

From the Executive Director

In our relentless effort to increase the number of Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential, we don't shy away from ambitious goals. The reality is that achieving the Drive to 55 requires us to not only take action, but to constantly measure progress.

The best recent example of this approach was the "all hands on deck" effort that the THEC and TSAC team put in place to increase FAFSA submissions. Tennessee has been a national leader in FAFSA filing rates for years, and last year 70% of our high school seniors submitted their financial aid form, far outpacing any other state. Yet the Drive to 55 requires us to always keep pushing, and we set an internal goal this year that would increase FAFSA completion by 5%.

The core of this effort was TN FAFSA Frenzy, a collaborative campaign between our agency, the Governor's Office, the Department of Education, and local school districts. This campaign led to a 10,000 student increase in FAFSA submissions by the Tennessee Promise deadline, and perhaps most impressive, many of our new Advise TN schools experienced double-digit growth in their FAFSA numbers.

The big takeaway: our THEC/TSAC team provided a model for the successful roll-out of an ambitious statewide initiative, and the results paid off for students, who are on track to continue to grow Tennessee's FAFSA filing rates and keep the state peerless in FAFSA submissions.

We have our eyes set squarely on goals that will serve and support Tennessee's quest to increase the number of college graduates and I continue to be amazed by the commitment of our staff and partners in meeting those goals.

-Mike Krause
Executive Director

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TN FAFSA Frenzy Sweeps Tennessee

When the 2017-2018 FAFSA opened online on October 1, many students, families, and college access professionals across the country were faced with a new timeline and process for submitting the form. This year, the timeline was new, the IRS data retrieval tool was a more prominent part of the process, and updated questions posed a change to how some families might respond. In Tennessee, however, those questions became opportunities to better connect with and serve students across the state through the TN FAFSA Frenzy campaign.



TN FAFSA Frenzy began in November 2015 as a collaboration among THEC, TSAC, the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE), and the three Tennessee Promise partnering organizations: tnAchieves, Southwest Tennessee Development District's Regional Economic Development Initiative (REDI), and the Ayers Foundation.

The campaign's goal has been to empower all Tennessee students to access the funds needed to attend postsecondary institutions. In summer 2016, TN FAFSA Frenzy partners organized nine regional meetings across the state where school counselors were trained on FAFSA submission and set FAFSA filing goals for their schools.



Governor Haslam recorded two videos in support of the TN FAFSA Frenzy Campaign

In November, the leaders of TN FAFSA Frenzy worked with the Office of Governor Bill Haslam to develop a concentrated statewide push for Tennessee Promise applicants to submit their FAFSA prior to the January 17th eligibility deadline. The Governor's Office proclaimed Thursday, January 12, 2017 as TN FAFSA Frenzy Day, and THEC and TSAC encouraged high schools to host events throughout the school week to assist students in meeting the Tennessee Promise FAFSA deadline.

The week of January 12th, the TSAC Student Communication Services Division coordinated over 500 community events and organized over 150 volunteers from THEC, TSAC, TDOE, tnAchieves, and colleges. Almost 50 volunteers from THEC and TSAC alone visited schools across Tennessee on January 12th to help students and parents with filing the FAFSA.



TN FAFSA Frenzy at Halls High School, an Advise TN school

During the Week of TN FAFSA Frenzy...



Advise TN and GEAR UP TN: Shattering FAFSA Submission Records

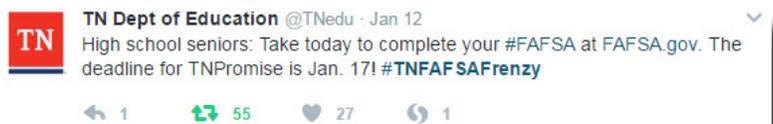
Through its Advise TN and GEAR UP TN initiatives, the College Access and Success Division provides direct college access services to a combined population of approximately 26,000 high school juniors and seniors attending schools with college-going rates that fall below the state average.

Aligned with the TN FAFSA Frenzy effort, the Division placed particular emphasis on increasing FAFSA filing rates at direct-service schools. This year, nearly 1,000 more Tennessee Promise applicants attending Advise TN and GEAR UP TN schools submitted the FAFSA than last year. In total, 43 high schools achieved a year-over-year increase in FAFSA filing among Tennessee Promise applicants. Twenty-seven of these schools increased their Tennessee Promise FAFSA filing rate by more than five percentage points. It is anticipated that these numbers will continue to rise as more FAFSAs are processed in the coming weeks.



