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## **Tennessee Higher Education Commission Wins SLC STAR Award for Third Consecutive Year**

**ATLANTA** – *July 25, 2019* – The Tennessee Higher Education Commission’s (THEC) Tennessee Reconnect program was selected as one of two winners of the Southern Legislative Conference’s 2019 State Transformation in Action Recognition (STAR) award.

The STAR award identifies and promotes state government solutions to regional problems, focusing on policy innovations that are creative, impactful, transferable and effective. This STAR award marks the Tennessee Higher Education Commission’s third award in three years, following successful submissions for Prioritizing Student Veterans in 2017 and the Tennessee Promise program in 2018.

“We are excited for this recognition of our state’s leadership and innovative policy,” said Emily House, THEC Deputy Executive Director. “Reconnect is a game changer for adult learners across our state, and is helping Tennessee to build a workforce that meets industry demands.”

Tennessee Reconnect, created to meet the needs of employers across the state, is an initiative to help more adults return to college to obtain their postsecondary degree or credential, tuition-free.

Through both Tennessee Reconnect and the Tennessee Promise programs, Tennesseans of all ages can earn relevant, marketable credentials to succeed in the labor market.

Approximately 15,000 Reconnect students enrolled in community colleges in fall 2018 – nearly double the projected take up. This substantial growth in adult student enrollment increased the overall enrollment at community colleges by over two percentage points.

Early indicators of the success of Tennessee Reconnect on college completion, in its inaugural year, show an increase in the postsecondary persistence of adult. Of those Reconnect students who enrolled in fall 2018, approximately 75% returned for the spring 2019 semester.

**About the Southern Legislative Conference:** Established in 1947, the [Southern Legislative Conference \(SLC\)](#) is a non-partisan, member-driven association comprising presiding officers and key legislators from 15 Southern states, and is the largest of the four regional conferences of The Council of State Governments.

For more information on the STAR award, please contact Nick Bowman at [nbowman@csg.org](mailto:nbowman@csg.org) or 404.633.1866.

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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.*