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Tennessee Higher Education Commission Releases Report on Food Insecurity Among Higher Education Students

Nashville, TN – December 19, 2023 – The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) today released a comprehensive report addressing the critical issue of food insecurity among students at public institutions of higher education. This report sheds light on the challenges faced by students and presents key interventions to address this pressing concern.

The report offers a holistic perspective on food insecurity in higher education, divided into three sections:

- 1. Overview of Food Insecurity in Higher Education:** The report defines food insecurity and explores its far-reaching implications on students' academic success and overall well-being.
- 2. Survey Results on Interventions and Services:** A summary of results from a survey administered by THEC to campus administrators highlighting the current landscape of interventions and services in place to combat food insecurity.
- 3. THEC's Recommendations for Policy, Practice, and Research:** The report culminates a set of strategic recommendations for policy, practice, and research to address and alleviate food insecurity among higher education students.

Some key recommendations from the THEC report include:

Improving Communication on Existing Resources

- *Recurring Convenings of Stakeholders:* THEC recommends establishing regular convenings of stakeholders to facilitate the sharing of best practices and resources, fostering a collaborative approach to tackling food insecurity.
- *Training on Federal and State Resources:* Campus personnel should have training opportunities on available federal and state resources to enhance their ability to support students facing food insecurity.
- *Promoting Interagency Partnerships:* THEC emphasizes the importance of building interagency partnerships to create a seamless network of support for students in need.

Dedicating Resources to Support Student Basic Needs Security

- *Assessing Financial Needs of Interventions:* Institutions should assess the financial needs of current interventions, ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to effectively address food insecurity.
- *Utilizing Institutional Budgets and State Allocations:* THEC recommends determining how current interventions can be funded through existing institutional budgets or state allocations, maximizing the impact of available resources.

Exploring the Adoption of a Tennessee Hunger Free Campus Bill

- *Identifying Standard Practices:* THEC suggests exploring the adoption of a Tennessee Hunger Free Campus bill, which would establish standard practices to promote food security and awareness on college campuses.
- *Allocating Financial Support to Institutions:* The state could also could contemplate financial support, in the form of grants, to institutions, empowering them to implement innovative and sustainable solutions to combat food insecurity.

Supporting Research and Evaluation

- *Statewide Survey of Students:* THEC advocates for the development of a statewide survey of students on basic needs security to gather comprehensive data for informed decision-making.
- *Incentivizing Research Participation:* Institutions are encouraged to participate in existing research opportunities, and THEC proposes incentives to motivate active involvement.
- *Competitive Request for Proposals:* THEC recommends generating research through a competitive Request for Proposals, fostering innovative approaches to address food insecurity.

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission remains committed to advancing policies and practices that promote student success and well-being. This report serves as a crucial step toward creating a more secure and supportive environment for higher education students across the state. To read the report and for more information on food insecurity, visit tn.gov/thec/learn-about/task-forces/food-insecurity.

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The Tennessee Higher Education Commission was created in 1967 by the Tennessee General Assembly. The Commission develops, implements, evaluates postsecondary education policies and programs in Tennessee while coordinating the state's systems of higher education, and is relentlessly focused on increasing the number of Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential.