

Retention Survey Results¹

Report created by OPEIR

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 THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
CHATTANOOGA

Introduction

Prior Student Characteristics

The prior students who completed the retention survey were more likely to attend UTC full-time (69.2%), consider themselves first-generation (41.1%), receive financial aid (61.6%), be female (47.3%), identify as white (55.1%), and be between the ages of 25 and 40 (42.5%).

Upper classmen made up over 70% of respondents; most leaving UTC when they were Juniors (41.8%) or Seniors (29%). Their last year of attendance was likely to be in 2020 (20.1%), 2019 (13.8%), and 2021 (10.8%); however, 6.7% last attended in 2012. There were respondents who last attended UTC in every year between 2000 and 2021.

Respondent Demographics

Year Last Attended UTC		
2000	1	0.4%
2001	1	0.4%
2002	1	0.1%
2007	3	1.1%
2008	4	1.5%
2009	6	2.2%
2010	9	3.3%
2011	9	3.3%
2012	18	6.7%
2013	8	3.0%
2014	13	4.8%
2015	11	4.1%
2016	21	7.8%
2017	20	7.4%
2018	24	8.9%
2019	37	13.8%
2020	54	20.1%
2021	29	10.8%
No Response	23	7.9%

Classification		
	Frequency	Percent
Freshman	7	2.4%
Sophomore	30	10.3%
Junior	122	41.8%
Senior	85	29.1%
Graduate Student	1	0.3%
Other	24	8.2%
No Response	23	7.9%
Race/Ethnicity		
	Frequency	Percent
American Indian	1	0.3%
Asian American	6	2.1%
Bi/Multi Racial	3	1.0%
Black/African American	28	9.6%
Caucasian/White	161	55.1%
Hispanic/Latino/a	6	2.1%
Other	8	2.7%
Prefer Not to Answer	20	6.8%
No Response	59	20.3%

Enrollment		
	Frequency	Percent
Full-Time	202	69.2%
Part-Time	68	23.3%
No Response	22	7.5%
Age Range		
	Frequency	Percent
18-24	66	22.6%
25-40	124	42.5%
41-55	32	11.0%
56-70	11	3.8%
Older Than 70	1	0.3%
No Response	58	19.8%
Financial Aid		
	Frequency	Percent
Don't Recall	7	2.4%
No	79	27.1%
Yes	180	61.6%
No Response	26	8.9%

Gender		
	Frequency	Percent
Female	138	47.3%
Male	80	27.4%
Transgender Female	2	0.7%
Transgender Male	0	0.0%
Non-Conforming	1	0.3%
Not Listed	4	1.4%
Prefer Not to Answer	9	3.1%
No Response	58	19.8%
First-Generation College Student		
	Frequency	Percent
No	146	50.0%
Yes	120	41.1%
Unsure	2	0.7%
No Response	24	8.2%

Prior Student Characteristics Continued

Most students indicated they were last enrolled in a major from the College of Arts and Sciences (43.3%), followed by the College of Health, Education, and Professional Studies (23.6%), and then the Rollins College of Business and College of Engineering and Computer Science (16.5% each). The most common majors identified were Business Administration (10.2%), Communication (7.5%), and Psychology (7.1%).

Student Major College

Major College		
	Frequency	Percent
CAS	110	43.3%
RCOB	42	16.5%
CECS	42	16.5%
CHEPS	60	23.6%

Student Major While Enrolled

Student Major When Enrolled at UTC								
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
Accounting	8	3.1%	Entrepreneurship	1	0.4%	Nutrition	1	0.4%
Anthropology	1	0.4%	Environmental Science	9	3.5%	Paralegal B.A.S.	1	0.4%
Art	6	2.4%	Exercise Science	13	5.1%	Political Science	6	2.4%
Biology	3	1.2%	Finance	2	0.8%	Pre-Law	1	0.4%
Nursing	16	6.3%	Math	3	1.2%	Pre-Pharmacy	1	0.4%
Business Administration	26	10.2%	Geology	3	1.2%	Psychology	18	7.1%
Chemical Engineering	3	1.2%	Health & Physical Education K-12	1	0.4%	Religious Studies	1	0.4%
Chemistry	3	1.2%	History	9	3.5%	Secondary Education	3	1.2%
Civil Engineering	3	1.2%	Information Technology	1	0.4%	Social Work	4	1.6%
Communication	19	7.5%	Integrated Studies: Graphic Design & Comm.	1	0.4%	Sociology	6	2.4%
Computer Science	14	5.5%	Interdisciplinary Studies	1	0.4%	Spanish	1	0.4%
Criminal Justice	4	1.6%	Interior Architecture	5	2.0%	Stem Education	2	0.8%
Cybersecurity	1	0.4%	International Studies	2	0.8%			
Early Childhood	4	1.6%	Law Enforcement Command Course	1	0.4%			
Education	12	4.7%	Legal Assistant Studies	1	0.4%			
Electrical Engineering	3	1.2%	Marketing	3	1.2%			
Engineering	4	1.6%	Mechanical Engineering	7	2.8%			
Engineering Management	5	2.0%	Mechatronics	1	0.4%			
English	8	3.1%	Middle Grades	2	0.8%			

