



# College Signing Day

## Site Coordinator Handbook

Sponsored by:





Dear College Signing Day Site Coordinators:

On behalf of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), thank you for hosting a Tennessee College Signing Day event during the month of May at your school or organization. We hope the event will help bolster your efforts to expand the college-going culture of your school.

The purpose of College Signing Day is to build statewide excitement around going to college. For many years, College Signing Day was often associated with students signing athletic scholarships, but every student should have the opportunity to publicly celebrate their postsecondary plans. The event can also be an inspiring opportunity for younger students. By applauding seniors who are transitioning to higher education, younger students begin to form their own educational aspirations and plans. Additionally, schools that partner with local higher education institutions to implement College Signing Day have the opportunity to grow the relationship between local colleges, their school, and their students.

Please contact Mary Laphen, Statewide Services Coordinator for THEC's Office of P-16 Initiatives, at (615) 253-1155 or [mary.laphen@tn.gov](mailto:mary.laphen@tn.gov) if you have any questions or concerns about planning and implementing a College Signing Day at your school. We will keep you updated regarding any changes or additional information you may find useful.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this important college access event. Your participation will encourage Tennessee students and their families to make college a part of their future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Troy Grant".

Troy Grant  
Director, College Access Initiatives  
Tennessee Higher Education Commission  
(615) 532-0423  
[Troy.Grant@TN.gov](mailto:Troy.Grant@TN.gov)



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# Section 1:

## Introduction to College Signing Day

With enthusiasm and dedication, Tennessee’s statewide College Signing Day is an event that can help to promote your school’s college-going culture. The event is a time for the entire school community to celebrate the achievements of your seniors. As you begin to plan College Signing Day at your school, tailor the event to the needs of your school community.

In this section, you will find more information on College Signing Day and research supporting the importance of the event. In the following pages, you’ll find information to help you grow your event and recruit support for the event within your school and community.

### IN THIS SECTION

- [About College Signing Day](#)
- [Overview: College-Going Culture](#)
- [Research: College-Going Culture](#)

# About College Signing Day

## What is Tennessee's College Signing Day?

College Signing Day is an event to celebrate seniors going to college and to encourage a college-going culture among all students, with college meaning any formal education that is continued after graduating from high school.

Focused on celebrating ALL students who are continuing their education after high school, Tennessee's statewide College Signing Day event takes its cue from the tradition of NCAA college athletics, where high school athletes get national attention as they sign letters of intent to attend a particular institution. In a similar way, College Signing Day is intended to publicly commend seniors who commit to attend college. Seniors will have the chance to publicly proclaim their plans which will promote a college-going culture in your school community.

College Signing Day is a new statewide initiative in Tennessee. Through Governor Bill Haslam's Drive to 55 initiative, Tennessee is focused on increasing college degree attainment across the state so that by 2025, 55% of adults will have a college degree or credential. The Path to College events, including College Signing Day, play an important role in reaching the Drive to 55's goals. By implementing the event statewide, College Signing Day will bring attention to college for many students and community members.

## What Does College Signing Day Look Like at a High School?

The event should be what works best for each individual school. For some schools, that might mean a pep rally or assembly, while for others it might mean a smaller event, such as an ice cream social or a pizza party. If it works best for a particular school, they can start smaller the first year and grow the event year after year. As long as the event is gathering a community's high school seniors to celebrate their path toward any type of formal postsecondary training, then the day will be a success.

## When is College Signing Day?

Across the country, many schools are planning events on or around May 1 to celebrate college decisions. We encourage schools in Tennessee to plan your College Signing Day for one day during the month of May. The exact date will depend on your particular school schedule.

## What is the Purpose of College Signing Day?

The purpose of College Signing Day is to grow excitement around going to college and model the college-going culture for younger students. Every student should have the opportunity to be publicly celebrated for going to college. The event can also be an inspiring opportunity for younger students. By applauding students who are going to college and gaining knowledge of where students are attending college, younger students will increase their own educational aspirations. Through adding participation of and partnership with higher education institutions, the event can also be a way to grow the relationship between the local colleges, your school, and your students who will be attending those institutions.

# Overview: College-Going Culture

## Why is Having a College-Going Culture Important?

Many of our students in Tennessee understand that college is important, but there is a gap between those who indicate a desire to seek postsecondary education and those who actually enroll. According to research from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, at least 54% of all new jobs in Tennessee will require a postsecondary credential by 2018, and Tennessee will need tens of thousands more college graduates to meet the workforce demands of our economy.

Students who have expectations from their parents, school, and community that college is the next step after high school see college as the norm. However, the idea that college is the next step after high school may not feel as automatic or realistic for all students, particularly for students who have been historically underrepresented in higher education. For these students especially, engaging in a school environment where college is made a priority is important. College Signing Day is a great time to focus on building and enhancing a college-going culture within your school.

## College-Going Culture Terms to Know

- **Articulation:** incorporating college access throughout a student's life, starting at the earliest possible point and supporting the student all the way through high school graduation, and beyond!
- **Clear Expectations:** communicating and reinforcing the foundation that all students can go to college and can take the steps to officially enroll in college.
- **College:** any formal education beyond high school. College is an inclusive term, which can mean students planning to get a technical certificate or diploma, students going to community college, students going to four-year institutions, or any other formal postsecondary education.
- **College Partnerships:** developing relationships between schools and postsecondary institutions to support the official enrollment process and transition to college.
- **College Talk:** engaging others in talk about college ensures that no matter where the students go or to whom they speak, college is discussed and the question of "where are you going to college?" is a norm.
- **Comprehensive Support:** helping students and families in preparing for and enrolling in college while also assisting with the related stress of the college preparation, application, and enrollment process.
- **Faculty Involvement:** engaging educators both within and outside of the classroom to create a college-going culture. Ask teachers to be part of the College Signing Day celebration both inside and outside the classroom.
- **Family Involvement:** engaging family members to increase the chances of student success in the college preparation, application, and enrollment process.
- **Information and Resources:** connecting students and families to relevant and necessary information about how to officially enroll in college and apply for financial aid, and what to do if the student has not applied or been admitted to college.

# Research: College-Going Culture

## Hossler and Gallagher's College Choice Model

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) break down college choice into three phases:

- 1.) **Predisposition**, in which students develop attitudes toward attending college,
- 2.) **Search**, in which students explore college options, and
- 3.) **Choice**, in which students select the college to which they will apply and the college in which they will enroll.

Different factors can influence a student's college **predisposition**, such as family socioeconomic status, parental involvement, peers, high school teachers and counselors, interactions with higher education institutions, high school involvement, and the relative value placed on attending college (Perna and Titus, 2004).

In the **search** phase, students form choice sets and determine which institutional characteristics are most important (Bergerson, 2009). Learning more about themselves, gaining information about institutions in which they are interested, and taking college entrance exams and obtaining results are important parts of the search phase.

The **choice** phase is when students use information to select an institution and complete the enrollment process (Bergerson, 2009). College cost and financial aid, information about institutional characteristics, parental encouragement, student aspirations, and student academic achievement are all factors in the college choice phase. Choice is the phase that will be celebrated through College Signing Day.

## High School Context

Relationships between high school and higher education institutions are important to build a college-going culture (Mullen, 2009; Wolniak and Engberg, 2007). Despite a considerable amount of research examining college enrollment and attainment, most studies are based on status attainment models that focus primarily on individual characteristics of students and their families (Engberg & Wolniak, 2010; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999).

However, an emerging body of research suggests that the social, informational, educational, and network resources available at a particular high school may structurally determine students' range of college choices and provide opportunities to compensate for deficiencies in family resources (Hill, 2008; Perna & Titus, 2005).

