EOC in its Fourteenth Year

Since 1991, the Educational Opportunity Center has been funded entirely by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to serve a minimum of 1,500 eligible participants in 26 counties in Northeast Tennessee, North Georgia, and Western North Carolina each year. The Center is sponsored by The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Participants must reside in the target area and two-thirds of EOC participants must be potential first-generation college student and low-income persons.

The EOC is part of a group of programs known as TRIO programs (TRIO, for the original three programs emanating from the 1964 Educational Opportunity Act and 1965 Higher Education Act). Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, TRIO programs now include Talent Search, Upward Bound, Math and Science Regional Center, Veterans Pre-College Programs, Student Support Services, and the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program. These programs are designed to help individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds prepare for and be successful in programs of postsecondary education.

The Educational Opportunity Center focuses its efforts on low-income, first generation adults. EOC provides counseling and information on college admissions, student financial aid, and career planning to qualified individuals who want to enter or continue a program of postsecondary education. The goal of EOC is to increase the number of adult participants who enroll in postsecondary education institutions.

Dr. Ernest W. Brewer
Professor and PI/Director

It's Never Too Late to Start

It's never too late to examine our lives and accept a new beginning. The harshness of life circumstances can be severe – loss of job, divorce, illness or accident, etc. These profound losses can produce a drought and prevent growth, causing us to wither. Like plants in the field, we must produce new growth or we die. It is in the dying stage that we must have a cool refreshing shower, an opportunity for a new beginning, an opportunity to revive, and an opportunity to once again produce new growth.

Perhaps your educational goals have been interrupted and you have found it hard to take that first step toward renewal, a new beginning, a new start, an experience of accomplishment and direction. It takes courage to move on, to take the challenge of a new beginning, to make choices that bring you closer to your life goals.

We can help you make decisions about your educational and career goals and help you obtain financial aid to pay for your training. Each day we make choices that bring us closer or farther away from our life goals. Today you have the opportunity to move closer to yours. Call an Educational Specialist in your area and schedule an appointment.

ALL SERVICES ARE FREE!

Ila Vee McGahay
Associate Director

http://web.utk.edu/~utfp

The University of Tennessee is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA institution in the provision of its education and employment programs and services. Inquiries concerning Title IX, Section 504, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 should be directed to The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Office of Diversity Resources and Educational Services (DRESO), 1818 Lake Avenue, Knoxville, TN 37996-3650; or telephone 865/974-2978. Requests for accommodation of disability should also be directed to DRESO.

University of Tennessee Printing Authorization R01-1760-020-002-05

EOC is 100% funded by the U.S. Department of Education at $1,753,992 for four years; however, the U.S. Department of Education is not responsible for the contents herein.
Who is eligible for EOC services?
Services are available to U.S. citizens and legal residents who reside in one of the 26 counties in East Tennessee, North Georgia, and Western North Carolina. Priority is given to individuals who are “low income” and “first generation” (individuals whose birth or adoptive parents do not have a bachelor’s degree). Prospective participants must complete an application and sign a financial statement indicating their annual taxable income.

How much do services cost?
All EOC services are free of charge. That is because the center is funded entirely by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The EOC has been sponsored by The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, since 1991.

What services does the EOC provide?
The UTK EOC is a FREE educational outreach program helping eligible participants pursue postsecondary education and/or training by assisting you with the following aspects of that process:
• Examining career options
• Choosing and applying to college or training programs
• Applying for financial aid and searching for scholarships
• Registering for and preparing for college entrance exams
• Finding ESL/GED/ABE options
• Locating appropriate social services agencies
• Resolving student loan defaults

How can I obtain services through the EOC?
People interested in receiving assistance should call the EOC office closest to them to get introductory information and to schedule an appointment with an Educational Specialist. Prospective participants need to fill out an application with background information prior to receiving services. Eligible participants meet with an Educational Specialist to determine what their needs are and which services can best meet their individual needs. Educational Specialists have a range of tools available to assist participants, including career inventories, college catalogs, financial aid forms, and access to scholarship Web sites.

How do I decide on a career and educational goal?
At EOC we help potential students choose a career by looking at individuals’ interests, values, and personality. EOC Educational Specialists are able to administer and interpret a variety of career inventories; then, you match your career interest to the institution that best suits your interests and educational goals.

What postsecondary schools do EOC participants attend?
EOC participants go to a variety of colleges, universities, and technical schools. Their choice depends upon the educational program that best suits their needs and interests. The EOC helps participants review all educational options; participants decide on the institution that best meets their needs.