FAFSA Filing Rates for TN Promise Applicants Top 10 GEAR UP TN Schools		
County	School	FAFSA Rate
Henderson	Lexington High School	99.2%
Claiborne	Cumberland Gap High School	97.1%
Grainger	Grainger High School	95.7%
Hardeman	Bolivar Central High School	94.1%
Anderson	Anderson County High School	93.4%
Haywood	Haywood High School	91.3%
Hardeman	Middleton High School	90.7%
Davidson	Antioch High School	90.7%
Wayne	Collinwood High School	89.6%
Bradley	Bradley Central High School	87.6%

FAFSA Filing Rates for TN Promise Applicants Top 10 Advise TN Schools		
County	School	FAFSA Rate
Gibson	Humboldt High School	98.6%
Dyer	Dyer County High School	97.8%
Lake	Lake County High School	96.1%
Grundy	Grundy County High School	96.0%
Hickman	Hickman County High School	94.2%
Hickman	East Hickman County High School	94.1%
Lauderdale	Halls High School	93.1%
Jefferson	Jefferson County High School	90.3%
White	White County High School	89.3%
Shelby	Overton High School	87.9%



#TNFAFSAFrenzy received significant engagement on social media from statewide figures

FOCUS Update: Lessons Learned from Oregon

In early December, staff from THEC's leadership team traveled to Salem, Oregon to meet with leaders from the state's Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC). THEC's Director of Institution and Board Affairs Lauren Collier coordinated the trip to provide agency staff with insight into Oregon's 2014-15 transition from a system of universities to seven independently governed universities. THEC met with campus representatives, as well as various members of the HECC team, including Executive Director Ben Cannon. Among the key takeaways from the trip:



- **Transition and communication:** In Oregon, affinity groups from the universities, such as councils of provosts or chief financial officers, have been critical to a successful transition. The HECC staff noted that they often found the councils to be a place where productive conversation occurred that would lead to solutions to any issues that arose during the transition.
- **Be prepared for updates and changes:** Following Oregon's transition, the state has spent time updating statutes related to the changes made across the systems. The HECC worked closely with the institutions to collaborate on recommendations for the changes and ensure a collective approach was taken when working with legislators.
- **Shared services have eased the transition:** Particularly for smaller institutions, sharing services, such as tax reporting and back office activities, assisted in the transition and ensured that all institutions were able to undertake functions previously operated by the system.
- **Anticipate academic expansion:** While change has encouraged institutional growth and differentiation, the HECC has been called upon to ensure and reassert state interests of mindful growth and student success.
- **Greater transparency and access to fiscal process:** Staff in Oregon found that one of the successes of the shift to independent governing boards was increased transparency of the budgeting process for each institution.

In coming months, Dr. Collier will continue to work with other higher education coordinating agencies whose responsibilities parallel those now given to THEC, including Virginia and Indiana.

Academic Supply and Occupational Demand Report

In early January, THEC released the 2017 Academic Supply and Occupational Demand Report, comparing the degrees being produced in Tennessee with the demand from the workforce for graduates in particular fields. The report also provides projections on the number of degrees that higher education institutions will award over the next decade, a critical component of tracking progress toward the Drive to 55.

The report shows that Tennessee's work to align degrees being produced with workforce needs is moving in the right direction. In particular, the demand for manufacturing and production certificates and degrees lines up with efforts from the Labor Education Alignment Program

(LEAP) and TCAT Reconnect to increase the number of degrees produced in those areas. The report also indicates that selling and sales management, as well as administrative support, are high-demand occupations; in hiring practices, however, graduates across all fields may be hired into those jobs.

