Partnersing to Increase Postsecondary School Enrollment

Participants in The University of Tennessee's Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) continue to show great courage and motivation in the pursuit of postsecondary education. Over 1,500 individuals from 26 counties in East Tennessee, Western North Carolina, and North Georgia engage in a variety of pre-college preparation activities through this Title IV U.S. Department of Education grant each year. Dr. Ernest W. Brewer (Theory and Practice in Teacher Education) serves as Principal Investigator/TRIO Director.

EOC has partnered with numerous community agencies and institutions in the target area to provide services related to the matriculation process, including assistance with financial aid and admissions applications, career exploration, and educational planning. In the last Annual Performance Report submitted to the USDE, it was shown that 75% of "college ready" project participants enrolled, re-enrolled, or continued in a postsecondary institution. Individuals with disabilities, referrals from the Department of Human Services, Families First, and other agencies responsible for delivering like services are included in this percentage. More than 70% of project participants were both low-income and first-generation.

Partnering with communities has been a focus for EOC since the beginning. To fulfill the legislative intent of the program to disseminate educational and financial aid information to individuals who are low-income, first-generation potential college students over 19 years of age, and to assist them with enrollment and obtaining financial aid, it is imperative that EOC services be embedded within communities. These efforts have consistently been rewarded with ongoing community support for the project. Confirmation of these partnerships and support was recently demonstrated as written monetary commitments for the proposal submitted in February for the proposed 5-year funding cycle totaled $464,640.00. Some agency partnerships include Postsecondary Institutions, County Boards of Education, Workforce Investment, Adult Education, Departments of Human Services, and Families First.

EOC participants have an opportunity to participate in individual and group activities dealing with such topics as Test Anxiety Reduction, ACT Preparation, Postsecondary Placement Exams, Career Assessment, Interviewing for Admission into Competitive Fields, Writing Scholarship Essays, Introduction to Regional Educational Opportunities, and Completing Applications for Admissions and Financial Aid. Resources regarding personal issues such as child care, domestic abuse, drug abuse, depression, overcoming student loan defaults, and dealing with life-altering transitions are also provided when appropriate.

The goal is to eliminate the barriers known to hinder this population from entering and completing postsecondary education. Recent studies show that the postsecondary enrollment rate for high school graduates whose parents did not go to college is
EOC FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

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. The Center is funded entirely by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, and sponsored by The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

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.

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 for student financial aid, you must complete the FAFSA, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. If you need help completing a FAFSA, contact your Educational Opportunity Center. EOC helps hundreds of people apply for aid each year.

Where is the EOC located?

Please refer to the back of this newsletter or the Website at http://web.utk.edu/~urtp to identify your local EOC contact.

EOC High Achiever

Teddy Strunk – Anderson County
“Sometimes Later Is Better”

Most EOC participants would be considered “non-traditional students” in terms of age and life experiences. Teddy Strunk, a student at Roane State Community College, definitely fits this description. At age 47, he has overcome enormous obstacles to soon complete the requirements for his Associates of Science degree. Interestingly, however, these setbacks and tragedies have been preparing Teddy for his dream - to eventually become a child and family counselor. Teddy's journey began within a family of high achievers. Such a background would usually be considered an advantage, but in some ways the opposite occurred as Teddy consistently contrasted himself to his family and felt lacking. His resulting low self-esteem was one major factor in his anxiety and clinical depression that was diagnosed only five years ago, but which he now realizes was practically a lifetime struggle.

“Never let bad influences deter you”

Teddy's own family life has also been difficult. A father of three sons, Teddy experienced the break-up of his marriage after Hurricane Hugo destroyed his windsurfing business in 1989 on St. Thomas Island. Years of anxiety and clinical depression resulted from this and other problems before he found his new love, Rachel. Teddy and Rachel became engaged and planned a summer wedding, but an overwhelming tragedy occurred in February. Rachel died, and Teddy lost not only his strongest scholastic advocate but also his future wife. Despite shock, grief, and returning depression that would have derailed most students from any educational plans, Teddy hung on and earned a 3.75 GPA for that semester. Teddy credits his amazing resilience to the support and prayers of loved ones.

Cont'd on p. 7
"Must Read" Information on the Tennessee Lottery Scholarship Program

This article contains important reminders to those of you who may be eligible to receive money for the first time or to continue to receive money from the Tennessee Lottery Scholarship (TELS) Program. Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) wants you to read and know this information so that you can continue to receive free financial help until you graduate from your educational program.

