

STUDENT RETENTION AND DIVERSITY STUDY 2011

**A Comparative Analysis of 2011 and 2008
Student Survey Data**



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**Student Retention and Diversity Study 2011
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga**

**Presentation to
Chancellor Roger Brown
and Executive Team**

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STUDY BACKGROUND

- The Student Retention and Diversity Study (SRDS) provided an opportunity to examine issues related to student life, diversity, and academics at UTC
- The first phase was conducted in 2008, establishing baseline data that informed university decision-making and initiatives
- The 2011 study allows a comparative analysis of survey data that assesses the impact of changes in the university from student perspectives since 2008



METHODOLOGY

Survey Development

- 2008: 52-item survey (and focus groups), based on
 - Tinto (1987) *Principles of Effective Retention*
 - 2001 Student Retention Study (UTC/CASR)
 - University of Rhode Island Diversity Survey
 - Campus input from various departments/units
- 2011: 49-item modified survey, based on
 - Review of 2008 findings, including write-in responses
 - Review by representatives from various UTC departments/units directly impacted by the findings
 - Review by CASR staff and University Planning
- The present survey included the removal of some items, the addition of other items, and the addition of response options for some existing items



METHODOLOGY

2011 SURVEY – Six Sections

- Choosing UTC
- Student Life at UTC (new)
- Academics at UTC
- Retention at UTC
- Diversity at UTC
- Demographic Questions



METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

- The 2008 survey was conducted via telephone and included 508 UTC student participants (5.2% response rate)
- The 2011 survey was conducted using online methods, with a total of 881 student participants (7.7 % response rate)
- Increase of 2.5%

Response Rate	2011	2008	Difference
Number Completed Surveys	881	508	+373
Number UTC Students	11,438	9,807	+1631
Response Rate	7.7%	5.2%	+2.5%



METHODOLOGY

Data Analysis

- 2011 data were collected and preliminary analyses were conducted using the Qualtrics online program
- Additional analyses were conducted using SPSS
- 2011 and 2008 survey data were compared using:
 - Two-by-two cross-tabulations with chi-square statistics to determine statistically significant changes in *percentages*
 - Independent samples t-tests to determine statistically significant changes in *means*



METHODOLOGY

Selected Sample Characteristics

- 2011 sample
 - 80.6% Caucasian/White
 - 71.7% female
 - 95.1% heterosexual
 - 91.7% full-time student
 - 75.6% financial aid recipient
 - 41.9% reside on-campus
 - 26.4% first generation college student
 - 6.1% reported a disability
 - 1.8% international student
 - Representation across colleges
 - Representation across class ranking
- 2011 sample closely mirrored the sample from 2008 with the exception of 15% more female and students who live on campus
- 2011 sample fairly representative of UTC population with the exception of higher proportion of females, White, full-time, and on-campus residency students



KEY FINDINGS



CHOOSING UTC

Reasons to Attend

○ Top five answers 2011

- Location
- Cost/affordability
- Had the student's major
- Liked the university/
what the student
heard about it
- Smaller campus
size/more personal
attention (new)

*Significant increases in all but
one category*

○ Top five answers 2008

- Location
- Had the student's
major
- Cost/affordability
- Interest in specific
majors/opportunities
associated with UTC
- Liked the university/
what the student
heard about it



CHOOSING UTC

What Students Like Best about UTC

○ Top five answers 2011

- Location
- Cost/affordability (new)
- Professors
- Friends students have here
- Smaller campus size/more intimate atmosphere

Significant increases in all categories

○ Top five answers 2008

- Smaller campus size/more personal attention
- Location
- Professors
- Majors offered
- Campus climate/environment



STUDENT LIFE AT UTC

Involvement in Campus Organizations

- Respondents reported more involvement in campus organizations than in 2008
 - Faith-based organizations (35% vs. 10%; +25%)*
 - Honor societies (21.3% vs. 5.8%; +15.5%)*
 - Fraternities and sororities (18.3% vs. 11.9%; 6.4%)*
 - Interest or departmental clubs (27.7% vs. 23.9%; 3.8%)
 - Campus organizations (31.3% vs. 28.7%; 2.6%)
- New to the 2011 survey, students reported involvement in
 - Campus recreation (33.7%)
 - Athletics (8.3%)

**Significant increases*



STUDENT LIFE AT UTC

Studying Preferences (New in 2011)

