I BELIEVE ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE.
I SEE OPPORTUNITY WHEN OTHERS SEE IMPOSSIBILITY.
I TAKE RISKS. I AM FOCUSED.
I INSPIRE.
I KNOW THAT NOTHING IS UNREALISTIC.
I CHASE MY PASSIONS.
I EMBRACE MY CHILDLIKE WONDER & CURIOSITY.
I TAKE FLYING LEAPS INTO THE UNKNOWN.
I CONTRIBUTE TO SOMETHING BIGGER THAN MYSELF.
I CREATE. I LEARN. I GROW. I DO.
I BELIEVE IT’S NEVER TOO LATE TO START LIVING A DREAM.
I MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
I AM A GAME CHANGER.

McWHERTER INNOVATOR
How do we build a better tomorrow?

The answer depends on what we want tomorrow to be.
The outcome will be influenced by many things: values, vision, aspirations, inspiration, preparation, drive, cooperation. And these only scratch the surface.

At The Ned McWherter Institute for Collaboration & Innovation, we believe that together we can build a better tomorrow for our region, our nation, and the world by following the lead of West Tennessee native son, entrepreneur, lawmaker and public servant, Governor Ned Ray McWherter.

Ned McWherter started with little and built successful businesses in Northwest Tennessee. He served in the National Guard, and upon entering the political arena, he served the region and state with distinction. As Speaker of the Tennessee House of Representatives, he was known for reaching across the political aisle and working with members of the other party to get things done—not for the politics, but for the people. As governor, he continued that practice, earning the respect of citizens across the state and leaders across the nation. Governor McWherter’s longtime friend, businessman Clayton McWhorter, established The Ned McWherter Institute in conjunction with the University of Tennessee at Martin to honor Ned’s legacy of collaboration and innovation.

The McWherter Institute operates on the idea that every flame begins with a spark.

By identifying students with special gifts and talents for creative thinking, teamwork, and the passion and drive to make a true difference by simply making things happen, we believe that we can help to build that better future for West Tennessee. The plan is simple: take carefully selected second-year students from different disciplines across the University to serve as McWherter Innovators, and over the next three years, help them to identify and build upon their strengths, connect with mentors within the University and the community, increase their awareness of domestic and international culture, and engage in business and public service ventures. Building on individual strengths, well-rounded collaborative teams will be formed to address problems and engage in projects that are important to the future of West Tennessee. We believe that cultivating diverse teams of passionate individuals who think globally, yet act locally, will yield a tremendous impact on our region.

But it doesn’t just end with graduation. The skills, perspectives, and collaborative styles honed through experience will continue to serve McWherter Innovators as they enter their careers and work with other visionaries to strengthen their communities, thus leading to expanding horizons for the region. Sparks from one flame will kindle others across the range of human endeavor and inspire a vibrant culture of collaboration and innovation.
Over the course of the three-year program, students will be guided through four Pillars of Transformation, beginning with a Discovery phase in which they are encouraged to learn more about themselves, explore their potential, and understand how their individual strengths can be leveraged in a team setting. In the Refinement phase, the McWherter Innovator will receive individualized training focused on personal and professional development. During this phase, they will develop professional acumen by engaging in activities ranging from resume writing, interviewing, and presenting to critical thinking and ethical decision making. In the Experience & Exposure phase, students will obtain real-world experience by engaging in job shadowing and internship programs, participating in domestic and international travel, and gaining insight and awareness from cultural events. Each of these experiences build toward the Application phase, in which students join together in complementary groups to address community service needs, develop and launch new business ventures, and bring their blended abilities to bear on solving critical problems that support regional development.

The McWherter Institute is ready to induct its second class. A total of ten students, two from each of UTM’s colleges, will be selected each year to participate in the three-year program. Students will be financially assisted for their involvement, however, beyond the monetary support, they will gain invaluable experience that will enhance their lives personally and benefit their communities collectively. As the program matures, it will adapt to match the needs of individual students with the demands of business and the community. Our goal is to make the McWherter Innovators the best trained and most sought-after candidates for positions in their chosen fields, if not creators of new employment opportunities themselves.

We need your help to identify the next pool of students who will continue to grow The Ned McWherter Institute.

Students from this pool will be invited to apply for a position in the Institute’s second class. Ideal candidates will:

- be a rising sophomore in good standing with the University
- be motivated, passionate, and committed (entrepreneurial mindset is a plus)
- be creative thinkers, demonstrating imagination and the ability to see things from different perspectives and take them to different levels
- be open-minded, trustworthy, coachable, and able to cooperate readily and collaborate productively
- possess the quality that instructors know as potential, which may be either already expressed or still hidden and waiting to be explored
- have a desire to reach, learn, and grow
- be able to take risks, learn from failures, and build on successes
- have good written and spoken communication skills
- have the time to commit to the program
If you know of a student (or students) fitting this description, please send their name(s) to your college’s representative on the NRMI Faculty Manager Team. Nominations will be accepted through March 28.

**Agriculture and Applied Sciences**
Jason Roberts – jroberts@utm.edu

**Business and Global Affairs**
Tom Payne – tpayne@utm.edu

**Education, Health and Behavioral Sciences**
Nancy Warren – nwarren@utm.edu

**Engineering and Natural Sciences**
Darrell Ray – dlray@utm.edu

**Humanities and Fine Arts**
Lane Last – lanelast@utm.edu

The Ned McWherter Institute will be a unique experience to enhance the futures of a core group of promising students. With your help, we can make the Institute a tremendous success, a source of pride for our University, and an impactful resource for West Tennessee.

For more information, contact Ashton Jennings, Interim Director of The Ned McWherter Institute at ajennings@utfi.org.