What if I don’t have a high school diploma or GED?
If you don’t yet have a high school diploma or GED, you can still begin receiving services at the EOC; however, your first priority will be to obtain the GED prior to enrolling in college. If you are unsure about how to proceed, you may contact the EOC office nearest you and speak with an Educational Specialist about your specific situation.

How do I apply for financial aid?
To start the process of applying for student financial aid, you must complete the FAFSA, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. You can still complete a paper version of the FAFSA and mail it to the processing center but more and more people apply via the internet each year.

Applying online cuts the processing time in half from approximately four weeks to two weeks. If you need help completing a FAFSA, either the paper version or the online version, contact your Educational Opportunity Center. We help hundreds of people apply for aid each year.

Where is the EOC located?
Please refer to the back of this newsletter or the Web site at http://web.utk.edu/~utfp to identify your local EOC contact.

How can I schedule an appointment?
To schedule an appointment, call the EOC office closest to you and make an appointment with an Educational Specialist.

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Education pays

[Graph: Median weekly earnings for year-round, full-time workers age 25 and older, by educational attainment, 2003]

Explore your career options with Occupational Outlook Handbook http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm
Amazing Accomplishments
Three refugees become involved with EOC

How much could anyone accomplish after experiencing unbelievable suffering? Can one succeed after losing his or her parents at a young age, living in refugee camps, and fleeing from war and disease? Three young refugees from Southern Sudan, Africa – Angelo, Jimmy and Victor – finally overcame such horrific barriers and are on their way to achieving a higher education. With incredible strength, these men can attest to their experiences as three of the “Lost Boys” of Sudan.

Education
The three Sudanese cousins and their families attended school between their escapes from war. They are now attending a four-year college, each in a different program. Angelo, a junior, is majoring in Psychology; Jimmy is entering his senior year studying International Relations; and Victor finished his first semester as a freshman, seeking a degree in Business Administration. Although they will have different degrees, they enrolled in college for the same reason - to help other people overcome hardships.

EOC Participation
I first met Angelo and Victor in 2003 when they were referred to the Educational Opportunity Center by one of their cousins, a former EOC participant. The two young men asked for help to enroll in college. With no money to pay for tuition, they also needed assistance to apply for financial aid.

During our first meeting, we developed an educational plan, looked at career options, and reviewed the financial aid application. I encouraged them to prepare for college entrance at the Blount County Adult Education Program.

Family Background
Although they shared some background information at their first session, Angelo and Victor told more about their families when they returned to complete their financial aid applications. Their immediate family had very little education. Angelo’s father was killed in the war in 1983. Victor’s father died from disease, and their mothers were assumed dead until a few years ago. They spoke of their loving Aunt Nyadeng, whose husband had been killed by the Southern Sudanese Rebels. She had led them and other relatives to a safe refugee camp in Kenya. Because they lived in so many places, the children learned to speak at least four languages: Arabic, Dinka, English and Swahili.

Angelo and Victor talked about Jimmy and his other family members, but only recently brought in Jimmy to meet me. Adding to Angelo’s and Victor’s history, Jimmy told about his trauma in Sudan. He said with great sadness that both his parents died of illness. He also experienced being scared as a child because he and his relatives never knew when they would die. All three shared their feelings of relief when they were told in 1997 that they would be moving to America. In 2001, after seventeen years of maintaining hope in the face of hardship, the three survivors and their kinsmen, arrived in the United States.

Motivation to Enroll in College
The cousins were eager to share their college goals. Angelo was the first to speak. "Our aunt believed in education. I was going to become a doctor, but have changed my mind. Now, I want to be a clinical psychologist to help people back in Sudan who are anxious. I just finished my second year and will be a junior this fall," he announced with pride.

Victor chimed in, "When I was in Africa, I never would have believed I could do everything I’m doing – working, going to college, having freedom. I am majoring in business so that I can help our people."

All three want to have their education so they can give back what they have been given. Jimmy is a senior majoring in International Relations, and spoke of how much encouragement and kindness they have been given. He said, "Our aunt always believed in us and education for us. She still does. We are a small part of the 'Lost Boys' but there are many who are not so fortunate. We want to help them seek education as well."

How They Overcame Obstacles
Jimmy repeated that their aunt helped them to believe in education and in themselves. But also, the three young men agreed that people in America, such as the Bridge Refugee Program, the United Methodist Church and the Adult Education staff in Blount County, TN, had faith they could succeed. Then Angelo jumped in and said, "And you. Your program (EOC) helped us find a way to enter college."