Planning and implementing College Signing Day is a great opportunity to develop or further cultivate a strong relationship with higher education institutions and, thus, further boost student interest and engagement in the higher education process.



# Section 2:

## Planning Your College Signing Day

With proper planning, event promotion, and creative thinking, your College Signing Day will inspire all students to feel proud of their choice for education after high school. To reach as many students as possible, get the whole school involved and pull out all the stops.

As you begin to plan College Signing Day at your school, tailor the event to the needs of your school. From the timing of event to the location, work with your school's administrators and teachers to plan an event that works best for your school and students.

In the following pages, you will find a checklist that can be tailored to your specific event, a page of helpful reminders for the day of your event, and tools to use throughout College Signing Day.

### IN THIS SECTION

- Event Ideas
- Possible Event Needs
- Site Coordinator Checklist
- Reminders for During Your Event(s)
- Who to Involve
- Budget Template
- Student Sign-In Sheet
- Reporting Procedure
- Reporting Form

# Event Ideas for College Signing Day

## Host a Celebratory Assembly

Talk with your school administrators about holding a school-wide assembly or pep rally, similar to an event you might hold before a big school sporting event. Your school could host a school-wide assembly where all seniors commit and sign a statement of intent to enroll while underclassmen cheer them on.

## Location for the Assembly

The event can be held in a space that works best for your school, such as a gymnasium, auditorium, cafeteria, or outdoor space. Mimic the NCAA model of a College Signing Day with pomp and circumstance at a location that will fit all seniors and other grade levels, guests and representatives, and volunteers.

## Date and Time

We recommend holding the event in early May and, if possible, coinciding with National Decision Day on May 1st. Additionally, we recommend holding the event during the school day, if possible. Students will have fewer conflicts and be more likely to attend if the event is held during the school day.

## Other Event Ideas

If a school-wide assembly is not an option for you, not to worry! There are many different ways to publicly celebrate seniors who have decided to enroll in college. We encourage you to think outside of the box and decide what will work best for your school. The sky is the limit! A few ideas that might work well in a smaller, more intimate setting include the following:

- Speaker(s) from outside organizations
- Community picnic
- Carnival
- Party during a lunch or study hall period
- Breakfast ceremony
- Lunchtime ceremony
- Part of an existing school event

## Who to Involve

Potential partners could include Tennessee Promise partner organizations (tnAchieves, REDI, and the Ayers Foundation). It is important to give them a specific role in the event, if invited.

Consider inviting elementary or middle school students to watch the event so that they will aspire to enroll and attend college one day.

Reach out to local higher education institutions with the list of students planning to attend their institution and ask for items such as t-shirts, pennants, tote bags, or any other item to give to students attending that institution. Invite representatives from higher education institutions where students plan to enroll to the event.

# Possible Event Needs

## Prizes

- Big Prizes: Tablets, laptops, mini fridge, microwave, other items students might want/need for college
- Little Prizes: College survival kit, pencils, flags, back pack, gift cards, t-shirts

*Note: Don't forget to ask partners or community organizations to help with donating prizes.*

## Food

- Ask a local restaurant or catering company to donate food or eating utensils/napkins
- Time of day (breakfast event, lunch event, snacks, or dessert event)
- Determine the number of people for whom to provide food

## Atmosphere

- Music (DJ or audio player)
- Balloons, streamers
- Games
- Performances or entertainment, such as a dance routine or band performance
- Guest speaker(s)

## Volunteers

- Counselors
- Teachers
- Tennessee Promise Partners
- College Admission Representatives
- Parents
- Business Leaders
- Alumni

# Site Coordinator Checklist

**This is a recommended planning process and timeline for College Signing Day.**

- **Feb. 9** Review Site Coordinator Implementation Guide.
- **Feb. 16** Set up a College Signing Day committee or team at your school to discuss the timeline and event. Your team might include school counselors, teachers, administrators, students, parents/guardians, college admissions/financial aid/outreach staff, and other community members or organizations.
- **Feb. 23** Evaluate current resources and budget. Once your budget is set, you will be able to better determine the type of event and what organizations and volunteers could provide or donate.
- **Mar. 2** Determine the type of event(s) and schedule for your College Signing Day based on resources and budget.
- **Mar. 9** Discuss with teachers possible assignments or activities for College Signing Day.
- **Mar. 16** Confirm College Signing Day location and time.
- **Mar. 23** Meet with seniors to support them through the college choice process and inform them of expectations for College Signing Day.
- **Mar. 23** Contact colleges, local businesses, and local non-profits or community organizations for donations and sponsorships:
  - Higher education institutions may be able to provide t-shirts or other materials.
  - Local businesses may sponsor the purchase of College Signing Day t-shirts or other swag.
  - Ask groups to help with promotion and day-of event logistics.
  - How will groups be recognized as a sponsor?
- **Mar. 23** If you are providing food, contact a local restaurant or catering service. Consider asking for the food to be donated. Provide an estimate of the number of people invited to the event. Schedule if the food will be delivered or picked up.
- **Mar. 30** Plan and prepare outreach and publicity efforts to get the word out about the event in the community. Discuss with your team possible volunteers and/or speakers to recruit.
- **Apr. 6** Distribute resources to faculty and staff at your school and request that they promote the event by decorating their classroom and/or door with related information.
- **Apr. 6** Begin volunteer outreach and reach out to your Tennessee Promise partner organization.
- **Apr. 13** Finalize arrangements for a pep rally and/or assembly, if applicable. Remind teachers, counselors, and administrators of the day's schedule and planned activities.
- **Apr. 13** Send student and parent letter home. Notify both students and parents of the planned event(s).
- **Apr. 20** Confirm any additional personnel needed. Inform custodial staff of set up and clean up needs.
- **Apr. 20** Distribute media advisory to media. Recommended approximately 2 weeks prior to your event(s).
- **Apr. 27** Confirm all seniors have informed you of their college choice.
- Ensure your event supplies are ready the day before College Signing Day.

# Reminders for During Your Event(s)

**The day before and the day of your College Signing Day event, please keep the following things in mind:**

- Follow up the day before the event with any media you invited.
- Set up any decorations and music the night before or day of the event(s), if applicable.
- Check in with volunteers to make sure they know where to go and what to do.
- Remember to take pictures during College Signing Day events and upload them to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. using the hashtag #TNCollegeSigningDay.
- Congratulate students and families on being one step closer to college. Remind them of steps to take over the summer.
- Remind seniors to update their CollegeforTN.org account after College Signing Day to indicate where they were accepted. Remind them to transition their account from High School to College.
- Submit summary of activities to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission survey.
- Send thank you letters to individuals involved, such as volunteers, school administration, catering, businesses, higher education institutions, and guest speaker(s).

**Additional to-do list items:**


# Who to Involve

## Students

- Recruit students to help in the planning of College Signing Day. Identify student leaders who would love to bring their own ideas to the table.
- Select “student ambassadors” and educate them on the purpose of College Signing Day. Ask them to share implementation ideas and distribute materials.
- Allow student ambassadors to count their College Signing Day event experience as community service hours.
- Ask students to promote College Signing Day through their social media accounts using the hashtag #TnCollegeSigningDay. Suggest creating an “Event” and inviting their peers to attend.

## Teachers

- Teachers are your greatest allies in building a college-going culture in your building. We recommend enlisting their help to make your school’s College Signing Day a huge success. Share your planning with them and ask for their help in brainstorming ways to make this event something the whole school embraces.
- Suggest that teachers use College Signing Day to encourage their students to come up with ideas on how to market an event to their peers.
- Have teachers recruit “student ambassadors” to help decorate the school, distribute materials, and encourage their friends to participate in College Signing Day.
- Ask teachers to have classroom challenges for College Signing Day poster designs.
- Ask them to dedicate at least one class during College Signing Day to plan for college-related activities such as essay writing or lessons on paying for college and financial aid.
- Encourage them to come up with their own ideas.

