



STATE OF TENNESSEE

PHIL BREDESEN
GOVERNOR

January 8, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: Higher Education Working Group Members

FROM: Pat Miller
Senior Advisor and Director of Legislative Affairs

SUBJECT: College Completion Recommendations

Following on our Higher Education Working Group meetings in 2009, attached are final recommendations for Tennessee's colleges and universities that were submitted to the Governor this past Wednesday from Complete College America, the nonprofit organization that has provided technical assistance to support our collective work. This report will be circulated to the Education Committees next week as part of the Administration's presentations on college completion strategies during this month's special session. The recommendations contained in the report are expansive. The bill itself will touch on a few key issues that we believe warrant legislation, including the funding formula, statewide transfer policies, and other strategies for improving college completion. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact John Morgan, Will Pinkston, or me.

Thank you.



COMPLETE COLLEGE TENNESSEE

Challenges and Opportunities

Tennesseans understand: It's time to retool, not retreat. That's why Tennessee colleges and universities are busting at the seams. In the depth of what has been called the Great Recession, Tennesseans are striving to raise their skills and sharpen their knowledge. They know the economy will eventually improve, but they also know that many low-skill jobs won't be coming back. When hiring begins again, employers will be looking for smarter workers. Admirably, thousands of Tennesseans are striving to answer the call.

Tennessee leaders have an obligation to help ensure that Tennesseans are successful. To do this, government must remove obstacles that stand in the way of attaining college degrees and credentials of economic value. Colleges and universities must establish new policies and pathways to make college success faster and more affordable, while maintaining quality. And elected officials must be guided in their work by a commitment to protecting taxpayers, investing no more than is necessary and demanding greater accountability from all.

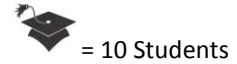
There's much room for improvement: For too long, Tennessee has lagged the country in completion of bachelor's degrees (40th) and associate degrees (45th). On average, only 46% of our full-time students at four-year schools graduate within six years, and only 12% of full-time community college students attain associate degrees within three years. Part-time graduation rates are even lower. Additionally, 60% of students entering community colleges start in remedial courses with dismal results.

Tennessee is at a unique moment in its higher education history. With so much at stake, the Governor and the Tennessee General Assembly can seize on the opportunity to modernize and dramatically improve higher education in Tennessee. Tennesseans are doing their part, often under difficult circumstances as they balance work, family and school. The state's leaders can become their partners, smoothing their paths to success. Doing so will benefit Tennessee for generations.

THE CHALLENGE IN TENNESSEE

- Missed Opportunities Cost Tennessee Dearly:** To achieve the national average of 38% of adults having an associate’s degree or higher by 2025, Tennessee will have to annually produce 20,000 more graduates. If Tennessee achieved the national average in degree attainment, its citizens would earn *an estimated \$6 billion in additional wages and salaries each and every year, generating as much as \$400 million in additional tax revenues for the state annually.*
- Losing students along the way:** Currently, out of every 100 ninth grade students, only 19 graduate from high school, enter college the following fall, persist through college and graduate with a degree within 150% of the normal time—that’s three years for students in community colleges and six years for students in four-year institutions.

TENNESSEE’S EDUCATION PIPELINE

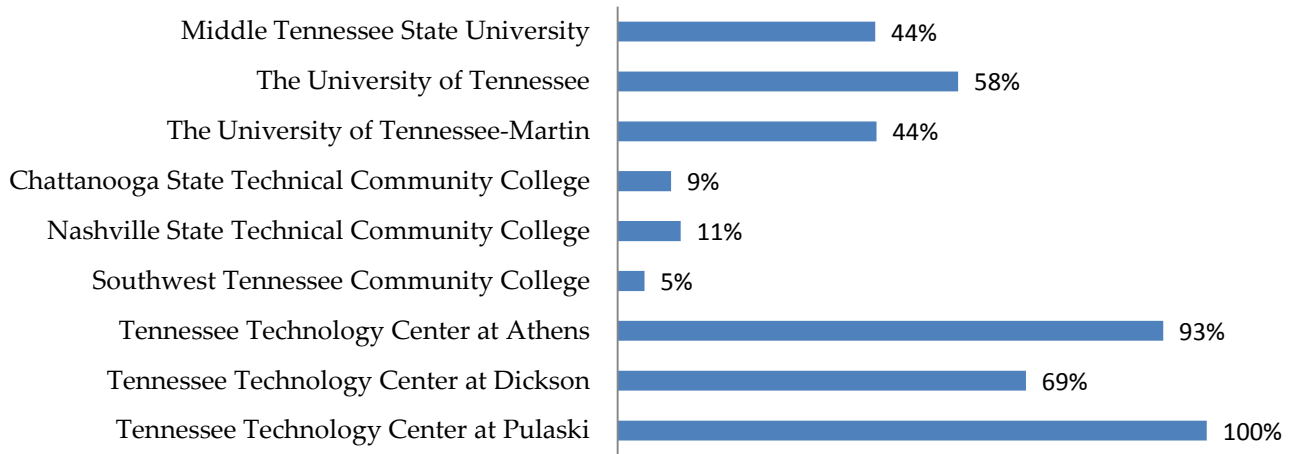


	For every 100 ninth grade students:
	67 graduate from high school in four years.
	43 go directly to college the fall following graduation.
	29 return for their sophomore year of college.
	19 graduate with an associate’s degree in three years or a bachelor’s degree in six years.

NCHEMS, 2006

- Too few students graduate from college:** Average graduation rates in Tennessee range from 12% at Tennessee’s community colleges to 44% at the four-year institutions. (Tennessee’s Technology Centers have an average graduation rate of 70%. See Appendix I for a complete table of graduation rates by campus).

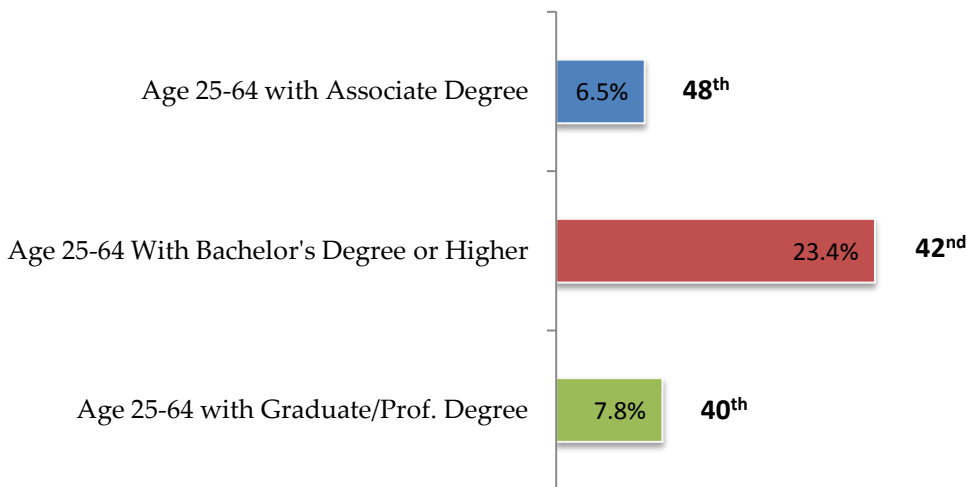
GRADUATION RATES AT SELECTED TENNESSEE COLLEGES



First-time full-time degree-seeking students graduating within three years from two-year colleges or from four-year institutions in six years. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2007

- Low college completion rates hamper Tennessee's economic growth:** Low graduation rates are holding Tennessee down in national comparisons of the educational attainment of the state's population—and, therefore, in the state's economic competitiveness. Currently, Tennessee ranks 40th or below among all states in the percentage of its citizens with every level of postsecondary degree.

