

COMPLETE TENNESSEE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Meeting Four | 2022 Issue Brief



TAKING ACTION TO SUPPORT STUDENTS

INTRODUCTION

The fourth gathering of the 2021-22 **Complete Tennessee Leadership Institute (CTLI)** program will focus on empowering policymakers to advance college completion policies, aligning regional and local efforts with statewide priorities, and creating action from lessons learned. This session will also give you an opportunity to reflect on your time in the program, finalize your action plan, and connect with other cohort members to identify opportunities for future collaboration. These topics build on the themes of the three previous **CTLI** meetings, which focused on access to higher education, supporting student success in persistence, and helping students complete postsecondary credentials.

THE IMPORTANCE OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Throughout the first three meetings, resource experts and practitioners have highlighted a number of policy solutions related to college access, persistence, and completion. During this meeting, you will receive guidance on how to translate some of these complex policy ideas into real, impactful action. This evolution happens through a policy implementation process.

Policy implementation is the process by which policies enacted by the government are put into effect by the relevant agencies, organizations, or other stakeholders. Policy design and policy implementation are closely related because choices made in the design of a policy will influence the way a policy is implemented, ultimately affecting the outcomes of that policy. To break these concepts down, one [popular framework](#) separates policy implementation activities into two main categories:

The Top-Down Approach: starts with the goals of high-level policymakers and traces the design and implementation of the policy down through the implementers on the ground.

The Bottom-Up Approach: starts with the abilities and motivations of the implementers on the ground and reverse engineers policy design up to the high-level policymakers.

It is important to note that these categories are not mutually exclusive – often, successful policy implementation strategies will combine aspects of both approaches to include a more collaborative approach between state leaders and practitioners.



These are the key differences between these two approaches to policy implementation:

	TOP-DOWN APPROACH	BOTTOM-UP APPROACH
Policy Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly defined at the start of the process. Used to measure progress and success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often developed to address needs within a specific context – may be less clearly defined, and may conflict with larger policy goals or the preferences of high-level policymakers.
Policy Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy is dictated by a single statute or other authoritative statement of policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy is dictated by a set of laws, rules, practices, and/or norms to address specific issues.
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarity at the beginning of the process can provide clear implementation tools and goals to measure progress against. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation becomes more of a collaborative process involving more stakeholders and a clearer sense of capacity. Encourages bargaining and compromise among stakeholders – not a focus on compliance.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-level policymakers may not have a complete understanding of the capacity of the implementers on the ground. It can be difficult to reach consensus around goals – and to predict the likely effects of a top-down policy. It can be difficult to isolate the causal effect of a particular policy within the larger context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different populations and groups have varying levels of familiarity with – and access to – the policy design and implementation process. Groups that are less engaged are often left out of the implementation conversations. Actors on the ground may misinterpret the intent of a policy when they are designing or implementing it.

Source:

COMMON IMPLEMENTATION THEMES OF TENNESSEE EDUCATION POLICY MILESTONES

Here are some common themes and strategies that were used by policymakers in Tennessee during the implementation processes of major higher education initiatives.

Strategy: Connecting a policy initiative to the state's postsecondary and workforce goals, with a focus on postsecondary attainment.

What does this strategy involve?

- Drawing connections between the goals or outcomes of a policy initiative and the state's focus on improving postsecondary affordability, completion, and alignment to the workforce goals.
- Focusing on connections between the policy initiative and the state's Drive to 55 attainment goal.
- Setting specific targets on how an initiative will raise attainment.

Why is this strategy beneficial?

- Tennessee's changing workforce needs, completion challenges, and Drive to 55 goal have broad buy-in from policymakers and stakeholders across the state who care about education policy, so drawing these connections can help grow the support for an initiative.
- Tying efforts to a state focus can build support for expanding an initiative, gaining additional funding, and ensuring the initiative has a long-lasting impact on student success.



When has this happened in Tennessee?

The **Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support (SAILS) program** initially began at one community college. After demonstrating impactful student success rates, SAILS was able to expand across Tennessee and gain funding because it had the potential to increase student attainment and act as an additional contributor to the Drive to 55 initiative.