The full Academic Supply and Occupational Demand report is available on THEC's website at: <http://www.tn.gov/thec/topic/supply-and-demand-report>

*Tennessee is projected to produce **78,656 degrees** in 2025.*

*That would be a **12.66%** increase over degree production in 2014.*

High-Demand Occupations

Selling and sales management
 Manufacturing/production
 Administrative support
 Specialized business functions
 (banking/finance/communications)

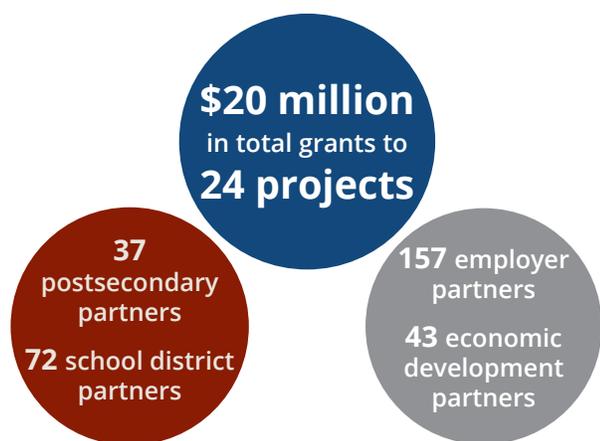
Oversupplied Occupations

Cosmetology
 Recreation and attractions
 Journalism
 Visual arts

2017 LEAP Report

Late December marked the release of the 2017 Labor Education Alignment Program (LEAP) Annual Report, which highlighted the results of LEAP's first two years of implementation and recommended statewide expansion of the workforce development program. The 2017 report is the first to include early outcomes for the program, as the first twelve grantees have laid the groundwork for meeting long-term workforce needs. In just its first two years, LEAP is credited with serving nearly 20,000 students through training and workforce development experiences. The program has also supported over 900 postsecondary students in completing a program of study or high-demand industry certification.

The release of the report resulted in media coverage for the program, including a story in *The Tennessean*, "Report finds 'growing' demand for college program" and included the recommendations for statewide expansion of LEAP.



LEAP provides services to students in 67 counties



High School Students



3,403

High school students enrolled in LEAP courses

105

Average contact hours earned

6

Average credit hours earned

2,065

College students enrolled in LEAP programs

938

College students completed program of study or industry certification

608

Students hired in the industry in which they studied

14,379

Students participated in LEAP "Impact Programming"

College Students



TENNESSEE
LEAP

19,847

Total training and workforce development experiences for LEAP students



LEAP Impact Programming





2017 Improving Teacher Quality Grants Awarded

Late in the fall, THEC awarded a new round of Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) grants to promote teacher development around the state through partnerships with higher education institutions. The ITQ grants, funded through the U.S. Department of Education, provide grants to higher education institutions for teacher professional development. Each year, THEC works jointly with the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) to identify subject areas that will have the greatest impact on Tennessee school districts and student achievement.

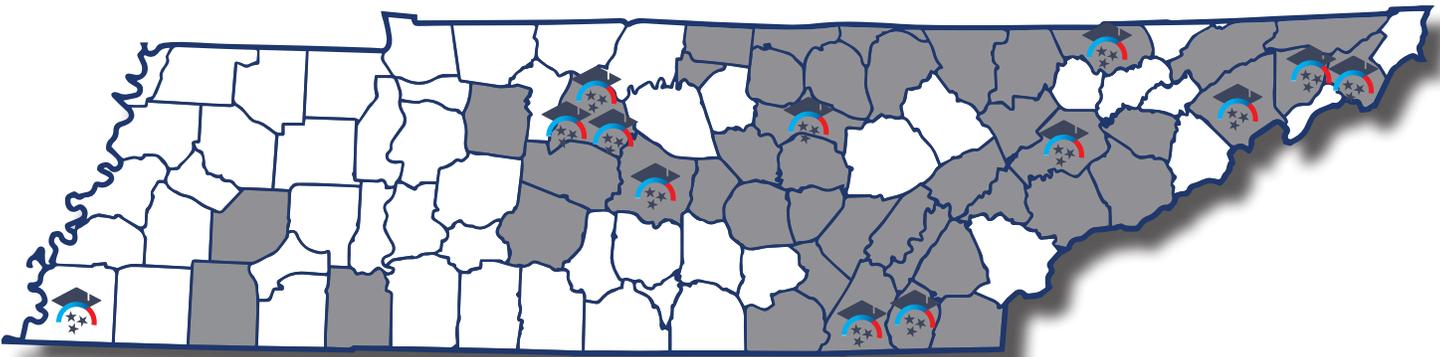
For 2017, THEC and TDOE determined that STEM, English/Language Arts, and Social Studies for middle and high school grades would be the targeted subject areas. The areas of focus are determined based on where student need indicates that additional teacher development would be of assistance, as well as areas in which districts are seeking shortages around qualified teachers for various grade levels.

