

Student Retention and Diversity Study
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Final Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the 2008-2009 academic year, 508 UTC students completed the Student Retention and Diversity Survey, mostly by telephone interview, providing extensive quantitative data analysis on a range of issues from academics, to housing, student activities, and multiculturalism and diversity. Additionally, 16 students participated in one of four focus group discussions, eliciting rich qualitative data shedding more light on these important issues. This Summary highlights the overall findings of both the survey and focus groups, and includes important multicultural and group differences where applicable. An extensive review of these differences can be found in the Results Section of the Report. Strengths, or areas to maintain, and weaknesses, or areas to improve, are noted in a concluding section with selected recommendations.

As in the larger report body, results included in this Summary are combined for freshmen and sophomores, and for juniors and seniors.

Choosing UTC

In both the survey and the focus groups, the majority of participants indicated that attending college was a norm for them, a stepping stone in continuing their education and moving toward a promising career and future. They described being motivated by their parents/caretakers and the knowledge that if they did not go to college opportunities would be limited. When asked why they chose to attend UTC in particular, the two predominant reasons given in both the surveys and focus groups were 'location' and 'cost/affordability.' Interestingly, the latter was not dictated by income level. Two other top reasons students selected on the survey is that UTC 'had my major' and that they had 'interest in specific majors or opportunities associated with UTC.' In the focus group sessions, participants also noted that they chose UTC because of the smaller size of the campus and its more intimate atmosphere. The survey indicated that interest in campus organizations, campus diversity, and family did not play much of a role in most students' decision to attend UTC.

Recruitment Issues

Few respondents reported that they had been recruited to attend UTC (12.1%). Of those, a third were recruited when UTC visited their high school, a quarter received a letter in a package from UTC, another quarter indicated that they were recruited for sports, and one in five were recruited for their academic ability. Very few attended a college recruitment event. Further, White students were more likely to report being recruited than ethnic minority students, and respondents without a disability were more likely to report being recruited than those who reported a disability.

Adjusting to UTC

In the focus groups, students were asked what has been most helpful in adjusting to UTC. Across the board, peers were cited as the most helpful in this way. Freshmen/sophomore students noted how peers positively impact their adjustment to the university classroom, and junior/senior respondents discussed making new friends as a way to adjust to the campus environment. Freshmen/sophomore students also noted that their professors were a major asset in helping them adjust, especially those who extend their help beyond the classroom. Social organizations and university services were also discussed by freshmen/sophomore students as helpful in adjusting, an important finding in light of the low involvement in social organizations and the low usage of

campus services reported on the survey. In addition to peers, junior/senior students noted that having assistance of advisors available provided them a sense of comfort. They also specified that having the common goal of earning a degree and quality education provided them a sense of connection between students.

Participants were also asked what has been difficult or problematic in their adjustment. Again, two different sets of answers emerged. Freshmen/sophomore students discussed two issues related to money - parking and housing. Students were frustrated over the lack of parking availability and the expense of parking, including parking decals and parking tickets incurred from not being able to find an appropriate place to park. Similarly, they were disappointed with UTC Place, noting that the repairs and maintenance issues make the pricing of that housing community unfair. Freshmen/sophomore students also described limited class space as a difficulty, noting the hassles of trying to get into their major-related courses, and the fact that being a freshman or sophomore worsened the problem. Conversely, junior/senior students were more concerned with the bureaucratic hassles and 'red tape' involved in transferring to UTC from a community college. Students also discussed one disadvantage of being a commuter student - less involvement in campus activities. However, they attributed this mainly to poor publicity of events.

Preparation for Future Job/Career

Responses on the survey and in the focus groups indicated that, in general, students feel they are advised well in regard to both their majors and their future jobs and career options, agreeing that, among other things, their advisors know them well, are available to talk with them, and that the relationships are good. However, survey results suggest that freshmen/sophomore students may be less knowledgeable about the advisement process than junior/senior students. Also, in the focus groups, some participants indicated wanting more time and direction from their advisors, noting that they sometimes feeling 'processed' ('just try to get you in and out') and sometimes are advised to take courses that are not required of their major ('wasting time and money').

Other discussions uncovering students' concerns about being prepared for their future emerged. Freshmen/sophomore students questioned the necessity of general education courses, some noting that they are not useful. This group of students also expressed considerable concern over the current economic situation and wondered whether there will be a job/career waiting for them when they graduate. Some are worried that their major areas may be too specialized, leading to an expensive education, but unattainable career. Junior/senior students, on the other hand, wanted a more structured curriculum with a detailed layout, including being advised early to prepare for graduate school and being required to complete an internship.

Internships were deemed especially beneficial in preparation for careers by all focus group participants, but they noted that most available internships are too specialized for certain majors, or are not advertised. This coincides with survey results indicating that only about a quarter of respondents reported having an opportunity to complete an internship related to their major or career aspirations. Similarly, a majority of students (86.8%) agreed that more internship opportunities would make UTC especially attractive to attend.

Academic Issues

Participants were asked a variety of questions about academic issues, such as major expectations of their professors, ways to make coursework more interesting and intellectually stimulating, satisfying and problematic experiences related to their coursework, and about studying abroad and service learning experiences and opportunities. When asked on the survey what their major expectations of their professors were, an overwhelming majority of respondents said they believed it was ‘to help build the student’s intellectual abilities’ (93.8%) and ‘to make the course interesting’ (92.0%). Another sizable majority (85.1%) felt that professors should provide them with broad information apart from the text (85.1%), use modern technology in the classroom and in assignments (76.9%), and help students find their career niche (73.2%). Interestingly, though still a large amount, least expected from their professors is ‘to make learning fun and easy’ (71.4%), suggesting that students find learning important and value their education more than they want an easy ride through school. However, it should be noted that students’ expectations of their professors varied by race/ethnicity, gender, and class ranking.

Participants in the focus groups were asked to discuss ways in which their courses could be made more interesting and intellectually stimulating. Most students desired more open class discussion, explaining that this stimulates intellectual conversation. Similar to previous responses, freshmen/sophomore students again pointed to professors as a key component. This group noted that an interested and engaged professor makes the class itself interesting and engaging. The focus groups comprised of juniors and seniors suggested that better facilities would be useful, noting that old run-down facilities are distracting and unaccommodating in the learning environment.

Focus groups participants were also asked to share their most satisfying and problematic experiences related to their coursework at UTC. A majority of freshmen/sophomore students indicated that their professors are a part of their most satisfying experiences, especially if they are helpful toward learning the material, and enjoyable, which adds to a positive classroom experience. Junior/senior participants discussed gaining applicable knowledge in the classroom as particularly satisfying, as well as the joy of seeing the finished product of their labor and the satisfaction of getting a good grade. One student noted that she ‘finally’ found a good math teacher, and this made a huge difference in her classroom experience.

Unfortunately, however, the math department was more often the source of freshmen/sophomore students’ problematic experiences related to their coursework. Participants described ‘bad math teachers’ and having to take remedial math courses over and over again. One student said she liked math, but wouldn’t major in anything related to math so that she could avoid UTC’s math department. Other students discussed frustrations with being required to take remedial courses and not receiving credit. They explained that taking remedial courses should be a personal decision and that they should be credited for the class. Other topics discussed as problematic for were taking instruction from non-credentialed instructors and language barriers between international professors and local students. Junior/senior students had a different set of negative experiences related to their coursework. Their primary concerns were the lack of structure in some of their courses, and the cost of textbooks, and in some cases, delayed purchasing all needed books at the beginning of the semester, causing them to get behind in their class work.

Participants were also asked about their studying abroad and service learning experiences and opportunities. Although only a small percentage of survey respondents reported participating in a study abroad program at UTC (2.4%), over half of the students indicated interest in doing so (55.7%) and a majority of respondents indicated that more international education programs (71%) and more support for international education programs (69.6%) would make UTC especially attractive to attend. Those who had a study abroad experience rated it as ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’ suggesting that this type of opportunity should be made more available and feasible for students. Students noted that a semester session would work best and the main difficulties with participating in a study abroad program are lack of time and money.

Students were also asked if they would be interested in participating in a service learning project as part of a grade, and three-fourths said they would (76%). Further, three-fourths of respondents felt that service-learning based courses (74.8%), more opportunities to be engaged in community volunteerism (76.8%), and more opportunities to do community research (74%) would make UTC especially attractive to attend. In the focus groups, students were a little ambiguous about the exact definition of service learning, but once provided a definition, they were generally supportive of the idea. They suggested that highlighting the importance of fieldwork as part of the overall learning experience and offering credit for participating would make the opportunity more appealing to students. Time and transportation were deemed challenges to completing a service learning project.

Campus Involvement

In both the focus groups and on the survey respondents indicated low campus involvement. When asked what groups they are involved in, about one in four indicated that they were involved in some type of organization (28.7%), with slightly less specifying involvement in interest or departmental clubs (23.9%). Only about one in ten claimed involvement in fraternities or sororities (11.9%) and faith-based organizations (10%). One in twenty were part of an honor society. Further, the majority of students said that more ways for students to become involved on campus (79.8%), more campus entertainment options (72.6%), and a set time for organization meetings during the day with no classes meeting (68.8%) would make UTC especially attractive to attend.

The focus group discussions shed more light on this issue. All groups agreed that there was not much student involvement on campus. Participants suggested that lack of advertisement and time constraints serve as obstacles to some student involvement. The freshmen/sophomore focus groups also pointed out that GPA requirements limit involvement in some campus activities. Junior/senior students felt that there is a lack of diverse activities on campus, which may be attributable to the limited advertisement of organizations and activities available. This group also suggested that most campus involvement is with fraternities and sororities, and that these are the same people involved in other organizations and activities, which creates an intimidating atmosphere for people not involved in Greek-letter organizations. Similarly, they noted that there is a lack of diversity, and suggested that diverse organizations and events would be more appealing to them.

Diversity Issues

In general, students seemed to possess positive opinions about diversity and multiculturalism at UTC. Overall, students at UTC seem to agree that some forms of diversity are present, they hold positive attitudes toward multiculturalism, and they believe that diversity on campus improves the quality of education. However, notable amounts of students indicated that they were unsure about some diversity related issues. For example, a third to a quarter of respondents were unsure whether UTC recognizes eminent leaders and alumni of color by naming buildings, scholarships, or lectureships in their honor and by awarding honorary degrees (33.5%), or if courses on race, culture, ethnicity, and other issues are regularly offered at UTC (29.8%), or if minorities feel comfortable at this university (28%), or if students are encouraged to join or form their own student organizations for support or celebrate their cultural heritage (26.4%). One in five did not know if women students have more opportunities than men at UTC (22.2%), if minority students have more opportunities than White students (20.2%), or if UTC has done a good job providing programs and activities that promote multicultural understanding (18%). Further, students disagreed to one positive diversity statement: ‘diversity at UTC is one of the reasons why I chose to come here.’ Of great importance, is that this is also the number one statement to which faculty, administrators, and staff disagreed in the 2009 UTC Faculty/Staff Worklife and Diversity Study recently completed at UTC. Whether or not these groups are indicating that UTC is not diverse enough for them or that diversity is not a factor they considered when coming here is unclear. Further investigation is recommended.

Though respondents had generally positive attitudes toward and opinions of diversity and multiculturalism, a third of the students surveyed reported hearing people on campus make insensitive or disparaging remarks about specific groups of people on campus. On average, administrators were believed to ‘never’ make disparaging remarks, but faculty were reported to ‘seldom’ make them about women, racial/ethnic minorities, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender persons, and persons of particular religious backgrounds. Students were reported to make these remarks most frequently. Specifically, students were reported to have ‘occasionally’ heard from other students insensitive or disparaging remarks about women, racial/ethnic minorities, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender persons. They also noted hearing remarks about the other five multicultural groups, though this was report to ‘seldom’ occur.

Also important, is that a quarter of the students surveyed reported being harassed in some way (e.g., insults, hate jokes, written comments, threats of physical violence, etc.) at some point at UTC, the majority who indicated so being women. Importantly, only a small percentage of those individuals who experienced harassment ever filed a complaint (7.8%). The top two group identities that students believed to be relevant in the harassment were race and sex/gender, with ethnicity and religion thought to play a role in slightly less of these incidents. Being gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender, low-income, or a person with a disability, did not seem to play much of a role in these incidents of harassment.

The focus groups provided more in-depth information about diversity on campus. Participants were asked what they believed to be the main diversity issues on campus, what have been the most positive things related to diversity that they have seen here at UTC, and the ways diversity might be increased at UTC. The main diversity issue discussed in all four groups is segregation in the cafeteria, which students felt uncomfortable with, desiring that this change. This issue is

not a new one. Participants also noted their disappointment with the lack of diversity within the fraternities and sororities, one going as far as to suggest her ‘mixed’ roommate was not selected for a sorority because of race/ethnicity.

On a positive note, all groups of students mentioned UTC housing as a positive experience with diversity, forcing students, who would not otherwise, to interact with each other. They discussed the housing arrangement as an opportunity to willingly meet different individuals and learn more about each other. Focus group participants also suggested a few ways to increase diversity on campus. Freshmen/sophomore students felt that providing more multicultural events (e.g., the Oak Street Roast) could bring more diverse groups of people together, while junior/senior students suggested more student recruitment from abroad, increasing international representation at UTC.

Student Attrition

Over half of the respondents in this study reported knowing someone who had dropped out of college and a third felt that they wanted to leave/drop out of UTC at some point themselves. Nearly-three quarters, however, indicated that it was “not at all likely” they would drop out of UTC before they graduate. Students listed many reasons they believe others may drop out of college, but poor study habits was the number one response followed by inadequate time management. Lack of motivation and academic difficulty were listed as the top two reasons someone they knew dropped out of college. Interestingly, when asked why they thought about leaving themselves, the majority of students reported department/professor issues. The fundamental attribution error (Ross, 1977)¹ dictates that people will attribute other peoples’ failures to internal reasons (e.g., poor study habits or inadequate time management), while attributing their own inadequacies to external reasons (e.g., it was the department or my professor’s fault), this psychological error clearly demonstrated here. However, respondents did confess lack of motivation as the second most predominant reason for considering dropping out, taking on some responsibility. Importantly, there were multicultural differences in this set of responses as well.

Strengths & Weaknesses of UTC

In the focus groups, students were asked what one thing about UTC they would change if they could and what one thing they would keep the same. All groups discussed the array of parking problems as a major weakness of the university that they would like to see remedied. Freshmen/sophomore groups also discussed limited housing as a result of the university’s growing population, noting the dissatisfaction of some students forced to live in hotels because the university cannot accommodate them. Junior/senior students said that they would like to see more transparency and accountability in regards to when and how university money is spent. They know how the money is coming in (e.g., tuition, parking tickets, etc.) but not where it goes.

¹ Ross, L. (1977). The intuitive psychologist and his shortcomings: Distortions in the attribution process. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*, Vol. 10 (pp. 174–200). New York: Academic Press.

In looking at things that students felt should stay the same, the number one response among freshmen/sophomore students was tuition. This coincided with survey findings in which 'cost/affordability' is the number three reason students chose to attend UTC in the first place. Focus group participants elaborated that UTC is 'affordable' and 'works for what you need'. Junior/senior participants, however, said they like the small size of the campus best, as well as the faculty and staff. This also coincided with survey findings. A 'smaller campus' and 'professors' were among the top three things students said they like best about UTC. The number two thing was 'city of Chattanooga/location,' which makes sense as it is the number one reason they chose to attend UTC in the first place.

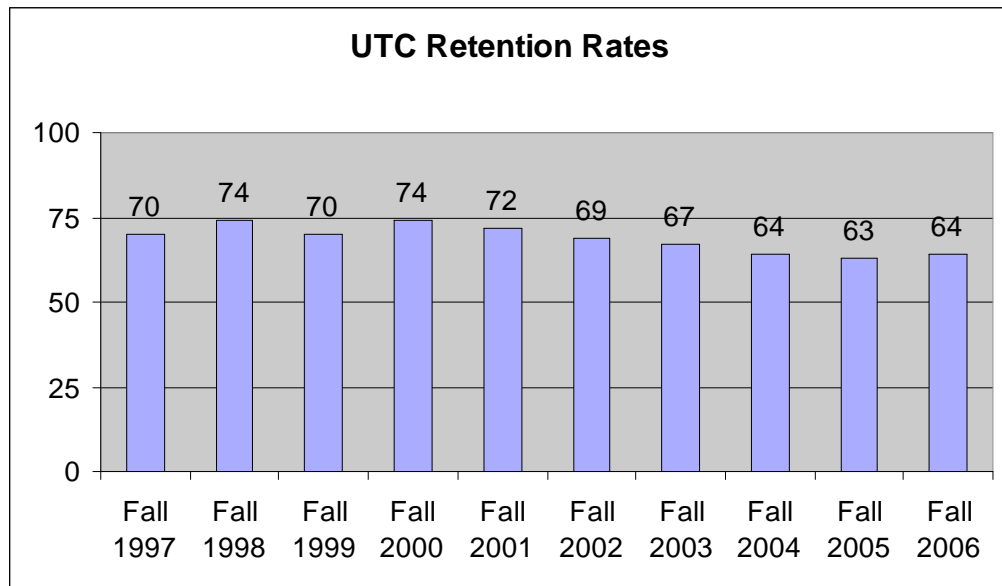
I. Study Background

Over the 2008-2009 academic year, the Center for Applied Social Research (CASR) conducted a study of student retention and diversity issues at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC). This study was conducted in response to a request from the UTC Retention Task Force to replicate a focus group study on student retention conducted by the CASR in 2001, and to further explore current campus diversity issues. This study provides the requested information, but is extended to include a comprehensive survey component as well. The latter was desirable in that it provides highly useful quantitative data on retention and diversity factors, and to establishes a baseline analysis that can be longitudinally compared over the next several years. This data furthermore offers an objective base from which focus groups could be developed. Focus groups were desirable in that they allow clarification of student concerns and the situations affecting their decisions to remain at UTC, as well as more in depth discussion of diversity issues.

Study Rationale

In reviewing UTC’s retention rates² over a ten year period (UTC Factbook, Office of Planning, Evaluation, & Institutional Research, 2008), we note a fairly steady decline across the last seven years, with student retention dropping a total of 10% from the Fall of 2000 (74% retention rate) to the Fall of 2006 (64% retention rate). Stated another way, while UTC retained about three-quarters of its students (see footnote) from the 2000 to 2001 school year, only two-thirds returned from the 2006 to 2007 school year.

Figure 1. UTC Retention Rates 1997-2006



² Retention rate is defined as a measure of the rate at which students persist in their educational program at an institution, expressed as a percentage; at four-year institutions, this is the percentage of first time, full-time bachelor’s (or equivalent) degree-seeking undergraduates from the previous fall, who are again enrolled in the current fall (UTC Factbook, Office of Planning, Evaluation, & Institutional Research, 2008).

Improving student retention and addressing diversity issues is also part of UTC's 2007 Strategic Plan. This research examines many factors that may impact student retention and helps to identify the major strengths (areas to maintain) and the major weaknesses (areas to improve) that, with attention, may help to increase the retention rate while also suggesting viable recruitment strategies. The study also explores diversity issues that may be affecting campus climate for students, and in some cases, impacting the retention rate.

II. Methodology

Survey

Instrument

A 52-item survey assessed students on retention and diversity factors at UTC, and included five sections: Choosing UTC, Academic Issues, Retention Issues, Diversity Issues, and Demographic Questions (see Appendix A). The first three sections address recruitment and retention issues. The *Choosing UTC* section asked students questions about their choice to attend UTC, whether and how they were recruited, and what they like best about UTC. *Academic Issues* assessed students' academic experiences at UTC and how they relate to future goals. In addition, students were asked about advisement related to future jobs and career options and majors. They were also queried regarding their relationships with advisors, opportunities for internship and service learning experiences, other opportunities that make UTC attractive to attend, their expectations of professors, and factors related to studying abroad. The third section, *Retention Issues*, asked students why they believe some students may decide to drop out of college, whether they knew someone who had dropped out and their reasons for doing so, and whether they themselves ever wanted to drop out of college and if so, why. This portion of the survey listed 25 potential reasons for college student drop-out, which began with the five major causes of student attrition identified by Tinto (1987)³: academic difficulty, problems in adjusting to college life, lack of clearly defined goals, uncertainty about career aspirations, and unwillingness to make academic commitments. Twenty additional items (e.g., lack of involvement in campus activities and organizations, financial issues, lack of mentors, etc.) were added by researchers at the CASR and persons on the UTC Retention Task Force, to enable the analysis to include these areas of particular interest to the Task Force.

The *Diversity Issues* section of the survey assessed campus climate and diversity and includes slightly modified questions from a Campus Diversity Survey developed by Myles & Rogers (2003)⁴ at the University of Rhode Island. The section includes multiple assessments, such as: multicultural diversity in the curriculum and classroom, availability of programs and services for various multicultural groups, mentorship for persons of differing multicultural backgrounds, beliefs about campus climate, opinions on diversity and multiculturalism in general, inter-group contact and comfort level with various multicultural groups, group identity and campus

³ Tinto, V. (November 1987). *The principles of effective retention*. Presented at the Fall Conference of the Maryland College Personnel Association, Largo, MD.

⁴ Myles, S., & Rogers, M.R. (2003). *University of Rhode Island Campus Diversity Survey*. Unpublished survey.

integration, frequency of hearing disparaging remarks on campus about different multicultural groups, and frequency of experiencing various forms of harassment on campus by group identity.

Finally, the survey asked *Demographic Questions* in order to describe the characteristics of the sample, and where allowable, to assess potential differences in retention and diversity factors by race/ethnicity (ethnic minority vs. White/Caucasian), gender (male vs. female), disability status (disability vs. no disability), financial status (low-income vs. not low-income), and classification (freshmen and sophomores versus juniors and seniors).

Procedure

Telephone Survey. The telephone interviews were conducted by trained student interviewers at the CASR Survey Center from October 2008 to January 2009. Interviews were conducted using the WinCati automated survey system.⁵ A pilot test of the survey was conducted with 26 students, which included an initial draft of the questionnaire and a brief feedback survey. Minor revisions were made to the survey as a result of the pilot test. The final telephone survey took between 20 and 30 minutes to administer, with variation due to how much students wanted to share in the interview. A total of 426 telephone surveys were obtained. Participating students received a small appreciation gift (e.g., candy bar, movie ticket, paraphernalia from UTC's athletic department, etc.).

Paper Survey. To supplement the telephone surveys, paper surveys were collected by student assistants in UTC's University Center during the same time period as the telephone survey. This version of the survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete, since it was self-administered. A total of 82 paper surveys were collected, and these students received the same incentives for participating as the telephone respondents.

Sample

A random list of 3,000 students was initially obtained from the UTC Office of Institutional Research. Due to the high number of changed or disconnected telephone numbers, and difficulty reaching students, a second random sample of 1,000 students was requested. Of the 4,000 student contact numbers provided, 10.7 % of students participated in the telephone survey (426/4000) meeting the goal of a desired 10-20% response rate. As noted above, 82 additional surveys were manually completed by students who volunteered to participate, for a total of 508 completed surveys. The numerical response goal was 600 surveys; 84.6% of the surveys sought were obtained (508/600). Sample characteristics are described in the first part of the Survey Results section.

Analysis

Data analysis was performed using the SPSS 16.0 statistical analysis package. The analysis results were reviewed, cleaned, and verified. Descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, means, standard deviations, medians, modes, ranges, etc.) were derived, which are provided throughout this report. Where possible, further multicultural analyses were conducted. Specifically, two-by-

⁵ Sawtooth Technologies (2003). *WinCati Supervisor Guide* (p. 1-1). Northbrook, IL: Sawtooth Technologies, Inc.

two cross-tabulations with Chi-Square statistics were run to determine variations in responses by race/ethnicity (ethnic minority vs. White/Caucasian), gender (male vs. female), disability status (disability vs. no disability), financial status (low-income vs. not low-income), and student classification. Freshmen and sophomore students, and junior and senior students, were combined for all student classification analyses. Only statistically significant differences are reported in this report that are meaningful within the context of the assessment areas noted above.

Multicultural analyses were not conducted on the 14 Likert scale items (questions 5, 6, 7, 13, 17, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32a)⁶ because there were more than two response options (e.g., 1=strongly agree through 5=strongly disagree), and although a significant difference may be detected, it is impossible to determine where the difference exists (e.g., is it between men and women who strongly agree vs. strongly disagree? is it between men and women who strongly agree vs. neither agree nor disagree?, etc.). Alternative statistical tests were not run due to low/disproportionate numbers in some sub-categories (e.g., 7% reporting a disability vs. 93% who did not). Further data manipulation and complex analyses can be run on these items if requested.

Focus Groups

Moderator Guide

In keeping with formal focus group methodology, a 20-question semi-structured moderator guide containing broad open-ended questions designed to elicit rich descriptions about participant's opinions and experiences⁷ was developed (see Appendix B). The five section guide was designed to obtain more in depth information from students on retention and diversity factors at UTC, and covered eight broad areas: decision to attend college, adjustment to UTC, preparation for future job/career, satisfying versus problematic experiences, academic issues such as service learning, campus involvement, diversity issues, and the strengths and weaknesses of UTC from the students' perspective.

Procedure

Students who participated in the survey portion of the study were sent an email inviting them to also participate in one of several follow-up focus group sessions. They were informed that the session should take approximately two hours, refreshments would be served, and they would receive a \$10 incentive fee for their participation. Students responding were separated into two groups – freshmen and sophomores, and juniors and seniors. Two focus groups were conducted for each respective grouping, and were held in April 2009.

⁶ It should be noted that for three Likert scale advisement items (questions 5, 6, 7) percent differences are described between underclass and upperclass students by request of a Task Force member. This should not be interpreted as a statistically significant difference.

⁷ Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Informed consents were distributed, explained, signed, and collected for all groups. Students were informed of the confidentiality requirements of the sessions, which included those participating and all discussion associated with the focus groups, including individual names. Sessions lasted an average of two hours.

Sample

Of the sample of 508 survey participants, 41 students responded to the email invitation (8.1% initial response rate), but after scheduling four of the most convenient time slots, only 26 were available (5.1% modified response rate). Sixteen students actually participated (3.1% participation rate). Two groups were conducted with freshmen/sophomores (10 participants; 5 each) and two with juniors/seniors (6 participants; 3 each). A brief description of focus group sample characteristics is presented at the beginning of the Focus Group Results section.

Analysis

In order to provide a full analysis of the data, the focus groups were tape recorded and later transcribed with all identifying information removed to ensure confidentiality of participants and those who may have been mentioned during the session⁸. The focus group transcripts were analyzed using a variation of Grounded Theory Method⁹. To capture the richness of the data without imposing theoretical constraints upon participants' experiences, categories stemming from a priori assumptions were avoided. Rather, themes were identified as they emerged from the data. That is, all focus group findings in this report were grounded in students' responses and not prior research. Once the overall analysis was completed variations in findings between lower level classifications and upper level classifications were explored.

III. Results

Survey Findings

Demographic Information

The majority of students surveyed identified themselves as "Caucasian/White" (72.3%), with 18.3% identifying as "Black/African American," and 9.4% selecting "other." Of the latter, 4.8% identified themselves as bi/multiracial, two as Iranian, and one each as Armenian, French, Arabic, and Middle-Eastern American. The remaining 4.6% identified themselves as Asian American, Hispanic/Latino/a, American Indian, or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Table 1 shows a summary of these findings.

⁸ It should be pointed out that the CASR protects the identity of participants and with those whom they talk about, but other participants are also present at the focus groups. To address this, we inform participants on the informed consent that they are required, as a member of the focus group, to maintain the confidentiality of those participating, including their names and information shared as part of the group.

⁹ Glaser B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine.

Table 1. Race and Ethnic Characteristics of Student Respondents

Race/Ethnicity	Percent
Caucasian/White	72.3
Black/African American	18.3
Other	4.8
Asian American	2.3
Hispanic/Latino/a	1.7
American Indian	.4
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	.2
Alaskan Native	0

Slightly over half (56.7%) of participants were female and the average age of respondents at the time of this study was 24 years (range 17-65; median=21). A little over 7% of participants reported having a disability; only 3.5% identified as “Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender.” Five participants were international students. They identified their countries of origin as Cameroon Africa, Belgium, Canada, Nigeria, and Syria.

As shown in Table 2, the college most represented by students in this sample was the College of Arts and Sciences (42.3% of respondents). A little over one in five students indicated the College of Business (22.6%), and nearly one in five reported the College of Health, Education, and Professional Studies (18.3%). Only 6% of respondents indicated the College of Engineering and Computational Science. A little over one in ten participants did not know their college (8.1%) or were undecided about their major (2.7%).

Table 2. College Distribution of Student Respondents

Colleges	Percent
Arts and Sciences	42.3
Business	22.6
Health, Education and Professional Studies	18.3
Don't Know	8.1
Engineering and Computational Science	6.0
Undecided Major	2.7

Within the College of Arts and Sciences, the top three majors reported were Biological & Environmental Sciences, Criminal Justice, and Psychology. The top three majors reported within the College of Business were Accounting, Management, and Marketing and Entrepreneurship. Of those who indicated a major in the College of Health, Education, and Professional Studies, nearly half did not indicate a specific major. However, one-fourth reported they were in the School of Nursing. Half of those indicating the College of Engineering and Computational Science did not specify a major, though nearly one-fourth indicated having an Engineering major. Another fourth specified Computational Science as their major. All respondent majors are shown in Tables 3.

Table 3. Student Respondent Majors

College of Arts and Sciences Majors	Number
Art	8
Biological & Environmental Sciences	29
Chemistry	17
Communication	15
Criminal Justice	25
Legal Assistant Studies	5
Economics	6
English	15
Foreign Languages & Literatures	4
History	2
Interdisciplinary Studies	0
Humanities	0
University Studies	0
Mathematics	3
Military Science	1
Music	1
Philosophy & Religion	1
Physics, Geology, & Astronomy	8
Political Science, Public Administration, & Nonprofit Management	15
Psychology	23
Sociology, Anthropology, & Geography	15
Theatre & Speech	2
University Honors Program	0
Unspecified Arts & Sciences Major	11
TOTAL	206

College of Business Majors	Number
Accounting	26
Finance	14
Management	26
Marketing & Entrepreneurship	26
General Business Administration	9
Unspecified Business Major	14
TOTAL	115

College of Engineering and Computer Science Majors	Number
Engineering	6
Cooperative Education Program	0
Engineering Technology Management	0
Computer Science	6
Unspecified Engineering and Computer Science Major	15
TOTAL	27

College of Health, Education, and Professional Studies Majors	Number
Early Childhood	3
Exceptional Learning	0
Foreign Language Education	0
Middle Grades Education	3
Secondary English	3
Secondary Mathematics	2
Secondary Natural Sciences	0
Secondary Social Sciences	3
Health & Human Performance	0
Interior Design	5
School of Nursing	31
Rehabilitation Science: Occupational Therapy	0
Rehabilitation Science: Physical Therapy	10
Social Work	6
Unspecified Health, Education, and Professional Studies Major	65
TOTAL	131

Other Majors/Responses	Number
Unidentifiable Majors	7
Respondent did not Specify Major	28
Respondent is Undecided	16
TOTAL	51

As shown in Table 4, results reflected a roughly even split across student classifications. Slightly more than half (54.1%) of the respondents indicated that they were either a junior (27.2%) or senior (26.9%). Freshmen were 21.9%, and sophomores 18.9%. The remaining 5.1% identified themselves as graduate students¹⁰. About a third (32.0%) of the students surveyed reported being a first generation college student and the majority (86.2%) of respondents were full-time students.

For the remainder of this report, findings will generally be combined for freshmen and sophomores, who are referred to as lower level students. Juniors and seniors are combined, and referred to as upper level students. Graduate student respondents are combined with juniors and seniors.

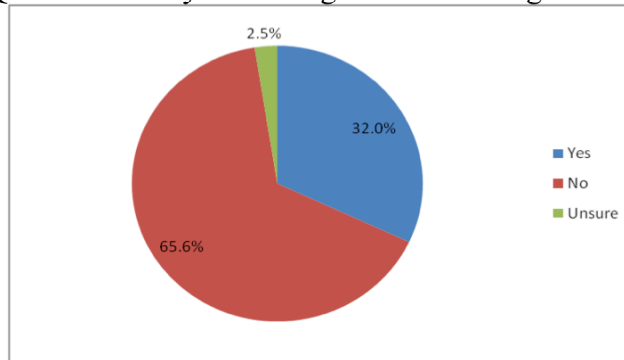
¹⁰ When the sample was created it consisted of undergraduate students for whom the study was directed; however, when the calling began some students in the sample had begun graduate work. Thus, 24 students in the total sample of 4,000 were graduate students.

Table 4. Classifications of Student Respondents

Classification	Percent
Junior	27.2
Senior	26.9
Freshman	21.9
Sophomore	18.9
Graduate	5.1

Figure 2. First Generation College Students

Question: Are you a first generation college student?



Based on their parents’ income, the majority of students characterized their social class position as “middle class” (39%; mean=3.65). About a third (34.7%) of students, however, reported being in a lower income status (low income, working class, or lower middle class). A majority of the students (73.15%) reported receiving some form of financial aid. Over half (53.7%) of the respondents received the HOPE Scholarship. Tables 5 and 6 summarize these findings.

