



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
CHATTANOOGA



Advisory Board Meeting

Tuesday, May 12, 2026 | 1:30–3:00 p.m.

James R. Mapp Building | Room 102

UTC ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, May 12, 2026 | 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. | James R. Mapp Building, Room 102

MEETING AGENDA

Page No.	Item	Agenda Topic	Presenter(s)
2	I	Call to Order	Mr. Scott LeRoy, Advisory Board Chair
3	II	Roll Call & Quorum Confirmation	Ms. Grace Sharp Administrative Assistant, Chancellor's Office
4	III	Approval of Minutes Action Required	Mr. Scott LeRoy, Chair
7	IV	Chancellor's Report	Dr. Lori Mann Bruce, Chancellor
30	V	SMILE Fund Student Presentation	Dr. Hunter Holzhauer and SMILE Fund Student Team
43	VI	Enrollment Update	Dr. Artanya Wesley, Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs
49	VII	FY27 Budget Action Required	Mr. Brent Goldberg, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration
60	VIII	Research Update	Ms. Meredith Perry, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research
105	IX	Elect New Chair Action Required	Mr. Scott LeRoy, Chair
106	X	Elect New Student Member Action Required	Mr. Scott LeRoy, Chair
107	XI	Review of Proposed 2027 Meeting Schedule	Mr. Scott LeRoy, Chair
	XII	Announcements and Other Business	Mr. Scott LeRoy, Chair
	XIII	Adjournment	

AGENDA ITEM II. SUMMARY

Date: Tuesday, May 12, 2026

Agenda Item: Roll Call & Quorum Confirmation



Action Required



No action required

PRESENTER(S): Grace Sharp, Administrative Assistant, Chancellor's Office

PURPOSE & KEY POINTS: A quorum was confirmed prior to the meeting, and at the start of the meeting Ms. Sharp will call the roll of Advisory Board members, using a roll call sheet to record attendance as the formal record of members present.

- Mr. Scott LeRoy (Chair)
- Isaac Durby (Student)
- Garnett Decosimo
- Mario Duarte
- Don Reising (Faculty)
- Elaine Swafford
- Todd Womack

**AGENDA ITEM III.
SUMMARY**

Date: Tuesday, May 12, 2026

Agenda Item: Approval of Minutes



Action Required



No action required

PRESENTER(S): Scott LeRoy

PURPOSE & KEY POINTS: Mr. LeRoy will present the minutes from the January 20, 2026, meeting to the Advisory Board, and a voice roll call vote will be taken to approve the minutes as the official record of proceedings.



**THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT CHATTANOOGA
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

1:30 PM EST
Tuesday
January 20, 2026

MAPP Building
Room 102

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Scott LeRoy called the meeting to order at 1:30pm. The roll was called with the following Board members present: Garnett Decosimo, Mario Duarte, Isaac Durby, Scott LeRoy, Elaine Swafford, and Todd Womack. A quorum was established.

II. OPENING REMARKS

Chair LeRoy welcomed everyone noting Dr. Beth Crawford, UTC Faculty Senate President, was standing in for the faculty Board member Dr. Don Reising on behalf of UTC faculty, but in a non-voting capacity.

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 23, 2025

The minutes of the September 23, 2025, meeting were unanimously approved (motion by Womack; second by Decosimo).

IV. CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Chancellor Bruce reported that the UTC Strategic Enrollment Plan was approved by the UT Board of Trustees at their November 23, 2025, meeting. Chancellor Bruce provided an update on enrollment including establishing an Executive Strategic Enrollment Team and an updated dashboard on enrollment and admissions. She also announced that she would be presenting UTC's Strategic Plan to the UT Board of Trustees at their meeting next month. Chancellor Bruce provided campus updates including UTC receiving the Carnegie designation for community engagement; the opening of a new counseling center on campus through a partnership with Parkridge Health Systems; and an Active Violence Response Training mandatory for all staff. She announced new leadership changes. Jermaine Freeman is now serving as Executive Director of Economic and Workforce Development. Additionally, Vice Chancellor for Research, Dr. Reinhold Mann, stepped down after completing his appointment term, and Dr. Mina Sartipi has been appointed as Interim Vice Chancellor for Research. Chancellor Bruce provided research and innovation highlights including being the first American university to host a permanent connection to a commercially available quantum network.

V. ACADEMIC AFFAIRS UPDATE

Provost Jerold Hale introduced Dr. Chris Smith, Dean of UTC's new College of Nursing, and Dr. Takeo Suzuki, Executive Director of the Center for Global Education. Dean Smith provided an overview of the College of Nursing, including programs offered, construction of the Dorothy and Jim Kennedy Health Sciences Building, and community partnerships. Dr. Takeo Suzuki introduced two international students and two study abroad students to share their experiences at UTC.

VI. FINANCIAL AND CAPITAL PROJECTS REPORT

Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Brent Goldberg presented a capital project timeline showing all projects, and providing an update on the projects. Vice Chancellor Goldberg discussed the 2026-2027 budget process, the current revised budget, and the operating outlook, highlighting the alignment of funding priorities with long-term campus growth, infrastructure needs, and strategic goals.

VII. ENROLLMENT REPORT

Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs Artanya Wesley provided an update on the implementation of the Mocs Flight Plan following UT Board of Trustees approval. Vice Chancellor Wesley outlined the established governance and accountability structure, including the Strategic Enrollment Implementation Taskforce, Strategic Enrollment Team, and initiative-based workgroups, as well as the project management and reporting processes supporting implementation. Vice Chancellor Wesley emphasized cross-divisional collaboration and sustained alignment of initiatives and goals with UTC's long-term institutional priorities.

VIII. UC FOUNDATION REPORT

Interim Vice Chancellor for Advancement and Executive Director of the UC Foundation Andrew Sheehy presented an overview of UTC's advancement efforts, including fundraising progress. Vice Chancellor Sheehy highlighted philanthropic priorities supporting scholarships, faculty recruitment and excellence, academic programs, athletics, and the Kennedy Health Sciences Building and Rollins College of Business expansion capital projects, emphasizing alignment with enrollment goals, student success, and long-term sustainability. He also provided an update on donor and alumni engagement.

IX. CLOSING REMARKS

Chair LeRoy thanked everyone for their time and participation in the meeting.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was approved unanimously via roll call vote (motion by Womack; seconded by Swafford). The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:05pm.

AGENDA ITEM IV. SUMMARY

Date: Tuesday, May 12, 2026

Agenda Item: Chancellor's Report

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Action Required

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No action required

PRESENTER(S): Dr. Lori Mann Bruce, Chancellor

PURPOSE & KEY POINTS: The Chancellor will provide updates regarding UTC's record enrollment, strong retention, and growing applicant demand, along with progress on Momentum, the University's 2030 Strategic Plan, highlighting campus achievements and \$460 M in capital investments. The update will also cover leadership changes and preview the University's 140-year celebration beginning in fall 2026.

Proclamation Honoring Dr. Jerold L. “Jerry” Hale Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Tuesday, May 12, 2026

Members of the Advisory Board, distinguished guests, faculty, staff, and friends—

Today, we pause to recognize and celebrate a remarkable leader, colleague, and educator whose career has left an enduring mark on this institution

—Dr. Jerold L. “Jerry” Hale.

After more than four decades of distinguished service in higher education, including seven impactful years here at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Dr. Hale will retire from his role as Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs on June 30.

Since joining UTC in 2019, Dr. Hale has exemplified the very best of academic leadership. With integrity, vision, and unwavering dedication, he has advanced our academic mission, strengthened our commitment to student success, and championed excellence among our faculty.

His leadership has guided UTC through both opportunities and challenges, always with a steady hand and a focus on what matters most—our students and our shared pursuit of knowledge.

Dr. Hale’s contributions extend far beyond titles and responsibilities. He has been a trusted advisor, a collaborative partner, and a thoughtful mentor to many across our campus. His insight and generosity have enriched our community, and his influence will continue to be felt in the programs he strengthened, the initiatives he advanced, and the people he inspired.

On a personal note, I am deeply grateful for Dr. Hale’s counsel and support during my first year as Chancellor. His wisdom, partnership, and commitment to this university have been invaluable, and I will always appreciate the example he has set.

Whereas Dr. Hale’s career spans more than 40 years of dedicated service to higher education;

Whereas his leadership at UTC has strengthened academic excellence and fostered a culture of collaboration and innovation;

Whereas his commitment to students, faculty, and institutional success has left a lasting legacy;

Now, therefore, I, Lori Mann Bruce, Chancellor of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, do hereby extend our deepest gratitude and formally recognize Dr. Jerold L. “Jerry” Hale for his extraordinary service, leadership, and contributions to this university and the broader academic community.

We congratulate him on his retirement and wish him continued fulfillment, joy, and success in the years ahead.

Please join me in expressing our sincere appreciation to Dr. Hale.

UTC Reports Record Spring Enrollment

Monday, April 27, 2026



Convocation 2025 photo by Angela Foster

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga has recorded an unofficial spring 2026 enrollment of 11,085 students, marking the first time in University history that spring enrollment has exceeded 11,000.

UTC also recorded a preliminary fall-to-spring freshman retention rate of 91.4%, the highest mark on record.

"These numbers reflect the momentum we are building around student success," Chancellor Lori Bruce said. "More of our students are choosing to stay, continue their progress and advance closer to graduation. That speaks to the support they are receiving, the opportunities they see here and our shared commitment to helping every student reach their goals."

UTC's 14-day headcount, pending Tennessee Higher Education Commission final approval, includes 9,482 undergraduate students and 1,603 graduate students. Overall enrollment is up 2.2% compared to spring 2025.

University of Tennessee System Board of Trustees Approves UTC's 2025–2030 Strategic Plan

Monday, March 2, 2026



Undergraduate students participate in a University of Tennessee at Chattanooga commencement ceremony Saturday, Dec. 13, 2025, in McKenzie Arena. Photo by Angela Foster.

The University of Tennessee System Board of Trustees has officially approved the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga's 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, establishing a bold, metric-driven roadmap to guide UTC's continued growth and impact through the end of the decade.

The plan reflects nearly two years of campus collaboration, data analysis and community engagement. Initiated in spring 2024 under Chancellor Emeritus Steven Angle and advanced by Interim Chancellor Robert Dooley, the effort included more than 2,000 data points and campus-wide roadshows and surveys to ensure broad input and measurable outcomes.

"This Strategic Plan is more than a document—it is a shared, metric-driven roadmap designed to guide our University toward our aspirations for 2030," said UTC Chancellor Lori Bruce. "Together, we will build on our momentum, expand our impact and continue preparing students for success in a rapidly evolving world."

Anchored by UTC's vision to be "a model metropolitan university that unites learner success, innovative research, and community partnerships to spark transformative growth and prosperity," the plan outlines clear aspirations for 2030, including achieving Carnegie R2 status as a high research activity institution and strategically expanding enrollment to 15,000 students.

The Strategic Plan is organized around five pillars:

Academic Excellence and Student Outcomes—Expanding UTC's educational footprint while improving retention, graduation and career placement outcomes. By 2030, the University aims to grow to 15,000



students, increase first-year retention to 80%, raise graduation rates, and ensure every undergraduate completes a high-impact practice course.

Developing and Supporting Our People—Investing in faculty and staff through competitive compensation, professional development, improved evaluation processes and enhanced recognition programs to strengthen retention and workplace satisfaction.

Innovative and Impactful Research—Elevating UTC’s research profile through expanded doctoral programs, increased research expenditures, new research centers and stronger support for translational research, commercialization and intellectual property development.

Operational Excellence—Strengthening fiscal stewardship, improving business processes, investing strategically in facilities and growing philanthropy to at least \$40 million annually while increasing the University’s endowment to \$260 million.

Community Engagement and Impact—Deepening partnerships across Chattanooga and beyond, earning the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, expanding advisory boards and increasing measurable regional economic impact by 15%.

Designed with accountability at its core, the plan includes 65 trackable metrics across the five pillars, ensuring progress is transparent and measurable over time.

“Strategic plans only succeed when they are lived daily—in our classrooms, our laboratories, our offices, our performances, our practices and throughout our community,” said Bruce.

With Board approval now secured, UTC will move into full implementation of the 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, advancing its mission to enrich lives through accessible and innovative education, impactful research and dynamic community partnerships across Tennessee and beyond.

UTC celebrates Kennedy Health Sciences Building Milestone with Topping Off Ceremony

Thursday, April 30, 2026



Construction crews place a signed beam atop the Dorothy and Jim Kennedy Health Sciences Building during a topping off ceremony on Thursday, April 30. Photo by Angela Foster.

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga celebrated a major milestone at the future home of the College of Nursing, the Dorothy and Jim Kennedy Health Sciences Building, with the placement of the structural beam at the highest point of the building at a topping off ceremony on April 30.

The new facility, located at the corner of Palmetto and East 3rd streets, will be approximately 90,000 square feet and feature state-of-the-art classrooms and a cutting-edge simulation lab. It will enable the College of Nursing to grow its student enrollment to 150% of its current level.

“The Dorothy and Jim Kennedy Health Sciences Building represents far more than new space—it signals who we are becoming as a University,” said UTC Chancellor Lori Mann Bruce. “It creates a bold gateway to campus and reflects the energy and momentum driving UTC forward. With this facility, we will expand access, grow enrollment, and strengthen our ability to meet the evolving workforce needs of the health care industry. This project is a direct expression of our 2030 strategic plan—advancing student success, deepening community partnerships and preparing the workforce of the future.”

Construction of the facility broke ground in late 2024. Prior to the ceremony, members of the University community, including Nursing faculty, staff and students, the construction team, donors to the facility and others had an opportunity to sign the building’s highest structural beam before crews lifted it into place. This traditional ceremony celebrates a major milestone in the construction process.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE CHATTANOOGA

"Topping out the UTC Health Sciences Building is a meaningful milestone—not just in the life of this project, but in our continued partnership with the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga," said Jeff Arlington, vice president at The Christman Company. "This progress reflects the shared commitment of UTC, our project team and our trade partners, whose craftsmanship and dedication are bringing this vision to life. We are grateful for the strong collaboration on site and proud to help deliver a facility that will support education, research and community impact for years to come."

The project's anticipated cost of \$77 million will be funded through a combination of donations and state resources, with a building campaign goal of \$21 million. In October 2023, UTC received an \$8 million gift from the Kennedy Foundation, Inc. to name the Dorothy and Jim Kennedy Health Sciences Building after the parents of the current Kennedy Foundation trustees—Jim Kennedy III, Elizabeth Kennedy Spratlin and Molly Kennedy ('82).

This will be the first building on campus to be named after an alumna. Dorothy ('82) received a degree in English while attending UTC alongside her daughter, Molly. This is the largest single gift in the College of Nursing's history.

"This topping out marks more than a construction milestone—it signals that we are one step closer to meeting the health care needs of our community," said Dr. Chris Smith, dean of the College of Nursing and UTC's chief health affairs officer. "With this new facility, we will significantly expand our capacity to graduate practice-ready nurses. Equipped with the latest technology and immersive, hands-on learning experiences, our graduates will be well prepared to deliver care at the highest level. Early and consistent exposure to simulation ensures they develop critical clinical skills that many in the field previously had to learn on the job. Through a strong emphasis on competency-based education, our program will produce nurses who are ready to make an immediate impact and strengthen the health care workforce across Chattanooga and beyond."

The building is scheduled for completion in 2027.

To learn more about the project, visit give.utc.edu/kennedy-health-sciences-building.

About Division of Advancement: The mission of the Division of Advancement at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga is to build meaningful connections for all Mocs and inspire generosity for Chattanooga's university. By fostering relationships and investment, UTC Advancement strategically brings together alumni, donors and friends of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga for the collective betterment of our campus and city.



UTC Named 2026-2027 Military Friendly® School

Thursday, March 26, 2026



Members of UTC's Office of Veteran and Military Affairs and military-connected students gather during a UTC Military Appreciation Game event. Photo courtesy of Sylvana Matthews.

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga has been named a 2026-2027 Military Friendly® School, earning Gold status in the large public university category.

The designation recognizes institutions that create meaningful educational paths for veterans, active-duty service members and their families. Approximately 1,500 military-connected students—including active-duty service members, spouses and dependents—are enrolled at UTC.

Institutions earning the Military Friendly® Schools designation were evaluated using both public data sources and responses from a proprietary survey. Schools are assessed on student retention, graduation rates, job placement, loan repayment and degree persistence, with additional attention to the experiences of student veterans.

"This recognition reflects the daily work happening across our campus to support military-connected students," UTC Office of Veteran and Military Affairs Director Sylvana Matthews said. "It's not about a single program or office; it's about faculty who understand the transition from service to classroom, staff who help navigate benefits and financial aid, and a campus culture that values the experience our veterans and military families bring with them.

"For many of our students, coming to UTC represents a new chapter after active duty or a move tied to military service," Matthews continued. "Our responsibility is to make that transition clear, supportive and focused on long-term success—from enrollment through graduation and into the workforce."



UTC Veteran and Military Affairs provides admissions assistance, GI Bill® and financial aid guidance, veteran-specific scholarships, mental health resources and a dedicated lounge space in Hooper Hall. The office also connects students to campus events, community partners and professional development opportunities.

"Earning the Military Friendly® designation is more than a badge of honor; it is a reflection of an institution's deep-rooted values and strategic commitment to those who served," Military Friendly® Vice President of Memberships Kayla Lopez said. "These schools don't just open doors for veterans and military spouses, they build sustainable pathways for academic success and long-term impact. Their support is transformative, proving that investing in military-connected students is both a moral imperative and a standard for educational excellence."

UTC will be showcased in the 2026-2027 Guide to Military Friendly® Schools, the April issue of G.I. Jobs® magazine and on MilitaryFriendly.com.

Military Friendly® is the standard that measures an organization's commitment, effort and success in creating sustainable and meaningful benefits for the military community. Over 3,200 organizations compete annually for the Military Friendly® designation. Military Friendly® is a service-disabled, veteran-owned small business. Military Friendly® is not affiliated with or endorsed by the U.S. Department of Defense or the federal government. Results are produced via a rules-based algorithm. The data-driven Military Friendly® lists and methodology can be found at <https://www.militaryfriendly.com>.

UTC Special Collections Completes Grant-funded Project to Preserve Dr. Tommie Brown's Papers

Monday, February 23, 2026



Black-and-white photograph of (from left to right) an unidentified individual, Margaret Sloan-Hunter, Gloria Steinem, and Tommie F. Brown. Photo courtesy of University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Special Collections.

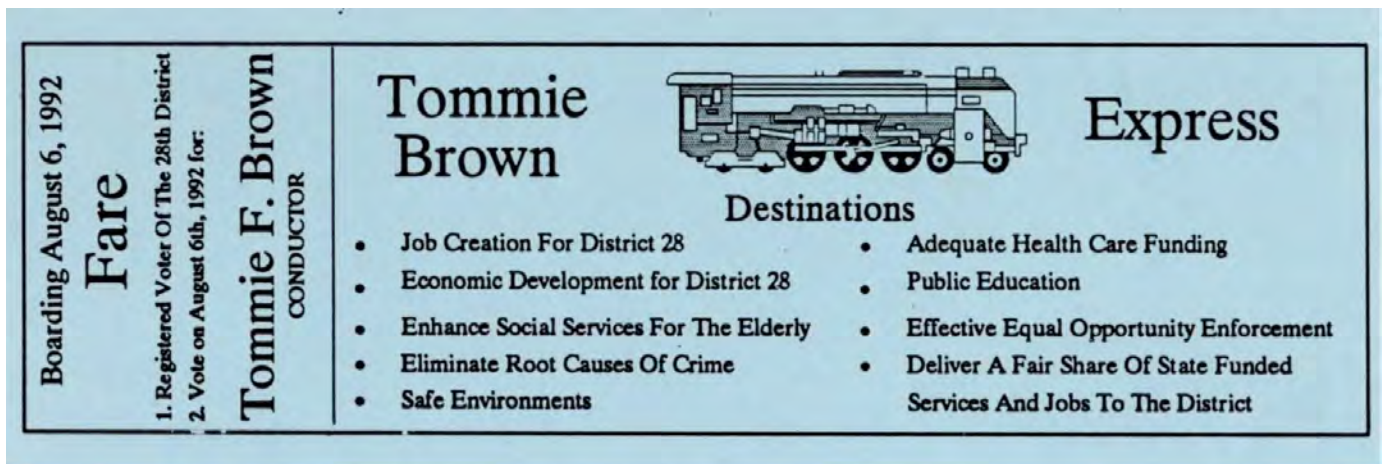
Just days before Dr. Tommie F. Brown passed away at the age of 91 on Jan. 20, 2026, archivists at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga crossed a significant finish line: the completion of a federally funded project to process and open Brown's personal and professional papers for public research.

The 18-month project, supported by a \$144,049 grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, resulted in the full processing of the Tommie F. Brown papers—a 172-box collection documenting the life and work of a woman whose influence shaped UTC, Chattanooga and the state of Tennessee.

Brown's papers were donated to UTC Special Collections in 2023, filling more than 125 linear feet of space with original research, legislative records, correspondence, legal documents, photographs and personal papers spanning decades of academic, political and civic work. The grant-funded project made those materials fully accessible to researchers for the first time.

"What finishing this project means is access," said Carolyn Runyon, director of Special Collections at UTC. "These papers are now open and available for anyone to come in and use—students, scholars, journalists and members of the community. That access is the reason this work matters."

Brown joined the UTC faculty in 1971 and later became the founding head of the University's social work program, serving as a faculty member until 1998. In 1980, she became the first person of color to lead an academic department at UTC.



Campaign ticket for Tommie F. Brown's 1992 election bid. Courtesy of University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Special Collections.

Beyond campus, she built a parallel legacy in public service, representing Tennessee's 28th District in the state House of Representatives from 1992 to 2012 and playing a central role in landmark civil rights efforts in Chattanooga.

The papers document Brown's work as the lead plaintiff in *Brown v. Board of Commissioners of Chattanooga*, the federal lawsuit that ended the city's at-large voting system and led to the creation of a mayor-council form of government with single-member districts. They also chronicle her two decades in the Tennessee General Assembly, including meticulously researched legislation focused on education, children's welfare, voting rights and public accountability.

The project employed a full-time professional archivist, Sara Kaparos, for 18 months and a student assistant, Boden Wilson. Together, they organized, described and rehoused every part of the collection, ensuring sensitive information was protected while preserving the integrity of the historical record.

Runyon said the timing of the project's completion remains striking. Kaparos' final day on the project coincided with Brown's funeral, during which the archivist spent the morning honoring the woman whose papers she had processed for more than a year.