TENNESSEE'S EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND RANK AMONG STATES (2006)



From the Making Opportunity Affordable: Tennessee Policy Audit, NCHEMS 2009

COMPLETE COLLEGE AMERICA'S WORK IN TENNESSEE

Beginning in early fall 2009, Stan Jones and staff of Complete College America were invited by the Governor's office to assess the current state of college completion in Tennessee. CCA made numerous visits to the state to meet with the leaders of the state's higher education systems, the Governor and his staff, and legislators, including:

- Several meetings with the leadership of the Tennessee Board of Regents and the University of Tennessee systems.
- Participating in a discussion session at Volunteer State Community College with community college presidents from throughout the state.
- An extensive meeting with leaders of the community colleges and technology centers to explore the potential for greater cooperation and collaboration.
- Multiple discussions with Governor Bredesen and his staff.
- Numerous individual meetings with Members of the Tennessee Senate and House of Representatives, and the Comptroller of the Treasury.
- A briefing on the importance of college completion to members of the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Tennessee Business Roundtable, and business leaders from across the state.
- Participation in a meeting of the Governor's Higher Education Advisory Council.

In addition, Complete College America enlisted the guidance and expertise of several national experts on higher education policy and reform—including the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), the Community College Research Center (CCRC), and FutureWorks—and reviewed several recent comprehensive studies of Tennessee's higher education system.

**COMPLETE COLLEGE AMERICA'S RECOMMENDATIONS
TO IMPROVE COLLEGE COMPLETION IN TENNESSEE**

Based on these extensive observations and discussions with state and higher education leaders throughout the state, Complete College America recommends the following strategies for improving college completion in Tennessee:

Developing Campus Graduation Plans

As chair of the Tennessee Board of Regents and the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, the Governor should work with the boards and the General Assembly to challenge every college and university in Tennessee to develop within six months campus-level action plans to dramatically increase the number of graduates.

1. State and campus leaders should develop **specific degree targets** for each campus and plans for reaching those targets, including for closing the gap in completion for traditionally underrepresented students. Plans should:
 - a. Ensure all students are ready to start and succeed in freshman credit courses
 - b. Redesign remediation strategies to substantially improve student success
 - c. Reduce time-to-degree and increase the number of students completing on time
 - d. Develop new, shorter, and faster pathways to degrees and credentials of value
2. State and campus leaders should adopt and use **common progress and completion measures** to set targets, benchmark and report improvement. This information should be **publicly reported annually**.
3. The Tennessee Board of Regents and the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees should be responsible for **approving, monitoring and implementing plans** as well as producing campus and system annual reports. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) should have the responsibility for developing and reporting state baseline data, benchmarks, and annual progress.

Implementing Performance Funding

Tennessee should pay for results by retooling the funding formula for higher education to make it substantially based on performance and outcomes.

1. THEC should develop a **performance funding formula** to reward institutions for increasing the number of transfers and certificates/degrees awarded.

2. **Appropriations** for the community colleges, and separately for the tech centers, should be made to the Board of Regents to be **allocated on the basis of increasing the number of transfers, certificates and degrees** awarded.
3. Additionally, **courses completed, rather than courses attempted**, should be counted for all semesters as part of the funding formula.
4. Student Financial Aid should be revised to provide **incentives for students making progress** toward a degree once they enter college.

Establishing the 'Tennessee Community College System'

Tennessee's community colleges should be further developed into a more cohesive system to unlock their full, untapped potential as affordable and effective gateways to higher skills and further education.

1. The Board of Regents should develop the community colleges into a **comprehensive statewide system** of coordinated programs and services. The branding of the "Tennessee Community College System" is an important part of this strategy.
2. A **common course catalog** should be established. **Common course and program offerings and a common course numbering** system should be implemented for all Tennessee community colleges, building on the current 41-hour common general education distribution core.
3. Community college **opportunities should be expanded** to cities and regions that are currently underserved through the use of public buildings or leased space.
4. Through public/private partnerships, **limited residential opportunities** should be developed. Housing opportunities should be leveraged as a college completion strategy, offered only to students who are attending full-time. Student housing should not exceed 10% of the student population.
5. The **HOPE lottery scholarship** for two-year institutions should be adjusted to provide for a more equitable level of financial aid, relative to four-year institutions, by **increasing from \$2,000 to \$3,000** the amount granted to students attending community colleges.
6. All students applying for financial aid should receive a **Full-Time Award Letter** indicating how much aid they could receive if they attended full-time. Full-time students complete college at a significantly higher rate than part-time students.

