



Complete to Compete: Complete College Tennessee Act of 2018

Complete to Compete: *The Complete College Tennessee Act of 2018* further sets the vision for higher education completion efforts in the state to reach the goal of 55 percent postsecondary attainment by 2025. We know that at least 55 percent of jobs in Tennessee will require postsecondary training by 2025. *Complete to Compete* restructures financial aid requirements for Tennessee Promise and the HOPE scholarship to keep students on track for success, and it requires community colleges to implement structured, ready-made schedules for all incoming full-time students based on the student's academic program.

Why Complete to Compete?

With the support of the General Assembly, the Drive to 55 initiative has created more opportunities for more Tennesseans. Since the implementation of the groundbreaking Tennessee Promise program, more Tennessee students are going to college than ever before. In fact, the state's college going rate, a metric difficult to move, has increased by roughly five percentage points since 2011. While more students are entering postsecondary education, the six-year graduation rate in Tennessee is currently 26.3 percent for community colleges and 56.8 percent for four-year institutions. Now more than ever before, Tennessee postsecondary institutions have an imperative to advise and guide students on their path to on-time completion, and this bill moves us closer to accomplishing that objective.

The Promise and HOPE 30-in-12

Under this proposal, students who receive either the Tennessee Promise or HOPE scholarship would be required to complete a minimum of 30 academic hours in 12 months or risk losing a portion of their award. ***The math is clear:*** to graduate on time, students must take at least 15 credits per fall and spring semester, or 30 credits per year including summer terms. Currently, many students default to 12 hours per semester because this classifies as full-time status for administrative purposes. Research shows the significant benefits of taking the credits needed to graduate on time: better academic performance, higher retention rates, and the increased likelihood of completion. Each extra semester comes with a cost, both to the student and the institution, and the longer it takes, the greater the likelihood that students will not earn their degree or credential. ***The bottom line:*** changing the requirement to a minimum of 30 credit hours in one year is good for students, institutions, and the state.

Structured Schedules for Success

When students start strong, they are more likely to complete their degree or credential. Yet, despite this fact, too few of our Tennessee Promise students are showing up to community colleges on day one with a clear sense of how to set up their academic schedule for success. This proposal restates the legislative intent for our community and technical colleges to become a more unified system to maximize effectiveness and enhance student success. Under this bill, the college system of Tennessee, which includes both community colleges and TCATs, would be required to implement a structured, ready-made scheduling for all entering freshmen based on the student's academic program.

Complete to Compete Overall Plan

In addition to the 30-in-12 and structured scheduling provisions, the *Complete to Compete* initiative includes additional financial supports for both students and our institutions. The overall initiative also includes: 1) the addition of advisors at each community college; 2) the deployment of a college coaching network across the state to work directly with college students; 3) the expansion of the SAILS program to reduce the need for remediation; 4) the expansion of the bridge program that offers intensive pre-college orientation and remediation support for Tennessee Promise students; and 5) the creation of a mobile, modular lab that can be used to provide training in some of the higher education "deserts" in Tennessee, where students are not readily able to access post-secondary opportunities.

Drive to 55 Background

In 2013, Governor Haslam launched the Drive to 55 to increase the number of Tennesseans with a postsecondary degree or certificate to at least 55 percent by 2025. As a result, the Haslam administration and General Assembly established the **Tennessee Promise** and **Tennessee Reconnect** programs to allow high school graduates and adults meeting certain requirements to attend two years of *community or technical college* free of tuition and mandatory fees. Drive to 55 is changing the landscape of what is possible in Tennessee public higher education, its workforce and economy.