

TENNESSEE  
**Promise**

# Tennessee Promise Annual Report 2017

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**THEC**  **TSAC**

Tennessee Higher Education Commission  
Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation

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# Tennessee Higher Education Commission

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# Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation

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# Executive Summary

This report is prepared pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-4-708(e), which instructs the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) and the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC) to report annually on the impacts of the Tennessee Promise program. In pursuit of the “Drive to 55,” Governor Bill Haslam’s educational attainment goal, THEC and TSAC have worked to implement various programs and initiatives to encourage more Tennesseans to engage with higher education and to support students through the completion of a credential. Perhaps the most well-known of these efforts is the Tennessee Promise, signed into law by the Tennessee General Assembly in 2014.

The Tennessee Promise is a last-dollar scholarship that allows recent high school graduates to complete an associate degree or certificate program free of tuition and mandatory fees at a public community college or College of Applied Technology (TCAT). In its first year of implementation, approximately 80 percent of all public and private high school seniors across the state applied for the Tennessee Promise, and that percentage has increased in subsequent years.

Additionally, Tennessee’s Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) filing rate has increased substantially, and Tennessee has led the nation in FAFSA filing since the implementation of Tennessee Promise (in 2015, 2016, and 2017 as of this report). Also, the statewide college-going rate increased by 4.6 percentage points in the first year of Tennessee Promise implementation, from 57.9 to 62.5 percent. This single-year increase is larger than the past 7 years combined (2007 to 2014). As such, enrollment of first-time freshmen grew between Fall 2014 and Fall 2015. Overall, there was a 10.1 percent increase in postsecondary enrollment across the state, with community colleges experiencing a 24.7 percent increase and TCATs experiencing a 20 percent increase in first-time freshmen enrollment.

The retention rate for Tennessee Promise students from Fall 2015 to Spring 2016 was 80.6 percent, which is comparable to Fall-Spring retention rates in years prior. The fall to fall retention rate is promising as well: 63 percent of Tennessee Promise students who began in Fall 2015 re-enrolled in Fall 2016. The 2015-16 retention rate for non-Promise first-time community college freshmen (including part-time students) was 42 percent, substantially lower than the retention rate of Tennessee Promise students.

The preliminary outcomes of Tennessee Promise are positive and encouraging, and forthcoming data will provide further insight, as the first cohort of Tennessee Promise students will complete their associate degrees in May 2017.

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## Introduction

This report is prepared pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-4-708(e), which instructs the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) and the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC)<sup>1</sup> to report annually on the impacts of the Tennessee Promise program. Specifically, T.C.A. § 49-4-708(e) states:

TSAC and the Tennessee higher education commission shall provide assistance to the general assembly by researching and analyzing data concerning the scholarship program created under this part, including, but not limited to, student success and scholarship retention.

Following the Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010, Tennessee set an ambitious postsecondary attainment goal; Governor Haslam’s “Drive to 55” challenges the state to equip 55 percent of working-age adults in Tennessee with a high-quality postsecondary degree or certificate by 2025. The most recent data analyzed by the Lumina Foundation indicate that Tennessee’s current postsecondary attainment rate is 39.3 percent, which includes an estimated 5 percent of state residents who hold a high-value postsecondary certificate.<sup>2</sup> Although Tennessee has made great strides toward its goal of 55 percent postsecondary attainment, much work remains to meet this goal within the next decade.

In pursuit of the Drive to 55, THEC and TSAC have implemented various programs and initiatives to encourage Tennesseans to engage with higher education and support students through the completion of a credential. **Figure 1** illustrates many of the higher education initiatives in Tennessee that span the student life cycle, from preparation for postsecondary coursework, to enrollment in higher education, to degree completion and workforce outcomes. More information about each of these initiatives is available on the THEC website.<sup>3</sup> The most well-known and highly publicized of these efforts (and the focus of this report) is the Tennessee Promise, signed into law by the Tennessee General Assembly in 2014.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1.** Tennessee Higher Education Initiatives across the Student Life Cycle



<sup>1</sup> For more information about THEC and TSAC, please see the Glossary on page 17.

<sup>2</sup> More information about the Lumina Foundation’s educational attainment data is available at: [https://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger\\_nation2016](https://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger_nation2016)

<sup>3</sup> For more information about these programs, please see the Glossary on page 17.

<sup>4</sup> T.C.A. § 49-4-708

## *Program Description*

Tennessee Promise is a last-dollar scholarship that allows recent high school graduates to complete an associate degree or certificate program free of tuition and mandatory fees at a public community college or TCAT.<sup>5</sup> As described in T.C.A. § 49-4-708(c)(1), students must enroll full-time at an eligible postsecondary institution in the fall semester immediately following high school graduation. This scholarship is intended to supplement existing financial aid, so all other gift aid (including federal Pell grants, Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarships, and Tennessee Student Assistance Awards) must be applied first, and Tennessee Promise funds then cover the remaining balance (if any) of tuition and mandatory fees.