"I've never experienced anything like it professionally," Runyon said. "The grant project ended as my colleagues and I attended Dr. Brown's celebration of life. The experience imparted me with a profound sense of responsibility steward her legacy as preserved in her papers."

Runyon said that Brown was intentional about preserving her story. During interviews conducted as part of the grant process, she often spoke about growing up in Chattanooga's Bushtown neighborhood and her belief that access to education, civic engagement and political power should never feel out of reach.

The collection is also notable for what it represents in the archival record. Based on Runyon's research, Brown's papers are the only known fully processed and publicly accessible archival collection documenting the career of a Black woman who served in the Tennessee legislature.

"Without collections like this, entire chapters of history remain incomplete," Runyon said. "Dr. Brown understood that, and she made a deliberate decision to ensure her work could be studied and understood in full."

Now that the project is complete, Runyon said UTC Special Collections staff encourage use of the collection in coursework, research and creative projects, with plans to explore future digitization and public programming.

"It's emotional to think about the finality of finishing something this large," she said. "But the most important thing is that Dr. Brown's papers are now part of the public dialogue.

"People can come here, open these boxes and learn directly from her life's work. That's the legacy she wanted."



UTC's Kristi Wick Receives National Faculty Practice Award

Tuesday, March 10, 2026



Dr. Kristi Wick

UC Foundation Associate Professor Kristi Wick, the Vicky B. Gregg Chair of Gerontology in the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga College of Nursing, has been selected as the 2026 recipient of the Outstanding Faculty Practice Award from the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF).

The Outstanding Faculty Practice Award recognizes nurse practitioner faculty members who demonstrate excellence in integrating active clinical practice into their academic roles while advancing innovative teaching models, practice standards and care delivery.

Wick will be honored during the organization's annual conference, scheduled for April 15-19 in Dallas.

UTC College of Nursing Dean Chris Smith said Wick's work has influenced how aging and rural health are addressed across the state.

"Dr. Wick has changed how this state thinks about caring for the aging adult. I say that because her efforts have substantially improved outreach efforts to those in rural areas who have not had routine access to services," Smith said. "From the first day as the Vicky Gregg Chair in Gerontology, her focus was to find a way to improve the health of our most vital resource—the aging adult—and her interprofessional focus on the needs of adults in our rural areas has shown us the power of working together to improve health."

"This is a well-deserved award and I am so excited but not surprised that she will have national recognition for her work. She will say it is a team effort and she is right. However, someone had to have the vision, and she certainly does. We are so fortunate to have her not only in the College of Nursing but in our communities."

UC Foundation Associate Professor Priscilla Simms-Roberson nominated Wick for the national award.

"This is a really big honor because NONPF is a huge national organization," Simms-Roberson said. "It's one of the most important organizations for nurse practitioner programs across the United States. The fact that Kristi was selected for the award shows that we are doing amazing things here at UTC that deserve to be recognized."

Simms-Roberson pointed to Wick's leadership of the MobileMOC mobile health unit as a defining example of the type of faculty practice the award was created to recognize.

MobileMOC, operated through UTC's College of Nursing, delivers services such as primary care, chronic disease management, preventive screenings and health education in communities with limited access to health care. It also provides hands-on clinical learning opportunities for students across multiple disciplines.

Through the MobileMOC program, undergraduate nursing students, nurse practitioner students and learners from fields such as occupational therapy, social work and nutrition participate in patient care while working alongside faculty clinicians.

"It's a great learning and practice opportunity for our students," Simms-Roberson said, "and it's not a common clinical experience."

Kay K. Chitty Assistant Professor Kate McKinney said Wick's approach illustrates how faculty practice can extend beyond the classroom while strengthening student learning and patient care in the community.

"As a newer faculty member, I've attended NONPF conferences to gain insight into nurse practitioner education and how to collaborate and be innovative, and Kristi really excels at that," McKinney said.

"Kristi's work has provided our students with an opportunity to do outreach with the geriatric population in these rural areas. I think her passion for that community is really seen in her work through the MobileMOC."

Balancing the responsibilities of teaching, clinical care and community engagement can be challenging for nursing faculty, Simms-Roberson said, but Wick has consistently found ways to connect those roles.

"Since she started here at UTC, she's done a great job of balancing teaching classes while also improving health care for older adults in the region," Simms-Roberson said.

McKinney noted that Wick incorporates hands-on experiences and simulations that help students understand the challenges many older adults face.

"She's doing exciting, important work," McKinney said.

Wick earned a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from UTC in 2019 after completing both her Master of Science in Nursing and Bachelor of Science in Nursing degrees.

Her leadership has also helped secure major grants to support programs addressing rural health access, aging and interprofessional care models.

"I think it will be inspiring to other faculty members to see what they can achieve as part of their faculty role and incorporate their own clinical practice into the job," Simms-Roberson said. "Dr. Wick's work shows how you can help students learn while also making a difference in the community."

UTC Launches New Campus Safety System

Monday, February 9, 2026



The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga has announced a partnership with 911Cellular to deploy a new emergency notification and incident management system.

This system improves the University's ability to communicate and respond during urgent and emergency situations, significantly strengthening UTC's emergency communications.

Safe@UTC, the new campus safety smartphone app, provides students, faculty and staff with direct access to safety resources. The app allows users to directly connect with the UTC Police via one-touch panic button functionality, anonymously report suspicious activity, initiate a remotely monitored Safe Walk, request a Safe Ride, and quickly access other campus resources. The new app is free to download from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.

"With the implementation of 911Cellular and the launch of the Safe@UTC app, we have taken our campus safety commitment to the next level," UTC Director of Emergency Management, Threat Assessment, and Safety Brett Fuchs said. "Keeping our community safe is a top priority at UTC. We now have a sophisticated security solution that enhances our ability to respond to emergencies and another tool to help prevent them in the first place."

For emergency responders, the system provides real-time situational visibility, including precise location details, shared maps and other critical content. Incident-specific alerts help route information to the teams best equipped to respond, supporting faster action and improved coordination.

"The 911Cellular Safety Platform and the Safe@UTC app are incredible tools to help us make students and employees feel safe anywhere, anytime. The app is customized to meet the specific needs of our faculty, staff and students," said UTC Associate Vice Chancellor for Public Safety and Chief of Police Sean O'Brien, who added: "Please don't wait until an emergency to download the app."

As part of the expanded safety infrastructure, UTC is also introducing additional on-campus safety options for employees, including wearable, computer-based and wall-mounted panic buttons. Like the Safe@UTC app, these tools connect directly with campus security to support coordinated response during critical situations.

The app and related safety tools are being deployed in partnership with 911Cellular—one of the country's top critical communications systems. Its safety solutions are deployed in thousands of facilities across the country and internationally.

"The Safe@UTC app is a customized security solution designed specifically with the UTC community in mind," 911Cellular Chief Executive Officer Chad Salahshour said. "Keeping students and school staff safe is at the heart of what we do, and it's our mission to make it easier to act fast, communicate clearly and protect what matters most during an emergency—each other."

UTC's Ignatius Fomunung Selected for Fulbright Specialist Roster

Wednesday, March 18, 2026



Dr. Ignatius Fomunung, UC Foundation professor of civil engineering at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, has been selected for the Fulbright Specialist Roster. Photo by Angela Foster.

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga UC Foundation Professor of Civil Engineering Ignatius Fomunung has been selected for the Fulbright Specialist Roster, a program of the U.S. Department of State that connects U.S. academics and professionals with short-term collaborative projects at institutions around the world.

The Fulbright Specialist Program is part of the broader Fulbright exchange initiative, one of the U.S. government's flagship international educational exchange programs designed to increase mutual understanding between the U.S. and other countries. Placement on the Fulbright Specialist Roster recognizes individuals with significant professional experience and expertise who may be matched with projects designed by institutions in more than 150 countries.

Specialists typically work with host organizations on activities such as curriculum development, faculty training, research collaboration and program development.

Fomunung's tenure on the roster runs through February 2029.

"The Fulbright Specialist Program looks at the totality of the skill sets that you bring to the table and that you can use in different parts of the world," Fomunung said. "They look at the totality of your experience—educational experience, work experience, life experience—and the expertise that you can leverage to help communities across the world."

Fomunung serves as director of UTC's Center for Energy, Transportation and the Environment, housed in the College of Engineering and Computer Science. His research focuses on transportation systems,

infrastructure planning and environmental sustainability—with an emphasis on integrating economic, environmental and social considerations into engineering decision-making.

Through the Fulbright program, Fomunung indicated interest in potential projects in Asia, South America and parts of Africa. If matched with a project, he would work directly with a host institution or agency on a short-term assignment that could include helping universities develop academic programs, advising on civil engineering curriculum development, or serving as a consultant on civil infrastructure development projects.

“It runs the gamut,” he said. “There could be development projects or educational projects. For example, universities might be creating a new civil engineering program or they may want help preparing for accreditation.”

Fomunung said the opportunity also offers a way to expand UTC’s global reach.

“The main impact is the visibility that it brings to the University,” he said. “It shows that UTC has faculty who are engaged and recognized internationally who are helping solve problems around the world.”

Dr. Kumar Yelamarthi, dean of the UTC College of Engineering and Computer Science, said the recognition reflects both Fomunung’s professional accomplishments and the broader work taking place within the college.

“Dr. Fomunung’s selection to the Fulbright Specialist Roster speaks to the breadth of experience and perspective he brings to his work,” Yelamarthi said. “His expertise in civil engineering and infrastructure systems positions him to make meaningful contributions to institutions and communities around the world.”

The last UTC faculty member to land on the Fulbright roster was Dr. Michelle Deardorff, the Adolph S. Ochs Professor of Government in UTC’s Department of Political Science and Public Service, who was a Fulbright Senior Specialist in Albania emphasizing civic engagement. She currently serves the program as an application reviewer.

“Speaking as a peer reviewer for the Fulbright Senior Specialist selection process, the program seeks nationally respected experts who have demonstrable cross-cultural skills,” Deardorff said. “This Fulbright program provides necessary expertise to professionals in other countries who then collaborate with the specialist to adapt the relevant skills to their own context. Fulbright hopes these programs lead to ongoing international collaborations.”

Fomunung, a member of the UTC faculty since 2005, brings an international background that aligns closely with the mission of the Fulbright Specialist Program. A native of Cameroon, he speaks several languages—including Mandarin, French and Creole—and has experience working across cultures, which he said helps him navigate international collaborations.

“Apart from the technical know-how, there is also cultural competency,” he said. “I’ve been exposed to different cultures throughout my life, so I know how to navigate different environments and understand the norms that help make collaborations successful.”

Three from UTC Earn Prestigious Harold Love Outstanding Community Service Awards

Thursday, April 30, 2026



Dr. Rick Dierenfeldt (left), Dr. Chandra Ward, Joshua Clay, Rep. Greg Martin, and Rep. Harold Love Jr. pose at the 2026 Harold Love Outstanding Community Service Award ceremony. Photo courtesy of TN Photo Services.

CHATTANOOGA—Three members of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga community—Dr. Chandra Ward, Dr. Rick Dierenfeldt and student Joshua Clay—have been named recipients of the 2026 Harold Love Outstanding Community Service Award, one of the state’s highest recognitions for public service in higher education.

Presented annually by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, the Harold Love Award honors 10 individuals statewide—five students and five faculty or staff members—who demonstrate a sustained commitment to volunteerism, civic engagement and community leadership. The award is named for the late Rep. Harold Love Sr., whose legacy of service continues to guide the selection.

“The Harold Love Outstanding Community Service Award represents the very best of what higher education can contribute to our communities, and we are incredibly proud to see Dr. Chandra Ward, Dr. Rick Dierenfeldt and Joshua Clay recognized at the state level,” said UTC Chancellor Lori Mann Bruce. “Each of these individuals embodies UTC’s commitment to civic engagement—using knowledge, leadership and compassion to create meaningful, lasting impact. Their work reflects not only personal dedication, but also the deep partnerships that define our role in Chattanooga and across Tennessee.”

This year’s honorees from UTC represent a broad spectrum of service, each grounded in long-term partnerships and a clear sense of responsibility to the region.

Dr. Chandra Ward, UC Foundation associate professor of sociology, has focused her work on issues of equity and access, particularly in transportation. Her research examines how mobility barriers shape access to jobs, health care and education, and she regularly connects that work to community-based efforts in Chattanooga.

"I am so honored to be a recipient of the Harold Love Outstanding Community Service Award," Ward said. "Service is at the heart of who I am as a person, and the discipline of sociology compels its practitioners to apply their work to both provide understanding and service to society."

Ward emphasized the connection between her academic work and the city itself, noting that UTC offers "a dynamic urban laboratory" where students and community partners can work together to address local challenges.

"To have the opportunity to leverage my skills as an urban researcher, to shine a light on community issues and place UTC at the forefront of cultivating future urban researchers ... that is what this award means to me," Ward said.

In addition to her research, Ward has partnered with the City of Chattanooga's Office of Multicultural Affairs on fair housing education initiatives and serves on the board of Humanities Tennessee.

Dr. Rick Dierenfeldt, UC Foundation professor and head of the Department of Criminal Justice, has built his service work through long-standing partnerships focused on public safety. As director of the UTC Violence Reduction Initiative, he collaborates with law enforcement agencies and community organizations to address violent crime using data-informed strategies.

"I am well acquainted with Representative Love's inspirational work and his remarkable commitment to improving the lives of others—and I am humbled to have even been nominated for the award that honors his legacy," Dierenfeldt said.

He pointed to the collective nature of the work, crediting partners across the region.

"The work these people and organizations are doing has been so critical to reducing gun violence, recidivism and opioid-related overdoses in our community," he said. "It is such a privilege, as their research partner, to have a front-row seat as they develop and implement models for addressing issues that are of critical importance."

Dierenfeldt added that the role of the University is clear.

"We all embrace the truth that research is an important form of service," he said. "That is the gap that we can fill—the meaningful contribution we can make to the larger mission of making Tennessee a safer place to live and work."

Joshua Clay, a Chattanooga native and graduating senior pursuing a Bachelor of Integrated Studies, has focused his service on mentorship, student support and campus engagement. His involvement includes roles as a Chancellor's Ambassador, orientation leader, Student Government Association senator and events manager.

"I am unable to formulate a sentence or comments that would encompass how much this nomination means to me," Clay said. "The recognition alone means the world to me."

Clay described service as something measured less in outcomes and more in impact on others.

"Being able to improve the lives of others and have proof in the thank yous, tears of joy and other forms of appreciation is something that fulfills you better than anything else can," he said.

He also pointed to the mindset that has guided his approach.

“From networking with donors to helping underclassmen find their way, I have always tried to promote access, connection and opportunities for success,” he said. “A big part of that is remaining consistent, continuing to learn and being ready to take on the next task—whether there is an immediate benefit or not.”

Clay said that perspective is rooted in lessons from his family. “Victory loves preparation,” he said, quoting his father, Michael Clay. He also shared a guiding principle from his mother: “The more you bless others, the bigger your blessings are going to be.”

Established by the Tennessee General Assembly in 1991 and later renamed in honor of Love, the award recognizes individuals who make lasting contributions to their communities. Recipients are selected by a statewide committee and receive a \$1,000 prize.

Though their work looks different, Ward, Dierenfeldt and Clay share a sustained commitment to civic engagement and the communities they serve. Their recognition points to the range of service tied to UTC and the role the University continues to play across Chattanooga and the state.

UTC Harold Love Outstanding Community Service Award Recipients (since 1998)

Students

2026 – Joshua Clay

2024—Chamyra Teasley

2020—Briana Brady

2019—JJ Lewis

2001—Andrew Smith

1998—Isaac Connor

Faculty/Staff

2026 – Dr. Rick Dierenfeldt, Dr. Chandra Ward

2022—Dr. Courtney Crittenden

2020—Dr. Priscilla Simms-Roberson

2019—Dr. Tammy Garland, Dr. David Ross

2018—Dr. Richard Brown, Dr. June Hanks

2011—Dr. Roger Thompson

2009—Dr. Zibin Guo

1998—Dr. Barbara Wofford

Academic Year Update | RECORD ENROLLMENT

FALL
12,060

SPRING
11,085

91.4%

Fall-to-Spring
Freshman
Retention

 **500+**
Doctoral
Students

 **18K**
Applicants
for Fall 2026

Leadership Changes

- Dean of the Honors College
SEARCH UPDATE
- Vice Chancellor for Advancement
SEARCH UPDATE
- Vice Chancellor for Research
SEARCH FALL 2026
- Provost & Senior Vice Chancellor
for Academic Affairs
SEARCH FALL 2026



Momentum Update | 2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

- Earned **Carnegie Community Classification** (Goal 5.1)
- Enhanced **Faculty/Staff Experience** (Goal 2.1)
- Implemented **Momentum Monday Celebrations** (Goal 2.2)
- Established Recognition Efforts **Celebrating Faculty and Staff Research Awards** (Goal 3.1)

Join the Momentum (Goal 4.2)

- Event on May 6
- Celebrated \$460 million in Capital Projects
- Highlighted that the value of a UTC degree is increasing for everyone



140th Anniversary Preview

Tuesday, Sept. 15

Celebration During Founder's Week

State of the University & 140th Anniversary



140

**Community Events
Throughout the Year**

1886

**Track 18,860 Hours
of Community Service**



**Commemorative
Celebrations**

AGENDA ITEM V. SUMMARY

Date: Tuesday, May 12, 2026

Agenda Item: SMILE Fund Student Presentation

☐

Action Required

☒

No action required

PRESENTER(S): Dr. Hunter Holzhauer and SMILE Fund Student Team

PURPOSE & KEY POINTS: Dr. Hunter Holzhauer and the SMILE Fund student team won their 10th consecutive CFA Institute Greater Tennessee Research Challenge. Members of the team will discuss how the competition strengthens their skills and provides real-world investment experience.

UTC Rollins College of Business Student Earns JPMorgan Internship

Wednesday, April 22, 2026



Ethan Tidwell, a SMILE Fund member, is getting a chance to live out a dream this summer in New York City. Photo by Angela Foster.

Ethan Tidwell has always dreamed of working in the city that never sleeps.

A junior double-majoring in finance and accounting at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga's Gary W. Rollins College of Business, Tidwell has spent the last three years preparing for the next step of his journey.

This summer, he will finally have the opportunity through a two-month internship with JPMorgan Chase & Co. in New York City.

"Getting into JPMorgan wasn't my goal," Tidwell said. "It was a byproduct. As an example, if you want to become a good leader, your goal should not be to become a good leader. Your goal should be to become obsessed with the process that it takes to get there.

"This is something that has helped me a lot because then you won't get disappointed when things don't go your way."

Tidwell said it took many years to get to this point, starting when he first declared as a finance major.

Initially, he came to UTC as an accounting major. He said the decision to add finance as a second major came while listening to Robert L. Maclellan and UC Foundation Associate Professor of Finance Hunter Holzhauer in class.

Tidwell then joined the SMILE Fund—a student-led investment fund—and currently serves as the vice president of research and development.



The SMILE Fund is a student-led investment fund aimed at expanding skills in portfolio management, investment strategies and equity valuation.

"Ethan has been in the SMILE Fund for a very long time," Holzhauer said. "I've known him from the beginning and he struck me in a couple of different ways. One, analytically, he's at the top. His brain almost looks for the challenge. He wants to find something that will push him to be better and better and better."

Tidwell credits Holzhauer, the SMILE Fund and other professors in the Rollins College of Business (RCOB) for preparing him for his opportunity this summer.

"The learning and the resources that UTC provides—especially with the professors—have helped me tremendously, especially in the SMILE Fund," Tidwell

said. "I know there are things that are just UTC general college-related, but the RCOB has probably been the biggest factor in it. The way I like to think about it is that you can go to Ivy League schools and get all this stuff, and you almost get an instant ticket into some of these banks.

"With UTC, you don't get the instant ticket but you get a stage. You can perform, you can do what you want, you can learn and you have the resources to do everything. We have better ways to learn, especially with the Bloomberg Lab."

Tidwell was also captain of UTC's Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Institute Research Challenge team, which won the Greater Tennessee Challenge for the 10th consecutive year and advanced to the Southeast Regionals.

"Ethan's a rising star and I'm sure we will be proud of him for many, many accomplishments that he will make throughout his career," Holzhauer said. "We say SMILE Fund is for life. He will always have a home here and he'll always have a fan base."

Tidwell said this process required hard work and intentionality after multiple years of trying to get the JPMorgan internship. He completed internships locally, including this past summer in the Rock City finance department, where he worked on the company's new gondola project to boost his resume and gain more experience in finance.

"I applied last year and the year before and didn't really get anything because I had no prior internship experience," he said. "I didn't have a ton of financial experience. I guess it was technically last year, but this last semester I applied just kind of like, 'We'll see what happens.'"

"I wasn't expecting anything. I got a HireVue (interview) and thought, 'Oh, I bet they give that to everyone.' But I studied my butt off because I wanted to learn more about the company and impress the interviewers with my knowledge of it."

He remembers the exact moment the offer email appeared in his inbox, while he was sitting in the Bloomberg lab, where he had spent countless hours preparing and studying for this opportunity.

"If you are not curious, if you're not trying to learn, if you're not willing to learn, you will not get better," Tidwell said. "It's important not to doubt yourself in a bad way, but really question, is there a better way to do this? Can I do this another way? Am I right? There are so many different questions you can ask yourself that will lead you down different paths to learn, and then you'll conceptually understand a lot of stuff, especially in finance. That's what has helped me."

Decade of Dominance: UTC SMILE Fund Wins 10th Consecutive CFA Research Challenge

Wednesday, March 4, 2026



UTC SMILE Fund members Brannon Smith, Rilee Ervin, Shaun Williams, Bana Sulieman and Ethan Tidwell won the fund's 10th straight Chartered Financial Analyst Institute Greater Tennessee Research Challenge. Photo by Vanee Patel, a finance major and marketing director of the SMILE Fund.

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga SMILE Fund has won its 10th straight Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Institute Greater Tennessee Research Challenge.

The CFA Research Challenge is an annual global competition that challenges students' valuation, report writing and presentation skills to gain real-world experience before graduation.

The UTC SMILE Fund (Student Managed Investment Learning Experience) team consisted of Gary W. Rollins College of Business students Brannon Smith, Rilee Ervin, Shaun Williams, Bana Sulieman and Ethan Tidwell. The five undergraduates competed against 11 universities from across the state, including UT Knoxville, Vanderbilt University, Belmont University and Lipscomb University.

Robert L. Maclellan and UC Foundation Associate Professor of Finance Hunter Holzhauer serves as the faculty advisor.

