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THEC Awards Over \$700,000 to Higher Education Institutions to Support Adult Learner Success

NASHVILLE – *August 17* – The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) has awarded \$726,130 in Ready to Reconnect grants to sixteen higher education institutions to build support systems that significantly improve outcomes for adult students. The grants will go toward facilitating the implementation and sustainability of institutional projects to improve practices, policies, and internal operations that support adult learner success.

“Ready to Reconnect Grants will enable institutions to support their adult learners with innovative programmatic interventions,” said Jessica Gibson, Assistant Executive Director at the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. “The grant program will also develop a community of best practices among these institutions in serving adult learners in Tennessee.”

The programs funded through Ready to Reconnect will support adult student retention and completion through increased support and programmatic elements. Many of the funded programs plan to engage adult learners by connecting them with adult learner peers, increasing access to technology for academic purposes and supporting connections between their academic pursuits and career ambitions. Other institutions are providing training and resources to faculty and staff to further support their adult students inside and outside the classroom such as providing faculty training on incorporating multiple methods of instruction including experiential and problem-based methods. To apply for funding, institutions were required to first complete the Adult Learning Focused Institution assessment provided by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. This assessment served as a foundation for their project proposal and provided institutions with insight into the perspectives of their current adult learners and the obstacles they face.

The Ready to Reconnect grant awarded sixteen grants to public and private not-for-profit community colleges, Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs), four-year colleges and universities across the state; grant amounts range between \$26,750 and \$50,000, based on the amount requested by the institution. The projects will begin September 2015 and span a 12-month period.

“Tennessee has been at the forefront of engaging adult learners in Tennessee for a number of years and the Ready to Reconnect Grant is yet another example of our commitment to adult learners in higher education,” said THEC Interim Executive Director Russ Deaton. “We look forward to partnering with the sixteen awarded institutions to implement these innovative ideas to promote success among our adult student population.”

The Ready to Reconnect grants were chosen through a competitive application process. The grant program is administered by THEC and funded by a College Access Challenge Grant from the U.S. Department of Education as well as state funding.

List of Funded Institutions:

- Austin Peay State University
- Baptist Memorial College of Health Sciences
- Chattanooga State Community College
- Cleveland State Community College
- Columbia State Community College
- Dyersburg State Community College
- Lipscomb University
- Middle Tennessee State University
- Roane State Community College
- Southwest Tennessee Community College
- Tennessee College of Applied Technology - Dickson
- Tennessee College of Applied Technology - Shelbyville
- University of Memphis
- University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
- Volunteer State Community College
- Walters State Community College

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission was created in 1967 by the Tennessee General Assembly. The Commission coordinates two systems of higher education, the University of Tennessee institutions governed by the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, and the state universities, community

colleges, and technology centers governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents. There are nine public universities, two special purpose institutes, 13 community colleges, and 27 colleges of applied technology in Tennessee that educate nearly 250,000 students.