Table 5. Social Class Status Based on Parent Income

Parental Social Class Status	Percent
Low income	3.8
Working class	15.2
Lower middle class	15.7
Middle class	39.0
Upper middle class	18.2
Upper class	1.3
Wealthy/elite	1.3
Don’t Know	5.6

Table 6. Financial Aid Received by Student Respondents

Financial Aid	Percent
HOPE Scholarship	53.7
Pell Grant	41.7
TSAC Grant	10.6
Perkins Loan	7.4
Academic Competitiveness Grant	7.4
Work Study	6.6
SEOG Grant	5.4
SMART Grant	1.1

To ascertain family background effects, students were asked several questions about their families of origin. Parental education was of interest for those students raised by a single parent. Of those students who reported being raised by their mother or a female guardian, a third reported her as having a college degree, 21.8% reported high school, and 21.4% reported some college as her highest level of education. Of those who reported being raised by their father or a male guardian, 28.3% reported him as having a college degree, 22.9% reported high school, and 17.4% reported some college. Table 7 summarizes these results.

Table 7. Parent Education for Respondents Raised by a Single Parent

Raised by Mother/Female Highest Level of Education	Percent
1=Less than High School	2.5
2=Some High School	3.4
3=High School	21.8
4=Some College	21.4
5=College	34.0
6=Advanced Degree	14.0
Not Applicable	2.9

Raised by Father/Male Highest Level of Education (select one)	Percent
1=Less than High School	2.3
2=Some High School	3.6
3=High School	22.9
4=Some College	17.4
5=College Degree	28.3
6=Advanced Degree	13.4
Not Applicable	12.2

When asked what groups they are involved in, 28.7% of respondents said organizations, 23.9% said interest or departmental clubs, 11.9% said fraternities or sororities, 10% said faith-based organizations on campus, and 5.8% said honor societies. Table 8 shows these results. In addition, campus involvement is frequently a function of whether students have access to transportation, are commuter students versus campus residents, and knowledgeable of campus resources. As shown in Table 9, many students had access to cars for transportation. Most participants (81.2%) indicated that they had a car as their main form of transportation. This fact may also reflect the fact that nearly three-fourths (73.9%) of students surveyed indicated that they lived off-campus (see Figure 3).

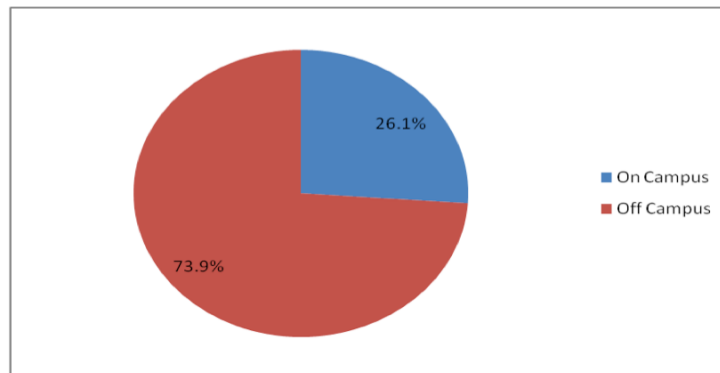
Table 8. Student Respondents’ Campus Organizational Involvement

Campus Involvement	Percent
Organizations (e.g. International Student Organization)	28.7
Interest or departmental clubs (e.g. Campus Democrats or Rowing Club)	23.9
Fraternities or sororities	11.9
Faith based organizations on campus	10.0
Honor societies (e.g. Alpha Kappa Delta or Mortar Board)	5.8

Table 9. Main Forms of Respondent Transportation

Main form of Transportation	Percent
Own a car	81.2
Walk	11.2
Shuttle/CARTA	3.1
Bicycle	2.1
Friend/roommate car	1.9
Other	.4

Figure 3. On-Versus Off-Campus Residency



How much students use various offices and services on campus was of interesting this survey. Student respondents, on average, reported that they rarely visit the Dean of Students Office, Office of Multicultural Affairs, Office of Students with Disabilities, Office of Cooperative Education, and the Student Success Center. These offices typically are visited due to specific needs. The same is true of the Counseling and Career Planning Center, Adult Services, and few students indicated visiting these offices. However, students also only infrequently visited the Writing Center and the Math Lab, which might be perceived as of more universal utility to students. Students were most likely to visit the Library, professors and advisors. These results are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10. Campus Offices and Services Visited by Respondents on Average *

How often do you visit...?	Mean	SD	%DK
Dean of Students Office	1.34	.756	2.9
Office of Multicultural Affairs	1.28	.755	1.9
Office Of Students with Disabilities	1.24	.738	.4
Counseling & Career Planning Center	1.66	.910	.8
Office of Cooperative Education	1.19	.603	1.5
Adult Services	1.60	.969	1.0
Student Success Center	1.40	.842	1.9
Writing Center	1.55	.946	0
Math Lab	1.85	1.156	.2
Library	3.70	1.064	0
Advisor	2.93	1.079	0
Professors	3.27	1.098	.2

* 1=Never 2=Seldom 3=Occasionally 4=Often 5=Very Often DK=Don't Know

Choosing UTC

A variety of reasons were given by students for why they chose to attend UTC. However, nearly two-thirds of the participants (65.7%) reported “location” as a reason for their decision. The second and third most prominent reasons were “UTC had my major” (16.5%) and “cost/affordability” (15.5%). As shown in Table 11, the same number of respondents from both the lower income background and the higher income groups reported “cost/affordability” as a reason why they decided to attend UTC.

Table 11. Reasons for Decision to Attend UTC

Response Options (select all that apply)	Percent
Location	65.7
Had my major	16.5
Cost/affordability	15.5
Interest in specific majors or opportunities associated with UTC	14.1
Like the University/what I had heard about it	11.6
Friends/family attend here/did attend here	11.0
Scholarship	9.2
Other	7.0
Interest in campus organizations	3.8
Campus diversity	2.8
Family decision	2.2

Table 12 reflects how students were recruited to attend UTC, with only 12.1% of respondents reporting that they had been directly recruited. Of those, a little over a third reported that they were recruited when UTC visited their high schools, 28.3% reported that they had received an invitation and application package from UTC, 23.3% noted sports recruitment, and a little over one in five students reported academic recruitment. Also, 10% (n = 6) reported “other¹¹” and four of those students reported “knowing someone at UTC” as how they were recruited. Caucasian respondents were more likely to report being recruited than ethnic minority students and respondents without a disability were more likely to report being recruited than those with a disability.

Table 12. Methods of Recruitment to UTC

Response Options (select all that apply)	Percent
UTC visited my high school	35.0
Received letter in recruitment package from UTC	28.3
Sports recruitment	23.3
Academic recruitment	21.7
Attended a college recruitment event	13.3
Other	10.0

Students were also asked what they liked best about UTC and a plethora of reasons were given. The fact that UTC is a “smaller campus” was the most prominent response received (32.2%). The second and third most popular reasons reported were the city of Chattanooga/ location (26.0%) and the professors (25.6%). There were many multicultural differences found in what

¹¹ For all questions with “other” as a response option, only those with a response rate of 10% or are elaborated upon in this narrative. A breakdown of all “other” responses can be found in Appendix C.

respondents liked best about UTC. As shown in Table 13, the majority of students who chose the “city of Chattanooga/location”, “living quarters”, and “opportunities offered” reported themselves to be Caucasian/White. Ethnic minority respondents were more likely to say “campus facilities”, “food options”, “clubs, organizations”, “friends I have here” and the “diversity” at UTC. Freshmen and sophomore respondents were more likely than junior and senior respondents to indicate “living quarters”, “clubs, organizations” and “friends I have here” as what they like best about UTC. Women tended to indicate “living quarters” as what they liked best. Males in contrast were more likely to indicate liking a particular professor, or sports.

Table 13. Student Respondents Selections of What Is Liked Best About UTC

Response Options (select all that apply)	Percent
Smaller campus	32.2
City of Chattanooga/location	26.0
Professors	25.6
Majors offered	13.8
Campus climate/environment	13.4
Class selections	11.2
Living quarters	9.8
Friends I have here	9.0
Diversity	7.8
Opportunities offered	7.6
Clubs, organizations	7.0
Natural beauty/amenities	7.0
Campus facilities	5.8
Other	5.8
Library	3.8
Food options	2.8
Sports	0.8

Academic Issues

Students were asked how well they felt that they had been advised at UTC for future jobs and career options. They were also asked how well they felt they had been advised regarding their majors, in terms of graduation requirements. A Likert scale was used and response options ranged from 1 (very well) to 4 (not at all). As shown in Table 14, the average response for advice on future jobs and career options was 1.95. Almost half of the respondents felt that they had been advised “fairly well” (49.2%) and a large number of students reported that they were advised “very well” (31.7%). In looking at percent differences between lower level and upper level students on this dimension, both evaluated their advisement for future jobs and career options similarly, though slightly more upper level students indicated “poorly” than lower level student respondents.

Table 14. Adequacy of Advisement for Future Jobs or Careers

Response Options (select one)	Overall %	Lower level%	Upper level%
1=Very well	31.7	32.8	29.7
2=Fairly well	49.2	50.6	49.6
3=Poorly	11.1	9.4	13.4
4=Not at all	8.0	7.2	7.3

The average response among participants on advice received regarding their majors was 1.71. That is, most students reported that they had been advised “very well” (45.8%) and sizable number indicated that they had been advised “fairly well” (40.9%). As shown in Table 15, differences between lower level and upper level students on this dimension indicated a similar trend. Both evaluated their advisement in regard to their majors positively, though slightly more upper level students indicated “poorly” than lower level respondents, while lower level students were more likely to select “not at all”.

Table 15. Respondent Views of Advisement for Majors and Graduation Requirements

Response Options (select one)	Overall %	Lower level%	Upper level%
1=Very well	45.8	43.2	45.5
2=Fairly well	40.9	44.3	41.0
3=Poorly	9.4	6.6	9.8
4=Not at all	3.9	6.0	3.7

Students were asked to rate their level of agreement with several statements regarding their advisors at UTC, using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree), with don’t know (DK) as an additional option. In general students tended to agree with all of the statements regarding advisement at UTC (mean range: 1.49-2.42). It is interesting to note that a little over one in five students responded “don’t know” to the following statements: “My advisor knows me well,” “I have the same person in my department to advise me each semester,” “My advisor talks to me about career opportunities,” and “My advisor and I have a good relationship.”

Table 16. Respondent Views On Advisement

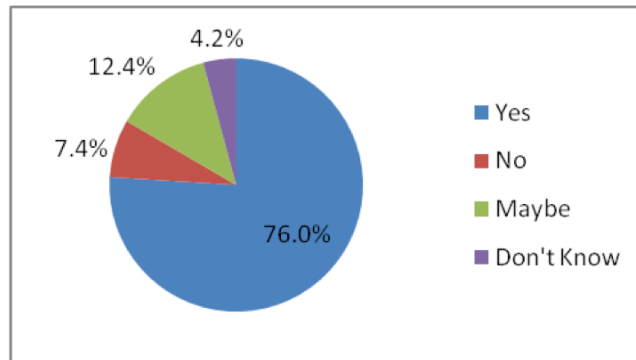
Statements	Mean	SD	%DK
I know my advisor’s name.	1.49	.725	8.9
My advisor is available to talk to me.	1.63	.706	8.3
My advisor and I mainly discuss my course schedule.	1.76	.768	6.2
My advisor knows me well.	2.31	.984	11.3
I have the same person in my major department to advise me each semester.	1.82	.865	13.3
My advisor talks to me about career opportunities.	2.42	.917	10.2
My advisor and I have a good relationship.	2.04	.865	11.8
I am prepared for my advising appointment when I see my advisor.	1.58	.650	5.6
I mainly want to see an advisor for an advisement code.	2.23	.886	4.8
I have received excellent advising at UTC.	1.98	.830	5.6

1= Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Disagree 4=Strongly Disagree DK=Don’t Know

A breakdown by whether the respondent reported being a lower level student or an upper level student revealed that, in general, more lower level students indicated “don’t know”, not only on these particular items, but on all items in this section. This may suggest that lower level students are newer to the University and thus to their advisor and the advisement process, but as they reach their junior and senior years and become more knowledgeable in this area. The results for advisement are summarized in Table 16.

Attitudes toward greater community engagement as part of the academic experience of students was a key area of interest for this survey. Asked about service learning as an approach to engagement, three-fourths of respondents were agreeable to a course requirement in which they would have the opportunity to do a service project or spend a limited number of hours doing professional work as part of their grade (see Figure 4). Of those, the majority were upper level students. In addition, 74.8% felt that service learning-based courses would make UTC especially attractive to attend. Only 24.3% of students surveyed indicated they had been given the opportunity to do an internship related to their major or career aspirations. Eighty-seven percent of students felt that offering the opportunity for more internships, and 76.8% felt more opportunities to be engaged in community volunteerism would make UTC especially attractive to attend. The majority who selected the latter (community volunteerism) were women.

Figure 4. Agreement to a course requirement involving service learning



As noted above, many students felt having an opportunity for hands-on learning through internships or service learning options would make UTC an attractive option for prospective students. Other factors respondents felt would contribute to UTC’s attractiveness included having “more ways for students to become involved on campus” (79.8%), “more opportunities to do community research” (74%), “more campus entertainment options” (72.6%), and “a set time for organization meetings during the day, with no classes meeting during that time” (68.8%). The majority of students who chose “more ways for students to become involved on campus,” “more opportunities to do community research,” and “a set time for organization meetings during the day...” were female. Table 17 summarizes these findings. Upper level students were more likely than lower level students to choose: “a set time for organization meetings during the day, with no classes meeting during that time” and “more ways for students to become involved on campus” as things that would be make UTC especially attractive to attend. An equal percentage of lower level and upper level respondents chose “more campus entertainment”.

Table 17. Views of What Would Make UTC Especially Attractive to Attend

Response Options (select all that apply)	Percent
More internships	86.8
More ways for students to become involved on campus	79.8
More opportunities to be engaged in community volunteerism	76.8
Service learning-based courses	74.8
More opportunities to do community research	74.0
More campus entertainment options	72.6
More international education programs	71.0
More support for international education programs	69.6
A set time for organization meetings during the day with no classes meeting	68.8

When asked what their major expectations of their professors were, an overwhelming 93.8% selected the response “to help build the student’s intellectual abilities.” A high percentage (92.0%) also stated that they expected that their professors make the course interesting, with female respondents especially likely to select this option. Also, 85.1% felt that professors should provide them with broad information apart from the text. Other responses with response rates of above 70% were: “To use modern technology in the classroom and in assignments,” “To help students find their career niche,” and “To make learning fun and easy.” Table 18 summarizes these findings.

Table 18. Respondents’ Major Expectations of Professors

Response Options (select all that apply)	Percent
To help build the student’s intellectual abilities	93.8
To make the course interesting	92.0
To provide broad information apart from the text	85.1
To use modern technology in the classroom and in assignments	76.9
To help students find their career niche	73.2
To make learning fun and easy	71.4

Only 2.4% of respondents had participated in a Study Aboard program at UTC. The percentage of Caucasian/White (1.0%) and Ethnic minority (1.3%) students who reported participating in a Study Aboard program was equal. Of those who have participated in a Study Aboard program, 50.0% rated the experience as “very good” and another 33.3% rated their experience as “excellent” (mean=1.92). Though only a small portion of students have been able to participate in a Study Aboard program, over half (55.7%) of the students would be interested in studying aboard, or doing it again. Upper level students were less likely to be interested in studying abroad than lower level respondents. Also, 69.6% of students surveyed felt that more support for international education programs would make UTC especially attractive to attend. As shown in Table 19, most students who had studied abroad had very good to excellent experiences, and most would like to do so again (see Figure 5). Table 20a shows the best time frames for studying

abroad for respondents, and Table 20b indicates the main reasons students felt they would have difficulty doing a study abroad session. The main reasons given for why it would be difficult to study abroad were: lack of time (27.9%), lack of funds (24.8%), other (22.4%), and lack of course credit toward graduation requirements (20.0%). Of interest, the majority (14.2%) of those who responded “lack of funds” as their reason for why it would be difficult for them to study abroad were not low-income students. Of those who responded “other” (n = 111), 32.4% reported that it would be difficult due to family obligations.

