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## **Dumas Announces Candidacy for School Board**

[April 9] Chattanooga, TN – Joe Dumas, professor and acting head of the Computer Science and Engineering department at UTC, announced his candidacy for District 2’s seat on the Hamilton County School Board. Dumas will be on the ballot in the August 7, 2008 county general election.

“As a faculty member who is in the classroom every day working with students, I know that success in college – and in life – depends on having a solid educational foundation at the K-12 level,” said Dr. Dumas. “At UTC, we recruit more students from the Hamilton County schools than anywhere else. I want those students to be prepared to succeed – and if my fellow citizens will place their trust in me as District 2’s next representative on the school board, I will put my many years of experience in education to work to make sure that happens.”

Dumas joined the UTC faculty in 1993 and was promoted to full professor in 2005. Since last May, he has been leading a department with ten faculty members and an annual budget of nearly a million dollars. As teaching and advising students are daily features of his job, Dr. Dumas knows from experience that it is sometimes difficult for students to complete their degrees in a timely manner because of inadequate preparation. “Having to take remedial courses can stretch out the process of earning a college degree from four years to five, six, or even longer. Unfortunately, some students never finish. They would have a much improved chance of success if our K-12 schools did a better job of grounding them in the fundamentals,” Dumas said.

In order to accomplish that goal, Dumas believes the Hamilton County school system must put more of its financial resources directly into the classroom. “Mr. Tommy Kranz, the HCDE’s Chief Financial Officer, has told us that the benchmark of successful school systems is that 90 percent or more of their budgets are spent in the classroom. Currently – after 8 years of my opponent’s time in office, including three as chairman – our classroom spending is in the low eighties. That is just not the right way to improve our schools, and I think it is time for a change – time to get our schools back on track. We need to cut non-classroom spending, especially in the central office, and put more of our money to work directly for the students. After all, they are the reason our schools exist.”

Dumas has chosen to campaign on a platform of “SAFETY in Our Schools.” SAFETY is an acronym for his six planks of Safety and discipline; Academic focus; Fiscal responsibility; Effective communication; Transparency and accountability; and Your schools, your voice. “Students cannot learn effectively if they are constantly being distracted by troublemakers. We must discipline and, if necessary, remove those who are not in school to learn, for the benefit of those who are. And when discipline or other troublesome issues come up, we need to be open and honest about them and communicate them to parents and the public in an appropriate and timely manner – just as we do when good things happen. We can’t make problems go away by sweeping them under the rug.”

Joe Dumas holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Southern Mississippi, a master’s degree from Mississippi State University, and the Ph.D. in computer engineering from the University of Central Florida. He and his wife, Chereé, live in Signal Mountain and attend Signal Crest United Methodist Church. Their two boys attended Hamilton County schools before going on to Middle Tennessee State University.

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