7. The Community colleges should redesign degree program schedules to be **more intensive (i.e. 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday through Friday)**, encouraging higher completion rates and more timely completions.

Creating a Statewide Transfer Agreement

Students should be able to transfer college courses and programs between institutions without losing hard-earned credits.

1. Students should be able to **transfer their Associate of Arts (AA) and Associate of Science (AS) Degrees** earned at a Tennessee community college to any Tennessee four-year universities without loss of any credits.
2. Students transferring with associate degrees should have **junior level status** at four-year universities.
3. Students should be able to earn a 30-credit hour **General Education Transfer Certificate**, which should transfer to any four-year college. Any of the courses that are part of the general education distribution core should transfer to any four-year college. Students should be enrolled in a degree program but may choose to transfer to a four-year college after completing a set of courses or the certificate.
4. The **transferability** of all courses and programs **should be clearly designated and communicated**.
5. **Dual admission and dual enrollment** to community colleges and four-year universities should be widely available for students intending to transfer.

Leveraging the Tennessee Technology Centers

To expand access to workplace and career credentials, the tech centers should be expanded and aligned with the community colleges.

1. The Board Regents should develop agreements between the tech centers and the community colleges to provide **seamless transfer opportunities** for students and **reciprocal use of facilities**, equipment, staff, and other resources.
2. Many of the certificate programs currently provided by tech centers are highly successful (with 70% completion rates on average). The most effective of these programs should be offered at the community colleges by mutual agreement with the tech centers.

3. Students earning certificates at the tech centers should be able to **complete an associate degree** through courses offered at the tech centers by mutual agreement.
4. The tech centers should develop **intensive certificate programs for part-time students**.

Reducing Remedial and Developmental Instruction

Remedial and developmental instruction, which is expensive and ineffective, should be scaled back and success significantly increased.

1. Remedial and developmental instruction should be **eliminated at four-year universities** and only be provided at community colleges where it can be provided at a lower cost to students and the state and where new models for more effective developmental education are being required.
2. **“Passport programs”** should be put in place at each four-year university in partnership with one or more community colleges. These programs should formally refer students seeking admission to a four-year university, but in need of remedial or developmental help, to a local community college with a list of courses (no more than four) needed to successfully complete in order to be admitted into the four-year university in a subsequent semester.
3. Tennessee is an American Diploma Project state and has adopted a college prep curriculum for all students graduating in 2013 and after. Beginning in 2013, **no remediation should be provided to recent high school graduates**. Instead, colleges should provide support for students in need of assistance through summer programs, tutoring and intensive supports during the academic year.
4. Remediation and freshman math and English courses at all of Tennessee’s community colleges should be redesigned for greater student success using the **best practice Instructional Design model**. This model has been successfully piloted at three community college sites with impressive results.
5. **Remedial instruction** should be intensive and **completed in one semester or less** so a student does not waste time and money.

Setting Bold Degree Production Goals

Leaders should establish a “Tennessee 2025” goal of producing 20,000 more degrees each year.

1. Establish the goal of increasing educational attainment to the **national average of 38% by 2025**.

2. THEC should develop and recommend to the Governor and General Assembly a **statewide plan** for achieving the 2025 goal. The Governor and the legislature should consider adopting the plan as their own.
3. THEC should incorporate into the plan the **individual campus plans** developed by the Board of Regents and the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees.
4. Each governing board should increase degree production in line with the Tennessee 2025 goal, and **hold its system and institutions accountable** for performance related to the goal.
5. Require each governing board to develop **system-wide strategic plans linked to the Tennessee 2025 goal**. Each **institution should be reviewed annually** for its performance.
6. Each governing board should include an **evaluation of system and campus executives** based on performance expectations related to increased degree completion.