Every ITQ proposal is required to include at least one higher education partner and incorporate faculty from both the institution's school of education and from a department related to one of the specified content areas. Proposals must also include partnerships with each local school district in which teachers will be trained. The partner districts must commit to providing recruitment plans to encourage teachers to take part in the programs.

In this round of ITQ funding, THEC awarded close to \$1.5 million to 21 public and private institutions across the state. The number of awards is almost double compared to the past two years. The grants will provide professional development to teachers in 48 school districts across 46 counties. Each project will provide a summer workshop, along with sustained activities throughout the school year for middle and high school teachers. Projects were allowed a maximum funding level of \$75,000 and are funded from January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017.

For questions or further information on the ITQ grant program, contact Herbert Brown (herbert.brown@tn.gov).

2017 ITQ Institutional Grants and Counties Served



Belmont University

\$74,568

East Tennessee State University

\$224,899

(across 3 grants)

Lee University

\$141,109

(across 2 grants)

Lincoln Memorial University

\$74,629

Lipscomb University

\$51,330

Milligan College

\$71,698

Middle Tennessee State University

\$74,570

Tennessee Technological University

\$224,813

(across 3 grants)

Tusculum College

\$74,991

University of Memphis

\$74,522

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

\$223,896

(across 3 grants)

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

\$130,640

(across 2 grants)

Vanderbilt University

\$57,663

Winter 2017

Tennessee Higher Education Commission

THEC Highlighted in National Media Stories

THEC has been in the national spotlight this winter. In early December, Advise TN was featured in *Education Week* as a model for statewide advising programs. Reporter Catherine Gewertz included quotes from Executive Director Mike Krause, Associate Executive Director for College Access and Success Troy Grant, and Advise TN Program Director Sherica Nelms. Gewertz also spoke with Michelle Willis, the Advise TN college advisor for Clarksville's Northwest High School, on her work with students at the school and the effort to increase the school's FAFSA submission and college-going rates.



In late December, the *Wall Street Journal* ran an article profiling Tennessee's work to return adult learners to college. Higher education reporter Melissa Korn discussed the state's efforts to promote adults with some college but no degree re-engaging with postsecondary institutions. The piece highlighted the work of the Tennessee Reconnect Communities and their localized advising services to adults across the state. Korn profiled Columbia State Community College student Bryan McBride, who returned to college to earn an associate degree. McBride has received advising services and support through the Middle Tennessee Reconnect Community.

Wall Street Journal article



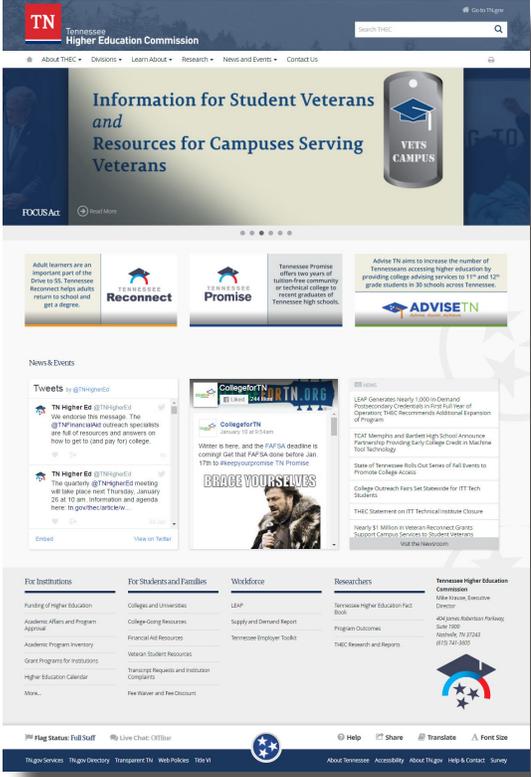
Education Week article

National education news website *Chalkbeat* profiled Tennessee Promise and the program's growth and evolution in an early January article. The story focused on the power of the messaging behind Tennessee Promise and how it has tackled perceptions about the difficulty of going to and paying for college.



Website Relaunch Provides New Spotlight on Programs and Research

The THEC website underwent a major overhaul in early December to make navigation of the site easier for users and to spotlight the agency's research and programmatic functions. The navigation menus saw the greatest changes and were updated to provide both internal and external audiences a way to reach the site's most popular pages with fewer clicks.