## Higher Education Institutions

- Partnerships with higher education institutions will be a factor that can play into the long-term success of your event.
- Reach out to higher education institutions where your students will commit to attend.
- Ask if they can attend the event and/or provide any college gear for the students.

## Tennessee Promise

- We encourage you to include your partner organization in College Signing Day. This is a great opportunity to invite local mentors to attend the event and support their students.
- Your partner organization may also want to recognize their Tennessee Promise Students with a certificate at College Signing Day.

# Who to Involve

## Volunteers/Community Representatives

- Volunteer and community involvement is crucial to the success of your event. Identify contacts in your community that may be interested in helping make your College Signing Day a success by either donating time and/or resources. Some examples may include:
  - School alumni
  - Students' families, PTA, School Improvement Council
  - Your school's athletic department and coaches
  - Retired educators
  - Volunteer, senior, or church groups
  - Community college and university representatives and faculty
  - Business, community, and political leaders
  - Tennessee Promise partnership organization
  - Youth programs (e.g., YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, Girl and Boy Scouts of America)
- Check with your school's leaders about policies for visitors on your campus.
- Send all potential volunteers and/or groups a College Signing Day recruitment email/letter with an event explanation and details.
- When promoting College Signing Day, always mention the need for volunteers in your communication.
- Create a system for collecting volunteer information.

## Contact Information for Tennessee's Public Four-Year Universities

Austin Peay State University  
Clarksville, TN  
www.apsu.edu  
Admissions Office:  
admissions@apsu.edu  
(931) 221-7661

Tennessee State University  
Nashville, TN  
www.tnstate.edu  
Admissions Office:  
admissions@tnstate.edu  
(615) 963-5101

University of Tennessee - Knoxville  
Knoxville, TN  
www.utk.edu  
Admissions Office:  
admissions@utk.edu  
(865) 974-2184

East Tennessee State University  
Johnson City, TN  
www.etsu.edu  
Admissions Office:  
go2etsu@etsu.edu.  
(423) 439-4213

Tennessee Tech University  
Cookeville, TN  
www.tntech.edu  
Admissions Office:  
admissions@tntech.edu  
(931) 372.3888

University of Tennessee - Chattanooga  
Chattanooga, TN  
www.utc.edu  
Admissions Office:  
utcmocs@utc.edu  
(423)425-4662

Middle Tennessee State University  
Murfreesboro, TN  
www.mtsu.edu  
Admissions Office:  
admissions@mtsu.edu  
(615) 898-2111

University of Memphis  
Memphis, TN  
www.memphis.edu  
Admissions Office:  
admissions@memphis.edu  
(901) 678-2111

University of Tennessee - Martin  
Martin, TN  
www.utm.edu  
Admissions Office:  
admitme@utm.edu  
(731) 881-7020

# Who to Involve

## Contact Information for Tennessee's Community Colleges

Chattanooga State Community College  
Chattanooga, TN  
www.chattanoogastate.edu  
Admissions Contact:  
Kisha Caldwell  
kisha.caldwell@chattanoogastate.edu  
(423) 697-3250

Motlow State Community College  
Tullahoma, TN  
www.mscc.edu  
Admissions Contact:  
Greer Alsup  
galsup@mscc.edu  
(931) 393-1520

Southwest Tenn. Community College  
Memphis, TN  
www.southwest.tn.edu  
Admissions Contact:  
Vanessa Dowdy  
vdowdy@southwest.tn.edu  
(901) 333-4399

Cleveland State Community College  
Cleveland, TN  
www.clevelandstatecc.edu  
Admissions Contact:  
Suzanne Bayne  
SBayne@clevelandstatecc.edu  
(423) 472-7141

Nashville State Community College  
Nashville, TN  
www.nsc.edu  
Admissions Contact:  
Jen Evernham  
jennifer.evernham@nsc.edu  
(615) 353-3265

Volunteer State Community College  
Gallatin, TN  
www.volstate.edu  
Admissions Contact:  
Tim Amyx  
Tim.Amyx@volstate.edu  
(615) 230-3614

Columbia State Community College  
Columbia, TN  
www.columbiastate.edu  
Admissions Office:  
admissions@columbiastate.edu  
(931) 540-2790

Northeast State Community College  
Blountville, TN  
www.northeaststate.edu  
Admissions Contact:  
Jennifer Starling  
jgstarling@northeaststate.edu  
(423) 323-0253

Walters State Community College  
Morristown, TN  
www.ws.edu  
Admissions Contact:  
Mike Campbell  
mike.campbell@ws.edu  
(423) 585-2682

Dyersburg State Community College  
Dyersburg, TN  
www.dsc.edu  
Admissions Contact:  
Shawn Dye  
dye@dsc.edu  
(731) 286-3324

Pellissippi State Community College  
Knoxville, TN  
www.pstcc.edu  
Admissions Contact:  
Cindy Atchley  
catchley@pstcc.edu  
(865) 539-7174

Jackson State Community College  
Jackson, TN  
www.jsc.edu  
Admissions Contact:  
Andrea Winchester  
awinchester@jsc.edu  
(731) 424-3520 x50484

Roane State Community College  
Harriman, TN  
www.roanestate.edu  
Admissions Contact:  
Priscilla Gitschlag  
gitschlagp@roanestate.edu  
(865) 481-2000 x2200

## Contact Information for the Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology

TCAT - Athens  
www.tcatathens.edu  
Kim Davis  
Assistant Director  
kim.davis@tcatathens.edu  
(423) 744-2814 x204

TCAT - Covington  
www.tcatcovington.edu  
Amanda Heath  
Coordinator of Student Services  
amanda.heath@tcatcovington.edu  
(901) 475-2526

TCAT - Crump  
www.tcatcrump.edu  
Joe Paul Bryant  
Student Services Coordinator  
joe.bryant@tcatcrump.edu  
(731) 632-3393

TCAT - Chattanooga  
www.chattanoogastate.edu/tcat  
Sandra Winters  
Enrollment Services Counselor  
sandra.winters@cattanoogastate.edu  
(423) 697-4433

TCAT - Crossville  
www.tcatcrossville.edu  
Alison Nunley  
Student Services  
alison.nunley@tcatcrossville.edu  
(931) 484-7502 x126



# Who to Involve

## Contact Information for the Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (continued)

### TCAT - Dickson

www.tcatdickson.edu  
Lisa Sullivan  
*Student Services Coordinator*  
lisa.sullivan@tcatdickson.edu  
(931) 393-1520

### TCAT - Livingston

www.tcatlivingston.edu  
Teresa Johnson  
*Financial Aid Coordinator*  
Teresa.Johnson@tcatlivingston.edu  
(931) 823-5525

### TCAT - Oneida

www.tcatoneida.edu  
Tim Smith  
*Coordinator of Student Services*  
tsmith@tcatoneida.edu  
(423) 663-4900

### TCAT - Elizabethton

www.tcatelizabethton.edu  
Ashley Edens  
*Financial Aid Coordinator*  
ashley.edens@tcatelizabethton.edu  
(423) 543-0070

### TCAT - McKenzie

www.tcatmckenzie.edu  
Daphne Brown  
*Student Services Coordinator*  
daphne.brown@tcatmckenzie.edu  
(731) 352-5364

### TCAT - Paris

www.tcatparis.edu  
Jan Latimer  
*Student Services Coordinator*  
Jan.latimer@tcatparis.edu  
(731) 644-7365

### TCAT - Harriman

www.tcatharriman.edu  
Becky Gilbert  
*Student Recruiter*  
bgilbert@tcatharriman.edu  
(865) 882-6703

### TCAT - McMinnville

www.tcatmcminnville.edu  
Mike Garrison  
*Student Services Coordinator*  
mike.garrison@tcatmcminnville.edu  
(931) 473-5587 x235

### TCAT - Pulaski

www.tcatpulaski.edu  
Mattie Bledsoe  
*Coordinator of Student Services*  
Mattie.Bledsoe@tcatpulaski.edu  
(931) 424-2404

### TCAT - Hartsville

www.tcathartsville.edu  
Kevin Harrison  
*Admissions Counselor*  
kevin.harrison@tcathartsville.edu  
(615) 374-2147 x137

### TCAT - Memphis

www.tcatmemphis.edu  
Felicia Lee  
*Student Affairs Manager*  
felicia.lee@tcatmemphis.edu  
(901) 543-6132

### TCAT - Ripley

www.tcatripley.edu  
Gwen Fleming  
*Financial Aid Coordinator*  
gfleming@tcatripley.edu  
(731) 635-3368

### TCAT - Hohenwald

www.tcathohenwald.edu  
Andrea Cooper  
*Student Services Coordinator*  
andrea.cooper@tcathohenwald.edu  
(931) 796-5351

### TCAT - Morristown

www.tcatmorristown.edu  
Pam Ruffner  
*Student Services/Financial Aid*  
pruffner@tcatmorristown.edu  
(423) 586-5771

### TCAT - Shelbyville

www.tcatshelbyville.edu  
Jim Potts  
*Evening Supervisor*  
jim.potts@tcatshelbyville.edu  
(931) 685-5013 x100

### TCAT - Jacksboro

www.tcatjacksboro.edu  
Rita Broyles  
*Student Services*  
rita.broyles@tcatjacksboro.edu  
(423) 566-9629 x117

### TCAT - Murfreesboro

www.tcatmurfreesboro.edu  
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*Student Services*  
CBeverley@tcatmurfreesboro.edu  
(615) 898-8010 x132

### TCAT - Whiteville

www.tcatwhiteville.edu  
JacQuene Winfield  
*Student Services Coordinator*  
jacquene.winfield@tcatwhiteville.edu  
(731) 254-8521

### TCAT - Jackson

www.tcatjackson.edu  
Amanda Bevis  
*Student Services Coordinator*  
amanda.bevis@tcatjackson.edu  
(731) 424-0691

### TCAT - Nashville

www.tcatnashville.edu  
Jerry King  
*Assistant Director*  
jerry.king@tcatnashville.edu  
(615) 425-5530

### TCAT - Knoxville

www.tcatknoxville.edu  
Patrick Wade  
*Assistant Director*  
patrick.wade@tcatknoxville.edu  
(865) 766-4340

### TCAT - Newbern

www.tcatnewbern.edu  
Nikki Burns  
*Recruiter*  
nburns@tcatnewbern.edu  
(731) 627-2511 x102





# Reporting Procedure

**The Tennessee Higher Education Commission wants to celebrate and promote College Signing Day happening across the state. Help us by reporting your scheduled activities.**

It is our goal that Tennessee Path to College events improve and expand each year. Collecting feedback and resulting data is an important part of accomplishing that goal. Please review the *Data Reporting Requirements* found on the following page.

As you plan your event, ensure that you track the information listed. You will need to keep track of the number of students who participate in your event. **Site Coordinators will receive a link to an online reporting form via email.** Reporting Forms should be completed no later than **June 15, 2015.**

On the following page is an example of the type of information you should collect during your College Signing Day event. If you have any questions regarding the data or surveys, please contact Mary Laphen at [mary.laphen@tn.gov](mailto:mary.laphen@tn.gov) or 615-253-1155.

# Reporting Form

## DATA REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Thank you for participating in the first ever College Signing Day 2015 for Tennessee. Please track the following data items to help us improve this initiative and better serve you in the future. **On May 1st you will receive a link to an online version of this form**, but you can use this form to keep notes and data from your event until you fill out the online form.

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your School District/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Your High School or Program: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many students make up your senior class? \_\_\_\_\_

2. How many seniors at your school participated in College Signing Day? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How many non-seniors at your school attended or participated in College Signing Day? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Would you like to continue to receive information and materials promoting College Signing Day?  
(Please circle one answer below.)

Yes    No

5. Do you plan on participating in College Signing Day next year? (Please circle one answer below).

Yes    No

6. How helpful was College Signing Day in promoting a college-going culture in your school or program?  
(Please circle one answer below. 1 = Not At All Helpful; 5 = Very Helpful).

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

7. How helpful were the College Signing Day materials (handbook, wall clings, etc.) in planning and implementing your event? (Please circle one answer below. 1 = Not At All Helpful; 5 = Very Helpful).

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

7. If you have any further comments about this initiative or suggestions of how to improve it, please write them below.

# Section 3:

## Creating a College-Going Culture

The success of your College Signing Day relies not just on you, but on your school and your community. Engaging the school community in the planning and implementation process will create excitement about the event. And the more support you have, the more success you will see. Additionally, the community plays an important role in creating and sustaining a college-going culture.

In the following pages, you will find ideas and templates to use for engaging students, school faculty, and members of the community, including a volunteer resource guide that will help you to prepare your volunteers for event day.

### IN THIS SECTION

- [Overview for School Community](#)
- [In-School Promotion Ideas](#)
- [Volunteer Resource Guide](#)
- [Volunteer Quick Guide to College Signing Day](#)
- [Sample Volunteer Training Agenda](#)
- [Sample Volunteer Recruitment Email/Letter](#)
- [Sample Volunteer Thank You Letter](#)
- [Sample Letter to Higher Education Institutions](#)
- [Sample Higher Education Thank You Letter](#)
- [Sample Donation Request Letter](#)
- [Sample Donation Thank You Letter](#)
- [Sample Certificate of Achievement](#)

# Overview for School Community

Our school is participating in Tennessee's College Signing Day! To ensure that our event is a success for our students we need your help in promoting and coordinating this event. We hope that this initiative is exciting and fun for our students, families, and community!

## **What is College Signing Day?**

College Signing Day is an event to celebrate seniors going to college and to encourage a college-going culture among all students.

## **What is the purpose of Tennessee's College Signing Day?**

The purpose of College Signing Day is to grow excitement around going to college and model the college-going culture for younger students. College Signing Day is something most often associated with students signing athletic scholarships, but every student should have the opportunity to be publicly celebrated for going to college. The event can also be an inspiring opportunity for younger students. For underclassmen, attending the event gives them an opportunity to applaud students who are going to college, gain knowledge of where students are attending college, and increase their own educational aspirations. By adding participation of and partnerships with local higher education institutions, the event can also be a way to grow the relationship between the local colleges, our school, and our students who will be attending those institutions.

## **What happens during College Signing Day?**

All students are recognized for their postsecondary education plans. As a school, we will work together to build excitement and awareness surrounding college selection and the enrollment process. We can do this by integrating fun activities about college into our school and community environments. For example, we can decorate our doors and classrooms in college themes, post signs and pennants in our community, or have college trivia contests - let's get creative!

## **How can I help?**

You can help by talking to students about their college choices, contributing to the spirit of College Signing Day, or reaching out to students to encourage the enrollment process. Seek out students who might need extra help in college planning and talk to them about their options. Be sure to ask students about their plans after high school as they board the bus, go through the lunch line, or walk into your classroom!

# In-School Promotion Ideas

You can use the following ideas to promote College Signing Day within your school community and to help raise awareness around the college-going process.

## Get the Word Out

Use your school's daily announcements to generate awareness of College Signing Day at your school. If your school has a morning news program, coordinate with producers to feature a countdown or a fun fact about college each morning leading up to the event. Coordinate interviews with seniors who plan to participate in the event or local admissions counselors. Student newspapers are also a great place to highlight the event. Encourage student writers to feature stories. You may even wish to place an ad in the paper with all of your seniors and where they decide to attend college.

