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Tennessee Higher Education Commission Announces Big Momentum Year Increase in College-Going Rate for the Class of 2023

NASHVILLE, TN – July 2, 2024 – The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) announced significant momentum today in increasing the state’s college-going rate, highlighted by a 2.4 percentage point increase for the class of 2023 over the class of 2022.

The state’s 56.7% college-going rate for the class of 2023 represents the largest year-over-year increase since the initial implementation of the tuition-free Tennessee Promise scholarship in 2015.

The college-going rate indicates the percentage of Tennessee’s public high school graduates who seamlessly enroll in postsecondary education immediately after high school.

“In the fall of 2022, THEC was pleased to work with partners across the state to launch a ‘Momentum Year’ to increase the college-going rate for the class of 2023, to increase adult enrollment in higher education through Tennessee Reconnect, and to improve coordination and alignment in education and workforce training,” said Dr. Steven Gentile, THEC Executive Director.

“It is gratifying to see those efforts pay off in helping even more Tennessee students and adult learners pursue their dreams and careers with college degrees and workforce credentials beyond high school,” Gentile said.

“However, we know there is still so much more work to do to help ensure every Tennessean has the opportunity for college access and success, which is why we are doubling down on FAFSA completion with the class of 2024 this summer to help more students maximize free financial aid.”

In today’s report: [Tennessee College Going and the Class of 2023](#), THEC provides valuable insights into the trends and progress of college enrollment among high school graduates in Tennessee, including for the first time differing college-going rates based on socioeconomic data.

These new findings showed economically disadvantaged students had a 39.3% college-going rate, while their non-economically disadvantaged peers had a 65.3% college-going rate.

Other major highlights from the class of 2023 college-going rate report include:

1. **Overall College-Going Rate:** The college-going rate for the class of 2023 is 56.7%, representing a 2.4 percentage point increase compared to the previous year. This increase for the class of 2023 represents the largest year-over-year increase since the initial implementation of the tuition-free Tennessee Promise scholarship in 2015.
2. **Demographic Disparities in Access:** College going for the class of 2023 is up across all race/ethnicity and gender pairs. However, these increases are not evenly distributed. White females, Hispanic/Latino males, and females in the “Other” race/ethnicity group saw growth in college-going rates above the statewide growth of 2.4 percentage points.
3. **Dual Enrollment Impact:** College-going rates for high school students who participate in the Dual Enrollment Grant remain high, and participation in the Dual Enrollment Grant has increased over time as the state has invested in wider opportunities for participation. Dual enrollment programs play a crucial role in fostering college readiness among Tennessee's high school students. Students who were found to have participated in the Dual Enrollment Grant at any point in their high school career were found to have consistently higher college-going rates than their high school peers.

The release of today’s college-going rate report reaffirms THEC's commitment to advancing educational attainment in Tennessee. The data not only highlights the progress being made, but also serves as a valuable tool for policymakers and educational institutions to identify areas for further improvement and enhance strategic planning.

For more information about THEC, and to access the full Class of 2023 college-going rate report, please visit www.tn.gov/thec/research/college-going-reports.

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