"This is not something you just start on day one and say we're going to win the most competitive competition for business school students and win your state 10 times in a row," Holzhauer said. "It happens over time, and you just have to continue to build your process and continue to invest in your students."

"We've upped our game every time and the other teams are upping their game trying to beat us. So, we're trying to stay not just one step ahead of them, but stay competitive at the next level. It's been a very interesting learning curve, but it's also been a testament that UTC and the SMILE Fund are serious. We're training the best students in the world to be leaders in the investment industry and business in general."

Holzhauer said the team examined Harrow Inc., an ophthalmic pharmaceutical retailer. He described the company as “interesting” to examine because it is a small-cap stock classified as a smaller or newer publicly traded company.

Part of the research was to determine whether the company’s business model was favorable. Students conducted a social media analysis to learn what patients were looking for in products. An Institutional Review Board-approved survey was created and sent to 6,000 ophthalmologists, yielding over 90 responses.

In terms of valuation, the team also provided specific growth assumptions and risk assessments at the product level.

Holzhauer said the team will now shift its focus to the Southeast Regionals, where UTC representatives have won three of the last five years.

“The students have already done the ground-level due diligence that most teams don’t even consider doing,” he said. “Not only did they consider doing it, but they did it the right way, and I’m really impressed.”

From the Classroom to the Boardroom, SMILE Fund Shapes Future Financial Analysts

Tuesday, July 15, 2025



UTC SMILE Fund alums Luke Johnson and Ryan Nichols. Photo by Angela Foster.

As Chattanooga's population and economic development continue to grow, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga students are fulfilling a need for bright, prepared and eager professionals ready to take fiduciary responsibility seriously.

Founded in 2015, the SMILE Fund—short for Student Managed Investment Learning Experience—was introduced to provide students with the opportunity to manage a real stock portfolio for a client.

With that goal in mind, the SMILE Fund's mission statement is "to provide UTC students with a proficient knowledge of portfolio management, investment strategies and equity valuation techniques while growing the value of the fund."

The SMILE Fund currently manages more than \$3 million, having grown from an initial investment of \$250,000.

Robert L. Maclellan and UC Foundation Associate Professor of Finance Hunter Holzhauser has served as the fund's program director since its inception.

"I wanted to do this in a totally different way," Holzhauser said. "I wanted this to be an out-of-class, pro bono, real-world business that the students run. I wanted it to be so much like the real world that it shocks the people when they go to work for them because the students already know what they're doing. I felt that way because I knew how competitive it is in business, finance and wealth management."



Ryan Nichols and Luke Johnson both served as SMILE Fund presidents during their time at UTC.

The local Chattanooga community has seen an influx of SMILE Fund alums ready to work in the financial service industry, including former fund presidents Luke Johnson and Ryan Nichols.

Johnson, a Signal Mountain native and 2023 UTC graduate, was a recipient of the John C. Stophel Distinguished Student Award for his work within the Gary W. Rollins College of Business.

Joining the SMILE Fund team during his first year at UTC, Johnson—who earned his bachelor’s degree in finance—was eager to explore a passion he stumbled upon in high school.

“When I was 15, I bugged my dad to open up an investment account for me,” Johnson recalled. “I don’t remember why, but you can get a UTMA account, and they’re the custodian until you’re 21. I had an app where you could select stocks and invest \$300. I bought Amazon, Apple and Tesla.

“When I turned 21, I had like \$2,100. I multiplied my money by seven. I thought this was super easy. That’s all you have to do. I got super lucky because it’s not that easy. For some reason, I had an interest in it. When I got to college, I immediately looked for the SMILE Fund.”

Johnson held multiple roles within the organization, ultimately finishing as president. He credits the fund for his first internship with Patten & Patten, one of the largest registered investment advisors in Chattanooga, which manages assets exceeding \$2 billion.

Ray Ryan, the president, CEO and portfolio manager at Patten & Patten, is the SMILE Fund’s industry mentor. Ryan’s connection with the fund led to Johnson becoming an intern with the company.

“When I was a runner, I would go ask Ray questions,” Johnson explained. “I would show interest in markets. I would show interest in investments. He was involved in the SMILE Fund. He is a great teacher. He took opportunities to teach me, as well as the other runners and people in the SMILE Fund, whenever he could.

“I was given an opportunity because of the SMILE Fund. It’s just building on the opportunities and a lot of them came from being involved in the fund.”

Johnson currently works as a portfolio manager for Acumen Wealth Advisors, one of the fastest-growing registered investment advisors in Chattanooga.

Reese Veltenaar, the CEO and managing partner of Acumen, is a Rollins College of Business alum who also serves on the SMILE Fund advisory committee.

"One of the best things about working with the SMILE Fund is that you get an insight into the most dedicated students who know finance in general and have had a good opportunity to do deep research," Veltenaar said. "Anybody who's worked in the officer or leadership positions in the SMILE Fund is a huge opportunity for us from a candidate perspective."

Veltenaar and Acumen have hired multiple SMILE Fund graduates due to the valuable experience students gain during their time in the program.

"Confidence is one of the biggest things the people from the SMILE Fund have," Veltenaar explained. "They just come out with a high level of confidence just because they've been tested in front of a huge group. They've done the research. They've participated more than just in a classroom setting. They feel better about their ideas, which helps get buy-in from the rest of the team and then ultimately usually works better on implementation."

A Chattanooga native, Nichols took a similar route to Johnson upon graduation. Initially, Nichols interned with Acumen and was hired as an analyst.

Recently, he accepted a position as an analyst at Alderman Enterprises, a Chattanooga-based private equity firm. Nichols describes the main difference in his new role as examining smaller, private, long-term investments instead of large, publicly traded companies.

Nichols, who graduated with degrees in accounting and finance in 2024, said he didn't know finance was his path until talking to Holzhauer at an initial SMILE Fund interest meeting.

"It showed what I think UTC and the Rollins College of Business offer," Nichols said. "It's a different level of personalization. You are able to connect on a deeper level with your professors."

In addition to the real-world skills the SMILE Fund provides, Nichols said the relationships with teammates are just as meaningful.

"Almost all of my closest friends are from the SMILE Fund or fund alumni," Nichols said. "That comes from other places like my internship working with guys at Acumen. I'm still close with the people I worked with there and other alums that I didn't work with. It has had a huge impact on my life on the personal and relationship side."

Holzhauer said Johnson and Nichols were crucial to the SMILE Fund, specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"They were steady hands when I needed some steady hands," Holzhauer said. "These are students managing real money, doing real things and both of them got to go to Acumen. Acumen asked me for my best folks and they were our presidents back to back."

While Chattanooga and Nashville are two cities well-represented by SMILE Fund graduates, Holzhauer hopes to continue expanding the fund's reach.

"I hear about SMILE Fund students helping other fund members get jobs more than I'm doing myself, which blows my mind," Holzhauer said. "I'd like it to get a little bit bigger in Atlanta. We have a few students helping



each other out in New York and a couple in Chicago. It's Chattanooga and Nashville that have taken off the most, but we'll eventually take over the world if we can."

Holzhauer hopes that they continue to develop a group of individuals willing to support one another in their careers and lives.

"We have a slogan, SMILE Fund for life," Holzhauer said. "All groups and companies have slogans, but ... I didn't want them to think I was going to be a semester professor. I want to be there for them. If they need to call me at any time or if they want to have lunch, breakfast or grab a coffee to run an offer past me—you name it—I'm there for them."

Student Managed Investment Learning Experience (SMILE)



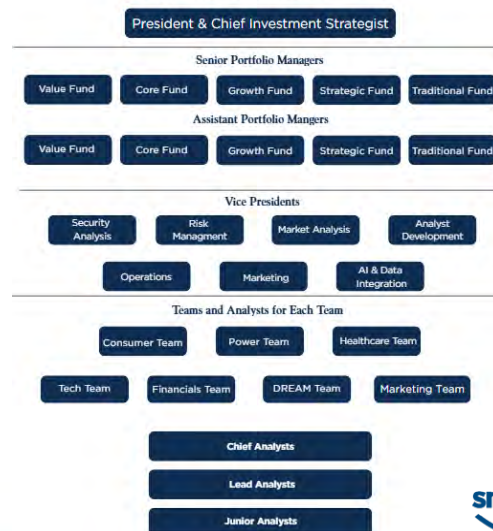
The SMILE Fund is a student-led investment fund at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, aimed at expanding students' skills in portfolio management, investment strategies, and equity valuation while increasing the fund's value.

"The SMILE Fund has been a transformative experience, opening doors to internships and networking opportunities I never imagined. It has significantly deepened my understanding of finance and investing through real-world, hands-on experience."

SMILE Fund Overview

- Fund Size Based on Assets Under Management (AUM)
 - ~\$4.2M AUM
 - Top 50 SMIF (AUM)
- Fund Size Based on Student Participation
 - Five individual funds
 - ~35 Exec Team members
 - ~175 total members
 - The largest SMIF in the world (based on student participation)

SMILE Fund Organizational Chart



SMILE Fund Executive Summary

Fund	Traditional Fund	Strategic Fund
Fund inception date	July 1, 2015	October 11, 2018
Benchmark [ETF Tracking Benchmark]	S&P 500 Index [SPDR S&P 500 ETF (SPY)]	MSCI World Index [MCI World ETF iShares (URTH)]
Initial and additional increases in AUM	\$250,000 (July 1, 2015) \$1,000,000 (August 12, 2024)	\$250,000 (March 26, 2019) \$250,000 (August 12, 2024)
Primary investment objective	Individual equities focused on total investment return	Tactical ETFs and mutual funds focused on total investment return
Specific investment strategies	Blend of value, core, and growth strategies using primarily large cap equities	Blend of macro strategies allocating towards outperforming domestic sectors and international markets

Fund	Value Fund	Core Fund	Growth Fund
Fund inception date	July 1, 2024	July 1, 2024	July 1, 2024
Benchmark [ETF Tracking Benchmark]	S&P 500 Value Index [S&P 500 Value ETF iShares (IVE)]	S&P 500 Index [S&P 500 Core ETF iShares (IVV)]	S&P 500 Growth Index [S&P 500 Growth ETF iShares (IVW)]
Initial allocations in AUM	\$250,000 (August 12, 2024)	\$250,000 (August 12, 2024)	\$250,000 (August 12, 2024)
Primary investment objective	Individual equities focused on total investment return	Individual equities focused on total investment return	Individual equities focused on total investment return
Specific investment strategies	Value strategies using primarily large cap equities	Core strategies using primarily large cap equities	Growth strategies using primarily large cap equities

SMILE Fund History: A Decade of Growth

In July 2015, the SMILE Fund started with about a dozen students.

Over the past ten years, the Fund has seen phenomenal growth in both assets under management (AUM) and student involvement.

Originally, the Fund only had a small team with a President, a couple of Vice Presidents, and a few Lead and Junior Analysts.

The Fund has grown to include Portfolio Managers, Assistant Portfolio Managers, Chief Analysts, the Dedicated Research in Emerging and Advanced Markets (DREAM) Team, and the Marketing Team.

The SMILE Fund had its largest incoming class in its history in Spring 2025, and we are excited to see the growth going forward.

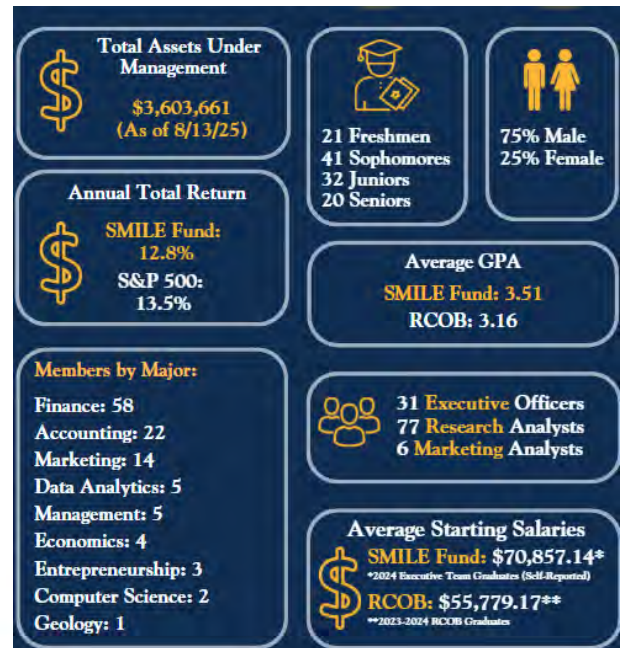
An additional piece that we are proud of is our increased number of women in the Fund. We currently have the highest female membership in the Fund's history.



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE CHATTANOOGA



At a Glance



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
CHATTANOOGA



Educational ROI

Performance in Competitions
(Educational ROI):

- Current Trophies
 - 9 CFA Research Challenge Team Trophies
 - 9 TVA ICP Team Trophies
 - 3 College Challenge Trophies



CFA RESEARCH CHALLENGE



From left: Daniel Goodman, Caden Christenson, Breonna Gandhi, Justice Cardenas, Kyle Leivas



A Message from Caden Christenson:

"The CFA Challenge is by far the most rigorous and rewarding experience that the SMILE Fund participates in. The challenge taught me more about stock research than any other opportunity at UTC."

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
CHATTANOOGA

A Decade of Dominance

- What is the CFA Research Challenge?
 - The **premier** investment research contest for both undergraduate and graduate business students
 - 6,000+ students
 - 1,200+ universities
- What is our track record?
 - CFA Greater Tennessee Research Challenge Champions 10 Years In A Row!
 - Southeast Regional Round Began 6 years ago (Won 4 of 6 times)
 - Americas Round (Two-time Finalists = Top 5 in Final Round)



No other university in the world has a current 10-year winning streak or has a longer winning streak in the 20-year history of the competition



Impact on Networking and Job Placement

Many SMILE Fund students have stayed in the Chattanooga and Nashville areas and are adding to our regional alumni network. Some of the closer firms near UTC where SMILE Fund students have been offered full-time positions include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACA Compliance • Acumen Wealth Advisors • Alderman Enterprises • Alliance Bernstein • Atlanta Healthcare Ventures • Bank of America • Barksdale Investment Management • Bloomberg • Cigna Healthcare • Commonwealth Asset Management • Deloitte • Elliott Davis • EY • Four Bridges Capital | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Horizon Bank • FreightWaves • Harpeth Capital • HHM Wealth Advisors • JP Morgan • LBMC • Lighthouse CFO Group • Merrill Lynch • Patten & Patten • Patton Albertson & Miller • SolomonWood • STEAM • The Patten Group • TVA • UBS • Unum • Vincit Group |
|--|--|



Spring 2024 Graduating Seniors

Ryan Nichols President & Chief Investment Strategist <i>Favorite Memory:</i> Traveling to New York for the GAME Forum. <i>After Graduation:</i> Investment Analyst at Acumen Wealth Advisors	David Brown VP of Market Analysis Chief Analyst - Healthcare Team <i>Favorite Memory:</i> Being able to work for the CFA Challenge and travel to New York and Chicago. <i>After Graduation:</i> Moving to New York to work for JPM.
Nadia San Lead Analyst - Financials Team <i>Favorite Memory:</i> Getting to be surrounded by some of the most brilliant - and kind - people on campus. <i>After Graduation:</i> Moving to NY as a Capital Market Analyst at Societe Generale Corporation & Investment Bank	Kristen Kowalski Chief Analyst - Consumer Team <i>Favorite Memory:</i> Being able to travel to New York, Chicago and Nashville and meeting new people and finding connections. <i>After Graduation:</i> Working remotely & general management for Techstars & Co-Founder/Manager.
Blade Kisler VP of Analyst Development Chief Analyst - Tech Team <i>Favorite Memory:</i> Joining the CFA Team and working all the long nights, competing in Nashville, and winning the Greater Tennessee competition with the team. <i>After Graduation:</i> Law School	Antonia Coleman Lead Analyst - Tech Team <i>Favorite Memory:</i> My favorite memory was winning on the senior update when I first joined the SMILE Fund. It was just an hour after team practice, and I learned to tell about the team's battle and how to win the Bloomberg group with limited time being an. <i>After Graduation:</i> Project Controls, Investment & TIA

AGENDA ITEM VI. SUMMARY

Date: Tuesday, May 12, 2026

Agenda Item: Enrollment Update

☐

Action Required

☒

No action required

PRESENTER(S): Dr. Artanya Wesley, Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs

PURPOSE & KEY POINTS: Dr. Wesley will provide an enrollment update, highlighting that admits are up 9% despite a modest dip in applications. Data trends indicate growth in transfer and dual enrollment students, along with a 22% increase in returning undergraduates, reflecting an expanding student pipeline, and high retention.

UTC, Chattanooga State Highlight Honors Articulation Agreement at Power C Tour Event

Wednesday, March 25, 2026



From left: ChattState Honors Program Director Angie Wood; ChattState students Dakota Velasquez and Miriam Hernandez; ChattState President Rebecca Ashford; UTC Chancellor Lori Bruce; UTC Honors College Dean Linda Frost; UTC student Asha Lee; and UTC Innovations in Honors Director Jordan King. Photo by Angela Foster.

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and Chattanooga State Community College highlighted a renewed articulation agreement between their honors programs during the Wednesday, March 25, Power C Tour event at Chattanooga State's Omniplex Building.

The agreement strengthens a transfer pathway for students in Chattanooga State's Honors Program to continue their academic careers in UTC's Innovations in Honors program.

Originally established in 2016, the updated agreement aligns the curriculum between the two institutions and ensures that honors coursework completed at ChattState can count toward both general education and Innovations in Honors requirements at UTC. Students who complete ChattState's honors program in good standing are also guaranteed admission into UTC's Innovations in Honors program.

The signing brought together UTC Chancellor Lori Bruce, ChattState President Rebecca Ashford, program leaders and faculty to formally recognize the partnership and its role in supporting transfer student success.

UTC's Innovations in Honors program, housed in the Honors College, is designed specifically for transfer students, providing a structured pathway into honors coursework while connecting students to academic, community and experiential learning opportunities.

"Our program is designed for transfer students and to help them have a clear pathway to UTC, so this partnership with Chattanooga State is foundational to what we do," said Dr. Jordan King, director of

Innovations in Honors at UTC. “Partnerships like this make that pathway even smoother and more accessible.”

The agreement reflects a broader effort by both institutions to strengthen transfer pipelines and support students as they move from two-year to four-year programs.

King and Dr. Angie Wood, ChattState’s Honors Program director, worked together to revise and renew the agreement to better align the two programs.

“The students at Chattanooga State and other community colleges value opportunities through honors,” King said. “We want to make it clear that when they transfer, there’s something familiar that helps set them up for success from day one at UTC.”

“Today marks a defining moment for ChattState Honors scholars—celebrating not only their achievements, but the pathway ahead through transfer to the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga’s Innovations in Honors program,” Wood said. “It represents a bridge between potential and purpose, equipping students with the opportunities, support and confidence to succeed here and to thrive as they continue their academic journey and beyond.”

Beyond course alignment, the agreement has supported increased partnership between the two institutions, including joint recruiting efforts and campus visits designed to connect students before they transfer.

“The articulation agreement is the formal part of this, but it has led to other collaborations: recruiting events, shared visits between campuses and opportunities for students to connect before they even transfer,” King said.

UTC honors faculty and students visited ChattState during the fall semester, while ChattState students traveled to UTC this spring. The visits have contributed to more students applying to the Innovations in Honors program and choosing to enroll at UTC.

Additional benefits tied to the partnership include scholarship opportunities, access to housing and participation in Innovation Lab courses that connect students with community-based projects in Chattanooga.

“There are students in this community who are looking for their next step,” he said. “We want to make sure they see UTC as a place where they can continue what they’ve started and be successful.”

For UTC student Joshua Clay, returning to ChattState for the Power C Tour felt different this time.

Two years ago, he attended the event as a prospective transfer student and received a scholarship.

Last year, he served in a support role as Scrappy the mascot at the ChattState stop.

He is now preparing to graduate from UTC in the coming weeks.

“I think to be able to serve both communities and both institutions is a huge blessing,” said Clay, who is pursuing a Bachelor of Integrated Studies with a concentration in accounting. “I have so much fun being able to work this event.

“Everyone’s in one place—my connections, my friends—and you just can’t really describe an experience like that.”

UTC’s Power C Tour trek down Amnicola Highway to ChattState connected prospective students with faculty, advisors, financial aid representatives and current students from across the University, with more than 20 groups tabling at the event.



ChattState President Rebecca Ashford and UTC Chancellor Lori Bruce after the ceremonial signing of the articulation agreement.

The ChattState stop carries added importance, with a strong focus on transfer students and the pathway between the two institutions.

Chancellor Lori Bruce made that message clear.

"We want you at UTC. We appreciate you. We want you to transfer to UTC," Bruce told attendees in her welcome remarks.

She also highlighted what students can expect at UTC, pointing to a 17:1 student-to-faculty ratio, more than 150 undergraduate academic programs and a campus environment she described as "big enough to matter and small enough to care."

Affordability remains a key part of that message. Bruce noted that many students combine scholarships, including the HOPE Scholarship, with university aid—and that more than half of UTC students graduate with zero debt.

For students like Clay, that pathway started at ChattState.

"It saved me a whole lot of money and a whole lot of student debt," he explained. "I was able to complete all my gen eds here and then, when I got to UTC, really focus on my major classes."

He also talked about the value of building connections early.

"You're not only here to get a degree. You're also here to capitalize on the human capital around you," he said.

"If you're able to network and market yourself well, you're able to do more than you would if you only focus on academics."

Asha Lee understands that transition firsthand.

A Chattanooga native and Central High School graduate, Lee earned her associate degree from ChattState before transferring to UTC—where she is now part of the Honors College's Innovations in Honors program and serves as a Chancellor's Ambassador.

"Today is kind of a full-circle moment for me," said Lee, who is pursuing a bachelor's degree in applied leadership. "ChattState has been great to me. UTC has been even more great. I've been so involved, and I've just learned so much."

Lee said her transition to UTC was smooth, helped by strong connections with faculty and staff across both campuses.

She also highlighted the importance of alignment between the two institutions—something reinforced by the articulation agreement between the schools.

"I think it's wonderful," Lee said. "It's great to know that what you're taking at ChattState will transfer to UTC. There won't be barriers that hinder you from moving forward with honors."

Lee was one of the participants in a group articulation agreement photo, which also included a pair of ChattState students who plan to transfer to UTC, Dakota Velasquez and Miriam Hernandez.

For Clay, the experience reflects how far he has come and what is possible for others considering the same path.

"I was able to build my network here and then maximize that when I got to UTC," he said. "It's not just about one school. It's about taking advantage of every opportunity along the way."

