 students to participate in EURēKA, UT's annual undergraduate research and creative achievement exhibition.

She proudly jokes that her students' research posters have won so many honors that there are too many "champion" posters to fit in her office.

"What is really wonderful is when we can make contributions on a daily basis. Even small impacts can cumulatively become generational impacts. For that, I am very touched as an educator."

Chen came to UT in 2000 as an assistant professor with a background in economic impact assessment and forecasting models for both tourism and natural resources.

Nine years later, Chen was appointed as a visiting associate professor in the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale University.

In 2010, she became the founding director of the Center for Sustainable Business and Development (CSBD) in the Institute for Secure and Sustainable Environments. Supporting undergraduate students and their research is just one of the many priorities on Rachel's plate as a professor and director of CSBD.

Since 2011, the center has hosted three sustainable business

leadership summits that were attended by numerous state commissioners and industry leaders. Additionally, the center forecasted economic impacts for West Tennessee 4-H that resulted in the opportunity to house a \$16 million West Tennessee 4-H Camp and Conference Center in Hardeman County.

"I get energy back from all the energy that I put in. It's a cycle."

Some of the individuals who give her energy are the cohort of women who also participated in the 2011 Denver Summer Institute for Women in Higher Education Resource Services (HERS).

"There was a sisterhood. We developed a network to support each other. We are still in touch to help each other with research ideas, skill development, important knowledge about operating budgets, plus—of course—mentorship," said Chen.

And for an hour every evening, she finds energy from playing the piano. ■



## MAXINE DAVIS ASSISTANT VICE CHANCELLOR, DIVISION OF STUDENT LIFE



“I like to say I’m home grown.” Knoxville native Maxine Davis has served the University of Tennessee, Knoxville since 1980. A graduate of Knoxville College and UT, Maxine has developed a philosophy that has shaped her work for the past four decades: encourage learning from the cradle to the grave.

This philosophy guided her through the early days of her career at UT as conference

coordinator and assistant director for what was then the Department of Conferences in the Division of Continuing Education. She rose quickly to director of the Office of Minority Student Affairs (now Multicultural Student Life) and then director of the Adult Student Services Center.

Just before Maxine became associate dean of students in 1997, she finished her doctoral degree and spent some time reflecting on her life and purpose.

“I woke up one morning with it in my heart. My purpose in life is to assist students to achieve their goals and dreams. It was just that simple.”

In 2002, Davis became UT Knoxville’s first African American and first female dean of students.

After serving in that position for twelve years, Maxine became Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Life. Now she oversees the Office of Disability Services, the Center for Health Education and Wellness, Student Conduct and Community Standards, the Student Counseling Center, and the Student Health Center.

“I am having so much fun! I am still able to make a difference in what I’m doing, but in a different way.” Currently Davis is spearheading a cross-disciplinary project that aims to provide integrated health care for UT students.

Davis notes UT has been very supportive of her development as a female administrator. She had the opportunity to attend the Alice Manicur Symposium for Women in 2000 and the Bryn Mawr Summer Institute for Women in Higher Education Administration in 2007.

Mentorship is an important aspect of personal and professional development to Maxine. Over the course of her career she has mentored numerous students and staff at UT. She says, “Sometimes you can have mentors that are colleagues. Provost Martin has been an unofficial mentor. When she led our division on an interim basis, she was a role model. She leads in a way that makes people feel valued and it was just exemplary.” ■

## MARGARET LAZARUS DEAN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Sometimes you just have to stop in your tracks and change paths. Margaret Lazarus Dean put her second novel on hold to chase down a story she couldn’t let go.

After teaching at the University of Michigan for six years, Dean came to UT in 2008. She was a published fiction author working on her second novel when it was announced the US space shuttle program was going to end. Forever.

Dean became consumed with the end of US space flight and a creative non-fiction book idea. She envisioned the author would attend the last launches, meet the people who worked on the shuttles all their lives, talk to US astronauts, and reflect on the end of an era. But as a fiction writer, she firmly believed she wasn’t the person to write it.