ABOUT COMPLETE COLLEGE AMERICA

Complete College America is a national nonprofit organization that aims to significantly increase the number of Americans with a college degree or credential of value and to close attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented populations. Unchanged for decades, the rate at which Americans complete postsecondary degrees falls woefully short of our country's needs and potential:

- ◇ Once first in the world, the U.S. now ranks 10th in the percentage of young adults with a college degree.
- ◇ Only about half of all Americans who begin college ever complete a degree.
- ◇ Completion rates for low-income, African American and Hispanic students – groups that are among the fastest growing segments of the college-going population – are below 40 percent.
- ◇ For the first time in the nation's history, the current generation of college-aged Americans will be less educated than their parents' generation.

Complete College America believes that for America to regain its status as first in the world in college attainment and opportunity, sustained action is needed at the state level – by governors, within legislatures, among higher education officials, and on college campuses – to measurably improve completion rates. Established in 2009, Complete College America was founded to focus solely on dramatically increasing the nation's college completion rate through state policy change and to build consensus for change among state leaders, higher education, and the national education policy community.

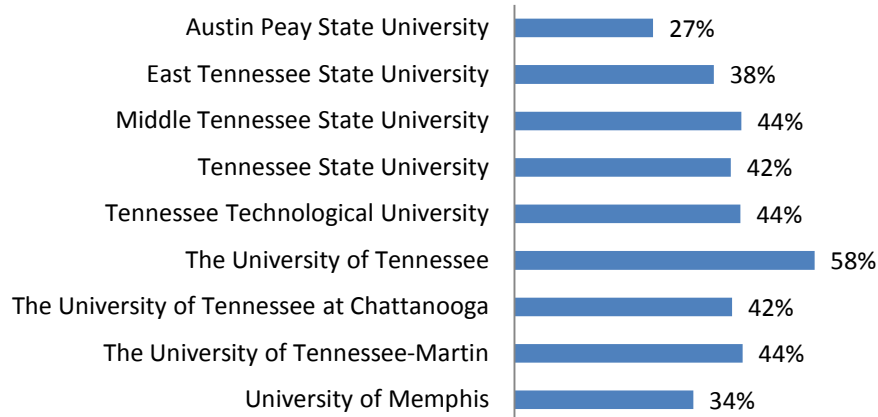
Complete College America is led by founding president Stan Jones, who has more than 30 years of experience and a successful track record of higher education reform in Indiana. He is supported by staff based in Indiana and Washington, DC, as well as other national experts on postsecondary completion issues. Five national foundations are providing multi-year support to Complete College America: the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and Lumina Foundation for Education

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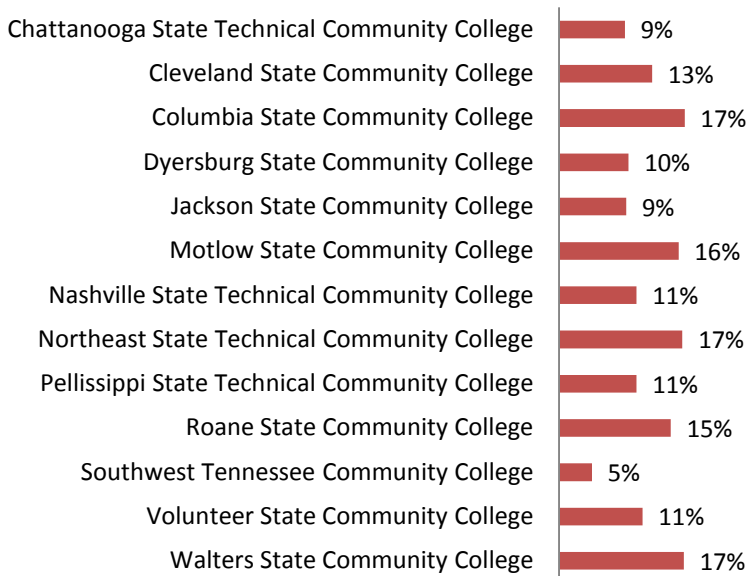
APPENDIX I – GRADUATION RATES BY CAMPUS