Selection Factors

Students were given a set list of fifteen factors that attracted them to apply at UTC and were able to indicate multiple factors. These factors ranged from academic reasons to campus environment and social opportunities, as well as post-graduation factors like career average starting salaries. Top factors for consideration were the location of the campus (27.8%), major and program offerings (14.9%), and cost/affordability (12.9%).

Next, students were asked to identify their ultimate reason for attending UTC. Limited to one selection, the top reasons matched previous selection factors identified but also identified two more: location/Chattanooga area (44.5%), the majors/programs offered (11.6%), cost/affordability (8.6%), ability to bring in transfer credit (5.8%), and had friends or family attend UTC (5.8%).

Factors and Reasons for Attending UTC

Factors Attracted Students to UTC		
	Frequency	Percent
Ability to bring in transfer credit	65	8.4%
Athletics or Sports Teams	7	0.9%
Availability of financial aid	69	8.9%
Average Starting Salaries for Graduates	2	0.3%
Campus Diversity	11	1.4%
Campus Size	54	7.0%
Cost/Affordability	100	12.9%
Had Friends/Family who Attended UTC	52	6.7%
Location (Chattanooga Area)	215	27.8%
On-Campus Living Opportunities	24	3.1%
Recommendation of HS Guidance Counselor	7	0.9%
Safety School	7	0.9%
Student Clubs	21	2.7%
The Majors and Programs Offered	115	14.9%
UTC's Reputation	24	3.1%

Ultimate Reason for Choosing UTC		
	Frequency	Percent
Ability to bring transfer credit	17	5.8%
Athletics or Sports Teams	5	1.7%
Availability of Financial Aid	7	2.4%
Average Starting Salaries for Graduates	0	0.0%
Campus Diversity	4	1.4%
Campus Size	3	1.0%
Cost/Affordability	25	8.6%
Had Friends/Family who Attended UTC	17	5.8%
Location (Chattanooga Area)	130	44.5%
On-Campus Living Opportunities	4	1.4%
Recommendation of HS Guidance Counselor	0	0.0%
Safety School	2	0.7%
Student Clubs	2	0.7%
The Majors and Programs Offered	34	11.6%
UTC's Reputation	3	1.0%
Other	12	4.1%
No Response	27	9.2%

Selection Factors Continued

Interestingly, what students liked most when attending UTC is also what they liked least. Almost 30% of respondents selected academic experience as the most and least liked. Students were also asked about their expectations for professors. The majority expected professors to effectively teach the course material (20.1%), followed by make the course interesting (14.3%), to provide real life examples and context (13.6%), and to develop students' critical thinking skills (12%). When asked if professors met expectations while at UTC, 14% of students strongly agreed and 32.5% somewhat agreed.

Best and Least Liked Things at UTC

Best Liked Thing at UTC		
	Frequency	Percent
Academic Experience	80	27.4%
Campus Facilities	50	17.1%
Campus Qualities	51	17.5%
Campus Social Experiences	36	12.3%
Student Life	16	5.5%
Other	20	6.8%
No Response	39	13.4%

Least Liked Thing at UTC		
	Frequency	Percent
Academic Experience	85	29.1%
Campus Facilities	19	6.5%
Campus Qualities	25	8.6%
Campus Social Experiences	30	10.3%
Student Life	19	6.5%
Other	70	24.0%
No Response	44	15.1%

Expectations of Professors

Expectations of Professors		
	Frequency	Percent
To Effectively Teach the Course Materials	219	20.1%
To help build the students' intellectual abilities	118	10.8%
To help develop students' critical thinking	137	12.6%
To help students find their career path	75	6.9%
To incorporate experiential learning	93	8.5%
To make learning fun and easy	85	7.8%
To make the course interesting	156	14.3%
To provide real life examples and context	148	13.6%
To use technology in the classroom	59	5.4%

