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THEC Report Highlights Continued Demand for Skilled Workers

NASHVILLE – *January 21* – The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) released the [2016 Academic Supply and Occupational Demand](#) in Tennessee report, showcasing the supply of educated labor in Tennessee as it relates to job vacancies and job demand for various occupations. The report projects that a significant increase in the number of degrees awarded will continue through 2025, with particular growth among bachelor's degrees. Additionally, jobs in manufacturing, construction, and transportation continue to be in high demand, while Tennessee colleges and universities offer programs to train students in those fields.

The Academic Supply and Occupational Demand report is released annually and data are provided by THEC, the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, and the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Required annually by Tennessee's Skills for Jobs Act of 2013, the report links the needs of Tennessee's workforce to the degrees being produced by Tennessee's higher education institutions.

"With the number of degrees being produced, and the continued increase in that number, Tennessee is on the right path to meet the goals of the Drive to 55," said Russ Deaton, THEC's interim executive director. "The next step is to ensure that students understand which degrees and credentials will best prepare them for the jobs that will be available to them when they graduate."

The report notes that although Tennessee is projected to award 78,656 degrees in 2025, a 12.66 percent increase in the number of awards produced in 2014, a concerted effort must be made to ensure that students are earning degrees in fields in which jobs are available. Currently, the most in-demand career fields are in production, construction, transportation, banking and finance, and education, while Tennessee is seeing an oversupply of workers trained in nursing, law, religious activities, and social work.

"Although we do see a skills gap in regards to graduates produced versus jobs available, higher education institutions are taking the necessary steps to ensure that students are being trained with

the skills they need to succeed,” said Emily House, THEC’s assistant executive director of policy, planning, and research. “Institutions of all kinds, public and private, are increasingly working with local employers to make sure that they have the right training programs in place and are teaching critical workforce skills.”

The skills gap described in the report is being addressed through a number of initiatives from the State of Tennessee, including the Labor Education Alignment Program (LEAP), part of Governor Haslam’s Drive to 55 initiative. The recently released [2016 LEAP Annual Report](#) highlights some of the programs put in place to address the skills gaps, particularly in the production fields.

The full 2016 Academic Supply and Occupational Demand in Tennessee report can be viewed here: http://tn.gov/assets/entities/thec/attachments/SupplyandDemand_011415.pdf

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission coordinates two systems of higher education, the University of Tennessee institutions governed by the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, and the state universities, community colleges, and colleges of applied technology governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents. There are nine public universities, two special purpose institutes, 13 community colleges, and 27 colleges of applied technology in Tennessee that educate over 240,000 students.