



Learning and
Leadership
are
indispensable
to each another.

- John F. Kennedy

The challenge of
leadership is to be
strong, but not
rude; be kind, but
not weak; be bold,
but not bully; be
thoughtful, but not
lazy; be humble
but not timid;
be proud, but not
arrogant; have
humor, but
without folly.
- Jim Rohn



The multidisciplinary [UTC LEAD programs](#) are designed to equip participants with an understanding of the relationship that learning and leadership play in the instructional process; develop reflective practitioners in a variety of organizations/institutions; and focus on the interwoven nature of leadership, decision-making, and learning; emphasizing the proficiency that individuals will need as they pursue the challenges of organizational change and/or ever-changing instructional processes and practices.



Welcome EdD26 & PhD26 Cohorts

We accepted 37 EdD & PhD scholar-practitioners this Summer. The new cohort members are currently enrolled in the initial foundational course, LEAD 7000 Learning & Leadership:

Induction and Integration, on campus and via the Virtual Classroom (Canvas/Zoom). They will enroll in their first semester of core coursework this Fall (leadership, research, and inquiry). Welcome to the LEAD community!

Faculty Highlight

The Applied Leadership & Learning department would like to recognize UC Foundation Associate Professor, [Dr. Jessica Taylor](#). Last Fall, Dr. Taylor was invited to speak to first generation UTC students about higher education and the path to a faculty role at the Discernment Dinner. She was appointed Associate Director of the Grand Challenges in Assessment in Higher Education Project and received the Pathfinder Award (AALHE) which recognizes professionals who are making a profound impact across the higher education landscape. Dr. Taylor has presented at national conference regarding the faculty's role in assessment work. This Fall, Dr. Taylor will have two chapters book chapters published. Thank you for your service and leadership, Dr. Taylor!



Please Share Your News!

If you have any professional or personal updates to share, we'd love to hear from you! Please visit the following survey link:

[Learning and Leadership Update Survey](#)



LEAD Participant/Candidate News

- **Richard Gadzekpo** and **Adam White** were recognized as the 2025-2026 Outstanding Graduate Participants for the LEAD programs at the UTC Graduate School ceremony in March
- In January, **Nancy Seiters** accepted the position of Assistant Dean of Greek Life and Student Involvement at Sewanee. She is grateful to the LEAD program and is excited to apply the concepts and tools to help develop a sustainable program with purpose, mission, and strong communication.
- **Christopher Brown** and **Melissa Laseter** were both selected as Moc's Golden Feather Award recipients. This award recognizes staff members who go above and beyond to make UTC a great place to work and learn.
- LEAD candidates, **Coy Hazlewood** and **Olivia Fernandez** welcomed a baby boy in July
- **Kaleb Littlejohn** reports that Jacksonville State University celebrated a milestone in law enforcement leadership education as the first cohort of the Southeastern [Leadership Command College](#) graduated in February. Kaleb thanks the LEAD faculty for their guidance and insight that contributed to the program's success and to Kaleb's learning journey.
- In May, **Jeff Cogburn** transitioned from his role in UTC Advancement/Alumni Affairs to Vice President of Advancement at Gardner-Webb University
- **Aaron Dixon** currently serves as the Executive Directory of the Freshman Academy at Alabama A&M University
- This past year, **Layne Bryant**, Assistant VP for Institutional Effectiveness at MTSU, co-authored an [article](#) on the topic of intelligence agents in the online classroom
- **Marinda Cauley**, Director of Operations at Punching Nun Group, has been collecting dissertation data related to the inclusion of disability studies in core requirements for select majors. This Spring, Marinda was invited by a professor in the UT Southern behavioral sciences department to present her research to several classes, resulting in meaningful conversations.

Summer 2027 LEAD Admission Timeline



Applications will be accepted to our Summer 2027 PhD and EdD cohorts from **December 2027 through February 2027**. If your colleagues are interested in pursuing their doctorate at UTC, please encourage them to contact our LEAD Program Office team at utclead@utc.edu.



LEAD Participant/Candidate News (Continued)



In April, LEAD faculty members, Dr. Ashleigh Pipes and Dr. Cindy Williamson, joined a group of LEAD 7390 Research Seminar participants for the poster presentation session of the [UTC Spring Research and Arts Conference](#). Since that time, several of our LEAD scholar-practitioners have published their research in journals related to their professional practice. Congratulations and best wishes on your publications and ongoing research!

