

Using a Focus Group Luncheon to Improve Donor Engagement Strategies at a Small Academic Library



Erik Nordberg, Dean of the Paul Meek Library
Ben Jones, Asst. Vice Chancellor for Development

Academic Library and Development Network
Monday, April 13, 2026

Welcome / Background



Today's Agenda

- I. Goals of the Initiative
- II. Planning
- III. The Event
- IV. Post-Event Follow-up
- V. Outcomes
- VI. Key Takeaways

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Update & Inform



Ask & Listen

Share, Affirm, Confirm
Value Statement
of
The Academic Library

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Participant Selection



Participant Selection

(ones that got away)



Final Participant List

1. Donor and creator of family foundation (in state)
 2. Spouse of above
 3. Donor and steward for family foundation (out of state)
 4. Lapsed donor, daughter of prominent former state politician
 5. Donor and retired university chancellor
 6. Donor and retired faculty member
 7. Donor and current faculty member
-
8. Library Dean
 9. Development Officer

Date Selection

Invitation

Hello Linda:

It was nice to speak with you on the phone this afternoon. And thanks for your willingness to join us on November 18. Please let me know if you are planning to bring a guest.

The event will include:

- A guided tour of the newly renovated library, including the Library Learning Commons.
- An update on our current operations and future plans.
- A donor focus group session, where we hope to hear your thoughts on why you've chosen to support the library, what messages resonate with you, and how we can more effectively engage future supporters.

To show our appreciation for your time and insights, we'll provide lunch and a small gift as a token of thanks.

Schedule: Tuesday, November 18, 2025:

🕒 11:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. | Library Tour, Lunch, and Focus Group

🕒 4:00 p.m. | Optional Book Launch & Museum Exhibit Opening

Join us afterward in Special Collections to celebrate UT Martin's 125th anniversary with the debut of a new exhibit and book launch.

I truly hope you'll be able to attend and help us shape the future of the Paul Meek Library.

Please let me know if you can join us.

Warm regards,
Erik

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Location and Setup



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Agenda

UF MARTIN

PAUL MEEK LIBRARY

Tuesday, November 18th

- 11:30 Introductions and Tour
- 12:00 Lunch
- 12:30 Updates about the Library and Donor Support
- 1:00 Greetings from Chancellor Freeman
- 1:15 Focus Group Discussion
- 3:00 Concluding Remarks
- 4:00 UTM at 125: Exhibit and Book Launch
in Special Collections



UF
MARTIN

Facility Tour



Updates from the Library and Development



- Print – Books, Journals
Magazines, Newspapers
- Digital – eBooks, Databases,
Electronic Resources
- Textbooks
- Archives and Special Collections
- Genealogy
- Leisure Reading
- Graphic Novels and Nonfiction
- Media – DVD and Streaming



- Research Support
- Information Literacy Training
(in-class, remote, on-demand, scavenger hunt)
- Loan – books, equipment, movies
- Printing and Duplication

NAVIGATE information systems

LOCATE relevant resources

EVALUATE content (CRAAP)

INCORPORATE into decision-making

Currency
Relevance
Authority
Accuracy



- Study Spaces – Group, Individual,
Silent, and Study Rooms
- Computer Workstations (incl. 2 labs)
- Study Pods and Semi-private booths
- Soft Seating - Graphic Novels and
Newspapers Area
- Classrooms and Meeting Rooms
- “North Windows” Area Overlooking The Quad
- 24/7 Lounge and Computer Lab
- Media Center and Makerspace
- Special Collections Reading Room
- Museum Gallery



Follow us on Runway

- Lectures and Educational Events
- UT Martin Research Series
- Paul Meek Literary Legacy Speakers Series
- Stress Relief Activities (Puppy Love)
- Finals Week
- Fun Events – CoMeekCon, D&D, Ice Cream
- Museum Exhibits
- Pop-up Library Events
- PML Bookmobile

Paul Meek Library

- Active Endowments (11)
- Inactive Endowments (3)
(no giving but still earning and can be spent)
- Active Gift Accounts (2)

Paul Meek Library

Unrestricted

- UTM Library Development Fund
- Alumni Library Fund
- Naomi Stover Ryan Library fund

Restricted / Special Use

- J. Houston Gordon University Museum Fund
- Corbitt Special Collections Fund
- Special Collections Library Fund
- Steven E. Rogers Library Fund (Media)
- Paul Meek Literary Legacy Speakers Series Fund

Restricted / Collections Support

- H.L and Maude Smith Library Fund
Tennessee history, culture, and genealogy
- Gordon Family Library Fund
History, political science, civic responsibility
- Martha C. Meek Library Fund
World literature and Southern literature
- Morrow Memorial Fund
American and Tennessee history
- West Tennessee Banking Business Library Fund
Business, finance, accounting, and marketing

Paul Meek Library Commitments and Donors

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Giving Totals</u>	<u>Donor Count</u>
2026	1,525.00	58
2025	56,625.00	39
2024	63,427.80	43
2023	75,490.78	40
2022	135,446.75	55
2021	54,295.00	26
2020	9,160.00	20
2019	7,110.00	30
2018	31,825.00	27
2017	5,985.00	29
2016	10,177.00	26
2015	9,895.65	26

Paul Meek Library-Captain's Challenge 2025

FY25 total dollars for PML designations: \$2,165.00

Total donors = 14

- UTM Library Development Fund = 1,745.00 (8 donors)
- Martha Meek Library Endowment = 210.00 (3 donors)
- UTM Alumni Library Endowment = 210.00 (3 donors)



Lunch and Visit with the Chancellor

Focus Group

(9 Prompts)



General

1. What are your earliest memories of libraries?
2. How do you use libraries today, and what brings you joy when you visit a library?
3. What is the value statement for libraries?

Academic Libraries

4. What interactions have you had with academic libraries?
(in the past, or now)
5. How do you feel academic libraries contribute to the success of students, faculty, and the university?

Our Academic Library

6. Why do you support the Paul Meek Library?

7. What will donors want to support in our academic library?
What did you see today that we should work on?

8. How can we get more people and new donors
to support the Paul Meek Library?

Additional Input

9. What other comments would you like to share about these topics?

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Summarize Notes from the Meeting

Transcribe Recording



Gather Photos



Thank-you Notes

Debrief with Team

Feedback from Participants

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Stories for Messaging



Give the Gift of Knowledge

Erik Nordberg, Dean of the Paul Meek Library
Ben Jones, Asst. Vice Chancellor for Development

Kiwanis Club of Martin
Wednesday, December 10, 2025



Stories for Messaging



Give the Gift of Knowledge

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Kiwanis Club of Martin
Wednesday, December 10, 2025



Wednesday, April 1, 2026

A great way to begin your
support
of the Paul Meek Library!



Gifts from Participants

Engagement and Understanding

Help Amplify our Value Statement to Others



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A donor luncheon builds engagement
and deepens commitment to supporting
your academic library

Thank You!

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