

QEP Proposal 18

QEP Concept Paper

Title: Creating a Chattanooga-Based Project as part of a Reimagined General Education Program

Summary: UTC is in the process of redesigning our General Education program to make it more meaningful for students and include more intentional high-impact practices. Our initial prototype includes a collaborative Chattanooga-based project that has proved especially popular with students in early feedback sessions. As currently imagined, it offers engaging opportunities to have students collaborate with a variety of other students and community partners to address a local or regional issue.

Rationale/Problem Statement/Growth Opportunity:

Employers who hire UTC graduates, regardless of major, have indicated that they want graduates to have skills in problem solving, teamwork, and understanding/navigating diverse perspectives (see the Community/Employer Spring 2021 subcommittee report at <https://www.utc.edu/media/73701>). As yet, UTC doesn't have a mechanism for all students to develop those skills, but our proposed Chattanooga-based project makes that possible. It also creates a recruiting tool for UTC to advertise a General Education opportunity that no other campus in the UT system offers.

Beyond the feedback from employers, the Chattanooga-based project is aligned with our new Strategic Plan, expected to be approved at this week's Board of Trustees meeting, as it addresses the importance of offering a distinctive educational experience at UTC. Specifically, it commits that UTC will define and promote UTC's distinctive educational experience; develop and implement a Reimagined General Education Program that offers a signature experience to UTC students while respecting and honoring Tennessee Transfer Pathways; implement curricular changes to ensure all students are prepared to live, work, and engage in reasoned discourse in a diverse, global society; and embed high impact practices within the Gen Ed curriculum.

Expected Outcomes/Impact on Student Learning

The Reimagining General Education committee has identified four areas of student learning that the Chattanooga-based project addresses:

- 1) Collaboration with Community Stakeholders
- 2) Collaboration with Teammates
- 3) Problem Solving
- 4) Civic Growth and Engagement

These areas of student learning will allow us to highlight the importance of including diverse perspectives, talents, experiences, and skills when attempting to address a challenging problem.

Learning outcomes include:

- Students will contribute to the project in ways that benefit the community partner's mission and needs.
- Students will demonstrate in-depth awareness about their contribution to moving group goals forward.
- Students will propose a plan and/or implement a solution in a manner that thoroughly addresses multiple contexts that shape the problem.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to adapt to unforeseen obstacles related to the project.
- Students will demonstrate thoughtful reflection on their role in the project and ongoing community engagement and collaborative problem solving.

Strategies/Actions to be implemented

If we adopt this as our QEP, it's likely that we'll need a Chattanooga-based project coordinator quite soon. This person will likely work in consultation with Vice Provost for Academic Outreach, Shewanee Howard-Baptiste, and me. Dr. Howard-Baptiste is leading the Reimagining General Education working group for the Chattanooga Project, so coordinating will be smooth.

Step 1: Faculty are asked to vote on the Reimagined General Education Program that includes the Chattanooga-based project in Spring 2022. If that vote is positive, we move to Step 2.

Step 2: Advertise and recruit a Chattanooga-based project (CBJ) coordinator from faculty or staff to start on or before June 1, 2022. Until that start date, Vice Provosts Ingraham and Howard-Baptiste will collaboratively manage the early stage planning and coordinating for the project. Part of this work will be inventorying existing community project partnerships to identify additional types of projects we should pursue.

Step 3: The CBJ coordinator's responsibilities will include understanding existing community-campus partnerships, cultivating new opportunities, and maintaining relationships with community partners. Beyond cultivating and maintaining relationships, the coordinator will also need to ensure that sufficient seats are offered every semester to allow students to progress to graduation. Coordinating with department heads and advising staff will be key. As such, this position has interests in both Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management and Student Affairs.

Students

If the Chattanooga-based project becomes part of our new General Education curriculum, all undergraduate students who enter UTC as first-time freshmen will benefit. Students whose majors already have a Chattanooga-based project built into the major would satisfy the requirement in the major. Other students would satisfy it through a certified General Education course. Transfer students who come in with an associate's degree through a Tennessee Transfer Pathway would be exempt.

Assessment

One of the five General Education program learning outcomes that the Reimagining General Education committee has proposed is directly related to this project: Outcome 5: Collaborate to address a Chattanooga-based problem. As part of routine annual assessment, student work

products from these projects—likely portfolios, public presentations with slides, reports, reflections, etc.—will be assessed using a rubric already designed by the RGE committee. As part of continuous improvement, we will adjust the rubric as needed to more accurately capture student learning, share the results of this assessment with all involved in the CBP courses, and create faculty development opportunities to address areas where student learning needs more improvement.

Resources Needed

1. As mentioned earlier, it's likely that we will need a Chattanooga-based project coordinator to ensure that partnerships are identified, sufficient opportunities for students exist, faculty development is provided, and work with faculty and staff to create new opportunities for student learning.
2. As with any new initiative, resources will be needed to incentivize faculty to develop new CBP partnerships and projects.
3. To highlight student learning and celebrate these partnerships, resources will be needed to host an annual or semi-annual CBP showcase.