

TOP FIVE REASONS ITE IS INVALUABLE TO TRANSPORTATION STUDENTS

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When asked to write an article about the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) student chapter, we thought it should be like us, unique. We brainstormed ideas and discussed what we wanted to write. Well, we wanted to write quite a bit. All of it, however, seemed to reflect on how much we love ITE and everything ITE has done for us. With that in mind, we compiled a list of the top five reasons ITE is invaluable to transportation students.

5. Unity in Transportation

There is one underlying reason we all go to school. We want to make a career out of something we love. For us, that something involves transportation engineering. From planning to traffic, surveying to data analysis, this field holds something for everyone. Depending on your university's specialty or research focus, you may never be exposed to certain types of transportation issues while in school. ITE unites professionals in all modes, positions, and organizations. This diversity allows students and members exposure to new and different aspects of transportation.

4. Makes Transportation 'FUNNER'

Members of the UTK chapter always seem to have the most fun. From student get-togethers to section and district meetings, we always find a way to enjoy ourselves. Our energy is especially contagious during the several events we hold for high schoolers interested in engineering. For UTK's Engineer's Day, we planned for months to make our event 'funner.' To engage students in the many facets of transportation engineering, we held a paper airplane contest, showed off our e-bikes, encouraged the students to race and beat the license plate reading cameras, and let the students test drive our state of the art driving simulator. We also created four riddles for the students to solve. The answer to each riddle was a transportation feature located somewhere near their activities for the day. To submit their entry, students had to take a picture of the answer and post it to our chapter's Facebook page. Students and chapter members alike had a great time participating in all of these events.

3. Professional Networking

Through ITE, we have met outstanding professionals in our field. Every event from our weekly student chapter seminars to section and district meetings gives us the chance to meet and interact with a diverse group of professionals. Through the relationships that are built, many of us have been able to find employment after graduation and mentors for our career. These contacts would never be possible without the aid of ITE.

The most invaluable aspect about networking is finding our mentors. These mentors give us strong real-world role models that cannot be found in any university. Through ITE, our repertoire of possibilities is broadened by our mentors. Whenever we encounter an issue that is outside the scope of our knowledge, there is a group of engineering mentors that have already faced that challenge. A simple email can start a larger chain in which you receive a number of solutions to the problem from various sources. These sources can come from vastly different views on the problem. From answers with a focus in one extreme, to just as many answers with a focus in the opposite extreme, this wealth of knowledge is something wholly unique to ITE. The UTK chapter is lucky to have such mentors as Hollis Loveday, Cindy Pionke, Alan Childers, Brian Hass and Chris Kirby located in Knoxville to support us.

2. Learning about the future of transportation

School is a great place to learn about new technologies that are emerging in the transportation field. After school, however, where can we learn? The simple answer, ITE. Attending meetings allows you to learn about transportation advancements. The advancements made in Tennessee may be interesting, but there are a number of states that are each making their own advancements. How would a system from Tennessee work in Virginia? Nationally? Attending ITE meetings and learning from the engineers that originally implemented the system is an incredibly valuable experience. Learning what types of new technology can benefit your region from those that pioneered the technologies is immensely important to the future of all transportation and something that is provided through ITE.

Our chapter has been inspired by many of the organizations and universities that are involved in ITE. We have become a stronger chapter, by using them as examples.

1. Lifelong friendships

The single most important aspect to every member of the UTK chapter is the bonds we have made with each other. The chapter is not just a group of students interested in transportation. We are a family. We enjoy spending time with each other. We enjoy doing things together. The bonds we have made and the friendships we share will go on far longer than our time at the university.

This year the UTK student chapter was rewarded greatly for our hard work at the Southern District ITE meeting, but we took more than just paper awards and checks home, we left with irreplaceable friends that were grouped together by common interest, but bonded by our dedication to each other. Our commitment to transportation and ITE is mirrored in our commitment to these lifelong friends. Our chapter may be unique and it is why we have hundreds of reasons as to why ITE is invaluable and lifelong to us.







