



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Tennessee Higher Education Commission Names Dr. Steven Gentile  
as Executive Director**

**Nashville, TN** – November 16, 2023 – The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) today appointed Dr. Steven Gentile as the agency’s new executive director.

Dr. Gentile has held numerous roles at THEC, ranging from Assistant Director of Fiscal Policy to the Chief Policy and Strategy Officer. He was most recently appointed Interim Executive Director in September 2023. Before joining THEC, Steven served as the Assistant Dean of Admission and Financial Aid at his alma mater, Davidson College, in North Carolina.

"I am thrilled to announce that Dr. Gentile has been named THEC’s new executive director," said THEC Chairwoman Tara Scarlett. "There is no one better prepared to take on this demanding role and lead Tennessee into the future of higher education."

Gentile received his Doctor of Education in Higher Education Leadership and Policy from Vanderbilt University (2019), a Master of Education from Vanderbilt (2014), and a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Davidson College (2006). He is also an alumnus of Leadership Tennessee NEXT, Nashville Emerging Leaders, and the Tennessee Higher Education Innovation and Leadership Fellows program.

"THEC and Nashville have been my home for over 10 years," said Dr. Gentile. "It is my true honor to assume the position of executive director and lead Tennessee higher education. It is a privilege to work alongside some of the best and brightest minds representing college access, academic affairs, higher education policy, and more."

While at THEC, Dr. Gentile has led the redesign of the state’s outcomes-based funding formula and capital outlay review process and he spearheaded the state’s Strategic Financial Plan. He has also conducted higher education research with current and former colleagues, investigating the effects of initiatives like Tennessee Promise on student debt, changes in federal PLUS loan regulations on HBCU enrollment, and the role of lottery earmarks in appropriation volatility. Dr. Gentile frequently engages with students in the classroom at Vanderbilt University where he has served as an adjunct professor for education policy.

In his free time, Dr. Gentile and his wife, Solvig, enjoy raising their school-age children in the close-knit East Nashville community.

Established in 1967, THEC oversees development of the state's master plan for higher education, makes recommendations for capital appropriations in the governor's budget, establishes tuition levels and approves new academic programs. Gentile will also lead the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC), which administers state financial aid programs.

Gentile is THEC's eighth executive director since its inception in 1967.

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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.