IT'S BEEN THREE YEARS since our journey to the Top 25 began, and our goals are no longer just numbers in a bar chart or graph. Our journey has sparked a great energy that is improving our students’ experience and yielding tangible results.

We set an ambitious goal during uncertain economic times—to become a Top 25 public research university in ten years—and it has brought a great focus to all of our work.

Our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends provide the fuel to maneuver the challenges in becoming a better university. Success builds momentum, which leads to more good news and more opportunity.

Our progress dramatically enhances Tennessee’s workforce and broadens our state’s impact through innovation and economic development. State support is on the rise because we’re meeting our goals.

Our primary focus is student success. We’re adding instructors, advisors, and tutors and retooling course delivery. Now, more students can get the prerequisite courses they need and talk with an advisor sooner.

We’re taking on a shortage of classrooms and laboratories with an ambitious schedule for building. Our students learn in newly renovated spaces, use the best technology and tools, and study and socialize in well-designed, modern settings.

We’re rejuvenating our residence halls and building a new facility that will serve as a showpiece for our vibrant campus life. We’re tearing out concrete and transforming courtyards and roadways to emphasize our region’s natural beauty and make campus a more inviting learning environment.

We’re at the forefront of discovery and creative achievement. With our partners, we’re building our expertise and our reputation in critical areas that make a difference in our world.

Part of the journey is accountability, and throughout this report, you will see where we have had success and where we still have work to do to reach our aggressive goals. It’s more important than ever that higher education prove its value. And we work every day to become an even better investment for our students and the state.

You may ask, “Has it been worth it?” Absolutely. We’ve accomplished a lot together already. And I’m really excited about what is yet to come.

Join us on our journey,

Jimmy G. Cheek, Chancellor

Signs of Progress
What “Top 25” Means

Our success in becoming a Top 25 public research university is measured by more than U.S. News and World Report’s annual “Best Colleges” rankings. The widely touted consumer rankings only quantify academic quality at the undergraduate level. Our measurements are much broader. Unlike the U.S. News rankings, our metrics encompass research and graduate education. These are critical to the state’s economy, job growth, and need for a more educated workforce. These activities are what make us a flagship university.

In 2010, we benchmarked ourselves against peer institutions and top-ranked public universities. We researched what the best schools do well and set goals to help us join their ranks.

We measure our success by the eleven very specific metrics outlined in this report. Some of these metrics are closely aligned with the current methodology used by U.S. News. Others are not. They were chosen to challenge us to be better—for ourselves and for the benefit of the state of Tennessee.

So, do the U.S. News rankings matter? Yes. Though we account for our success beyond the rankings, they do still matter. The magazine’s rankings have a good reputation among the thousands of students and parents who use them to navigate the complicated process of choosing the right college. And research confirms that a rise or drop in the rankings can impact a school’s admissions. Simply put, we can’t afford to ignore them.

Last year, we ranked forty-sixth among all public universities in the “Best Colleges” rankings—the same as 2011; six slots higher than 2010. Though it may seem like we stalled in our journey last year, the numbers tell us otherwise. We made progress in the metrics used by U.S. News and most of our institutional metrics. In other words, we are better now than we were a year ago.

As we better ourselves, we cannot help but rise in the rankings. But always our goal is to improve as a university, to better serve our students, our faculty, our staff, our alumni, and our state.

Change in U.S. News and World Report Rankings

Three-year change, 2010 to 2012, with 2012 rank

- #1 UC Berkeley
- #2 UCLA
- #3 Michigan
- #4 North Carolina
- #5 UC Santa Barbara
- #6 Virginia
- #7 Davis
- #8 Wisconsin
- #9 Pennsylvania State
- #10 Texas
- #11 Illinois
- #12 Maryland
- #13 Texas A&M
- #14 Florida
- #15 Pittsburgh
- #16 Michigan
- #17 Tennessee
- #18 Texas
- #19 Ohio State
- #20 Michigan State
- #21 Pennsylvania
- #22 Georgia
- #23 Purdue
- #24 Indiana
- #25 North Carolina
- #26 Minnesota
- #27 California State
- #28 Minnesota State
- #29 Iowa State
- #30 Illinois State
- #31 Indiana State
- #32 New Mexico State
- #33 Alabama State
- #34 Georgia State
- #35 University of Texas at Austin
- #36 Idaho State
- #37 Montana State
- #38 North Dakota State
- #39 South Dakota State
- #40 Montana State
- #41 Idaho State
- #42 Montana State
- #43 North Dakota State
- #44 South Dakota State
- #45 Montana State
- #46 Tennessee

Change in U.S. News and World Report Rankings

Three-year change, 2010 to 2012, with 2012 rank

Aspiration Target Peer
Without a thriving and successful undergraduate student body, we cannot become the premier public university we know we can be.

