

# Final Recommendations & Findings

Spring 2020



The  
Styles L. Hutchins  
Fellowship



# Mission of the SLH Fellowship

To create a plan that will make Chattanooga a city where diverse talent can create a prosperous future after college and thrive as professionals.

The Styles L. Hutchins Fellowship, established in the entrepreneurial and innovative spirit of its namesake, launched with the inaugural cohort in the fall of 2019. Cohort I's work entailed research geared toward gauging UTC student perspectives and if their sentiments paralleled with their perception of Chattanooga as a whole.

Cohort I presented their findings in January 2020 and published a list of recommendations for the City of Chattanooga, UTC, and other anchor institutions in the area.

Cohort II was introduced in the early Spring semester of 2020. They began with the goal to move past inspiration to ideation in the design thinking model of research. Following in the footsteps of the first fellows, Cohort II gathered research of their own. They made the executive decision to narrow their research to a few specific areas to make their work more manageable and realistic to achieve. Now their legacy takes *another step toward unifying UTC's diverse student body and Chattanooga's community through career-focused opportunities and a sense of belonging.*

From Covid 19 and having to end all in-person interaction completing the semester and Fellowship work completely online, to tornado devastation hitting close to home and civil unrest in our nation; this Cohort remained resilient in their efforts to make Chattanooga a desirable city for diverse talent.

# Spring 2020 SLH Cohort



**Khadesha Gordon** is a Chattanooga native and studying as a non-traditional student majoring in Political Science and Public Service with a minor in Africana Studies. Her professional career goal is to work in the legal field and with corporate diversity and inclusion efforts. Over the course of her college career she has been involved on campus with SGA, NAACP, and MocLead. She is a part of the Student Voices Project with The Ed Trust Tennessee and is the Civic Engagement Chair for Urban League of Greater Chattanooga Young Professionals.



**Tyrese Hobbs** is a rising senior from Nashville, Tennessee; studying Entrepreneurship and Interior Design. His professional career goal is to be a serial entrepreneur-- clothing, hospitality, entertainment venues, etc. During his college tenure he has been involved with Freshman Senate, Brother2Brother Mentoring, Resident Assistant, the Lambda Iota Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., Alpha Lambda Delta Honor Society, Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society, and the S.M.I.L.E. Fund--as a Lead Analyst.



**Ervin Fisher IV** is a rising senior double majoring in Entrepreneurship and Marketing. His professional career goals are to work for a company's marketing department and start ups in the local area in order to gain experience for starting his own business ventures. During his college career, he has worked full-time in the hospitality field and has solidified his foundation for career placement upon graduation through networking opportunities.



**Eric Barton** is a rising senior at UTC, double majoring in Engineering Management and Psychology with aspirations of owning a social lounge and an engineering management firm. Eric serves as an academic advisor for Upward Bound: Math Science, where he assists Chattanooga's high schoolers to develop college readiness and confidence- building skills. He has served in multiple leadership roles on UTC's campus including vice president and treasurer of Eta Phi Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated, community service chair and social media chair for Brother2Brother, Scholarly Men in Action, Black Student Alliance, and Resident Assistant.

# Partners



Urban League of  
Greater Chattanooga, Inc.

