International Education Review of  
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga  
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I. Self-Study and Other Reports

A self-study entitled *Report of International Services and Program Operations at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga* (“Report”) was completed in November 2013. Both the Office of International Programs (“OIP”) and International Student Services (“ISS”) contributed to this report. This document describes the structure and operations of the programs supporting international education at UTC. It is a descriptive not an evaluative document. Prior to this report the Ad Hoc Committee on International Programs had given reports on international education to the Faculty Senate. The Report was read by Foster and Albon prior to their site visit.

II. Site Visit

A one-day site visit was conducted by Foster and Albon on 4 March 2014. It included individual or group meetings with the following individuals directly involved in international education activities: Jocelyn Sanders, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs; Yancy Freeman, Assistant Provost for Enrollment Services; Chancellor Steven Angle; Jerald Ainsworth, Provost; Hugh Prevost, OIP Director; Kristin Labs, OIP Assistant Director; Joyce Blevins, OIP Program Specialist; Jerad Brewer, ESL Institute; and, Nancy Amberson, International Student Advisor. The site visit also included a session with international students and a luncheon with study abroad and national exchange students. There was also an opportunity to interview the academic deans and administrators, a meeting with Student Development staff and an open session that included members of the *ad hoc* committee on international programs and faculty and staff.

The following *Review Report* is based upon information gathered from the *Report* and the one-day site visit. The established mandate for this *Review Report* was to provide feedback on international education from the campus community and a set of recommendations to move international education forward at UTC.
III. Observations

After spending an entire day interviewing international education program staff, the Provost, deans, faculty, student services and multicultural staff and international and domestic students we offer the general observation that UTC has many elements in place that give it the potential to make international education financially sustainable as well as an academically integral and dynamic force within the institution, most importantly a strong and widespread desire on the part of administrators, faculty and students for strengthening recruitment of international students, expanding opportunities for study and research abroad and creating other opportunities for international educational and cultural exchange.

The following specific observations we perceive as limiting factors to a “ramping up” of the UTC’s international education programming:

1. UTC international support functions are divided between the two offices, ISS and OIP. Reporting lines for the offices are different and atypical for international higher education. International students are also supported by Student Development staff.

2. The two offices are under-staffed and operating budgets are insufficient for current roles and responsibilities. Staff is clearly working very hard with limited support. Both indicated the need and desire to increase support for their students and other constituents. Both offices have worked to deliver services more efficiently to their constituents (e.g. the on-line pre-arrival orientation developed by ISS, the participation in CCSA organized by the OIP).

3. Communication between these units, especially at the strategic level, is limited and is not sufficient for personnel to engage in broader visioning or planning for enhancements in UTC’s international education programs.

4. Stakeholders noted that communication within the UTC community regarding international education programs and activities is limited.
5. There is some confusion within UTC about the roles and responsibilities of the ISS and OIP offices.

6. The OIP also has the responsibility of managing the National Student Exchange Program, a domestic institutional exchange program. Students who participated in this program reported a high degree of satisfaction with their experiences.

7. Both ISS and the OIP have international student visa advising and critical Federal Government reporting and compliance functions. These are monitored and enforced by the Department of Homeland Security, Student and Exchange Visitor Program. There is a duplication of services and operations in this area.

8. There is a need to establish clear guidelines for admission into UTC degree programs for students who are enrolled in the ESL Institute, these guidelines must comply with Federal Government regulations for international student enrolment in ESL programs.

9. There is no international student recruitment plan. The reviewers met with a group of six international students representing five different countries. All of these students were highly positive about their experiences at UTC but stated that family or personal connections are the reason for their enrollment. When asked if they would recommend UTC to friends from their home countries, they unanimously and enthusiastically indicated that they would. This indicated to us that a well-planned marketing and recruitment effort by UTC (currently non-existent, as stated in the UTC self-study Report) could be highly successful.

10. The nascent ESL Institute has a capacity for growth and has a plan in place to improve enrolment. This program is a success factor for revenue enhancement for other strategic international education initiatives. It needs to be tied into an international recruitment plan for growing overall international student enrollment and properly supported.

11. More opportunities for on-campus employment for international students are needed. On-campus employment is a proven way to improve the
international student experience because it provides an important cultural experience as well as a source of US-based income for international students.

12. Housing is an issue for international students, especially for those arriving as new students. Both students and staff commented on this.

13. The current study abroad program relies mainly on exchange-based student mobility. This is a cost effective system for UTC. It continues to provide students with important semester-long international education opportunities. Additional financial support is needed to address the exchange balance deficit and to provide students with additional scholarship to improve access.

14. Exchange students reported that they were very satisfied with their experience working with the OIP, but indicated that study abroad opportunities for the broader UTC student body are limited, primarily because of the lack of financial support. There is also a lack of information on the part of many students about the feasibility of participating in national and international exchange opportunities, which is an inhibiting factor for UTC students might want to study abroad.

