

# THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE CHATTANOOGA

## Provost's Page

March 7, 2011

At this point in my career, I am convinced that there is no such thing as a normal academic year on any university campus. This is certainly the case this year for UTC with all the events and initiatives going on this year. Although the sheer amount of activity can be challenging and daunting at times, it signals an exciting period of growth and creativity for UTC. Within this edition of the Provost's Page, I will highlight a few of the most currently relevant initiatives and in future issues will continue to focus on others.

At the full faculty meeting in January, we first unveiled the results of a gap analysis that identified a set of 17 peer institutions and a set of 15 comparative metrics strategically selected to assess our current competitive position within the higher education marketplace. The gap analysis also helps us identify areas of opportunity for UTC in the future. The gap analysis, now branded as *Engaged in Excellence*, also led to the bold ambition for UTC to become a Top 5 Public Master's University in the South. This ambition and the supporting details were presented to the UT Board of Trustees two weeks ago. At this point, we have the full support of the Board as well as of President DiPietro to move forward with this effort. Although this effort may seem to be yet another new initiative to add to our lengthy list, the *Engaged in Excellence* process is actually a natural culmination of everything that we are already doing, including the strategic plan, the Complete College Tennessee Act, and the QEP for SACS reaffirmation. For more information on the effort, the full board presentation can be viewed on-line at: <http://blog.utc.edu/news/2011/02/utc-aims-for-top-five-southern-master%E2%80%99s-universities/>.

Course schedules for Summer and Fall 2011 are now up on the web. Registration for both will open to students beginning March 27. We have made extensive changes to summer school with the intent of making it more student-centered and of encouraging more students to facilitate their academic progress with summer programming. Summer school currently generates about 16% of the student credit hours produced during a regular fall or spring semester. Since most of the campus fixed costs are already covered in the annual E&G budget, the incremental costs of instruction in the summer are relatively low with the result that we have significantly unused capacity in summer programming. Therefore, any additional revenue produced in the summer can have a dramatic, positive impact on our academic year budget. The recent structural and financial changes with summer school are necessary first steps, but the subsequent behavioral changes for faculty and students will likely take some time before we fully realize the anticipated benefits of the new summer school model.

Our recent study of classroom utilization has revealed some interesting and troubling use patterns. Many of you have properly complained about the unavailability of classrooms on campus during traditional time slots. The data actually show we have largely artificially created this logjam by offering most of our lecture sections between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. on Monday

through Thursday. The practices of non-standard time slots that tie up space for multiple class periods and of double counting of sections for artificial course load determinations further compound this problem. Following consultations with the deans, we are discontinuing the practices of non-standard time slots during prime time and double counting of large lecture sections. Further, respective department heads, as part of their overall responsibility to equitably manage workloads within their departments, will still have the opportunity to award credit to faculty who teach large sections.

You will also notice some adjustments to the Fall 2011 schedule. Reading Day has been eliminated. The last day of class falls on a Friday with final exams beginning the following Monday. These changes are deemed necessary to provide better student services, including financial aid and grade processing. This new calendar allows for processing appeals and financial aid issues that impact student progression.

This past week we sandwiched our 125<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration kickoff between open budget hearings. The former reminds us of our rich tradition and the many changes to our university over the decades. The latter has been very instructive for where we are now and for the immediate work yet to be done. We're all aware that, like all public higher education campuses, we have realized significant reductions in state funding over the last three years. Despite these continuing financial challenges, UTC is actually in a relatively enviable position because of regular enrollment growth and reasonable tuition increases. As indicated, the efforts to reenergize summer school and gain efficiency in classroom scheduling are designed to both reduce recurring budgetary pressures and increase our revenue generating potential.

In summary, we're an engaged campus with much to look forward to. It's an exciting time to be at UTC! Thank you for all you do to make UTC a premier institution.

Below are announcements and a briefly annotated list of a few of the current initiatives. As always, please feel free to contact me directly at [phil-oldham@utc.edu](mailto:phil-oldham@utc.edu) with any suggestions, questions, and/or concerns you may have regarding any university-related issues.

## CURRENT INITIATIVES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- SACS QEP and On-Site Visit- Our SACS Quality Enhancement Plan, "Think and Achieve", is complete and on-line. Our campus site visit is scheduled for April 5-7, 2011.
- 125th Anniversary- We will mark this milestone in the history of Chattanooga's University with a year's worth of concerts, parties, dinners, lectures, and sporting events leading up to and following the official founders' day birthday celebration on Sept. 15, 2011. The various events have been identified to give us all multiple opportunities to celebrate our history and dream about our future. <http://blog.utc.edu/news/2011/03/university-launches-125th-anniversary-celebration/>
- New Library Update- Contrary to the empirical evidence, the new library is still on schedule. For timeliness and efficiency, the total project was split into three phases with separate bidding processes. Phase 2 actually finished a bit ahead of schedule while the bid for phase 3 was slightly delayed. This has created the unfortunate illusion that the project has been jeopardized in some way. The RFP for phase 3 is expected to be issued later this month with an anticipated construction start date of June 1.

- Financial Aid Move- The Financial Aid office is now moving into their new space on the second floor of the University Center next door to the UC Auditorium.
- Oak Street House- UTC is now in the process of completing a purchase of the two houses at the corner of Oak and Douglas streets. We are currently evaluating the potential of moving the Provost's office, the Graduate School office, International Education, and ESL into these properties.
- FYRE- For the incoming freshman class this fall we are initiating a First Year Reading Experience (FYRE). This year's book is *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Creating Currents of Electricity and Hope* by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer. More information can be found at: <http://www.utc.edu/Academic/FirstYearStudies/fyre.php>.
- Research Day- UTC Research Day Celebration is scheduled for April 7, 2011 in the University Center. The Graduate School Office is accepting applications for presentations from students and faculty through March 11, 2011. The Office of Partnerships & Sponsored Programs, the Graduate School, and University Honors Program are joining forces to celebrate the scholarly accomplishments among our UTC family.
- UTC College of Business Nationally Ranked- Congratulations to our College of Business for earning a #107 ranking nationally by Businessweek. With over 3,500 business schools in the world, Bloomberg Businessweek selected only 113 for inclusion in its annual ranking. Since 2007, UTC College of Business has held the honor of being ranked one of the top undergraduate business schools in the country.  
[http://www.businessweek.com/interactive\\_reports/bs\\_ugrank\\_tab\\_0303.html?chan=bschools\\_special+report+--+best+college+business+programs\\_special+report+--+best+college+business+programs](http://www.businessweek.com/interactive_reports/bs_ugrank_tab_0303.html?chan=bschools_special+report+--+best+college+business+programs_special+report+--+best+college+business+programs)