UT has remained committed to student success throughout the fall semester by being flexible, compassionate, and creative. Led by our faculty’s creative efforts, we reimagined how our student scholars learn and engage within traditional and virtual classrooms alike. The entire Volunteer community worked to create transformational experiences both inside and outside the classroom. This report summarizes the impact of Student Success initiatives developed to support the academic enterprise and improve student achievement.

Based upon preliminary data we anticipate:

• Fall-to-spring retention to remain flat or slightly higher than last year.
• Over 90% of our first-year student scholars are in good academic standing.
• Fewer student scholars are on academic probation this semester.
• There was almost a five percent decrease in the number of student scholars on academic probation.

Student Success Signature Programs

Vol Success Teams

Student Impact
In fall 2020, Vol Success Teams successfully launched and provided impactful academic and student service support for each first-year student scholar. The Vol Success Team, comprised of an academic advisor, academic coach, and One Stop counselor, helps student scholars academically, personally, and professionally navigate UT.

As a result of the Vol Success Teams:

• 4,863 student scholars had academic coaching sessions, compared to 1,969 during fall 2019.

• Student scholars who engaged with academic coaching experienced a higher average term GPA (3.25) compared to those who did not (2.99).

• The feedback of student scholars expressed their engagement with their Vol Success Teams lowered stress, increased sense of belonging, and strengthened their confidence for academic success.

Student Outcomes
The Vol Success Teams working group has developed strategic outcomes that impact the UT experience and support student scholars through their academic journey. The Vol Success Team, through collaboration, seeks to ensure each student scholar will:

• Understand university resources and practices
• Discover their strengths to achieve academic and professional goals
• Engage with the UT community to build relationships and foster belonging
Vol First-Year Experience

Student Impact
To enhance student scholars’ persistence and sense of belonging, the Vol First-Year Experience (VFYE) engages first-year student scholars with peers, faculty, and staff through two courses: a first-year seminar and an academic course hosted by the student scholar’s college.

Student Outcomes
In fall 2020, over 4,000 first-year student scholars completed the CliftonStrengths assessment to discover their unique talents. The top five strengths of student scholars completing the assessment were Restorative, Achiever, Empathy, Adaptability, and Positivity. Student scholars who engaged with VFYE in fall 2020 reported an increased sense of belonging and academic preparedness. Additional outcomes of VFYE are reported below.

- 88% of first-year student scholars enrolled in the Vol First-Year Experience.
- Student scholars who participated in an FYS course had higher average term GPAs (3.24) than those who did not (3.06).
- Feedback from our student scholars indicated 76% of first-time scholars feel they are part of the UT community, and 88% believe they will excel academically at UT.

Academic Support Services

Tutoring and Supplemental Instruction

Student Impact & Outcomes
In fall 2020, more than 2,000 student scholars engaged with tutoring, and over 6,200 supplemental instruction sessions were held. Through a strengths-mindset approach, tutoring and supplemental instruction provided student scholars effective learning support, impactful study skills, and meaningful engagement with support staff to increase their academic success. As a result of tutoring and supplemental instruction:

- 90% of first-year student scholars achieved good academic standing in fall 2020.
- Student scholars who engaged with supplemental instruction experienced a higher average term GPA (3.60) compared to those who did not (3.07).
- UT experienced a decrease in student scholars placed on academic probation and academic dismissal. Transfer student scholars on academic probation decreased by almost 4%.
The Path Forward — Spring 2021

Building a Campus Rooted in Positive Psychology

A key concept of UT’s strategic vision is to create a “Volunteer” experience for every student. We believe the foundational framework to develop this experience should be a campus environment that values and nurtures each student scholar’s strengths. Helping student scholars understand, build, and stretch their strengths will foster their confidence and resiliency, two essential attributes for success while at UT and after leaving us. Beginning in spring 2021, the Strengths-Mindset Advisory Council will:

- Advise on the comprehensive strategic pathways to support student scholar curricular, co-curricular, and academic and social engagement
- Provide recommendations on tactical best practices UT could adopt to move the university’s work forward.

UT Success Academy

In fall 2021, UT will welcome the inaugural cohort of the UT Success Academy, a new strengths-based approach to maximizing new first-year Black and Latinx student scholars’ transition to the Volunteer community through an innovative four-year customized infrastructure, experiential learning, community building, and transformative experiences, both on and off-campus. Student scholars will receive a customized four-year curriculum with individual academic plans to help student scholars achieve their academic dreams, peer coaching, monthly First Friday community events, and more!

Enhancing the Vol First-Year Experience

Building upon the inaugural year’s success, we will enhance the Vol First-Year Experience with key academic modules to facilitate a smooth transition for new Vols. We will work with critical departments and faculty partners to improve the learning outcomes and develop relevant, engaging, and strengths-based content to promote student achievement.

Summer @ RockyTop

UT seeks to change student scholars’ behavior by encouraging returning first-year student scholars to participate in summer programs through marketing high demand summer courses and creating incentives to enroll in summer school (online or in-person). Throughout spring and summer 2021, Summer @ Rocky Top will be promoted heavily to the UT community. Benefits of encouraging summer participation include:

- Help student scholars stay on track toward degree
- Increase the probability of returning the following semester
- Increase graduation rates
- Increase summer headcount and long-term revenue

Honors & Scholars External Review

UT’s Honors & Scholars Programs will undergo an external review process in spring 2021. The external review will evaluate the strengths and opportunities in current programming while simultaneously guiding the path forward.