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## The Future of Higher Education

Office of the President

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## The Future of Higher Education

As we begin a new academic year, I have some updates about opportunities and events within the University and throughout higher education.

### Direction

Now is an exciting and challenging time for higher education. President Obama, Governor Haslam and other leaders are emphasizing initiatives affecting colleges and universities, and those of us in higher education are evaluating the course we want to take for our future. At the same time we must be open to new approaches, new technology and new ideas, we also must be thoughtful and thorough in determining what's best for the University of Tennessee and our students. The UT System Strategic Plan provides a road map for our future and has us moving in the right direction.

### Drive to 55

Last week, I was privileged to attend the governor's Drive to 55 kickoff event with leaders from our campuses and the Tennessee Board of Regents. The Drive to 55 goal is an ambitious one — to have 55 percent of Tennesseans earn at least a post-secondary degree or certificate by 2025. I'm proud of the work we're doing to meet this challenge and improve our University System in the process. That work includes projects to address high school education and college preparedness, ensure seamless transfer of community college credits, and maximize enrollment capacity and advising services.

### Board of Trustees Workshop

Increasing retention and graduation was the subject of our Board of Trustees' summer workshop on Sept. 5-6. In addition to updates on the current status of retention and graduation at our campuses in Knoxville, Chattanooga and Martin, we heard from leaders with the University System of Georgia and Appalachian State University.

Both the Georgia System and Appalachian State have impressive retention and graduation statistics, the product of very intentional and longstanding programs. In addition to hearing about their steps to enhance retention and graduation, we heard what is well-understood: There is no "silver bullet" to improving these numbers. Still, by using data and drilling down, they have identified with precision the groups of students most at risk and then tailored their initiatives to be responsive to those very specific student populations.

We can learn a lot from their processes. The Georgia System and Appalachian State leaders also stressed that retention is everybody's job--from faculty, to student affairs, to the staff in the administrative offices. I believe that also is an important reminder for us all.

### Online or Hybrid Instruction

In the spring, I told you about a pilot program we started with the Coursera platform, another way to

serve students by offering online or hybrid classes. That 18-month pilot program started in August when the first course launched at UT Chattanooga. We have just finalized a similar contract with another provider, edX, and will be calling on faculty to volunteer to try it. Beyond these projects, faculty and staff on our campuses are engaged in many activities that work to improve the educational experience and student success.

## Higher Education's Future

We take on many of the questions facing us in the fall issue of the Tennessee Alumnus magazine, the UT System publication for all alumni. The cover story and related articles ask "What is the future of Higher Education?" Answers are offered by a variety of experts, from our chancellors to Governor Haslam to US Senator Lamar Alexander—a former UT president and US education secretary. The magazine is available online as well as in print, and you can read it here: <http://alumnus.tennessee.edu>

We are privileged to be able to work together to educate, discover and connect – for the good of all Tennesseans. Thank you for all you do for the University of Tennessee.

All the best,  
Joe

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