In addition to providing financial aid, Tennessee Promise students are paired with a mentor to guide them through the postsecondary application and enrollment processes. The mentorship component is coordinated by three privately funded partner organizations across the state: (1) tnAchieves, which serves 84 counties; (2) the Ayers Foundation, which serves four counties; and (3) the Regional Economic Development Initiative (REDI), which serves seven counties in West Tennessee. Students are also required to complete eight hours of community service, also coordinated by the partnering organizations, during each semester of postsecondary enrollment.

To be eligible for Tennessee Promise, students must complete an application process that involves several steps. The 2016-17 application process and all applicable deadlines are as follows:<sup>6</sup>

1. By November 1, 2016: Complete an online application for the Tennessee Promise program.
2. By January 17, 2017: File the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
3. Fall 2016/early Spring 2017: Students must attend the first mandatory meeting, coordinated by the partnering organization. Meeting dates vary by high school.
4. Spring 2017: Students and volunteer mentors must attend the second mandatory meeting, coordinated by the partnering organization. Meeting dates vary by high school.
5. Spring 2017: Apply to a community college or TCAT.
6. By July 1, 2017: Complete and report eight hours of community service to the partnering organization.
7. By August 1, 2017: Complete FAFSA verification, as required by the institution.
8. August 2017: Enroll full-time at a community college or TCAT

To maintain Tennessee Promise eligibility, students must renew the FAFSA for each year they are to receive the scholarship. Additionally, students enrolled at community colleges must maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.0, while students enrolled at TCATs must maintain satisfactory academic progress as determined by the institution. As mentioned above, students must complete eight hours of community service for each semester they are enrolled. According to T.C.A. § 49-4-708(c)(8), a student is eligible to receive Tennessee Promise funds until the student has earned an associate degree or certificate, or until the student has completed five semesters at an eligible postsecondary institution (whichever occurs first).

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<sup>5</sup> For more information about TCATs, please see the Glossary on page 17.

<sup>6</sup> On September 27, 2016, the TSAC Board of Directors approved changes to the rules for Tennessee Promise. The approved changes are summarized here: [http://tn.gov/assets/entities/theac/attachments/I\\_A\\_-\\_Promise\\_Rules.pdf](http://tn.gov/assets/entities/theac/attachments/I_A_-_Promise_Rules.pdf)



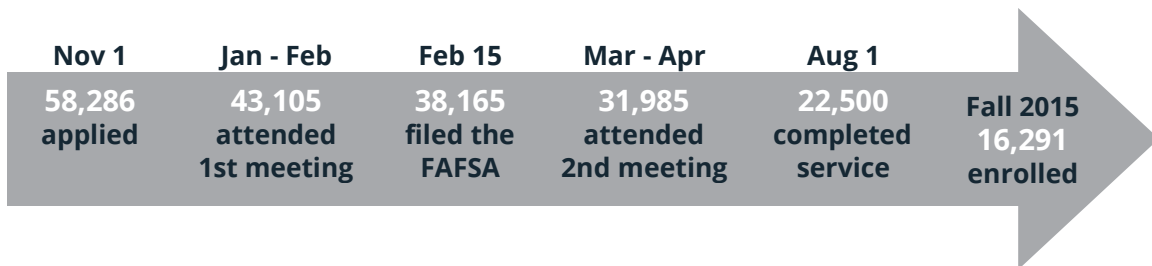
Because it is a last-dollar scholarship, the amount of the Tennessee Promise award is based on other gift aid a student receives. First, the federal Pell grant is applied, followed by state gift aid (i.e., Tennessee Education Lottery programs and Tennessee Student Assistance Award). After all federal and state gift aid is applied to the student's total tuition and mandatory fees, the remaining balance is paid by Tennessee Promise. Some students maintain their Tennessee Promise eligibility by completing all requirements but do not receive any funding from Tennessee Promise, as their tuition and fees are covered by other sources of grant aid.

### *Application Process*

As indicated in the previous section, the Tennessee Promise application process involves several steps. **Figures 2, 3, and 4** illustrate the number of students who completed each step in the process for the first three cohorts (the graduating classes of 2015, 2016, and 2017) of Tennessee Promise students.