## Class of 2015 - "Where will you find them?" Activity

Have a map of Tennessee and a map of the country to let your students mark where they are going. Try reaching out to your local AAA for maps. You can leave the map up for the following year until the lead up to the next College Signing Day event.

## Pledge to Go

Have seniors pledge to go to college. You can hang an "I am Going to College" banner in a prominent area of the school and have seniors sign it. You can also have senior sign college pledges and hang those pledges in a high-traffic area, such as the front hallway or cafeteria.

## Post College Acceptance Letters

Collect acceptance letters or copies of acceptance letters and hang them in a high-traffic area.

## Create a "College Wall"

Have seniors write the names of the college where they plan to attend on banners or strips of construction paper to hang in a main hallway. If available, enlist the support of art teachers, as they may be helpful in developing additional promotional materials to create a "college-going culture" on the walls of your school.

## Involve Teachers and Staff

During College Signing Day, ask teachers to share their college experience, wear their alma mater gear, and post signs on classroom doors advertising where they went to school. Be sure to promote the idea of college in general, not a specific school.

## "I Am Going" Stickers

Give students an "I Am Going" sticker either before or after the College Signing Day event.

## Dress the Part

During the days leading up to College Signing Day, encourage teachers and staff to wear a t-shirt, sweatshirt, or hat from the college they attended, or have them bring in their college yearbook or other items with their college mascot to share with students.



### Dress in College Colors Day

Ask students, faculty, and staff to dress in the colors and apparel of their favorite college or college sports team for a day. Have a contest to see which college gets the most support.

### Invite a Panel of Past Students

Reach out to your high school's alumni who are now in college and invite them to come and speak about their experiences.

### Give Away College "Stuff"

Hold drawings before or after College Signing Day. Ask colleges and universities to donate promotional items (banners, hats, t-shirts, sweatshirts, etc.) to use as giveaways during your event. Also, ask local businesses for items for your drawing.

### Communicate

Send letters or e-mail reminders to all parents, students, and school staff. Also, include information in the school newsletter and post flyers around the school and community about your College Signing Day event. You can use the Sample Student/Family Letter in Section 4 as a guide.

# Volunteer Resource Guide

Volunteers can help you to implement your College Signing Day and provide support for the event. If you do recruit students, either from within your school or in your local community, this guide can help to ensure you have a well-informed and efficient volunteer force.

## Notify them

Once you have recruited and finalized your volunteer roster for College Signing Day, you will need to notify them of the event details. You can use the template on the next page as a guide.

## Information for Volunteers

Identify specific responsibilities and duties for your volunteers. Create a short explanation of each responsibility for volunteers to follow. Here are a few examples of responsibilities for your volunteers on College Signing Day:

- Greet students
- Sign in students
- Hand out prizes or certificates
- Set up and clean up
- Manage food and beverage table(s)

## Identify them

Help identify your volunteers as a source of help for students by providing name badges for volunteers on the day of the event.

## Train them

On the morning of the event, conduct a quick orientation to familiarize volunteers with details of your event.

## Thank them

Send a thank-you letter to all volunteers for their dedication to College Signing Day. Handwrite a note to each volunteer. You may also want to give students the opportunity to thank the volunteers.



## VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

Welcome to College Signing Day! We appreciate your hard work and dedication to making college a reality for our students. Use this reference guide to familiarize yourself with the details of our College Signing Day program.

### What is College Signing Day?

College Signing Day is an event to celebrate seniors going to college and to encourage a college-going culture among underclassmen sponsored by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and CollegeforTN.org.

### What is the purpose of College Signing Day?

The purpose of College Signing Day is to grow excitement around going to college and model the college-going culture for younger students. College Signing Day is something most often associated with students signing athletic scholarships, but every student should have the opportunity to be publicly celebrated for going to college. The event can also be inspiring for younger students. By applauding students who are going to college and gaining knowledge of where students are attending college, younger students will increase their own educational aspirations. By adding participation of and partnership with local higher education institutions, the event can also be a way to grow the relationship between the local colleges, our school, and our students who will be attending those institutions.

### What are the most common colleges for our students to attend?

---

How many seniors are participating in College Signing Day? \_\_\_\_\_

How many different colleges will they be attending? \_\_\_\_\_

# Sample Volunteer Training Agenda

Volunteers for College Signing Day will need to have enough information to be useful to you and the students. In addition to the much needed assistance they can provide, they are also likely to become stewards of the college-going process in the community.

You are not required to provide a volunteer training; it will be your decision based on who you have selected as volunteers and if they feel comfortable with the tasks you have selected for them. You can provide a volunteer training as a short gathering either a week before the event or on the day of the event, before the event begins.

## I. Welcome and Thank You!

- Have all volunteers sign in and provide you with name, phone number(s), and email address (you will need an email address later if you send a follow-up thank you note).

## II. Purpose of Tennessee's College Signing Day

- Use information provided on the Volunteer Information sheet.

## III. College Signing Day Logistics

- Provide a short tour of the school highlighting where the event will be held, the principal's office, and any facilities they may use or go into.

- Dates and times of College Signing Day.

- Times that volunteers are expected to be available. For example, you may want to ask volunteers to arrive 15-20 minutes prior to the start of the event.

- Assign tasks and responsibilities to be done by volunteers.

## IV. Questions?

## V. Again - Thank You!

# Sample Volunteer Recruitment E-mail/Letter

This letter should be distributed to any volunteer prospects and/or groups. Update the bold pieces with your school's event information and feel free to add more event details to generate interest.

**[School Logo/Name]**

**[School Address]**

**[Date]**

Dear **Name of Organization or Person**,

**Name of Your High School** is pleased to announce its participation in the statewide College Signing Day. College Signing Day will be held each year during the month of May to coincide with the date that most seniors must inform a college of their enrollment plans.

Tennessee's College Signing Day is a new statewide initiative this year. Some schools have held similar events on their own in the past, but this initiative will have statewide attention and resources. College Signing Day is an event to celebrate our seniors going to college and to encourage a college-going culture among underclassmen. The purpose of College Signing Day is to grow excitement around going to college and model the college-going culture for younger students. College Signing Day is something most often associated with students signing athletic scholarships, but every student should have the opportunity to be publicly celebrated for going to college.

We will be hosting our event on **Date and Time** and welcome you to our school to help out with our exciting and important event. Volunteers can greet and sign in students, hand out prizes, set up, clean up, manage the food and beverage table, or just be there to cheer on the students **[tweak this sentence to fit school's needs]**. Our students would really appreciate your help and support as they announce their college plans.

If you are interested in volunteering in any capacity, or know anyone who might also be interested in volunteering, please contact **Name, Contact Info** at **Name of Your High School**.

Thank you,

**Your Name**

**Your Title**

# Sample Volunteer Thank You Letter

This letter should be distributed to any volunteers who helped with College Signing Day. Update the bold pieces with your school's event information and feel free to add more details specific to what your volunteers assisted with at the event.

**[School Logo/Name]**

**[School Address]**

**[Date]**

Dear **Name of Volunteer**,

On behalf of **Name of High School** I would like to personally thank you for volunteering your time at our College Signing Day event. This event would not have been a success without your help and the help of many others who volunteered their time.

During College Signing Day, we recognized **Number of Seniors** of our senior class for their college plans. Our students are one step closer to actualizing their dreams of attending college!

**Summarize Events or Include Any Press Coverage**

Once again **Name of High School** thanks you for your efforts and contribution of time at College Signing Day! We hope to see you at the event next year.