General Information:
• Students must have a completed FAFSA on file by September 1, 2006, to receive scholarship money.

• To receive scholarship money, you must be enrolled in at least 6 hours in fall and spring. Students may lose their lottery money if they withdraw from a class for reasons other than extreme circumstances and without prior approval from their financial aid office. See your financial aid officer first.

• Students must have a 3.0 GPA in high school, a minimum SAT score of 980, or a minimum ACT score of 21 to be eligible for the scholarship. GED students must have a minimum score of 525 in addition to either of the above SAT or ACT minimum scores. Renewed criteria require a 2.75 GPA after the first 24 attempted hours and a 3.0 GPA after every following 24 attempted hours.

• Award amounts have increased this year to:
  $1,500 for all Tennessee Technology Center students
  $1,900 for students attending approved two-year colleges
  $3,800 for students attending approved four-year colleges
  $1,500 extra for college students whose families earn less than $36,000 per year

First time recipients:
• High school graduates are now allowed to wait up to 16 months after graduation to begin college.

• High school students who take college courses are now eligible to have some or all of their course expenses paid by lottery scholarship funds.

• Adults who did not go directly to technical school or college from high school are eligible for the scholarship. These adults must be 25 or older and have family incomes 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 GPA or higher. They will then be eligible for a full lottery scholarship starting with their sophomore year and afterward if they maintain a 3.0 GPA.)

Continuing recipients:
• Students may repeat one class only one time (correction from 2005 newsletter) and replace the lower grade with the higher grade in their lottery GPA calculation. However, both classes will be counted in the total number of attempted hours. Students must petition to have the repeated class used to replace the lower grade in their lottery GPA.

For additional questions on the TELS program, contact your financial aid officer. You can also call the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation at 1-800-342-1663 or log on to www.CollegePaysTN.com.

Patricia Anne Danko
Educational Specialist
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 Thol
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 1
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
approximately 59%. Low-income, first-generation families typically know little about requirements for admissions testing and entrance requirements, career options and offerings, and academic assistance. They also lack the necessary skills to navigate the matriculation process. Without the day-to-day delivery of services and the motivation, direction, and referrals to available resources, many of the personal and academic success stories we observe each year would have never come to fruition.

For more information, please contact Dr. Ernest W. Brewer, Professor and PI/Director or Vee McGeary, EOC Director, at 974-4466 or visit the EOC Main Office, 25 HPER Building, Knoxville, TN 37996-2745.

**Tips For Educational Success**

**Career Exploration**

- Research possible careers by consulting The Occupational Outlook Handbook or web sites such as [http://www.bls.gov/bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov/bls.gov) and [http://online.onecenter.org](http://online.onecenter.org).
- Request an inventory through EOC to identify careers and majors that might be right for you.
- Obtain first-hand information from individuals who are working in occupations you are considering.
- Shadow, volunteer, or work in these fields before committing to an educational program.

**Choosing a GED Program, Vocational School, or College**

- Research educational institutions by logging on to their web sites or start with our EOC web site at [http://web.utk.edu/~utpf](http://web.utk.edu/~utpf).
- Arrange for campus visits and tours. Talk with students, counselors, program directors, and financial aid employees and obtain materials such as view books and catalogs to learn about the institution and the programs that interest you.
- Get a clear understanding of the bottom-line cost for you to attend the institution.

**Financial Aid**

- Make an EOC appointment to complete your FAFSA as early as possible after January 1 of each year you plan to attend higher education because many financial aid funds are on a “first come, first serve” basis or have deadlines.
- Bring the following financial aid materials with you to your appointment if you plan to file your FAFSA: 1) Proof of all your previous years’ income (W-2s, tax return, child support, social security benefits, etc.). If you are considered a dependent according to the U.S. Department of Education, your parent’s or parents’ proof of income is also needed. 2) Any other related materials you may have, such as your Student Aid Report (SAR) or personal identification number (PIN). If possible, we encourage you to apply for a PIN at [http://www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov).
- If you have any questions or concerns about this process, call us at (865) 974-4466 or schedule an appointment at the numerous sites where we provide services.

Wishing you success with your educational and career goals and dreams!