Table 19. Respondents’ Views of Study Abroad Experiences

Response Options (select one)	Percent (n=)
Excellent	33.3
Very good	50.0
Average – ok	8.3
Not very good – needed improvement	8.3
Poor	0

Figure 5. Student Interest in Studying Abroad Again

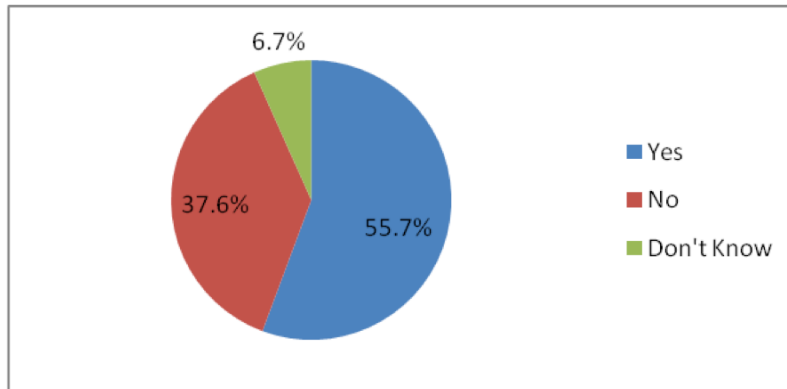


Table 20a. Best Time to Study Abroad

Response Options (select one)	Percent
Semester abroad	36.3
2-week session abroad	21.4
One month session abroad	31.9
Other (please specify)	10.5

Table 20b. Reasons for Not Studying Abroad

Response Options (select all that apply)	Percent
Lack of time	27.9
Lack of funds	24.8
Other (please specify)	22.4
Lack of course credit toward graduation requirements	20.0

Retention Issues

Students were asked to rate a variety of statements regarding why they thought some students decided to leave or drop out of UTC before graduating using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree), with “don’t know” (DK) as an additional option. On average, the statement that students seemed to agree most with was “poor study habits” (1.63). On average, the statement that students seemed to agree with the least was “physical disability/access issues” (2.98). In general, respondents agreed with all of the reasons listed for why they believed some students might drop out of school, except for the following: “learning disability,” “student’s background differs from those of most students, faculty, and staff on campus,” and “lack of advisement”. It is also interesting to note that a little over one in five students responded “don’t know” to the following statements: “physical disability/access issue,” “learning disability,” “depression, anxiety, or other mental health issue,” “low self-esteem,” “intended to leave prior to degree completion,” and “forced to leave due to probation or expulsion”. Table 21 summarizes these results.

Over half (61.2%) of the students surveyed reported knowing someone who has dropped out of UTC. Of those, 27.3% felt that the student decided to discontinue his/her education at UTC because of “lack of motivation”. Another 20% felt that it was due to “academic difficulty”. It is interesting to note that, in the previous question, the majority of students disagreed that “physical disability/access issue” was a reason for someone to drop out of UTC, but here it is the third highest reason given for why someone they know has dropped out of UTC. These results are summarized in Table 22.

Furthermore, students were queried regarding their own possible decisions to leave UTC prior to graduation. Roughly a third (31.5%) of students surveyed indicated they had at some point felt they wanted to leave or drop out of UTC. Of those, 21.4% (n = 33) reported “other” as the reason they considered discontinuing their education at UTC. Of the 33 students who responded “other” to this question, almost a third (n=10; 30.3%) stated “department/professor issues” as the reason. “Lack of motivation” was reported by 15.6% of students and “academic difficulty” was reported by 10.4% of respondents. The latter two of these coincide with the two most prominent reasons given for why someone they knew had dropped out. It is promising to note that nearly-three quarters (72.2%) of the participants said that it was “not at all likely” they would drop out of UTC before they graduate. Table 23 summarizes these findings.

Table 21. Reasons Some Students May Drop Out of College

Response Options (rate each one)	Mean	SD	%DK
Academic difficulty (e.g., struggling in classes, poor grades, can't handle course load)	2.10	.793	4.4
Insufficient academic skills (e.g., not prepared for college level work, can't pass remedial classes)	1.92	.710	3.6
Poor study habits	1.63	.611	1.2
Inadequate time management	1.65	.599	1.2
Physical disability/access issue	2.98	.658	13.2
Learning disability	2.69	.693	12.0
Depression, anxiety, or other mental health issue	2.18	.715	10.9
Low-self esteem	2.37	.693	13.3
Lack of motivation	1.84	.627	1.6
Lack of clearly defined goals (e.g., person has goals more limited than the institution)	1.94	.649	5.7
Unwillingness to make academic commitments (e.g., family pressures, unsure if one wants to go to college)	1.85	.581	3.2
Problems adjusting to college life (e.g., cannot make the jump from high school to the demands of college)	1.93	.642	1.8
Lack of involvement in campus activities and organizations	2.44	.791	4.6
Student's background differs from those of most students, faculty, and staff on campus (e.g., race or income)	2.66	.704	8.9
Relationship issues (e.g., problems with family or roommates)	2.35	.662	5.5
Social issues (e.g., unable to make friends or unable to communicate with professors)	2.25	.662	4.6
Financial issues (e.g., cost of tuition/textbooks/housing, no financial support from parents)	1.67	.680	1.0
Lack of advisement	2.58	.710	4.7
Lack of mentors	2.45	.718	8.9
Uncertainty about career aspirations (e.g., not sure what one wants to be)	2.07	.659	4.5
Personal emergency (e.g., illness, death in the family, loss of a family business)	2.04	.627	6.9
Desired to go to different school because of career interests or major	1.87	.588	3.6
Needed/wanted to be closer to home	2.03	.594	3.4
Intended to leave prior to degree completion	2.38	.712	15.6
Forced to leave due to probation or expulsion	2.22	.667	15.4

1= Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Disagree 4=Strongly Disagree DK=Don't Know

Table 22. Reasons Some Students Dropped Out of College

Response Options (select all that apply)	Percent
Lack of motivation	27.3
Academic difficulty (e.g., struggling in classes, poor grades, can't handle the course load)	20.0
Physical disability/access issue	13.3
Inadequate time management	12.3
Problems adjusting to college life (e.g., cannot make the jump from high school to the demands of college)	12.0
Poor study habits	11.7
Unwillingness to make academic commitments (e.g., family pressures, unsure if one wants to go to college)	11.7
Insufficient academic skills (e.g., not prepared for college level work, can't pass remedial classes)	9.7
Uncertainty about career aspirations (e.g., not sure what one wants to be)	8.7
Forced to leave due to probation or expulsion	8.7
Lack of involvement in campus activities and organizations	8.3
Other	7.7
Financial issues (e.g., cost of tuition/textbooks/housing, no financial support from parents)	7.3
Low-self esteem	7.0
Lack of clearly defined goals (e.g., person has goals more limited than the institution)	7.0
Relationship issues (e.g., problems with family or roommates)	6.3
Desired to go to different school because of career interests or major	6.3
Social issues (e.g., unable to make friends or unable to communicate with professors)	6.0
Needed/wanted to be closer to home	6.0
Lack of mentors	5.7
Depression, anxiety, or other mental health issue	5.3
intended to leave prior to degree completion	4.3
Lack of advisement	3.7
Personal emergency (e.g., illness, death in the family, loss of a family business)	3.7
Student's background differs from those of most students, faculty, and staff on campus (e.g. race or income)	2.7
Learning disability	2.3

Table 23. Reasons Some Respondents Considered Leaving UTC

Response Options (select all that apply)	Percent
Other	21.4
Lack of motivation	15.6
Academic difficulty (e.g., struggling in classes, poor grades, can't handle the course load)	10.4
Unwillingness to make academic commitments (e.g., family pressures, unsure if one wants to go to college)	9.1
Needed/wanted to be closer to home	9.1
Desired to go to different school because of career interests or major	8.4
Financial issues (e.g., cost of tuition/textbooks/housing, no financial support from parents)	6.5
Depression, anxiety, or other mental health issue	5.8
Forced to leave due to probation or expulsion	5.8
Physical disability/access issue	5.2
Problems adjusting to college life (e.g., cannot make the jump from high school to the demands of college)	4.5
Uncertainty about career aspirations (e.g., not sure what one wants to be)	4.5
Intended to leave prior to degree completion	4.5
Inadequate time management	3.9
Low-self esteem	3.9
Lack of clearly defined goals (e.g., goals more limited than the institution)	3.9
Lack of involvement in campus activities and organizations	3.9
Social issues (e.g., unable to make friends or unable to communicate with professors)	3.9
Lack of advisement	3.9
Poor study habits	2.6
Student's background differs from those of most students, faculty, and staff on campus (e.g. race or income)	2.6
Relationship issues (e.g., problems with family or roommates)	1.9
Lack of mentors	1.9
Insufficient academic skills (e.g., not prepared for college level work, can't pass remedial classes)	1.3
Learning disability	1.3
Personal emergency (e.g., illness, death in the family, loss of a family business)	1.3

In looking at multicultural differences in reasons respondents may have ever considered dropping out of UTC, almost all items reflected racial/ethnic differences. The following reasons were more likely to be reported by ethnic minorities than by White respondents: “academic difficulty,” “insufficient academic skills,” “poor study habits,” “student’s background differs from those of most students, faculty, and staff on campus,” “social issues,” “financial issues,” “lack of advisement,” and “lack of mentors”. Differences according to students’ classification ranking also existed. Lower level respondents were more likely to report “desired to go to a different school because of career interests or major”, and all respondents who chose “lack of mentors” were lower level students. Conversely, all participants who said they had considered leaving UTC because they “needed/wanted to be closer to home” were upper level students. The only response option that revealed gender differences was “problems adjusting to college life”; surprisingly, all respondents who reported this as a reason for why they considered leaving UTC were women. Only one item revealed differences among those who do and do not have disabilities. Respondents without disabilities were more likely to report “unwillingness to make academic commitments” as a reason for why they considered discontinuing their education at UTC. No differences were found based on whether participants were low-income or not.

As shown in Table 24, when asked at what point they have seen more students leave college before graduating, 79.1% of students surveyed responded “after losing a scholarship” and two-thirds felt that it was “after scholarship expires”. Three quarters believed it was after freshmen year and over half felt that it was after the student had completed his/her major. Nearly half indicated “sophomore year.”

Table 24. Point at Which More Students Drop Out of College

Response Options (select all that apply)	Percent
After losing a scholarship	79.1
Freshmen year	74.2
After scholarship expires	65.5
After completing major	58.4
Sophomore year	49.1
After time for participating in a sport runs out	36.5
After pledging a fraternity or sorority	16.6
Junior year	15.0
Senior year	8.3
After joining social or organization groups	7.5

Diversity Issues

The sensitivity of diversity issues can make an assessment of diversity attitudes more problematic. To facilitate gauging student attitudes and perceptions in this area, respondents were asked to rate a variety of statements regarding diversity at UTC on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree), with “don’t know” (DK) as an additional option. In general, students agreed with almost all of the statements regarding diversity at UTC, except for the following: “Diversity at UTC is one of the reasons why I chose to come here,” “I feel I need to minimize various characteristics of my racial/ethnic culture (e.g. language, dress) to be able to fit in at UTC,” “Minority students have more opportunities than white students on the UTC campus,” and “Women students have more opportunities than men at UTC.” Since all but the first of these statements are negatively worded items, students’ opinions related to diversity issues at UTC are relatively positive in this sample. Table 25 details these findings.

It is interesting to note, however, that a little over one in five students responded “don’t know” to the following statements: “The institution expects that students of color will succeed and develop strategies to help them do so,” “The university provides programs to ensure the success of differently-abled students,” “Scholars and artists of color are invited to the campus to participate in campus events,” and “UTC has done a good job of providing programs and activities that promote multicultural understanding”. Further, a little over two in five students responded “don’t know” to the following statements: “The institution recognizes eminent leaders and alumni of color by naming buildings, scholarships, or lectureships in their honor and by awarding honorary degrees,” “Students are encouraged to join or form their own student organizations for support or to celebrate their cultural heritage,” “Minorities feel comfortable at this university,” “Minority students have more opportunities than white students on the UTC campus,” “Women students have more opportunities than men at UTC,” and “Courses on race, culture, ethnicity, and other issues are regularly offered at UTC.” It appears that although respondents generally had positive opinions regarding diversity at UTC, a number of students were unsure about specific aspects of diversity on the campus.

Table 25. Respondent Agreement with Specific Statements Regarding Diversity at UTC

Rate your level of agreement with...	Mean	SD	%DK
I think that the core curriculum should require courses in multicultural diversity.	2.16	.794	8.2
Where appropriate, professors address multicultural issues in the classroom.	1.99	.567	5.7
The institution expects that students of color will succeed and develops strategies to help them do so.	1.97	.593	13.7
The university provides programs to ensure success of differently-abled students.	1.90	.551	10.6
Diversity on campus improves the quality of education.	1.77	.628	4.5
Scholars and artists of color are invited to the campus to participate in campus events.	1.93	.506	14.8
The institution recognizes eminent leaders and alumni of color by naming buildings, scholarships or lectureships in their honor and by awarding honorary degrees.	1.97	.557	33.5
The campus environment is free from racial conflict.	2.28	.762	13.9
Diversity at UTC is one of the reasons why I chose to come here.	2.69	.792	4.5
Minorities feel comfortable at this university.	1.99	.530	28.0
UTC has done a good job providing programs and activities that promote multicultural understanding.	2.01	.586	18.0
Friendships are more likely to be determined by common interests than by race.	1.96	.626	5.7
Students are encouraged to join or form their own student organizations for support or to celebrate their cultural heritage.	2.01	.511	26.4
My experiences since coming to UTC have led me to become more understanding of racial/ethnic differences.	2.22	.716	5.3
In my experiences students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds participate equally in classroom discussion and learning.	2.12	.654	4.7
I feel I need to minimize various characteristics of my racial/ethnic culture (e.g. language, dress) to be able to fit in at UTC.	2.89	.709	7.2
Minority students have more opportunities than white students on the UTC campus.	2.94	.620	20.2
Women students have more opportunities than men at UTC.	2.96	.538	22.2
I have learned more about interacting with people with disabilities since coming to UTC.	2.51	.715	8.4
Courses on race, culture, ethnicity, and other issues are regularly offered at UTC.	2.16	.590	29.8
This university actively promotes diversity.	1.96	.520	12.6

1= Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Disagree 4=Strongly Disagree DK=Don't Know

As shown in Tables 26 (a, b, c, d) nearly a third (30.6%) of the students surveyed reported that they had ever heard anyone on campus (e.g., faculty, staff, administrators, other students) make insensitive or disparaging remarks about a specific group of people on campus (e.g., women, people of color, persons with a disability, low-income person, etc.). On average, students felt that faculty ‘never’ made insensitive or disparaging remarks about men, persons with disabilities, non-native English speakers, or low-income persons, and ‘seldom’ made disparaging remarks about women, racial/ethnic minorities, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender persons, and persons of particular religious backgrounds. On average, students felt that administrators and staff ‘never’ made insensitive or disparaging remarks about any of the multicultural groups of people listed. Interestingly, they felt that students made the most disparaging remarks of all four of these populations. They reported to have ‘occasionally’ heard insensitive or disparaging remarks about women, racial/ethnic minorities, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender persons. They also noted hearing remarks about the other five multicultural groups, though this was reported to ‘seldom’ occur.

Table 26a. Respondents Hearing Faculty Making Disparaging Comments

Rate the frequency of each	Mean	SD	%DK
Women	1.60	.935	4.1
Men	1.42	.821	3.4
Racial/ethnic minorities	1.71	1.03	1.4
Gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender persons	1.62	1.05	2.8
Persons with disabilities	1.22	.585	1.4
Non-native English speakers	1.37	.707	1.4
Persons of particular religious backgrounds	1.55	1.01	2.1
Low-income persons	1.36	.801	2.1

1=Never 2=Seldom 3=Occasionally 4=Often 5=Very Often DK=Don't Know

Table 26b. Respondents Hearing Staff Making Disparaging Comments

Rate the frequency of each	Mean	SD	%DK
Women	1.23	.590	3.4
Men	1.11	.391	3.4
Racial/ethnic minorities	1.36	.777	3.4
Gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender persons	1.39	.893	3.4
Persons with disabilities	1.13	.428	3.4
Non-native English speakers	1.29	.651	4.1
Persons of particular religious backgrounds	1.24	.698	4.1
Low-income persons	1.22	.660	4.1

1=Never 2=Seldom 3=Occasionally 4=Often 5=Very Often DK=Don't Know

Table 26c. Respondents Hearing Administrators Making Disparaging Comments

Rate the frequency of each	Mean	SD	%DK
Women	1.09	.491	1.4
Men	1.11	.574	1.4
Racial/ethnic minorities	1.17	.639	2.8
Gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender persons	1.15	.611	2.1
Persons with disabilities	1.11	.546	2.1
Non-native English speakers	1.08	.434	2.1
Persons of particular religious backgrounds	1.09	.424	2.1
Low-income persons	1.08	.420	2.8

1=Never 2=Seldom 3=Occasionally 4=Often 5=Very Often DK=Don't Know

Table 26d. Respondents Hearing Students Making Disparaging Comments

Rate the frequency of each	Mean	SD	%DK
Women	2.66	1.15	2.1
Men	2.37	1.15	1.4
Racial/ethnic minorities	3.01	1.13	.7
Gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender persons	3.15	1.23	.7
Persons with disabilities	2.05	1.13	1.4
Non-native English speakers	2.44	1.25	1.4
Persons of particular religious backgrounds	2.34	1.26	1.4
Low-income persons	2.02	1.17	1.4

1=Never 2=Seldom 3=Occasionally 4=Often 5=Very Often DK=Don't Know

Students were asked to rate a series of statements regarding whether or not they agreed that diversity related issues were present at UTC or not (1=strongly agree to 4=strongly disagree). On average, students agreed with all of the statements, except for the following: “Interracial tensions in the residence halls” and “Interracial tensions in the classroom.” The latter two items were the only negatively worded items on the list, again indicating positive opinions about diversity at UTC. However, it should be pointed out, as with the previous set of diversity statements, that many respondents selected “don’t know” to many of the items. One in five students responded “don’t know” to “Availability of social/cultural life for members of my race/nationality in the community”. Over two in five responded “don’t know” to “Participation of students of all races/nationalities in judiciary/disciplinary programs,” “Leadership roles of students of all gender/race/nationalities in student government organizations,” “Residence hall assignments for the purpose of promoting cultural diversity,” “Majority student participation in events sponsored by minority students,” and “Interracial tensions in the residence halls”. Further investigation is needed here. These results are summarized in Table 27.