- Students indicated that they like to study both on and off campus
 - On-campus study location preferences
 - Library (70.5%)
 - Residence hall/room (39.5%)
 - Classroom/academic building (37.1%)
 - University Center (34.3%)
 - Outdoors/green space (29%)
 - Off-campus study location preferences
 - Apartment/housing (81.1%)
 - Coffee house/restaurant (40.1%)
 - Outdoors/green space (25.3%)



ACADEMICS AT UTC

Perceptions of Advisement

- Positive consistent findings across both survey years for
 - ‘I know my advisor’s name’
 - ‘I am prepared for my advising appointment when I see my advisor’
 - ‘My advisor is available to talk to me’
 - ‘I have the same person in my major department to advise me each semester’
- Also, three new items added in 2011 ranked high
 - ‘I talk to my advisor at least once per semester’
 - ‘My advisor is familiar with on-line registration and the Banner system’
 - ‘I know my major’s requirements before my advisor tells me’

ACADEMICS AT UTC

Perceptions of Advisement (cont)

- **Three items ranked high, but significantly decreased**
 - ‘My advisor and I mainly discuss my course schedule’
(2008 mean=1.76, 2011 mean=1.90)
 - ‘I have received excellent advising at UTC’
(2008 mean=1.98, 2011 mean=2.18)
 - ‘My advisor and I have a good relationship’
(2008 mean=2.04, 2011 mean=2.27)
- **Final two items moving significantly away from ‘agreement’ and toward ‘disagreement’**
 - ‘My advisor talks to me about career opportunities’
(2008 mean= 2.42, 2011 mean=2.66)
 - ‘My advisor knows me well’
(2008 mean=2.31, 2001 mean=2.71)

1= Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Disagree 4=Strongly Disagree



ACADEMICS AT UTC

Perceptions of Advisement (cont)

- Taken together, students' responses to the prior items can be seen in their overall perceptions of advisement
 - Students rated advisement in terms of their *majors* as 'fairly well' across both years
 - Respondents' perceptions of advisement in terms of *career options* were rated significantly less favorably in 2011; this was so for all class rankings, freshmen through seniors

Advisement	Mean 2011	Mean 2008	Difference
Regarding academic major	2.06	1.95	+.107
Regarding career options	2.47	1.71	+.758

1=Very well 2=Fairly well 3=Poorly 4=Not at all



ACADEMICS AT UTC

Frequency of Visits to Campus Resources

- Across both years, respondents ‘often’ visit
 - Library
- They ‘occasionally’ visit
 - Professors
 - Advisors
- Students reported that they ‘seldom’ visit
 - Computer Center
 - Math Lab
 - Center for Advisement and Student Success
 - Counseling and Career Planning Center
 - Writing Center



ACADEMICS AT UTC

Frequency of Visits to Campus Resources

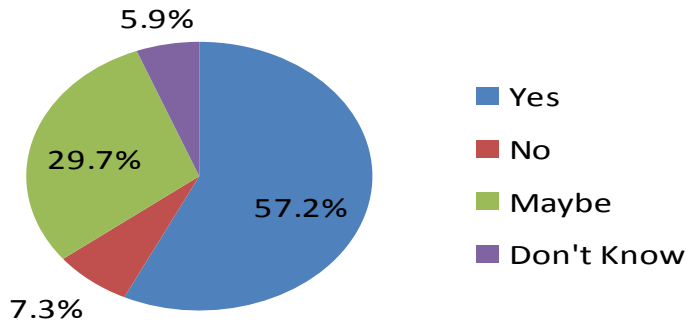
- Respondents reported virtually ‘never’ visiting
 - Dean of Students Office
 - Office of Students with Disabilities
 - Office of Multicultural Affairs
 - International Education
 - Office of Cooperative Education
 - Office of Equity and Diversity
- **Note: It should be pointed out that frequency of student visits to university offices and academic resources is not necessarily a reflection of the office’s function or effectiveness. This may be a reflection of student need or interest, or may indicate a lack of awareness of the offices and the services they provide.**