Victor nodded in agreement and explained, "It was the EOC program that helped us look at careers and fill out forms. If we did not come to you, we would not have known about all the opportunities to go to college."
Test Anxiety? Do Not Fear

Do you feel nervous about taking a test? Do you "blank out" during tests -- even when you know the material? Does your fear of test-taking prevent you from accomplishing your dreams? If you have test anxiety or fear of tests, help is available.

Test takers can experience general fear of tests, or they can be nervous about a particular subject, such as math or writing. The experts on test anxiety tell us there are three causes of test anxiety -- worry, emotionality, and lack of preparation or necessary skills.

The number one cause of test anxiety is worry. Worry is brought on mostly by negative self-talk or obsessions, which prevent us from concentrating on taking the test. Do these thoughts sound familiar? "Oh, I will never finish this test!" or "Everyone in the class is writing and I haven't even started!"

The second cause of test anxiety is emotionality, which causes us to feel faint, blank, and have rapid heart beats or shakiness. Lack of self-confidence, worry, and general nervousness can add to emotionality.

The third reason students have test anxiety is because they are not prepared. Sometimes, they did not study enough or they need to take additional classes.

Several ways to prevent test anxiety are:

- Make sure you have the skills. For example, in order to pass geometry, you need the foundations of math.
- Study the material until you are eating, sleeping and breathing it. Do not cram for tests the night before.
- Practice focusing only on taking the test. Avoid looking at the clock and listening to your neighbors writing or turning in their papers. Tell yourself you are a success!
- If you have general nervousness or low self-esteem, seek help from a counselor either at an agency, through work, or at your church or school.
- Get a good night's sleep. Being well-rested really helps.
- Take a deep breath through your nostrils and exhale slowly. Visualize yourself being confident and at peace.
- Do not fear and go for it!  
  
  — Vicki Tbal  
  Educational Specialist

Managing Your Time

We all have the same amount of time. So, why do some people seem able to accomplish so much? They usually follow a system of time management.

Do you know where your time goes? In order to manage time, you need to know what you usually do. One way to accomplish this is to keep a time log. Briefly jotting down what you are doing every 15-30 minutes for a week will give you important information. Once you have this, ask yourself:

- Did I get everything done?
- Was I rushed for time?
- Did I meet deadlines?
- What habits interfered with reaching my goals?
- Did I accomplish more at a certain time of day?
- At what times of the day did I accomplish the least?

Now, you're ready to use the information from your time log. Make a list of the activities you have to do. Mark those that are scheduled at definite times and those that can be arranged according to your own time. Then, prioritize the list:

1. the most crucial activities
2. activities that can wait until after those in group I
3. the least crucial activities

Then, prepare a schedule using the prioritized list. Use your list and schedule every day. When you develop the schedule, remember to plan for your peak times and low energy times.

Some tips for stretching your time include: using waiting time effectively, being sure of instructions, avoiding perfectionism, doing the difficult tasks first and avoiding overcommitment.

Effective time management frees you to do your best and to succeed. But the schedule isn't your master. You control it.

— Dr. Ernest W. Brewer  
Professor and PI/Director
Advice to Potential Students
When I asked the trio what it takes for students to overcome barriers and succeed in higher education or college, they said it takes determination, their faith, studying hard, and support from resources like EOC, their church, and the adult education staff. They also added that some people go through hardships, but then they wait for everyone to pull them up. They believe people need to have faith in themselves. These young men showed patience and quiet strength as they said they "couldn't sit around and wait for someone else to pull us up." They had to make a move.

As the visit was about to end, one made a definite statement and the others nodded. "Without education, there is no freedom. With our education, we can help others." I believe these hopeful students have found their way.

― Vicki Thal
Educational Specialist

“The purpose of life is to discover your gift. The meaning of life is to give it away.”
― Anonymous

Lottery Grant Parcel Revised
Lottery-funded scholarships will pay more and be available to more students of all ages under revisions approved by the Tennessee Legislature in the waning hours of its 2005 session. Collectively, the three major changes to the lottery scholarship law are projected to spend an extra $25 million per year. That is in addition to $25 million earmarked for a prekindergarten program. The combined $50 million in new funding comes from the lottery raising more profits than projected when the program was established last year. The main provisions of the legislation are listed below.

- The basic annual scholarship for students attending a four-year university will increase from $3,000 to $3,300. The bonus supplement for students with low family incomes, now at $1,000 per year, will increase to $1,500 per year.

- The scholarship for students attending two-year colleges will increase from $1,500 per year to $1,650 per year, and the scholarship for students attending trade or technical schools will increase from $1,250 to $1,300 per year.

- For the first time, some adults who did not go directly to college from high school will become eligible for the scholarship. The provision will apply to persons 25 or older and with income of less than $36,000 per year. (Such "nontraditional students" must first enroll in a college and complete their freshman year with a 2.75 grade point average or higher. They will then be eligible for a full lottery scholarship starting with their sophomore year and afterward, providing they maintain a 3.0 average.)

- High school students who take college courses will be eligible to have some or all of their expenses in taking the course paid by lottery scholarship funds.

The legislation makes some other minor changes in current law. For example, it allows college students to retake one course per year, then use the higher grade in calculating whether or not they maintained the required grade point average to stay in the scholarship program. Students must have a 3.0 average in high school, an SAT score of 980 or above, or an ACT score of 21 or above to be eligible for scholarships. Freshman must have a 2.75 average and, afterward, a 3.0 average. Other changes will allow high school graduates to wait for up to 16 months after graduation to begin college and allow the children of Department of Defense employees who are transferred out of state to retain eligibility.

― Source: The Knoxville News Sentinel
June 1, 2005

Top 20 Occupations
in the U.S.
(based on growth) — Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
1. Database Administrator, Computer Support Specialist
2. Computer Engineer
3. Systems Analyst
4. Personal and Home Care Aides
5. Physical and Corrective Therapy Aides
6. Home Health Aide
7. Medical Assistant
8. Desktop Publishing Specialist
9. Physical Therapist
10. Occupational Therapy Assistants and Aides
11. Paralegal
12. Occupational Therapist
13. Teachers, Special Education
14. Human Services Worker
15. Data Processing Equipment Service Technician
16. Medical Records Technician
17. Speech/Language Pathologist
18. Dental Hygienist
19. Amusement and Recreation Attendant
20. Physician's Assistant

Hot Jobs - 2005

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Starting Salary</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>$30,000-$45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health technician</td>
<td>$25,000-$30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plumber</td>
<td>$30,500-$41,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electrician</td>
<td>$20,000-$30,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>$45,000-$52,000</td>
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<td>Technical support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Debt Mediator</td>
<td>$30,700-$34,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountant</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EOC High Achievers

Tabetha Dyer – Union County

When Tabetha Dyer was a teenager, she never dreamed she would be going to college. Now she is entering her senior year at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

Tabetha, 23, was referred to the EOC by Families First in August 2003. During her first visit, she said she would love to become an elementary school teacher. While she was uncertain whether she would succeed, Tabetha had determination in her voice. She knew she would have to attend school and maintain a good grade point average while taking care of her family and raising three small children.

Reviewing how she made it to the university, Tabetha recounted her years growing up. Her parents believed in education and she wanted them to be proud of her. Because of difficulties during her senior year in high school, Tabetha entered the Union County Adult Education program, earning her GED. Due to her high ACT and GED scores, the East Tennessee native was accepted to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Although she had child care through Families First, she didn’t know how she would pay for tuition and books. Time management was an obstacle because her children, now 7, 5, and 3 years old, required attention when she needed to study. “And the process of registering for school was scary. I was so nervous about it,” Tabetha acknowledged.

“What has helped? Well, my family, growing up, always supported education. And my husband supports me – he will do anything to help me through college. Knowing that teachers can make lasting impressions on students made me want to teach. Some teachers made me nervous, but I had some teachers that did things to help me.”

Tabetha says the EOC program was wonderful. “Even though we did not meet often, it was calm to know I always could call or you would call me about things like filling out the FAFSA. It was one less thing I had to worry about.”

In advising others going to college, Tabetha said, “I would tell them to go into a field they would enjoy working in. I would also say to them, ‘Enjoy the time you spend in school, because it really does go by fast.’ Sometimes it’s been difficult, but little by little, I’m making it.”

After her graduation in 2006, she will begin a Masters in Education program and become an elementary school teacher. We all will be fortunate to have her teaching our students in Tennessee.

– Vicki Thal
Educational Specialist

EOC High Achievers

Marjorie Davis – Knox County

Often EOC participants overcome considerable obstacles as they pursue higher education. Marjorie Davis, a freshman at Pellissippi State Technical Community College, has definitely done that. In addition, she has distinguished herself with her high academic achievement at two post-secondary institutions.

Marjorie grew up without knowing her father and a mother who was afflicted with severe health problems from the time Marjorie was in second grade. She attended South Doyle High School, pregnant during most of her senior year. In April her daughter was born and in May Marjorie graduated, the first member in her family to earn a high school diploma. She attributes her excellent grades in her final year (all As and Bs) to the realization that she now had a child to raise.

