

[The University of Tennessee, Knoxville](#)

[Office of Research & Engagement](#)

UT Hosts Conference Addressing Community Engagement

UT hosted a two-day engagement and outreach conference October 8 and 9, bringing together more than 150 faculty, staff, and community partners to discuss collaborations between higher education institutions and their larger communities.

The Office of Community Engagement and Outreach, Office of Research and Engagement, the Office of Diversity and Community Relations in the Haslam College of Business, and University-Assisted Community Schools in the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences partnered to host the conference, *Building University-Community Relationships: More Than One and Done*.

The conference was meant to foster collaboration between UT and its community partners, with speakers highlighting potential issues institutions face when engaging communities and sharing successful examples of national solutions and partnerships. Representatives of UT's 11 academic colleges were in attendance as well as a variety of community partners including United Way of Greater Knoxville, Centro Hispano de East Tennessee, the Boys and Girls Club, Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Tennessee, and the YMCA.

“We have a lot of scholars on campus who incorporate community engagement into their research and scholarly efforts, which is why it is important to have a mechanism for them to discuss these types of projects,” said Javiette Samuel, UT’s director of community engagement and outreach. “It also helps to ensure that we are implementing best practices when working with our community partners. The goal is to create a dialogue wherein new ideas are spurred, and we wanted to build that opportunity into this conference.”

The day began with an opening keynote address from Darlene Kamine, executive director of the Community Learning Center Institute in Cincinnati, Ohio, and closed with Gavin Luter, director of UniverCity Alliance at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Both emphasized the importance of community engagement, the types of impact a successful outreach campaign can have, and the potential of these collaborations to enact change both in a local community and on a national stage. Luter also touched on the unintended consequences engagement can have on a community—a subject that caught the attention of Randy Boyd, recently named interim president of UT.



“We always have to be mindful when we are engaging the community. We need to make sure that we are aware of the full impact of our actions,” said Boyd, reflecting on the collaboration that eventually became University-Assisted Community Schools. “Overall, I’m proud of the work that the community schools and the University of Tennessee have done, and I think what may be even more impactful is the inspiration we can provide to the rest of the state and the rest of the country.”

A panel of community leaders, including Evetty Satterfield of the Knox County Schools Board of Education; Bob Kronick, professor of educational psychology and counseling and director of University-Assisted Community Schools; Calvin Skinner, co-founder of the One Knox Legacy Coalition; and Sylvia Turner, associate director of UT’s Haslam Scholars Program, discussed the hurdles of community engagement and what can be done to reach underrepresented communities. Attendees participated in moderated roundtable discussions and viewed posters from Engagement and Outreach Mini-Grant recipients.

“I think the time is now, and the place is Knoxville,” said Samuel. “UT, in partnership with the community partners, conducts mutually beneficial research that is at the very heart of community engaged scholarship. I’m excited to see the impact we can make going forward.”