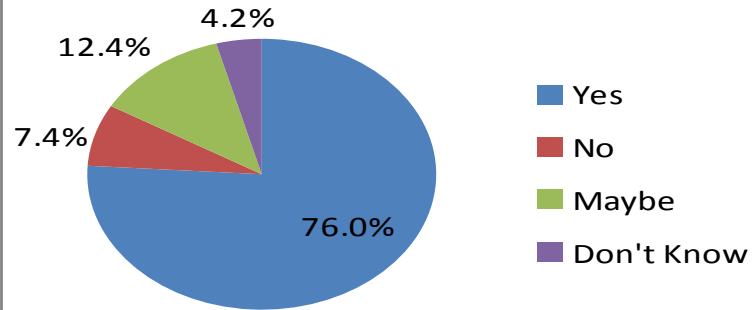
ACADEMICS AT UTC

Service Learning

**Interest in Service Learning
2011**



**Interest in Service Learning
2008**



- About a quarter of the respondents, both years, reported that they have participated in a service learning opportunity
- A significant decrease was found in the number of students who indicated that they would like to see service learning opportunities incorporated as a course requirement (57.2% in 2011, 76% in 2008)
- However, significantly more said 'maybe (29.7% vs. 12.4%)



ACADEMICS AT UTC

Expectations of Professors

○ Top half answers 2011

- To effectively teach the course material (new)
- To make the course interesting
- To help build the student's intellectual abilities
- To help develop students' critical thinking skills (new)

Significant decreases in all categories

○ Top half answers 2008

- To help build the student's intellectual abilities
- To make the course interesting
- To provide broad information apart from the text
- To use modern technology in the classroom/assignments



RETENTION AT UTC

Dropping Out

- Close to *two-thirds* of respondents in both survey years indicated that they knew someone who dropped out of UTC
- Around *one-third* reported having personally contemplated dropping out in both survey years
- Of those who had thought about dropping out, only 18% of the 2011 respondents said that leaving was 'likely' to happen as compared to 21.4% in 2008, which reflected a significant decrease



RETENTION AT UTC

Why Students May Leave/Drop Out of UTC

○ Top third reasons SOME STUDENTS drop out 2011

- Poor time management
- Poor study habits
- *Financial issues*
- Lack of motivation
- Problems adjusting to college life
- *Desired to go to a different school because of career interests or major*
- Unwillingness to make academic commitments
- Lack of clearly defined academic goals
- Insufficient academic skills

○ Top third reasons STUDENT considered leaving 2011

- Desired to go to a different school because of career interests or major
- Financial issues
- Uncertainty about career aspirations
- Lack of course availability
- Lack of advisement
- *Depression, anxiety or other mental health issue*
- *Lack of motivation*
- *Academic difficulty*
- Lack of mentors

RETENTION AT UTC


Fundamental Attribution Error

- When asked why *others* may drop out of college, respondents tended to list *internal* reasons
- When asked why *they* may have considered dropping out, they tended to cite *external* reasons
- Results reflect a psychological phenomena known as fundamental attribution error (Ross, 1977), which is the tendency to attribute
 - Others' failures to internal/dispositional shortcomings, Personal downfalls to external/situational reasons outside of one's control
- This phenomena occurred in both survey years, with responses being very similar across years




DIVERSITY AT UTC

Diversity and Multiculturalism

- **Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with 21 statements pertaining to diversity and multiculturalism at UTC related to**
 - Academics/Learning
 - Institutional Policies/Culture
 - Climate/Environment
 - **Overall, responses were very positive across all three sections, both survey years**
 - **Highlights: Academics/Learning (high agreement both years)**
 - ‘Diversity on campus improves the quality of education’
 - ‘Courses on race, culture, ethnicity, and other issues are regularly offered at UTC’
 - ‘Where appropriate, professors address multicultural issues in the classroom’
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DIVERSITY AT UTC

Diversity and Multiculturalism (cont)

- **Highlights: Institutional Policies/Culture** (high agreement)
 - ‘This university actively promotes diversity’
 - ‘Scholars and artists of color are invited to the campus to participate in campus events’
 - ‘The university provides programs to ensure success of differently-abled students’
 - ‘UTC has done a good job providing programs and activities that promote multicultural understanding’
 - **Highlights: Climate/Environment** (high agreement)
 - ‘The campus environment is free from racial conflict’
 - ‘Minorities feel comfortable at this university’
 - ‘My experiences since coming to UTC have led me to become more understanding of racial/ethnic differences’
 - **One concern** (across both years), respondents’ disagreed:
 - ‘Diversity at UTC is one of the reasons why I chose to come here’
- 

DIVERSITY AT UTC

Disparaging Remarks on Campus

- *‘Have you ever heard anyone on campus (such as faculty, staff, administrators, students) make insensitive or disparaging remarks about specific groups of people (such as women, persons of color, individuals with disabilities, low-income persons)?’*
 - The majority of 2011 respondents (76%) said ‘yes’, compared to only 30.6% in 2008, a large percent and statistically significant increase
- **Those who indicated ‘yes’ were then asked to indicate the frequency in which they have heard the remarks being made by faculty, administrators, staff, and students**
 - The *frequency* in which these remarks were reportedly heard was low, particularly those by employees
 - Other students reportedly most often heard making disparaging remarks