Did Professors Meet Expectations		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	41	14.0%
Somewhat Agree	95	32.5%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	32	11.0%
Somewhat Disagree	28	9.6%
Strongly Disagree	28	9.6%
No Response	39	13.4%

Results

Utilization of Campus Resources

The survey also attempted to understand how engaged the student may have been on campus by asking how often they utilized various centers and services. Since names and structure may have changed over the years, centers and programs were grouped together by the type of support offered. Five support categories were created including Academic Support Centers, Career Services, Diversity and Inclusion Support, Health and Wellness Services, and Student Support Services. Examples of each were provided for students. The most common response for all categories was that students never utilized these services or supports. The same trend was evident when asked about social events or group activities: most respondents were not involved. Some students took advantage of the text box designated for “other” to share they worked full time or were adult learners who spent time with family when not in class.

Academic Support Centers (Center for Academic Support and Advisement, Math Plaza, Writing and Communication Center, MOCS One)		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	10	3.4%
Weekly	48	16.4%
Monthly	28	9.6%
Every 3-4 Months	22	7.5%
Once Per Year	23	7.9%
Twice a Year	19	6.5%
Never	92	31.5%
No Response	50	17.1%
Career Services (Center for Career and Leadership Development, Center for Professional Education)		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	1	0.3%
Weekly	8	2.7%
Monthly	8	2.7%
Every 3-4 Months	17	5.8%
Once Per Year	36	12.3%
Twice a Year	14	4.8%
Never	153	52.4%
No Response	55	18.8%

Resources Utilized While Enrolled

Health and Wellness Services (Counseling Center, Student Health Services, Scrappy's Cupboard)		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	5	1.7%
Weekly	19	6.5%
Monthly	25	8.6%
Every 3-4 Months	20	6.8%
Once Per Year	19	6.5%
Twice a Year	20	6.8%
Never	128	43.8%
No Response	56	19.2%
Student Support Services (Disability Resource Center, Veteran Student Services, Center for Global Education)		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	3	1.0%
Weekly	9	3.1%
Monthly	19	6.5%
Every 3-4 Months	13	4.5%
Once Per Year	16	5.5%
Twice a Year	7	2.4%
Never	169	57.9%
No Response	56	19.2%

Diversity and Inclusion Support (Center for Women and Gender Equity, Multicultural Center, Office of Equity and Inclusion)		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	4	1.4%
Weekly	11	3.8%
Monthly	6	2.1%
Every 3-4 Months	7	2.4%
Once Per Year	6	2.1%
Twice a Year	10	3.4%
Never	192	65.8%
No Response	56	19.2%

Participation in Social Groups

Participation in Social Groups		
	Frequency	Percent
Athletics	8	2.9%
Campus Recreation	29	10.5%
Clubs & Organizations	35	12.6%
Faith Based Organizations on Campus	31	11.2%
Fraternities/ Sororities	20	7.2%
Honor Societies	11	4.0%
None of These Groups	143	51.6%

Utilization of Campus Resources Continued

Participation in Academic Activities

Department Events, Lectures, and Webinars		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	24	8.2%
Weekly	25	8.6%
Monthly	33	11.3%
Every 3-4 Months	22	7.5%
Once Per Year	27	9.2%
Twice a Year	21	7.2%
Never	92	31.5%
No Response	48	16.4%
Library Workshops and Events		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	9	3.1%
Weekly	10	3.4%
Monthly	23	7.9%
Every 3-4 Months	19	6.5%
Once Per Year	22	7.5%
Twice a Year	17	5.8%
Never	141	48.3%
No Response	51	17.5%
Math Plaza Tutoring		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	4	1.4%
Weekly	27	9.2%
Monthly	17	5.8%
Every 3-4 Months	9	3.1%
Once Per Year	10	3.4%
Twice a Year	6	2.1%
Never	166	56.8%
No Response	53	18.2%

Professor Office Hours		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	2	0.7%
Weekly	40	13.7%
Monthly	70	24.0%
Every 3-4 Months	43	14.7%
Once Per Year	26	8.9%
Twice a Year	19	6.5%
Never	42	14.4%
No Response	50	17.1%
Research or Research Lab Activities		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	6	2.1%
Weekly	34	11.6%
Monthly	20	6.8%
Every 3-4 Months	13	4.5%
Once Per Year	11	3.8%
Twice a Year	8	2.7%
Never	151	51.7%
No Response	49	16.8%
Study Groups		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	8	2.7%
Weekly	50	17.1%
Monthly	48	16.4%
Every 3-4 Months	22	7.5%
Once Per Year	13	4.5%
Twice a Year	5	1.7%
Never	91	31.2%
No Response	55	18.8%

