



# Tennessee Higher Education Commission

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

## ***Tennessee Joins Multistate Effort Using Higher Education to Drive Economic Prosperity***

**Nashville, TN – Wednesday, November 12, 2025** – The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) today announced that Tennessee has joined Lumina Foundation’s State Attainment Collaborative, a multistate initiative to help states revise or adopt goals for ensuring people receive formal education or training that leads to further learning and career opportunities.

This effort will build momentum toward Lumina’s [Goal 2040](#): By 2040, three-fourths of adults in the U.S. labor force will have college degrees or other credentials with value that lead to meaningful careers and economic mobility.

Through the collaborative, Tennessee will work alongside education, business, civic, nonprofit, and policy leaders from 12 other participating states — Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Missouri, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Utah, Washington and West Virginia — to define what makes a credential valuable, update its statewide educational attainment goals, and align policies and programs to support today’s students.

“Tennessee has long recognized that education is the foundation of economic growth and individual opportunity,” said Dr. Steven Gentile, THEC Executive Director. “By joining Lumina’s collaborative, we are reaffirming our commitment to ensuring every Tennessean has access to valuable learning and training that lead to great careers and stronger communities.”

Lumina launched the country’s first national post-high school attainment goal in 2008, sparking a movement that led 49 states to establish their own state-specific targets. Since then, the share of working-age adults with college degrees or short-term credentials has grown from 39 percent in 2008 to 55 percent in 2023.

“Setting clear goals for increasing degrees and workforce credentials demonstrates Tennessee’s commitment to expanding opportunity and strengthening its economy,” said



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Michelle Asha Cooper, Lumina's Vice President for Public Policy. "Through formal collaboration, we can help refine goals, share lessons, and ensure they center on value for individuals, communities, and employers."

By participating in this effort, Tennessee aims to ensure that learning beyond high school translates into meaningful outcomes for residents and strengthens the state's economy and workforce.

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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, 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.

#### **About Lumina Foundation**

Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation in Indianapolis committed to making opportunities for learning beyond high school available to all. The foundation envisions a system that is easy to navigate, delivers fair results and meets the nation's talent needs through a broad range of credentials. Lumina works toward a system that prepares people for informed citizenship and success in a global economy.

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