The chemistry of cool jazz, great golf, and students. Things that mean a lot to Dr. Lancelot C. A. Thompson --and only part of what makes him so special to the people who know him.

After 20 years as UT's vice president for student affairs, Dr. Thompson will be granted professor emeritus status on June 30, and an era will have ended. Dr. Thompson, a trendsetter in every sense of the word, was the first black professor at the University, the first black to receive tenure, one of the first four recipients of "The Outstanding Teacher Award," the first black vice president, and the first person to hold the post of vice president of student affairs.

A native of Jamaica, Dr. Thompson, came to the United States in 1949 on a track scholarship from Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. While at Morgan State, he won the 1952 broad-jump title at the Penn Relays. He received his bachelor of science degree with honors from Morgan State in 1952 and his doctorate in physical-inorganic chemistry from Wayne State University, Detroit, in 1955. He returned to Jamaica, teaching chemistry, physics and mathematics, and serving as athletic director at Cornwall College in Jamaica. He also was chairman of the science department and an instructor in chemistry at Wolmers Boys' School in Jamaica.

Dr. Thompson joined the University in 1958 as an assistant professor of chemistry and the first full-time black faculty member.

He was presented with an Outstanding Teacher Award in 1964 and was appointed assistant dean of the College of Arts and Sciences the same year. Dr. Thompson said that it took him a long time to make the decision, because his first love has always been teaching, and he didn't want to leave. When he accepted the post, however, his teaching load was reduced because, in the dean's words, "so many students have been seeking him out voluntarily for private counsel, it seems only fair to provide him with the time and facilities..."

In 1966, he became dean of student services, was promoted to professor of chemistry in 1967, and was appointed vice president in 1968. As vice president for student affairs, he has coordinated the activities of more than a dozen offices including student activities, housing, financial aid, discipline, international students, placement, the student union,
counseling center, minority affairs, testing center, health service, the Interfraternity and PanHellenic councils, and intramurals and recreation. In addition, he continued to teach general chemistry while performing his administrative duties.

A member of the American Chemical Society and chairman of the Toledo Section in 1965, he also is a member of Sigma Xi chemistry honorary, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the New York Academy of Sciences, and the Blue Key National Honor Fraternity.

A visiting scientist in 1962 for the Ohio Academy of Science, he served as chairman of the Ohio Association of Student Personnel Administrators, the president of Toledo chapter of the International Torch Club, and a member of the executive committee and the editorial board of the NASPA Journal, and the assistant midwestern vice president for the state of Ohio for the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.

In athletics, he organized and became the unpaid coach of the Rocket track team in 1960--without equipment or budget. When it became a varsity sport, he turned to other interests, organizing a soccer team. He was inducted into Morgan State University's Athletic Hall of Fame in 1975.

The author of nine publications on chemistry and students, Dr. Thompson was the recipient of the Outstanding Achievement in Education award and the Outstanding Brother of the Year Award from the Alpha Xi Lambda chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, the Alpha Phi Alpha midwestern region Distinguished Brother Award, the Key to the Golden Door Award from the International Institute of Toledo for outstanding service to the city of Toledo and the country, and the Ohio Association of Student Personnel Administrators Award for Outstanding Contributions and Services to students and the profession. Dr. Thompson also was honored by the invitation from President Lyndon Johnson to attend the 20th anniversary ceremony of the signing of the Atomic Energy Act on August 1, 1966.

Public service has been a large part of Dr. Thompson's life. He has served on the executive committee of the Bridge, Inc., the mayor's executive committee on alcoholism, the Toledo Health Planning Association Board, the Toledo Development Committee, the board of trustees of the Neighborhood Health Association, and the board of trustees of Mary Manse College, serving as vice chairman and as a member of the Student Affairs subcommittee. In addition, he continues to serve on the Toledo Labor Management Citizens Committee, the board of trustees for the Better Business Bureau, and the board of

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directors of the American Red Cross. A member of Kiwanis International since 1971, he
has been president-elect and president.

During his years at the University, Dr. Thompson has seen both good and bad. When
he first came to UT, some people couldn't accept that he was allowed to park in faculty
parking. "It didn't bother me at first because some of the incidents that happened in the
first few years were funny," he said. Something that wasn't funny was the housing
discrimination he experienced when he first came to Toledo. Stones were thrown through
his windows and no one willing to give him a loan to buy a house, he recalls. But he got
a loan from a bank in Columbus and bought a house on Cheltenham in Old Orchard. Dr.
Thompson said that he had expected some people in the neighborhood to move out when
he moved in, but that didn't happen. Neighbors became some of his best friends.

A turbulent time for both the University and Dr. Thompson was the late '60s and '70s.
According to Dr. Thompson, in the aftermath of the Kent State tragedy, administrators
really earned their pay. "We kept the University from being taken over by student activists.

"We were very lucky here because of the good student leadership," Dr. Thompson
said. "The student leaders, myself, the faculty and the chief of security worked to defuse
situations." Open discussions of concerns, teach-ins, and the fact that UT didn't bring the
police on campus helped keep the situation under control. Dr. Thompson can remember
once when a Blade reporter asked him why he didn't arrest some kids making a protest.
He replied that if the president had wanted her (the reporter) to be vice president, he would
have appointed her.

On occasion during those years, Dr. Thompson stayed overnight at the University.
"We only had two police guarding all the property. I found one policeman the night some
students tried to burn the Field House, but I never found the other one." Dr. Thompson
had been tipped off about the burning attempt, and he and some student leaders stayed all
night in the Field House to prevent anyone from getting on the roof (the only thing that
would burn). He also remembers when students threw gasoline on the press box in the
Glass Bowl. They tried to light it, but it had been raining too hard, and the fire wouldn't
light. "I think Max Gerber (retired UT sports information director) would have been happy
if it had burned down," Dr. Thompson said.

Despite all the tension, Dr. Thompson recalls the years fondly. "A lot of times, we
averted trouble by the skin of our teeth. We came pretty close to some large-scale riots.

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Those were great days, though." In his opinion, students were more politically aware of what was going on and were more willing to march and demonstrate for causes. "Students are more conservative now," he said. "They're reflecting a trend across the nation."

Teaching is one of the things he is looking forward to the most in his retirement. "I love to see students blossoming as they understand what you're teaching. For students to learn, they have to enjoy what they're learning," he said. He said that classes can be humorous. He remembers a class he was teaching about the chemicals used in photo developing. "I was talking about a photo of Madame Curie, and I said it was a naked picture of her, when I meant it was undeveloped. The kids cracked up."

In addition to teaching, he hopes to improve his golf game, travel to some of the countries in the West Indies that he hasn't been to, and write some articles in his field. But teaching will still be the most important to him. "When kids come back and tell you thank you.... that's what makes me feel good," he said.

During a golf tournament last year, a man came up and said that he wouldn't have graduated if it hadn't been for Dr. Thompson. He told Dr. Thompson that he had tutored him in chemistry and helped him to pass. Dr. Thompson, unfortunately, couldn't remember the man's name. "After you've taught thousands of kids, you never know who you've touched." But the warm feeling of being needed remains.