After surviving some rough personal problems, Marjorie enrolled at Tennessee Technology Center (Knoxville) to major in accounting. Financial aid assistance, provided by EOC, enabled her to obtain the Pell Grant and the Tennessee Student Assistance Award; but making ends meet was still tough. Often times she could not even afford her textbooks, and borrowed them from her instructors. Marjorie fondly remembers her computer instructor, Ms. Hodge, encouraging her to pursue her education after earning her TTC certificate. The seed was planted. Not only did Marjorie graduate with her certificate in June of 2004, but she also enrolled at PSTCC to earn her A.A.S. in accounting, despite the fact that none of her TTC credits transferred. She now has a 3.6 GPA, having earned a B, a B+, and two As last semester. Again, without EOC’s financial aid assistance while at PSTCC, Marjorie said, “I probably wouldn’t be here.”

Marjorie’s advice to other EOC participants is to “set your mind to anything, and you can do it.” She describes herself as “living proof of this, never thinking I could do this.” Far more importantly, Marjorie’s extraordinary academic achievement has planted a seed in her own daughter, who has asked her mom “to save your books for when I go to college.” EOC congratulates this resilient, dedicated student and role model.

– Patricia Anne Danko
Educational Specialist
EOC High Achievers
Anna Palaganas – Sevier County

One of EOC’s highest achievers is Anna Palaganas, a senior at Tusculum College. This intelligent, dedicated student has overcome enormous family, cultural, and financial odds to achieve her educational goals. As an EOC client, not only will she be graduating in December with her Bachelor of Science in Organizational Management, but she will also be continuing her education at Tusculum for her Masters degree.

Anna, the oldest of eight children, moved to the United States with her father from the Philippines when she was only eleven years old. Her mother and seven siblings remained in the Philippines until Anna and her father could establish a home, away from the poverty and political turmoil they left behind. This challenge was especially difficult considering that neither were U.S. citizens nor could they speak English, and her father had no employment here in Tennessee at the time.

Her inability to speak English was especially difficult for Anna. An eighth grader in the Philippines, she was assigned to fifth grade here in Tennessee. She slowly learned to speak English, especially due to her favorite television show at the time, Sesame Street. Her memories of this time include years of painful ridicule from classmates due to her difficulty speaking English and her dark skin and hair. She hopes that other immigrants will eventually be judged by “who they are rather than the color of their skin.”

Anna graduated from high school at the age of twenty and went straight to Walters State Community College as a pre-nursing major. She dropped out due to marriage but then resumed her education, changing her major and her college. Despite dedicating herself to her new role as wife, and later mother, a divorce followed. During this painful transition of just taking “baby steps,” Anna relied on her son for the strength and joy she gave her and in her faith in God. She said she also relied on EOC, which gave her “wonderful, personal help in getting financial aid” and enabled her to “be where I am today.” Anna is grateful to her EOC Educational Specialist, whom she describes as “a friend, someone who wants only the best for students and pushes them towards their dreams.”

Anna’s hopes include finding the right career and stability for herself and her young son. Her advice for others is to “never give up – always move forward, taking one day at a time” and to focus on God’s blessings rather than materialism. EOC celebrates this hard-working, enthusiastic, and wise mother and student.

– Patricia Anne Danko
Educational Specialist

Average Family Income
by Educational Attainment of Householder, 2003

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Unemployment Rates
by Education for 2000 and 2003
All Races, Both Sexes
Age 25 to 64 years

Source: Census Bureau

www.postsecondary.org
EOC SERVICE AREAS

Georgia
Dawson, Fannin, Gilmer, Rabun, Towns, & Union Counties

North Carolina
Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Jackson, Macon, & Swain Counties

Tennessee
Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Cumberland, Knox, Loudon, McMinn, Meigs, Morgan, Polk, Roane, Scott, Sevier, & Union Counties

Administrative Centers

Georgia
Educational Opportunity Center
FLAG Learning Center
Appalachian Technical College
125 School House Road
Epworth, Georgia 30541
Telephone: (706) 492-2883
Fax: (706) 492-2883

North Carolina
Educational Opportunity Center
Macon County Schools
P.O. Box 1029
Franklin, NC 28734
Telephone: (828) 369-1732
Fax: (828) 524-5938

Tennessee
Educational Opportunity Center
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Theory and Practice in Teacher Education
1914 Andy Holt Avenue • 25 HPER
Knoxville, Tennessee 37996-2745
Telephone: (865) 974-4466
Fax: (865) 974-3961

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Southeast Tennessee Career Centers
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