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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Possible Exposure to Student Information Reported

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – *July 23, 2019* – The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) and the Department of Education have been notified that Graduation Alliance, a state vendor providing data and web hosting services, encountered a potential incident of unauthorized entry to servers that contained some Tennessee student information.

Graduation Alliance is a third-party vendor that hosts *CollegeforTN.org*, a college and career-planning website. Immediately upon detecting unusual traffic, the website was taken offline so that a full security assessment could be conducted. After receiving notice from the vendor, THEC notified the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation and the Office of the Comptroller, as well as all other state agency stakeholders, to ensure a comprehensive response was executed.

THEC Executive Director Mike Krause said that students and their families deserve to have confidence in their pursuit of higher education.

“We’ll be monitoring the investigation closely and will provide updates for students and their parents as information becomes available,” he said. “We are working closely with law enforcement to ensure students’ privacy is protected.”

Graduation Alliance has hired independent forensic experts to perform a thorough investigation to determine whether any student information was accessed. At this time, no evidence has been found that any student data was viewed or taken from the Graduation Alliance servers.

The data stored on the servers under review does not include Social Security numbers, financial, driver’s license or health information. However, fields including names, birthdays, gender, ethnicity and, on a smaller batch of records, ACT scores were present.

All access to the website has been taken out of service and will not be restored until the forensic investigation is completed.

THEC has established a toll-free number that students and parents may call for additional information. That number is 800-342-1663.

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About the Tennessee Higher Education Commission

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, and is relentlessly focused on increasing the number of Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential.