



Graduate Assistant – Financial Aid Research

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) invites applications for a **project-based, part-time, summer graduate assistant** to support data strategy operations. The graduate assistant will contribute to pursuing THEC's vision to cultivate a cohesive higher education enterprise which fosters innovative solutions to ensure student success, build strong communities, and improve the lives of Tennesseans.

THEC's Data Strategy Division oversees the agency's data governance program and data science initiatives. Graduate assistants in the Data Strategy Division will:

- Collaborate with experts in postsecondary education policy and data;
- Review relevant literature and policy on issues related to postsecondary education;
- Analyze quantitative and qualitative data; and
- Assist with administrative work to support agency operations as necessary;

The Graduate Assistant will **select one project**, as outlined below, based on their interest and skillset. The graduate assistantships for summer 2026 last **up to 15 weeks (maximum of 29.5 hours per week)**. Tennessee residency is required, but work may be completed on a **remote or hybrid** schedule. The hourly rate for this position is **\$22.00**. Graduate assistants may earn academic credit in accordance with their institution's academic policies.

THEC will supply the appropriate equipment to complete the selected project.

Qualifications

Ideal applicants should be a **current or recent graduate of a graduate-level program** in statistics, public policy or administration, education, or a related field. Irrespective of the selected project, qualified candidates should possess:

- A general knowledge of postsecondary education policy issues from a state and/or national level;
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office (Word, PowerPoint, Excel, etc.) and with research or analytical software (e.g., R Studio, Stata, etc.)
- Effective skills communicating data and evidence; and
- Excellent written and oral communication skills.

Project-specific qualifications are listed beneath each project summary.

To Apply

Interested applicants should submit a cover letter, writing sample, and resume **by April 17, 2026. Applicants should specify their preferred project in their cover letter.** All materials should be submitted to David Heithcock, Human Resources Director at thec.hr@tn.gov.

Graduate Assistant Project Options, Summer 2026:

Project 1: Futureproofing Financial Aid Programs

Project Description: Assist the Data Strategy Division and THEC executive leadership on an assessment of state-based scholarship program sustainability and efficacy, which will involve descriptive and inferential statistical analysis and the creation of communication materials to disseminate findings.

Deliverable(s): Written summary of statistical analyses conducted and related findings (3-5 pages with a separate 1-page executive summary); a brief presentation to THEC staff.

Preferred Qualifications: Interest and experience in quantitative research methods or program evaluation; familiarity with scholarly literature on financial aid programs.

Project 2: Empowering Evidence-Based Practice in Student Financial Aid

Project Description: Advise THEC of evidence-based practices related to state-funded financial aid programs by conducting a review of recent scholarly literature on need- and merit-based financial aid programs—with a focus on how these programs affect student success and on how programs have innovated over time.

Deliverable(s): A finalized literature review with an executive summary; a brief presentation to THEC staff; and a brief outline of recommendations on how Tennessee's portfolio of financial aid programs could further innovate.

Preferred Qualifications: Prior experience drafting literature reviews; familiarity with scholarly literature on financial aid programs.