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**May 18, 2026**

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## **Tennessee Higher Education Commission Approves New Academic Programs and Tuition Range for 2026-27**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Monday, May 18, 2026 – The Tennessee Higher Education Commission held its quarterly Commission meeting on Friday, during which commissioners approved six new academic programs across Tennessee public institutions and established the tuition and fee range for the 2026-27 academic year.

The Commission approved the following academic programs:

- University of Tennessee, Knoxville: Bioinformatics, Bachelor of Science (BS)
- University of Tennessee, Knoxville: Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management, Master of Science (MS)
- East Tennessee State University: Hospitality and Tourism Management, Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)
- East Tennessee State University: Environment, Health, and Disaster Science, Master of Science (MS)
- Middle Tennessee State University: Mechatronic Systems Engineering, Master of Science (MS)
- Tennessee Technological University: Integrative Biology, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

“These newly approved programs reflect Tennessee’s continued commitment to preparing students for success while strengthening the state’s workforce in high-demand and emerging industries,” said Dr. Julie A. Roberts, THEC’s Chief Academic Officer. “By expanding opportunities in fields ranging from bioinformatics and engineering to hospitality and tourism, these programs will help students gain the skills needed for meaningful careers while supporting Tennessee’s growing economy and talent pipeline.”

The Commission also approved a binding tuition and mandatory fee increase range of 4.5 percent for the 2026-27 academic year. Individual tuition and fee adjustments will be considered and approved by each institution’s governing board within the approved range.

In addition to action items, commissioners received an institutional spotlight presentation from the Southern College of Optometry, updates from the 2026 legislative session, and participated in a discussion on innovative degree pathways requiring fewer than 120 credit hours.

The Commission is composed of nine voting members appointed from the general public, each serving a six-year term and representing the state's Grand Divisions equally. Three members are appointed by the General Assembly and six are appointed by the Governor. The state constitutional officers — the Comptroller of the Treasury, State Treasurer, and Secretary of State — serve as ex-officio voting members. Additionally, one voting student member serves a one-year term, and the Executive Director of the Tennessee State Board of Education serves as an ex-officio non-voting member.

The Commission coordinates and provides guidance to the institutions governed by the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, the six locally-governed state universities, and the community colleges and Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs) governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents.

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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.