One day she was in the Department of English’s mail room lamenting to a colleague about how someone needed to write this book.

Her colleague said to her, “Margaret, this is your story to write.”

Published in 2015 and authored by Dean, *Leaving Orbit: Notes from the Last Days of American Spaceflight* was recently selected by UT as the Life of the Mind program book first-year students will read prior to attending fall 2016 classes.

The support and sense of community from her colleagues is a recurring theme as Dean talks about what she finds most rewarding about being at UT.

“All of my colleagues are fantastic. I have been so impressed

with all my department heads. Their job is so tough. One of the reasons why we can attract such fabulous students is because we have a reputation for creating a community of writing and mentoring students.”

As Dean teaches, directs the creative writing program, continues work on her second novel, and directs the Brian M. Conley Young Writers’ Institute, she is grateful for a core group of female professors who welcomed her when she came to UT.

She notes her discipline has more gender equity than STEM disciplines, but there are still infrastructural barriers in academia to women balancing their careers and families.

“I have a core group of women professors around the same age, most have kids at the same age, and we get together socially a couple times a semester. We are all dealing with similar concerns in our careers. It is really important to me to be part of building a supportive community.” ■





“There is no other place you could work that would be any greater.”

Longtime University of Tennessee Space Institute (UTSI) employee, Joyce Moore describes her forty-seven years at the space institute as an adventure.

A native of Winchester, Tennessee, Moore worked for insurance agencies in Cowan and Nashville after graduating from Franklin County High

School. During that time she attended the University of Tennessee at Nashville (now Tennessee State University) before she married and returned to Winchester.

Moore learned about UTSI because her father-in-law was the superintendent of the construction company building the space institute. She decided to apply for a job.

In 1966, Joyce was hired in a support staff position at the UTSI library and has steadily achieved higher ranking positions over the course of her career, with a short break in service from 1972 to 1975. She now serves as the director of sponsored programs and contracts in the UTSI Office of Research.

“I don’t look for a lot of recognition. I just want to help the faculty and staff who submit proposals and work towards getting research awards.”

Over the decades she has seen women advance in the workplace. “We’re taken more seriously and we’re accepted more in the professional world. And even salaries and so forth have equalized in certain areas.”

Moore can name several leaders who were very supportive of her career and advancement at UTSI, including B. H. Goethert, Robert Kamm, Charlie Weaver, Kenneth Harwell, John Caruthers, and most recently Robert Moore.

“There are many faculty and staff that have been very supportive to me over the years. Looking back, it was wonderful to have known and worked with Dr. Goethert, the first UTSI director, and really getting to know him as a person.” ■

After spending two summers at a long-term ecological research station in the Arctic tundra, Mallory Ladd says she “fell in love with the science going on in the Arctic, as well as the culture of the people.”

As a doctoral student in the Bredesen Center Energy Science and Engineering Program, Ladd works with the principal investigator for the Next Generation Ecosystem Experiments (NGEE) Project, an Oak Ridge National Laboratory scientist. She researches analytic chemistry and climate science to inform real-world applications on Arctic policy.

“The Bredesen Center program is so attractive because you’re getting a science degree, but you’re also encouraged to pursue your other interests, like policy.”

Even as an interdisciplinary doctoral student, Ladd finds time to give back to other women in STEM. In 2015, she and other graduate students serving on the Commission for Women designed and hosted the first-ever annual Women in STEM Research Symposium.

“As second- and third-year graduate students in STEM, we wanted to help incoming students navigate feelings of uncertainty or inadequacy—the imposter syndrome—and encourage undergraduate and graduate women in STEM to continue in their fields by highlighting their research and offering professional development opportunities.”

While Ladd sees her mom as a primary mentor, her dad is another huge reason she has persevered in a male-dominated field, always telling her “anything boys can do, you can do better.”

Nina McClelland, dean emeritus of the College of Natural Science and Mathematics at the University of Toledo, inspired Ladd to become involved with the American Chemical Society, continue her research in graduate school, and pursue her interdisciplinary interests.

Ladd laughs heartily when asked about the thing all graduate students dread—when she expects to complete her degree—and what comes next. When she does answer, she is measured and humble. She would “love the coveted AAAS science policy fellowship” but will also likely seek a joint appointment at a national lab and university.

“I just don’t want to leave research yet.” ■



## ASHLEY EVANS UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT & PRESIDENT, BLACK STUDENT UNION



“Because of the women that I have had around me, I have seen women do great, amazing things. It makes me want to push myself.”

Ashley Evans, second-year student and president of the Black Student Union (BSU), has had a number of women shape the course of her life—and the most influential have been her educators.

Evans’s mother is her number one mentor.

Her mother teaches in the same public school system that Evans attended in Memphis and was a constant influence in developing her daughter’s love for learning.

Now at UT, Shannen Dee Williams fills that role. Williams encourages Evans’s academic development and drives her to pursue graduate school. “I realized that I actually do love discussing ideas and thinking about theories and ideologies. I like it, and I want to keep doing more after undergrad,” says Evans.

Williams and Evans work together closely through the Black Student Union (BSU) organization. Williams is the organization’s faculty advisor.

Evans says, “Before UT, I attended diverse public schools where my blackness was celebrated. I didn’t feel that when I got here. This was also when the murders of Mike Brown and Eric Garner and others were happening. I was full of anger and pain. I was looking for an outlet and I really didn’t find one on UT’s campus.”

Evans and her friends did research about SEC schools and how their black students were coping. They discovered other SEC institutions had black student unions or black student associations, and their black students were thriving through these organizations.

“That’s when we decided, that’s what we need. That’s what I want behind me.”

As president of UT’s BSU, Evans created a Freshman Action Board to mentor incoming black students and create a succession plan for BSU. She says what excites her most about being a student at UT is that there is a lot of work to be done.

“I see a lot of traditions at UT, and I feel like there is room for new traditions. That’s exciting.”

UT has also given Evans an avenue to explore feminism and speak out about women’s rights and sexual assault.

“I used to think, ‘Oh, I wish this never happens to me,’ but now I think, ‘It doesn’t deserve to happen to anybody.’ I will do whatever I can to stop the perpetuation of rape culture. Feminism is for everyone.” ■

## ALISSA REEVES ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT ASSISTANT, HASLAM COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

“My support comes from within myself. The question is not who is going to let me. The question is who is going to stop me.”

This is the type of fearless attitude that Alissa Reeves puts forth when taking on new projects.

She just initiated an effort to expand the Peace Corps into Cuba. After reaching out to the regional executive director to begin the effort, she set out to analyze potential activities for Peace Corps volunteers that align with the six sectors of the organization: education, environment, agriculture, community and economic development, health, and youth development.

Reeves will begin her service with the Peace Corps in the fall of 2017. She aims to teach English as a second language or serve in a community development role that ties into her experience working as an assistant in the Haslam College of Business’s Office of Diversity and Community Relations and the Office of Marketing and Public Relations

“I’m in a diversity role in the Haslam College of Business. This college is one of the things that excites me the most about being at UT because they absolutely embrace diversity and diversity-related efforts. It’s just a great college.”

Reeves began in this position in 2013 after graduating summa cum laude with a double major in English and Religious Studies. In addition to working full time, she is enrolled as a graduate

student focusing her studies on ancient Israelite women.

“History has lost the women’s perspective. It is an area that is lacking, especially in archaeology—one of my main focus areas. We don’t focus as much on women’s experience as men’s.”

Reeves spent six weeks at the ‘Ayn Gharandal archaeological project studying with Assistant Professor of Religious Studies Erin Darby. She credits several other “female-positive” professors and their courses for the caliber of her undergraduate and graduate academic experience, including Gilya Schmidt, Tina Shepardson, Megan Bryson, Patricia Freeland, and Misty Anderson.

“I have just had the best academic experience. Plus, in the Haslam College of Business we focus on recruiting female faculty and staff. We have such strong female professionals in the college. I really appreciate that.” ■

