



MIKE KRAUSE
Executive Director

BILL HASLAM
Governor

STATE OF TENNESSEE
HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION
PARKWAY TOWERS, SUITE 1900
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243-0830
(615) 741-3605

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media contact: Kate Derrick
kate.derrick@tn.gov
615-532-0428

THEC Reports Show More Students than Ever Going to College, Demonstrate Progress toward the Drive to 55

NASHVILLE, TN – April 18 – A record number of students are going to college directly after high school and they are showing up more prepared once they get there according to two recent reports from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC). The annual [Tennessee Higher Education Fact Book](#) and the interactive [2017 Profiles and Trends in Higher Education](#) report published by THEC highlight data and trends in relation to the Drive to 55.

The reports reveal that in 2016, 38,698 high school seniors who graduated in 2016 enrolled in college that fall. The number of students is a slight increase over 2015 and has steadily trended upward in the past five years. The Fact Book also shows that fewer students are requiring learning support courses, likely attributable in part to the Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support (SAILS) program. Data show that students enrolled in co-requisite remediation at the college level, such as adult learners, are seeing similar success.

"These reports indicate that more Tennesseans are going to college than ever before, and fewer of them need remediation," said THEC Executive Director Mike Krause, "These trends are exactly what we were hoping to see as we pursue the Drive to 55, and we are grateful to those across the state that have helped us build this momentum."

The Profiles and Trends report highlights fiscal trends for both higher education institutions and for students. As tuition rates have increased in recent years, similar to most other states, Tennessee has been able to meet increased demand for scholarships and grants to relieve tuition costs for students. Tuition is offset for many students through programs such as Tennessee Promise, which provides two-years tuition-free to graduating high school seniors, and TCAT Reconnect, which covers tuition and mandatory fees for adult learners at the Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs). State funding for other financial aid programs, such as the Tennessee Student Assistance Award, has also steadily increased in recent years.

Additionally, student loan debt is lower in Tennessee compared to other states, a positive indicator as student loan originations saw a sharp annual decrease as programs such as Tennessee Promise and other Drive to 55 initiatives have been implemented.

Other highlights of the reports include:

- The number of college-going high school graduates increased by 16.4 percent between 2012 and 2016, from approximately 33,233 students to 38,698 students.
- The number of first-time freshmen requiring learning support in Math went from 71.1 percent in 2011 to 53.7 percent in 2016; overall remediation dropped from 76.8 percent of first-time freshmen in 2011 to 62.4 percent in 2016.
- Tennessee ranks 4th among the 16 Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) states in the amount of state grant aid per full-time equivalent (FTE) student. Tennessee provides \$1,513 in grant aid per FTE student, 24.0 percent of which is need-based aid. For comparison, the SREB average is \$893 in grant aid per FTE student, 40.7 percent of which is need-based aid.

“Through this year’s data, we are starting to see the outcomes of programs like SAILS and Tennessee Promise,” said THEC Assistant Executive Director for Policy, Planning, and Research Emily House. “We anticipate that we’ll continue to see trends that point to increased access to higher education in our state and, eventually, increased success for students enrolled in college in Tennessee.”

THEC uses the data to target resources and develop programs that will provide the greatest impact and most efficiently meet the needs of Tennessee’s students. The Drive to 55 was launched in 2013, and the Tennessee Promise program began enrolling students in Fall 2015.

[Summary of 2017 Fact Book Data](#) | [Summary of 2017 Profiles and Trends](#)

About the Tennessee Higher Education Commission

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission was created in 1967 by the Tennessee General Assembly. The Commission develops, implements, and 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.