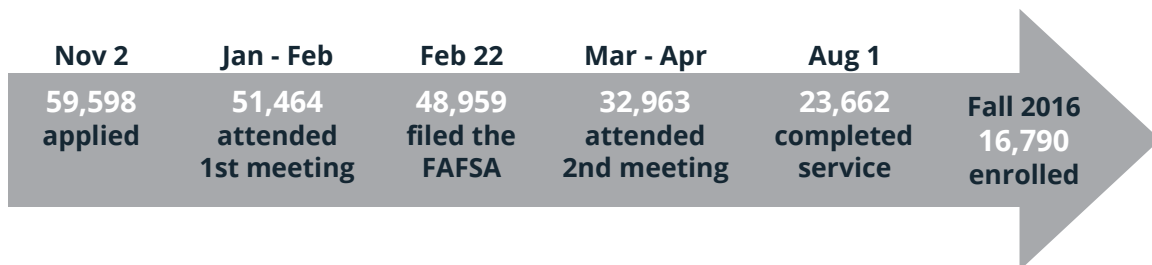
**Figure 2** displays that 58,286 students applied for the Tennessee Promise in Fall 2014. In 2014-15, Tennessee had approximately 74,400 seniors enrolled in public and private high school across the state; approximately 80 percent of high school seniors submitted an application for Tennessee Promise. Ultimately, 16,291 students enrolled as Tennessee Promise students in Fall 2015, representing 21.9 percent of high school all seniors in the graduating class of 2015.

**Figure 2.** Tennessee Promise Application Process, First Cohort (2015)



Per **Figure 3**, 59,598 students applied for the second cohort of Tennessee Promise in Fall 2015. Again, approximately 80 percent of public and private high school seniors in the state submitted an application for Tennessee Promise. In Fall 2016, 16,790 students enrolled at Tennessee Promise eligible institutions as Tennessee Promise students, representing 22.6 percent of all high school seniors in the graduating class of 2016.

**Figure 3.** Tennessee Promise Application Process, Second Cohort (2016)



**Figure 4** shows that 60,780 students applied for the third cohort of Tennessee Promise in Fall 2016. Of these students, 51,862 completed a FAFSA. Additional data about the enrollment of these students are forthcoming.

**Figure 4.** Tennessee Promise Application Process, Third Cohort (2017)



Substantial program take-up during the program’s first year and the growth in applications in each subsequent year can be largely attributed to the outreach efforts of THEC, TSAC, and many state partners. In 2016, for example, TSAC staff held Tennessee Promise application workshops and FAFSA workshops in nearly every county across the state as part of the TN FAFSA Frenzy campaign. FAFSA Frenzy events provided students with information about how to pay for college, including the many grants and scholarships available from the state. In support of FAFSA Frenzy, Governor Haslam proclaimed January 12, 2017 as TN FAFSA Frenzy Day. On this day, volunteers from THEC, TSAC, nonprofit organizations, and higher education institutions across the state visited public high schools to help students and families complete the FAFSA before the Tennessee Promise deadline. Additionally, each of the 13 community colleges hosted a Scholarship Saturday event on October 1, 2016. These events were geared toward incoming Tennessee Promise students; students received help with the Tennessee Promise application and the FAFSA, and learned about academic programs available at each community college.

### *Program Participants*

**Table 1** provides information about the gender, ACT score, high school GPA, race, and financial aid eligibility of Tennessee Promise students at community colleges in Fall 2015 (Tennessee Promise Cohort 1). The table compares Tennessee Promise students to two other groups: (1) first-time freshmen right out of high school at community colleges in Fall 2014; and (2) all first-time freshmen at community colleges in Fall 2015.

The gender composition of Tennessee Promise students was identical to the comparison groups, with 56 percent female students. The average ACT score of Tennessee Promise students (19.1) is higher than first-time freshmen right out of high school in Fall 2014 (18.7) and all first-time freshmen in Fall 2015 (18.9). The average high school GPA of Tennessee Promise students is comparable to Fall 2014 students (3.05 versus 3.04, respectively) and is slightly higher than all first-time freshmen at community colleges in Fall 2015 (3.00).

The racial and ethnic composition of students was fairly similar from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015. When compared to all first-time freshmen at community colleges in Fall 2014, Tennessee Promise students in Fall 2015 were comprised of a larger share of white students (70 versus 74 percent) and a smaller share of nonwhite students. However, these trends mimic the overall racial and ethnic composition of students enrolled in higher education across the state.

A larger share of Tennessee Promise students are eligible for a Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship (TELS)<sup>7</sup> award (58 percent) relative to community college students in Fall 2014 and all first-time freshmen (FTF) at community colleges in Fall 2015 (48 and 43 percent, respectively). This makes sense, as Tennessee Promise students have comparatively higher average ACT scores and high school GPAs compared to their non-Promise peers and those in earlier years. The share of Tennessee Promise students who receive full Pell or enough Pell to cover tuition and fees is similar to all first-time freshmen in Fall 2015, but is substantially lower than Fall 2014 first-time community college students.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of Fall 2015 Tennessee Promise Students at Community Colleges