Fall 2026 Enrollment Update

Category	Metric	Fall 2025	Fall 2026	Change (#)	Change (%)
Overall	Applications	18,764	18,003	-761	-4%
	Admits	9,884	10,764	+880	+9%
New Freshmen	Applications	15,390	15,017	-373	-2%
	Admits	8,614	9,339	+725	+8%
New Transfer	Applications	1,417	1,398	-19	-1%
	Admits	606	700	+94	+16%
New Graduate	Applications	1,431	1,061	-370	-26%
	Admits	388	415	+27	+7%
Dual Enrollment	Applications	39	87	+48	+123%
	Admits	17	70	+53	+312%
Pre-Registered Undergraduates	Headcount	5,880	6,280	+400	+7%

Application & Admit Comparisons | As of May 1, 2026

Enrollment Incentives

ACCEPTED STUDENT EVENT

February 26, 2026

New Freshmen & Families

- Students - 388
- Guest - 437
- Total - 825

POWER C TRANSFER EVENT

March 25, 2026

Transfer Prospects — Chattanooga State

- Students - 105

BLUE & GOLD PREVIEW

April 11, 2026

Prospected & Admitted Students

- Students - 511
- Guest - 864
- Total - 1,375

MOCS FLIGHT TASKFORCE

Spring 2026 – Fall 2030

Cross-Functional Campus Initiative

- Workgroups meet weekly
- Taskforce meet monthly
- SET meet biweekly

Recruitment & Yield Events | Mocs Flight Taskforce | Spring 2026

AGENDA ITEM VII.
SUMMARY

Date: Tuesday, May 12, 2026

Agenda Item: Budget



Action Required



No action required

PRESENTER(S): Brent Goldberg, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration

PURPOSE & KEY POINTS: Mr. Goldberg will present UTC's proposed FY 2027 budget for Board consideration, highlighting record Fall 2025 enrollment and ambitious 2030 goals. The plan prioritizes investment in campus infrastructure, capacity, and maintenance while keeping tuition affordable, and identifies opportunities to manage capital projects and debt through strategic efficiencies.



University of Tennessee Chattanooga

Fiscal Year 2026-27 Advisory Board Operating Budget Recommendation

Proposed Current Operating Fund Budgets

Fund Group	Revenues	Expenditures & Transfers
Unrestricted Educational & General (E&G) Funds	\$242,694,998	\$242,694,998
Unrestricted Auxiliary Funds	\$29,848,072	\$29,848,072
Subtotal: Unrestricted Funds	\$272,543,070	\$272,543,070
Restricted Funds	\$79,792,911	\$79,792,911
Total Current Operating Funds	\$352,335,981	\$352,335,981

Total current operating funds balance may fluctuate by June 30th original budget entry due to adjustments or new entries before the end of fiscal year 2026, although it is expected to be by immaterial amounts.

Recommended Changes to Tuition & Mandatory Fees	TUITION		TUITION + FEES	
	\$-change	%-change	\$-change	%-change
Undergraduate Students				
In-State	\$192	2.2%	\$322	3.0%
In-State: Online Learning & Distance	\$192	2.2%	\$204	2.0%
Non-Resident: Out of State	\$440	2.6%	\$570	3.0%
Non-Resident: Online Learning & Distance	\$222	2.4%	\$234	2.1%
International Students	\$696	2.8%	\$826	3.0%
Graduate Students				
In-State	\$216	2.3%	\$346	3.0%
In-State: Online Learning & Distance	\$216	2.3%	\$228	2.1%
Non-Resident: Out of State	\$464	2.6%	\$594	3.0%
Non-Resident: Online Learning & Distance	\$270	2.6%	\$282	2.4%
International Students	\$720	2.8%	\$850	3.0%

Operating Enrollment

Record enrollment in Fall 2025

Enrollment goal for 2030 is aspirational and obtainable

Invest in campus infrastructure, capacity and maintenance

Maintain an **affordable and reasonable tuition** environment

Record amount of capital projects and debt service impacts

Opportunity to use funds strategically through process improvements (i.e. procurement methods, renegotiating contracts, position adjustments, funding and retention policies, etc.)

FY 2027 State Appropriations Higher Ed Summary

THEC recommended total formula funding – \$73,800,000

State Appropriations proposed formula funding – \$16,225,200

Universities – \$11,275,600

Community Colleges – \$3,925,600

TN Colleges of Applied Tech – \$1,024,000

State Appropriations – 1.5% Salary Pool – ~55% Cost Allocation

State Appropriations – Insurance Increases – Pass through costs

FY27 State Appropriations – Universities

UT Universities	Formula - Productivity Adjustments	Formula - New Funding - \$11.2M	1.5% Salary Pool - \$16.1M	Total New Revenue
UT Chattanooga	(\$161,500)	\$817,400	\$1,167,500	\$1,823,400
UT Knoxville	12,870,500	3,712,400	5,302,600	21,885,500
UT Martin	(1,801,800)	454,700	649,500	(697,600)
UT Southern*	182,700	83,200	118,900	384,800
LGI Universities	Formula - Productivity Adjustments	Formula - New Funding - \$11.2M	1.5% Salary Pool - \$16.1M	Total New Revenue
Austin Peay	(\$3,466,900)	\$727,900	\$1,039,800	(\$1,699,200)
East Tennessee	(3,115,800)	980,400	1,400,400	(735,000)
Middle Tennessee State	(4,739,900)	1,415,100	2,021,300	(1,303,500)
Tennessee State	(1,174,100)	520,200	742,900	89,000
Tennessee Tech	(465,000)	780,400	1,114,700	728,100
University of Memphis	(1,095,400)	1,783,900	2,548,100	3,236,600

FY 2027 Proposed Fee Changes

Approval	Fee	Current	Proposed	Change	%	Annual Revenue
Board	UG Maintenance Fee	\$ 8,712	\$ 8,904	\$ 192	2.2%	\$ 1,919,140
Board	GR Maintenance Fee	\$ 9,396	\$ 9,612	\$ 216	2.2%	\$ 286,768
Board	Out of State Tuition	\$ 8,306	\$ 8,554	\$ 248	3.0%	\$ 237,494
Board	Mandatory Fees	\$ 2,050	\$ 2,180	\$ 130	6.3%	\$ 1,424,518
Board	Differential Fees	\$64 / \$111	\$66 / \$115	\$2 / \$4	3.0%	\$ 197,417
President	Lab Fee Minimums	Varies	\$75	Varies	Varies	TBD
Board/Chancellor	Auxiliaries	Varies	Varies	Varies	4.0%	\$ 993,053
Chancellor	Mocs Total Access	Varies	\$ 22/hr	Varies	New	TBD

FY 2027 Proposed Mandatory Fee Changes

Fee	Current	Proposed	Change	%
Student Activity	\$ 188	\$ 196	\$ 8	4.3%
Debt Service	504	524	20	3.9%
Health Services	130	134	4	3.0%
Athletics	514	520	6	1.2%
Technology	260	270	10	3.8%
Library	50	52	2	4.0%
Transportation	184	244	60	32.6%
Facilities	200	220	20	10.0%
International	20	20	-	-
Total	\$ 2,050	\$ 2,180	\$ 130	6.3%

FY 2027 Proposed Graduate Tuition & Fees

UG Students	Maintenance Fees	Mandatory Fees	Out of State Tuition	Total Cost	Total Change	Cost Change
In-State	\$ 8,904	\$ 2,180	N/A	\$ 11,084	3.0%	\$ 322
Out-of-State	\$ 8,904	\$ 2,180	\$ 8,554	\$ 19,638	3.0%	\$ 570
International	\$ 8,904	\$ 2,180	\$ 17,050	\$ 28,134	3.0%	\$ 826

With an overall 3% increase, UTC instate cost will remain uniquely competitive within the Tennessee university market.

FY 2027 Proposed Graduate Tuition & Fees

GR Students	Maintenance Fees	Mandatory Fees	Out of State Tuition	Total Cost	Total Change	Cost Change
In-State	\$ 9,612	\$ 2,180	N/A	\$ 11,792	3.0%	\$ 346
Out-of-State	\$ 9,612	\$ 2,180	\$8,554	\$ 20,346	3.0%	\$ 594
International	\$ 9,612	\$ 2,180	\$17,050	\$ 28,842	3.0%	\$850

With an overall 3% increase, UTC instate cost will remain uniquely competitive within the Tennessee university market.

FY 2026 Market Comparison

University	UG Maintenance Fee	Mandatory Fees	Total
UT Knoxville	\$ 11,560	\$ 2,316	\$ 13,876
Tennessee Tech	10,470	1,456	11,926
UT Southern	9,930	1,334	11,264
University of Memphis	9,336	1,920	11,256
Middle Tennessee State	8,814	2,257	11,071
East Tennessee State	8,802	2,192	10,994
UT Martin	9,066	1,758	10,824
UT Chattanooga	8,712	2,050	10,762
Austin Peay	8,028	1,824	9,852
Tennessee State Univ	8,190	1,248	9,438

FY27 Proposed Balanced Budget Summary

Revenue	Amount
Total State Appropriations (formula, salary, ins)	\$3,330,600
Tuition & Mandatory Fees – 3% Increase	3,867,920
Other Student Fees (Diff; Course; Lab)	197,417
Auxiliaries – 4% Increase	993,053
Total New Revenue	\$8,388,990
Expenses	Amount
Institutional Allocations	\$6,042,346
Division/College Allocations	1,353,591
Auxiliaries	993,053
Total New Expense Allocations	\$8,388,990
Balanced Budget	-

FY27 New Revenue Details

Resource	Funding
State Appropriation – Formula Growth	\$817,400
State Appropriation – Productivity Adjustment	(161,500)
State Appropriation – 1.5% Salary Pool	1,167,500
State Appropriation – Health Insurance Adjustments	1,507,200
Tuition – In State – 2.2% Increase	2,205,908
Tuition – Out of State – 3.0% Increase	237,494
Mandatory Fees – Multiple Allocations – 6.34% Increase	1,424,518
Differential Fees – Tuition 3.0% Increase and New Fee	197,417
Lab Fees – Increase Minimum Fee to \$75	TBD
Auxiliaries – Housing, Meal Plans, Student Parking - 4% Increase	993,053
Total Revenue Increase	8,388,990

FY27 Institutional Expense Allocations

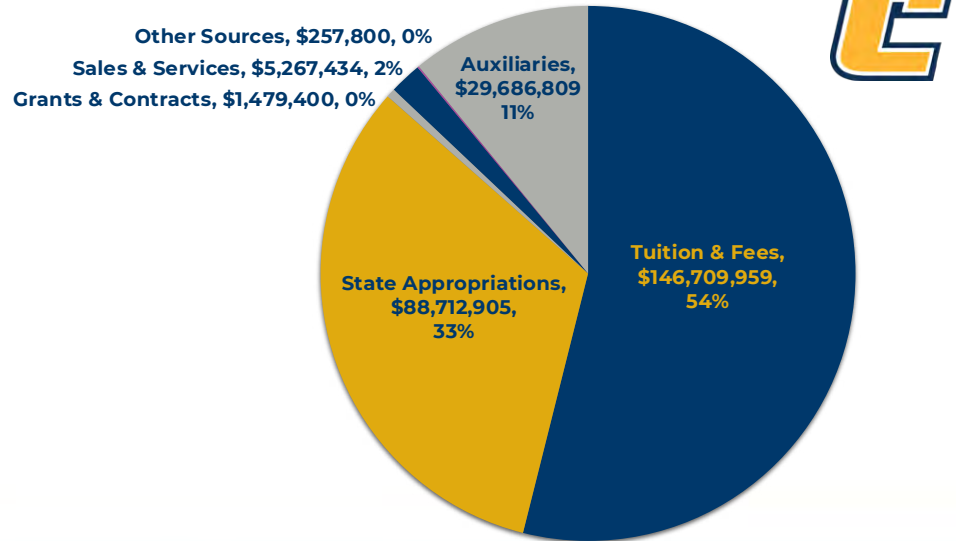
Expense	Funding
1.5% Compensation Pool	\$2,430,000
Faculty Promotions and Rollovers	450,000
2.2% Scholarship and Retention	284,428
UT System – Insurance Premiums	1,507,200
UT System – Security Operations Center	269,522
UT System Charge (Placeholder)	250,000
Mandatory Fees – Debt Service; Transportation	851,196

FY27 Division Expense Allocations

Expense	Funding
AA – Nursing - Psych Mental Health - Faculty	\$121,140
AA – Graduate School – 2.2% Graduate Assistantships	38,140
AA – Differential Fees	197,417
AA – Mandatory Fee - Library Fee	25,600
Athletics – 2.2% Grant In Aid	130,892
Athletics – Mandatory Fee – Athletic Fee	62,272
EMSA – Mandatory Fee – Student Activity Fee	81,199
EMSA – Mandatory Fee – Health Fee	45,667
Finance and Administration – Mandatory Fee – Facilities Fee	246,153
Finance and Administration – Mandatory Fee – Technology Fee	112,431
Finance and Administration – DASH Staffing	185,000
Finance and Administration – Human Resources – Director of Training	107,680
Auxiliaries – Food Service and Student Parking	120,544
Auxiliaries - Housing	872,509

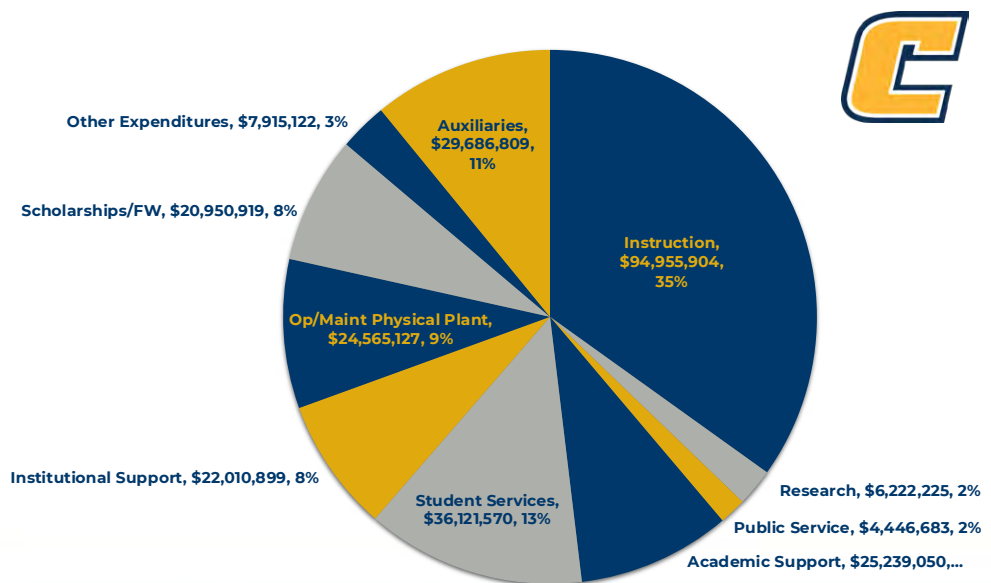
FY 2027
**Projected
Budget
Revenues**

**Total
\$272,114,307**



FY 2027
**Projected
Budget
Expenses**

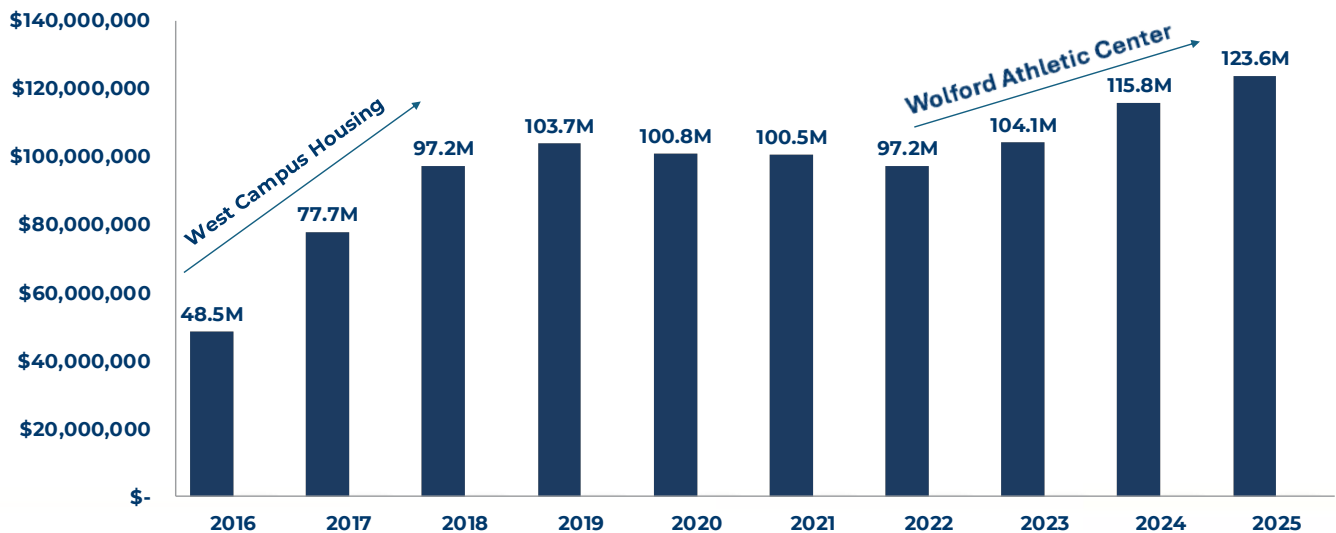
**Total
\$272,114,307**



Year to Year Budget Highlights

	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	Proposed FY 2027
Total Budget	\$204,065,948	\$221,533,091	\$236,613,158	\$248,637,836	\$251,857,893	\$263,725,317	\$272,114,307
Tuition Increase	0%	2.0%	0%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
State Appropriations – Funding Formula	\$183,800	\$1,470,100	\$4,631,900	\$1,953,400	\$1,447,200	\$(246,700)	\$655,900
State Appropriations – Salary	-	\$2,550,000	\$2,674,700	\$3,523,500	\$2,219,800	\$1,819,900	\$1,167,500
Compensation Plan	Faculty Promotions	2.75% \$11 Min Wage Staff Equity Faculty Promotions	3.0% \$13 Min Wage Staff Equity Faculty Promotions	4.0% \$15 Min Wage Compression Faculty Promotions	3.0% Faculty Promotions	2.5% Staff Market Faculty Market Fac Promotions	1.5% Merit Faculty Promotions
Compensation Plan Cost	\$250,000	\$3,583,720	\$3,696,910	\$4,981,424	\$3,534,425	\$5,757,572	\$2,880,000

Notes & Bonds Payable



Expected to add an additional \$123M of bonded debt over the next couple of years for the UC Renovation and Oak Street Housing

Remaining Timeline

- **Campus Advisory Board** – Recommendation to President
- **Enter FY 2027 budget into DASH**
- **Prepare Proposed Budget Reports** for UT System and THEC
- **UT Board of Trustee's approval** at the June board meeting

AGENDA ITEM VIII. SUMMARY

Date: Tuesday, May 12, 2026

Agenda Item: Research Update

☐

Action Required

☒

No action required

PRESENTER(S): Ms. Meredith Perry, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research

PURPOSE & KEY POINTS: A healthy research ecosystem is key to a thriving university. Meredith Perry will provide an overview of UTC's research portfolio and key performance indicators for sponsored program activity. At UTC sponsored grants and contracts support cross-cutting activities that directly align with all five pillars of UTC's strategic plan. Through UTC's portfolio of active research awards and expanding network of research centers, UTC faculty, staff, and students are on the leading edge of research and discovery, making meaningful institutional and community impacts.

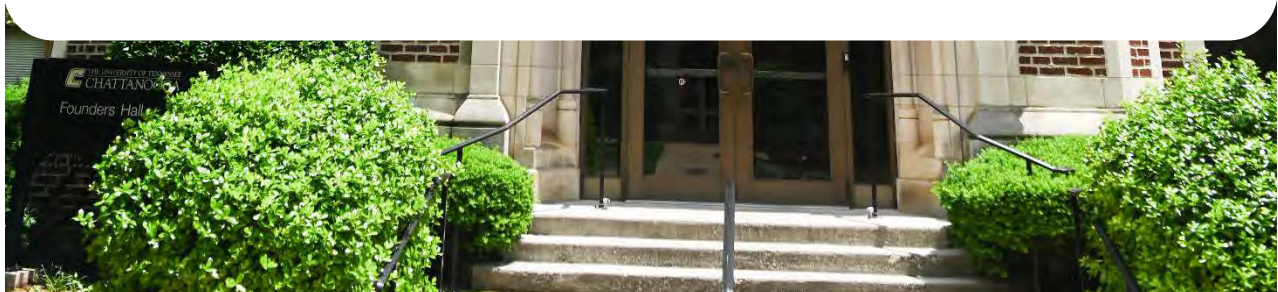


THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
CHATTANOOGA
Office of Research and
Sponsored Programs

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2025

JULY 1, 2024 - JUNE 30, 2025



WHAT'S INSIDE

WELCOME	4
INSTITUTION OVERVIEW	8
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES	10
COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND COMPUTER SCIENCE	11
COLLEGE OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES.....	12
GARY W. ROLLINS COLLEGE OF BUSINESS	13
ADMINISTRATION	14
RESEARCH DIVISION	15
APPENDIX A.....	19
APPENDIX B.....	21



WELCOME

The ORSP Annual Report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 documents the significant achievements of faculty, staff, organizational units, and the institution. FY25 was UTC's single greatest year for award dollars received. UTC faculty and staff attracted more than \$18.5 million in award dollars, and the institution experienced its highest single-year growth with a 20% increase over FY24.

UTC faculty and staff continue to distinguish themselves through meritorious investigator-initiated research. Dr. Murat Barisik (Mechanical Engineering) received a prestigious NSF CAREER award, Dr. Francesca Leasi (BGE) attracted NSF funding for environmental research, and Dr. David Giles and colleagues won an NIH award for biomedical research. Dr. Rahul R. Bhosale (Chemical Engineering) secured an NSF research award to examine thermochemical energy storage solutions, and Dr. Lani Gao (Mathematics) received industry funding for a statistical analysis in stroke care and treatment.



UTC faculty and staff leveraged sponsored funding to bolster learning environments and promote workforce and economic development in our region. Dr. Brad Harris led a multidisciplinary team in securing NSF funds for experiential learning in advanced manufacturing. Dr. Loren Hayes (BGE) attracted an NSF award to engage students in international research experiences. Dr. Don Reising (Electrical Engineering) continued a longstanding collaboration with Purdue University to grow the microelectronics workforce, and Dr. Amir Alakaam (Health & Human Performance) expanded his ongoing collaborations with the TN Department of Health to bolster the public health workforce.