Focusing our efforts on improving undergraduate education has proved fruitful over the last two years. The academic caliber of our students remains on par with Top 25 schools, and we have made progress in our retention and six-year graduation rates—two key metrics by which we gauge our success.

Setting Expectations

Every fall, each of the more than 4,000 freshmen who arrive on campus receives a graduation tassel as part of Welcome Week activities. That tassel, emblazoned with their graduation year, expresses our expectation that they will graduate on time. More students now begin their UT careers expecting to graduate in four years, and we continue to add and improve resources to help them succeed. If that trend endures, our graduation rates will continue to rise.

Eliminating Bottlenecks

Bottleneck courses, typically general education classes with high demand and limited availability, impede our students’ progress toward timely graduation. We have substantially reduced these bottlenecks, but still have room for improvement. Our objective at the undergraduate level is to eliminate all bottleneck courses—a lofty but achievable objective.

Building Community

Leaving home and living on campus is a difficult transition for many students. To help ease the transition we now offer twelve Living and Learning Communities. These residence hall communities give undergraduates with similar interests and academic pursuits the opportunity to live together, learn together, and build lasting relationships. The more quality interactions students have with each other, the better our retention rate will be.

“The emphasis of the first phase of our journey was on improving undergraduate education, and we’ve made the most progress in that area.”

CHANCELLOR JIMMY G. CHEEK

Retention Rate

The number of first-time enrolled students who continue the following year.

6-Year Graduation Rate

The percentage of students who complete four-year bachelor’s degrees within six years of starting.

ACT Equivalent

The ACT scores of entering freshman class. (75th percentile/25th percentile)
Making progress requires us to navigate tricky intersections along our journey. Graduate education has proven to be such an intersection. We must dramatically grow and improve graduate education. It is one of our top priorities and is linked closely to other goals, such as broadening our research base.

We have lost ground in the number of graduate and professional degrees we have conferred since 2010. But we are not alone. New enrollment in graduate schools across the nation has fallen for two years in a row, according to the Council of Graduate Schools. As a response, we are focused on placing high-achieving graduate students in new and more competitive assistantships and fellowships, and we have already significantly improved our admissions process, particularly for international students.

Creating Opportunities
We have added seventy-five new assistantship positions since 2010 and have allocated $12 million for larger stipends and new fellowships to attract outstanding young scholars. Additional program options help ensure that graduate students will work closely with more of our distinguished faculty and additional support for research and professional travel helps us recruit graduate students. We also created two new degree programs—the Doctor of Nursing Practice and the Doctor of Social Work.

Tackling Problems
The Bredesen Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Graduate Education has now recruited two classes. The center has thirty-nine graduate students and nine distinguished graduate fellows, all training with UT and Oak Ridge scientists to take on the world’s most challenging energy problems.

Reaching Across Boundaries
We’re forging new international agreements, and have created our first dual-degree doctoral agreement with the University of Padua, Italy. Also, two of our departments have new collaborative agreements with historically black institutions—the Department of Public Health with Jackson State University (Mississippi) and the Department of Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport Studies with Morehouse College (Atlanta).
Research Changes Lives. It better the world by advancing human knowledge and discovering solutions to society’s most significant challenges. Our research distinguishes us from other universities, and our success in exploring a wide array of topics is dependent on funding.

We’ve made progress in both of our research expenditure metrics—numbers generated by the National Science Foundation. These figures help us measure our success in supporting research activities, and they are used by the research and academic communities to compare us to other institutions.

Partnering for Success
Our relationships with Oak Ridge National Laboratory and Y-12 National Security Complex are well known and highly beneficial. These partnerships continue to thrive as we explore, together, how to capitalize on our connections and gain access to additional funding. As these affiliations prosper, through ventures like the Joint Institute for Advanced Materials, so too does the opportunity for our research to make a significant difference.