	TN Promise CC students	FTF out of HS, Fall 2014 (CCs)	FTF at CC's, Fall 2015
<b>Female</b>	56%	56%	56%
<b>Average ACT</b>	19.1	18.7	18.9
<b>Average HS GPA</b>	3.05	3.04	3.00
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
<i>White</i>	74%	70%	74%
<i>Black</i>	14%	19%	18%
<i>Hispanic</i>	4%	5%	3%
<b>Financial Aid</b>			
<i>TELS</i>	58%	48%	43%
<i>Any Pell</i>	53%	53%	55%
<i>Pell covers T&amp;F</i>	45%	53%	44%
<i>Full Pell</i>	34%	40%	33%

The destination of Tennessee Promise students has been consistent across the first two cohorts. In Fall 2015, 16,291 students enrolled using Tennessee Promise; 85 percent of these students enrolled at community colleges (or an eligible associate degree program at Austin Peay State University), 13 percent enrolled at TCATs, and 2 percent enrolled at private institutions with eligible associate degree programs. In Fall 2016, 16,790 students in Cohort 2 enrolled for the first time, and 6,505 students in Cohort 1 enrolled for a second year, totaling 23,295 Tennessee Promise students. Eighty-six percent of these students enrolled at community colleges (or an eligible associate degree program at Austin Peay or Tennessee State University), 10 percent enrolled at TCATs, and 4 percent enrolled at private institutions with eligible associate degree programs.

## Tennessee Promise Outcomes

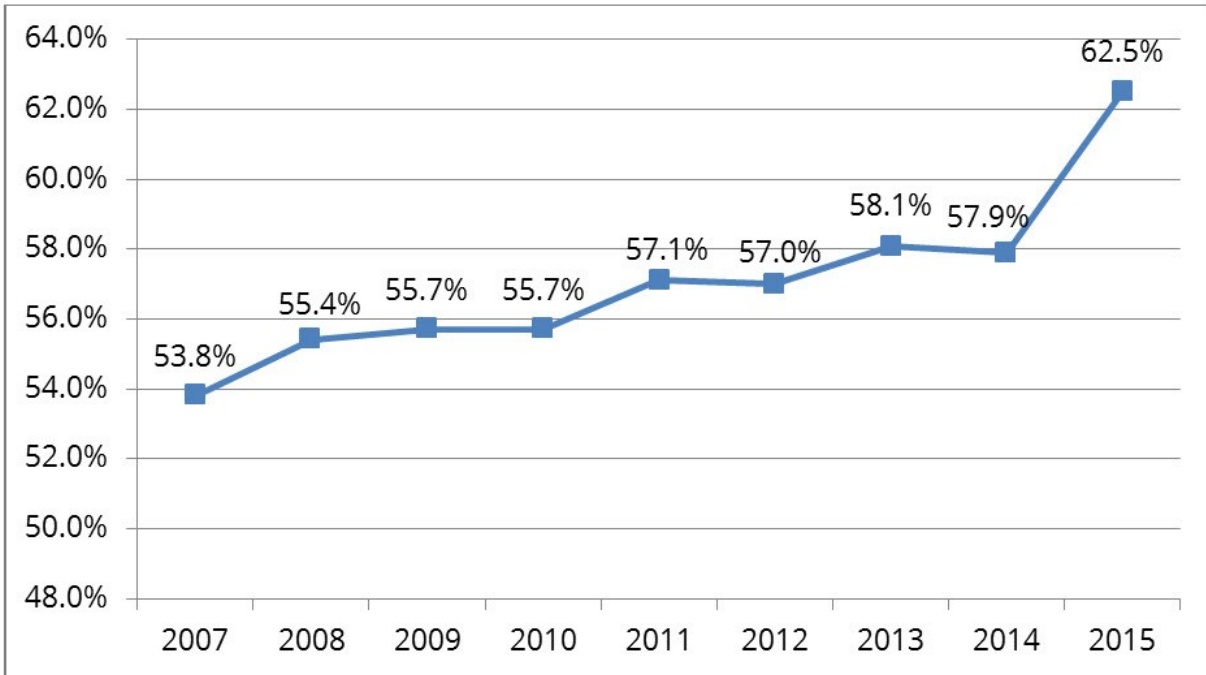
### **Impact on Student Behavior and Outcomes**

Tennessee Promise has substantially impacted students' application and college-going behavior (e.g., the statewide FAFSA filing rate and college-going rate) and early student outcomes (e.g., retention). To be eligible for Tennessee Promise, students must complete/renew a FAFSA each year. As a result, the FAFSA filing rate in Tennessee has increased over the last three years. Tennessee comprised 40 percent of all growth in the FAFSA filing rate nationwide from 2014 to 2015, and has led the nation in FAFSA filing since the implementation of Tennessee Promise (in 2015, 2016, and 2017 thus far). The FAFSA filing rate in Tennessee increased nearly 10 percentage points between 2014 and 2016, from 60.4 to 70.3 percent of high school seniors. The recent increase in the FAFSA filing rate indicates the success of THEC and TSAC's outreach efforts, as well as the work of administrators, teachers and counselors, to create a college-going culture in Tennessee.

