

Tennessee Higher Education Commission

Fall 2016 | Quarterly Update



From the Executive Director

This fall has been a transformative season for our team here at THEC. We have been examining everything we do as an agency, and asking ourselves which actions have the most impact on increasing the number of Tennesseans with a college degree. This inward look resulted in each division compiling their ideas for moving forward towards the Drive to 55, and we look forward to implementing many of these innovations in 2017.

A look at the recent work of our team provides a perfect snapshot of the many ways THEC is working to help students succeed. Whether it is implementing the FOCUS Act, launching the transformative AdviseTN initiative, or leading efforts to increase FAFSA completion, our staff members embody the THEC vision of being relentlessly focused on increasing the number of Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential.

It's an exciting time for higher education in our state, and your support, as always, is greatly appreciated.

-Mike Krause
Executive Director

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**Creating and maintaining a
policy environment focused
on the Drive to 55.**

Welcome back event at Nashville State.

**Innovating for student
access and success.**

SAILS visit at Antioch High School.

**Protecting students and
consumers.**

Outreach fair for ITT Tech students at TCAT Nashville.

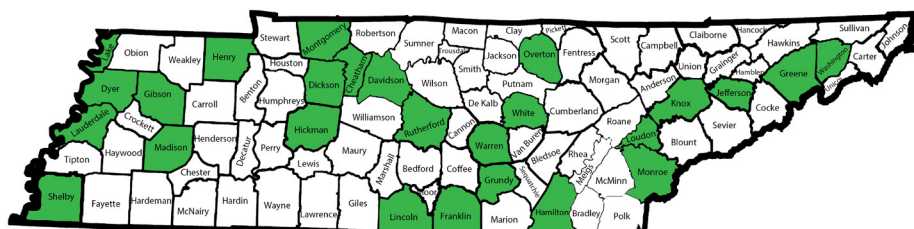
THEC Launches Advise TN

On October 19 at the Williamson County campus of Columbia State Community College, high school principals, counselors, and Advise TN college advisors came together to chart a new course for their schools and their students through Advise TN.

"There's a lot of stuff that gets in the way between getting accepted and going to college," Hunters Lane High School principal Susan Kessler said. "One barrier ends up being the last straw. This is going to help keep those doors open so more of my kids get to college."

Advise TN helps students identify the college that best fits their aspirations and ensures they can navigate the financial aid and application processes to attend college. The 30 Advise TN college advisors, each placed at one of the 30 Advise TN partner high schools, have already begun to provide services, including assisting students with the Tennessee Promise application and hosting FAFSA submission events with school counselors and members of the TSAC Outreach Team.

Advise TN was included in the state's 2016-17 budget with funding of \$2,455,800. High schools that are part of Advise TN are required to develop sustainability plans to continue the program beyond initial state funding. Pictured below are the counties served by Advise TN.



Advise TN Overview

Mission: To increase the number of Tennesseans accessing higher education by partnering with high schools to provide college advising services.

14,000 juniors and seniors at 30 high schools across the state will be served by Advise TN.



Milan High School seniors commemorated their College Application Week with a barbecue for all who applied to college.

College App Week 2016

Tennessee held its ninth annual College Application Week in September, encouraging students across the state to commit to college and officially begin the enrollment process. Many schools also use the event to promote a college-going culture in their community. This year, over 57,000 students explored and applied to college.

In addition to high school seniors completing their applications, thousands of elementary and middle school students statewide participated in postsecondary activities, such as college-themed pep rallies and college visits.

TN FAFSA Frenzy

The statewide collaborative initiative of TN FAFSA Frenzy, which provides support for Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion at high schools across the state, has already helped 30,000 students submit the FAFSA. TN FAFSA Frenzy has provided counselors with support in assisting students and families to file the FAFSA, an important indicator of whether or not a student will actually enroll in college, as well as a coordinated social media and outreach campaign. The deadline to submit the FAFSA for Tennessee Promise is January 17. To view the most up-to-date FAFSA submission rates by high school, visit tnfafsafrenzy.gov.