- Last year, **NaQuaina Moore** was awarded the Hardy Liston Jr. Symbol of Hope Award given at the UTK Chancellor's Honors Banquet. This award recognizes a faculty or staff member who has made outstanding, proactive contributions to the educational community and/or has promoted cultural diversity at the university
- In addition to her role at ETSU, **Chasity Drew** serves as Co-Chair for the Women & Leadership in International Education MIG, Secretary/Treasurer for the TAIE, and TN State Rep for NAFSA Region VII. These roles have promoted collaboration with colleagues across the field. On a personal note, the role of grandmother has brought a new sense of joy, reflection, and purpose to her work.
- **Reagan de la Torre** joined the UTC Office of Research and Sponsored Programs last year and was elected Program Director for Rotaract Club of Chattanooga, an organization for young professionals
- **Mark Harvey** currently serves as Program Manager at Morehouse School of Medicine
- **Jalonda Thompson**, Academic Success Coach and Adjunct Faculty at Salem College, was invited to serve as a guest instructor for a unit in a Professional Course through IASA: International Association of Student Affairs and Services and to share her paper related to career advancement strategies for mid-level women in student affairs.
- **Lindsay Davis** was elected to the Board of Directors for AHEPPP, the national association for collegiate faculty and staff who work with parents and families
- In January, **Melissa Tindell** was appointed as Vice President for Communication and Marketing at the University of Tennessee System
- **Brent Golberg** was appointed by Mayor Wamp to serve on the Carter Street Corporation board, was appointed by the Chattanooga City Council to serve on the Chattanooga Industrial Devt Board, and was elected by the River City Board as Asst. Treasurer and member of the Executive Committee.



LEAD Alumni News

In February, the ACHE South 2026 Distinguished Credit Program Award was presented to UTC's Bachelor of Applied Science in Applied Leadership program. At the same conference, LEAD graduate, **Dr. Marci Reiter**, received the Goddard Scholarship Award for research focused on improving success for adult learners. The recognition was particularly meaningful because it came from peers who understand the challenges of designing programs for participants whose educational journeys often look very different from the traditional college experience.



Dr. David Rausch & Dr. Marci Reiter (pictured on the left)

- In May, Dr. Marci Reiter was also featured in the UTC Blog for the ways in which her work with adult learners helped to shape her path to graduation
- LMN Coaching & Consulting, LLC is a consulting and coaching firm founded by **Dr. LaToya Newson**. **This company empowers** community- and faith-based organizations to design, strengthen, and sustain impactful programs, policies, and systems.
- Last year, Dr. John Alpers transitioned to Tusculum University and was promoted to Assistant Dean/ Department Head of the Business Department along with Director of the Honors program
- **Dr. Erin Melhorn** presented her doctoral dissertation research at the International Conference on Assessing Quality in Higher Education in Santiago, Chile, this Summer
- In July, **Dr. Jared Brewer**, was interviewed by Local 3 regarding the vital role ESL classes play in the American Dream for Chattanooga's immigrants. After several years as a faculty member, Dr. Brewer has transitioned into a staff role as Director of ESL Services at Chattanooga State which has allowed him to return to the work at the center of his professional and research interests.
- **Dr. Tiffany Ramsey** is pleased to share that she started a new career journey as a Vocational Rehabilitation Consults with Unum in April. Prior to this transition, Dr. Ramsey received the Bob Drake Advocacy Award at the Annual Wellness Through Employment Conference.
- **Dr. Kimberly Norfork, GA Institute of Technology**, has been appointed to the Board of Directors for the Southern Association for College Admission Counseling. This appointment reflects Dr. Norfork's continued commitment to increasing access to higher education and strengthening pathways for students across Georgia and the broader region.
- Last Fall, **Dr. Donald Behneman** was promoted to Assistant Director of Data and Innovation in UTC's IT department. Dr. Behneman is also an associated faculty member in the UTC LEAP (BAS) program.



LEAD Alumni News (Continued)

- **Dr. Colleen Harris**, Dean of the Killam Library at Texas A&M International University, has published multiple poetry collections including her 4th full-length poetry collection, *The Light Becomes Us*
- **Dr. Scott Bruce**, Professor/Director of Research for the Master of Athletic Training Program and Co-chair for the Veterans Suicide Prevention Project at Arkansas State, has given multiple international/national presentations and has published an article related to the VSPP. He has also published a second article regarding an instrument to measure pupillary reactivity while holding multiple interim administrative roles at the university.
- Last year, **Dr. Tambra Sweet-Hayes**, School Counselor at the York Institute (State of TN), and her husband opened a new business, TowPro Trailers. They were recognized by their local chamber as the New Business of the Year.
- **Dr. Garrett Jackson** currently serves as National Portfolio Sales Manager at 3C Labs
- **Dr. Alexandra (Lexi) King**, Associate Director of College Counseling at Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School, welcomed a son, Amos Homesley King, last Spring. It has been a truly special time as their family adjusts to life with their newest addition.
- After retiring from Chattanooga State, **Dr. Jody Love** transitioned to the roles of Executive Marketing Director partner and CLO of The Ascending Group, a financial firm centralized in Chattanooga with business operations across the U.S. Within these roles, historical data, along with experiential and comparative research analysis are essential; therefore, she continues to carry her LEAD learning experiences throughout her career.