<sup>7</sup> For more information about TELS, please see the Glossary on page 17.

**Figure 5** illustrates the college-going rate of Tennessee high school graduates over time. The college-going rate reflects the percent of high school seniors who enroll at a postsecondary institution in the fall semester immediately following high school graduation. In the first year of Tennessee Promise implementation, the statewide college-going rate increased by 4.6 percentage points, from 57.9 to 62.5 percent. This single-year increase was larger than the past 7 years combined (2007 to 2014), representing approximately 4,000 new entrants into higher education.

**Figure 5.** College-Going Rate of Tennessee High School Graduates, 2007-2015



Also, since the implementation of Tennessee Promise, there has been a decrease in student loan take-up. Compared to Fall 2014, 17 percent fewer students originated federal student loans in Fall 2015, with some community colleges seeing a decrease of as much as 25 percent. Furthermore, the average federal student loan amount decreased by approximately 12 percent. The decreased reliance of Tennessee students on federal loans is a testament to the state’s commitment to making postsecondary education affordable for more students.

The average GPA of first-time, full-time community college freshmen right out of high school was 2.03 in Fall 2015, which is lower than the prior year (2.29 in Fall 2014). The average GPA of all community college students (including older and part-time students) follows a similar trend; their average GPA in Fall 2015 was lower than in Fall 2014 (2.03 versus 2.18, respectively). The reason for a decreased average GPA in Fall 2015 is difficult to determine, but may be an indication that Tennessee Promise is indeed expanding access to higher education. In previous years, students with less academic preparation for college may have decided not to attend college; perhaps these students have now decided to go to community college because Tennessee Promise allows them to attend tuition-free. Among public university students, however, the average GPA of first-time, full-time freshmen right out of high school was 2.71 in Fall 2015, which is comparable to prior years.

The retention rate for Tennessee Promise students from Fall 2015 to Spring 2016 was 80.6 percent overall; 78.5 percent at community colleges, and 94.7 percent at TCATs. In prior years, the fall to spring retention rate for first-time community college freshmen right out of high school was approximately 80 percent, and the fall

to spring retention for all community college students was about 70 percent. Maintaining a similar retention rate despite a large enrollment increase is a great success, and reflects positively on the support services available at community colleges.

The Year 1 to Year 2 retention rate is promising as well: 63 percent of Tennessee Promise students who began in Fall 2015 re-enrolled in Fall 2016. The Fall 2015 to Fall 2016 community college retention rate is 58 percent; the TCAT retention rate is 83 percent. The 2015-16 community college retention rate is identical to the prior year. Furthermore, the 2015-16 retention rate for non-Promise first-time community college freshmen (including part-time students) was 42 percent, substantially lower than the retention rate of Tennessee Promise students. The preliminary outcomes of Tennessee Promise indicate that not only are more students enrolling in higher education, but the students who enroll using Tennessee Promise are persisting as well as students in previous years, and at higher rates than non-Promise students at community colleges.

***Impact on Institutions***

Tennessee Promise has also impacted institutions of higher education. **Table 2** displays the change in first-time freshmen enrollment by sector from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015, the first year of the Tennessee Promise program. Overall, there was a 10.1 percent increase in first-time freshmen enrollment across the state. The Tennessee Board of Regent’s (TBR)<sup>8</sup> community colleges saw the largest growth in first-time freshmen, with a 24.7 percent increase. TCATs also saw a substantial increase of 20 percent. Both the University of Tennessee (UT)<sup>9</sup> system and the TBR universities experienced a decline in first-time freshmen enrollment (-4.6 and -8.4 percent, respectively).

**Table 2.** Change in First-Time Freshmen Enrollment by Sector, Fall 2014 to Fall 2015

	FTF Enrollment Fall 2014	FTF Enrollment, Fall 2015	Percent Change
TBR Community Colleges	17,379	21,679	↑ 24.7%
TCATs	8,691	10,432	↑ 20.0%
University of Tennessee	7,977	-7,611	↓ -4.6%
TBR Universities	11,983	10,977	↓ -8.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>46,030</b>	<b>50,699</b>	<b>↑ 10.1%</b>