Patricia Anne Danko  
Educational Specialist

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**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 - 2006**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Starting Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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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<tr>
<td>Technical support</td>
<td>$27,500-$56,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>$30,700-$34,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>$29,500-$40,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EOC High Achiever
Jenaiya Johnson – Knox County
“A Tribute to Her Mother”

Many parents hope their children will follow in their footsteps. Jenaiya Johnson, an electronics student at Tennessee Technology Center (Knoxville), exemplifies her mother’s dream in more ways than one. A recipient of the 2006 Sunrise Foundation Scholarship, Jenaiya will soon complete her 24-month certificate program and plans to enter the workforce as a Computer Specialist. Not only is Jenaiya pursuing higher education as her mother had hoped, but interestingly she eventually chose the very same field of study. Jenaiya recalls when she was a little girl sitting quietly for many evenings with her two siblings in the back of their mother’s classroom until their single-parent mother graduated and became an Electronics Technician. She also reminisces with tears in her eyes about the strong bond of love they shared. This model of education, self-sufficiency, and love remained with Jenaiya despite tough times that followed in her teen and early adult years.

In tenth grade, Jenaiya became pregnant and dropped out of school but then earned her GED two years later. Her self-esteem plummeted as bad influences and abusive relationships affected her life and left her struggling with depression, greatly intensified by knowing that she was capable of so much more. After a second baby followed and her first attempt at post-secondary education failed, Jenaiya’s father died. Shortly afterwards her mother was diagnosed with lung cancer, at which time Jenaiya entered the Electrical Engineering program at Pellissippi State Technical Community College. Despite excellent grades for two years, she dropped out three weeks before exams from worry and grief over her grandmother’s and her mother’s deteriorating health. Jenaiya had been told her mother had only two weeks to live. Within that time span, Jenaiya lost both her beloved grandmother and mother. Despite these staggering losses, encouragement from her mother on her deathbed motivated a resilient Jenaiya to later try education again, this time the Electronics Technology Program at TTC (K). Jenaiya credits EOC with helping her during this stage of her education. She appreciates not only with the financial aid, but also “the prayers, telling me I could succeed, and the good feelings from just talking.” In addition, her children motivate her tremendously to stay focused on academics and the challenges of being a loving, single parent.

Despite constant worries about getting each month’s bills paid, her hope is to eventually buy a home and establish a college fund for her two sons. Jenaiya’s greatest asset is her faith in God. She stresses prayer, hope, and faith—“truly believing that things will fall into place.”

All of these supports and her mother’s love have enabled Jenaiya to be an even greater tribute to her mother than just academic and career achievement. This is through her personality—her warmth, compassion, and encouragement to others. Her concluding advice to us demonstrates these qualities. “Surround yourself with positive people— it’s so much easier to stay on track.” Perhaps her most profound advice is, “Never let anyone tell you what you are or are not capable of. Anyone can rise above expectations.”

Patricia Anne Danko
Educational Specialist

“Surround yourself with positive people, It’s so much easier to stay on track.”

EOC High Achiever
Ellen Richey - Athens, TN
“Never Say Never”

“You never get enough education and you are never too old to go back to school.” This is the advice Ellen Richey gives to everyone. She was born and grew up in Athens, Tennessee and dropped out of high school after the ninth grade to get married. She received her GED in 1987 and with that milestone complete, she was able to later move on with her academic pursuits. She obtained a Bookkeeping Diploma in Business Systems Technology from The Tennessee Technology Center in Athens and is now employed full time for Southeast Tennessee Development District at the Athens Career Center as Resource Room Coordinator and says, “I love my job very much.”

It has not been an easy road, but with determination and a lot of support, she has navigated her career path very well. At the age of 55, the plant where she worked closed. When this happened, she took advantage of the opportunity to attend the Tennessee Technology Center in Athens, Tennessee. She says that “help from the Tennessee Department of Labor, WIA and assistance by the Educational Opportunity Center in applying for and obtaining a Pell Grant made it possible for me to return to school.”

In March of 2000, she entered the Business Systems Technology program. Also, in November of 2000, Ms. Richey took a part time job with the Green Thumb Program for workers over 55 years old at the Career Center in Athens to assist with finances. Even though she struggled with finances and health problems including being a diabetic, having high blood pressure and epilepsy, after 18 months, she graduated with a 4.0 grade point average with a Bookkeeping Diploma. She received the honor of being named Student of the Year in 2000-2001 and has recently taken the Microsoft Office Specialist Test and passed it with a 94 average.