FOCUS Act

The FOCUS transition process continues to take shape. In October, THEC issued a memo regarding implementation of the FOCUS Act outlining the roles and priorities identified to date. Commission staff has completed meetings with leadership at all six locally-governed institutions (LGIs). The next formal steps include confirmation by the Tennessee General Assembly and professional development conducted by THEC staff. The newly-appointed boards are expected to convene and assume governance in April. Below are highlights of the implementation timeline:

November 2016

- Fall THEC meeting: State appropriation, capital, and non-binding tuition recommendations

January 2017

- THEC solicits intent from universities to assume responsibilities on data, procurement, and capital processes
- Winter THEC meeting: Revised operating budgets, revised academic policies, and revised capital policies presented for action

Spring 2017

- Board member confirmation by the General Assembly
- THEC presents and reviews appropriation, capital, and tuition recommendations to legislative committees
- Eight governing boards work with THEC to understand campus revenue needs and prepare binding tuition recommendations
- Board orientations on campuses and initial board meetings
- Spring THEC meeting: revised academic policies, university missions, and binding fee ranges

Summer 2017

- Summer THEC meeting: Proposed operating budgets presented, finalized tuition and fee recommendations, and campus severance requests

Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support (SAILS)

This Fall, SAILS continued its expansion across Tennessee, with SAILS Math entering its sixth academic year in operation, now in 243 high schools. SAILS English, in its second year, expanded from 5 high schools to 19. Through the 2015-16 academic year, **86% of the 33,761 students that participated in SAILS Math completed the course** and were determined to be college-ready in Math. Since SAILS Math was implemented in 2012, **there has been a 15.6% decrease in the number of students that enter community college in need of remediation.**



"SAILS helped me get college ready, because I was doing things on my own at the college level. I was learning key terms and skills I wouldn't have learned in high school. I was retaught skills I learned in the past, and was able to learn new skills to get more prepared for college."

– Marquis Carr, a SAILS student at The Howard School in Chattanooga



"SAILS helped me learn how to pace myself, and do schoolwork on my own. It prepared me for college, because not everything we were taught in high school led to college-level work. SAILS formed a bridge for me between high school and college."

– Laura Pritchard, a SAILS student at Rhea County High School

Quality Assurance Funding

Quality Assurance Funding (QAF) incentivizes high-quality performance and provides a means of assessing the progress of student learning at public community colleges and universities. Tennessee was the pioneer in developing quality-based funding for higher education institutions and has become a model for states seeking to promote the highest standards and continuous improvement.



QAF standards are evaluated every five years to ensure alignment with state higher education priorities. The 2015-20 QAF cycle standards reflect current state priorities outlined in the 2015-25 Master Plan, guided by the Drive to 55, and continue to challenge institutions to promote the highest standards while carrying out their unique missions.

2015-20 QAF Defining Features

Academic Programs

When an appropriate accrediting agency is not available, institutions utilize program evaluations to ensure that academic program standards remain high through a self-study and external review. As part of the 2015-20 cycle standards review, program evaluation rubrics have been updated to reflect current best practices and align with the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) standards.

Institutional Satisfaction Study

In the 2015-20 QAF cycle, community colleges and universities will follow a unique schedule to engage various institutional stakeholders. Colleges and universities will use widely-respected surveys, employed at institutions across the country, to determine institutional satisfaction at the campuses.

Adult Learner Success

A major component of the 2015-25 Master Plan and Tennessee Reconnect is engaging adult learners. To support institutions in this critical mission, QAF implemented the Adult Learner Success standard focused on the unique experiences and challenges facing adult students. In 2015-16, institutions performed a self-study and gathered feedback from adult students that will help to create a campus-specific action plan for engaging adult learners. The standard also examined adult student graduation rates as compared to the institution's prior three-year average.

