

"UTC Student Receives the 3,000th Dollar of Scholarship Award from GITA Southeast Chapter"



Ryan Miller receives third award from GITA Southeast Chapter president Charlie Marlin

The Southeast Chapter of GITA awarded the 3,000th dollar of scholarship assistance to Ryan Miller, graduate student in the University of Tennessee of Chattanooga's Environmental Science program.

The research of Mr. Miller is being conducted in conjunction with the federal National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) project at UTC. The focus of this line of research is to establish a database of and georeferences for the 15,000 plant specimens of the UTC Herbarium plus ongoing plant documentation. Current advances in GIS and software designed for biological collections allow herbarium data to be used for new methods of conservation, restoration, and general biological inquiry.

The project overseen by Mr. Miller seeks to document the presence of plant species in particular Tennessee counties and generate a database consisting of plant distribution data for each of the documented plant species. For each collected plant specimen the database will include over 50 searchable characteristic fields (e.g., GPS coordinates, state, county, locality description, date collected, collector, and reproductive state). This work is intended to act as a pilot study for the planned larger efforts of approximately 200 herbaria throughout the southeast that will undoubtedly enhance our biological knowledge of the southeastern United States.

One of Mr. Miller's first presentations about his project was given at the GITA Southeast Chapter's Annual Conference in October 2006. The scholarship money has allowed Mr. Miller to travel to other conferences, make presentations about his project, and learn the practices of people engaged in similar activities.

The project is overseen by Dr. Joey Shaw and other UTC faculty who are members of the Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences. These projects involve research utilizing UTC's Geographical Information System (GIS) laboratory.