In 2012, Governor Haslam announced a statewide attainment goal of 55%, commonly known as the **Drive to 55**. Under that banner, policymakers and advocates worked together to establish the Tennessee Promise Scholarship in 2014. TN Promise uses the HOPE lottery endowment in a new way while providing support services to students enrolling in postsecondary education.

Advise TN was established in 2016 to support the Drive to 55 attainment goal. The initiative aims to create a college-going culture in the state of Tennessee and works to provide high school juniors and seniors with one-on-one counseling sessions to map out postsecondary goals, participate in college preparation events, and complete college and financial aid applications.

Strategy: Connecting a policy initiative to the TN Promise.

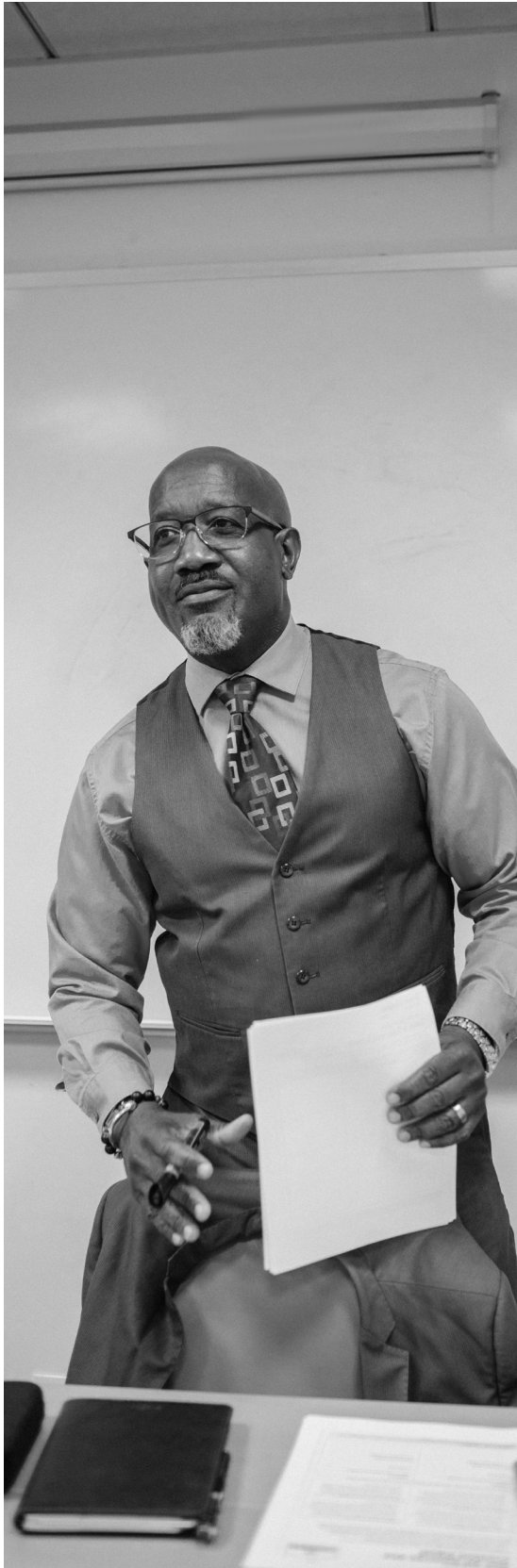
What does this strategy involve?

- Drawing connections between the goals or outcomes of a policy initiative and the statewide last dollar scholarship program, TN Promise.
- Demonstrating that the strategy will positively impact the success of the TN Promise and student success.

Why is this strategy beneficial?

- The TN Promise program has broad buy-in from policymakers and stakeholders across the state who care about education policy, so drawing these connections can help grow the support for an initiative.
- Since TN Promise is a need-based scholarship, this policy provides opportunity for advocates and stakeholders to draw connections with other policies, such as transfer pathways or completion coaching, that work to promote student success as well.





When has this happened in Tennessee?

- To ensure that students are prepared to take full advantage of TN Promise, high school students are encouraged to obtain postsecondary credit and pursue other early postsecondary opportunities. All Tennessee school districts are required to provide at least 4 early postsecondary opportunities, which could include local dual credit, dual enrollment, industry certification, advanced placement, college level examination program, international baccalaureate, Cambridge International examinations, and statewide dual credit.
- Early access to postsecondary coursework opportunities not only give students credit, but they also help students become familiar with the rigor and expectations of college, develop confidence and skills for success, make informed postsecondary and career decisions, and decrease their time and cost of completion.