Tennessee Job Market Graduate Placement

The community college job placement standard utilizes data from the Tennessee Longitudinal Data System (TLDS) which combines data from the Tennessee Department of Education, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and THEC. TLDS allows THEC to complete a statewide job placement analysis that is uniform across all community colleges, rather than through the use of surveys.

Student Access and Success

QAF focuses institutional attention on increasing the access and success of focus populations around the state. All institutions selected five populations on which to focus particular attention and resources throughout the 2015-20 QAF cycle. Low-income students and underrepresented race and ethnicity are the most common focus populations selected by colleges and universities, and eight institutions chose to concentrate on veterans.

QAF and the Funding Formula

How do they work together? How are they different?

QAF works hand-in-hand with the outcomes-based funding formula, with QAF complimenting the funding formula by providing an incentive for growth in outcomes to pair with a focus on quality. While state appropriations to each institution are largely determined through the funding formula, QAF provides an incentive for institutions to focus on outcomes as well as quality. QAF emphasizes quality of programs and success beyond graduation, ensuring that student outcomes are aligned with the state's higher education goals.

For more information on QAF, including a breakdown of the average point recommendations, contact Victoria Harpool at victoria.harpool@tn.gov.

Tennessee Reconnect Communities (TRCs)

TRCs are designed to offer adults free advising, career counseling, support, and a personalized path to and through college. They also connect local stakeholders to larger statewide degree-attainment efforts. This design is based on The Graduate! Network's (TGN) proven model for improving outcomes for adult learners. TGN is a founding partner and works closely with THEC to provide communities with strategic and operational planning support.



In May 2015, Lumina Foundation provided financial support for the provision of technical assistance for the implementation of the TRCs, and state funding was provided to support start-up costs. In October 2015, THEC awarded \$675,000 to the first three TRCs in the Middle Tennessee, Southwest, and Upper Cumberland regions. In June 2016, THEC awarded \$1,125,000 to five additional TRCs in Northwest Tennessee, Memphis, South Central Tennessee, the Smoky Mountain region, and Northeast Tennessee.

Update on Expansion of TRCs

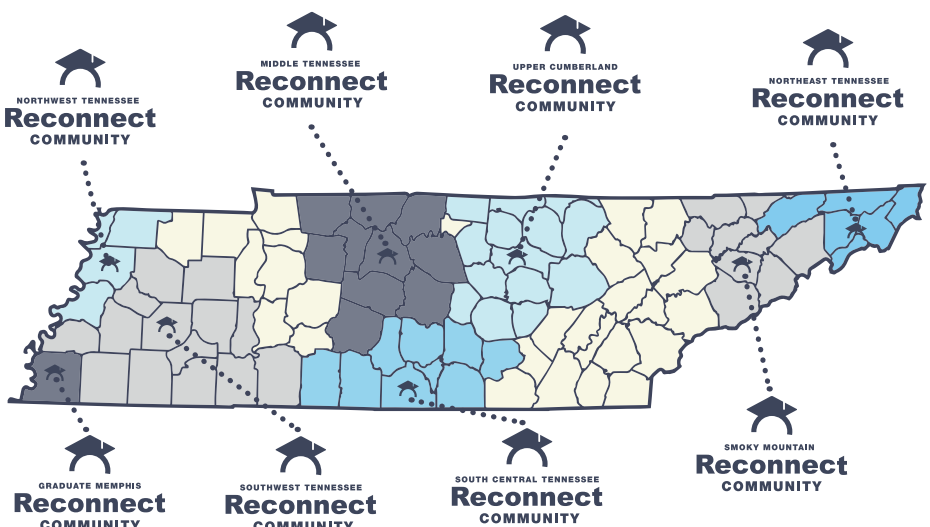
The TRC initiative continued and expanded its work during this period through the onboarding process of the five additional communities into the Tennessee Reconnect Community Network. Continuing the partnership with TGN, THEC wrote and developed an extensive implementation plan as these new TRCs kicked off their operational planning in June. New directors were hired and trained by THEC and TGN in July and August, and in September, the TRCs' new advisors were also hired and trained. THEC provided each of these TRCs an advisor manual as part of the training process; this manual provided new advisors detailed guidance on their role and responsibilities as a TRC advisor and concrete methods of engaging adult learners in their community.

The five new TRCs are currently working on launching their websites, establishing their social media presence, messaging and marketing their services within the community, and engaging partners. These TRCs are currently preparing for their individual launch events within their community which will occur in November 2016.

Strategies Moving Forward

As the new TRCs become more firmly established in their communities, THEC will focus on these next steps to guide all eight communities for further growth and expansion while also solidifying the functions and supports of the TRC Network:

- Examining additional state partnerships in order to further message the resource of the TRCs and provide TRC services in more convenient and accessible environments.
- Providing further technical assistance, professional development, and training to the TRCs and specifically the advisors on using best practices in their advising techniques, engaging special populations, and the importance of data tracking and reporting.
- Providing technical assistance to TRCs for the growth and expansion phase of their work, focusing on building and strengthening partnerships in the community.



Launching Tennessee Reconnect Ambassador Partnerships

Through a partnership with the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development and The Graduate! Network, THEC trained 200 staff from the Tennessee American Job Centers (AJCs) to be the first Tennessee Reconnect Ambassadors. AJC career counselors provide career counseling services for adults seeking employment; they are now trained as Ambassadors to identify clients who may be interested in completing a postsecondary credential for referral to TRC advising services. Ambassadors provide encouragement and support to adults they know who are interested in finishing a college credential and refer them to the Tennessee Reconnect Community in their area for advising services. They support an educational culture change in their community by using their existing relationships to encourage adults to pursue and complete postsecondary education.

THEC plans to expand this Tennessee Reconnect Ambassador initiative with additional agencies, community organizations and employers in order to maximize the message of Tennessee Reconnect and the advising services available through the TRCs.

Continuation of Veteran Reconnect Institutional Grants

In the wake of the passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Tennessee experienced a significant increase in the number of veterans enrolled in higher education. Data show that, as of September 2016, over 11,000 veterans across the state were enrolled at higher education institutions using GI Bill benefits. The Veteran Reconnect Grant Competition seeks to spur new efforts to serve student veterans, as well as sustain existing efforts. In 2015, THEC issued a competitive Request for Proposals to fund veteran support efforts at institutions of higher education. These grants were awarded to 11 colleges and universities and represented the state's first focused efforts to encourage campus support of student veterans. THEC has continued this program through a second round of grants to institutions to build on those efforts and to facilitate development and implementation of interventions focused on student veterans.



Totaling nearly \$1 million in funds, these 22-month grants were awarded to six campuses in August 2016 and will focus on supporting campuses that have already demonstrated a clear commitment to serving veterans and seek to strengthen and support initiatives that will have a lasting impact on the student veteran community. The programs funded through Veteran Reconnect will further develop campus services for student veterans and provide veteran-specific resources. Such resources include assistance in crafting individualized success plans to serve as a road map to degree completion and employment, career development training sessions, increased internship and employment opportunities, and standardized prior learning assessment (PLA) to award college credit for prior military training and experience.

