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TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION PUBLISHES 10-YEAR MASTER PLAN

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – March 25, 2026 –Tennessee leaders have approved a new 10-year plan to strengthen higher education and expand opportunities for students across the state. The 2025-2035 Strategic Higher Education Master Plan, adopted by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, aims to ensure that **“every Tennessean can earn a credential that leads to lifelong success and a stronger Tennessee.”**

“Postsecondary education has never been more important for our students, our workforce, and the future of Tennessee,” said **Commission Chairwoman Tara Scarlett**. “We have a strong foundation, and now is the time to build on it with a strategic vision that expands opportunity for every Tennessean.”

Required by statute, the statewide master plan sets the direction and priorities for higher education in Tennessee. The previous plan, released in 2015, built on the Drive to 55 initiative and helped align institutions around a shared goal. The new plan carries that momentum forward, expanding the table to include employers and partners statewide and driving the next phase of student and workforce success.

The 2025–2035 Master Plan is organized around three cornerstones:

- **Aligned:** Connecting education to career pathways and workforce needs
- **Achievable:** Expanding access, affordability, and student support
- **Agile:** Adapting and innovating to meet evolving workforce and student needs

Developed over the past year, the plan reflects input from stakeholders across education, workforce, business, and communities statewide, reflecting a broad cross-section of Tennessee.

“It is an honor to serve Tennessee students and to lead the development of this Master Plan,” said **Amanda Klafehn, Chief Strategy Officer at THEC and author of the plan.** “We have clear, shared goals for the next decade to ensure every student in Tennessee has the resources, support, and opportunities to succeed and emerge as the next leaders of our state and nation.”

The plan is designed to deliver both economic and social benefits for students and the state by strengthening academic programs to ensure relevance, quality, and accountability; protecting students and upholding institutional integrity; and aligning program offerings with real-world skills and career readiness, including experiential learning opportunities that prepare students for meaningful careers.

“We are grateful to the Commission, THEC staff, and all collaborators who contributed to this effort,” said **Dr. Steven Gentile, Executive Director of THEC.** “This plan reflects a bold vision for higher education in Tennessee and positions our state as a national leader in preparing students for high-impact, high-earning careers.”

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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.