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Nearly \$1 Million in Veteran Reconnect Grants Support Campus Services to Student Veterans

NASHVILLE – *August 24* – The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) announced the six campuses receiving nearly \$1 million in funds through the 2016 Veteran Reconnect grant program. The grant is part of the State of Tennessee's larger efforts to support and encourage adult learners, many of whom are veterans, studying at Tennessee institutions.

Programs were funded at Chattanooga State Community College, Lipscomb University, Maryville College, Middle Tennessee State University, Tusculum College, and the University of Tennessee at Martin. The most recent round of the Veteran Reconnect program, which was awarded through a competitive proposal process, aims to build on proven practices to support veterans on campuses and will provide funding for a 22-month grant period.

"Every student enrolled in college has a unique set of needs and that is especially true for veteran students," said THEC Executive Director Mike Krause. "Veteran Reconnect is assisting veterans on Tennessee campuses to both connect with their campus and with their fellow servicemen."

The programs funded through Veteran Reconnect will increase campus services for student veterans and provide veteran-specific resources, such as the expansion of campus veteran centers or professional development for faculty and staff on the specific needs of students with military experience.

Veteran Reconnect was first awarded to 11 campuses in 2015 for a 15-month service period. To date, outcomes include:

- Development of standardized systems of tracking the enrollment, retention, and graduation of student veterans;
- Formation of veteran success committees on campus composed of staff, faculty, and students focused on the continued evolution of best practices in veteran education;

- Providing dedicated student veteran coordinators on each campus to serve as a sole point of contact for student veterans and all of their needs;
- Building and furnishing veterans centers or lounges on campus to provide study space, social interaction, enhanced academic support, and other resources;
- In-depth training programs for faculty and staff to improve awareness of veteran-specific issues; and
- Increased internship and employment opportunities for veteran students through new annual career development training sessions and enhanced relationship-building with corporate partners.

Veteran Reconnect is part of Governor Bill Haslam's Drive to 55 initiative to increase the number of Tennesseans with a postsecondary degree or certificate to 55 percent by 2025. The grants were funded through state appropriations in the 2016-17 budget.

2016-17 Veteran Reconnect Programs:

**Indicates prior recipient of Veteran Reconnect grant*

Chattanooga State Community College* | \$130,000

Chattanooga State Community College will enhance existing services for student veterans in three areas: professional development for faculty and staff, veteran student engagement and support, and career development for veteran students. Additionally, the grant funds will assist in encouraging student veterans to tell their stories as part of the Telling Project production. The campus will also increase activities focused on student veterans, including celebrations and recognition of veterans during the academic year, a community service project, and a business networking event focused on student veterans.

Lipscomb University* | \$185,563

Lipscomb University will use funds to increase its visibility among prospective veteran students and increase engagement of the school's veteran alumni. Lipscomb, which has a goal of doubling the number of veteran students it serves by 2021, will hold an annual veteran student orientation, provide enhanced academic support for veteran students, and provide faculty and staff with training on veteran-specific issues. The university will also enhance career services for veterans through career development training sessions and corporate partnerships focused on providing internships and jobs for veterans.

Maryville College* | \$122,922

Maryville College will build on the work of its previous Veteran Reconnect grant by developing an individualized approach to monitoring specific steps to degree and career attainment for veterans. A new staff position, the Veteran Success Coordinator, will develop an individualized success plan for each veteran student to serve as a roadmap to academic progress, degree completion, and employment.

Middle Tennessee State University* | \$185,463

Through Veteran Reconnect, Middle Tennessee State University will enhance the services offered to veteran students and their families through the Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Family Military Center. Specific initiatives include funding for a full-time transition manager to work with veteran students as they transition into the university, as well as travel for the position and the

Center's employer search agent. Additionally, the Center will hire a graduate assistant to focus on outreach to veterans on campus through communications and social media. Funds will also go to support students attending veteran-related conferences.

Tusculum College | \$185,470

Tusculum College will use Veteran Reconnect funds to develop, create, and hire the position of Director of Veterans Affairs. In addition, the college will enhance the services of its Veteran Education Program by providing veterans with streamlined enrollment, promotion of student veteran resources, financial advisement, implementation of faculty and staff training to increase awareness of veterans' needs, and workforce partnerships.

University of Tennessee at Martin | \$168,877

The University of Tennessee at Martin, using Veteran Reconnect funds, will develop an integrated approach to student services for veterans. The university will hire a Veterans Service Specialist and dedicate space on campus to develop a student veterans center. The grant will also assist in establishing a veterans success committee, developing an orientation designed specifically for new student veterans, and integrating prior learning assessment (PLA) to assist veterans in receiving credit for their prior military training.

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. 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 annually.