

DATE: July 23, 2015

SUBJECT: College Access Programs Update

ACTION RECOMMENDED: Information

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: GEAR UP TN Youth Summit GEAR UP TN provides Tennessee students with a clear path to college. Funded through a seven-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education, GEAR UP TN works with Collaboratives in 15 Tennessee counties to promote college readiness and success. GEAR UP TN Collaboratives serve a cohort of students, the Class of 2018, starting in the seventh grade continuing through their first year of postsecondary education. Cohort students will be entering tenth grade in the fall. The program also provides services to high school seniors each year of the grant. GEAR UP TN is designed to promote student achievement and expand the college-going culture statewide.

In June, GEAR UP TN hosted the annual Youth Summit for cohort students. Over 160 students and 45 chaperones from across the 15 GEAR UP TN Collaboratives attended this year's Youth Summit, which was hosted at Middle Tennessee State University. Students attended a range of sessions, covering topics such as Tennessee Promise, writing a college admissions essay, financial aid options, tips for a successful tenth grade year, and STEM majors and careers. In post-event surveys, both students and chaperones reported that the event was very positive experience for all involved and contributed to the student's college-going aspirations.

Tennessee Promise Forward Grants Awarded

In May, THEC awarded \$522,638 in Tennessee Promise Forward grants to seven community colleges to focus on success and retention of Tennessee Promise students. Awarded grants facilitate the development of campus programs that assist Tennessee Promise students in succeeding during their first year of college and continuing to their second year. Grantees were chosen through a competitive application process. Projects will be funded for a total of fourteen months, beginning in June 2015 and continuing through the end of August 2016. Tennessee Promise Forward grants are administered by THEC and funded by a College Access Challenge Grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

The following community colleges were awarded Tennessee Promise Forward grants: Chattanooga State (\$72,638), Cleveland State (\$75,000), Columbia State (\$75,000), Dyersburg State (\$75,000), Northeast State (\$75,000), Pellissippi State (\$75,000), and Volunteer State (\$75,000).

CollegeforTN.org and Transcript Exchange

The Office of P-16 Initiatives is currently in the process of procuring vendors for CollegeforTN.org and the Tennessee electronic transcript exchange. The contract for the current CollegeforTN.org vendor expires in 2015 and the selection of a vendor for the next five years is expected to be complete in July. The electronic transcript exchange request for proposals was released in June and a vendor is expected to be chosen by the end of August.