

## Retention Survey Results

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### Introduction and Key Findings

Recently, a survey was distributed to students who attended UTC, did not receive a degree from UTC, chose not to return to UTC, and did not complete a degree at any other institution. A total of 292 students completed the survey. While the survey is limited in scope, based on the demographic makeup of the respondents, two key actionable areas emerged.

1. **Course access** was consistently named as a barrier to continuation of studies and degree attainment. Course access included considerations of courses such as modality, time of day, and frequency offered.
2. **Non-traditional student support** was identified as a gap leaving students less engaged. Requested non-traditional student support not only refers to available services, but academic programs and a sense of community.

### 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.

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%).

**Table 1: Respondent Demographics**

Classification			Age Range		
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
Freshman	7	2.4%	18-24	66	22.6%
Sophomore	30	10.3%	25-40	124	42.5%
Junior	122	41.8%	41-55	32	11.0%
Senior	85	29.1%	56-70	11	3.8%
Graduate student	1	0.3%	Older than 70	1	0.3%
Other	24	8.2%	No response	58	19.8%
No response	23	7.9%			
Race/Ethnicity			Gender		
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
American Indian	1	0.3%	Female	138	47.3%
Asian American	6	2.1%	Male	80	27.4%
Bi/Multi Racial	3	1.0%	Transgender female	2	0.7%
Black/African American	28	9.6%	Transgender male	0	0.0%
Caucasian/White	161	55.1%	Non-conforming	1	0.3%
Hispanic/Latino/a	6	2.1%	Not listed	4	1.4%
Other	8	2.7%	Prefer not to answer	9	3.1%
Prefer not to answer	20	6.8%	No response	58	19.8%
No response	59	20.3%			
Year Last Attended UTC			Enrollment		
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
2000	1	0.4%	Full-time	202	69.2%
2001	1	0.4%	Part-time	68	23.3%
2002	1	0.4%	No response	22	7.5%
2007	3	1.1%			
2008	4	1.5%			
2009	6	2.2%	First-Generation College Student		
2010	9	3.3%		Frequency	Percent
2011	9	3.3%	No	146	50.0%
2012	18	6.7%	Yes	120	41.1%
2013	8	3.0%	Unsure	2	0.7%
2014	13	4.8%	No response	24	8.2%
2015	11	4.1%			
2016	21	7.8%	Financial Aid		
2017	20	7.4%		Frequency	Percent
2018	24	8.9%	Don't recall	7	2.4%
2019	37	13.8%	No	79	27.1%
2020	54	20.1%	Yes	180	61.6%
2021	29	10.8%	No response	26	8.9%
No response	23	7.9%			

**Table 2: Student Major College**

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

**Table 3: Student Major While Enrolled**

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

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 (Table 6). 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.

**Table 4: Factors and Reasons for Attending UTC**

Factors Attracted Students to UTC			Ultimate Reason for Choosing UTC		
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
Ability to bring in transfer credit	65	8.4%	Ability to bring in transfer credit	17	5.8%
Athletics or sports teams	7	0.9%	Athletics or sports teams	5	1.7%
Availability of financial aid	69	8.9%	Availability of financial aid	7	2.4%
Average starting salaries for graduates	2	0.3%	Average starting salaries for graduates	0	0.0%
Campus diversity	11	1.4%	Campus diversity	4	1.4%
Campus Size	54	7.0%	Campus Size	3	1.0%
Cost/affordability	100	12.9%	Cost/affordability	25	8.6%
Had friends/family who attended UTC	52	6.7%	Had friends/family who attended UTC	17	5.8%
Location (Chattanooga Area)	215	27.8%	Location (Chattanooga Area)	130	44.5%
On-campus living opportunities	24	3.1%	On-campus living opportunities	4	1.4%
Recommendation of high school guidance	7	0.9%	Recommendation of HS guidance counselor	0	0.0%
Safety School	7	0.9%	Safety School	2	0.7%
Student clubs	21	2.7%	Student clubs	2	0.7%
The majors and programs offered	115	14.9%	The majors and programs offered	34	11.6%
UTC's reputation	24	3.1%	UTC's reputation	3	1.0%
			Other	12	4.1%
			No Response	27	9.2%

**Table 5: Best and Least Liked Things at UTC**

Best Liked Thing at UTC			Least Liked Thing at UTC		
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
Academic Experience	80	27.4%	Academic Experience	85	29.1%
Campus Facilities	50	17.1%	Campus Facilities	19	6.5%
Campus Qualities	51	17.5%	Campus Qualities	25	8.6%
Campus Social Experiences	36	12.3%	Campus Social Experiences	30	10.3%
Student Life	16	5.5%	Student Life	19	6.5%
Other	20	6.8%	Other	70	24.0%
No response	39	13.4%	No response	44	15.1%

**Table 6: Expectations of Professors**

Expectations of Professors			Did Professors Meet Expectations		
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
To effectively teach the course material	219	20.1%	Strongly agree	41	14.0%
To help build the students' intellectual abi	118	10.8%	Somewhat agree	95	32.5%
To help develop students' critical thinking	137	12.6%	Neither agree nor disagree	32	11.0%
To help students find their career path	75	6.9%	Somewhat disagree	28	9.6%
To incorporate experiential learning in the	93	8.5%	Strongly disagree	28	9.6%
To make learning fun and easy	85	7.8%	No response	39	13.4%
To make the course interesting	156	14.3%			
To provide real life examples and context	148	13.6%			
To use technology in the classroom and in	59	5.4%			

## 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.

**Table 7: Participation in Social Groups**

Participation in Social Groups		
	Frequency	Percent
Athletics	8	2.9%
Campus recreation	29	10.5%
Clubs and organizations	35	12.6%
Faith based organizations on campus	31	11.2%
Fraternities or sororities	20	7.2%
Honor societies	11	4.0%
None of these groups	143	51.6%

**Table 8: Resources Utilized While Enrolled**

<b>Academic Support Centers (Center for Academic Support and Advisement, Math Plaza, Writing and Communication Center, MOCS One)</b>			<b>Health and Wellness Services (Counseling Center, Student Health Services, Scrappy's Cupboard)</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Daily	10	3.4%	Daily	5	1.7%
Weekly	48	16.4%	Weekly	19	6.5%
Monthly	28	9.6%	Monthly	25	8.6%
Every 3-4 months	22	7.5%	Every 3-4 months	20	6.8%
Once per year	23	7.9%	Once per year	19	6.5%
Twice a year	19	6.5%	Twice a year	20	6.8%
Never	92	31.5%	Never	128	43.8%
No response	50	17.1%	No response	56	19.2%
<b>Career Services (Center for Career and Leadership Development, Center for Professional Education)</b>			<b>Student Support Services (Disability Resource Center, Veteran Student Services, Center for Global Education)</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Daily	1	0.3%	Daily	3	1.0%
Weekly	8	2.7%	Weekly	9	3.1%
Monthly	8	2.7%	Monthly	19	6.5%
Every 3-4 months	17	5.8%	Every 3-4 months	13	4.5%
Once per year	36	12.3%	Once per year	16	5.5%
Twice a year	14	4.8%	Twice a year	7	2.4%
Never	153	52.4%	Never	169	57.9%
No response	55	18.8%	No response	56	19.2%
<b>Diversity and Inclusion Support (Center for Women and Gender Equity, Multicultural Center, Office of Equity and Inclusion)</b>					
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>			
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%			

**Table 9: Participation in Academic Activities**

Department Events, Lectures, and Webinars			Research or Research Lab Activities		
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
Daily	24	8.2%	Daily	6	2.1%
Weekly	25	8.6%	Weekly	34	11.6%
Monthly	33	11.3%	Monthly	20	6.8%
Every 3-4 months	22	7.5%	Every 3-4 months	13	4.5%
Once per year	27	9.2%	Once per year	11	3.8%
Twice a year	21	7.2%	Twice a year	8	2.7%
Never	92	31.5%	Never	151	51.7%
No response	48	16.4%	No response	49	16.8%
<b>Library Workshops and Events</b>			<b>Study Groups</b>		
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
Daily	9	3.1%	Daily	8	2.7%
Weekly	10	3.4%	Weekly	50	17.1%
Monthly	23	7.9%	Monthly	48	16.4%
Every 3-4 months	19	6.5%	Every 3-4 months	22	7.5%
Once per year	22	7.5%	Once per year	13	4.5%
Twice a year	17	5.8%	Twice a year	5	1.7%
Never	141	48.3%	Never	91	31.2%
No response	51	17.5%	No response	55	18.8%
<b>Math Plaza Tutoring</b>			<b>Tutoring (including Supplemental Instruction)</b>		
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
Daily	4	1.4%	Daily	5	1.7%
Weekly	27	9.2%	Weekly	27	9.2%
Monthly	17	5.8%	Monthly	20	6.8%
Every 3-4 months	9	3.1%	Every 3-4 months	16	5.5%
Once per year	10	3.4%	Once per year	8	2.7%
Twice a year	6	2.1%	Twice a year	6	2.1%
Never	166	56.8%	Never	159	54.5%
No response	53	18.2%	No response	51	17.5%
<b>Professor Office Hours</b>			<b>Writing and Communication Center Advising</b>		
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
Daily	2	0.7%	Daily	3	1.0%
Weekly	40	13.7%	Weekly	7	2.4%
Monthly	70	24.0%	Monthly	20	6.8%
Every 3-4 months	43	14.7%	Every 3-4 months	14	4.8%
Once per year	26	8.9%	Once per year	14	4.8%
Twice a year	19	6.5%	Twice a year	14	4.8%
Never	42	14.4%	Never	168	57.5%
No response	50	17.1%	No response	52	17.8%

**Table 10: Participation in Social Events and Activities**

<b>Art Shows, Musical Performances, and Theatre Productions</b>			<b>Fraternity/ Sorority Functions</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Daily	1	0.3%	Daily	12	4.1%
Weekly	11	3.8%	Weekly	9	3.1%
Monthly	24	8.2%	Monthly	9	3.1%
Every 3-4 months	27	9.2%	Every 3-4 months	5	1.7%
Once per year	41	14.0%	Once per year	4	1.4%
Twice a year	24	8.2%	Twice a year	3	1.0%
Never	114	39.0%	Never	198	67.8%
No response	50	17.1%	No response	52	17.8%
<b>Cultural Events or Celebrations</b>			<b>Political Events</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Daily	2	0.7%	Daily	2	0.7%
Weekly	5	1.7%	Weekly	3	1.0%
Monthly	21	7.2%	Monthly	11	3.8%
Every 3-4 months	21	7.2%	Every 3-4 months	8	2.7%
Once per year	23	7.9%	Once per year	13	4.5%
Twice a year	15	5.1%	Twice a year	8	2.7%
Never	152	52.1%	Never	196	67.1%
No response	53	18.2%	No response	51	17.5%
<b>Faith-Based Events</b>			<b>Sports Games/Matches</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Daily	4	1.4%	Daily	4	1.4%
Weekly	18	6.2%	Weekly	17	5.8%
Monthly	14	4.8%	Monthly	29	9.9%
Every 3-4 months	6	2.1%	Every 3-4 months	18	6.2%
Once per year	7	2.4%	Once per year	17	5.8%
Twice a year	6	2.1%	Twice a year	14	4.8%
Never	184	63.0%	Never	144	49.3%
No response	53	18.2%	No response	49	16.8%
<b>Film Showings</b>			<b>UTC Wide Events</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Daily	0	0.0%	Daily	1	0.3%
Weekly	8	2.7%	Weekly	12	4.1%
Monthly	11	3.8%	Monthly	17	5.8%
Every 3-4 months	12	4.1%	Every 3-4 months	18	6.2%
Once per year	23	7.9%	Once per year	20	6.8%
Twice a year	11	3.8%	Twice a year	13	4.5%
Never	176	60.3%	Never	159	54.5%
No response	51	17.5%	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. Table 12 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.

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 (Table 13). 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 Scrappy’s cupboard to me”.

**Table 11: 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%

**Table 12: Likelihood of Returning to UTC**

Likelihood of Re-Enrolling at UTC <sup>1</sup>		
	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%

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

## Conclusion & Summary

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.

3. Advising-Implement an early warning system consistently across campus based on student behavior *prior* to midterm grades.
4. 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.
5. Faculty- offer or expand faculty occasions to revisit QM practices or provide ongoing online course development training.
6. Financial- review timeline of when students receive refund or provide opportunities for students to have payment plan for books until aid comes through.
7. Non-Traditional Student Support- provide a support center entirely geared toward non-traditional students: advising, tutoring, access to resources outside of 9am to 5pm.

**Table 13: 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 been 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 acted 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"
	"Offer things that help working adults/adults with family/children."
	"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"