

State of the University 2017  
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga  
Chancellor Steven Angle

### *The UTC Difference*

Welcome to Founders Day 2017. This is the 131<sup>st</sup> Birthday of our university. Thank you for coming. I cannot tell you what a privilege it is to serve as Chancellor of this incredible university. This job is a family effort and I want to acknowledge my wife, Dr. Dominique Belanger. I could not do this job without her.

What a great venue for the 2017 State of the University Address. The new residence hall behind me will have 600 beds, food options and a branch of the UTC book store. Underneath us there are two decks of parking that will hold over 600 cars. Our new tennis complex is to your left.

I want to dedicate this State of the University Address to an alum who is a near and dear friend of our entire UTC community, Mr. James "Bucky" Wolford. Bucky defines what it means to be a Moc. Sadly, he passed away on Sept. 1.

UTC is focused on student success and community connections. We are a dynamic institution, defining the role and executing the mission of a regional comprehensive university. Our focus is on adding value and achieving excellence.

This is a time of revolutionary, incredible change in higher education in Tennessee, and nationally. We embrace reforms and advances such as the Tennessee Promise and Reconnect that make higher education more accessible.

We are on solid footing and part of a strong university system, the University of Tennessee. All of our success indicators are on the upswing. Now is the time to decide where we go from here.

As we chart our course forward, the questions for us to address are simple and yet complex: Who are we? What distinguishes us? Why should a student choose UTC? What defines a UTC education?

For the State of the University in 2017, I believe the challenge is for us – students, faculty, staff and community – to thoroughly explore active and collaborative learning as fundamental activities that cut across all we do and give depth and meaning to a UTC education. Indeed, I believe this it already what DEFINES a UTC education.

Our purpose here today is to begin a strategic discussion on collaborative approaches to improve student learning, outcomes and success. Today will be a "Call to Arms." The beginning of the discussion and development of an action plan.

But first, I want to look at where we are today.

Enrollment is up and our housing is full. Our 14<sup>th</sup> day enrollment head count increased to 11,586 students. Our graduate enrollment was up 3.5 percent to 1,411 and graduate FTE increased 8. percent!

Our students, faculty, and staff are receiving awards and having huge impact on our campus, our community, and their academic fields. Our progress as a university is clearly tied to our campus-wide focus on student success.

Our six-year graduation rate is up 9.2 percent from 2009 to 2015 to 60% from any Tennessee Higher Education Commission institution.

Retention of freshman students to return to a four-year university in their sophomore year was 85 percent for freshmen arriving in Fall 2016.

We have a "Strategic Plan, Year 2 Update" brochure that is now available and our Strategic Plan website has a dashboard with key metrics that show our progress.

Why does active and collaborative student learning matter? It matters because student learning defines UTC. It matters because this is who we are. We educate students to be prepared citizens of our society, not just to master the content of an academic major. It matters because we are a liberal arts institution.

At our core, at our heart, we are a liberal arts institution.

Our strategic plan calls for the harnessing of our collective willpower and brainpower to find solutions to everyday problems and lays the groundwork for stronger relations between campus and community. The State of the University is strong and vibrant. Founders Day 2017, our energy is directed toward expanding and institutionalizing comprehensive and collaborative learning that provide the practical experience as well as multicultural understanding that our students need to be engaged citizens.

Goal 1(a) of our strategic plan states "All undergraduates will complete an internship, practica, service project, research project, senior capstone, honors thesis, or international experience."

Our challenge is to operationalize our plan and particularly, this goal.

As we have plotted our course forward, we looked at other institutions, organizations and our community to see what we can learn as we implement our strategic plan.

Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, IUPUI, says an engaged campus is one where Students, faculty, staff, alumni and community relationships enrich life and learning, help address social issues and spur the economy.

The American Association of Colleges and Universities says that innovation and entrepreneurial approaches to problem solving are the future of academia and student learning.

We have looked to our community and the environment in Chattanooga that encourages entrepreneurs to take the leap of faith to start a new business. Entrepreneurs are willing to fail, to learn from what did not work, to apply the lessons learned and to try again. An entrepreneurial approach to student success is having more than the right answer on a test; it is an appreciation of the personal growth that comes from engaging, inquiring and applying shared knowledge.

For the State of the University 2017, I challenge us as a campus to seize the opportunities before us. Yes, this campus deserves a GREAT WORK pat on the back. But now is not the time to rest on our laurels. Now is the time for action and hard work.

Our opportunity is to drive student preparation from being considered good to being known as great. Great in that students who graduate from UTC are ready to apply their learning and knowledge in whatever field they may choose.