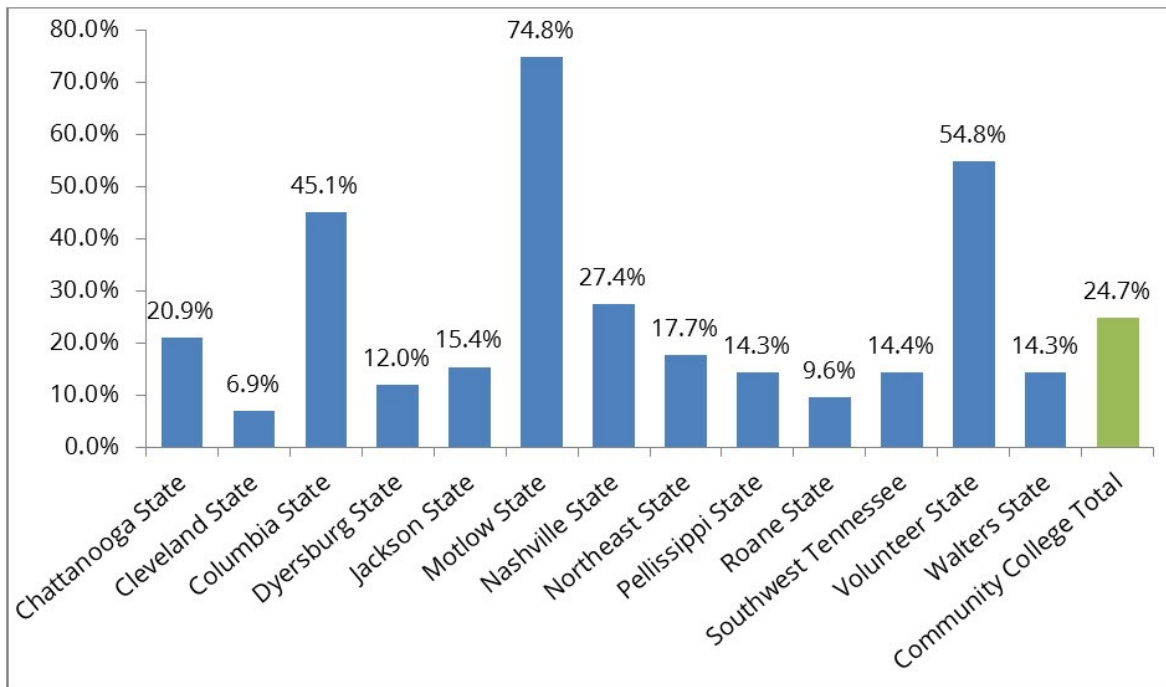
First-time freshmen enrollment has continued to increase through Fall 2016. Between Fall 2014 and Fall 2016, enrollment has grown by 13 percent overall, with increases of 30 percent at community colleges and 32 percent at TCATs.

**Figure 6** displays the percent change in first-time freshmen enrollment at each community college across the state. Every campus experienced an increase in enrollment, though the percent increase varied widely, from 6.9 percent at Cleveland State to a tremendous 74.8 percent at Motlow State. Community colleges in Middle Tennessee, which is experiencing huge population growth, saw the largest increase in first-time freshmen enrollment.

<sup>8</sup> For more information about TBR, please see the Glossary on page 17.

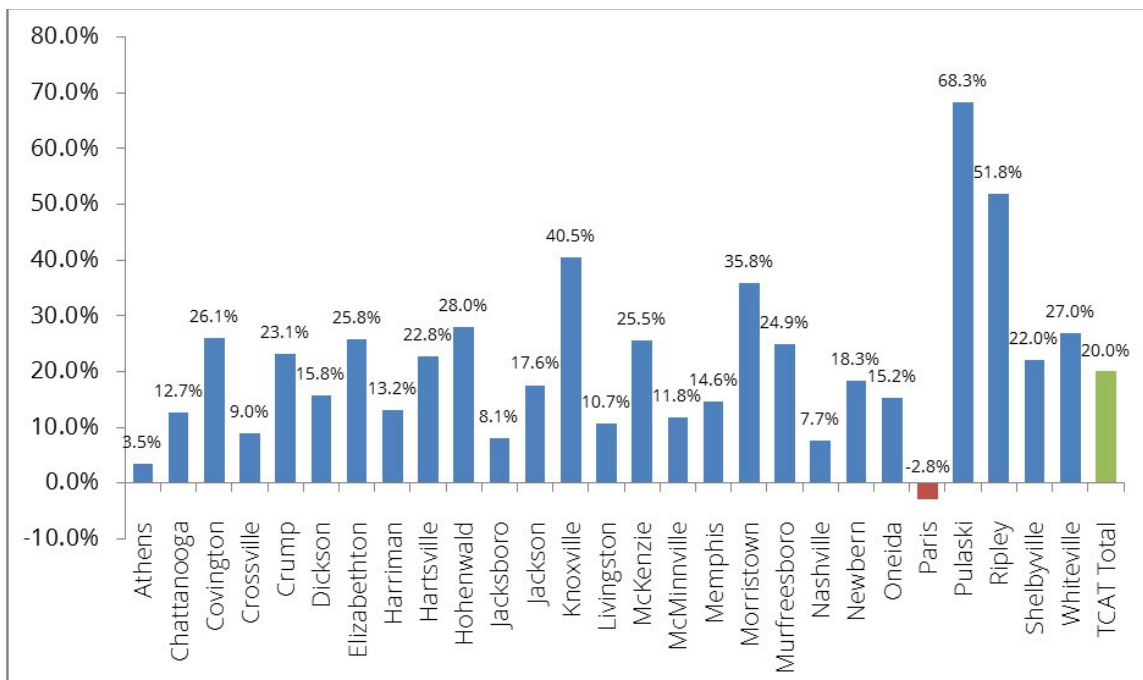
<sup>9</sup> For more information about the UT system, please see the Glossary on page 17.

