



ThinkAchieve: Creating Connections uses critical thinking as the foundation for each of its student-centered links. The title of the program comes from our belief that students who have become competent in the areas of creative and critical thinking will achieve higher levels of success. Their success at becoming critical thinkers will fuel their achievements in academics, in their careers, and in their lives. We also know that critical thinking cannot be an isolated outcome and must be addressed within an integrated community of learning that emphasizes growth across multiple disciplines and experiences.

Our intention is to implement a program in which UTC students are offered both a curriculum and a variety of co-curricular experiences to practice and integrate critical thinking skills through courses, service learning experiences and other experiential learning opportunities, both in and out of the classroom.

Project Goal:

Over the course of their university experience, UTC students will increase their overall critical thinking skills, as exhibited by the ability to identify, evaluate and interpret information; solve problems, create innovative solutions through creative thinking; and communicate ideas and information effectively.

ThinkAchieve: Creating Connections will integrate this definition in the following student programs:

- **ThinkAchieve: Introduction** – Pre-orientation and orientation programming to introduce critical thinking and problem-solving concepts to incoming students, to ease the transition to college, to foster a community of learning among incoming students, and to create an expectation of academic rigor to prepare incoming students for university study.
- **ThinkAchieve: In the Classroom** – Curricular integration to emphasize critical thinking and problem-solving skills through the general education program and the disciplinary courses. Integrate teaching and learning strategies that require critical thinking, form faculty communities to share successful strategies, assess at the programmatic level.
- **ThinkAchieve: Beyond the Classroom** – Provide students the opportunities to practice and apply knowledge in experiential learning scenarios. Experiential learning that ask students to examine, apply, practice, and reflect upon critical thinking skills within approved experiential learning experiences. The planned activities may include both credit and non-credit activities. UTC will document service and experiential learning through a co-curricular transcript.

The current literature on critical thinking outlines several taxonomies and components that make up “critical thinking” (Lynch, C.L. & Wolcott, S.K., 2001; Paul, R.W., & Elder, L., 2001). Most of these taxonomies outline a continuum of skills along which students can move as they improve their thinking abilities. Our plan is that UTC students will improve their critical thinking skills progressively through an integrated program that spans the general education curriculum, the curriculum for their major that may include opportunities for service learning, and experiential learning opportunities outside of the classroom. The integrated program will allow students to practice and apply critical thinking skills over their entire university experience.

Each of the programmatic elements of **ThinkAchieve: Creating Connections** will support these learning outcomes and the further development of student learning. This program is student-centered and makes possible a broad-based paradigm shift in teaching and learning toward pedagogies that have been proven more effective in theoretical studies as well as in the classroom.

UTC will be able to track student access to and capability in those desired critical thinking skills through the Critical Thinking Assessment Test (CAT), the ETS Proficiency Profile Exam (PPE), the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE). Additionally, each academic and student-centered unit will use the existing Institutional Effectiveness assessment cycle to set desired outcomes, assess the achievement of those outcomes, and use their results to improve and innovate for the following year.

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