Starting in 2015, the TN Promise model added a **Mentorship Program** to provide high school seniors access to a mentor as they transition to college. These mentors are community volunteers who dedicate 10-15 hours a year to assist 5-10 students. Mentors are asked to serve three roles: taskmaster to ensure students are aware of meetings and deadlines; resource to answer questions and connect students to resources; and encourage students to reach their full potential.

In 2018, **Tennessee Reconnect** was created as an extension of the TN Promise program, specifically targeting students 25 years and older seeking to earn an associate degree or technical certificate. In 2018, TN Reconnect's first year, 31,000 adults expressed interest in participating and 18,217 enrolled in an eligible institution and received Tennessee Reconnect funding. In the first year of the program, over 2,000 students completed a certificate or degree and 248 of them maintained enrollment in pursuit of another credential.

Strategy: Coalition Building

What does this strategy involve?

- Networking with policymakers and stakeholders across the state to build relationships across sectors.

Why is this strategy beneficial?

- Coalition building can garner support from the community to gain additional resources for implementation.
- When expanding efforts statewide, coalition building can create buy-in from policymakers and stakeholders across the state to make expansion efforts feasible.



When has this happened in Tennessee?

One example of this strategy in action is the **Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support (SAILS) program**, which utilized software from Pearson, partnership with local high schools, Tennessee Higher Education Commission, and strong relationships with piloting community colleges. The program created at Chattanooga State Community College was strong but through coalition building the program was able to expand to a statewide effort and make a larger impact on student success.

The **TN Promise program** began as a small, community led program and transformed into a statewide effort as coalitions and partnerships were built. In 2008, about one in four high school students did not continue to postsecondary education due to a lack of funding and structural support. A group of local government, business, and philanthropic leaders in Knoxville began working together to increase affordability and access to postsecondary education. Within 60 days, they had raised **\$2.3 million** and formed the KnoxAchieves Board, which later became a key partner organization and blueprint for the statewide TN Promise program.

Strategy: State Led Initiatives

What does this strategy involve?

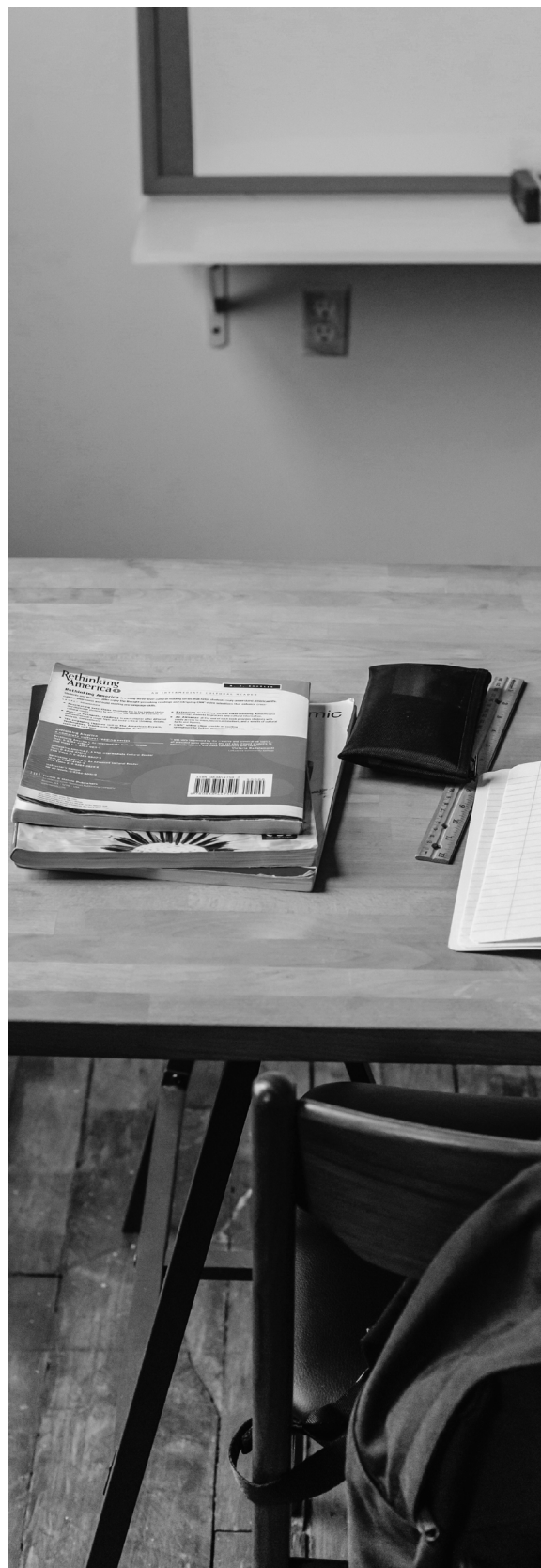
- Partnering with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission or the General Assembly to implement strategies to support postsecondary students.
- In some cases, it may be necessary to compete for a federal or nonprofit grant to secure funding for the initiative.