Cont’d on next p.
EOC High Achiever
Stacy J. Guffey - Macon County, NC
“Success” - In His Own Words

I was a first-generation college student; in fact I was the first person in my family to ever complete a college degree. Without Tom Edmonds and the EOC I would not have known about all of the available financial aid available for low-income, first generation college students. Tom helped me do all the paperwork and helped me secure a combination of loans and a Pell grant.

I left Franklin in ’94 to begin college at the Interamericana University of Puerto Rico in San German where I majored in Spanish for a year and a half. I then returned to Franklin and graduated from Southwestern Community College with a degree in General Ed. And in 1999 I graduated with a BA in English Literature from Western Carolina University. My degree opened up so many doors.

I started my working career at WCU working in the Public Information Office writing and editing university press releases and publications. In 2000 I began working at Southwestern Community College as the director of the e-Commerce program in continuing ed. There I taught adults how to start or move existing businesses to the web. In 2004 I left SCC when I was named Macon County Planning Director, the position I hold today.

“My degree opened up so many doors.”

I could not have been successful if I had not been supported by people like Tom Edmonds and by the public funds he helped me secure. I feel greatly indebted to the community. Since graduating college I have been very active in the community trying to give back a little of what has been given me. I am also a full-time single dad of a 10 year old, James. I hope I can instill in him the importance of an education and the importance of making positive contributions to the community.

Thomas Edmonds
Educational Specialist

Ellen Richey Cont’d from p. 6

“You are never too old to go back to school”

Ms. Richey says that “after 22 years of marriage she was divorced and was unable to go back to school at that time because of financial problems”; however, she never forgot her desire to return to school. She is especially pleased to speak of her daughter, grandson, and son-in-law, and what a special privilege it was for her to have them present when she received her diploma. In addition to loving her job, she says it is a pleasure to work with Nelson Green, EOC Educational Specialist as she continues her education in the pursuit of an Associate Degree from Cleveland State Community College. Congratulations, Ms. Ellen Richey! We celebrate with you in all your successes!

Nelson Green
Educational Specialist

Teddy Strunk cont’d from p. 2

Two less major challenges that Teddy faces are finances and math. Teddy is currently trying to figure out a budget on which he can survive as a University of Tennessee – Knoxville student, where he hopes to earn his Bachelor’s degree. However, before he can do that, he must complete his remedial and developmental math courses at RSCC. He hopes to overcome his math anxiety in the process, a problem common to many students.

Fortunately, Teddy has been blessed with several other strong supports while at RSCC. One is Don Windham, his advisor and former psychology professor. Teddy expresses profound gratitude for the consistent, generous help he received from this teacher, counselor, and mentor. Teddy’s strongest overall support is his mother, an unwavering advocate of education and spiritual life. He describes her as being “beautiful inside and out,” someone who loves to quote Scripture to him. Her most common advice to him is “Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.” Proverbs 3:5-6.

Teddy also thanks EOC for personal and educational help. An EOC participant since April of 2003, Teddy remembers meeting his EOC counselor the first day he signed up for classes at RSCC. He considers her “more than a friend,” not only due to help with the college financial aid process but for sending him many encouraging, helpful materials. He describes his EOC counselor’s help as a “custom fit job for her” because she tries to use all of her own experiences to help her clients.

Teddy’s hopes for the future involve higher education in psychology to perhaps teach but especially to counsel children and families, maybe even starting his own clinic. He also hopes to devote time to songwriting and playing the harmonica, mandolin, and guitar. His own advice to us is, “Never let bad influences deter you, and it’s never too late.” On the contrary, we believe that the insights, resilience, and enthusiasm Teddy has gained from life’s lessons will enormously add to his own abilities and the abilities of others to reach their dreams.
EOC SERVICE AREAS

Tennessee
Anderson
Blount
Bradley
Campbell
Cumberland
Knox
Loudon

McMinn
Meigs
Morgan
Polk
Rhea
Roane
Scott
Sevier
Union

North Carolina
Cherokee
Clay
Graham
Jackson
Macon
Swain

Georgia
Dawson
Fannin
Gilmer
Rabun
Towns
Union

Administrative Centers

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Ila Vee McCarthey/Director
Knoxville, Tennessee
Patricia Anne Danko/Educational Specialist
Knoxville, Tennessee
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Theory and Practice in Teacher Education
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Fax: (865) 974-3961

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