DR. STEVEN GENTILE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Tennessee Higher Education Commission

BILL LEE
GOVERNOR

STATE OF TENNESSEE
TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION
312 ROSA L. PARKS AVE., 9TH FLOOR
NASHVILLE, TN 37243
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Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC)
General Counsel

General Description

The General Counsel reports directly to the Executive Director and serves as the chief legal officer for the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. The General Counsel provides legal advice, counsel, and representation to the Executive Director, the THEC board, and agency leadership. The position advises the agency on higher education law, administrative law, legislation, ethics, contracts, procurement, public records, open meetings, employment, risk management, and regulatory compliance. The General Counsel leads the legal bureau, manages the agency's legal affairs, and ensures that THEC operates consistently with applicable law, policy, and professional standards.

The successful candidate will be a trusted and practical advisor who brings sound judgment, intellectual independence, discretion, and the ability to communicate complex legal issues clearly to both legal and nonlegal audiences. The position requires a leader who can anticipate emerging issues, identify workable paths forward, and provide candid advice while remaining attentive to the agency's public mission. The successful candidate will build confidence across the organization, lead and develop the legal bureau, and maintain strong relationships with internal and external partners.

Job Duties and Responsibilities

- Serve as the principal legal advisor to the Executive Director and agency leadership.
- Provide legal advice, counsel, and representation to the THEC board.
- Advise the agency on higher education, administrative, legislative, ethics, employment, contract, procurement, public records, open meetings, risk management, and regulatory matters, including proposed legislation, administrative rules, policies, memoranda of understanding, contracts, grants, and other agency agreements.
- Monitor legal developments affecting THEC, Tennessee higher education, and state government, and communicate their implications to agency leadership.
- Lead and supervise the legal bureau, including its contract and compliance functions, while setting clear expectations, delegating effectively, ensuring high-quality legal service, and developing staff through feedback and professional growth opportunities.
- Establish appropriate legal review processes, policies, and procedures to promote consistency, accountability, and timely decision-making.
- Manage outside counsel and coordinate the agency's representation in litigation, claims, investigations, administrative proceedings, and other legal matters.
- Oversee the legal bureau's coordination and preparation of commission meeting materials, agendas, resolutions, board communications, and meeting procedures, ensuring that materials are complete, timely, and compliant with applicable law.
- Provide legal guidance on agency investigations, audits, complaints, and sensitive or high-profile matters.

- Protect attorney-client privilege and maintain the highest standards of confidentiality, professional responsibility, and legal ethics.
- Perform other duties and special projects related to the position.

Experience and Qualifications

- Juris Doctor degree and active admission to practice law in Tennessee; and active licensure in good standing.
- At least ten years of progressively responsible legal experience, including experience advising executive leadership, governing boards, higher education institutions, or other public-sector entities on complex and consequential legal matters.
- Strong knowledge of, or substantial experience with, public-sector legal issues, including administrative law, open meetings, public records, ethics, contracts, procurement, employment, and legislative matters.
- Experience leading or supervising attorneys and legal staff, managing outside counsel, or overseeing a legal department or function.
- Demonstrated ability to analyze complex legal issues, exercise sound judgment, and provide clear, practical advice to nonlawyers, including on controversial, sensitive, or high-profile matters.
- Demonstrated commitment to legal ethics, professional responsibility, confidentiality, and public service.
- Excellent written, oral, interpersonal, and relationship-building skills.

Anticipated Salary Range and Benefits

The annual salary range for this position is $185,000-$205,000 and is commensurate with qualifications. This position offers a competitive benefits package that includes health, dental, life insurance, and paid vacation and holidays.

How to Apply

Please submit a cover letter, resume, and contact information for three references via email to THEC.HR@tn.gov.