Why is this strategy beneficial?

- Garnering support for the initiative before implementation can ensure that there is commitment to the program and adequate funding to deliver substantial improvements to student outcomes.

When has this happened in Tennessee?

In 2018, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission secured a federal grant of **\$11.68 million** from the U.S. Department of Education's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) which created the **GEAR UP TN program**. This was Tennessee's third GEAR UP grant, with their work first starting in 2005. GEAR UP TN provides academic readiness and college access services to students in **32 middle schools and 18 high schools across Tennessee**.



In Tennessee, the **Education Lottery Scholarship system** began in 2004 and operates with funding from the net proceeds of the state lottery system. Over time, additional scholarships were added to support specific student demographics and student needs. Today, there are a total of 10 different scholarships and grants that support students with different identities and needs.

- The Tennessee Higher Education Commission and Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation recently revamped the CollegeforTN.org website, a free online resource for schools and districts to expand college and career advising.

Strategy: Pilot Programs

What does this strategy involve?

- Implementing the initiative on a smaller scale to demonstrate student outcomes. Once the success of the initiative is evident, it can then be scaled to more locations and even become a statewide effort.

Why is this strategy beneficial?

- This strategy gives policymakers and higher education leaders the ability to test out the initiative and ensure an increase in student outcomes before a sizable investment is made in the program.
- Starting an initiative small allows the opportunity to gain feedback and ensure that the model can be scaled and implemented in a seamless fashion.
- Testing the initiative across different geographic locations, student populations, and institutional characteristics to help understand the nuances of implementation as a statewide effort.

When has this happened in Tennessee?

One example is the Governor's Investment in Vocational Education (GIVE) program, which piloted in five school systems before becoming publicly available through a proposal process. GIVE prepares students for the high-demand, high-skill careers in Tennessee. Juniors and seniors in high school are able to obtain high school credit for experiences such as internships, apprenticeships, and paid work experiences. This program began in 2013 with a statewide assessment to engage stakeholders at the school, district, and industry levels. Then in 2015, five school systems piloted the statewide Work-Based Learning program in geographically diverse areas of Tennessee.

- In 2021, the Tennessee General Assembly created a pilot program with tnAchieves to award eligible Tennessee Promise students with completion grants. The goal of this grant is to support more TN Promise students to persist to completion. Completion grants were used by students from 85 counties to assist with computer/technology, gas/transportation, groceries, housing, supplies or class fees. In only two months, tnAchieves exceeded the budget for the pilot grant.

Strategy: Governor-Led Initiatives

What does this strategy involve?

- Collaboration with the Governor's Office to create initiatives in partnership.

Why is this strategy beneficial?

- The Governor's Office is responsible for working with educational advocates across sectors, which can create coalitions that garner support for initiatives early on.
- Initiatives with the Governor's Office are more likely to gain resources and support, especially if there is broad buy-in from policymakers and stakeholders across the state who care about education policy.

When has this happened in Tennessee?