Sponsored funding also undergirds significant community engagement that improves lives in our community, our state, and beyond. Under the leadership of Dr. Elizabeth O'Brien, the School of Professional Studies secured a new HRSA award that will generate \$2.4 million over 4 years to promote mental and behavioral health in a multi-county region. UTC's School of Nursing attracted \$2.1 million in funding in FY25 to bolster health care in our region. UTC's Criminal Justice faculty has secured nearly \$400,000 in funding that supports the broader aims of the Violence Reduction Initiative.

Through the Quantum Center and the Center for Urban Informatics and Progress, the UTC Research Institute continues to develop multi-investigator R&D efforts and special facilities in strategic priority areas, attracting \$5.8 million in sponsored program awards from a diversified sponsor base including NIST, NSF, the State of TN. Many of these efforts include collaborations with other institutions of higher education, national laboratories, the commercial sector, and the Chattanooga innovation ecosystem.

All of these achievements are made even more noteworthy due to the significant challenges that FY25 has witnessed. Despite the headwinds, the state of research at UTC is strong. That strength derives not only from the expertise and skills of faculty and staff but also from the commitment, creativity, and resilience of administrators at all levels who work diligently, often behind the scenes, to support the research enterprise and ensure the success of sponsored programs.

Please join me in congratulating all the UTC faculty and staff who engaged in sponsored project activity during FY25, and in recognizing the dedicated campus colleagues who support and enable sponsored project activity. A special and heartfelt thank-you to my ORSP colleagues whose expertise, dedication, commitment to service, and professionalism enable and support all of these accomplishments.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE CHATTANOOGA Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) seeks to promote scholarship, research, creative activities, and engagement by encouraging and providing comprehensive support to faculty and staff in the pursuit of sponsored programs.



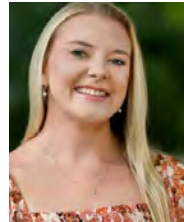
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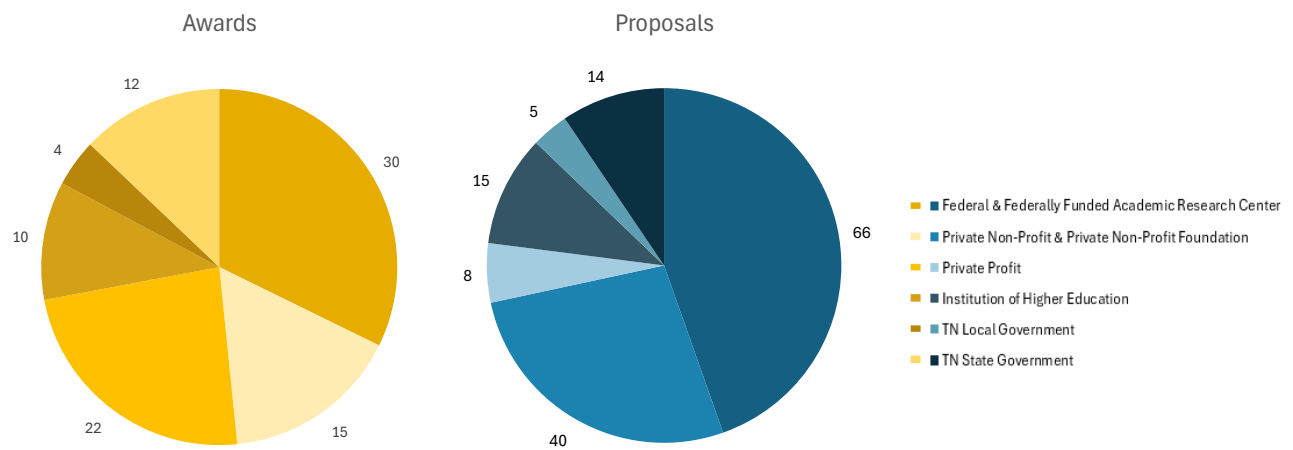
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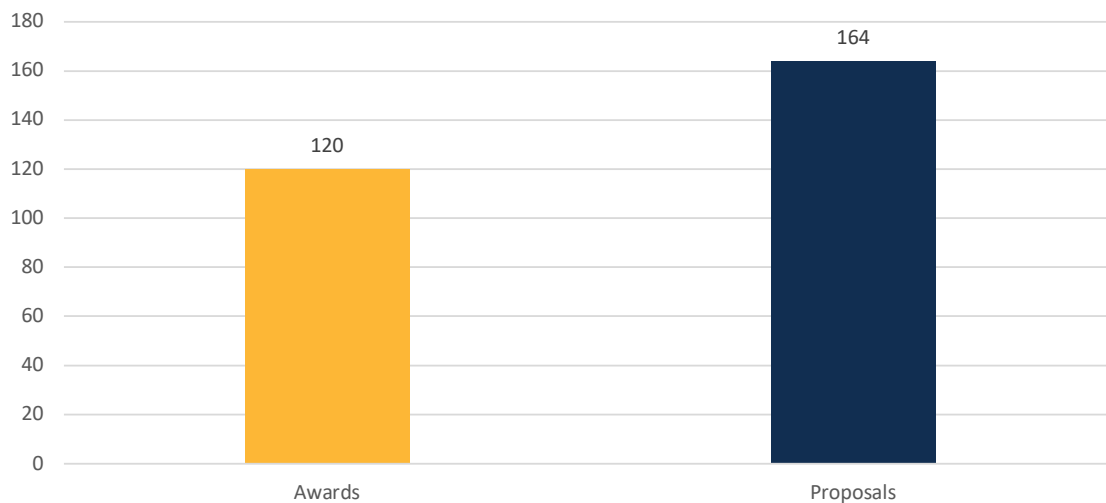
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FY25 UTC SNAPSHOTS

SPONSOR TYPE



UTC PERSONNEL INVOLVED IN SPONSORED PROJECT ACTIVITY

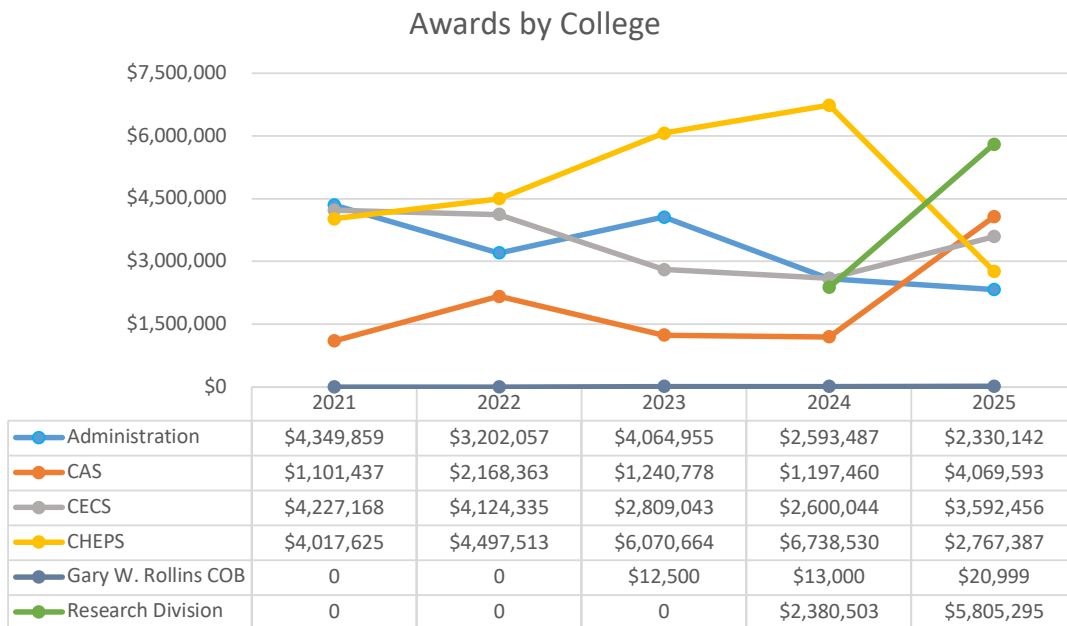
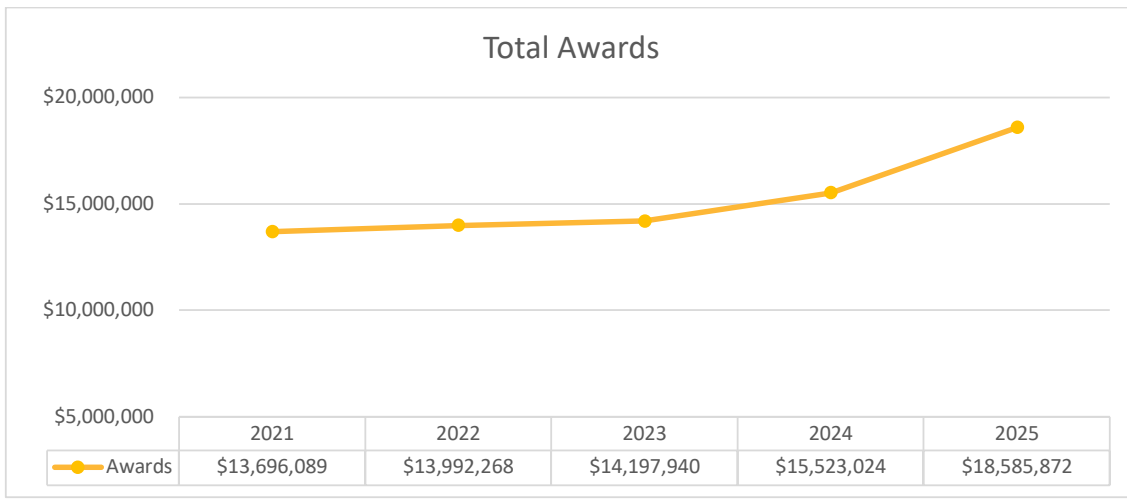


FY25 UTC SNAPSHOTS



INSTITUTION OVERVIEW

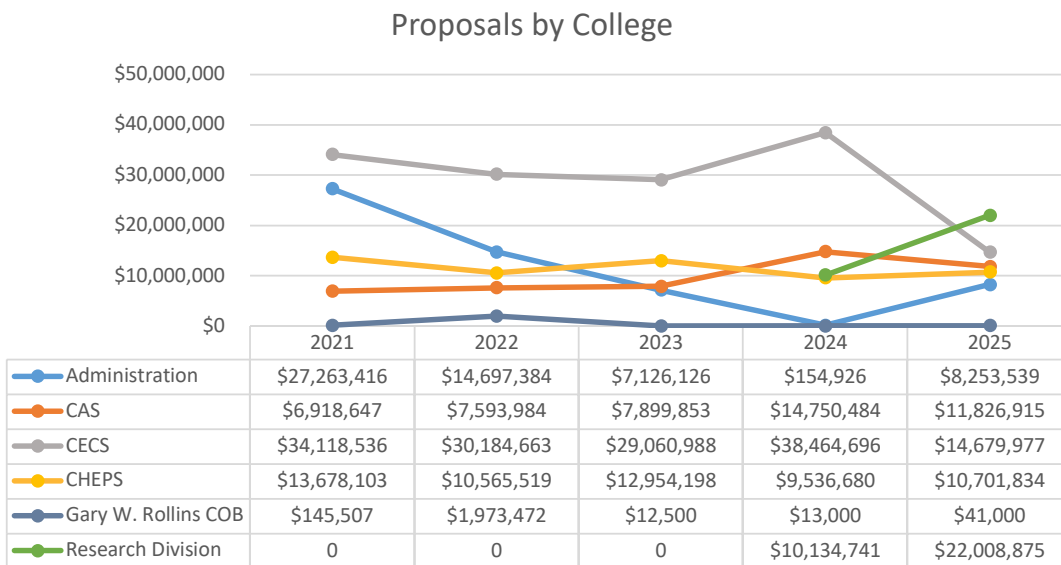
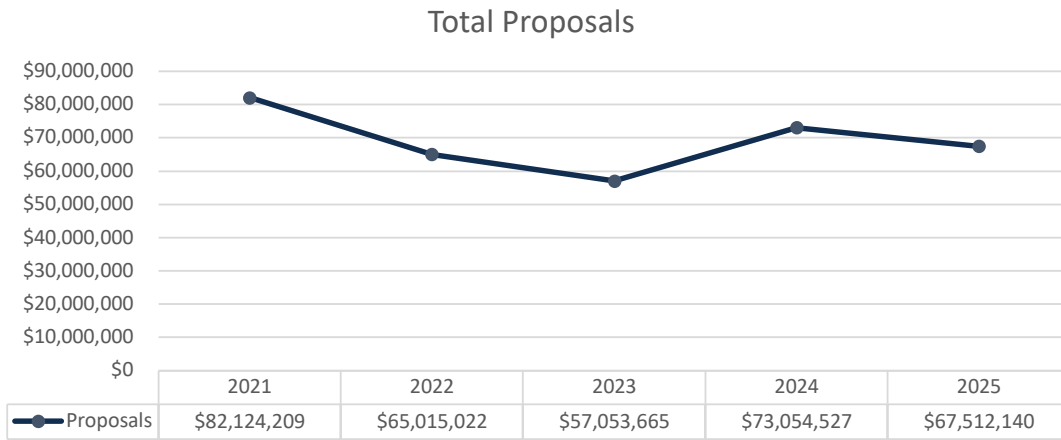
FIVE YEAR TREND - AWARDS



*Research Division data was included in the "Administration" Unit until 2024

INSTITUTION OVERVIEW

FIVE YEAR TREND - PROPOSALS

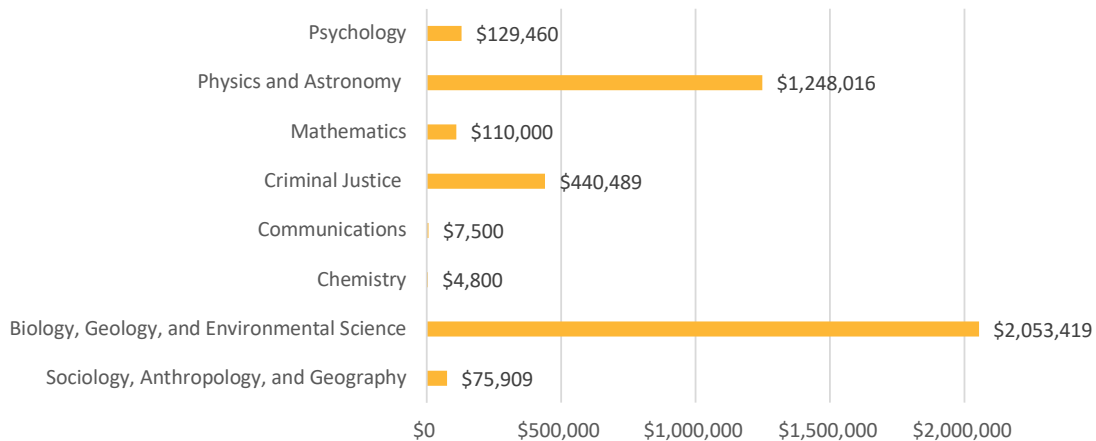


*Research Division data was included in the "Administration" Unit until 2024

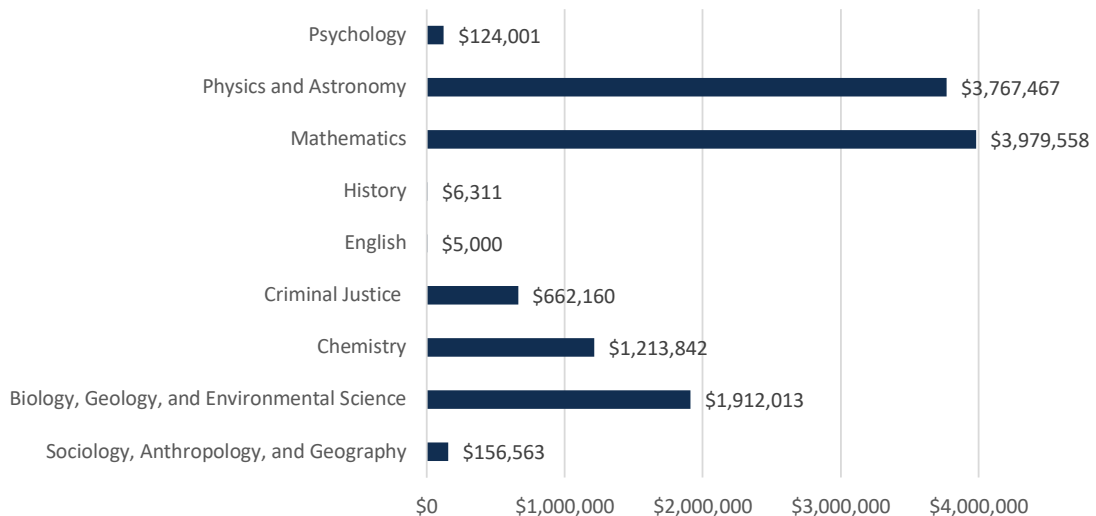
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

AWARDS & PROPOSALS BY DEPARTMENT

Awards



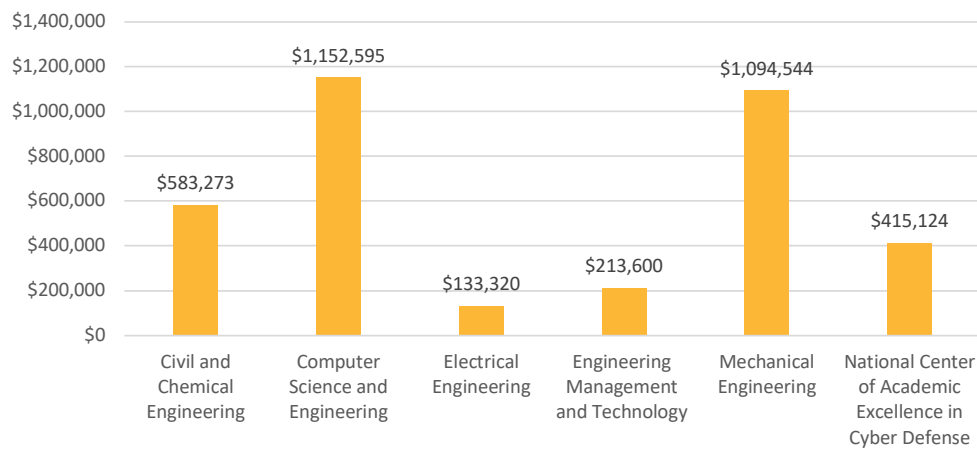
Proposals



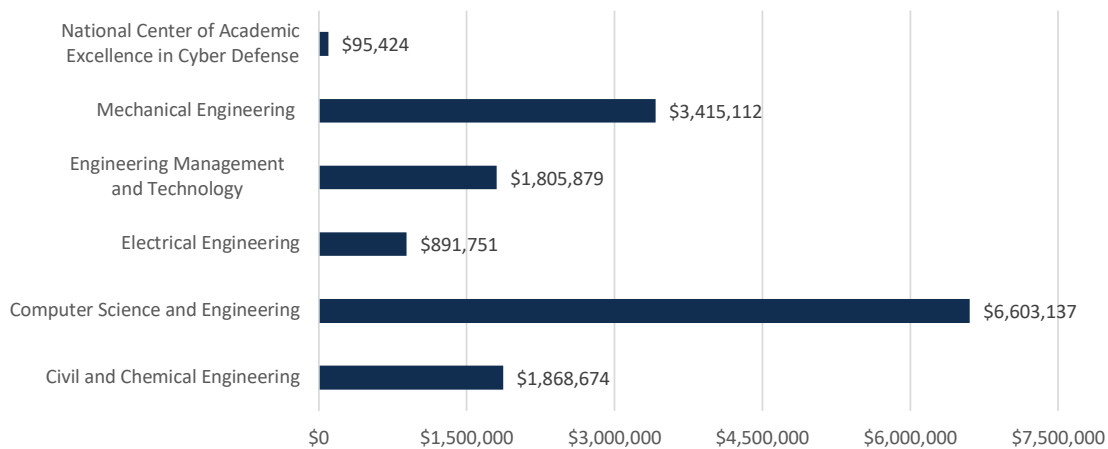
COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND COMPUTER SCIENCE

AWARDS & PROPOSALS BY DEPARTMENT

Awards



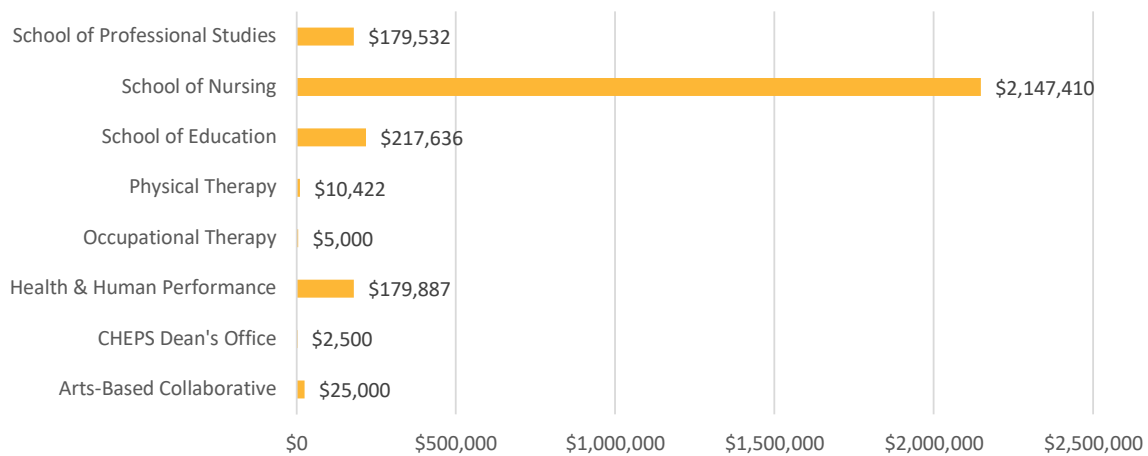
Proposals



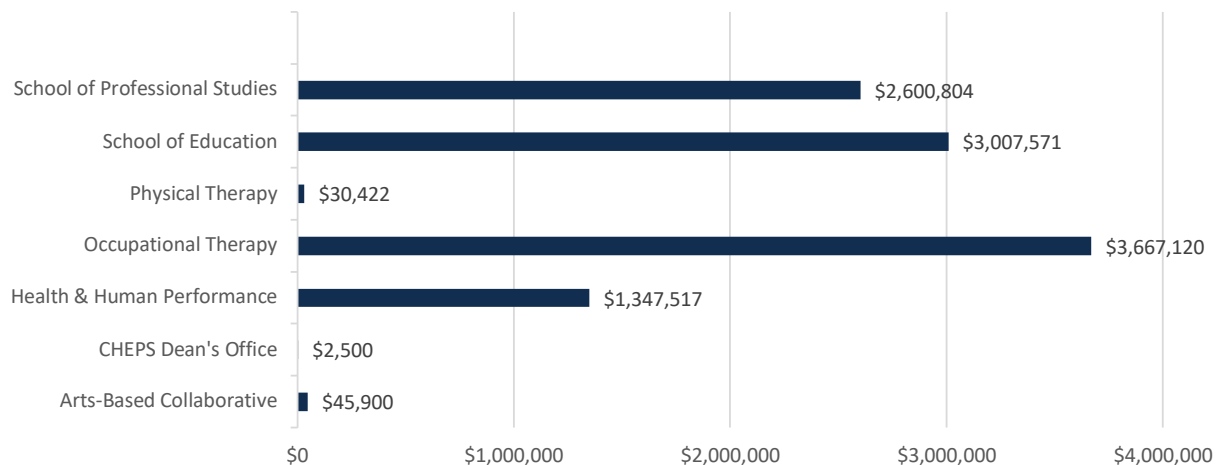
COLLEGE OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