Tutoring (Including Supplemental Instruction)		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	5	1.7%
Weekly	27	9.2%
Monthly	20	6.8%
Every 3-4 Months	16	5.5%
Once Per Year	8	2.7%
Twice a Year	6	2.1%
Never	159	54.5%
No Response	51	17.5%
Writing and Communication Center Advising		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	3	1.0%
Weekly	7	2.4%
Monthly	20	6.8%
Every 3-4 Months	14	4.8%
Once Per Year	14	4.8%
Twice a Year	14	4.8%
Never	168	57.5%
No Response	52	17.8%

Utilization of Campus Resources Continued

Participation in Social Events and Activities

Art Shows, Musical Performances, and Theatre Productions		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	1	0.3%
Weekly	11	3.8%
Monthly	24	8.2%
Every 3-4 Months	27	9.2%
Once Per Year	41	14.0%
Twice a Year	24	8.2%
Never	114	39.0%
No Response	50	17.1%
Cultural Events or Celebrations		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	2	0.7%
Weekly	5	1.7%
Monthly	21	7.2%
Every 3-4 Months	21	7.2%
Once Per Year	23	7.9%
Twice a Year	15	5.1%
Never	152	52.1%
No Response	53	18.2%
Faith-Based Events		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	4	1.4%
Weekly	18	6.2%
Monthly	14	4.8%
Every 3-4 Months	6	2.1%
Once Per Year	7	2.4%
Twice a Year	6	2.1%
Never	184	63.0%
No Response	53	18.2%

Film Showings		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	0	0.0%
Weekly	8	2.7%
Monthly	11	3.8%
Every 3-4 Months	12	4.1%
Once Per Year	23	7.9%
Twice a Year	11	3.8%
Never	176	60.3%
No Response	51	17.5%
Fraternity/Sorority Functions		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	12	4.1%
Weekly	9	3.1%
Monthly	9	3.1%
Every 3-4 Months	5	1.7%
Once Per Year	4	1.4%
Twice a Year	3	1.0%
Never	198	67.8%
No Response	52	17.8%
Political Events		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	2	0.7%
Weekly	3	1.0%
Monthly	11	3.8%
Every 3-4 Months	8	2.7%
Once Per Year	13	4.5%
Twice a Year	8	2.7%
Never	196	67.1%
No Response	51	17.5%

Sports Games/ Matches		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	4	1.4%
Weekly	17	5.8%
Monthly	29	9.9%
Every 3-4 Months	18	6.2%
Once Per Year	17	5.8%
Twice a Year	14	4.8%
Never	144	49.3%
No Response	49	16.8%
UTC Wide Events		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily	1	0.3%
Weekly	12	4.1%
Monthly	17	5.8%
Every 3-4 Months	18	6.2%
Once Per Year	20	6.8%
Twice a Year	13	4.5%
Never	159	54.5%
No Response	52	17.8%

Retention

Less than one percent of the students completing the survey left UTC because of probation. The most common reasons were financial issues (21.1%), depression (15.2%), academic difficulty (13.7%), desire to change school based on career/degree interests (11.3%), and a life event or personal emergency (10.3%). In the open-ended text box, more than 4% responded that professors were the reason for leaving. Although some respondents would have been enrolled at the start of the global pandemic only four indicated that was why they left however three additional prior students indicated that campus safety, unrelated to the pandemic, was the reason. The first table to the right provides frequency for all 19 of the reasons students reported for leaving UTC.

While many students indicated that they were interested in UTC because of the affordability, it appears that cost plays a larger factor in retention. The comments directly related to cost targeted the add on expenses of attending UTC: parking, fees, books, and ancillary supplies like Scantron sheets or exam books. Additionally, depression and academic difficulty are linked as students who indicated that they were experiencing academic difficulties also reported depression.

Reasons Student Left UTC

Reasons Student Left UTC		
	Frequency	Percent
Academic Difficulty	28	13.7%
Campus Safety	3	1.5%
Depression	31	15.2%
Desired to go to Different School because of Career Interests/Available Majors	23	11.3%
Faculty Issues	9	4.4%
Financial Issues	43	21.1%
Forced to Leave Due to Probation	2	1.0%
Intended to Leave Prior to Degree Completion	4	2.0%
Issues with Course Availability	18	8.8%
Lack of Connection to Advisor and/or Mentors	12	5.9%
Lack of Motivation to Finish a Degree	4	2.0%
Life Event or Personal Emergency	21	10.3%
Moved from Area	4	2.0%
Needed/Wanted to be Closer to Home	4	2.0%
Non-Academic Responsibilities	17	8.3%
Pandemic Concerns	4	2.0%
Relationship Stress	2	1.0%
Student's Background Differs from that of Most Students	1	0.5%
Uncertainty About Career Aspirations	9	4.4%

Likelihood of Returning to UTC

Likelihood of Re-Enrolling at UTC ¹		
	Frequency	Percent
Not at All Likely	99	42.5%
Somewhat Unlikely	52	22.3%
Somewhat Likely	43	18.5%
Very Likely	39	16.7%
No Response	59	25.3%

¹ Percent of likelihood based on those who responded, however 25.3% did not respond.