Table 27. Level of Agreement with Specific Statements Regarding Diversity at UTC

Rate the level of agreement...	Mean	SD	%DK
Presence of an ethnically diverse faculty and administrative/professional staff.	1.97	.651	6.0
Presence of an ethnically diverse student body.	1.87	.530	4.1
Availability of social/cultural life for members of my race/nationality in the community.	1.95	.565	12.8
Opportunity for frequent contact with ethnically/racially diverse faculty.	2.05	.595	9.7
Participation of students of all races/nationalities in judiciary/disciplinary programs.	1.96	.543	31.7
Leadership roles of students of all gender/race/nationalities in student government organizations.	1.93	.542	27.4
Residence hall assignments for the purpose of promoting cultural diversity.	2.08	.569	41.0
Majority student participation in events sponsored by minority students.	2.22	.583	38.1
Respect by students for other students of different racial and ethnic groups.	1.97	.541	8.9
Respect by faculty for students of different racial and ethnic groups.	1.80	.492	5.4
Respect by students for faculty of different racial and ethnic groups.	1.91	.486	6.8
Interracial tensions in the residence halls.	2.66	.712	45.5
Interracial tensions in the classroom.	2.88	.620	7.2

1= Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Disagree 4=Strongly Disagree DK=Don't Know

Table 28. Perceptions of Acceptance and Tolerance Based on One's Group Identity

Because of my group identity...	Mean	SD	%DK
I feel isolated or left out in campus related activities.	3.23	.565	2.3
I feel pressure to show loyalty to my group.	3.17	.604	2.7
I feel like I can never slip up because what I do represents my group's abilities, behaviors, etc.	3.02	.699	2.7
I feared for my physical safety.	3.32	.597	.4
I was a victim of a sex crime or hate crime.	3.44	.603	1.0
People assume I am here because of affirmative action.	3.31	.599	7.5
I was singled out as the "resident authority" for my group when issues relevant to my group identity arose.	3.27	.637	8.7
I heard derogatory comments about my group in the academic class.	3.20	.697	1.4

1= Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Disagree 4=Strongly Disagree DK=Don't Know

Students were also asked to respond to several negatively worded statements as they related to their identification with one or more groups (1=strongly agree to 4=strongly disagree). It is positive to note that, on average, students disagreed with all of them. These results are summarized in Table 28.

Respondents, on average, also disagreed that they have experienced any of the forms of harassment about which they were surveyed: verbal comments, written comments, being ignored, insults, threats of physical violence, actual physical assault or injury, anonymous phone calls, called names, graffiti, hate jokes, cartoons, other forms of harassment. However, a quarter (25.5%) of students surveyed reported experiencing some form of harassment at some point at UTC, with the majority who indicated so being women. The following group identities were believed to be relevant in this harassment: race (39.7%), sex/gender (31.1%), ethnicity (23.9%), religion (23%), sexual orientation/gender identity (15%), being low-income (8.7%), and disability (7.4%). Not surprisingly, of those who reported sex/gender as relevant in the harassment, an overwhelming majority were women. Interestingly, this also indicates that some male students have also experienced some form of sex/gender harassment at UTC. Unfortunately, of those who reported being harassed, only 7.8% filed a complaint or grievance. (See Figure 6 and Figure 7)

Figure 6. Experience With Any Form of Harassment due to Group Identity

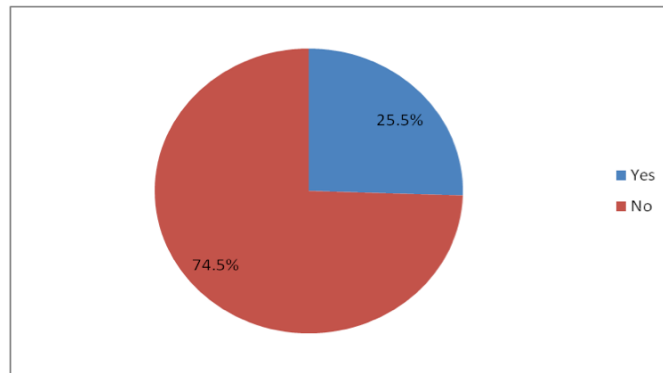
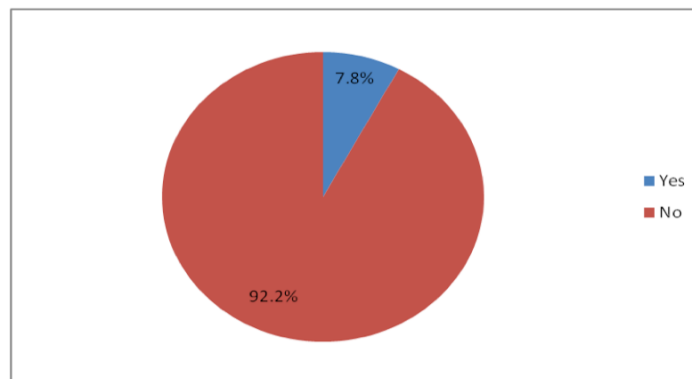


Figure 7. Filing of a complaint or grievance about harassment



Focus Group Findings

Four focus groups were conducted with 16 undergraduate students. Two groups were conducted with freshmen/sophomore level students (10 participants; 5 each) and two were held with junior/senior level students (6 participants; 3 each). Thus, nearly two-thirds of the sample were freshman or sophomores (62.5%). The majority were also women (n=13; 81.3%) and White (n=13; 81.3%). Generally this report will refer to the freshmen/sophomore group as lower level students, and the junior/senior group as upper level students.

Decision to Attend College/UTC

An overwhelming number of students stated that attending college was a norm for them, a mere stepping stone to continue their education. Echoing peers, one lower level student mentioned that college is the natural next step from high school towards a promising career and future, equating it to “getting married, having kids and then growing old.” Others mentioned the expectations from parents as their motivation to attend college, as well as the opportunities afforded to individuals with a college education, versus individuals without a degree. These sentiments were consistent across the upper and lower level students.

“I think it was never really a question like if I would or wouldn’t go... [it was] expected by my family.”

“I feel the same way because, you know, to get ahead in life one main thing you need is a college education... Everyone in my family has gone to college so, that’s why I went too, so I could have a good future and not have to worry about where my money is going to come from.”

Most students, both upper and lower level students, attributed their decision to attend UTC to the affordability of the university. Lower level students focused more on scholarship opportunities, while upper level participants focused on affordability and cost effectiveness.

“...I needed [my] Hope Scholarship and they were the only school in the state that had my major...”

“...I came here because it was really cost effective, like I could keep living in my mom’s basement and not having to pay for Tennessee Tech... I could come here and have a good experience and a small classroom and, you know, the reasonable price and still have a diploma that’s as good as Tennessee Tech’s diploma in my opinion.”

Both classifications also showed appreciation for the mid size and location of the university. Most participants mentioned being “just far enough” from home with the convenience of traveling home when necessary. Interestingly, housing was mentioned as a factor in participants’ decision to attend UTC.

“Dorms. I’m sorry I’m not a community bathroom kind of girl. I’ve never done well with that.”

The convenience of minimal communal areas, along with the opportunity of privacy is what appealed most. The opportunity for independence from former high school classmates and friends was also mentioned as an appealing factor of the university. Upper and lower level participants, again, attributed this factor to the convenient location and also the intimate campus atmosphere.

“...most of the people from my high school weren’t going here, so that’s why I went here.”

Lower level participants mentioned other contributing factors were lack of “overwhelming Greek life” and “overwhelming sports affiliation.”

Adjusting to UTC – Positive Aspects

Both under and upper level participants mentioned peers when it came to making the adjustment to UTC helpful. However, lower level students focused on peers positively impacting their adjustment to the university classroom, while upper level participants focused on adjustment to the entire campus environment, mentioning making new friends as a helpful adjustment to UTC.

“I think I just met people in my class. It wasn’t really like the housing program that made me feel more comfortable, but more like meeting other people in my classes, I guess.”

“Gaining friends.... If you don’t have friends, you know it just makes everything so much harder and you just feel awkward, out of place. If you have people that come up to you and introduce themselves and kinda take the first step, it just makes everything so much easier, so much faster and you feel like you’re part of a group and no the longer at the table eating Chick-fil-A by yourself.”

Social organizations, and other university services, such as the Student Success Center and Math Lab made the list of helpful adjustments for most lower level participants. However, an overwhelming number of lower level students mentioned their professors as a major asset in adjusting to UTC. Some participants mentioned that their professors didn’t stop their assistance in the classroom, often extending their duties beyond that setting.

“A lot of my, well not a lot, but a few of my professors have been really helpful throughout the semesters to give me aid and help in whatever [way] I needed help, you know, going beyond just teaching in the classroom.”

While lower level participants focused on the help from professors, upper level participants noted help from advisors, mentioning that having that assistance available provided a sense of comfort.

“...the door for my advisor is always open and that always goes a long way because having a face to face access with somebody in the system helps so much, you know?”

Interestingly, upper level participants also mentioned the common goal of the students at the university as helpful in adjusting to UTC. The goal of each student to earn a degree and gain a quality education provided common ground and a sense of connection between students.

“...it’s not like a school setting where everyone is in there against their will; everyone here is here to work and further themselves...”

Adjusting to UTC – Negative Aspects

When questioned about difficulties in adjusting to UTC, participants often mentioned money and parking, as well as transitioning to a university setting and issues that stem from being a “commuter student.” Money and parking were mentioned as the top source of difficulty when it came to adjustment for the lower level students, with an emphasis on current parking arrangements. These participants frequently complained about the lack of parking availability as well as the expense of parking, which includes parking decals and parking tickets incurred from being unable to find appropriate parking spaces.

“Plus parking at Place, it’s so expensive to park your car at night. Like it’s not worth it. It’s worth it to park like blocks away and walk to the apartment. It’s like 250 dollars a semester to park in that lot when you’re already paying tuition (inaudible).”

“I probably spent like over two hundred dollars in parking tickets.”

Other difficulties for lower level participants involved limited class space. The hassle of gaining admittance into courses for their majors was an area of concern, stating that their current classification (freshmen) worsened the problem.

“But like what she said... it is harder to get into classes...especially when you’re a freshman because we get the last pick and everything is filled up, so you have to like wait and it kind of like puts you behind.”

Also, of particular concern, lower level participants mentioned the correlation of pricing of campus housing (speaking of UTC Place) with the quality of the housing. Participants pointed out repair and maintenance issues that made the pricing of the housing community unfair.

“Everything. We had a leak out of our vents in the apartment and their weather stripping is not completely sealed.... like all of this stuff, and they charge all of this money and they charge so high for parking. Like I’m glad I live there because I like it, but at the same time I’m just, like, never again. Why did I choose this place?”

Among the upper level participants, difficulties adjusting included the transition to a university setting, as well as problems incurred from having to commute to campus, versus living on campus. Some upper level participants noted the difference between a community college and university setting, explaining that maneuvering through the “red tape” was a difficult adjustment. The student felt as if university processes proved difficult for even the seemingly easiest of tasks.

“I came from a community college and there there’s like no red tape. Everything happened in ONE building and coming here was one of the like hardest struggles to get classes transferred, find the right department, if you lose something you have to go to THREE different buildings to like... You have to pay for it in one building, take your receipt to another building, make sure you’re the right person, and then you go to the third building and you get your piece of paper or whatever you need... and just coming here and a lot of their, I guess, internet systems are just archaic.”

Commuting to campus was also described as problematic. Upper level participants complained of the difficulty of getting involved on campus as a student that does not live on campus. The focus group participants attributed this lack of involvement to poor publicity about campus and organizational activities.

“The things that made it kind of problematic for me as a commuter student, and I don’t live on-campus like when I was a freshman, I remember I wanted to maybe sign up for a fraternity or something, but I didn’t even know when rush was because it’s not publicized enough for me.”

Some upper level students noted that email communication is not sufficient advertisement for campus activities, with one mentioning that the email “usually goes right in the garbage bin.”

When questioned about factors that may make the adjustment to UTC difficult for their peers, most participants (upper level and lower level students) mentioned the adjustment to a life of independence away from the comfort of home as a problematic adjustment. However, other participants characterized such difficulties as a “personal issue,” suggesting that it could be resolved by making friends and pushing oneself to become more involved in campus activities.

“I think it’d be more of a personal issue. I was really shut off when I first got here. I wasn’t really doing anything, getting myself out there. But once I got myself out there I was happy. It just has to be about your attitude and the environment you’re setting.”

Upper level students attributed the difficult adjustment to lack of “basic life skills.” Participants told of numerous experiences helping their peers with tasks they found relatively simple, oftentimes blaming parents for neglecting to teach their peers the “necessities to survive.” Students suggested that the problem could be addressed by arranging priorities in a way that is conducive to a successful college career.

“Their parents really did them a huge disservice by not teaching them the necessities to survive.”

“When you graduate, you need to move to your own house and do what you do.”

“I was nurse for a lot of people, I was chef – you buy the groceries [and] I’ll cook. We did that a lot. Like I had to teach my roommates, one how to wash clothes, the other one how to do the dishes and cook.”

Upper and lower level students both noted that this difficulty is to be expected and is a normal part of “college life.”

Preparation for Future Jobs and Careers

Overall, most participants (upper level and lower level) felt they were being well-prepared in terms of job and career. However, there were some areas that the participants felt needed more attention. Some participants expressed concern about the current economic situation. One participant in the freshmen/sophomore group described the present situation as “Great Depression Part Two” and pondered the possibility of studying for a career that might not exist if the present economic situation does not improve. Other participants were concerned about possibly not having a viable career because of the specialized area of study they had chosen. These students expressed concerns that their particular career choice could prove either “very expensive or unattainable.” The cost of further education was also seen as problematic.

“I mean, we can go to grad school, we can have a career, but for the most part if we’re not gunning for a real career, we know better [than to expect much success].”

“I want to go to graduate school, but I don’t think I want to be paying “the man” for fifty plus years. My mom is still paying off hers.”

Lower level students also commented on general education courses. There was a split opinion on their usefulness, though the majority of participants described the courses as a waste of time, and giving them few benefits.

“...English 121 and 122... it’s almost insulting to be in that class.”

“I don’t think my gen ed. classes are going to help me with anything, but as soon as I get to courses related to my major...I’m pretty excited about it.”

While lower level participants focused more on courses and the freedom to choose whether to take general education courses or not, upper level participants focused on the structure of their courses. Upper level participants desired a more structured curriculum with a detailed layout.

“Sure. I plan on going to grad school. And, you know, just last week was the first time that I’ve had a teacher talk to us about the steps that need to be taken. So I think it might be important... [to plan for grad school].”

“I guess requiring an internship [is helpful]. You know there’re lots of people that say “Oh yea, yea I’ll do it.” I guess if it’s forced upon you... so you have to [do] one to graduate... I think that would help a lot.”

While lower level and upper level participants differed in some areas, they were on common ground in the area of advising and internships. An overwhelming number of lower level and upper level participants mentioned these factors as key in the preparation for life after college. In the area of advising, participants desired more direction. Some lower level students reported

feeling that their assigned advisors “just try to get you in and out.” Both upper level and lower level participants felt that if they had been better advised, they may not have “wasted time” taking courses that were not required for their majors.

“I know...that’s why I’m, like, behind because they told me [I needed certain courses]. I was signed up for classes I didn’t even need and so, like now, I’m struggling to try and catch up with the rest of my classmates.”

In the area of internships, upper and lower level participants felt that internships would be especially beneficial to the preparation of their careers. Participants did acknowledge that there were internships available. However, participants complained of the specialization of internships for certain majors, as well as the limited advertisement of such opportunities.