AWARDS & PROPOSALS BY DEPARTMENT

Awards

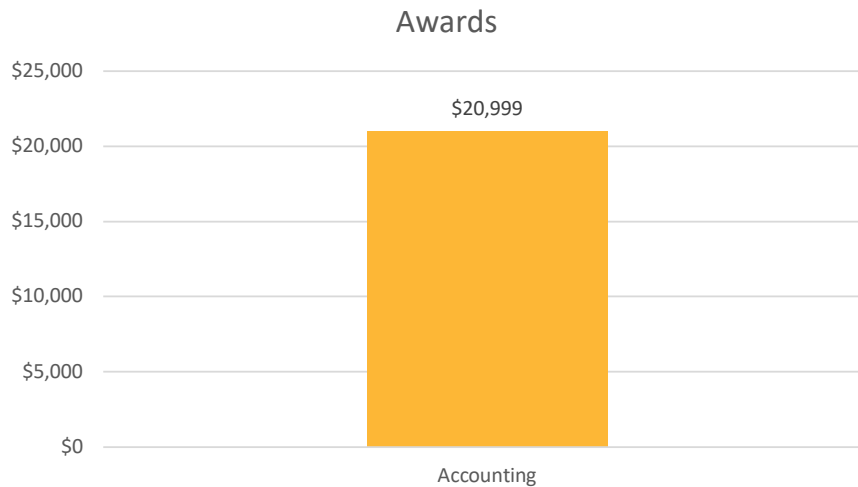


Proposals



GARY W. ROLLINS COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

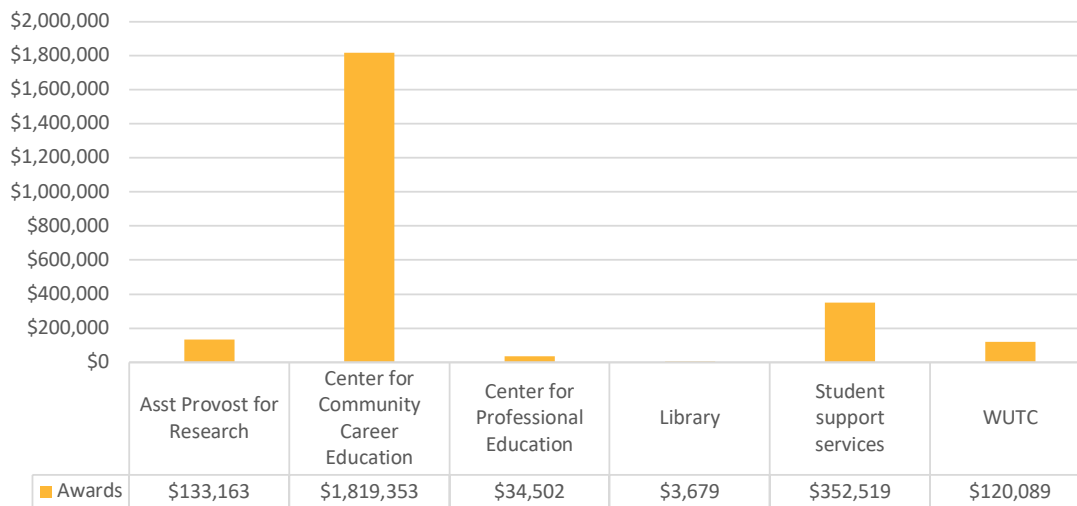
AWARDS & PROPOSALS BY DEPARTMENT



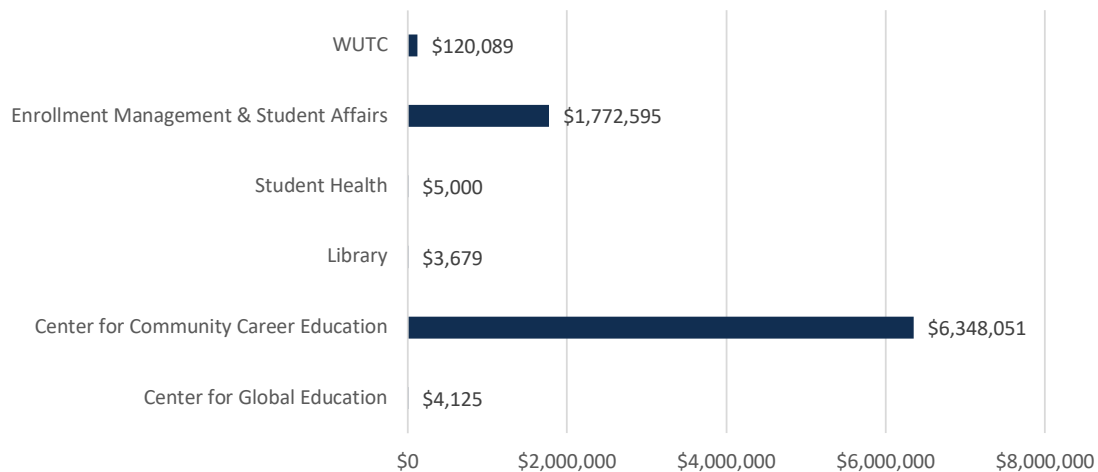
ADMINISTRATION

AWARDS & PROPOSALS BY DEPARTMENT

Awards



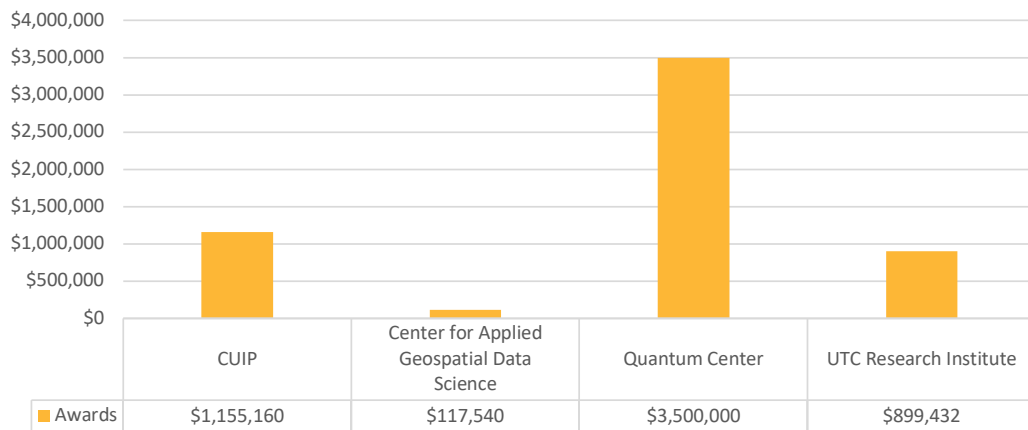
Proposals



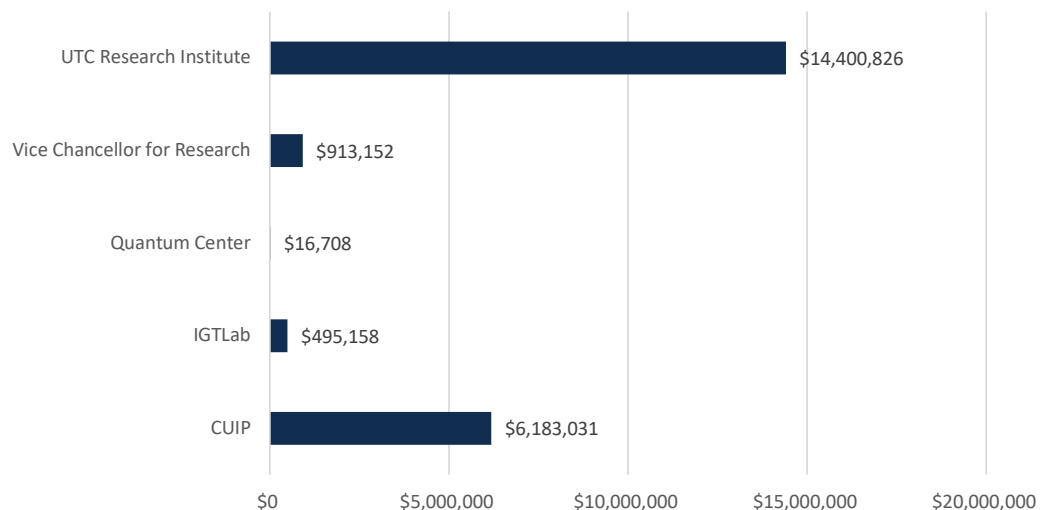
RESEARCH DIVISION

AWARDS & PROPOSALS BY DEPARTMENT

Awards



Proposals



UTC INVENTION DISCLOSURES

The University of Tennessee Research Foundation (UTRF) plays a vital role in turning university research and ideas into innovations that serve the public good Through its focus on technology transfer and commercialization.

Congratulations to all UTC faculty and staff who engaged in technology transfer activities during FY25!



PATENTS

Dr. Erkan Kaplanoglu (Engineering Management and Technology) who received a patent for Athletic Balance Control Platform with Pneumatic Actuation.



AWARDS

Dr. Joshua Tyler (Electrical Engineering) received the Entrepreneurial Fellow 2025 award for developing a SAS for the innovative Advanced Waveform Resampling.

INVENTION DISCLOSURES

Disclosure Title	Inventors*
Virtual-RSU Sensor Driven Connected Vehicle (CV2X) Virtualization and Actuation Road Side Unit	Austin Harris, Mina Sartipi
A Vehicle Based Platform For Automated ITS Asset Integration	Austin Harris, Mina Sartipi
High-Resolution Infrastructure Based Detection Localization Using Mobile Calibration and Fusion System	Austin Harris, Mina Sartipi
Localization and Integration of Connected Vehicle and Road-Side Detection Systems	Austin Harris, Mina Sartipi
MLK Smart Corridor Testbed - Testbed-As-A-Service	Austin Harris, Mina Sartipi
Smart Robotic Gripper with Enhanced Capabilities for Pinion Gear Systems	Erkan Kaplanoglu
Sampling device for surface water quality	Jejal Bathi, Kidambi Sreenivas
LaMMOn: A Language Model and Graph Neural Network Approach for Multi-Target Multi-Camera Tracking	Tuan Nguyen, Macro Fisichella, Mina Sartipi, Huu Nguyen
Cooling Driven Offloading Insole System (COISY) for Rehabilitation of Diabetic Neuropathy	Erkan Kaplanoglu, Gazi Akgun
Development of Theramatch App for Rehabilitation Professionals	Brooklyn Caballero, Alexie Inman, Blake Wright, Corrin Sneed, Courtney Ward, Maggie Chamberlain, Michael Radick
Monocular Camera Autocalibration Method And System For Adaptive Cruise Control	Terry Zhang
Brooks Band: A Wearable Real-Time Feedback Device for Voice Modulation and Routine Management	Megan Cales
RANDOM Encryption Network	Joshua Tyler, Donald Reising
MACA: Large Language Multi-Agents Model for User-Interactive Multi-Target Multi-Camera Tracking	Huu Nguyen, Tuan Nguyen, Thanh Doan, Mina Sartipi, This Hoang Nygan Le
Predicting Driver Distraction	Maged Shoman, Parisa Hatami, Sima Ashayer, Mina Sartipi
A Route-based Multi-Agent Reinforcement Learning Algorithm for Joint Optimization of Vehicle and Pedestrian Signals	Vijayalakshmi Kumarasamy, Mina Sartipi, Yu Liang, Pengyuan Sun, Dalei Wu
Software for predicting viral variant fitness from nucleotide sequences	Hong Qin, Parisa Hatami
The Assistive Guitar Pick Holder: The Pick-Grip	Areej Alghoul, Michael Martin, Amy Guinac
Real-Time Three-Dimensional Fluoroscopy Reconstruction Framework for Interventional Surgical Guidance	Zihao Wang

*Lead Inventor listed first

OPEN PUBLISHING SUPPORT FUND RECIPIENTS

Congratulations to UTC's Open Publishing Support Fund FY25 Recipients!

The Open Publishing Support Fund is an internal fund that assists with expenses related to article processing charges for eligible peer-reviewed, open access journals.



Dr. Hope Klug (Biology, Geology, and Environmental Science) is an author on the article entitled, "Sexual Selection and Life History Interact to Influence the Evolution of Paternal Care," which has been published in *Ecology and Evolution*.

Dr. Wolday Abrha (Engineering Management and Technology) is the lead author on the article entitled, "Cybersecurity Access Control: Framework Analysis in a Healthcare Institution," which was published in the *Journal of Cybersecurity and Privacy*.



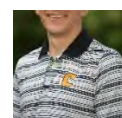
Dr. Francesca Leasi (Biology, Geology, and Environmental Science) is the lead author on the article entitled, "Microbiota associated with *Ototyphlonemertes* spp. (Nemertea, Hoplonemertea, Monostilifera, Ototyphlonemertidae) reveal evidence of phyllosymbiosis," which has been published in *Ecology and Evolution*.

Dr. Caitlin Jarvis (Biology, Geology, and Environmental Science) is the lead author on the article entitled, "Effects of Urbanization on Disease Prevalence in Managed Honey Bee Hives in Hamilton County, TN," which was published in *Urban Naturalist*.



Dr. Serkan Varol (Engineering Management and Technology) is the lead author on the article entitled, "Unlocking Insights in Real Estate Markets: Integrating Geo-Spatial Data for Comprehensive Property Valuation and Urban Planning," which was published in *Data in Brief*.

Dr. Donald Reising (Electrical Engineering) is the lead author on the article entitled "Assessing Adversarial Replay and Deep Learning-Driven Attacks on Specific Emitter Identification-based Security Approaches," which was published in *Discover Internet of Things*.



Dr. Sean Richards (Biology, Geology and Environmental Science) is the lead author on the article entitled "The Current Applications of Metabolomics in Endometriosis: A Systematic Review," which was published in *Metabolites*.

2025 NSF CAREER COHORT

Best of luck to UTC's FY25 NSF CAREER proposal submission cohort!

The NSF CAREER program supports the research aspirations of early career faculty in pursuing intellectually rigorous and impactful scholarship in NSF-eligible areas of inquiry. The following faculty spent the better part of summer 2025 preparing for submission:



Dr. Rahul Bhosale (Civil & Chemical Engineering) requested \$575,036 for a project entitled, "Toward Solar Jet Fuel: Solar-Driven Isothermal Chemical Looping Reforming of CH₄ Coupled with H₂O/CO₂ Conversion for Syngas Production."

Dr. Luis Sanchez Diaz (Physics) requested \$753,182 for a project entitled, "Structure and Rheology of Passive and Active Silica-Protein Colloidal Systems."



Dr. Thien Le (Mathematics) requested \$734,355 for a project entitled, "Statistical Inference and Prediction in Network-Based Models of Complex Systems."

Dr. Tian Li (Physics) requested \$530,063 for a project entitled, "Deploying Encoded Quantum Repeaters and Cultivating the Quantum Workforce on a Commercial Metro-Scale Fiber Network Testbed."



Dr. Xiunan Wang (Mathematics) requested \$467,262 for a project entitled, "Modeling and Forecasting Cognitive Animal Foraging and Migrations."

APPENDIX A: Awards and Proposals by Lead PI

Lead Investigator	Total Award Amount	Total Proposal Amount	Lead Investigator	Total Award Amount	Total Proposal Amount
<i>Aborn, David</i>	\$1,600	\$1,700	<i>Giles, David</i>	\$396,750	
<i>Acocello, Shellie</i>		\$23,243	<i>Guo, Zibin</i>		\$19,069
<i>Ahmed, Raga</i>		\$737,689	<i>Hamilton, Kara</i>	\$9,995	\$9,995
<i>Alakaam, Amir</i>	\$161,839		<i>Hargrove, Jami</i>		\$5,000
<i>Baker, Sybil</i>		\$5,000	<i>Harris, Austin</i>	\$169,763	\$419,859
<i>Barbee, Meredith</i>		\$120,000	<i>Harris, Bradley</i>	\$509,398	\$25,000
<i>Barbosa, Jose</i>		\$714,175	<i>Hayes, Loren</i>	\$749,999	
<i>Barisik, Murat</i>	\$686,732	\$596,510	<i>Hill, Linda</i>	\$18,621	
<i>Basham, Sherah</i>	\$99,830	\$399,931	<i>Hogg, Jennifer</i>		\$155,554
<i>Bathi, Jejal Reddy</i>	\$73,875	\$173,787	<i>Hood, Ralph</i>	\$61,618	
<i>Bhosale, Rahul</i>		\$958,821	<i>Hossain, Azad</i>	\$147,389	
<i>Black, Kristen</i>		\$110,000	<i>Huckabay, Hunter</i>	\$654,390	\$6,348,051
<i>Boykin, Twyler</i>	\$309,505		<i>Hunt, Nyssa</i>		\$5,442
<i>Bridges, Keith</i>	\$566,988		<i>Ibrahim, Hamdy</i>	\$111,968	\$412,799
<i>Brock-Hon, Amy</i>	\$7,690	\$7,690	<i>Kaplanoglu, Erkan</i>	\$57,600	\$288,650
<i>Carver, Ethan</i>	\$133,163		<i>Kendall, Catherine</i>	\$5,982	\$14,250
<i>Copeland, Molly</i>	\$3,679	\$3,679	<i>Kiel, Anna</i>	\$5,000	\$10,000
<i>Cunningham, Christopher</i>	\$58,989	\$14,001	<i>Kim, Jisook</i>		\$1,068,242
<i>Davenport, Stephan</i>	\$19,999		<i>Kode, Venkateswara</i>		\$184,388
<i>Denney, Andrew</i>	\$52,575		<i>Laseter, Melissa</i>	\$352,519	\$1,772,595
<i>Dierenfeldt, Rick</i>	\$245,429	\$219,574	<i>Lazenby, Susan</i>	\$120,089	\$120,089
<i>Dittmar, Angela</i>	\$25,000	\$45,900	<i>Leasi, Francesca</i>	\$696,680	\$35,000
<i>Dungey, Keenan</i>	\$4,800	\$9,600	<i>Levine, David</i>	\$5,000	\$5,000
<i>Eckelmann, Susan</i>		\$6,311	<i>Li, Tian</i>	\$4,740,326	\$1,847,618
<i>Elliott, Trevor</i>	\$200,000		<i>Liang, Yu</i>	\$100,000	\$250,000
<i>Epperson, Brooke</i>	\$499,999		<i>Liuzzo, Derek</i>		\$20,000
<i>Erdemir, Gokhan</i>		\$443,679	<i>Lynberg, Jennifer</i>	\$55,571	\$1,623,520
<i>Fayard, Louis</i>	\$1,000	\$1,000	<i>Ma, Ziwei</i>		\$299,998
<i>Ferdoush, Jannatul</i>		\$684,869	<i>Mann, Reinhold</i>	\$899,432	\$913,152
<i>Frank, Alexandra</i>		\$13,004	<i>Margraves, Charles</i>	\$25,844	\$34,920
<i>Freeze, John</i>	\$34,502		<i>McAllister, Deborah</i>	\$162,065	\$1,384,051
<i>Frishcosy, Christopher</i>		\$26,731	<i>McElrone, Marissa</i>		\$466,340
<i>Gao, Lan</i>	\$110,000	\$109,998	<i>Melhorn, Erin</i>		\$3,657,120

Lead Investigator	Total Award Amount	Total Proposal Amount	Lead Investigator	Total Award Amount	Total Proposal Amount
<i>Mix, Charles</i>	\$117,540	\$489,716	<i>Suzuki, Takeo</i>		\$4,125
<i>Mukherjee, Rick</i>		\$16,708	<i>Tanner, James</i>	\$7,500	
<i>O'Brien, Elizabeth</i>		\$2,400,000	<i>Tantawi, Khalid</i>	\$156,000	\$687,381
<i>Persons, Brooke</i>	\$9,832		<i>Teaford, Max</i>	\$6,853	
<i>Peyer, Karissa</i>	\$8,053	\$76,556	<i>Vann, Karen</i>	\$288,470	
<i>Pienkos, Jared</i>		\$16,000	<i>Varol, Serkan</i>		\$386,169
<i>PolICASTRO, Christina</i>	\$42,655	\$42,655	<i>Walker, Richard</i>		\$404,460
<i>Ranjan, Reetesh</i>		\$1,403,409	<i>Wang, Jin</i>		\$2,769,925
<i>Reising, Donald</i>	\$133,320	\$154,062	<i>Wang, Xiunan</i>		\$320,744
<i>Ren, Shaogang</i>		\$498,905	<i>Wang, Yingfeng</i>	\$205,800	\$1,060,638
<i>Roache, Amber</i>	\$628,790		<i>Wang, Zihao</i>		\$1,997,525
<i>Rutledge, Valerie</i>	\$2,500	\$2,500	<i>Ward, Chandra</i>		\$50,000
<i>Sakib, Shahnewaz Karim</i>		\$360,000	<i>Weerasena, Lakmali</i>		\$478,893
<i>Sanchez Diaz, Luis</i>		\$1,919,849	<i>Wick, Kristina</i>	\$1,000,000	
<i>Sartipi, Mina</i>	\$985,397	\$20,113,998	<i>Wu, Dalei</i>	\$599,989	\$399,999
<i>Schilling, Ashley</i>	\$5,422	\$5,422	<i>Xie, Mengjun</i>	\$462,124	\$142,424
<i>Scott, Cathy</i>	\$173,550	\$173,550	<i>Yang, Sungwoo</i>		\$499,947
<i>Shaw, Joey</i>	\$61,001	\$64,119	<i>Yeo, Jinsoo</i>		\$40,000
<i>Shelton, Jill</i>	\$2,000		<i>Yuan, Yukun</i>	\$199,806	\$1,989,070
<i>Shi, Yunye</i>	\$70,000	\$967,474	<i>Zwart, Ryan</i>		\$615,829
<i>Smith, Morgan</i>	\$66,077	\$137,494			
			Grand Total	\$18,585,872	\$67,512,140

APPENDIX B: Awards by Month

JULY 2024

Dr. Hunter Huckabay (Center for Community Career Education), has received \$654,390 from the US Department of Education for the project entitled, "UTC GEAR UP Project."

