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THEC Awards Over \$500,000 to Community Colleges to Support Tennessee Promise Retention

NASHVILLE – *May 21* – The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) has awarded \$522,638 in Tennessee Promise Forward grants to seven community colleges to focus on success and retention of Tennessee Promise students. The grants will go toward developing campus programs that assist Tennessee Promise students in succeeding during their first year of college and continuing on to their second year.

“Tennessee Promise has provided students in Tennessee with an incredible opportunity to go to college,” said Mike Krause, executive director of Tennessee Promise and Drive to 55. “The Tennessee Promise Forward program supports those students and simplifies the transition to college.”

The programs funded through Tennessee Promise Forward will support student retention through increased student engagement and advising. Many of the funded programs plan to engage students using mobile technology, such as texting and mobile apps, to connect students to advisors and other college resources. Other institutions are developing near-peer advising and mentor programs to assist students with academic and financial aid requirements. To apply for funding, institutions were required to formally partner with their local Tennessee Promise partnering organization in support of the program.

The Tennessee Promise Forward grant will award seven grants to community colleges across the state; grant amounts range between \$72,638 and \$75,000, based on the amount requested by the institution. Participating community colleges anticipate serving nearly all Tennessee Promise students at their respective institutions during the 2015-2016 academic year.

“Tennessee has been on a trajectory of student completion for a number of years now and the Tennessee Promise Forward grants are another example of

that trend,” said THEC Interim Executive Director Russ Deaton. “We look forward to partnering with the seven awarded institutions to implement these innovative ideas to promote completion among students.”

The grants were chosen through a competitive application process. The projects will be funded for a total of fourteen months, beginning in June 2015 and continuing through the end of August 2016. The Tennessee Promise Forward grants are administered by THEC and funded by a College Access Challenge Grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

Summary of Funded Programs:

Chattanooga State Community College

Award amount: \$72,638

The Tennessee Promise Forward project will develop and launch a mobile application to send targeted push notifications to Tennessee Promise students. The application will include a checklist of Tennessee Promise and institutional requirements coupled with the ability to upload documents, track class attendance, provide alerts from instructors, and connect students to their Tennessee Promise mentors.

Cleveland State Community College

Award amount: \$75,000

The First Year Seminar (FYS) for Tennessee Promise Students project will redesign the school’s first-year experience through the integration of technology, a student mentoring program, and development of a first-year student academic “boot camp” for Tennessee Promise students.

Columbia State Community College

Award amount: \$75,000

The GTP² (Guided Tennessee Promise Pathways) project will use software solutions to assist students in tracking their academic requirements and selecting courses. The program will also provide increased advising for students at risk of falling behind on academic requirements. The GTP² program will serve all Tennessee Promise students, but will also provide individualized mentoring services for students from Perry and Hickman counties through a partnership with the Ayers Foundation.

Dyersburg State Community College

Award amount: \$75,000

The Focus Forward Program will develop a suite of programs and targeted interventions for incoming Tennessee Promise students. The program will include a pre-orientation summer success camp to assist students with testing into college-level courses with a focus on literacy initiatives, a three hour freshman orientation course, Tennessee Promise-specific faculty advisors and

mentors, a text messaging campaign, and an end of year recognition ceremony to promote retention.

Northeast State Community College

Award amount: \$75,000

Keeping Our Promise: Access, Completion, and Community will focus on a peer mentoring program and development of a mobile application specific to Northeast State Community College and the Tennessee Promise program. The mentoring program will seek and train student leaders from campus to act as near peer mentors to incoming Tennessee Promise students. The mobile app will support the mentor-mentee relationship by providing a method for communication and information between students.

Pellissippi State Community College

Award amount: \$75,000

The Pellissippi Promise Program will focus on connecting students with advisors during their first semester through four required advisor meetings and two workshops, accompanied by a text messaging service that will provide pertinent reminders for Tennessee Promise and institutional deadlines. The advising via text messaging will continue into the second semester, along with an additional two required in-person advising sessions.

Volunteer State Community College

Award amount: \$75,000

The Pioneer Promise project will provide software to integrate student-level data and institutional requirements to develop targeted advising and interventions for students. The key components of the project are an early alert intervention tool that will allow the institution to determine which students will likely need additional attention early in the semester. The project will also include funding for a part-time completion specialist to focus on targeted retention interventions.

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission was created in 1967 by the Tennessee General Assembly. The 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 technology centers 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 nearly 250,000 students.