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TSAC Celebrates Over One Million Lottery Scholarships Awarded

NASHVILLE – *January 19* – During the 2015-2016 academic year, the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship (TELS) program officially awarded its one millionth scholarship. The Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC), which administers the TELS program, marked the milestone of having paid out over one million scholarships to Tennessee college students to fund their higher education goals.

The Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship was established by the Tennessee General Assembly in 2003 and in the 2004-2005 academic year, the first year of TELS operation, 40,087 scholarships were awarded. In the 2014-2015 academic year, 103,589 scholarships were awarded, as the TELS program has more than doubled the amount of scholarships given out each year since the creation of the program. Since 2004, nearly \$3 billion in scholarships and grants have been awarded through over one million scholarships.

“The significance of this milestone should not be overlooked; one million scholarships means one million education opportunities for Tennessee students that have been funded through the TELS program,” said Russ Deaton, interim executive director of TSAC. “The lottery scholarship has changed access to higher education for a new generation of students and brought Tennessee many steps closer to our educational attainment goals.”

The purpose of TELS is to offer merit-based and need-based scholarships to Tennessee students attending public or private institutions in the state. TELS scholarships are funded by the Tennessee Education Lottery Corporation through revenues from the state’s lottery. TELS is comprised of eleven scholarships and grants, including the HOPE scholarship, Wilder-Naifeh Technical Skills grant, the dual enrollment grant program, and the Helping Heroes grant program. Since the implementation of TELS, nearly 150,000 dual enrollment grants have been paid out and over 3,000 Helping Heroes Grants have assisted veterans to pay for their education.

“Awarding over one million lottery scholarships demonstrates the popularity and importance of the TELS program,” said Tim Phelps, TSAC’s associate executive director for grant and scholarship programs. “The initial successes of the HOPE scholarship and the Wilder-Naifeh grant led to continued expansion of the program, meaning that many more Tennesseans had the opportunity to access the scholarships and then achieve their educational goals.”

Research from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission indicates that students who enter Tennessee public higher education with a TELS award are approximately 10 percent more likely to graduate than their cohort as a whole. Additionally, TELS students enroll in a higher number of credit hours per term than students without a lottery award, reducing the time to degree and increasing the likelihood of degree attainment.

For more information about the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship, visit www.tn.gov/collegepays.

The Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation is the State of Tennessee's non-profit corporation responsible for the administration of postsecondary financial aid programs. TSAC provides financial assistance for postsecondary educational opportunities to Tennessee residents and other students who have established eligibility in accordance with program guidelines. TSAC also provides outreach services to schools and students to assist with making responsible financial aid decisions, emphasizing responsible borrowing and repayment.