Dr. Keith Bridges (Center for Community Career Education) has received \$241,332 from the U.S. Department of Education for the project entitled, "Northwest Georgia Educational Opportunity Center NWGEOC."

Dr. Keith Bridges (Center for Community Career Education) has received \$325,656 from the U.S. Department of Education for the project entitled, "Southern Appalachian Educational Opportunity Center (SAEOC)."

Dr. Melissa Laseter (Enrollment Management and Student Affairs) has received \$352,519 from the US Department of Education for the project entitled, "UTC Student Support Services Program."

Twyler Boykin (Center for Community Career Education) has received \$309,505 from the US Department of Education for the project entitled, "University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Upward Bound Math & Science."

Dr. Amber Roache (School of Nursing) has received \$628,790 from the Health Resources and Services Administration for the project entitled, "Clinical-Academic Partnerships: Breaking Down Barriers to Care 2023-27."

Dr. Linda Hill (School of Nursing) has received \$18,621 from the Health Resources and Services Administration for the project entitled, "2020-27 HRSA Nurse Anesthetist Traineeships."

Dr. Donald Reising (Electrical Engineering) and Dr. Mohamed Fadul have received \$34,129 to support a research project.

Dr. Donald Reising (Electrical Engineering) has received \$45,740 from Purdue University for the project entitled, "2020 SCALE Consortium – Radiation-Hard Microelectronics Workforce Development Consortium."

Dr. Austin Harris (CUIP/ UTC Research Institute) Dr. Dalei Wu and Dr. Yukun Yuan (Computer Science and Engineering) have received \$149,764 from the State of Tennessee Appropriations for the project entitled, "COAST RV App Development."

Dr. John Freeze and Rebecca Hurst (Center for Professional Education) have received \$34,502 from the Tennessee Office of Criminal Justice Programs for the project entitled, "JAG – Southeastern Leadership Academy 2023-2026."

Dr. Bradley Harris (Civil and Chemical Engineering), Dr. Trevor Elliot (Mechanical Engineering), Dr. Stephanie Philipp (School of Education), Dr. Raga Ahmed (Electrical Engineering) and Dr. Rahul Bhosale (Civil and Chemical Engineering) in collaboration with Cleveland State Community College, have received \$509,398 from the National Science Foundation for the project entitled, "Explorations: Experiential Learning in Advanced Manufacturing towards Novel and Diverse Career Opportunities for Rural TN Students."

Dr. Dalei Wu and Dr. Yu Liang (Computer Science and Engineering) in collaboration with the University of Vermont & State Agricultural College, have received \$599,989 from the National Science Foundation for the project entitled, "Real-time Subsurface Sensing with Cognitive Networked Robotic System."

Dr. Francesca Leasi (Biology, Geology and Environmental Science) in collaboration with Florida International University, has received \$696,680 from the National Science Foundation for the project entitled, "The Evolution of Salinity Tolerance in Monogonont Rotifers."

Dr. Mengjun Xie (National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense), has received \$290,124 from the National Science Foundation for the project entitled, "The National Cybersecurity Workforce."

Dr. Brooke Persons (Social, Cultural & Justice Studies) has received \$9,832 from the U.S. Forest Service for the project entitled, "USFS Internship – Cherokee National Forest."

Dr. Deborah McAllister (School of Education), in collaboration with Vanderbilt University has received \$36,666 from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for the project entitled, "Elementary and Middle Grades STEM."

AUGUST 2024

Dr. Joey Shaw (Biology, Geology and Environmental Science) has requested and received \$13,000 from the Association of Southeastern Biologists for the project entitled, "2024-2025 Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage (SWFP) Graduate Assistantship."

Dr. Mina Sartipi (UTC Research Institute/ CUIP) has received \$100,397 from DENSO International America, Inc for the project entitled, "Federated Trajectory Prediction for VRU Safety."

Dr. Trevor Elliott (Mechanical Engineering) has received \$200,000 from DENSO North America Foundation for the project entitled, "Integration of Metal Additive Manufacturing into UTC Senior Design."

Dr. Murat Barisik and Dr. Rateesh Ranjan (Mechanical Engineering) have received \$184,972 from the Department of Energy for the project entitled, "First principles multiphase modeling of mesoscale gas transport in porous reactive systems."

Dr. Karen Vann (Center for Community and Career Education) has received \$288,470 from the Department of Education for the project entitled, "UTC Talent Search."

Dr. Kara Hamilton (Health & Human Performance) has received \$9,995 from Fast Break Athletics for the project entitled, "Fast Break Clients Utilization of HHP Sports Lab."



Dr. Morgan Smith (Social, Cultural & Justice Studies), in collaboration with Florida State University, has received \$38,569 from the Department of Interior for the project entitled, "Reevaluating BOEM's Guidelines for Identifying Submerged Pre-Contact Archaeological Sites in the Gulf of Mexico: An Extensive Geoarchaeological Approach."

Dr. Brooke Epperson, Tessa Mullinax-Baker, Dr. Rosebelle Peters, Dr. Jenny Holcombe, Dr. Rachel Nall, and Michelle Rosano (School of Nursing) have received \$499,999 from the Health Resources and Services Administration for the project entitled, "AHEAD-RN."

Dr. David Giles (Biology, Geology and Environmental Science), Dr. Bradley Harris (Chemical Engineering), and Dr. Steven Symes (Chemistry and Physics) have received \$396,750 from the National Institutes of Health for the project entitled, "In vitro and in silico investigations of changes in bacterial cell membrane dynamics due to polyunsaturated fatty acid (PUFA) modifications."

Dr. Erkan Kaplanoglu and Dr. Gokhan Erdemir (Engineering Management and Technology) have received \$57,600 from the JTEKT North America Corporation for the project entitled, "Smart Robotic Gripper with Enhanced Capabilities for Pinion Gear Systems."

Dr. Christopher Cunningham (Psychology) has received \$44,989 from Peak Performance, Inc. for the project entitled, "Continuing support for the Smart Factory Institute (Years 4-5)."

Molly Copeland and Carolyn Runyon (Library) have requested and received \$3,679 from the Tennessee State Library and Archives for the project entitled, "Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Chattanooga Records Digitization Project."

Dr. Christopher Cunningham (Psychology) has received \$14,000 from The House: University Ministries of Chattanooga for the project entitled, "Campus Ministry Impact Project - A Longitudinal Study for The House: University Ministries of Chattanooga."

Dr. Angela Dittmar (Arts-Based Collaborative) has received \$25,000 from the United Way of Chattanooga for the project entitled, "UWGC-Chattanooga 2.0 Wolf Trap Residencies 2024."

Dr. Yingfeng Wang (Computer Science and Engineering), in collaboration with Kean University, has received \$195,000 from the National Science Foundation for the project entitled, "Collaborative Research: CISE-MSI: RCBP: SCH: Advancing Breast Cancer Detection in Ultrasound Imaging through Active and Weakly Supervised Learning Techniques."

Dr. Deborah McAllister (School of Education), Dr. Lauren Ingraham (English), Dr. Cindy Williamson (Academic Affairs), in collaboration with the University of Nebraska at Omaha, have received \$97,899 from the National Science Foundation for the project entitled, "Collaborative Research: Measuring faculty use of evidence-based classroom practices and identifying perceived obstacles to adoption."

Dr. Loren Hayes, Dr. Azad Hossain (Biology, Geology and Environmental Science), Dr. Krysta Murillo (School of Education), and Dr. Jin Wang (Mathematics) have received \$749,999 from the National Science Foundation for the project entitled, "IRES: Integrating biological, geospatial, and math modeling to understand how a changing climate impacts animal social systems."

Dr. Tian Li (Chemistry & Physics) has received \$792,705 from the National Science Foundation for the project entitled, "ExpandQISE: Track 1: Demonstration of distributed quantum sensing with Heisenberg scaling by creating multipartite entanglement on a metropolitan scale quantum network."

Dr. Yukun Yuan, Dr. Yu Liang, Dr. Dalei Wu (Computer Science and Engineering), Dr. Feng Guo (Psychology), and Dr. Abdelrahman Mohammed (Electrical Engineering), in collaboration with Central State University and Florida State University, have received \$199,806 from the National Science Foundation for the project entitled, "Collaborative Research: CISE MSI: RDP: CPS: Enhancing Efficiency and Sustainability in Electric Transportation and Power Systems through Interaction-aware Management."

Dr. Morgan Smith (Social, Cultural & Justice Studies) has requested and received \$20,000 from the Forest Service for the project entitled, "USFS Internship - Cherokee National Forest."

SEPTEMBER 2024

Charles Mix (IGTLab) and Nyssa Hunt have received \$6,261 from the Dalton State College Foundation, Inc. for the project entitled, "Dalton Resilient Communities, A Spatial Analysis of Rocky Face Ridge."

Dr. Tian Li (UTC Research Institute), Dr. Tatiana Allen (Chemistry and Physics), Dr. Christopher Cox (Mathematics), Dr. Yu Liang (Computer Science and Engineering), Dr. Reinhold Mann (Vice Chancellor for Research) and Dr. Donald Reising (Electrical Engineering) have received \$3,500,000 from the National Institute of Standards and Technology for the project entitled, "UTC Quantum Center."

Dr. Mengjun Xie (National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense) has received \$125,000 from the Department of Defense for the project entitled, "UTC AY24-25 DoD Cyber Scholarship Recruitment and Capacity Building."

Charles Mix (IGTLab) has received \$14,706 from the Enterprise Center for the project entitled, "EPA Air Quality Sensor Site Location Analysis; Spatial Data Science Support for The Enterprise Center & Student Fellows Program."

Dr. Louis Fayard (Accounting) has received \$1,000 from the Institute of Management Accountants for the project entitled, "Memorial Education Fund Proposal."

Dr. Mina Sartipi (UTC Research Institute), Dr. Ignatius Fomunung and Dr. Weidong Wu (Civil and Chemical Engineering) have received \$350,000 from the Nashville Department of Transportation for the project entitled, "Leveraging Advanced Data to Deliver Multimodal Safety."

Dr. Cathy Scott (Social Work), Dr. Erin Melhorn (Occupational Theory), and Dr. Kristi Wick (School of Nursing) have requested and received \$173,550 from the Southeast Tennessee Area Agency on Aging and Disability for the project entitled, "Academic Partnership for Delivering Evidence Based Programs." Dr. Jennifer Lynberg (School of Education) has received \$55,571 from the Tennessee Department of Education for the project entitled, "Governor's School for Prospective Teachers (2025)."

Dr. Ralph Hood, Dr. Chris Silver, and Matthew Durham (Psychology) have received \$61,618 from the Universität Bielefeld for the project entitled, "Faith Development Longitudinal Study Part Three."

OCTOBER 2024

Dr. Valerie Rutledge (Dean of the College of Health, Education and Professional Studies) has received \$2,500 from the Jack Miller Center for Teaching America's Founding Principles and History for the project entitled, "The Fourteenth Annual Dr. Richard Gruetzemacher Constitution Day Lecture Series."

Dr. Kristina Wick (School of Nursing) and Dr. Jessica Freeman (Communications) have received \$1,000,000 from the Tennessee Department of Health for the project entitled, "National Initiative to Address COVID-19 Health Disparities Among Populations at High-Risk and Underserved, Including Racial and Ethnic Minority Populations and Rural Communities."

Dr. Donald Reising (Electrical Engineering) and Dr. Tian Li (Chemistry and Physics) have received \$19,546 from Tennessee Technological University for the project entitled, "Beginnings: Creating & Sustaining a Diverse Community of EQUIS Across the Southeastern US."

Dr. James Tanner (Communications) has received \$7,500 from the Solutions Journalism Network for the project entitled, "UTC Media Project."

Dr. Morgan Smith (Social, Cultural & Justice Studies) has received \$7,508 from the City of Chattanooga for the project entitled, "Archaeological Investigation of Shallowford Ecological Preserve."

NOVEMBER 2024

Dr. Khalid Tantawi (Engineering Management and Technology) and Dr. Francesca Leasi (Biology, Geology and Environmental Science), in collaboration with Motlow State Community College and Chattanooga State Community College, have received \$150,000 from the National Science Foundation for the project entitled, "Development of an Electric Vehicle Engineering Technology Program for the Middle Tennessee Region."

Dr. Lani Gao (Mathematics) has received \$110,000 from Tele-Specialists for the project entitled, "Statistical Analysis in Stroke Care & Treatment."

Dr. Christina Policastro and Dr. Karen McGuffee (Social, Cultural & Justice Studies) have received \$42,655 from the Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence for the project entitled, "2025 Senator Tommy Burks Victims Assistance Academy."

Dr. Mina Sartipi (CUIP/UTC Research Institute) has received \$490,000 from the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development for the project entitled, "Advancing High Powered Dynamic Wireless Charging for Medium and Heavy-Duty Vehicles."

Dr. Amir Alakaam (Health & Human Performance) has received \$36,839 from the Tennessee Department of Health for the project entitled, "Developing a Curriculum for Public Health Workforces in Tennessee."



Dr. David Aborn (Biology, Geology and Environmental Science) has received \$1,600 from the Tennessee Ornithological Society for the project entitled, "Survey of Age and Sex Ratios in Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) Roosts in the Southeastern US."

Dr. Ethan Carver (Assistant Provost for Research), Dr. Michelle Deardorff (Political Science and Public Service), and Dr. Joanne Romagni (Biology, Geology and Environmental Science) have received \$133,163 from the National Science Foundation for the project entitled, "ASPIRE: Appalachian Students Promoting the Integration of Research in Educations."

DECEMBER 2024

Dr. Yunye Shi (Mechanical Engineering) has received \$70,000 from the American Chemical Society for the project entitled, "Experimental Investigation of Light-controlled Active Droplets in Confined Environment."

Dr. Stephan Davenport and Dr. Spencer Usrey (Accounting) have received \$19,999 from the Internal Revenue Service, in collaboration with the Urban League of Greater Chattanooga. for the project entitled, "UTC IRS/VITA Program for Students to Provide Tax Preparation Services for the Underserved."

Dr. Sherah Basham (Social, Cultural & Justice Studies) has received \$99,830 from Arnold Ventures for the project entitled, "A multi-site planning of a rapid video response model: Phase I - randomized control trial planning and piloting."

Dr. Rick Dierenfeldt (Social, Cultural & Justice Studies) has received \$245,429 from the U.S. Department of Justice, in collaboration with the City of Chattanooga for the project entitled, "Chattanooga United to Reduce Violence."

JANUARY 2025

Dr. Andrew Denney, Dr. Sherah Basham, Dr. Rick Dierenfeldt, and Dr. Gale Iles (Social, Cultural & Justice Studies) in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Justice have received \$52,575 from the Hamilton County Government for the project entitled, "Recidivism Reduction Initiative."

Dr. Catherine Kendall (Interior Design) has received \$5,982 from the Tennessee Board of Architectural and Engineering Examiners for the project entitled "2025 Architectural and Engineering Grant."

Dr. Charles Margraves (Mechanical Engineering) has received \$25,844 from the Tennessee Board of Architectural and Engineering Examiners for the project entitled, "2025 Architectural and Engineering Grant."

Charles Mix and Nyssa Hunt (IGTLab) have received \$96,573 from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture-Division of Forestry for the project entitled, "Spatial Analysis of TN Urban Community Forests."

Dr. Jejal Reddy Bathi (Civil and Chemical Engineering) has received \$73,875 from Solmax for the project entitled, "Microplastics Investigation at Plastic Erosion Controls Installed Sites."



Dr. Karissa Peyer, Dr. Eric Hungenberg, Dr. Andrew Bailey, and Dr. Kara Hamilton (Health & Human Performance) have received \$8,053 from the Chattanooga Tourism Co. for the project entitled, "Chattanooga Marathon Research Project."

Dr. Max Teaford (Psychology) has received \$6,853 from The Ohio State University, in collaboration with the Office of Naval Research for the project entitled, "Identifying Adverse Modes via Human-Machine Cybernetic Modeling."

Dr. Mina Sartipi (UTC Research Institute) has received \$45,000 from the University of Memphis in collaboration with the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development for the project entitled, "Designing Multimodal Transit for Blue Oval City and Volkswagen."

FEBRUARY 2025

Dr. David Levine (Physical Therapy) has received \$5,000 from True Power Performance Inc for the project entitled, "Effectiveness of True Power Performance, Inc on Cutaneous Blood Flow."

Dr. Yu Liang, Dr. Yingfeng Wang, Dr. Dalei Wu (Computer Science and Engineering), Dr. Katherine Elverd (Music Therapy), and Dr. Zibin Guo (Anthropology) have received \$100,000 from the AI/Machine Learning Consortium to Advance Health Equity and Researcher Diversity for the project entitled, "Enhancing Healthcare Equity through Large-Language-Model-Enabled Diagnostic and Therapeutic Music Modality."

Dr. Donald Reising (Electrical Engineering) has requested and received \$24,052 from Purdue University for the project entitled, "2020 SCALE Consortium - Radiation-Hard Microelectronics Workforce Development Consortium."

MARCH 2025

Dr. Joey Shaw (Biology, Geology and Environmental Science) has received \$12,000 from the Association of Southeastern Biologists for the project entitled, "2025 Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage."

Austin Harris (CUIP) has received \$19,999 from Vanderbilt University for the project entitled, "Mobile Lidar Trailer Partnership."

Dr. Hamdy Ibrahim (Mechanical Engineering) and Dr. Stephanie Philipp (School of Education) have received \$111,968 from the National Science Foundation for the project entitled, "Hybrid Surface Coating Toward Corrosion-Controlled Magnesium-Based Implants."

Dr. Ashley Schilling, Dr. Max Jordon, and Dr. David Levine (Physical Therapy) have received \$5,422 from the AMBUCS for the project entitled, "Impacts of seating fit upon pedaling initiation and power production on an adaptive tricycle in children with neuromuscular disability."

Dr. Susan Lazenby (Radio station) has received \$120,089 from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for the project entitled, "WUTC Radio Community Service Grant."

APRIL 2025

Dr. Anna Kiel (Occupational Therapy) and Dr. June Hanks (Physical Therapy) have received \$5,000 from the Alliance of Women Philanthropists for the project entitled, “BrainBridge: Exploring Brain Health Across Lifespan and Recovery.”

Dr. Amy Brock-Hon and Kevin Hon (Biology, Geology and Environmental Science) and Steven Kline (Chemistry and Physics) have received \$7,690 from the Alliance of Women Philanthropists for the project entitled, “Hands-On Educational Displays at the Clarence T. Jones Observatory: Sparking Curiosity and Enhancing Astronomy Education in the Chattanooga Community.”

Dr. Azad Hossain (Biology, Geology and Environmental Science) has received \$147,389 from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for year 2 of the project entitled, “Remote Sensing of Water Quality in the Tennessee River.”

Dr. Mengjun Xie, Dr. Li Dai, Dr. Yu Liang, Dr. Yingfeng Wang, and Dr. Yukun Yuan (Engineering and Computer Science) have received \$47,000 from Northeastern University for the project entitled, “2025 Bridge to Cyber.”

Dr. Amir Alakaam (Health & Human Performance) has received \$125,000 from the Tennessee Department of Health for the project entitled, “Developing a Curriculum for Public Health Workforces in Tennessee.”

Dr. Donald Reising (Electrical Engineering) has received \$9,853 from Tennessee Technological University for the project entitled, “TREN: Building Tennessee Research and Education Network.”

MAY 2025

Dr. Joey Shaw, Dr. Stylianos Chatzimanolis, and Jessica Sanders (Biology, Geology, and Environmental Science) have requested and received \$36,001 from the Electric Power Board of Chattanooga (EPB) for the project entitled, “2025 EPB Bio Survey.”

Dr. Jill Shelton (Psychology), in collaboration with Florida International University (FIU), has received \$2,000 from the Mental Research Institute for the project entitled, “The Role of Self & Others in the Internalization of Disability Identity.”

Dr. Deborah McAllister (School of Education), in collaboration with Georgia Tech Research Institute, has received \$27,500 from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for the project entitled, “Inspiring NASA’s Next Generation through Building, Coding, and Machine Learning Missions (NASA ML-BOTS).”

Dr. Tian Li (Chemistry and Physics) and Dr. Donald Reising (Electrical Engineering), in collaboration with the Arizona State University, have received \$447,621 from the National Science Foundation for the project entitled, “Collaborative Research: Sub-Shot-Noise Limited Distributed Quantum Sensing on a Commercial Metropolitan-Scale Quantum Network via Deep Learning Aided Noise Suppression.”

JUNE 2025

Dr. Keenan Dungey, Dr. Meredith Barbee, and Dr. Jared Pienkos (Chemistry and Physics) have received \$4,800 from the American Chemical Society for the project entitled, "Project SEED site in Chattanooga for 2025."

Dr. Yingfeng Wang (Computer Science and Engineering) has received \$10,800 from a private institution for higher education for a research project.

Dr. Murat Barisik (Mechanical Engineering) has received \$501,760 from the National Science Foundation for the project entitled, "CAREER: Multiscale characterization of heat transfer in nanoporous materials assisted by machine learning."

UTC Mapping Project Earns International Recognition for Storytelling with Maps

Monday, April 27, 2026



A mapping project at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga is drawing international attention for how it explains a local problem.

UTC's Center for Applied Geospatial Data Science (CAGDS) earned the Storytelling with Maps Innovation Award in the 2025 ArcGIS StoryMaps Competition for "Mapping Chattanooga's Urban Forests."

The project was also named a finalist in the competition's Environment category, placing it among the top entries from around the world.

The competition is cohosted by Esri's ArcGIS StoryMaps and ArcGIS Living Atlas of the World teams. Esri is an international supplier of geographic information system software, web GIS and geodatabase management applications.

