

PATHFINDERS MONTHLY

Newsletter of the Office of Grants and Program Review
April 2006

Successful Student Support Services Program Leverages Additional Funding

UTC has been extremely successful in creating a welcoming and inclusive learning environment for students who are from low-income households, are the first generation in their families to attend college, or have disabilities. Unfortunately, these students face a number of challenges to completing a baccalaureate degree and are far less likely to graduate than their peers due to financial problems and lack of adequate preparation for college. In fact, only 26% of these students graduate within six years. Recognizing the critical need for financial and academic assistance to improve retention and graduation rates for these students, **Ms. Shirl Gholston** operates and continues to enhance UTC's Student Support Services (SSS) program. The SSS program is an important element of UTC's success in meeting the needs of students who face challenges associated with income, first-generation college attendance, or disabilities.

Ms. Gholston and program staff operate the SSS program with a grant award from the U.S. Department of

Education. This funding enables the program to serve 200 low-income, first generation students and students with disabilities each year. This long-standing program has a history of success, which is reflected in exemplary proposal reviews. The most recent proposal was ranked among the best in the United States, and reviewers awarded Ms. Gholston an extra year of funding because of the outstanding proposal and project plan.

To ease the financial burden of college and to help minimize dependence on student loans, the SSS provides financial aid packages for project participants. In addition to direct financial assistance, Ms. Gholston and SSS staff provide a number of other important services to participants, including tutoring, individualized education plans, intensive mentoring, and a structured freshman year. These services, along with access to social and cultural events and study skills instruction, help to ease the transition from high school to college, a transition which is often a difficult one for

participating students. Through these services, Ms. Gholston and the SSS staff facilitate the development of a supportive peer community which bolsters the students' commitment to attaining a baccalaureate degree.

However, the SSS does not stop at transition services. Participants also receive technology instruction, career guidance, and assistance in preparing to enter graduate or professional schools. Ms. Gholston and SSS staff ensure that participants have the tools they need to succeed not only in attaining a baccalaureate degree but also in pursuing advanced degrees and career opportunities suited to their interests and abilities.

Through the exemplary efforts of Director Shirl Gholston and staff, SSS provides participating students with the resources they need to succeed in college. Student Support Services plays a vital role in increasing retention and graduation rates for at-risk UTC students, and this most recent grant acquisition ensures that it will continue to motivate students to succeed for years to come.

FUNDED GRANTS AND RESEARCH
APRIL 1, 2006 –APRIL 30, 2006

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

DR. STEVEN SYMES

NASA

Chronological and Mineralogical Studies of
Alteration Products in Martian Meteorites

\$28,610

DR. AMYE WARREN

United Way of Greater
Chattanooga

Family Child Care Quality Improvement Project

\$5,000

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING & COMPUTER SCIENCE

SIM CENTER

SPARTA, Inc.

Solid Rocket Motor Computational Model Validation
and Verification

\$60,000

COLLEGE OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

MS. NANCY GEREN

NCCEP / SBC

Supplement to the GEAR UP Partnerships in Bradley
and Walker Counties

\$48,275

PROGRAM REVIEW

Sociology and Anthropology Program

THEC Assessment Score: 100%

The reviewer for the Sociology and Anthropology program lauded the strong curricula of both programs of study and was especially impressed with the Center for Applied Social Research and the Institute of Archaeology, noting that these units provide excellent opportunities for students to become involved in experiential learning while serving the community. The reviewer also commended the program's exemplary efforts to recruit and retain a diverse faculty and student body and recommended that UTC's Sociology and Anthropology program be used as a model for departments at similar institutions.