Sincerely,

**Your Name**

**Your Title**

**Contact Information**

# College Signing Day Higher Education Letter

This letter should be distributed to any higher education institutions who may be able to donate items or volunteer time during College Signing Day.

Be sure to include a list of seniors who plan to enroll in their institution.

**[School Logo/Name]**

**[School Address]**

**[Date]**

**[Address of Recipient]**

Dear **Contact's Name or Institution,**

I am writing to you on behalf of the senior class of **Name of High School**. This year our school is excited to celebrate our seniors and their college decisions. College Signing Day is an event to celebrate our seniors going to college and to encourage a college-going culture among underclassmen. The purpose of College Signing Day is to grow excitement around going to college and model the college-going culture for younger students. College Signing Day is something most often associated with students signing athletic scholarships, but every student should have the opportunity to be publicly celebrated for going to college.

We will be hosting our event on **Date and Time** and would welcome representatives from **Name of Institution** to visit our school during this exciting and important time. Building a college-going culture starts with partnerships between high schools and higher education institutions, and we would be honored to have your support.

We are including a list of seniors who plan to attend **Name of Institution** and we would like to respectfully request any promotional items to present to these students during the event, such as t-shirts, pennants, stickers, water bottles, etc.

If you or any of your colleagues at **Name of Institution** are interested in attending, please contact **Name, Contact Info** at **Name of Your High School**. Additionally, thank you for considering our request. If you would like to make a donation or would like further information, please feel free to contact me at **Contact Information**.

Sincerely,

**Your Name**

**Your Title**

# Sample Higher Education Thank You Letter

This letter should be distributed to any higher education institutions who helped with College Signing Day. Update the bold pieces with your school's event information and feel free to add more details specific to what the institutions did to assist with the event.

**[School Logo/Name]**  
**[School Address]**

**[Date]**

Dear **Contact's Name or Institution,**

On behalf of **Name of High School** I would like to personally thank you for volunteering your time at our College Signing Day event.

I would like to personally thank you for your **Donation/Gift of X** to support our College Signing Day event. This event would not have been a success without your contribution and the help of many others who assisted us.

During College Signing Day, we recognized **Number of Seniors** of our senior class for their college plans, including **Number of Seniors** planning to attend **Name of Institution**. Our students are one step closer to actualizing their dreams of attending college!

## **Summarize Events or Include Any Press Coverage**

Once again **Name of High School** thanks you for your efforts and contribution of time at College Signing Day! We hope to see you at the event next year.

Sincerely,

**Your Name**  
**Your Title**  
**Contact Information**



# College Signing Day Donation Request Letter

This letter should be distributed to any local companies or organizations who may be able to donate funds for application fees during College Signing Day.

**[School Logo/Name]**

**[School Address]**

**[Date]**

**[Address of Recipient]**

Dear **Contact's Name or Organization/Company,**

I am writing to you on behalf of the senior class of **Name of High School**. This year our school is excited to celebrate our seniors and their college decisions. College Signing Day is an event to celebrate our seniors going to college and to encourage a college-going culture among underclassmen. The purpose of College Signing Day is to grow excitement around going to college and model the college-going culture for younger students. College Signing Day is something most often associated with students signing athletic scholarships, but every student should have the opportunity to be publicly celebrated for going to college.

A donation from **Company Name** will go directly to support our school make this event possible and **Mention How You Will Use the Donation**. Your donation will help students celebrate the college-going process and remind them of the support they have in their community.

We also invite you to join us during the celebration. **[Insert Event Schedule]**.

Thank you for considering our request. If you would like to make a donation, volunteer in any way with College Signing Day, or would like further information, please feel free to contact me at **Contact Information**.

Sincerely,

**Your Name**

**Your Title**

# Sample Donation Thank You Letter

This letter should be distributed to any sponsors who helped make College Signing Day a success. Update the bold pieces with your school's event information and feel free to add more details specific to what your sponsors were able to donate or assist in the event.

**[School Logo/Name]**  
**[School Address]**

**[Date]**

**[Address of Recipient]**

Dear **Name of Sponsor**,

On behalf of **Name of High School** I would like to personally thank you for your **Donation/Gift of X** to support our College Signing Day event. This event would not have been a success without your contribution and the help of many others who volunteered their time or resources.

During College Signing Day, we recognized **Number of Seniors** of our senior class for their college plans. Our students are one step closer to actualizing their dreams of attending college!

## **Summarize Events or Include Any Press Coverage**

Once again **Name of High School** thanks you for your efforts and contribution during College Signing Day! We hope to see you at the event next year.

Sincerely,

**Your Name**  
**Your Title**  
**Contact Information**

# COLLEGE-BOUND SENIOR

**Congratulations to**

**for making the decision to attend college at**

**in the fall of 2015.**

**Presented on College Signing Day 2015.**

Principal

Guidance Counselor



# Section 4:

## Outreach

Promoting your school's College Signing Day is crucial. While much of the focus for College Signing Day is geared toward seniors, a truly successful event has the entire school community actively engaged. In the following pages, you'll find ideas and sample activities you can use to promote the event to all those involved both within your school community and outside the walls of your school.

### IN THIS SECTION

- Promoting College Signing Day to the Media
- Sample Media Advisory
- Sample Student/Family Letter
- Sample Flyer
- Social Media Tools

# Promoting College Signing Day to the Media

Inviting local media to your College Signing Day is a great way to increase public awareness of your school's activities and promotion of a college-going culture in Tennessee. Here are some tips for contacting the media:

1. **Write a media advisory:** Write a brief media advisory/press release with information about your College Signing Day event and any other activities.
2. **Distribute the media advisory:** Send out the media advisory to your local media outlets approximately two weeks before College Signing Day.

If you email a copy of the advisory, send it directly in the body of your email. This will help your email avoid spam filters. If you can, send the email from an address linked to a person's name (rather than a general organizational mailbox). An email from mary.laphen@tn.gov is more likely to be read than an email from CollegeforTN@tn.gov.

**Tip:** If you or someone on staff at your school has a relationship with the media or a specific reporter, have that person reach out and/or follow up with the media. Also try reaching out to reporters who have covered your school(s) previously.

3. **Follow-up once you send the advisory:** Once you have sent the advisory, follow up by phone to make sure the newsroom received it. Prepare a small script ahead of time with the most important information. Prepare to be brief on the phone- newsrooms and reporters are usually busy and being prepared when you speak to them will help you keep their attention.
4. **Designate a media point-of-contact:** Choose someone involved with College Signing Day to be the point person for any members of the media who may attend.

The media point-of-contact should be prepared to greet anyone from the media who attends your College Signing Day event and direct them to students, faculty, or anyone else willing to be interviewed for a news piece.

5. **Follow up the day before your big event:** The day before your College Signing Day event (or the Friday before), follow up with your media targets by phone or email to remind them of the event and/or confirm their attendance, and give them contact information for your designated media point-of-contact.
6. **On College Signing Day:** Make sure parking is available for any media and that your school's front office is aware that media may be arriving.

Ensure that your media point-of-contact is prepared to answer basic questions about your College Signing Day, including the event(s) and any other activities your school is hosting, the number of seniors at your school, and your most recent college-going rates.

Try to get contact information from any media that attend so you have their contact information for future events/announcements and to send a follow-up thank you.

7. **Send a thank you:** Send thank you notes to members of the media that attend your event. This will help to maintain a good relationship with your local media outlets.

# Sample Media Advisory

Send this sample media advisory to local news organizations. Update the bold pieces with your school's event information and add any other relevant event details. If you need help locating contact information for your local news outlets, please contact Kate Derrick (kate.derrick@tn.gov) at the Tennessee Higher Education Commission.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, please contact:

**Name,**  
**Phone,**  
**E-mail Address**

## SCHOOL NAME HOSTS COLLEGE SIGNING DAY

**CITY, TN (DATE)** - In an effort to promote a college-going culture in our school, **Name of Your High School** will participate in Tennessee's inaugural College Signing Day, a statewide initiative sponsored by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and CollegeforTN.org, on **Date of Event**.