**Figure 6.** Percent Change in First-Time Freshmen Enrollment at Community Colleges, Fall 2014 to Fall 2015



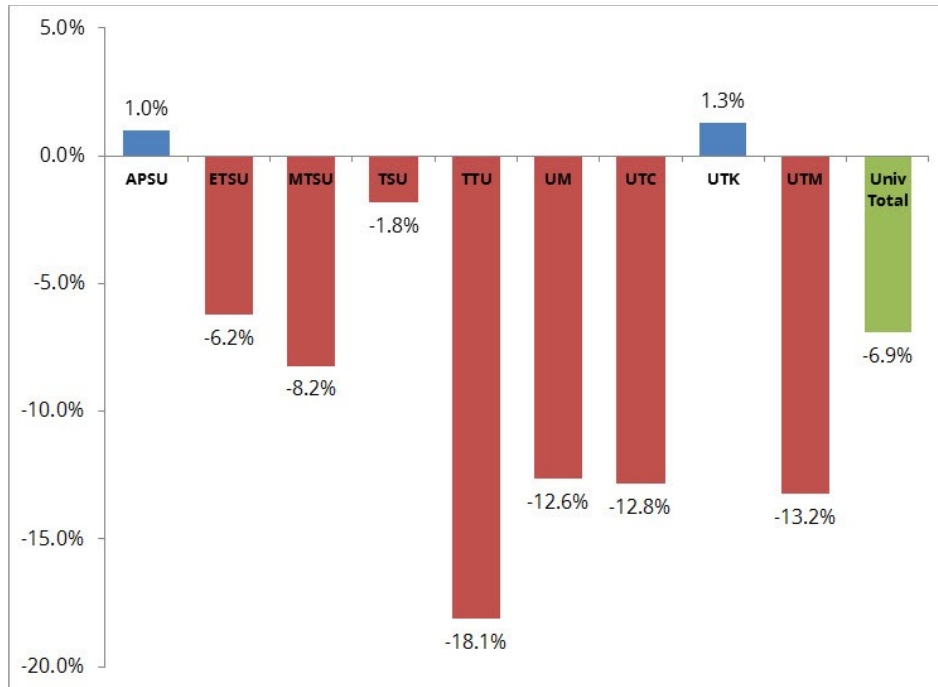
**Figure 7** displays the percent change in first-time freshmen enrollment at each TCAT. All but one campus experienced an increase in enrollment following the implementation of Tennessee Promise. The percent change in enrollment varied widely, from a slight decrease (-2.8 percent) at TCAT Paris to a large increase (68.3 percent) at TCAT Pulaski. This growth is also due in part to Tennessee Reconnect, which allows adults to attend a TCAT tuition-free; only 2,000 (13 percent) Tennessee Promise students were enrolled at TCATs in Fall 2015.

**Figure 7.** Percent Change in First-Time Freshmen Enrollment at TCATs, Fall 2014 to Fall 2015



**Figure 8** displays the percent change in first-time freshmen enrollment at each public university in Tennessee. Most campuses experienced a decrease in first-time freshmen, with the exception of Austin Peay and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville (1.0 and 1.3 percent increases, respectively). Among the institutions that saw a decrease in enrollment, the percent decrease varied, from -1.8 percent at Tennessee State University to -18.1 percent at Tennessee Technological University.

**Figure 8.** Percent Change in First-Time Freshmen Enrollment at Universities, Fall 2014 to Fall 2015



### *Program Finances*

Tennessee Promise awards are funded off the interest generated by the Tennessee Promise scholarship endowment fund (trust)<sup>10</sup> and excess Tennessee Education Lottery funds. As stated in T.C.A. § 4-51-111(b)(3), a minimum of \$100 million must remain in a reserve account to fund Tennessee Education Lottery scholarships (e.g., HOPE scholarships). In 2014, over \$400 million remained in the reserve account, \$300 million of which was moved to the Tennessee Promise trust.

For students in the first Tennessee Promise cohort, the average Tennessee Promise award was \$850, including eligible students who did not receive Tennessee Promise funds because their tuition and fees were fully covered by other aid sources. Excluding those who received \$0, the average annual award was \$1,700, resulting in a net program cost of \$15.2 million in 2015-16. For students in Cohorts 1 and 2 who enrolled in Fall 2016, the average annual Tennessee Promise award was \$1,090 (including those who received \$0). The total program cost for 2016-17 was \$25.3 million. In Year 3, when the program is fully mature, total cost will be approximately \$33 million.