“I was going to say more internships for biology majors because it seems like all of these internships that I hear about are for like communications, and there’s nothing really [for biology]. Because I would love to study abroad and stuff, but they don’t really advertise it here for anyone but communications.”

Academic Issues

Student participants were questioned about satisfying and problematic experiences related to their coursework at UTC. A majority of lower level participants named professors as among the most satisfying experiences at the university. One student participant noted that having an enjoyable professor translated to an enjoyable class experience.

“I’ve had, like, really helpful teachers, especially like [Professor]. She sat down with me one day after class for like two and a half hours just going over like old tests and stuff like that...I know she had other stuff to do because I know she was really busy with this, but she like took the time to sit down with me.”

When upper level students were asked to point out particular satisfying experiences in their coursework, some mentioned gaining useful knowledge in the classroom. Others mentioned the pleasure of seeing the finished product of their work, and the satisfaction of earning a good grade.

“I guess I’m a bit of a narcissist, but I like seeing my work done and on display to be appreciated by me and by other people. Like when I wrote an article for the *Echo*, like I know I was probably the only one that read it, but, you know, just seeing it in its fullness and greatness, and the greatness of me - I really liked that.”

“Definitely. Well, I mean it’s good to have, you know. When you do a project for a class and having the class say that was a good job - that tells you that at least you’re decent at what you’re doing instead of, you know, if I just sat in my basement and did this stuff, I couldn’t really get anybody to appreciate it other than my mom.”

On an interesting note, students mentioned finding an exceptional math professor as a particularly satisfying experience. Students reported having a number of unpleasant experiences with math courses, and being able to find sufficient math instruction was especially rewarding.

“I finally found a good math teacher.”

“I’m an out of state student so they didn’t accept my SAT score because you have to take the ACT in order to not take math. So they... I had to do all those “lower maths.” I did 105 and...I don’t know. I had a concussion that semester so like a lot of stuff was going wrong. But... the math department was just really bad that semester and everyone failed. So I re-took it the next semester, and finally passed, but I [had] found a good teacher.”

Problems with math courses also affected some decisions about possible majors and associated career options. One student observed he/she decided against majoring in any subject that was related to math, even where there was a strong interest in the given subject.

Problematic experiences in coursework for lower level participants included taking having non-credentialed instructors, problems with advising, and inadequate communication between professors and students. However, the most commonly mentioned experience was being forced to enroll in non-credit remedial courses. Participants noted that enrolling in such courses should be a personal decision and when they must enroll, they should receive credit for the courses. There was a recurring theme of unfairness in relation to the subject of remedial courses. One student noted that the term remedial was also personally devaluing.

“Why should I have to pay for something that doesn’t count towards my graduation? I mean, I made B’s in math in high school. I can do math, it’ll be fine, I’ll pick it up again.”

“Once they call it remedial it doesn’t make me feel any better about myself.”

Upper level participants mentioned the lack of structure in some courses as problematic. Participants reported that this lack of structure resulted in poor experiences as well as a reflection on having inexperienced professors.

“As far as classes overall, though, I’d say I don’t like classes where a teacher just kind of makes up [material] as he goes along and stuff. I like a teacher giving me a syllabus with dates on it...so I just like that kind of organization to it.”

“Adjunct teachers have either been really, really good or the worst of my college [experience]. Either you have someone who has a great work experience and they can teach you more than textbooks and a lot more than your other teachers, or you have somebody who has no idea how to teach and is just there to make their money.”

Upper level participants also mentioned the cost of textbooks as problematic in their experiences at UTC. Some students noted not being able to afford textbooks, causing them to delay purchasing books until it was affordable.

“Sometimes the books cost too much....It takes me a couple weeks to actually get books. I don’t have that quick [access to] an income, because I can only work part time because I’m a student. And I have other things to pay for. So books, when they raise the prices, especially when I get new books, are problematic.”

Upper and lower level students also mentioned the language barrier between professors from another country and local students. Participants reported that this barrier compromised the quality of their education and made understanding coursework more difficult.

“And that might have been why it was easier to understand, which is nice. Because all the other ones that are foreign you really can’t understand.”

“I have an [specific ethnic group] teacher this semester. With differential equations, I’d be like ‘what are you talking about?’”

Service Learning

When questioned about the meaning of servicing learning most participants, upper and lower level students were unaware of the exact definition. Participants immediately related the ‘service’ aspect of service-learning to assisting others and defined service-learning as volunteering or “helping someone learn.” However, some participants had some idea of the academic concept of service learning, and sought to provide examples.

“I guess [it’s] like hands-on teaching, shadowing.”

“[It is] like learning through doing things like, I know this isn’t like an example of school, but like going out and volunteering teaches you a certain lesson, kind of. Can that be like what service learning means?”

In terms of making a service-learning opportunity more appealing to students, both upper and lower level participants agreed that offering credit for participating would be most appealing.

“I mean, if it counts for a major credit that you don’t have to take, you know [it would be useful].”

Lower level participants suggested emphasizing the fact that service-learning takes place outside of the classroom as a means of making the concept more appealing to other students. This point highlighted the observation that students would appreciate some way to combine a classroom and field experience.

“...Emphasize the fact that you’re not in the classroom. Because I know people kind of get, I mean, people kind of get bored learning [only] in classrooms, I guess. ”

Students welcomed the idea of service-learning, but were aware of possible issues with such a program. Among both under and upper level participants, the major concern with implementing a service-learning program was time. Participants also mentioned that all students do not possess

personal transportation to get them to service-learning assignments. In regard to time, participants questioned whether service-learning could feasibly take place during normal classroom hours, and how it would affect students with a job or work schedule.

“I guess, try to make sure it’s during the class time if possible because I know people have jobs. I guess it could only be during Tuesday or Thursday classes, really, because if you’re in like a fifty minute class it’d be hard to get the service in.”

“Having work, [service] work, classes... When am I going to have time to do this?”

Lower level participants also mentioned the possibility that a given service-learning experience may not be representative of the students’ particular area of study. The possibility of making the wrong career choice because of a service-learning experience also was a concern.

“You might just get a bad...experience and you decide you don’t like [a particular career area] because of that one time. Or the opposite: You might have a good experience and then you end up not liking [the related career].”

Improving Courses

When questioned about ways to make courses more interesting and intellectually stimulating, a sizable majority of participants (upper level and lower level) cited wanting more open class discussion. Participants mentioned that this open class discussion makes for more stimulating courses and is conducive to a more intellectually sound environment.

“I find whenever courses are very interactive, like students get a chance to talk it out, it gets more intellectual.”

“Something we were talking about in one of my classes today, it’s really just a discussion based class in a communications lab, one of the Anthropology classes: [It would be good to] just have a room that would be permanently set up in a circle like a conference room or something. Instead of [having students] hunched over in the little desks with the hospital lights.... You know have something more comfortable where you can actually have a real conversation instead of a student-teacher [situation] where [they are] arguing this fact. I think that we could put an interesting dynamic into some of the courses.”

Lower level students also mentioned the impact of professors on the overall classroom environment. Participants noted that an interesting or engaged professor makes the classroom environment more interesting. Students recalled past experiences with interesting and uninteresting professors, commenting on the major differences between the two.

“I’d have to agree with them. Like, when I took Biology 121 my teacher...to teach us about atoms, she actually stuck things to herself and spun around the room acting like atoms. I was like “Oh my gosh!” (laughter) But it helps you remember, it really does help. And then... some teachers, you go in and they’ll say like, ‘I absolutely hate teaching, I’m here to get paid.’ One of my teachers said that to me and I ended up doing terrible in that class. But that really does help, having the teacher like teaching.”

Upper level students also noted the importance of having better facilities to make courses more interesting and intellectually stimulating. One student mentioned how having to work in an older facility limited the course experience:

“In my major I guess I would say that we need better facilities and that’s not to say that we’re in dire shape over there, but we are in like an old mental hospital and the rooms are really small.”

As described by both lower level and upper level students, the biggest motivators for students to perform well in courses include the fear of losing a scholarship and personal motivation. The fear of losing a scholarship coincides with the present economic situation for most students.

“No, I’d have to say money in general. Money is a big motivator, like I had to keep a certain grade point average to keep my Hope Scholarship, and all that stuff.”

“A lot of people I talk to have to get good grades to stay on the scholarships and stay in the honors group or whatever. Definitely scholarships play a big role.”

Along with scholarships, upper and lower level participants mentioned personal motivation as a reason to perform well in courses. Participants noted that motivations vary by person.

“I think everybody has different motivations, whether it’s going home, saying ‘I got an A!’ to your parents or whatever. Whether it’s like, ‘I have to keep this scholarship,’ or you have to [report to] other people, ‘I have to stay in college, I don’t want to go home.’ I think everybody has different motivations for being here and getting certain grades. I think it completely depends on the person.”

Some students reiterated their view that a “personable professor” helps to motivate students to perform at their best abilities. A particular participant mentioned that the approval of a professor can serve as a source of motivation for a student:

“You need the approval of your professors.”

All participants were on common ground in the area of clubs and organizations. Students mentioned that such groups serve as a motivation for students to maintain satisfactory grade point averages in order to attain membership. One student noted that Greek organizations “rule everything.”

“Even Greeks...kind of ... outdo the athletics here at UTC, which is kind of weird.”

Campus Involvement

Overall, both upper and lower level students felt that there is not much student involvement on campus. Some lower level participants attributed this to the lack of activities to be involved in due to GPA requirements, while upper level participants attributed it to the lack of diverse activities. Upper level participants noted that if there is involvement from students, it is mostly

with Greek-letter organizations. Participants explained that this causes the same people to be involved with most other organizations, creating an intimidating atmosphere for individuals who are not a part of Greek-letter organizations.

“I think people really want to enjoy things but they can’t. Like earlier when I said I wanted to be in a sorority and I couldn’t. I think other people have that situation not only in sororities and fraternities, but other things, like I don’t know, anything like that. Like it’s not an option for them because... in high school or maybe previous year, they didn’t do good their first year.”

“Yea, that’s probably why you have a lot of Greeks sitting on a lot of stuff on campus. Obviously there’re social groups or whatever, and they just sort of... not necessarily that you’re excluded from things... but I don’t know anyone who holds any power position on SGA.”

“I’d say not really because the people that are involved, they’re usually involved in other things too. So it seems like it’s the same people that are involved in every organization.”

Participants mentioned that advertisement and time constraints served as obstacles to some student involvement. Upper and lower level participants mentioned that work schedules can limit student involvement. Participants also mentioned being unaware of many activities due to lack of advertisement or not being approached.

“I kind of feel like, well I haven’t really been approached to join any group except art club, which normally has one meeting that really isn’t like a meeting...with pizza.”

“I see things in the *Echo* and stuff all the time, like “this group has held a meeting” and I’m like, alright, who is that group? Group of aliens from Mars has met in the lobby today.”

Upper level participants suggest diversity in organizations as a means to involve more students in campus activities. Participants suggested more diverse organizations as well as more well-rounded individuals to be apart of the organizations. Advertisement was also suggested by both upper and lower level participants to make students more aware of campus activities, as well as more representation for smaller organizations.

“...more knowledge of everything. Like if there was more representation there’d be more knowledge of what Habitat for Humanity’s is about or what SGA is about or whatever...”

“Just better advertisement, I guess. Like I know there’s this outdoor [organization], like I’ve always wanted to join the outdoor...I don’t know what it’s exactly called, it’s an outdoor club where they go out and like go rafting and stuff, but like I never see advertisements about it at all.”

While most participants felt that student involvement on campus was rather low, there were a few participants who felt student involvement was “just right.”

“Yeah, I think it suits everyone...because if you want to be super-involved it’s really easy for you to do that. And if you don’t really, if you’re not interested, then it’s easy for you to avoid it.”

Diversity

The main diversity issue brought up by both upper and lower level participants was the segregation in the University Center. Many participants were confused by this and desired to see this change. Lower level participants mentioned not seeing more diversity among Greek-letter organization members as an issue. A particular student reported having a roommate that felt discriminated against when attempting to join a sorority where she was a minority.

“The main thing that bugs me about, I guess diversity, is walking in the cafeteria. It’s almost like segregated. I mean I don’t know how we could fix that or like what we could do to make it better but it’s just like the upper level and the lower level, and they don’t really mix at all.”

“And that’s another thing about how my roommate...one of them was mixed, and she thinks the reason she didn’t get into the sorority is because she was mixed. So that brought up a whole other can of worms.”

Upper level participants also named the “ignorance” of peers as a main issue with diversity at UTC. Participants felt that if students were more culturally educated there would be less division.

“Ignorance - people being ignorant of other situations.... Everybody is not the same as you; they did not come from the same place. If you like something, I don’t care. As long as you don’t force it on me it’s fine, but everybody wasn’t raised like that, and they don’t understand.”

Both under and upper level students mentioned housing as a positive experience in regard to diversity, noting that housing forces students, who otherwise would not, to interact and learn more about each other. Several lower level participants observed that housing served as an opportunity to willingly meet different individuals and learn more about them.

“Because...I have a Chinese roommate, and she came here not knowing any English....I didn’t expect us to bond, but we did and I’m helping with her English papers and she teaches me a lot about her culture and stuff like the food she makes.”

“And housing... that’s really like a good mix. I think it’s great because I’ve met great kids. All of them.”

When making suggestions to increase diversity on campus, lower level participants mentioned more activities and multicultural events. Participants repeatedly referred to the Oak Street Roast, an annual back-to-school event, as a great way to bring students together.

“I love the Oak Street roast. That’s one good thing that I can say. Around that time it seems like the university really does try to promote diversity, and like, coming together, but I guess kind of after that it’s up to everybody else to keep that up and try to stay diverse. But I really love the Oak Street roast.”

“I think one thing...I don’t know if it’s just me, but I really don’t mind learning about other cultures or other ways of life and you know, it just makes me think of high school, we had like our international day. But if there are, if there’s a majority of a group of students who are from this country, that country or African-American, blah, blah, blah, and they, you know, it’s almost like the more you know about the background of someone the more comfortable you can be around them. So I think almost just more things that are just offered to everybody.”

A few upper level participants suggested more student recruitment from abroad would be good for UTC. Students recalled seeing local recruitment, but believed that more recruitment from abroad would bring greater international diversity to the university.

“I think...when they go out and recruit students, they spend a lot of their time locally, you know, like they have a lot of people from Memphis, Nashville, and Chattanooga and Knoxville. I think they need to at least advertise abroad what UTC can offer; whether it’s in Latin America, England, Asia. You know one of my roommates is from South Korea and I don’t know how the heck you [would] find out about UTC. Most of the people took a dart and happened to hit this weird Southern town and found out there was a college there, so...went there. I think you just have to promote your college differently. If you want to have a larger population, you have to do that.”

Of particular note, upper level participants also suggest focusing on current diversity initiatives by increasing promotion and advertisement.

“More focus on the activities that they are already doing to try to increase the diversity.... Like the multicultural group. I don’t think they get as much publicity and stuff as the SGA or Student Alumni Council. They do some very good programs.”

Strengths & Weaknesses of UTC

Overall, upper level and lower level participants mentioned parking as a major weakness of the university. Participants also mentioned limited housing as a result of the university’s growing population. Lower level students recalled friends that were forced to live in hotels because of the limited housing situation. When questioned on changes to make at UTC, participants mentioned they would change current parking arrangements, as well as slow the growing population of students, or at least expand to accommodate these students better.

“...I had people in classes that were living in hotels because they said that there was going to be housing and there wasn’t. You can’t live in a hotel and go to class.”

“I think we should build one giant parking garage.”

“I think it’s just like they’re getting a much larger student population than they were used to and they need to accommodate that.”

Upper level participants also suggest more accountability for the university in regard to when and how money is spent.

“I would like something in the mail that told me where all the money was coming in and where it all was going....there’s an article in the *Echo* that said we write a thousand parking tickets a week. Well, ok, put that with an average of \$20 a parking ticket. That’s twenty grand a week! Where is that going? Why is there an unpaved parking lot over there? Just how is this whole thing working? Why don’t we work on that, you know, we’re coming up with budget shortfalls and stuff, but I would like to know where it’s all going, just better accountability.”

Lower level participants reported that they would like to see tuition rates remain unchanged. One student commented that the current tuition is affordable and “works for what you need.” One student recognized that increases were inevitable, but suggested that increases be minimal.

“Let’s not let tuition cost go up. Let’s keep the cost lower than every other school.”

“...I mean, of course it’s not going to be low, but just don’t raise it. Because there was that, like spoof, that they were going to raise tuition rates next year.”

Upper level participants suggested that the small campus size stay the same as well as university staff. One student commented on the helpfulness of staff in the Bursar’s office. Participants also appreciated the achievement of the faculty. Most found faculty achievements to be “the best thing ever.”

“As far as what I like about the University, and don’t want to change, is class size. All of my classes have been really cool. I don’t like big classes. Like I remember touring UTK and the first place they take you is this huge auditorium where you’re just number on a sheet of paper to a professor. So I like that, I like the personal interaction between students and professors...”