**What:** **Name of Your High School** is hosting a College Signing Day to celebrate the senior class of 2015 making the important decision to enroll in college and pursue their dreams. This celebration will continue to create a college-going culture within our school as well as within the community. We are extremely proud of our senior class for taking this next big step for their future.

**When:** Insert Date from Time

**Where:** Location

**RSVP:** Name, Title, Contact Information

**Press:** This event is open to the media. We ask that you RSVP in advance. If you are unable to RSVP, please check in at the school's main office.

Event Highlights:

- **Speaker Names and Information**
- **Plans for Games and/or Prizes**
- Announcing senior's college decisions

###

# Sample Student/Family Letter

Use this letter to start conversations with students and families about College Signing Day. Update the bold pieces with your school's event information and add any other event details.

## School Logo

## School Address

Dear Students and Families,

**Name of Your High School** is hosting a College Signing Day to celebrate the senior class of 2015 making the important decision to enroll in college and pursue their dreams. On **Date of Event**, our seniors will declare what they want to do with their futures and decide where they will go after high school. College Signing Day is something most often associated with students signing athletic scholarships, but every student should have the opportunity to be publicly celebrated for going to college.

Throughout the month, high schools across the state will host College Signing Day events to celebrate students who have made the decision to pursue postsecondary education. The event is sponsored by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and the State's all-access college portal, CollegeforTN.org. In September/October, we helped our seniors apply to college during College Application Week and today we get to celebrate their efforts as they take this next big step. These events help us to grow the college-going culture in our school and in our community.

**Insert information about all activities leading up to and during College Signing Day. Include speakers, games, prizes, food, etc.**

All graduating seniors are invited to attend and are encouraged to celebrate the school spirit of the college of their choice. Parents, school administration, teachers, staff, and community members are invited to join the celebration. To RSVP: **Insert Information**.

Thank you in advance for your support of this exciting initiative to encourage Tennessee students to make college a part of their future.

Sincerely,

**School Counselor/Principal/Site Coordinator**

# Tennessee's College Signing Day May 2015



## Who?

- Class of 2015
- Families
- Underclassmen

## What?

- Seniors from our school will announce and celebrate their college decisions.

## Where?

- **[NAME OF SCHOOL, ROOM NUMBER, OR LOCATION]**

## When?

- **[DATE AND TIME OF EVENT]**

## Why is College Signing Day Important?

- To celebrate and recognize our seniors for their college decisions and the hard work leading up to this decision.
- To encourage a college-going culture within our school community.
- To influence younger students to apply for and enroll in college.
- To recognize ALL seniors for postsecondary plans.
- To support our students and their decision.
- To wrap up our school year with a joyful celebration.

*For more information about Tennessee's College Signing Day contact the counselor at your student's school.*



# Social Media Tools

Social media is an excellent way to create buzz around your event. Use social media tools and network to engage students about where they want to go to school, what they are doing to get there, and answer questions or concerns they have. Ask for suggestions or input from the community.

## Social Media Hashtags

We encourage you to use the hashtag **#TNCollegeSigningDay** on social media.

**Facebook:** Post at least 3 times a week leading up to important dates and deadlines. It is important to post items that will engage the audience and encourage them to participate in the conversation. Open-ended questions and asking for opinions are good ways to initiate dialogue. We also recommend the use of pre-selected hashtags.

### Facebook Examples:

- Seniors! May 1 is #TNCollegeSigningDay 2015. Tell us where you are going to college!
- May 1 is #TNCollegeSigningDay! Join us in congratulating our seniors for this big decision.
- Congrats seniors on your #college #decision. #TNCollegeSigningDay
- Tomorrow is the day our seniors tell us where they are going to college at our #TNCollegeSigningDay. Don't forget to wear your college gear to celebrate!
- We are proud of our seniors! Your hard work is about to pay off. Our #TNCollegeSigningDay is [date]. We can't wait to hear where you are going this fall.

**Twitter:** With a limit of 140 characters per post, you have to keep it short and sweet on Twitter. To leave space for users to retweet your post and add a comment, try to keep posts to 120 characters or less. We recommend the use of pre-selected hashtags. Simply note on posters or flyers the chosen hashtags or note them in Facebook posts.

### Twitter Examples:

- May 1 is #TNCollegeSigningDay. Where are you going?
- Congrats seniors on your #college selections. #TNCollegeSigningDay
- College Signing Day is next week. Remember to wear your #college colors to school. #TNCollegeSigningDay

## CollegeforTN.org Social Media:

- Follow CollegeforTN on social media leading up to and during your College Signing Day event for updates, resources, and shout outs!
- **Twitter:** @CollegeforTN
- **Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/CollegeforTN](http://www.facebook.com/CollegeforTN)
- **Pinterest:** [www.pinterest.com/CollegeforTN](http://www.pinterest.com/CollegeforTN)
- **Instagram:** @collegefortn

# Section 5:

## Student Resources

The Student Resources section includes technical guidance on how to guide students through College Signing Day and beyond as they begin their postsecondary path. Key information in this section includes enrollment steps for college and resources for students before they begin college.

### IN THIS SECTION

- Why Go to College?
- Choosing a College
- Enrollment Steps
- The Summer Before College

# Why Go to College?

*Why go to college? It's a question that's easily overlooked in the rush to start the college application process and find the perfect school. There are many great reasons to attend college, and we've outlined a few for you below.*

## Career Path

Many students go to college to prepare for their future career. And the great thing about college is you can sample and explore potential careers before you dive into one. Think you want to major in business? Take a few introductory classes in accounting and marketing, and you'll figure out pretty quickly if the business school is right for you. Likewise, that psychology elective you took on a whim might spark an entirely new area of interest, taking you down a career path you never imagined.

**CollegeforTN.org** is a great place to go to learn about different career options! Visit the [Career Planning](#) page to learn more about yourself and explore careers. Some helpful tools are the [Interest Profiler](#), [Career Plan Builder](#), [Career Finder](#), and [Resume Builder](#). There are also questions and answers about career planning under the [Voices](#) section. Check it out!

## Earning Potential

Sure, there are successful people out there who make a great living without a college degree. But on average, college graduates earn nearly twice as much annually as those who don't continue their education beyond high school, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Factor those earnings over a lifetime, and someone with a bachelor's degree will, on average, make \$1 million more than someone who didn't go to college.

## Self-Reliance

Think of college as a stepping stone to the real world. Setting your own schedule, choosing your own classes, and finding time to study outside of school are all things that help prepare you for adulthood while getting your education on a college campus.

## Connections

As a college graduate, you'll be part of an alumni network that can help you make connections both professionally and socially. Yes, the name on your diploma just might score you a job interview with a fellow alum.

## Personal Growth

College is about more than spending time in the classroom working toward your diploma. Along the way, you'll be meeting new people, having new experiences and developing new interests that give you a broader perspective on the world around you. No matter what your major is, you'll leave college as a well-rounded individual who is better prepared to handle whatever life has in store for you.



# Choosing a College

*Once you get in to college, how do you choose the one that's right for you? Be sure to consider these top 10 factors as you decide what school will give you your ideal college experience:*

## 1. Degree Programs

If you know what you want to major in, definitely look at colleges that are strong in that program. But if you have no idea what you want to study, it's just as important to choose a school with a wide range of degree programs to explore and eventually choose from.