## *Recommendations and Conclusions*

Partnerships across the state have been a crucial component of Tennessee Promise's success. Support from Governor Bill Haslam, members of the Tennessee General Assembly, faculty and staff at postsecondary institutions and high schools, philanthropic organizations, and business leaders has been an asset in the program's first three years.

The preliminary outcomes of Tennessee Promise indicate positive growth, in terms of students' application behavior and postsecondary enrollment. The FAFSA filing rate, college-going rate and enrollment of first-time freshmen have all increased since the implementation of Tennessee Promise in 2014-15. Though the growth in these three metrics and the implementation of Tennessee Promise occurred simultaneously, determining whether the growth can be directly attributed to Tennessee Promise requires additional analyses, which THEC will complete in the coming months.

Furthermore, the data presented in this report are preliminary outcomes, such as retention and academic performance (e.g., GPA). The first cohort of Tennessee Promise students will begin completing their associate degrees in May 2017. As more data become available, THEC will report on additional outcomes of Tennessee Promise students, such as completion rates, transfer behavior, and workforce outcomes.

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<sup>10</sup> The Tennessee Promise scholarship endowment fund was created by T.C.A. §49-4-708(d).



## Glossary

**Degree Compass:** Degree Compass is a course recommendation interface developed by Austin Peay State University, and is used at select postsecondary institutions in Tennessee. Degree Compass uses students' grades, test scores, and enrollment data to suggest a degree path and predict how well students will perform in the coursework for that degree path. For more information, please visit the Degree Compass website at: <http://www.apsu.edu/information-technology/degree-compass-what>

**Dual Enrollment:** Dual enrollment courses are postsecondary courses taught to high school students at a postsecondary institution, high school, or online. High school students are enrolled at the postsecondary institution and concurrently receive both high school and postsecondary credit. For more information, please visit the Department of Education's website at: <http://www.tn.gov/education/topic/dual-enrollment>

**Launch My Career TN:** Launch My Career TN is a free website that provides prospective students with information to help them evaluate institutions and academic programs based on potential earnings, employment, and other post-graduation outcomes. For more information, please visit the Launch My Career TN website at: <http://launchmycareertn.org>

**LEAP:** The primary goal of the Labor Education Alignment Program (LEAP) is to close the skills gap by ensuring that students gain the necessary training for the increasing number of high-skill and high-technology jobs offered in the state. LEAP accomplishes this goal by providing grant funding to communities that develop a framework for regional collaborations between education providers and industry partners. For more information, please visit the LEAP website at: <https://www.tn.gov/thec/topic/leap>

**SAILS:** The Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support (SAILS) program targets students that have not achieved college readiness in mathematics by introducing the college developmental curriculum into the high school senior year. The SAILS program embeds the Tennessee Board of Regents Learning Support competencies into the high school senior year math courses utilizing a blended learning model. For more information, please visit the SAILS website at: <https://www.tn.gov/thec/topic/sails>

**Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR):** The Tennessee Board of Regents is one of the two public systems of higher education in Tennessee. The Tennessee Board of Regents governs 6 universities, 13 community colleges, and 27 colleges of applied technology across the state. Beginning in 2017, the 6 universities will become locally governed institutions, each with its own governing board.

**Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT):** There are 27 colleges of applied technology in Tennessee that are governed by the Board of Regents. The workforce development mission of the TCATs is to give Tennessee residents the opportunity to obtain technical skills and professional training necessary for advancement in the competitive job market.

**Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship (TELS):** The Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship program is a suite of scholarship and grant programs funded by state education lottery proceeds. These programs are intended to provide financial awards to offset costs associated with pursuing postsecondary education (e.g., Tennessee HOPE Scholarship, Dual Enrollment Grant, and Wilder-Naifeh Technical Skills Grant, among others).

**Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC):** The Tennessee Higher Education Commission was created in 1967 by the Tennessee General Assembly to coordinate and foster unity within higher education. The Commission coordinates two systems of public higher education: (1) the University of Tennessee; and (2) the Tennessee Board of Regents.

**Tennessee Reconnect:** Tennessee Reconnect is a suite of programs focused on helping adults 25 and older enter postsecondary education and complete a degree or credential. For more information, please visit the Tennessee Reconnect website at: <https://www.tn.gov/thec/article/tn-reconnect>

**Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC):** The Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation was created in 1974 by the Tennessee General Assembly to serve as the designated federal guaranty agency responsible for the administration of postsecondary educational loan programs. TSAC also administers other state and federal student assistance programs as authorized.

**The University of Tennessee (UT):** The University of Tennessee is one of the two public systems of higher education in Tennessee. The University of Tennessee Board of Trustees governs 3 universities (in Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Martin), the Health Science Center, the Space Institute, the Institute for Agriculture, and the Institute for Public Service.