James C. Collins, an author and business consultant, said, "Greatness is not a function of circumstance. Greatness is largely a matter of conscious choice and discipline."

I believe, as a campus community, we are ready for a new, challenging strategic discussion on collaborative approaches to improve student preparation, learning, outcomes and success.

Our job is to ensure every aspect of our existence moves us on a path that many on our campus have long embraced: active and cooperative learning experiences. A total focus on student learning, in the classroom, of course, but also in housing, student organizations, scholarship, in performances, in research, in athletics, in volunteering within the community, in internships, in every aspect of life related to our campus. We take the extra time to engage students in applying classroom knowledge to real world situations.

In effect, this is Goal 1(a) of our strategic plan, it is at the heart of a UTC education. This is not new. This is the UTC Difference.

On our campus, there are colleges, departments, and faculty that have implemented collaborative learning – learning by doing – models.

For example:

- Cooper Thome, a chemical engineering major, went to Japan to work in nanotechnology to develop stem cells in real-world applications.
- Matt Joplin applied his electrical engineering skills during an internship with SpaceX, the first private company to successfully send and return spacecraft from low orbits.
- Students in the SMILE fund working with Professor Hunter Holzauer and local finance professionals manage over \$250,000 of the UC Foundation endowment funds.

For a UTC student, the most significant impact is graduating with a portfolio of work that shares real world experiences, highlights hands-on preparation for a career, and shows they are prepared to be a productive member of society.

When a UTC graduate is asked if a collaborative learning experience made a difference, my hope is the response will be absolutely - yes. They were encouraged to explore areas that are less defined than in a traditional classroom lecture. Internships, community projects and teamwork added meaning, context and a greater depth of knowledge and skills to their UTC degree and built a strong, lasting bond with faculty.

Our Innovations in Honors Program is an example of collaborative student learning.

Students do 15 hours of honors course work including a two-semester Innovation Lab sequence where they tackle community and university issues. Azabelle Peters, Garner Cox and Courtney Baier were instrumental in Drew Bailey's I-Lab to plan out an Exercise is Medicine Outdoors movement. The I-Labs use design thinking and a structured creative process to pose potential solutions to community-wide issues.

Honors student Mae Stuart and her group in Charlene Simmon's I-Lab developed a plan to install an unusual crosswalk in the Glass Street area to manage traffic speed.

These are problem-based, community-embedded learning experiences that challenge our students to work with faculty to develop skills in critical and design thinking, applied creativity, and collaborative leadership.

Linda Frost, our Honors dean, modeled the UTC program from a similar program at the University of Applied Science in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

UTC students have access to the computational power of Oak Ridge National Lab and the connectivity of EPB's "gig" for high speed access. Non-profits in our community zero in on improvements in the social and cultural well-being of all citizens. These are incredible learning opportunities for our students.

While the Tennessee Promise and Reconnect opened new avenues for access to higher education, the differentiation among institutions will come from the quality of the student learning experience. We must expand the learning experience to be collaborative with faculty, create team approaches to problem solving, and provide hands-on community-based initiatives that are translatable to a career.

College ready. Work force ready. Even graduate school ready. All are supported the same way. Through Our vision. Our mission. Our values. Our goals.

I believe, as a campus community, we are ready for a new, challenging strategic discussion on collaborative approaches to improve student preparation, outcomes and success.

Being college-ready has multiple interpretations.

Our freshman experience should continue to target basic learning skills. But we also need to provide insights into career options and fields that are rapidly changing. Freshman must understand they need a portfolio of accomplishments to make them ready career ready and to open doors upon graduation.

We should consider forming learning communities that link together 20-25 students who have similar academic goals in multiple courses, including a freshman seminar.

Should we have a junior year experience as well? What other innovations should be incorporated into the campus learning environment?

Faculty and staff are at the heart of all of this and as we ask more, we must look at how our merit, promotion, and reward system is aligned with our strategic goals.

Our education management system impacts student outcomes. It should be a one-stop application to summarize research; scholarship; a reflective writing piece; membership and leadership in clubs, organizations and athletics; community service; and other experiential learning activities. Students must be able to document their learning experiences so when they graduate, the information is portable and easily shared with an employer or a graduate or professional school.

As educators, we should continually challenge ourselves to critically examine the student learning environment and when required, make adjustments. This is where UTC is today.

Collaborative and active learning experiences are one way to provide a more distinctive focus on student success. These bridges from the classroom to real time application build accountability, group processing, team building, person-to-person interactions and a portfolio that shares the total educational experience for every graduate.

Innovations typically do not come from an individual sitting alone in a room. They come from interactions, from disagreements, from discussions, from collaborations, from trial and error and even from failures.