“I kind of like the history, like I like how much our faculty has done. It’s cool, it’s interesting...”

IV. Conclusions & Recommendations

It is evident from the Student Retention and Diversity Study results that the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga has much that is pleasing and workable for students. Students like the location of the university, find UTC affordable, and like the smaller size of the campus. Students also noted the importance of having smaller classes and appreciated opportunities to get to know their professors and fellow students more easily. Students feel they are able to have majors that will lead to viable careers. They also enjoy campus organizations, and a number of opportunities for personal development, including study abroad options. Students feel most students who have left the university have done so more as a result of personal situations than because of any failure on the part of the university. However, the most often cited reason – poor study habits – may be a telling point regarding how well UTC is helping students gain the type of study skills that contribute to academic success.

The study is instructive on other points as well. Most student respondents were not first generation college students, although a sizable number were in this category. This means that most students come to UTC with some clear ideas about what they should be getting from a college education. They are aware of what professors should provide in terms of an intellectually stimulating course, and most respondents noted this as of primary importance in courses. Focus group respondents also spoke to this, noting the desirability of courses that were interactive, and where professors were engaged with students. Frustration with courses where they had greater hardship was also noted, especially in the math area, indicating a need for perhaps more services to students facing math difficulties, and other steps that could improve math outcomes for students.

Although most students categorized themselves as middle class or above based on parental income levels, most also were either receiving scholarship aid or were dependent on student loans. Both hold stipulations for students: To retain scholarships they must keep a certain grade point average, and for those taking out loans, these are future debts the student will have to pay back, making this an investment for them in their futures. Consequently, getting the most out of their college education is of importance for most.

It is of interest then, that the majority of students did not indicate that they took advantage of a number of offices and services offered on the campus that could enhance their academic situations. Most respondents did not make use of such services as the Student Success Center, the Writing Center, Math Lab, Student Multicultural Office, or Dean of Students office. All of these can assist with problems students may be having in a wide variety of contexts. The explanation may be that after initial orientation as freshmen, when the services of many of these offices are discussed, the information is forgotten and students do not come into contact with it sufficiently again. The specific ways in which a given office can be helpful with specific problems may not be communicated throughout the student's college career at UTC. Finding ways to keep students informed of services that can help them with academic, personal, roommate, and other needs would likely increase their ability to do well in courses and meet the personal challenges that can result in dropping out or transferring from UTC.

Recruitment strategies also may be informed by this study. Most students indicated that they were not directly recruited, but many noted they learned of UTC through their high schools and college fairs. A sizable number received information packets in the mail, and this opened the door to attending UTC. The university's appealing features, as discussed above, clearly should be highlighted and emphasized. However, students have noted that some of these features are compromised once students get to the campus. For example, problems with adequate housing and actual facilities were of concern for students. In addition, not being able to afford books, or meet other basic needs should be examined, and students given additional information as applicable to help them address these issues before they become major. That UTC is growing is a noted fact. However, part of the university's appeal to date has been its smaller size, as compared to larger institutions in the state. Growth and maintaining attractive dimensions of the campus must continue to be balanced if student views are considered.

It was refreshing that students cited good advisement and relations with professors as among the positive attributes of the university. However, some negative notes were sounded in these areas as well. Continued review of the advisement process, especially ensuring that students do not take un-needed courses, and have adequate availability of required courses would be clear recommendations from these concerns. Additionally, having sufficient time to meet with professors is partly a function of professors having sufficient time to meet with students. As noted in the 2009 Faculty/Staff Worklife and Diversity Study (FSWDS) Report, professors find working with students among their greater sources of work satisfaction, but their overall workload often precludes as much interaction with students as desirable. A resolution of this appears important for both students and professors, as helping students achieve through positive supports within and outside the classroom remain a critical objective of UTC.

This further is reflected in the fact that students would like more hands-on training opportunities, whether these are in the form of internships or service-learning options. Students also noted that such opportunities would make UTC even more attractive to prospective students. However, time for such activities remains a barrier for both students and faculty. A task force on internships and service learning should be established to explore how to enable further engagement and experiential learning at UTC that will circumvent the problems of time and access noted in this study, and discussed in the FSWDS report. The work of this task force might also collaborate with work underway to examine how to increase study abroad opportunities for students, and how to make it more affordable for a broader diversity of students.

Retention is closely related, according to this study, to students feeling connected to the campus, making friends, and feeling a part of something they can relate to on campus. Much of this occurs in student organizations. It was therefore revealing that most respondents did not feel there was much involvement in campus organizations, and many felt shut out from the organizations that are most visible. Focus group participants in particular noted the need for greater diversity in campus organizations, so that more students could find a niche and friends. Advertisement of existing organizations is also important, from the standpoint of some students, who felt a lack of information was often the culprit in poor involvement. Ensuring that more students have access to leadership opportunities as well as membership can create a different dynamic in campus organizations, and improve participation. Finally, addressing the fact that many students commute (do not live on campus) and work jobs off-campus is important. A

majority of students indicated that they would like to see a regular period set aside when organizations could meet and plans generated for campus activities and involvement. This might be one solution that could improve involvement over time, as students and faculty become accustomed to using this designated period in this manner to build campus cohesion and the overall campus culture.

Students noted several activities, such as the Oak Street roast, and programs offered by the Multicultural Office, as great recreational options. However, they expressed a need for more activities on campus for student involvement. This is a recurring point, and has been noted from other student studies at UTC. More activities are offered than previously, and yet student participation seems to lag, despite the call for these activities. It is not clear what should be done to overcome this issue. The reason may rest in a number of areas, and further exploration of the problem is needed.

Finally, students indicated a strong concern for diversity, and noted the importance of having a multicultural student body at UTC. They noted that both U.S. ethnic and racial diversity is important to address, and international diversity. Persistent problems related to racial and ethnic biases were recognized, and the fact that much ignorance and intolerance need to be addressed seemed clear to focus group participants. While most students had not encountered direct acts, comments, or attitudes reflecting bias on the part of faculty, staff or administrators, they had encountered it among their fellow students. In particular, students are concerned about interracial tension on campus, incidents that reflect racial or ethnic bias, or other forms of intolerance and bias, and are concerned about the level of self-imposed segregation on campus, as apparent in dining and other social areas. Prejudice resulting in exclusion from membership in some campus organizations (specifically a sorority) was noted, and the distress this situation caused for the student affected in the stated example. Any given example, however, is indicative that a larger problem may exist, and should be a matter of high importance for the campus community. Students were not sure how to deal with the “segregation” issue, but felt it is important that ways be found for students to get to know each other across cultural and racial lines, and that this has in part been accomplished in the housing area. However, additional ways are needed on campus to address this persistent and often troubling pattern. A number of studies have been conducted that may be insightful, and are noted in the Useful Resources list attached to this report.

Increasing the visibility of multiculturalism on the campus was viewed as one way to combat problems of bias, and continuing to emphasize the university’s commitment to diversity and fairness. Students also felt an additional way to foster this commitment was through building a more diverse international student body, as well, and advertising UTC abroad and in other regions of the United States.

Appendix A. Student Retention and Diversity Survey

This survey is about a variety of things that affect students' experiences here at UTC. It takes about 20 minutes to complete and you will receive a gift for participating and be entered into a drawing to receive one of five large prizes. This survey has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at UTC. Your participation is voluntary, your answers will remain confidential, and you may refuse to answer any question you choose.

CHOOSING UTC

First, we'd like to ask you a few questions related to your choice to come to UTC.

1. Why do you decide to attend UTC? (circle all that apply)

- a. Location
- b. Had my major
- c. Friends/family attend here/did attend here
- d. Scholarship
- e. Family decision
- f. Liked the University/what I had heard about it
- g. Interest in campus organizations
- h. Interests in specific major or opportunities associated with UTC
- i. Campus diversity
- j. Cost/affordability
- k. Other (please specify)_____

2. Were you recruited to come to UTC? (circle one)

Yes No **If no, skip to 4**

3. How were you recruited to come to UTC? (circle all that apply)

- a. Sports recruitment
- b. Academic recruitment (Honors Program, etc.)
- c. UTC visited my high school
- d. Attended a college recruitment event
- e. Received letter in recruitment package from UTC
- f. Other (please specify) _____

4. What do you like best about UTC? (circle all that apply)

- a. Professors
- b. Class selections
- c. Sports
- d. Clubs, organizations
- e. Smaller campus
- f. Diversity
- g. Friends I have here
- h. City of Chattanooga/location
- i. Natural beauty/amenities
- j. Living quarters
- k. Library
- l. Campus facilities
- m. Food options
- n. Campus climate/environment
- o. Majors offered
- p. Opportunities offered
- q. Other (please specify) _____

ACADEMIC ISSUES

Next, we'd like to ask you about your academic experience here at UTC and how it relates to your future.

5. In general, how well do you feel you have been advised at UTC for future jobs and career options? (circle one)

- a. Very well
- b. Fairly well
- c. Poorly
- d. Not at all

6. How well do you feel you have been advised at UTC in regard to your major, in terms of graduation requirements and related course needs? (circle one)

- a. Very well
- b. Fairly well
- c. Poorly
- d. Not at all

7. Please rate your level of agreement with these statements about your advisor at UTC:

1= Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Disagree 4=Strongly Disagree DK=Don't Know

- _____ a. I know my advisor's name.
- _____ b. My advisor is available to talk to me.
- _____ c. My advisor and I mainly discuss my course schedule.
- _____ d. My advisor knows me well.
- _____ e. I have the same person in my major department to advise me each semester.
- _____ f. My advisor talks to me about career opportunities.
- _____ g. My advisor and I have a good relationship.
- _____ h. I am prepared for my advising appointment when I see my advisor.
- _____ i. I mainly want to see an advisor for an advisement code.
- _____ j. I have received excellent advising at UTC

8. Have you had the opportunity to do an internship that is related to your major or your career aspirations? (circle one)

Yes No

9. Would you be agreeable to a course requirement in which you had the opportunity to do a service project or spend a limited number of hours doing professional work as part of your grade (service learning)? (circle one)

Yes No Maybe Don't know

10. What additional opportunities for students do you think would make UTC especially attractive to attend? (circle all that apply)

- a. More international education programs
- b. More support for international education programs
- c. More internships
- d. Service learning-based courses
- e. More opportunities to do community research
- f. More opportunities to be engaged in community volunteerism
- g. A set time for organization meetings during the day, with no classes meeting during that time
- h. More ways for students to become involved on campus
- i. More campus entertainment options

11. What are your major expectations of your professors? (circle all that apply)

- a. To make the course interesting
- b. To make learning fun and easy
- c. To provide broad information apart from the text
- d. To help students find their career niche
- e. To help build the student's intellectual abilities
- f. To use modern technology in the classroom and in assignments

12. Have you participated in any Study Abroad program here at UTC?

Yes No **If no, skip to 14**

13. If yes, how was your experience? (circle one)

- a. Excellent
- b. Very good
- c. Average – ok
- d. Not very good – needed improvement
- e. Poor

14. Would you be interested in studying abroad (again)? (circle one)

Yes No Don't know **If no or don't know, skip to 16**

15. What would work best for you, as far as time goes, as a study abroad opportunity? (circle one)

- a. Semester abroad
- b. 2-week session abroad
- c. One month session abroad
- d. Other (please specify) _____

16. What would be the main reasons studying abroad would be difficult for you? (circle all that apply)

- a. Lack of time
- b. Lack of funds
- c. Lack of course credit toward graduation requirements
- d. Other (please specify) _____

RETENTION ISSUES

In this section, we'd like to ask you some questions about why students might choose to leave UTC before graduation.

17. Why do you think some students decide to leave or drop out of UTC before graduating? (please rate each of the following reasons a-y)

1= Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Disagree 4=Strongly Disagree DK=Don't Know

- a. academic difficulty (e.g., struggling in classes, poor grades, can't handle course load)
- b. insufficient academic skills (e.g., not prepared for college level work, can't pass remedial classes)
- c. poor study habits
- d. inadequate time management
- e. physical disability/access issue
- f. learning disability
- g. depression, anxiety, or other mental health issue
- h. low-self esteem
- i. lack of motivation
- j. lack of clearly defined goals (e.g., person has goals more limited than the institution)
- k. unwillingness to make academic commitments (e.g., family pressures, unsure if one wants to go to college)
- l. problems adjusting to college life (e.g., cannot make the jump from high school to the demands of college)
- m. lack of involvement in campus activities and organizations
- n. student's background differs from those of most students, faculty, and staff on campus (e.g., race or income)
- o. relationship issues (e.g., problems with family or roommates)
- p. social issues (e.g., unable to make friends or unable to communicate with professors)
- q. financial issues (e.g., cost of tuition/textbooks/housing, no financial support from parents)
- r. lack of advisement
- s. lack of mentors
- t. uncertainty about career aspirations (e.g., not sure what one wants to be)
- u. personal emergency (e.g., illness, death in the family, loss of a family business)
- v. desired to go to different school because of career interests or major
- w. needed/wanted to be closer to home
- x. intended to leave prior to degree completion
- y. forced to leave due to probation or expulsion

18. Do you know someone who has dropped out of UTC?

Yes No **If no, skip to 20**

19. Why did that student decide to discontinue his/her education at UTC? (circle all that apply)

- a. academic difficulty (e.g., struggling in classes, poor grades, can't handle the course load)
- b. insufficient academic skills (e.g., not prepared for college level work, can't pass remedial classes)
- c. poor study habits
- d. inadequate time management
- e. physical disability/access issue
- f. learning disability
- g. depression, anxiety, or other mental health issue
- h. low-self esteem
- i. lack of motivation
- j. lack of clearly defined goals (e.g., person has goals more limited than the institution)
- k. unwillingness to make academic commitments (e.g., family pressures, unsure if one wants to go to college)
- l. problems adjusting to college life (e.g., cannot make the jump from high school to the demands of college)
- m. lack of involvement in campus activities and organizations
- n. student's background differs from those of most students, faculty, and staff on campus (e.g. race or income)
- o. relationship issues (e.g., problems with family or roommates)
- p. social issues (e.g., unable to make friends or unable to communicate with professors)
- q. financial issues (e.g., cost of tuition/textbooks/housing, no financial support from parents)
- r. lack of advisement
- s. lack of mentors
- t. uncertainty about career aspirations (e.g., not sure what one wants to be)
- u. personal emergency (e.g., illness, death in the family, loss of a family business)
- v. desired to go to different school because of career interests or major
- w. needed/wanted to be closer to home
- x. intended to leave prior to degree completion
- y. forced to leave due to probation or expulsion
- z. other: _____

20. Have you ever felt that you wanted to leave/drop out of UTC?

Yes No **If no, skip to 22**

21. Why did you consider discontinuing here at UTC? (circle all that apply)

- a. academic difficulty (e.g., struggling in classes, poor grades, can't handle the course load)
- b. insufficient academic skills (e.g., not prepared for college level work, can't pass remedial classes)
- c. poor study habits
- d. inadequate time management
- e. physical disability/access issue
- f. learning disability
- g. depression, anxiety, or other mental health issue
- h. low-self esteem
- i. lack of motivation
- j. lack of clearly defined goals (e.g., person has goals more limited than the institution)
- k. unwillingness to make academic commitments (e.g., family pressures, unsure if one wants to go to college)
- l. problems adjusting to college life (e.g., cannot make the jump from high school to the demands of college)
- m. lack of involvement in campus activities and organizations
- n. student's background differs from those of most students, faculty, and staff on campus (e.g. race or income)
- o. relationship issues (e.g., problems with family or roommates)
- p. social issues (e.g., unable to make friends or unable to communicate with professors)
- q. financial issues (e.g., cost of tuition/textbooks/housing, no financial support from parents)
- r. lack of advisement
- s. lack of mentors
- t. uncertainty about career aspirations (e.g., not sure what one wants to be)
- u. personal emergency (e.g., illness, death in the family, loss of a family business)
- v. desired to go to different school because of career interests or major
- w. needed/wanted to be closer to home
- x. intended to leave prior to degree completion
- y. forced to leave due to probation or expulsion
- z. other: _____

22. What is the likelihood that you will drop out of UTC before you graduate? (circle one)

Very likely Somewhat likely Not very likely Not at all likely

23. From your experience, at what point have you seen more students leave college before graduating? (circle all that apply)

- a. freshmen year
- b. sophomore year
- c. junior year
- d. senior year
- e. after pledging a fraternity or sorority
- f. after joining social or organization groups
- g. after scholarship expires
- h. after losing a scholarship
- i. after time for participating in a sport runs out
- j. after completing major

DIVERSITY ISSUES

In this section, we'd like to ask you some questions about your experience with diversity on UTC's campus.