We also continue to further on-campus partnerships. The College of Nursing, a leader in “interprofessional practice,” recently partnered with the College of Engineering, as well as programs in pharmacy and medicine, on a grant to help deliver improved health care to patients with limited access. Such interdisciplinary projects allow us to maximize existing talent and expertise to further our research capacity, outreach, and public reputation.

Supercomputing
Solving difficult problems often requires powerful tools of the trade. Our research position is amplified by access to two of the world’s premier supercomputers, Titan and Kraken (currently the world’s fastest). When professor of civil and environmental engineering Joshua Fu needs to simulate the potential effects of climate change, he harnesses the power of these supercomputers to crunch ten million hours of climate and chemistry models. The ability to conduct such high-level research is critical to our success in attracting talented faculty and essential funding.

Multidisciplinary Centering
Multidisciplinary research brings experts together, attracts new faculty and graduate students, rewards high-achieving faculty, and makes us more competitive for federal grant funding. Two distinctly important multidisciplinary efforts launched last year: the Institute for Nuclear Security, which brings together experts in engineering, chemistry, and political science; and the Humanities Center, which enriches our research in philosophy, history, languages, art, music, law, linguistics, and other humanities subjects.
THE CORE OF ANY GREAT UNIVERSITY is its faculty. The faculty teaches our students. The faculty leads our research. The faculty brings national attention to our achievements. With that fact in mind, we have taken great strides to recruit and retain talented and dedicated faculty members.

REWARDING OUR BEST
We have made significant progress in raising average faculty salaries. Assistant professor salaries are up, and for the second year in a row, we were able to provide merit raises to reward our best performers. This year, we also implemented a career path for lecturers in order to retain our top non-tenure-track instructors and reward them through promotions and salary increases. We still have significant work to do to ensure that our faculty is supported on par with those at other top universities.

ENDOWING SCHOLARSHIP
Successfully funding top talent requires private support. Through the Chancellor’s Faculty Support Challenge, more than $7 million has been raised to create thirty new endowed chairs and professorships. Matching funds from the Office of the Chancellor allowed us to boost the compensation of our leading scholars. First-ever chairs were created in the colleges of Architecture and Design, Communication and Information, Nursing, and Social Work.

DISTINGUISHING OURSELVES
When national and international spotlights illuminate our faculty, they shine on the university as a whole. Most notably, last year saw the election of ecologist Dan Simberloff to the National Academy of Sciences. Simberloff is a distinguished professor and the Gore-Hunger Professor of Environmental Science in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology.
HOUGH WE MEASURE OUR PROGRESS in infrastructure and resources improvements by the size of our endowment and expenditures per student, this priority encompasses a much broader picture.

We must balance our growing operational needs with our strategic plan and the associated price tags for meeting our goals. We are focused on accountability and staying affordable and accessible to all qualified students who wish to become Volunteers. And once they are here, we commit resources to help our students succeed and graduate in four years without the burden of debt.

ESTABLISHING FINANCIAL FOOTING
Since 2009, we have endured cuts of more than $60 million from the state, resulting in a 30 percent loss to our primary operating fund. We have not yet made up those reductions, but tuition increases, recent state appropriations, and fundraising have helped restore dollars to academic programs. Last year was a record fundraising year, and we’re on track for another increase in 2013. Generous support from our alumni and friends is having a significant impact through faculty fellowships, scholarships, new building construction, and the advancement of our athletic programs.

BREAKING GROUND
Our campus community has patiently endured the many challenges associated with progress. Last year saw more than a dozen large-scale renovation and new construction projects. We broke ground on the new Student Union and the first new residence hall in more than forty years. Construction continued on the Natalie L. Haslam Music Center and the John D. Tickle Engineering Building. More than $25 million was used to address years of deferred maintenance and upgrades, including more than 120 new roofs, thousands of windows, and even more lights.

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE
Among universities, we are a sustainability leader. UT is one of the first large universities in the Southeast to offer a sustainability major, and we are recognized nationally for the student-initiated campus environmental fee. Last year, our most historic and iconic building—Ayres Hall—became the first LEED platinum-certified facility on campus, and several new facilities are being built to LEED standards.
Perhaps the most public of our achievements occur on the court and on the field. With eighteen NCAA Division I intercollegiate teams, the Vols and Lady Vols enjoy a national reputation for a competitive spirit and a tradition of excellence.

