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THEC Awards \$800,000 to Improve Student Outcomes in Higher Education

NASHVILLE – *June 8* – The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) has awarded \$800,000 to six colleges and universities to increase student outcomes at the institutions.

The \$800,000 in funding through the Institutional Outcome Improvement Fund Grant will assist institutions in growing student outcomes in areas such as credit hour progression and degree completion. The outcomes that each institution will address with the funding are all related to Tennessee's outcomes-based funding formula model for higher education, which promotes educational attainment and economic development in the state.

"The outcomes-based funding formula has been a catalyst for improvement and growth for many institutions in Tennessee," said THEC's Interim Executive Director Russ Deaton. "The Institutional Outcomes Improvement Fund grants were designed to provide an action plan for institutions that have identified areas where they can grow student success further."

In total, six institutions were awarded funds with grant amounts ranging from \$84,106 to \$165,990. Funded projects include a campus climate improvement initiative at Austin Peay State University to improve credit-hour progression and degree completion, and a new advising program at Walters State Community College to assist progression of academically underprepared students. Successful proposals were required to show evidence of deficiency in growth in at least one of the formula outcomes for community colleges or public universities or among one of the identified focus populations (adult learners, low income students or, for community colleges, academically underprepared students).

Tennessee's outcomes-based funding formula model was implemented through the Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010. The formula underwent a review process in 2015, which identified updated outcomes and focus populations for the next five year cycle. Through the review process, the Institutional Outcomes Improvement Fund was identified as an additional tool to assist institutions in growing outcomes and student success.

The grants were chosen through a competitive application process. The projects will be funded for a total of twenty-four months through non-recurring state funds provided in the FY17 budget. Program activities will begin in July 2016 and continue through the end of June 2018.

Summary of Funded Programs:

Austin Peay State University

Anticipated award amount: \$144,407.50

Title: Improving Campus Climate for Increased Degree Attainment (ICCIDA)

Outcomes: 30, 60, 90 Semester Credit Hour Progression Metrics and Bachelor's/Associate Degrees

Focus Populations: Adult and Low-income students

APSU will examine institutional data to assess the relationship between objective aspects of the campus climate and student perceptions of the climate and their subsequent relationship to persistence. Resulting data will inform the systematic implementation of the three-pronged intervention, using the Inclusive Excellence model, for Pell-recipients, adult learners, and Pell-recipient adult learners with 30-60 credit hours in the Colleges of Arts & Letters, Behavioral and Health Sciences, Education, and Science and Mathematics. Additionally, APSU will create programs and other institutional improvements that directly support students/colleges/campus improvements for Pell-recipients, adult learners, and Pell-recipient adult learners that could be adopted by other institutions to increase fidelity and sustainability for this target population.

East Tennessee State University

Anticipated award amount: \$165,989.69

Title: Retention Initiatives for Sophomores: Creating a Dedicated Retention System at ETSU

Outcomes: 60 Semester Credit Hour Progression Metric

In support of CCTA, Drive to 55, TN Reconnect, and other higher education initiatives, ETSU is proposing an intensive, comprehensive retention plan to support students in the 30 -60 credit hour cohort inclusive of all subpopulations of student demographics within that cohort. This proposal design incorporates a campus-wide integration strategy that engages all components of academic and student life guided by best practices for retention. The desired outcome is an increase in the rate of students crossing the 60 credit hour threshold successfully and with an enhanced academic skill set, career planning, and life skills to progress successfully to degree completion and beyond.

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Anticipated award amount: \$151,998.72

Title: The Summer Success Experience: Supporting the Progression of Low-Income Students

Outcomes: 30 Semester Credit Hour Progression Metric

Focus Populations: Low-income students

UTC seeks to develop a program to prepare low-income students for academic, experiential, and personal success. UTC will use the grant funds to offer two sessions of a week-long residential summer program beginning Summer 2017. All low-income students admitted for the Fall semester will be invited to participate in this preparatory event at no cost, with 100 students accepted for each week of the program, totaling 200 students per summer. The summer program offers incoming freshmen the opportunity to become familiar with UTC, learn about student services, explore the Chattanooga area, and experience life on a college campus through a variety of workshops, field trips, and seminars. Students also participate in academic classes, providing the opportunity to develop study skills and learn about collegiate classroom expectations.

Cleveland State Community College

Anticipated award amount: \$90,700.00

Title: Steering Undergraduates toward College Completion to Ensure Student Success (S.U.C.C.E.S.S.) Program

Outcomes: 12, 24, 36 Semester Credit Hour Progression Metrics, Associate Degrees, Long- and Short-term Certificates, and Awards per 100 FTE

Cleveland State Community College will create a Student Success Center to provide a structure for early and frequent communication with students from the time of application to the college until completion of their academic program. The Center will be developed using a Success Coaching model, where staff are assigned caseloads of students. Coaches provide regular feedback and support for students in order to keep them on a path toward successful completion of a degree or certificate. The college will enhance existing technologies that facilitate early identification of students who may be at risk of not succeeding, assist coaches in monitoring students' progress, and help students stay on track toward their desired academic goal. Professional development and training opportunities for success coaches and technical staff will be provided through grant funds, both from software vendors and from staff at other institutions that have model success coaching programs.

Roane State Community College

Anticipated award amount: \$84,106.00

Title: Progress for Success

Outcomes: 12, 24, 36 Semester Credit Hour Progression Metrics

Focus Populations: Adult students

With IOIF grant funding support, Roane State Community College proposes to increase the number of students who achieve the three credit hour progression benchmarks (12, 24, and 36 credits). In particular, Roane State seeks to increase the number of *adult* students who achieve these credit hour progression thresholds. The college will implement a Math Boot Camp for adult students, create a Welcome Back Orientation for readmitted students, and provide a large proportion of its readmitted adult students with holistic support from a Success Coach who will collaborate with faculty to identify those students who are in need of academic intervention.

Walters State Community College

Anticipated award amount: \$158,869.00

Title: Student Trajectory, Advising, Retention, Success (STARS)

Outcomes: 12 and 24 Semester Credit Hour Progression Metrics and Workforce Training/Contact Hours

Focus Populations: Academically Underprepared Students

Walters State Community College's Student Trajectory, Advising, Retention, and Success (STARS) project will address freshman attrition through a multifaceted network of student support services. Through instructor feedback and regular meetings, completion coaches will provide timely assistance and guidance to help students monitor their progress, alter behaviors, and make changes to their initial major selection if necessary. Completion coaches, advisors, and participating faculty will receive professional development trainings in Growth Mindset theory and other constructs appropriate to the support of students needing learning support. Completion coaches will make connections between the students and a variety of student services (e.g., Financial Aid, Tutoring Services, and Workforce Development). The primary goals for the STARS team and coaches are to be proactive in advising; to place students in appropriate major pathways that include embedded certificate attainment when appropriate; to monitor progress toward 12 and 24 credit hour benchmarks; to recommend possible alternative pathways to postsecondary certifications; to oversee a variety of opportunities connecting students with their upcoming careers; and, ultimately, to retain learning support students to successful degree completion.

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission was created in 1967 by the Tennessee General Assembly. The Commission develops, implements, and evaluates postsecondary education policies and programs in Tennessee while coordinating the state's systems of higher education. 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 annually.