24. Please rate your level of agreement with these statements about diversity at UTC. (please rate each of the following statements a-u)

1= Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Disagree 4=Strongly Disagree DK=Don't Know

- _____ a. I think that the core curriculum should require courses in multicultural diversity.
- _____ b. Where appropriate, professors address multicultural issues in the classroom.
- _____ c. The institution expects that students of color will succeed and develops strategies to help them do so.
- _____ d. The university provides programs to ensure success of differently-abled students.
- _____ e. Diversity on campus improves the quality of education.
- _____ f. Scholars and artists of color are invited to the campus to participate in campus events.
- _____ g. The institution recognizes eminent leaders and alumni of color by naming buildings, scholarships or lectureships in their honor and by awarding honorary degrees.
- _____ h. The campus environment is free from racial conflict.
- _____ i. Diversity at UTC is one of the reasons why I chose to come here.
- _____ j. Minorities feel comfortable at this university.
- _____ k. UTC has done a good job providing programs and activities that promote multicultural understanding.
- _____ l. Friendships are more likely to be determined by common interests than by race.
- _____ m. Students are encouraged to join or form their own student organizations for support or to celebrate their cultural heritage.
- _____ n. My experiences since coming to UTC have led me to become more understanding of racial/ethnic differences.
- _____ o. In my experiences students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds participate equally in classroom discussion and learning.
- _____ p. I feel I need to minimize various characteristics of my racial/ethnic culture (e.g. language, dress) to be able to fit in at UTC.
- _____ q. Minority students have more opportunities than white students on the UTC campus.
- _____ r. Women students have more opportunities than men at UTC.
- _____ s. I have learned more about interacting with people with disabilities since coming to UTC.
- _____ t. Courses on race, culture, ethnicity, and other issues are regularly offered at UTC.
- _____ u. This university actively promotes diversity.

25. Have you ever heard anyone on campus (e.g., faculty, staff administrator, student) make insensitive or disparaging remarks about a specific group of people (e.g., women, person of color, person with a disability, low-income person)?

Yes No **If no, skip to 30**

26. In the last year at UTC, how often have you heard a faculty member (e.g., professor, teacher, etc.) make insensitive or disparaging remarks about the following groups? (please rate each of the following groups a-h)

1=Never 2=Seldom 3=Occasionally 4=Often 5=Very Often DK=Don't Know

- _____ a. Women
- _____ b. Men
- _____ c. Racial/ethnic minorities
- _____ d. Gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender persons
- _____ e. Persons with disabilities
- _____ f. Non-native English speakers
- _____ g. Persons of particular religious backgrounds
- _____ h. Low-income persons

27. In the last year at UTC, how often have you heard a staff member (e.g., secretary, counselor, cashier, etc.) make insensitive or disparaging remarks about the following groups? (please rate each of the following groups a-h)

1=Never 2=Seldom 3=Occasionally 4=Often 5=Very Often DK=Don't Know

- _____ a. Women
- _____ b. Men
- _____ c. Racial/ethnic minorities
- _____ d. Gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender persons
- _____ e. Persons with disabilities
- _____ f. Non-native English speakers
- _____ g. Persons of particular religious backgrounds
- _____ h. Low-income persons

28. In the last year at UTC, how often have you heard an administrator (e.g., department head, dean, etc.) make insensitive or disparaging remarks about the following groups? (please rate each of the following groups a-h)

1=Never 2=Seldom 3=Occasionally 4=Often 5=Very Often DK=Don't Know

- _____ a. Women
- _____ b. Men
- _____ c. Racial/ethnic minorities
- _____ d. Gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender persons
- _____ e. Persons with disabilities
- _____ f. Non-native English speakers
- _____ g. Persons of particular religious backgrounds
- _____ h. Low-income persons

**29. In the last year at UTC, how often have you heard a student make insensitive or disparaging remarks about the following groups?
(please rate each of the following groups a-h)**

1=Never 2=Seldom 3=Occasionally 4=Often 5=Very Often DK=Don't Know

- _____ a. Women
- _____ b. Men
- _____ c. Racial/ethnic minorities
- _____ d. Gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender persons
- _____ e. Persons with disabilities
- _____ f. Non-native English speakers
- _____ g. Persons of particular religious backgrounds
- _____ h. Low-income persons

**30. Please rate your level of agreement with these statements about diversity at UTC.
(please rate each of the following statements a-m)**

1= Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Disagree 4=Strongly Disagree DK=Don't Know

At the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, I have found (the):

- _____ a. Presence of an ethnically diverse faculty and administrative/professional staff.
- _____ b. Presence of an ethnically diverse student body.
- _____ c. Availability of social/cultural life for members of my race/nationality in the community.
- _____ d. Opportunity for frequent contact with ethnically/racially diverse faculty.
- _____ e. Participation of students of all races/nationalities in judiciary/disciplinary programs.
- _____ f. Leadership roles of students of all gender/race/nationalities in student government organizations.
- _____ g. Residence hall assignments for the purpose of promoting cultural diversity.
- _____ h. Majority student participation in events sponsored by minority students.
- _____ i. Respect by students for other students of different racial and ethnic groups.
- _____ j. Respect by faculty for students of different racial and ethnic groups.
- _____ k. Respect by students for faculty of different racial and ethnic groups.
- _____ l. Interracial tensions in the residence halls.
- _____ m. Interracial tensions in the classroom.

Please respond to items listed in questions 31 and 32 based on your identification with one or more groups (for example: race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, disability)

31. Because of my group identity: (please rate each of the following statements a-h)

1= Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Disagree 4=Strongly Disagree DK=Don't Know

- _____ a. I feel isolated or left out in campus related activities.
- _____ b. I feel pressure to show loyalty to my group.
- _____ c. I feel like I can never slip up because what I do represents my group's abilities, behaviors, etc.
- _____ d. I feared for my physical safety.
- _____ e. I was a victim of a sex crime or hate crime.
- _____ f. People assume I am here because of affirmative action.
- _____ g. I was singled out as the "resident authority" for my group when issues relevant to my group identity arose.
- _____ h. I heard derogatory comments about my group in the academic class.

32a. Because of my group identity, I have experienced the following forms of harassment: (please rate each of the following statements a-l)

1= Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Disagree 4=Strongly Disagree DK=Don't Know

- _____ a. Verbal comments
- _____ b. Written comments
- _____ c. Being ignored
- _____ d. Insults
- _____ e. Threats of physical violence
- _____ f. Actual physical assault or injury
- _____ g. Anonymous phone calls
- _____ h. Called names
- _____ i. Graffiti
- _____ j. Hate jokes
- _____ k. Cartoons
- _____ l. Other forms of harassment

32b. Did you file a complaint or grievance about this harassment? Yes oN

33. Which group identities were relevant to your responses to items 31 and 32? (circle all that apply)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| a. race | e. religion |
| b. ethnicity | f. disability |
| c. sex/gender | g. low-income level |
| d. sexual orientation/gender identity | h. other _____ |

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

OK, we're almost finished. I'd just like to take a minute to find out a little bit about you.

34. Please indicate your race or ethnicity: (circle one – the group with which you most closely identify)

- fA/kcalB .arican American rednalsI cificaP/naiiawaH .e
- a/onitaL/cinapsiH .b evitaN naksalA .f
- naciremA naisA .c etihW/naisacuaC .g
- naidnI naciremA .d _____)ebircsed esaelp(rehtO .h

35. Please indicate your sex or gender: (circle one)

- Female Male

36. Do you consider yourself to be? (circle one)

- Heterosexual/straight LGBT (lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender)

37. Are you an international student? seY oN

If yes, what is your country of origin _____

38. Do you have a disability? seY oN

If yes, what type of disability? _____

39. What is your major? _____ rojaM dedicednU

40. Please indicate your college here at UTC: (circle one)

- secneicS dna strA fo egelloC .a
- ssenisuB fo egelloC .b
- seidutS lanoisseforP dna noitacudE ,htlaeH fo egelloC .c
- ecneicS lanoitatupmoC dna gnireenignE fo egelloC .d
- rojaM dedicednU .e
- wonK t'noD .f

41. What is your year of classification to the best of your knowledge?

- Freshman roinuJ eromohpoS roineS

42. How old are you? _____

49. At UTC, what groups are you involved in? (circle all that apply)

- a. Organizations (e.g. Association for Campus Events or International Student Organization)
- b. Interest or departmental clubs (e.g. Campus Democrats or Rowing Club)
- c. Faith based organizations on campus
- d. Fraternities or sororities
- e. Honor societies (e.g. Alpha Kappa Delta or Mortar Board)

50. Do you live? On Campus Off Campus

51. What is your main form of transportation? (circle one)

- a. own a car
- b. friend/roommate car
- c. bicycle
- d. shuttle/CARTA
- e. walk
- f. Other: _____

52. How often have you visited the following places or people on campus?

1=Never 2=Seldom 3=Occasionally 4=Often 5=Very Often DK=Don't Know

- _____ a. Dean of Students Office
- _____ b. Office of Multicultural Affairs
- _____ c. Office Of Students with Disabilities
- _____ d. Counseling & Career Planning Center
- _____ e. Office of Cooperative Education
- _____ f. Adult Services
- _____ g. Student Success Center
- _____ h. Writing Center
- _____ i. Math Lab
- _____ j. Library
- _____ k. Advisor
- _____ l. Professors

Thank you for participating in this survey!

Appendix B. Focus Group Moderator Guide

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Student Retention and Diversity Study Spring 2009

Welcome! Thank you all for your willingness to participate in the second phase of our study of student opinions about life here at UTC, by being part of this focus group. I will ask you questions about attending college in general, attending UTC specifically, about your coursework, campus involvement, and diversity issues here at UTC. We have a lot to cover in a little amount of time, so I will try to keep the discussion moving along as much as possible. However, if I move ahead too quickly, and you have something important to add, please do not hesitate to stop me.

Are there any questions? [pause] OK, let's begin.

A. Opener/Warm-Up Questions:

1. Why did you decide to go to college?

B. General Questions (reasons for attending UTC; adjustment to UTC):

2. What attracted you to UTC? Why did you decide to attend here?
3. Since coming to UTC, what has been most helpful to you in adjusting to UTC? Think in terms of student advising, student services, etc.
4. What has made your adjustment to UTC difficult or problematic?
5. From your observations, what has made the adjustment to UTC difficult for other students?

C. What works/doesn't work at UTC (course-related):

6. What are the things you feel would most help you for your future job or career? Think in terms of courses, course content, internships, etc.
7. What have been the most satisfying experiences you have had in your courses here at UTC?
8. What have been the most problematic experiences in your courses?

9. When you hear the term “service learning” what does this mean to you?
10. If service learning is generally understood to be an opportunity to work in a community or business setting during a course, allowing the student to get hands-on experience, and receive part of their grade from this activity, what do you think would be necessary to make this kind of course opportunity appealing to students?
11. What would be most problematic about having this kind of requirement in a course?
12. In what other ways do you think courses at UTC could be made more interesting and intellectually stimulating?
13. In your view, what motivates students most to do well in their courses?

D. Campus Involvement:

14. Do you feel students at UTC are very involved in campus activities? If not, what are the main obstacles to students being more involved?
15. What would encourage more student involvement? Think in terms of the types of organizations or activities.

E. Diversity Issues: [Note: If students stick to race/ethnic topics, remind them that diversity includes other group memberships].

16. What in your experience have been the main issues related to diversity here at UTC?
17. What have been the most positive things related to diversity that you have seen here at UTC?
18. How would you propose that UTC increase diversity?
19. If you could change one thing about UTC, what would it be?
20. If you could keep one thing the same about UTC, what would it be?

Okay, that’s all I have for you today. Is there anything else anyone would like to add?

Appendix C. “Other” Survey Responses

Q1k/OTHER (n=35; 29 responses, 6 did not specify)

Why did you decide to attend UTC?
Housing/Dorms (10)
Dorms (2)
Housing (2)
Dorms are really nice
Housing & dorms
Housing facility
Liked housing
Liked UTC place
Living dorms
Visited before/Recruited (3)
Came to a Freshman Friday
Representative took time to speak to me
Went to Governor School in 2002
Size of University/Classes (3)
I wanted to go to a bigger school
Not too big and too small
Small classroom setting
Self-Improvement (3)
Get a degree and learn
I needed a better job
Not American and wanted to expand my language
Four Year University (3)
4 year degree
Wanted a university over a community college
Year university
Not accepted to first choice school (2)
Applied to UTC and UTK only accepted by UTC
Couldn't get into GA
Other (5)
I knew the professors
Nontraditional student
Not as much partying
Transferred
Wanted to be away from home

Q3f/OTHER (n=6; 5 responses, 1 did not specify)

How were you recruited to come to UTC?
Knew Someone at UTC (4)
Friends go here
Friends told me about it
Husband was professor
Know a chancellor
Band (1)
Band

Q4q/OTHER (n=29; 17 responses, 12 did not specify)

What do you like best about UTC?
Cost (4)
Cost
Prices are great
The cost is good
This school is cheaper than other schools
Convenience/Flexibility (2)
Class times at night for working adults
Convenience
Independence (2)
A lot you can do to work on your own
Living on my own
College Experience (2)
College experience
It's a university
Do Not Like UTC (2)
I do not like it at all (2)
Other (5)
Department was more professional
Grant
I like everything
It's growing
Technology

Q15d/OTHER (n= 26; 6 responses, 20 did not specify)

What would work best for you, as far as time goes, as a study abroad opportunity?
Other (6)
Summer (2)
1 year abroad – for “lease” reasons
Half a semester
Any
Depends upon employment

Q16d/OTHER (n= 111; 78 response, 33 did not specify)

What would be the main reason studying abroad would be difficult for you?
Family Obligations (36)
Family (12)
Married (3)
I have a family (3)
Children (2)
I have a child (2)
I have a daughter (2)
I have children (2)
Being away from family
Home life
I am having a child
I am married and has a family
I have a son
I have children and single parent
I have three kids at home
I have two kids
Leaving my husband
Single parent
Language/Culture Differences (9)
Differences in culture
Going to a different country being unaware of atmosphere
Going to another country, and getting adjusted to different languages & customs
I am scared wouldn't know language
I speak no other language
Just going to another country, and not knowing about it
Language
Language barrier
The unknown of surroundings
Not Interested (8)
I am not interested (4)
I don't want to
I don't want to do it
I just don't want to
No desire
Distance/Homesick (8)
Distance (2)
Home sick (2)
Give up life here

I do not want to be far from family
I do not want to leave home
Too far away from family
Other Commitments (e.g. Job/Military/Activity) (6)
I can't leave city (work)
I have a career already here
I have a job
I have band commitments
Military obligations
Outside obligations
Age/Year in school (5)
Graduate soon
Graduating
I am about to graduate
Older student
Too old
Other (6)
All of the Above
I already lived abroad
I am not from America so wants to learn more about this country
I cannot find the right program
Social reasons
Too much to balance

Q19z/OTHER (n=23; 19 responses, 4 did not specify)

Why did that student decide to discontinue his/her education at UTC?
Joined workforce (5)
Dropped out to join work force instead
Got a full time job
Had full time job
Wanted to be a firefighter and don't need a degree for that
Work
Navy/Army (3)
Navy (2)
Joining army
Problems with Professors/University (3)
Did not like school, did not like professors
Did not like the school
Teacher was bad
Drug Abuse (2)
Began using drugs heavily
Drugs
Other (6)
All reasons

Boring
Father got better job offer somewhere else
Lack of classes
Records office lost papers and poor communication
Transfer, wanted to have more fun

Q21z/OTHER (n=33; 31 responses, 2 did not specify)

Why did you consider discontinuing here at UTC?
Department/Professor issues (10)
Bad instruction
Bad leadership in the nursing department
Communication department
Course load; professors not caring about students; poor communication with the financial aid department
Financial aid office
I didn't like professors
I didn't like the Communications department
I didn't like the staff
I do not like communication department
Physics department is really poor
Location (6)
I didn't like the city of Chattanooga
I didn't enjoy Chattanooga
I didn't like the city
I don't want to live in Chattanooga
Location
Too close to home
UTC campus size (2)
Small campus
I wanted to change to a bigger campus
Strict Freshmen regulations (1)
Force freshmen to live on campus and are strict on freshmen
Other (12)
Problems with parking tickets, not enough spaces
Further career in military
I am an older student
I am having a child
I am moving
I feel like I have to go
I wanted a change in atmosphere
Major looks better on resume
Personal achievements
Poor quality of education at UTC
School was not diverse enough, it was boring. I left and came back because the financial aid office is great. I get my money on time.
The economy is lacking

Q33h/OTHER (n=21; 13 responses, 8 did not specify)

Which group identities were relevant to your responses to items 31 and 32?
Age (5)
Age (4)
Ageism
Other (8)
Army friends
Being married
It doesn't matter
Major
Other
Political views
Social Greek organization
Sub-Culture

Student Retention and Diversity Study

Useful Resources

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