DIVERSITY AT UTC

Disparaging Remarks on Campus

- Frequency of hearing disparaging comments made by
 - Administrators (virtually ‘never’)
 - Staff (mostly ‘never’)
 - Faculty (‘never’ to ‘seldom’)
 - Students (‘seldom’ to ‘occasionally’)
- Most consistently disparaged groups
 - Racial/ethnic minorities
 - Women
 - Gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered (GLBT) persons
- Least disparaged groups
 - Persons with disabilities
 - Non-native English speakers
 - Low-income persons



DIVERSITY AT UTC

Diversity, Acceptance, and Respect

- **Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with positive statements regarding diversity acceptance, and respect at UTC, related to what they are observing**
- **Students responded positively across both years, most with significant increases in level of agreement.**

Highlights:

- Respect by faculty and students for individuals of different racial and ethnic groups
- Presence of an ethnically diverse faculty, administrator, staff, and student body
- Multicultural participation in student government organizations, judiciary/disciplinary programs, and minority sponsored programs
- Opportunities for frequent contact with racially/ethnically diverse faculty
- Residence hall assignments for the purpose of promoting diversity



DIVERSITY AT UTC

Diversity, Acceptance, and Respect (cont)

- **Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with negative statements regarding diversity acceptance, and respect at UTC, related to their group identities**
- **Students responded positively across both years, most with significant decreases in level of agreement. Highlights include respondents disagreeing that they:**
 - Always have to represent their group in a positive light
 - Have to be the “resident authority” for their group
 - Feel pressured to show loyalty to their group
 - Feel isolated or left out of campus activities
 - Feared for their safety
 - Were a victim of a sex or hate crime



DIVERSITY AT UTC

Experiencing Harassment

- **Overall, students on both surveys ‘disagreed’ that they have experienced the following forms of harassment:**
 - Verbal comments
 - Written comments
 - Being ignored
 - Insults
 - Threats of physical violence
 - Actual physical assault or injury
 - Anonymous phone calls
 - Called names
 - Graffiti
 - Hate jokes
 - Cartoons
 - Other forms of harassment



DIVERSITY AT UTC

Experiencing Harassment (cont)

- **Nonetheless, about one in four students did report experiencing a form of harassment at some point at UTC in both 2011 and 2008 (27.5% and 25.5% respectively; no statistical difference)**
- **Of those students who did:**
 - About one third of incidents were reportedly due to race (2011, 31.5%; 2008, 39.7%)
 - About one third were reportedly due to sex/gender (2011, 30.9%; 2008, 31.1%)
 - The remaining were due to religion, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation/gender identity, income level, disability
- **Also, of those who reported being harassed, only 5% of 2011, and 7.8% of 2008, said they filed a complaint or grievance (no statistical difference)**




CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Overall, the 2011 SRDS reflects that there are many elements associated with the university that students appreciate, support and enjoy
- The students like being here - they like the university, its people, its location, its size, and find it to be affordable
- They appreciate the more engaging environment and are involved in campus organizations, like to study in the library, and value relationships with their advisors
- Students at UTC want to learn from their courses and want to learn to think critically
- In general, they welcome an inclusive, diverse atmosphere
- Respondents seemed positive about being at UTC



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continued review of the advisement process, especially ensuring that students feel ‘known’ by their advisor, and that they receive career advisement at all stages of the college experience, seems to be an area for additional focus
 - That the majority of students indicated that they ‘rarely’ take advantage of a number of offices and services offered on the campus that could enhance their academic situations should be further explored
 - Whether this is primarily a reflection of student interest or need, or if students are unaware of the resources, where they are located, and/or what services are provided, or whether other factors may be involved, should be explored
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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Further exploration of interest in experiential learning may be helpful as we initiate the new ThinkAchieve Quality Enhancement Plan
- A study of students who have dropped out or left UTC, and their reasons for doing so, could be more enlightening than present findings, as to relevant retention issues here at UTC
- Though overall diversity findings were positive, hearing and experiencing insensitive or disparaging remarks by and among students at UTC remains an area of concern
 - A campus-wide student diversity training, such as the one implemented for UTC employees this year, should be considered

