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## **ADVISE TN INCREASES ENROLLMENT IN COLLEGE AND TECHNICAL TRAINING**

**NASHVILLE, Tenn. – March 3, 2026** – The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) today released a new independent study confirming that Advise TN, Tennessee’s state-funded college and career advising program, increases immediate enrollment in college and technical training by 6% statewide. The study, conducted by researchers at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, evaluated the program across more than two dozen communities, with the strongest gains among rural students.

Since 2017, Advise TN has placed full-time college and career advisors in high schools with historically low college-going rates. Advisors meet one-on-one with students and families to map out next steps after graduation — whether that’s a university, TCAT or trade school, apprenticeship, military service, employer-based training, or the workforce.

The research makes clear why it works. Advise TN drives results by helping students complete the critical steps that matter most — like FAFSA filing and scholarship applications, procedural milestones that lead to higher rates of enrollment. Results were strongest when students met with advisors multiple times, received in-person or hybrid support, and benefited from manageable advisor caseloads.

The program is even more effective for students who often face the highest barriers, like those in rural or low-income communities. “Education and training after high school pays off,” said Dr. Steven Gentile, Executive Director of THEC. “The data is clear: higher levels of education mean higher earnings, stronger workforce participation, and healthier communities. Whether a student’s goal is college or university, TCAT or trade school, apprenticeship, employer-based training, the military, or straight into the workforce, Advise TN helps students not only make a plan, but execute it.”

Dr. Taylor Odle, Assistant Professor of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, added: “A six percent increase achieved at scale, across multiple cohorts, is a substantial gain by any standard. Advise TN stands out nationally for delivering

validated statewide impact through a focused, high-frequency advising model.”

### **Why Advise TN Works**

The researchers noted three specific components of Advise TN’s structure as best practices back by data:

- **Professional, full-time advisors** with deep experience and a clear advising role.
- **Centralized, institution-neutral infrastructure** for supervision, training, data tracking, and quality control to ensure consistency across schools.
- **Community-based, high-frequency advising** that builds relationships and helps students complete the concrete tasks that lead to enrollment.

According to Dr. Gentile, Advise TN is just one example of how THEC seeks to fulfill its statutory duty under state law to develop and evaluate postsecondary access and career readiness initiatives across the state. Notes Dr. Gentile, “Advise TN delivers results, respects taxpayer dollars, and empowers communities, helping more Tennesseans pursue postsecondary credentials that grow incomes and strengthen local economies.”

### **Download the Study & Learn More**

- Full working paper: [When and Why Does College Advising “Work:” Evidence from Advise TN](#) (EdWorkingPaper No. 251371)
- Policy brief and impact summary: [EdWorkingPapers Policy & Practice Series](#)
- Advise TN program information: [CollegeForTN.org/AdviseTN](http://CollegeForTN.org/AdviseTN)

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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.