The homepage now focuses on resources that provide assistance to students and families, such as information for student veterans and scholarship programs. The menu navigations were updated to focus on making information accessible to students, institutions, media, and policymakers, such as legislators and legislative staff.

The site was developed within the State of Tennessee web template, which assists new users in quickly identifying the site as an official state agency. For feedback or suggestions for the website, users can contact Heather King (heather.king@tn.gov) or Kate Derrick (kate.derrick@tn.gov).

Student and Staff Voices

Stories from students and professionals working to meet the goals of the Drive to 55.



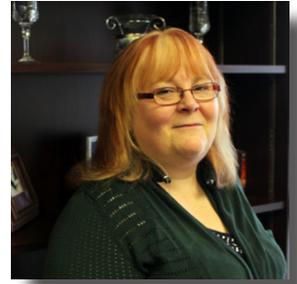
"Tennessee Reconnect provided me with the perfect mix of financial aid and guidance assistance needed to return to school. I will complete my degree this spring and am grateful this program was available. The program provides the resources

to those who are willing to put in the time and effort to complete their degree."

-Bryan McBride, student at Columbia State Community College and advisee of Middle Tennessee Reconnect Community

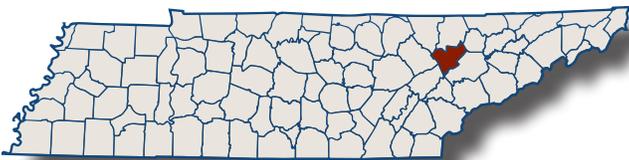
"I grew up poor in a rural area, but I knew I could get an education at a community college. My parents didn't know anything about going to college; neither of them went. When I visited the community college, a woman on staff there showed me the FAFSA, which I had never seen before. From there, she helped me figure out how I could get through school. And I got my associate degree and then went on to get my bachelor's degree. Now I love seeing all of the barriers being removed for Tennessee students."

-THEC Fiscal Director Trish Hensley

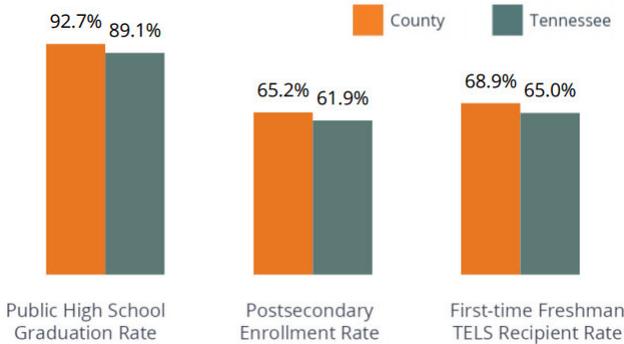


Winter 2017 County Spotlight: Anderson County

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

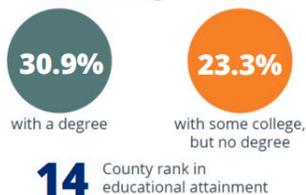


Anderson County is located in a part of Tennessee that includes major career prospects for workers with a heavy STEM skill set and/or manufacturing certifications. The county's educational attainment rates get a boost from highly-skilled employees of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, which is partially located in southeastern Anderson County. The northern parts of the county see higher levels of poverty and a lower educational attainment rate than the Oak Ridge area.



The county is looking at major growth in education opportunities in its partnerships with THEC. Both LEAP and Drive to 55 are providing funding for postsecondary expansion in the county. **GEAR UP TN** launched in the county in 2013 and has been working relentlessly with seniors and the Class of 2018 cohort to increase college-going and postsecondary success.

County Educational Attainment, Adults Age 25-64



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

2,246

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

40

Anderson County will be the location of a new 30,000 sq ft training facility operated by TCAT Knoxville and funded in part by \$5,700,000 through the **Drive to 55 Capacity Fund**. The land for the training facility, totaling 8 acres, was donated by automotive parts manufacturer SL Tennessee. Training at the Anderson County facility will include the following programs: Welding, Diesel Powered Equipment Technology, Truck Driving, Machine Tool Technology, Industrial Maintenance/ Mechatronics Technology, Automotive Technology, and Special Industry Training.