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Tennessee Public College Enrollment Increased in Fall 2026

Fourteenth-day figures show statewide growth in enrollment and first-time freshmen

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - Enrollment at Tennessee's public community colleges and universities increased this fall, according to fourteenth-day data released by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC). The institutions reported 228,352 students, up 2,933 students, or 1.3%, from the same point last fall.

First-time freshman enrollment increased 3.9% statewide, from 39,771 to 41,310 students. Community colleges reported a 3.6% increase in first-time freshmen.

Other findings from the fall 2026 data include:

- **Community college enrollment increased 1.9%** to 80,042 students. Nashville State Community College recorded the largest percentage increase among community colleges, at 9.0%.
- **University enrollment increased 1.0%** to 148,310 students. Tennessee State University recorded the largest percentage increase among universities, at 17.2%. Its first-time freshman count rose from 435 last fall to 1,758 this fall.
- **Full-time equivalent enrollment**, a measure based primarily on students' course loads, increased 1.4% statewide.

"Increased first-time freshmen enrollment is an encouraging sign that more Tennesseans recognize the lifelong value and return on investment of higher education," said Dr. Steven Gentile, THEC Executive Director. "Our vision is for every Tennessean to earn a credential that leads to lifelong success and to a stronger Tennessee, and this growth bring us closer to making that vision a reality."

The figures cover Tennessee's 13 public community colleges and 11 public universities; they do not include the Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology, whose figures are still pending and are expected later this fall, nor private institutions.

The fourteenth-day census is an early snapshot. Most public institutions offer courses that begin later in the semester, so their enrollment totals may grow by the end of the term.

The full fourteenth-day enrollment summary is available at [this website link](#).

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About the Tennessee Higher Education Commission

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission was created in 1967 by the Tennessee General Assembly. As the state's higher education coordinating body, its mission is to build a strong higher education landscape that provides opportunities for all individuals to pursue high-quality education and high-value credentials.