

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 46

By Gresham

A RESOLUTION to recognize and congratulate the University of Tennessee at Martin Parsons Center upon its tenth anniversary.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly recognize those venerable educational institutions that strive to provide services to students from all walks of life, particularly those in underserved regions of this State; and

WHEREAS, one such institution is the University of Tennessee at Martin (UTM), specifically the UTM Parsons Center, which recently celebrated its tenth anniversary, marking ten years that the center has provided access to quality education for students in Decatur County; and

WHEREAS, bringing a satellite campus of UTM to the City of Parsons was truly a community effort. The moment of inception can be traced to City of Parsons employee Dan Lindsey first uttering the concept in response to the lack of a college or university presence at a City of Parsons job fair; from there, Mayor Tim David Boaz approached businessman and philanthropist Jim Ayers, after which Dr. Nick Dunagan, then Chancellor of UTM, was presented with the idea of a UTM campus in Decatur County; and

WHEREAS, having once served as Vice Chancellor for Development at UTM, Dr. Dunagan understood the need to expand the reaches of the university to serve those for whom college was not a proximal option, and he got behind the idea of a campus in Decatur County; and

WHEREAS, since no building was available to house the Parsons Center, the first classes were taught at Riverside High School and the Parsons Municipal Building; at that time, in 2007, there were 108 students, many of whom were nontraditional; and

WHEREAS, the community responded to the pressing need for a suitable facility for the Parsons Center; many local residents became involved in the planning process, and a course of action was devised for funding the project: the Ayers Foundation pledged one million dollars; the City of Parsons and Decatur County government each pledged five hundred thousand dollars; and private citizens contributed the remaining two million dollars, no small feat for a county of slightly more than ten thousand residents; and

WHEREAS, UTM's Vice Chancellor of University Development Len Solomons and Assistant Vice Chancellor of Development Keith Carver spearheaded the fundraising efforts, and local businessman, the late Danny Graves, donated the property for the facility. Construction began in 2008, and classes were held in the new building in the spring semester of 2009; and

WHEREAS, as UTM's fourth off-campus site, the Parsons Center is housed in a 29,000-square-foot, technologically advanced facility that includes a nursing lab, conference room, computer lab, student lounge, bookstore, science lab, library, and distance-learning classroom, as well as administrative offices and general classroom space; and

WHEREAS, the center offers undergraduate degrees in K-6 education, university studies, social work, psychology, business, history, and criminal justice, as well as a Bachelor of Science in nursing; additionally, the center boasts a variety of general-education undergraduate courses designed to accommodate students who wish to begin working toward a degree; and

WHEREAS, currently, 334 individuals are enrolled at the UTM Parsons Center, both traditional and nontraditional students, as well as dual-enrollment students from neighboring high schools; some of these students will transfer to other institutions after obtaining their prerequisites, and others will remain at the institution for the entirety of their undergraduate careers. As of December 2016, 278 students have obtained their degrees at the center; and

WHEREAS, the UTM Parsons Center is a true boon for Decatur County, one orchestrated by visionaries who recognized the immense value of providing the people of the

region with access to quality education, and one that continues to enrich the lives of students and residents alike; it is thus fitting that this institution be recognized; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we congratulate the University of Tennessee at Martin Parsons Center on ten years of service to the Decatur County community and extend our sincerest wishes for the center's continued success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.