In 2010, under Governor Phil Bredesen, the **Complete College Tennessee** Act was passed, which included two large initiatives. The first was an increase in **performance-based state allocations** from 5.5 percent of total higher education operating allocations to 100 percent. This also included premiums applied to performance of adult and low-income students. The second was **Tennessee Transfer Pathways**, which included a requirement for public two- and four-year institutions to improve transfer policies by creating articulation agreements across many academic



disciplines for a shared, 60-hour block of courses. This law also required partnership agreements for all community colleges and universities to allow dual admissions of students.

In 2016, Governor Haslam introduced the Tennessee **Focus on College and University Success (FOCUS) Act**, which changed the governance structure of higher education in Tennessee and the relationships between the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR), the six TBR universities, and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC). This Act was designed to provide more support to community and technical colleges, increase the autonomy and local control of the TBR universities, and to strengthen THEC.

■ In 2019, Governor Bill Lee introduced the GIVE Act, a legislative initiative to expand access to vocational and technical training statewide. The General Assembly approved \$25 million to foster partnerships between Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs), community colleges, industry, economic development/workforce agencies, and K-12 to identify and address skills gaps. This initiative is grant-based and proposals were required to show data to identify workforce needs and specific outcomes related to postsecondary attainment. The program was piloted in five school systems across the state.

In closing, as programs are implemented, it is important to continuously assess the program's goals and intended outcomes to measure success and impact. In order to expand the program from a small pilot program, to a larger statewide initiative, it will be necessary to demonstrate positive student success rates and ties to state-led initiatives and policy.



APPENDIX: RESOURCE EXPERT ROLODEX

National and State Resource Experts

NAME	ORGANIZATION	CONTACT	STRATEGIES TO CONNECT
Raumesh Akbari	Senator, District 29, 2nd Vice Chair, Education Committee	sen.raumesh.akbari@capitol.tn.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiatives pertaining to Shelby County
Kari Alldredge	Vice Provost for Enrollment Management at University of Tennessee	kari@utk.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing enrollment Holistic admissions programs Transfer pathways
Dr. Marshall Anthony Jr.	Research Director, The Institute for College Access & Success	marshall.anthonijr@gmail.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equity Accountability Affordability
Janet Ayers	President, Ayers Foundation	suzanne@ayersmgmt.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programs and related projects for educational enhancement, innovative health care and by supporting organizations dedicated to the preservation of our natural resources and wildlife habitats for hunting and fishing Grants for Scholarships
Charlie Baum	Representative, District 37, Member, Education Committee	rep.charlie.baum@capitol.tn.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiatives pertaining to Rutherford County
Dr. Jennifer Bell-Ellwanger	President and CEO of the Data Quality Campaign	jennbellell@dataqualitycampaign.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to information about education Student Decision-making and achievement
Jared Bigham	Senior Advisor on Workforce & Rural Initiatives, Tennessee Chamber of Commerce & Industry	jared.bigham@tnchamber.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce development Rural communities Business partnerships
Richard Briggs	Senator, District 7, Knox County, General Assembly	sen.richard.briggs@capitol.tn.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiatives pertaining to Knox County
Ronni Chandler	Executive Director, Project GRAD Knoxville	vchandler@knoxed.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access and success for students College/career prep
Krissy DeAlejandro	Executive Director, Tennessee Achieves	krissy@tnachieves.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TN Promise TN Promise Mentorship
Dr. Nancy Dishner	President and CEO of the Niswonger Foundation	nancy.dishner@niswongerfoundation.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic preparedness Supporting rural and underserved students
Dr. Steven Gentile	Chief Policy Officer at the Tennessee Higher Education Commission	steven.gentile@tn.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> making institutions more accessible, affordable, and effective