15. Faculty and Deans reported that they were not satisfied with the services that they expected from the OIP, specifically with a lack of follow through on the approval of MOU’s, confused or poor communication and lack of support for the planning of travel programs with students. Our sense is that the problems with follow through and communication are largely due to the inadequate staffing and to the bifurcated organizational structure.

16. There appeared to be some question whether or not there were policies and procedures in place at the UT System level regarding international institutional relations and international business practices that were having an impact on UTC internationalization efforts.
17. Faculty efforts to promote internationalization may or may not be recognized in tenure and promotion decisions.

18. No institutional funds are available specifically to promote international research, internationalization of the curriculum or international program development.

IV. General Comments

UTC is well positioned to compete successfully for international students as well as to provide an internationalized campus setting for all of its students and faculty. Of note are UTC’s particular strengths including its academic programs in science, technology, engineering and math; its ranked business school; its ESL Institute; the University of Tennessee brand; and Chattanooga with its low cost of living and developing international business climate.

UTC is well positioned to increase the number of students who study abroad for a semester at partner institutions and with UTC faculty on UTC programs. Current capacity in these areas can be built upon.

Additionally, there clearly is broad institutional support for the internationalization of the student experience and the curriculum, for faculty development and research, etc.

Overall, while there is interest and enthusiasm for international education at UTC, there seems to be an ad hoc approach with not a lot of coordination and follow through. This was opinion expressed on the part of the faculty and certainly by the deans. UTC’s current structure for the administration of international programs does not serve the institution well. There is much potential for internationalization that is not been engaged.

In order to move forward in international education, UTC should increase its funding and administrative support, centralize administrative and support functions in a single office, create a position of senior international officer, and, importantly, create a comprehensive international strategic plan that is the result of an institution-wide planning process.

V. Recommendations

1. Organizational Structure & Reporting Lines: UTC should move toward centralizing its currently bifurcated organizational structure. Centralizing UTC’s
international education organizational structure would in our view greatly improve communication and reduce ambiguity and confusion on the part of all of the UTC stake-holders – deans, faculty, students and staff. Centralization would also make it easier for UTC to engage in strategic planning for international education in a "bottom up" approach that engages all of the campus stakeholders and then to execute the plan and ensure the achievement of planning goals. This office should be led by a senior campus administrator with the responsibility of leading internationalization efforts. A standing faculty committee for international programs should be established as institutional by-laws permit.

2. Strategic Planning: UTC should create a comprehensive strategic plan for international education. This should include, and likely start with, the creation of a UTC inventory of all of its “assets” that relate to international education (faculty interests/strengths/connections, research, infrastructure, local draws, etc.) and to establish a broad and coherent vision of what international education should be at UTC. The strategic planning process should include broad stakeholder input and should be well informed by the ethical guidelines and the current best practices and standards that are rapidly developing in international education. Additionally and importantly, the issues of legal environment and compliance and risk mitigation must be taken into account in throughout the planning process. The strategic plan should also include the development of measurable goals (international student enrollment, study abroad participation, UTC faculty-led programs, etc.). This plan should address all aspects of internationalization, including internationalizing the curriculum, study abroad, international student support, strategic communications (internal and external), and admissions. Importantly, it should define the services, business processes, and policies and procedures for which the international office should be responsible.

3. Resource Development: UTC is significantly under-resourced in its international education operations. There is simply not enough staff to support basic operations: international student marketing,
recruitment and admissions; processing and orientation of incoming students; study abroad and exchanges; logistical travel support for faculty; strategic international partnerships, etc.

4. Faculty & Staff Development Support: UTC should provide support through a venture fund for faculty and staff to develop international and cross-cultural initiatives. The aim would be to support innovation within the institution in a wide range of areas (e.g. research funds to support the internationalization of the curriculum of a course, funds for a pilot co-curricular cross-cultural leadership program, etc.) and thus support the comprehensive strategic plan for internationalization.

5. Web presence: Given the centrality of the web in any university’s marketing, branding and recruitment efforts (particularly for an international clientele), UTC
should conduct a systematic review of its web pages with the goal of making it easier to navigate the links that relate to international programs and to raise significantly and highlight the visibility of its international programs and global connections. Numerous comments were made throughout the interviews that we conducted that the current web presence for international education at UTC was inadequate.

VI. Conclusion

UTC has considerable potential for being highly successful in the contemporary arena of international education. However, it currently lacks two fundamental elements, though, for developing international programs that would compete with peer institutions: sufficient resources to support needed programs and innovative initiatives and a strategic vision that would energize and systematically channel institutional resources and efforts. These two fundamental issues need to be addressed. Additionally, UTC needs a central administrative office with the mandate to execute the internationalization plan under the leadership of a senior international officer who would be accountable for progress towards the goals of the plan.