Retention Continued

Students were then asked about the likelihood of re-enrolling at UTC within the next two years to determine if the reasons for leaving were continuing to impact their higher education obtainment. Thirty-five percent of the prior students indicated they are likely to return. Further, students could provide contact information if they wanted someone from UTC to reach out about re-enrolling and 50 people did so.

The last question on the survey allowed students to provide feedback to the inquiry if there was anything additional UTC could have done to help the student be more successful. These responses were grouped together by common themes. The most common theme was around advising, followed by course scheduling, faculty, financial, and non-traditional student support. One student comment in particular addressed multiple themes; "I felt lost in what steps to take as a transfer student. I feel like better communication between advisors and students as well as more accessible classes for unconventional students like myself with (ie, work, family)".

While most of these quotes are aimed toward understanding reasons why students left UTC and what the institution could have done better, some students shared positive comments as well. Most of those comments were centered around providing resources such as, "They did help by offering me counseling services and explaining Scruppy's cupboard to me".

Themes of Retention Barriers

Theme	Student Quote
Advising	"Have advisors who are more knowledgeable about courses that are not in their department but coincide with a students educational goals."
	"I wish that I had someone to take an interest in my progression, and help develop a path of success."
	"Warned me that I was in trouble while something still could have done, because my grade were also suffering."
	"As a transfer student trying to take pre-med courses, advisors were wildly unhelpful and uninterested in helping me."
Course Access	"Offer more evening, Friday and weekend classes"
	"Because I work full-time, the availability of courses became extremely difficult to attend on campus classes to finish out my last semester. Not everyone can make a day class so without the availability of a night course or remote learning it just became impossible to finish"
	"As a working individual and provider for my family. It was hard to find classes to take either online or evening to satisfy my degree."
	"All of my classes were full and I couldn't sign up for any of them."
	"Some classes weren't offered frequently enough."
	"Give seniors first choices for classes they need to graduate!"
Faculty	"Need better science department teachers; they lacked compassion and had poor teaching skills. They as if they wanted us to fail."
	"Actually monitor online courses and care about what their professors are like. Ive had more passionate professors at a community college that cared about the course materials than at UTC."
	"Some of the professors treated me with a condescending attitude and were unwilling to educate me on the material. It did not feel like an enjoyable learning experience."
Financial	"Yes the payment plan at the school is too expensive - No one single can't pay \$500 a month, and pay out pocket for books."
	"More scholarships available"
	"given me my refund faster so I couldve bought textbooks on time instead of falling weeks behind in all my classes!"
	"Been more transparent about qualifications for the nearby state student tuition discount."
Non-Traditional Student Support	"Reached out. I was an adult learner, established with a family, house, full time job and the on campus feel is not conducive to that. I choose to go to change schools that had a larger online offering."
	"Wasn't fitting into a community"
	"better support for non-traditional adult students"
	"Have a genuine non-traditional program for working adults"
	"activities for non traditional students, club for non traditional students, support group"

Conclusion

Areas for Improvement

Five main themes emerged around issues impacting student retention and completion including Advising, Course Access, Faculty, Financial, and Non-Traditional Student Support. Two of these issues, Course Access and Non-Traditional Student Support appear to have the greatest immediate impact on a student's trajectory to graduation. Recommendations below provide an example of a best practice to address each issue.

1. Advising-Implement an early warning system consistently across campus based on student behavior prior to midterm grades.
2. Course Access- Audit current course schedule to determine need and feasibility of expanding course offering times to after 5:00 pm and potentially weekends. Determine opportunities to provide degree programs targeted at non-traditional students.
3. Faculty- offer or expand faculty occasions to revisit QM practices or provide ongoing online course development training.
4. Financial- review timeline of when students receive refund or provide opportunities for students to have payment plan for books until aid comes through.
5. Non-Traditional Student Support- provide a support center entirely geared toward non-traditional students: advising, tutoring, access to resources outside of 9am to 5pm.