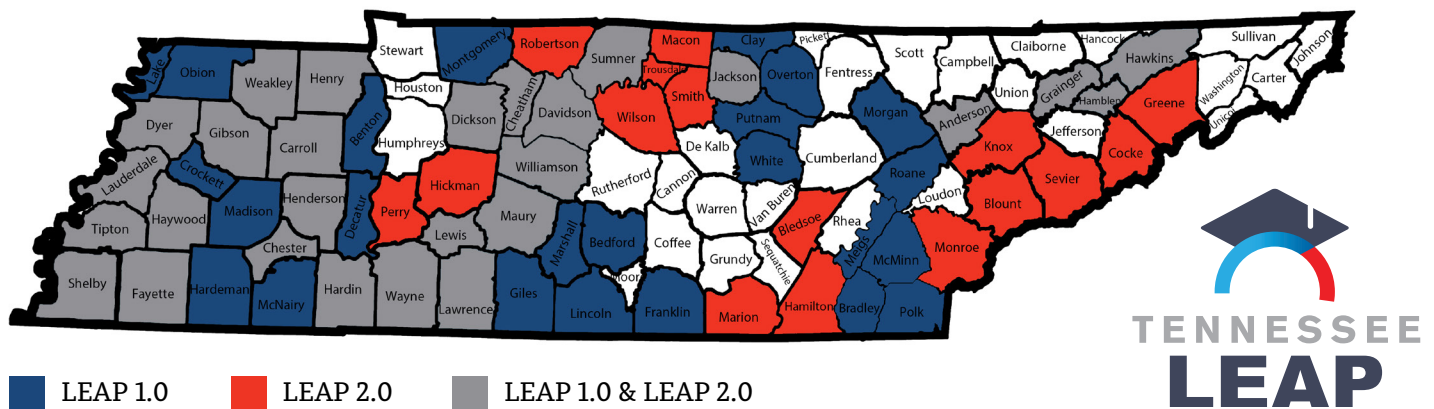
THEC Responds to ITT Technical Institute Closure

On September 6, ITT Technical Institute announced it was closing its doors across the country. The move immediately affected nearly 2,000 Tennessee students who were enrolled. THEC staff quickly mobilized to reach students impacted by the closure. The Division of Postsecondary State Authorization (DPSA) set up a hotline students could call to gather more information. Students were also able to sign up to receive email updates from THEC as new information became available, in addition to receiving information on transcripts, comparable programs, and details on institutions offering transfer opportunities.

THEC also partnered with the Tennessee Board of Regents to host outreach fairs at campuses statewide the week after the closure. THEC and TBR have worked with hundreds of displaced students to provide information on transferring into public institutions during the 2016-17 academic year.

LEAP 2.0 Selections Announced

In September, THEC announced the recipients of \$10 million in awards for the Labor Education Alignment Program (LEAP). Marking the second round of funding for the program, twelve proposals were funded to increase the LEAP service area to 67 counties. Every LEAP program is required to focus on specific technical skills which students will learn. LEAP 2.0 included an emphasis on work-based learning components, such as co-ops, internships, and other experiential learning for students. LEAP 2.0 will provide students with training in the following in-demand skill areas: advanced manufacturing, automation, automotive diesel, electricity, healthcare, industrial maintenance, machine tool technology, mechatronics, soft skill development, and welding.



Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship (TELS) Report

This fall, THEC released its annual TELS Report, describing how and where TELS funds are being used across the state. Highlighted in this year's report was the increased buying power of the HOPE Scholarship at Tennessee's community colleges. In past years, HOPE has covered slightly above 50% of the average tuition and fees at public institutions. In 2014-15, reflecting changes to annual award amounts of HOPE, **the scholarship covered, on average, 84% of the tuition and fees at community colleges and 52% at universities.** Additionally, the report found that **about 60% of students retain their TELS awards** from their first year to their second year of college, but among those students that lose the award, approximately 60% still persist in higher education.

The full 2016 TELS Report is available on THEC's website:

http://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/thec/attachments/2016_TELS_Fact_Book.pdf

TELS in 2014-15

70,000 students
received a combined
\$270 million in TELS
funding.

Distribution of TELS scholarships among first-time freshmen:

HOPE - 64%
Aspire - 26%
GAMS - 7%
Access - 2%

60%

of transfer
activity
is within
Tennessee

20%

are TN
residents
coming back

56%

of transfers are
from 2-year
to 4-year
institutions

22%

go from 4-year
to 2-year
institutions

Articulation and Transfer Report

THEC recently released the 2016 Articulation and Transfer report, highlighting how students in Tennessee move between institutions prior to receiving an undergraduate degree or certificate. The 2016 report findings are similar to prior year results: The majority of transfer activity happens within Tennessee, between colleges and universities located in the state, and that most transfer is vertical, with students transferring between two-year and four-year universities.

The full 2016 Articulation and Transfer Report is available on THEC's website:

http://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/thec/attachments/Articulation_Transfer_Report_2016.pdf

Student and Staff Voices

Stories from students and educators at Tennessee's public higher education institutions.

"I didn't really see myself going [to college]. Then, as soon as I heard about Tennessee Promise, that changed. I thought maybe I had a chance to go. And that was



exciting, since I didn't end up getting scholarships other than [Tennessee Promise]."

-Nate Young, Tennessee Promise student, sophomore, and business major at Austin Peay State University

"When I went back to college using the GI Bill, I had to do my own homework on how to use the benefits. I feel really purpose-driven now because there's a language barrier when we leave the service and we go to school. So I'm here to smooth those things out and ask those questions; I've been in their shoes and know the challenges I had."

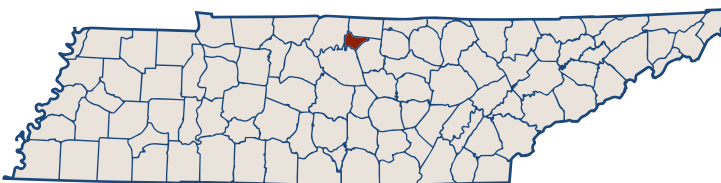
-Daniala Gardner, Veterans' Success Coach at Columbia State Community College



Fall 2016 County Spotlight: Trousdale County

Each quarter, THEC will spotlight one county throughout the state that stands out in its higher education practices.

In August, THEC released the top counties across the state for FAFSA filing last year, and Trousdale County was at the top of the list. With a FAFSA filing rate of 96%, what does a FAFSA-friendly county look like in Tennessee?

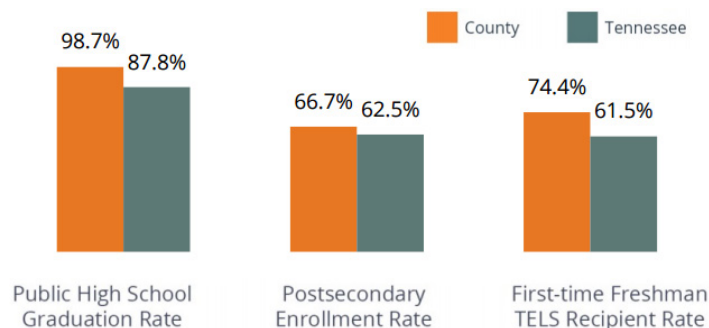


Number of degrees county needs to produce per year until 2025 for Tennessee to reach the goals of the Drive to 55:

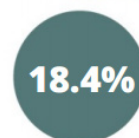
163

To increase the county's college-going rate by 5 percent, number of additional students that must enroll in college in the next year:

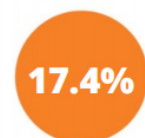
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County Educational Attainment, Adults Age 25-64



with a degree



with some college, but no degree

67

County rank in educational attainment

Trousdale County is home to the Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) Hartsville, which enrolls over 300 students from Trousdale County and surrounding areas.



TENNESSEE COLLEGE OF APPLIED TECHNOLOGY
—HARTSVILLE—



Trousdale County is among the recipients of funding from the recent Labor Education Alignment Program (LEAP) 2.0 subgrant awards. TCAT Hartsville received **\$944,009** to fund its Tennessee Central Cooperative Manufacturing Education LEAP program. Additionally, Trousdale County is one of five counties served from the **\$811,621** Mechatronics-to-Jobs LEAP grant to Volunteer State Community College.