

PATHFINDERS MONTHLY

Newsletter of the Office of Grants and Program Review
March 2006

UTC Professor Forms Partnership to Enhance Tennessee Teacher Education

In the wake of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation, the link between teacher quality and student achievement has been studied extensively. As a result, researchers and policy makers recognize the critical relationship between the two. However, until recently, researchers have largely ignored the equally critical link between the efficacy of teacher education programs at colleges and universities and the quality of the classroom teachers that they prepare. This oversight has led to a detrimental gap in knowledge about how to prepare effective teachers in order to enhance student achievement. Noting the resulting gap in “best practice” research, **Dr. Dan Baker**, a Professor in UTC’s Teacher Preparation Academy, developed a project to assist Tennessee teacher preparation

institutions to analyze their programs and characteristics of graduates to determine their effectiveness. To initiate this project, Dr. Baker engaged two important partners: the Tennessee Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (TACTE) and the Tennessee State Department of Education. Dr. Baker and project partners set out to determine the effectiveness of Tennessee teacher education programs by developing a research-based model that Tennessee colleges and universities can use to assess the quality of their teacher preparation programs.

Because of the critical need for this research and Dr. Baker’s leadership in assessing the quality of teacher education programs, the project attracted funding from the prestigious

Carnegie Corporation of New York. In 2004, the Carnegie Corporation awarded Dr. Baker \$25,000 to support the project. Dr. Baker and project staff initially used grant funding to conduct research on evidence-based practices in teacher education and on induction practices for new teachers in Tennessee. Dr. Baker surveyed a number of teacher education programs to identify which data sources were being used to assess teacher quality and how those sources were being used. Other researchers surveyed 136 Tennessee school districts regarding their current induction programs. This data, along with other information, was used to develop protocols and research designs to investigate teacher education program and individual variables. The sustainability of

the project has been assured by the establishment of the Tennessee Center for Education Research, a unit implemented by the Tennessee Department of Education. One of the primary objectives of the Center will be to assist institutions of higher education with their research endeavors.

Based on the significant advances made during the initial Carnegie funding period, Dr. Baker was awarded a contract with the Tennessee Department of Education to enable him to work part-time as a Center staff member. In this role, Dr. Baker trained higher education professors in research methodologies and program evaluation that will comply with

standards established by the Tennessee Department of Education and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. Dr. Baker will also partner with TCER staff and others to perform program evaluations using a variety of assessment models. Workshops have been held to inform institutions of higher education regarding how collaborative research studies may be conducted with the Center. Dr. Baker and other members of the TACTE Research Committee as well as Center staff will assist TACTE institutions which have not yet conducted research studies in preparing to initiate them.

Dr. Baker's role in establishing the TCER and developing assessment techniques for Tennessee teacher education programs is an outstanding example of the commitment of UTC faculty to improving education statewide. By engaging partners including the Tennessee Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and the Tennessee State Department of Education, Dr. Baker increases UTC's profile as a key player in teacher education in Tennessee. Dr. Baker's efforts will benefit teacher education programs across Tennessee, enabling them to better prepare a new generation of Tennessee teachers to help their students succeed.

FUNDED GRANTS AND RESEARCH MARCH 1, 2006 –MARCH 31, 2006

COLLEGE OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

MS. ANNE GAMBLE

United Way of Greater Chattanooga

Project Ready for School 2006

\$80,447

DRS. JANE BROWER & BETH DODD

TN Department of Education

Governor's School for Prospective Teachers 2006

\$80,400

DR. DEBORAH MCALLISTER

TN Space Grant Consortium

Extension of TN Space Grant Consortium College and Fellowship Program Award

\$10,000