**NEWS**

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UT MARTIN PROGRAM RECEIVES STATEWIDE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AWARD

 MARTIN, Tenn. – The University of Tennessee at Martin’s Department of Agriculture, Geosciences, and Natural Resources received the Tennessee Association of Agricultural Educators’ award for the Outstanding Postsecondary Agriculture Program at the organization’s annual conference July 10-12 in Murfreesboro. This is the third time that UT Martin has received the award.

 The award recognizes a post-secondary institution or program in which staff and faculty members devote at least 50% of their teaching time to providing exemplary agricultural education training. Recipients are chosen by a committee of agriculture teachers from across the state based on each program’s curriculum, experiential learning and leadership-development opportunities, professional growth of faculty members, and program marketing.

 By receiving the award on the state level, UT Martin is now eligible for the national award, which will be given at the National Association of Agricultural Educators conference in December in Las Vegas. The selection process will be based on the same criteria, but the deciding committee will be made up of agriculture teachers from across the United States.

 “This award does not represent what a single faculty or staff member has done,” said Dr. William Bird, associate professor of agricultural education. “It represents the collective effort of everyone in our (academic) department – administrators, faculty, instructors, staff and students – who come to work in the department every day with a focus on helping our students find success personally and professionally. The relationships we all foster with our students are what make this a special place to work and learn.”

 For more information about the award, contact Bird at wbird1@utm.edu or 731-881-7271. ###

PHOTO ID: Pictured (l, r) at the Tennessee Association of Agricultural Educators’ annual conference are Dr. William Bird, associate professor of agricultural education; Samantha Essex, a senior agricultural education major from Crossville; and Emma Corson, a senior agricultural education major from Murfreesboro.