Hitting the Books
Our student-athletes excel both on the playing field and in the classroom. Last spring, the average student-athlete GPA was 3.11, and two sports, women’s basketball and volleyball, achieved a 100 percent graduation success rate. Impressively, three student-athletes won NCAA Post-Graduate Scholarships: diver Ryan Helms and track and field’s Chanelle Price and Ellen Wortham. Tennessee had more honorees than any other Division I school. Wortham was also named SEC co-Women’s Scholar-Athlete of the Year.

Leading the Way
Four head coaches assumed the helm last year. Holly Warlick was named the first new women’s basketball head coach in thirty-eight years. A tried and true Lady Vol, Warlick was a three-time All-American point guard at Tennessee before spending twenty-seven years as assistant to now-Head Coach Emeritus Pat Summit. Butch Jones was hired in December to lead the Volunteer football team, Brian Pensky took over the women’s soccer team, and Matt Kredich was named coach of the recently combined men’s and women’s swimming and diving team.

Going for Gold
Two current and fourteen former student-athletes competed in the 2012 Olympic Games in London, representing ten different countries. Sophomore Jamol James ran for his home country of Trinidad and Tobago in the 100-meter dash and the 4x100 meter relay. Sophomore soccer player Hannah Wilkinson made her Olympic debut playing for her home country, New Zealand.

It’s Great to Be a Tennessee Vol!
ETRICS ARE VITAL to tracking progress, but sometimes sweeping changes can’t be easily measured or summed up with a graph.

“There has been an incredible culture change all across our campus,” Chancellor Cheek said. “Our campus community believes in our potential and departments across campus are talking about how to make their program a Top 25 operation.”

This culture change is as vital to our success as any metric. When faculty, staff, and students believe in our potential, they provide momentum that fuels our journey and an energy that reverberates far beyond our campus.

ADVANCING OUR REPUTATION

Early last year, the university launched a branding campaign to complement this momentum. Core messaging and unified identity guidelines now provide members of the campus community a platform from which to successfully share our stories with the world. When we speak with one cohesive voice, whether through an alumni magazine or in a conversation with friends and colleagues, we advance the university’s public reputation.

MAKING HEADLINES

Increasingly, the world is noticing the University of Tennessee. Last year national and international media organizations highlighted our work on climate change, epigenetics, electric vehicles, asteroids, infidelity, pedometers, the Mars rover Curiosity, and standing up to bullies.

IN THE NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

UT was front and center on network television when NBC’s Today broadcast live from the south lawn of Ayres Hall on October 1. It all began when a few students captured the attention of show producers on Twitter. From there, the Vol Nation took over. Faculty, staff, students, alumni, and other members of the Volunteer family voted in force to bring the popular morning show to campus. About three million viewers tuned in to the one-hour national broadcast, which featured a campus tour, a student game show, cheerleaders, Smokey, the Pride of the Southland Band, student step teams, and hundreds of faculty, staff, students, and Big Orange fans.

Beyond the Metrics

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By the Numbers

7 Faculty members who became fellows in the American Association of the Advancement of Science, bringing our total to forty-five

8th UT’s national rank among universities for number of National Endowment for the Humanities research fellowships (2005–12)

4 Total number of dropped classes each student is now allowed, a change geared toward improving our graduation rate

23 New endowed chairs and professorships created, thanks to the Chancellor’s Faculty Support Challenge

19 New academic advisors added across the university to help students stay successful on their path to graduation

4 Additional Living and Learning Communities to help foster a sense of community and increase the likelihood of retention

3 Campus buildings now on the National Register of Historic Places: Ayres Hall, Tyson House, and Hopscotch

226 Student-athletes named to the 2011-12 SEC Honor Roll

44 Percentage of 2013-13 incoming freshmen with a 4.0 GPA

3 Graduate programs ranked, nationally, in the Top 10: supply chain management and logistics, nuclear engineering, and printmaking

4.5 Terabytes of memory now installed in UT’s upgraded Nautilus supercomputer

75 Instructors hired to teach high-demand courses, thanks to the Provost’s Strategic Instructional Fund

6,885 Degrees awarded during the 2011-12 academic year— the most by any college or university in the state