

UT MARTIN ASSESSMENT NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2024

Our most important job is to help our students succeed!

In this issue, we share some information from the Tennessee College Association (TCA) Annual Meeting, held March 26 in Nashville.

SACSCOC President Belle Wheelan to Retire in 2025

Dr. Belle Wheelan, SACSCOC President, has announced her intention to retire in the Summer of 2025, marking 20 years of service as SACSCOC President and a career spanning more than 50 years in higher education.

At the recent TCA Annual Meeting, Dr. Wheelan shared a list of accomplishments made by SACSCOC since she became President in 2005. These accomplishments include:

- The implementation of the SACSCOC Summer Institute with a focus on assessment and student learning outcomes.
- Establishment of the SACSCOC Office of Training and Research, which provides summaries of all accreditation classes' non-compliance issues each year, compiles other types of data from SACSCOC institutions, and provides training for institutional effectiveness, student services, chairs, and new Trustees.
- Developed an information brochure for legislators that describes the purpose of accreditation, which was later adopted by all of the then-regional accreditors.
- Developed a Resource Manual to guide institutions in understanding the Principles of Accreditation.

- Modified the reaffirmation process to allow institutions to provide additional information throughout the reaccreditation process instead of simply submitting their accreditation report and hoping for the best.

We have all benefitted from Dr. Wheelan's leadership, and we wish her the very best in her retirement!

Excerpts from Reports Addressing Economics and the Value of a College Degree

Dr. Don Bruce, Director of the Boyd Center for Business and Economic Research, presented findings from two recent reports issued by the Boyd Center.

In the first, "An Economic Report to the Governor of the State of Tennessee," Dr. Bruce noted findings indicating that Tennessee has faced a shortage of workers for the past three years. Within the past 12 months, even if every unemployed Tennessean had a job, there would still be approximately 135,000 job openings in the state. During this time, Tennessee's population has continued to grow, primarily due to people moving from other states or countries to Tennessee, with 2022 seeing the highest increase in new residents with almost 90,000 people migrating to Tennessee. This report also contains forecasts for Tennessee in terms of workforce trends, housing trends, labor markets, agricultural and forest industries, and rural economies. You can access the report here:

<https://haslam.utk.edu/publication/economic-report-to-the-governor-2024/>.

The second report, “The Value of a College Education in Tennessee,” was published in August, 2023, and discusses questions related to whether a college education is “worth it.” Some noteworthy statistics from the report include:

- In Tennessee, the percentage of high school graduates going straight to college fell from 61.7% to 52.8% between 2019 and 2021. The percentage in 2022 was 54.3%.
- One analysis of nation-wide earnings estimated that a U.S. worker with an associate’s degree will earn \$452,000 more in lifetime earnings than someone with a high school diploma, and someone with a bachelor’s degree will earn \$1.4 million more in lifetime earnings than someone with a high school diploma.
- For Tennesseans, someone with a bachelor’s degree will earn approximately \$1.4 million more and someone with an associate’s degree will earn \$417,000 more in lifetime earnings than someone with a high school diploma.
- Based on 2021 data, Tennessee workers with a high school diploma had a 3% unemployment rate; Tennesseans with an associate’s degree experienced a 2% unemployment rate; and Tennesseans with a bachelor’s degree or higher experienced a 1% unemployment rate.

Full details, along with additional findings related to the type of degree earned, the location of the person with the degree (metropolitan areas vs. non-metropolitan areas), and data disaggregated by race and gender are included in the report. You can access the report here:

<https://haslam.utk.edu/publication/the-value-of-a-college-education-in-tennessee/>.

AI and Higher Education

Dr. Jules White, Senior Advisor to the Chancellor for Generative AI, Vanderbilt University, discussed generative AI and the potential for its use in academic contexts. He shared examples of how he had used ChatGPT to generate responses to a variety of questions, including asking it to make up a game for his ten-year-old that focused on practicing operations with fractions within the context of the Pokemon universe, develop a meal plan that met certain dietetic standards, and generate visual representations of data sets that could be embedded in PowerPoint slides.

Dr. White is offering several free, online courses related to generative AI through Coursera. The first, *Prompt Engineering for ChatGPT*, teaches you how to develop your skills at writing prompts for ChatGPT that will allow you to effectively use large language models like Chat GPT to create and use complex applications. The course is available here:

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/prompt-engineering#about>, and takes about 18 hours to complete.

The second, *ChatGPT Advanced Data Analysis*, teaches you to automate the creation of PDFs, PowerPoint, Excel, images, video, and other applications. You will learn how to visualize complex data using ChatGPT, and you can have ChatGPT critique slides or other documents for you. This course takes about 10 hours to complete. You can access this course here:

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/chatgpt-advanced-data-analysis#about>.

A third course, *Innovative Teaching with ChatGPT*, teaches you to customize examples, games, assessments, and lesson plans using generative AI. This course takes about 2 hours to complete. You can access the course here:

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/chatgpt-innovative-teaching>.