Students encouraged and challenged by faculty – listening, learning, and working together; Students realizing that in a work group, we are all contributors with each one providing an integral part of the solution. For example, an engineer needs to understand marketing and business plans as well as have strong engineering skills. Our learning model will be rich if students have inter-disciplinary experiences.

Problem-based collaborative learning or as Cal Poly San Luis Obispo says, “Learning by Doing,” has been a “hands-on teaching approach” at the center of its curriculum.

Their classes focus on “active learning methods with a high proportion of laboratory and field work with on and off campus opportunities that apply classroom theory to real-world situations.”

Hands-on teaching occurs on our campus. This is what we are about.

In the Spring semester 2017, physical therapy students and their clinical instructors provided care to 71 UTC students in Student Health. This pro bono service equates to \$14,645 of free physical therapy for the UTC community.

Engineering students conducted a traffic study around Hamilton Place and presented their findings to the Hamilton County commission as a final exam. They learned a lot of facts, figures and patterns. They also understood how to present understandable data to government officials.

Our curriculum embraces the collaborative learning approach but the challenge is should we do more? Our faculty know that we engage students to have more than content knowledge. Our students must have the heart and passion to impact the world.

On Founders Day 2017, it is time we make this official and plant our stake in the ground. The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga will be defined by the depth and richness of learning experiences. Learn by doing. Applying classroom knowledge to real world situations. Research, scholarship, performance and creative activities – active and collaborative learning.

When a potential student asks why should they come to UTC, do we have a short answer that responds with who we are? We embrace active, collaborative learning, and hands on problem solving. It is the constant across all our programs and ingrained in who we are as a university.

Our Vice Chancellors and Deans participated in a retreat this past month and we discussed the UTC Difference. We talked about active, collaborative learning being at the heart of who we are as a university. We tried to describe “the UTC Difference” in a few words.

The best we came up with was: *Bridges Beyond the Classroom* – suggested by George Heddleston our Vice Chancellor for Communications and Marketing.

The bridge from an interest in a subject to being a master of it. Bridges from classroom learning to problems and impact. Bridges that connect UTC to our community, and the literal bridges that connect our community across the Tennessee River. *Bridges Beyond the Classroom*.

Is this the right way to describe the UTC difference? We are fortunate to have many smart, creative people on our campus. We need you to help us articulate what makes UTC special. Help us come up with the right words.

I do not feel this is merely an intellectual activity, a waste of time, or simply a marketing strategy. It is a way for our campus to come together around what makes us special, and will define UTC for years to come. Help us put into words what we all feel. We know this is a special place. I hope that by the end of this semester, we find something to rally behind, if it is Bridges Beyond the Classroom, that is great, but maybe we will have something even better.

Stay tuned for opportunities to participate in this discussion. We need your help.

Before closing, I want to come back to a point I made early in my remarks. At our core, we are a liberal arts institution and this is directly tied to the success of our students. Students learn about history, religion, philosophy and so much more as part of our liberal arts foundation. This is the basis for cultural and societal understanding of diversity, civil rights, social justice and other issues that shape an appreciation of people, place and purpose.

Henry Thoreau said: "It's not what you look at that matters; it's what you see."

The UTC Mission defines who we are and where we are going: *The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga is a driving force for achieving excellence by actively engaging students, faculty, and staff; embracing diversity and inclusion; inspiring positive change; and enriching and sustaining our community.*

I challenge us to use today as the beginning of a campus-wide effort to focus on student learning in every aspect of life related to our campus. We are already engaging students in applying classroom knowledge to real world situations. This is part of our strategic plan. Now, we need this to be part of every program, every activity, and ingrained in the fabric of our institution.

While there are important issues to discuss and serious questions to be considered, the broader conversation is underway and must continue.

We already are moving from being considered good to being great.

What is UTC the difference?

We actively engage students; we focus on personal growth, service and community; we understand knowledge comes from collaborative experiences; we prepare students to be life-long learners and lifetime contributors to helping their community, growing the economy and impacting society. Perhaps, this is best articulated as *Bridges Beyond the Classroom*.

Thank you. GO MOCS!

UTC birthday cake is available to my left- please enjoy and celebrate our 131 years!

Tours of the housing complex are available.

If you are interested, please sign up at the entrance to the building, behind me, you will see people gathering.

Each tour can accommodate 10 people and will take about 20 minutes.

Our celebration of Founders' Week continues on ML King Blvd this afternoon during the city's annual Park (ing) Day event.

UTC faculty, staff and students have joined other local business in transforming parking spaces into public parks along the Boulevard.

Please go to ML King and enjoy the art installations and we will have UTC Birthday cake on the Boulevard for your enjoyment.