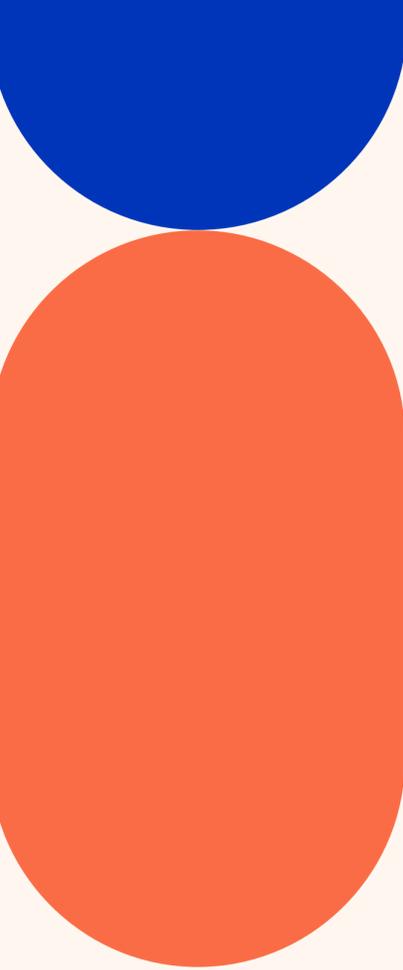


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Mayor Andy Berke pictured with new Cohort II Fellows (Left to right: Eric Barton, Tyrese Hobbs and Ervin Fisher) during first day welcome lunch. February 2020

# Recommendations for Advancing Career Opportunities and Professional Networks

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**The UTC Office of Multicultural Affairs should strengthen relationships between Black students with local employers and capitalize on opportunities for those who promote diversity and inclusion in recruitment and hiring practices.**

**85%**

**Black students listed job opportunities as the number 1 factor influencing their decision to stay in Chattanooga post-graduation, and additionally, 52% said that paid internships would improve their college experience.**

## Findings:

- Interviews with large area employers revealed strong relationships between employers and the Gary W. Rollins College of Business than other colleges and areas of study at UTC.
- Overall, Black students had the highest percentage of disagreement when asked if Chattanooga had the type of career opportunities they are seeking after graduation.
- Competitive GPA requirements for paid internships may be a barrier to access in obtaining these professional opportunities.

Source: Fall 2019 UTC Student Perspectives Survey - Cohort I  
Local Employer Interviews: EPB, BCBS, Unum, Erlanger

UTC should review and support implementation of the Styles L. Hutchins Professional Mentorship Program and Toolkit, created by Cohort II Fellows and scheduled to launch in Fall 2020.

96%

The overwhelming majority of young black professionals responding to the Cohort II Young Professional Perspectives Survey agreed that professional mentorships were essential to career advancement.

## Findings:

- Mentorship and professional networks/career opportunities were **two of the four factors** that students believe would improve their experience in reaching their professional goals.
- Research proves that professional mentoring is a cost-effective and valuable tool for developing employer's most important asset: a pipeline of talented young professionals who desire to live and work locally.

# Recommendations for Creating a Greater Sense of Belonging for Black Professionals

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**The City of Chattanooga should establish a stronger social and cultural climate by developing a month-long annual celebration of diversity and inclusion; a permanent cultural and minority business corridor along East M.L.K. Boulevard.**

**55%**

More than half of young Black professionals responding to the Cohort II Young Professional Perspectives Survey disagreed with the statement, "I feel culturally connected to the city of Chattanooga."

## Findings:

- Only 34% of black students at UTC responding to the Cohort I Survey said they could see themselves living in Chattanooga after graduation.
- Collective responses from Young Black Professionals regarding cultural and/ or social activities that may improve a sense of belonging were reflective of place-based ideas for for young adults to meet socially, artistically, and for cultivation of their unique business needs. Examples include: "Cultural Street Festivals, R&B Soul Lounge or coffee shops, concerts, consistent black social events and better nightlife, food festivals, MLK revitalization and more diverse vendors and artists at events such as, Riverbend."

# Considerations Moving Forward: Cohort III



**The City of Chattanooga and community partners should:**

**Continue community advocacy for transit improvements as both a long and short-term solution for mobility and access.**

*In order to attract and retain talent in Chattanooga, easy and affordable transit options must be available and accessible to young people.*

**Continue to work to remove barriers to and strengthen affordable housing options especially in and around downtown Chattanooga.**

*Offering affordable housing options in and around the downtown core encourages college graduate to live, work and play in our city.*

**Create a digital resource guide targeted for diverse young professionals and newcomers to Chattanooga.**

*This one-stop shop online platform or app would connect diverse individuals to professional networks of color, minority-owned enterprises, faith based institutions and other organizations and social events. Producing such a resource will welcome young people to our city and help to bridge the information gap ideally leading to a sense of belonging for black students and diverse professionals beginning their careers or moving to Chattanooga. #CHACULTURE.ORG*