Created by GIS Director Charlie Mix, the StoryMap focuses on the Chattanooga Tree Project, a citywide effort to address tree canopy loss and rising urban heat. Working with the City of Chattanooga and local partners, UTC researchers are using geospatial data and artificial intelligence to identify where trees are needed most.

"It's pretty cool to get recognized at such a high level," Mix said. "I think it really reflects the Chattanooga Tree Project and the power of collaborations between UTC, the city and the nonprofit community to do something that can make a real difference."

The work behind the StoryMap relies on aerial imagery, satellite data and machine learning to map existing tree canopy and measure heat patterns across the city. That information is used to create a heat risk index, which helps guide where new trees should be planted.

"It really shows the utility of this kind of work," Mix said. "Something so complex can be used for something as simple as knowing where to put a tree in the ground."

Part of what sets the project apart is how it's presented. The StoryMap walks users through the data step by step, pairing maps with plain-language explanations so people outside the field can follow along.

"In academia, we want to be really technical, but we can miss our core audience," Mix said. "If we're not able to communicate what we're doing to a broader audience, we fall short on actually solving the problem."

The project traces back to early partnership work supported by the Lyndhurst Foundation, which helped UTC begin collaborating with the city on urban forestry efforts. That groundwork led to a \$6 million U.S. Forest Service-supported initiative to expand tree planting across Chattanooga.

Mix said the recognition is the result of a group effort. Assistant GIS Director Nyssa Hunt, graduate student Michelle "Mimi" White and partners across the city and nonprofit community all contributed to the project.

"This isn't something I'm doing on my own," he said. "It's really about telling the story of everybody involved."

UTC Graduate Student's Cloudland Canyon Plant Research Earns Top Botanical Honor

Tuesday, April 7, 2026



Andy Wall, center, was presented with the North Carolina Botanical Garden Award by Dr. Heather Joesting, president of the Association of Southeastern Biologists, and Scott Ward, research botanist at the North Carolina Botanical Garden. Photo courtesy of Dr. Gretchen Potts.

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga graduate student Andy Wall was selected for the 2026 North Carolina Botanical Garden Award at the recent Association for Southeastern Biologists conference in Mobile, Alabama.

Wall was the second consecutive UTC environmental science graduate student to win the honor, following 2025 recipient Julia Prins.

The North Carolina Botanical Garden Award is given for an outstanding presentation that best advances understanding of the biology and conservation of southeastern plants and their ecosystems.

"It definitely felt good. It was validating to be recognized in that way," said Wall, who will graduate from UTC in May.

Working under UTAA Distinguished Service and UC Foundation Professor Joey Shaw, Wall's research, titled "The Vascular Flora and Species Distribution Modeling of Two Rare Species in Cloudland Canyon State Park, Dade and Walker Counties, Georgia," focused on Cloudland Canyon State Park in northwest Georgia—an area known for its rugged terrain and ecological diversity.

Shaw said Wall was "a strong fit for the project," citing his background in field botany.

Between late 2023 and the end of the 2025 growing season, Wall conducted a comprehensive floristic inventory of the park, documenting hundreds of plant species and building a dataset that will support



UTC graduate student Andy Wall and UTAA Distinguished Service and UC Foundation Professor Joey Shaw.

conservation efforts. He completed 52 site visits to Cloudland Canyon and, combined with existing herbarium records, documented 665 species and subspecific taxa spanning 361 genera and 122 plant families.

A floristic inventory, he explained, provides a baseline understanding of what species exist in a given area. This information is essential for future research and land management.

"We need to understand what these plant distributions are and where they're occurring. It begins with this boots-on-the-ground floristic research," he said.

The research also identified 28 rare species and produced more than 200 county-level records—data that park managers can now use to make informed decisions about conservation, invasive species management and long-term stewardship.

"They know where the rare species are so that they can keep an eye on them," Shaw said. "When it comes to invasive species, park managers can go in and help eradicate them so that they don't take over."

In total, Wall collected hundreds of specimens representing roughly 600 species, creating a verifiable record of the park's biodiversity, and contributed those samples to UTC's herbarium, where they will serve as a resource for future students and researchers.

Each specimen, Shaw said, strengthens a growing scientific record.

"If there weren't specimens and he just said, 'Oh, I saw all these wonderful things there,' how can that be verified?" Shaw said. "He's collected all these specimens ... and every student who contributes to it expands that library."

Those specimens are also digitized and shared through a global database, making the research accessible to scientists beyond UTC.

For Shaw, having a second consecutive UTC student win the award reflects both the quality of Wall's research and the strength of the University's environmental science program.

"I think it says that we've got great continuity between generations of students that can feed off of one another and learn from one another," he said. "Students learn from those ahead of them and are pushed to reach that same level."

For Wall, the path to UTC began in the Baltimore area, where he developed an early interest in plants and the natural world. He grew up near a state park and spent time exploring the woods, sparking an early curiosity about plant life. He earned his undergraduate degree at Frostburg State University in Maryland and later worked as a field botanist in West Virginia and a researcher in California before coming to Chattanooga.

"I spent a lot of time in the woods and was just fascinated by the plants there," he said.

After connecting with Shaw, he chose UTC for graduate school to deepen his expertise in field botany and plant identification.

Now, with his thesis defended and graduation approaching, Wall is looking ahead to a career in conservation, whether through floristic research, habitat restoration or related work across the eastern United States.

"I'm looking to work in the conservation field ... something that I can make a difference for rare plants," he said.

Shaw believes he is well prepared for what comes next.

"He's done what he needs to do," Shaw said, "and he's started building his reputation as a capable field botanist and scientist."

"He is someone who can not only do the field work but also write the reports and analyze the data. He's the whole package."

Discovery on Display: UTC Research Conference Returns April 15

Monday, April 27, 2026



Biochemistry major Zayda Dominick presented research on antibiotic-resistant *Escherichia coli* during the 2025 Spring Research and Arts Conference. Photo by Angela Foster.

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga's Spring Research and Arts Conference returns to campus on Wednesday, April 15, bringing together hundreds of student researchers, faculty mentors and community partners to present their work and share ideas across disciplines.

This year's conference, which will take place at McKenzie Arena and the Wolford Family Athletic Center, will feature 352 unique presentations and 710 presenters, highlighting projects from across the University as well as research contributions from visiting high school students.

Presented by UTC's Office for Undergraduate Research and Creative Endeavor (URaCE), the annual conference serves as the University's largest showcase of student and faculty research and creative work.

URaCE Executive Director Lisa Piazza said the conference offers an opportunity for the entire campus community to gather in one place to share the work occurring in laboratories, classrooms and field sites throughout the year.

"This is really our one moment each year when the entire research community at UTC comes together in the same space," Piazza said. "Students from every college are presenting work they've been developing with faculty mentors, and it gives people a chance to see the incredible range of ideas and creativity happening across campus."



This year's Spring Research and Arts Conference will feature 352 unique presentations and 710 presenters, highlighting projects from across the University as well as research contributions from visiting high school students.

In addition to the presenters, more than 500 students are expected to attend through organized class visits, giving them a chance to experience the conference environment even if they are not yet conducting research themselves.

Piazza said those visits often serve as an entry point for students who may not yet see themselves as researchers.

"For many students, this might be the first time they see someone their own age presenting original work," she said. "That moment can be powerful. They start to realize that research is something they can do, too."

The conference extends beyond UTC's campus. This year's event includes high school presenters representing seven area schools, including Baylor School, Chattanooga School for the Arts and Sciences, Brainerd High School, Tyner Middle High Academy, Girls Preparatory School, East Hamilton High School and Signal Mountain Middle High School.

According to Piazza, inviting younger students to participate helps create early pathways into research and encourages them to begin thinking about college-level inquiry.

"It's exciting to see high school students presenting alongside UTC undergraduates and graduate students," she said. "They get a chance to see what research looks like at the next level, and our students get to share their experience and mentor them in that environment."

Throughout the day, poster and oral presentations will span a wide range of topics—from engineering and data science to health sciences, business, education and the arts.

Several special sessions will also highlight emerging areas of study, including panels on applied mathematics, artificial intelligence in teaching and learning, and the intersection of science and art.

Another session will introduce campus resources related to geographic information systems, led by Charlie



UTC's annual Spring and Research Conference serves as the University's largest showcase of student and faculty research.

Mix and Nyssa Hunt in the UTC Center for Applied Geospatial Data Science, giving participants an overview of tools available to support geospatial research and mapping projects.

The conference will also feature the Mocs Innovate! Innovators Showcase, where faculty and researchers will present early-stage innovations ranging from artificial intelligence tools to urban data systems and emerging technologies.

The Mocs Innovate! presenters and their innovations:

- Megan Cales, coordinator of career engagement in the Decosimo Success Center, Gary W. Rollins College of Business: Upgrading the Brooks Band wearable to include a clip-on microphone to enhance voice capture
- Dr. Mehdi Khaleghian, postdoctoral research fellow, Center for Urban Informatics and Progress: Multispectral drone system to enhance urban infrastructure and agricultural intelligence
- Dr. Shahnewaz Karim Sakib, assistant professor, College of Engineering and Computer Science: AI system for course design and management for accreditation
- Dr. Maged Shoman, research assistant professor, UT–Oak Ridge Innovation Institute, Center for Urban Informatics and Progress: Systems platform for predicting grocery demand and short-range autonomous robots for delivery from microhubs
- Dr. Weidong Wu, professor of civil engineering, College of Engineering and Computer Science: Crash-free web interface for statistical analysis and report generation

Piazza said the showcase helps demonstrate how research ideas can evolve beyond initial discovery.

"One of the things we want people to see is how a research idea grows," she said. "Sometimes it starts with a student poster or a small faculty project and eventually becomes something with broader impact. The conference lets people see those ideas in their early stages."



Pulling off an event of this scale requires coordination from across campus. Piazza said this year's conference will include 130 volunteers—75 students and 55 faculty and staff members—along with 10 faculty moderators leading oral presentation sessions.

The conference's impact, though, ultimately comes back to the students standing beside their posters or presenting their findings.

"When students present their work, they're telling the story of what they've discovered and what they've learned along the way," Piazza said. "Those experiences build confidence and help them see themselves as contributors to knowledge, not just consumers of it."

"Whether they go on to graduate school, medical school or directly into the workforce, they leave with the ability to ask questions, analyze information and communicate ideas. Those are skills that stay with them long after the conference ends."

UTC's Azad Hossain Lands City of Chattanooga Contract to Study Urban Impact on Friar Branch Creek

Wednesday, April 1, 2026



Dr. Azad Hossain's new research brings together geospatial analysis, field data collection and advanced computer modeling to examine how land use changes are reshaping Friar Branch Creek's behavior and water quality. Photo by Angela Foster.

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Associate Professor Azad Hossain, an environmental geoscientist in the Department of Biology, Geology and Environmental Science, has received a \$227,172 contract from the City of Chattanooga to study how urban development is affecting Friar Branch Creek and the surrounding watershed. The project runs through September 2029.

The project, titled "Evaluating the effects of Land Use and Land Cover Change on Friar Branch Creek Using Geospatial, Watershed and Hydrodynamic Models with Emphasis on Channel Widening and Sediment Transport," brings together geospatial analysis, field data collection and advanced computer modeling to examine how land use changes are reshaping the creek's behavior and water quality. The research is being funded by stormwater fees.

"This project is all about understanding growth," Hossain said. "We like growth. It's good for the economy. But at the same time, we have to ask, 'Is this sustainable? What is it doing to our streams and water quality?'"

Friar Branch Creek is part of the South Chickamauga Creek watershed, one of the most urbanized drainage areas in Chattanooga. The creek runs through the eastern part of the city, including areas around Hamilton Place and the broader Brainerd corridor, where residential, commercial and industrial development has expanded significantly in recent decades.

As that development increases hard surfaces such as roads and rooftops, rainfall moves more quickly across the landscape, carrying sediment into nearby waterways instead of soaking into the ground.



Side-by-side satellite images from 1985 (left) and 2022 show the expansion of urban development in Chattanooga around the Friar Branch Creek watershed. Areas highlighted in white in the 2022 image indicate increased hard surfaces such as roads and buildings, which contribute to faster runoff, increased sediment transport and potential impacts on stream health and water quality. Images courtesy of Google Earth.

“When you have more development, you have more runoff,” Hossain said. “The water moves quickly and with that water comes sediment. That sediment carries pollutants and affects the overall health of the stream.”

The research will focus on two key concerns identified by the city: sediment transport and channel widening.

Sediment, the fine particles carried by flowing water, is a major contributor to water quality issues because it can transport contaminants and degrade aquatic habitats. Over time, increased sediment loads can alter the physical structure of a stream, filling its bed and forcing water outward—leading to wider, less stable channels.

To better understand those processes, Hossain and his team will combine decades of satellite imagery with newly collected field data. Using geospatial tools, they will map how land use and land cover have changed across the watershed over the past 40 years. That information will then feed into watershed and hydrodynamic models designed to simulate how water and sediment move through the creek under current and future development scenarios.

“We’re creating a modeling framework that allows us to ask, ‘What is happening now and what could happen next?’” Hossain said. “If development continues, how much sediment will we see? What will the stream look like in the future?”

A key component of the project is the development of a modeling capability tied to total maximum daily load (TMDL), a regulatory benchmark that defines the maximum amount of a pollutant a waterbody can receive while still meeting water quality standards. By integrating TMDL considerations into the model, the research will provide the City of Chattanooga with data to help guide future planning and environmental management.

“The goal is to give the city something they can use,” Hossain said. “Not just understanding the problem, but helping inform decisions moving forward.”

The project builds on a long-standing partnership between UTC and the City of Chattanooga. Hossain credited the late Dr. Mark Schorr, a longtime faculty member who helped establish the University’s early water research efforts with the city.

“Dr. Schorr created the pathway for this kind of work,” Hossain said. “What we’re doing now is building on that foundation and continuing that collaboration.”

That collaboration continues to guide the project. The City of Chattanooga will provide historical and ongoing data collection, while UTC researchers will contribute analysis and modeling expertise.

Dr. Mounir Minkara, water quality manager in the Department of Public Works, will lead the collaboration from the city's side.

"I really appreciate the support from the city," Hossain said. "These kinds of projects take time to develop, and their partnership makes this possible for our research, for our students and for the community."

The project also includes work with the University of Mississippi's National Center for Computational Hydroscience and Engineering, with Dr. Chao Xiaobo serving as co-principal investigator. The NCCHE specializes in hydrodynamic modeling and has developed tools used by federal agencies, bringing additional expertise to the project's modeling efforts.

"They are pioneers in this type of modeling," Hossain said. "We're bringing their expertise into this project to strengthen our ability to simulate what's happening in the stream."

Beyond its research outcomes, the project will create opportunities for UTC students. Hossain said undergraduate and graduate students will be involved in data collection, analysis and modeling, gaining hands-on experience with tools and techniques used in environmental research.

"This project will greatly support our students," he said. "They'll be working with real data, real problems and real applications. That kind of experience is invaluable."

UC Foundation Professor Gretchen Potts, head of the Department of Biology, Geology and Environmental Science, said the project reflects the kind of community-connected research that defines UTC's mission.

"Through this collaboration with the City of Chattanooga, UTC faculty and students are contributing research that directly informs local decision-making," Potts said. "Dr. Hossain's project demonstrates the value of aligning University scholarship with city-led efforts to promote sustainable growth and environmental stewardship."

For Hossain, a member of the UTC faculty since 2016, the project is about more than data and models; it's about connecting research to the place he calls home.

"Chattanooga is growing, and that's a good thing," he said. "But we also have to understand what that growth means for our environment. If we can do that, we can grow in a way that is both productive and sustainable."

UTC Establishes Nanoengineering Center to Expand Research Impact

Thursday, March 5, 2026



Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering Murat Barisik will serve as the director of the Nanoengineering Center. Photo by Angela Foster.

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga has announced the launch of the Nanoengineering Center, a new research center housed within the UTC Research Institute.

The center, which began as a Center for Excellence in Applied Computational Science and Engineering (CEACSE) Convergent Research Initiative, has now graduated to standalone status after meeting key milestones in research growth, collaboration and external funding.

The Nanoengineering Center is the third center under the UTC Research Institute and builds on multidisciplinary work advancing nano-enabled solutions in energy, health and defense.

Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering Murat Barisik will serve as the center's director.

"As we continue elevating UTC's research enterprise, the launch of the Nanoengineering Center represents an important step forward," UTC Chancellor Lori Bruce said. "This center brings together faculty expertise across disciplines, strengthens our partnerships with national laboratories and industry and expands opportunities for students to engage in high-level research."

"The creation of the Nanoengineering Center supports UTC's continued growth as a research institution and our trajectory toward Carnegie R2 classification."

Interim Vice Chancellor for Research Mina Sartipi, who serves as executive director of the UTC Research

Institute, said the decision to elevate the initiative followed clear benchmarks in research productivity, faculty engagement and external support.

"When we launched the CEACSE Convergent Research Initiative, we defined clear criteria for success," Sartipi said. "The goal was to engage faculty from multiple departments and colleges, build relationships with industry, other universities and national laboratories, involve Ph.D. students and secure external funding. Under Dr. Murat Barisik's leadership, the team has successfully met those milestones."

Sartipi said the initiative demonstrated sustained growth in faculty participation, sponsored funding and national collaborations, making it ready to operate as a standalone center under the UTC Research Institute.

"One of the goals for our centers is to build momentum and bring more people in," she said. "With formal center status, they can pursue additional funding opportunities with a stronger position because they have already been recognized as a research center."

Barisik, who joined the UTC faculty in 2022, was the principal investigator for the FY2025-2028 CEACSE Convergent Research Initiative project, which focused on advancing UTC's research in nanotechnology through computational modeling, material design and machine learning.

That initiative brought together faculty from multiple departments to develop advanced nanomaterials for applications such as energy storage, biodegradable materials and thermal protection systems. As collaborations, student involvement and externally supported projects expanded, the effort evolved into a shared research platform spanning advanced materials, manufacturing and energy.

Formal center status allows the team to scale partnerships, expand student training and accelerate multi-investigator research efforts. The center integrates AI-guided multiscale modeling to translate fundamental mechanisms into predictive, engineering-ready performance.

"Our focus is straightforward: connect nanoscale understanding to solutions for high-impact national needs," Barisik said. "We want to make it easier to translate fundamental insights into real-world impact."

"Convergence isn't a buzzword for us; it's the workflow. The problems we're tackling don't fit in one department, so the center is built to make cross-disciplinary work the default."

Beyond research growth and external funding, Barisik pointed to the center's academic and workforce role.

"One of the most important outcomes is what this means for students," he said. "A center gives us a stable home for training, where students can work across disciplines and learn how nanoscale science translates into real-world solutions. I think of it as preparing students for where technology is headed; nano-enabled technologies are becoming part of the mainstream, and we want our students to be familiar with them and confident working with them."

"For several years, we've been building nanotechnology awareness through hands-on educational activities that introduce students from K-12 through graduate levels and the broader community to nanoscale science and its real-world impact."

The center will continue collaborations with partners that include the U.S. Department of Energy, the National Science Foundation, Oak Ridge National Laboratory and industry stakeholders, with additional proposals in development.

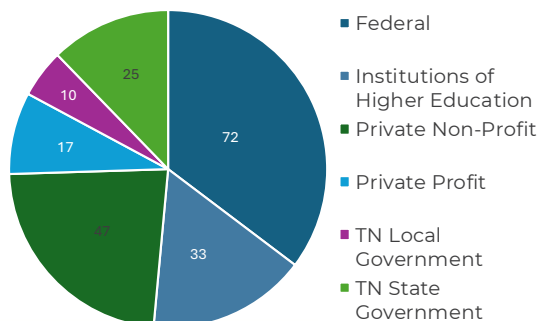
UTC Research Horizons

- High Research Productivity Across Disciplines
- Strategic Research Centers in High-Impact Areas
 - Driving growth in funding, partnerships, and innovation
- Research Driving Real-World Impact
 - Deploying research into real-world solutions across key domains
 - Strong partnerships with industry, government, and community

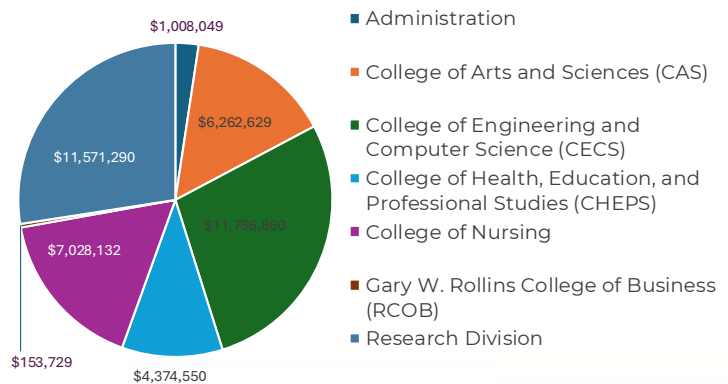


UTC Research Horizons

FY26 Active Awards by Sponsor Type



FY26 Active Awards by Division



Thriving Research Centers

RESEARCH INSTITUTE THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT CHATTANOOGA

- **Center for Urban Informatics and Progress**
- **Quantum Center**
- **NEW: Nanoengineering Center**
 - Exploring nanoscale research in materials, energy and advanced technologies
 - Partnerships with DOE, NSF, ORNL, the UT–Oak Ridge Innovation Institute and industry
 - Directed by mechanical engineering faculty member Dr. Murat Barisik
- **Center for Applied Geospatial Data Science**
- **Center for Regional Economic Research**



**AGENDA ITEM IX.
SUMMARY**

Date: Tuesday, May 12, 2026

Agenda Item: Appointment of New Chair



Action Required



No action required

PRESENTER(S): Mr. Scott LeRoy

PURPOSE & KEY POINTS: Mr. LeRoy will present Garnett Decosimo to the Board for approval as the next Chair of the UTC Advisory Board.

AGENDA ITEM X. SUMMARY

Date: Tuesday, May 12, 2026

Agenda Item: Appointment of New Student Member



Action Required



No action required

PRESENTER(S): Mr. Scott LeRoy will present an Advisory Board Student Member Nominee for consideration and approval by the Board.

**AGENDA ITEM XI.
SUMMARY**

Date: Tuesday, May 12, 2026

Agenda Item: Review of Proposed 2027 Meeting Schedule



Action Required



No action required

PRESENTER(S): Mr. Scott LeRoy will present the proposed 2027 meeting schedule.



**PROPOSED MEETING DATES
FOR 2026-2027**

- September 22, 2026 1:30-3:00pm
- January 26, 2027 1:30-3:00pm
- May 11, 2027 1:30-3:00pm