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Troy Grant	Senior Director of College Access at Tennessee Higher Education Commission	troy.grant@tn.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none">empower communities, local education agencies, and other partner organizationsCollege attainmentStudent focused approaches
Dr. Tracy D. Hall	President, Southwest Tennessee Community College	president@southwest.tn.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Postsecondary TransferAffordable EducationAccessCommunity Building and Economic Development
Brandon Hudson	Senior Director of Workforce and Economic Development with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission	brandon.hudson@tn.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Supporting Postsecondary Access in Rural CommunitiesInvestment in Vocational Education
Dr. Scott Hummel	President of Tusculum University.	president@tusculum.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none">fundraising success and enrollment growth
Dr. Adam Hutchison	President of Virginia Highlands Community College	ahutchison@vhcc.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Workforce developmentregional accreditation and quality enhancement planningtechnical education pathways, competency-based learning, and project management in higher education
Dr. Rushton Johnson	Vice President, Student Affairs, Pellissippi State Community College	rwjohnson2@pstcc.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Crafting a holistic, culturally responsive, student centered experience
Mary Laphen	Strategy Officer for Participation at Community Colleges for Lumina Foundation	mlaphen@luminafoundation.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none">completion for traditional age students and adult learnersWraparound Services
Dr. Justin Lawhead	Dean of Students and Chief Health and Safety Officer, University of Memphis	rwjohnson2@pstcc.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Safety protocols for studentsBasic Need SupportsCareer DevelopmentStreamlining hiring and recruitment on campus
Dr. Chuck Lopez	Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Distributed Education, Tennessee Board of Regents	chuck.lopez@tbr.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none">College ReadinessCurriculum development and assessmentAcademic Advising
Harold Love	Representative, District 58, Member, Education Committee	rep.harold.love@capitol.tn.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Initiatives pertaining to Davidson County
Dr. Jean Luna	Chief of Programs, Tennessee Department of Education	jean.luna@tn.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Whole Child Initiative

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Katrina Miller	Education Industry Consultant, SAS State & Local Government Practice	katrina.miller@sas.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher and leader preparation for all students K-12 & Higher Education Policy
Dr. Brittany Motley	Principal Consultant, EAB	bmotley@eab.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Partnership between higher education institutions Student Success Closing Equity Gaps
Brian Noland	President, East Tennessee State University	president@etsu.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Planning Student Success Budgeting
Carol Puryear	President, Tennessee College of Applied Technology- Murfreesboro	cpuryear@tcatmurfreesboro.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic and Community Development TCAT
Tim Renick	Executive Director, National Institute for Student Success- Georgia State University	trenick@gsu.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of data, analytics and emerging technologies to identify barriers to student success Development of equitable programs Student Success
Susan Rhodes	Director, Ayers Foundation	susan.rhodes@theayersfoundation.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> K-12 and Postsecondary Alignment Career and College Readiness Mentorship Access for rural, low-income, first-gen students
Dr. Julie Roberts	Associate Chief Academic Officer, Tennessee Higher Education Commission	julie.a.roberts@tn.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Success Learning Support Driving Policy and Research
Donna Seagle	Vice-President for Academic Affairs at Walters State Community College	donna.seagle@ws.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active learning Modeling the ability to reflectively and critically consider new perspectives
Dr. Jeff Sisk	President of Tennessee College of Applied Technology Jackson	jeff.sisk@tcatjackson.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student success Experiential Learning Theory applied to technical education settings
Tyvi Small	Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Engagement at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville	vcde@utk.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity and Inclusion Student Engagement Student Admissions
Dr. Yolanda Watson Spiva	President of Complete College America (CCA)	ywspiva@completecollege.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closing equity gaps Increasing college completion rates
Frank Stevenson	Associate Vice President and Dean of Students at Tennessee State University	fsteven1@tnstate.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student services and life Student engagement and leadership opportunities



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Tiffany Bellafant Steward	Director of Advising & First Year Initiatives at Tennessee Board of Regents	tiffany.steward@tbr.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> programs and activities related to advising first year student initiatives
Dr. Michael Torrence	President of Motlow State Community College	officeofthepresident@mscc.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing institution facilities Distance learning Diversity, Equity, Belonging
Bo Watson	District 11 in the Tennessee State Senate	sen.bo.watson@capitol.tn.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving labor market Financing higher education
Mark White	Representative, District 83, Member, Chair, Education Administration Committee	rep.mark.white@capitol.tn.gov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiatives pertaining to Shelby County
Dr. Keith Wilson	Director of Career and Technical Education, Knox County Schools	keith.wilson@knoxschools.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College & career prep Hands on learning
Dr. Rachel Worsham	Postdoctoral Research Associate, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	rachel.worsham@unc.edu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College Access Living-Learning Initiatives Transfer Policy in North Carolina Higher Education Policy

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