Tennessee Four-Year Colleges and Universities



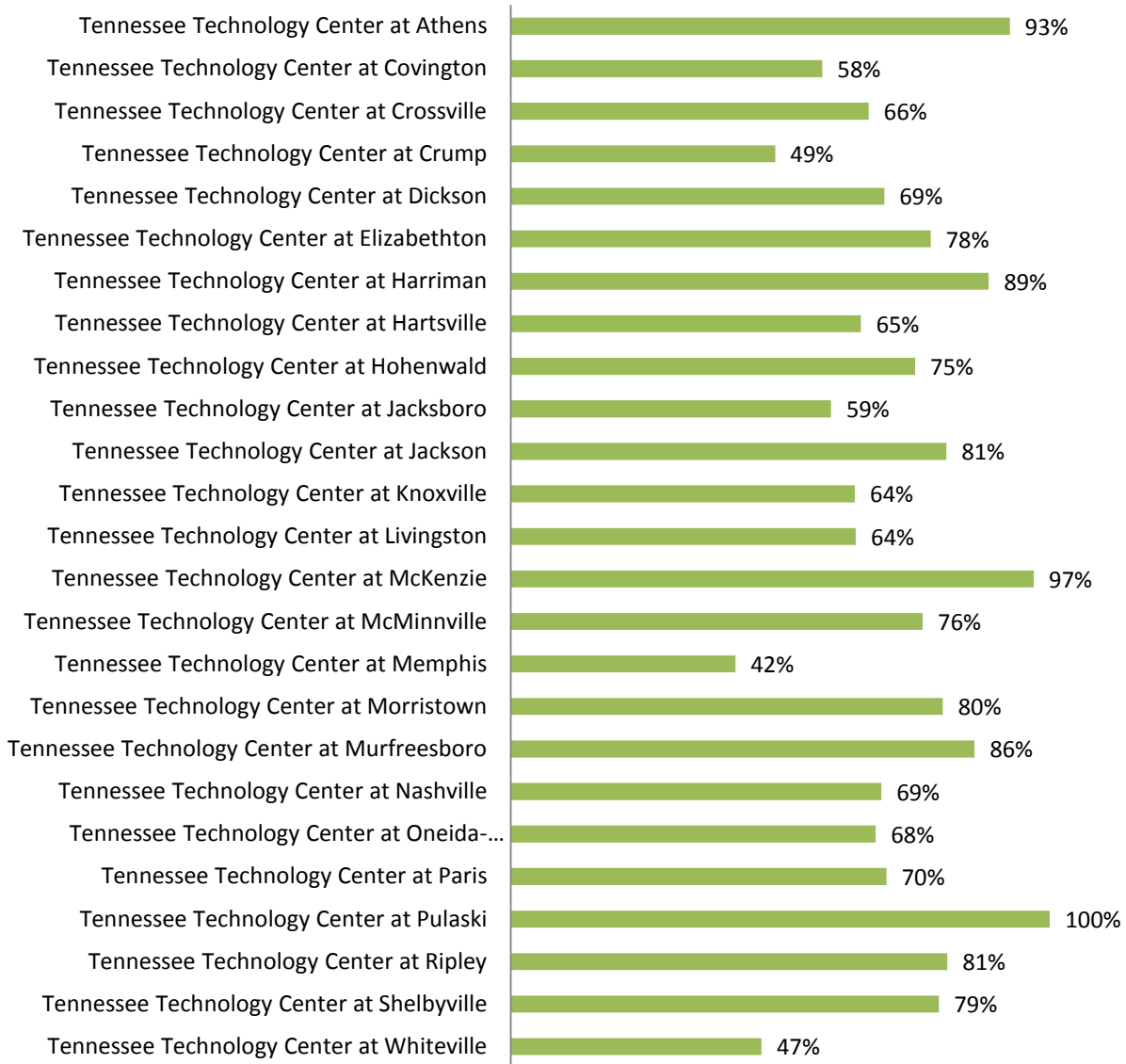
First-time full-time degree-seeking students graduating within six years. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2007

Tennessee Community Colleges



First-time full-time degree-seeking students graduating within three years. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2007

Tennessee Technology Centers



First-time full-time degree-seeking students graduating within three years. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2007