## 2. Learning Environment

Think about what type of learning environment suits you best. Then, consider factors like a college's average class size, student-to-teacher ratios, whether classes are taught mainly by professors or graduate assistants, and whether you learn better through discussions or through hands-on activity. All of these are factors which will impact your academic experience at college.

## 3. Campus Life

What do you want your college experience to be like outside of the classroom? Think about what's important to you in terms of extracurricular activities, social life, school spirit and traditions, and housing.

## 4. Distance from Home

Decide how far from home you want your college experience to take you. Do you want to have the support of friends and family nearby, or experience life in an entirely new part of the country?

## 5. Location

Do you see yourself attending college in a small town where the campus is the center of activity, or a major metropolitan area where you'll enjoy the benefits of city living? Also decide if you want to be in a certain geographic area or climate.

## 6. Type of College

Private, public, religiously affiliated, single-sex or co-ed there are many types of colleges and all offer benefits and drawbacks. Weigh the pros and cons and decide what type is right for you.

## 7. Size

A tiny liberal arts school and a huge state university will give you two very different college experiences. Visit colleges of different sizes to see where you feel most comfortable.

## 8. Student Body

Do you want a college where you'll be surrounded by students similar to yourself, or one where you'll meet people from a variety of backgrounds? Check out student demographics for colleges you're considering, such as male-to-female ratio, average student age, and geographic, ethnic and religious diversity.

## 9. Cost

Don't limit your college search because of cost; financial aid and scholarships can what the final cost would be for you. As you look at colleges, though, it is important to think about how you plan to pay for college, and find schools that work within your financial circumstances.

## 10. First Impressions

No matter what, you should visit the top two or three colleges you are considering. Talk to students, take a walk through campus, sit in on a class or grab a cup of coffee in one of the buildings. The best way to get a real feel for a college and decide if you belong there is to go there. And if you're like many students, you'll visit one college that just feels "right." Go with your instincts and believe in first impressions.

# Enrollment Steps

*Congratulations on taking the next big step towards achieving your dream and enrolling in college! Here we have some steps that will help you during the enrollment process.*

## □ **Send official documents**

- Check with your college or university and make sure you've submitted all required documents. These can include official transcripts from your high school, ACT scores, and healthcare forms.

## □ **Attend new student orientation or equivalent**

- Attend new student orientation at your college or university or access it online, if applicable.

## □ **Access college email**

- You will receive a student email account from your college or university. Set it up!

- Make sure you can log in and check this email account regularly. Your college or university will start sending all information through this account.

## □ **Complete placement testing**

- You may need to complete placement testing if you scored below the following grades on your ACT: math (19), English (18), reading (19).

- Placement testing is different for every school; please contact your institution to determine what is required.

## □ **Talk to your advisor**

- Be sure to talk to your advisor before registering for classes. You may have to create an advising appointment through your institution, and every school handles it differently.

- Create an educational plan and get assistance in scheduling your classes.

## □ **Register for classes**

- Register early! The earlier you register, the better your chances to get the classes you want. Figure out which classes are needed in your first semester with your advisor.

## □ **Double check credit hours**

- Most institutions require you to take at least 12 hours to be full-time. Completing 15 hours per semester is often necessary to finish an Associate's degree in two years or a Bachelor's degree in 4 years.

## □ **Register for parking**

- Each campus handles parking differently and if you plan to have a car, make sure you check out parking regulations and when to register.

## □ **Begin classes!**

- Remember to ask for help, go to class, introduce yourself to professors, engage during class, read and understand your syllabus, manage your time, and use resources to your advantage.

# The Summer Before College

*You can use the summer break to prepare for the rigors and time management challenges of college course work with these 5 must-do tasks to accomplish according to the U.S. News and World Report.*

## □ **Read often**

- Create a list of books, visit the bookstore or public library, and read as often as possible this summer.
- College will likely require you to complete longer and more frequent reading assignments than high school, so it is important to prepare accordingly.
- Consider a novel or short story that you hoped to read, but never found the time to start.

## □ **Review academic content**

- It is in your best interest to refresh your knowledge of key high school content.
- If you are aware of your class schedule before the start of the semester, focus on past coursework that applies to these classes.
- Otherwise, review material like math and writing, and you may also benefit from studying content specific to your intended major.

## □ **Strengthen time management skills**

- Time management is key to success in college, and you should begin to practice this skill before you start your first semester.
- You don't need to arrange each second of your day, but create a schedule for certain activities and then follow it.

## □ **Find summer work**

- Getting a job is a wonderful way to learn how to budget your hours and your money.
- A summer job will prompt you to use your brain to help you pass the days until college begins.
- If you worked during high school, you are one step ahead. If you plan to work while in college, then this is an excellent chance to ensure you can manage both responsibilities.

## □ **Investigate career options**

- If you have a particular major in mind, investigate the most common careers within that field. Speak with individuals who are involved in such work and try to determine if the career is right for you.
- If you are not certain about a career or major, explore jobs of those people who you frequently encounter. A significant component of college is preparing yourself for your future career, so use this summer to decide what that future might look like.

Be sure to sign in to **CollegeforTN.org** and use this resource to your advantage as you transition!

# Section 6:

## Best Practices

College Signing Day 2015 will be Tennessee's first statewide event of its kind. Schools that have participated in a College Signing Day of their own have come up with a number of successful ideas to promote a college-going culture in their high schools during the event.

### IN THIS SECTION

- **Best Practices from Tennessee**
- **National College Advising Corps**
- **Best Practices from Other States**



# Best Practices in Tennessee



College Signing Day assembly at Glenclyff High School

## Glenclyff High School College Signing Day 2014 Glenclyff High School Kicks Off a College Signing Day

106 Glenclyff High School seniors went on stage to proudly announce the college they would be attending and signed a commitment to finish their degrees. Local colleges and universities donated pennants and t-shirts. Students held up their college t-shirts when they announced over the microphone which institution they would be attending. Each student received a certificate of achievement. They had a student speaker deliver a speech to close the ceremony.

Contact: Elise Burns, [elise.burns@mnps.org](mailto:elise.burns@mnps.org)

## Planning for Your College Signing Day Buy-In and Enthusiasm from Seniors is Important

In order to get the seniors excited, the planning team visited each English class in March. They showed the classes a video of an event at YES Prep in Texas, and talked about the importance of inspiring the younger students, their community, and each other by proudly announcing their choices. They also gave the students a form to turn in as soon as they had decided on a college, so they could start gathering the swag. They sent home invitations for them to hand out to their families and friends. The event was meaningful because the seniors were bought-in and excited about it.



College Signing Day assembly at Glenclyff High School



Glenclyff's certificates that each student signed at the event.



Glenclyff's promotional bulletin board leading up to College Signing Day.



# Best Practices in Tennessee



Clinton High School celebrates with college banners.

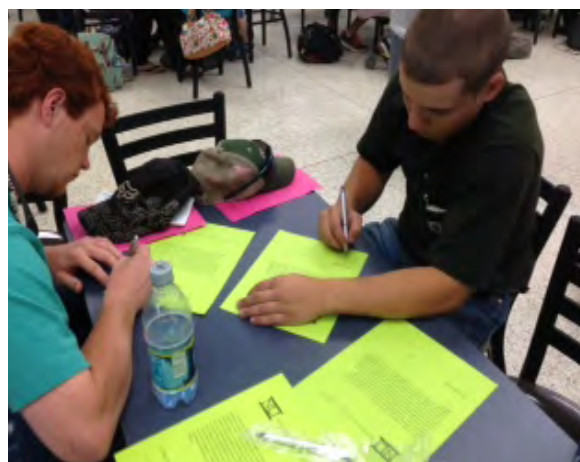
## Clinton High School Celebrates after Practice College Signing Day Banners Put to Use

At the end of graduation practice, students were called forward by groups based on institution to sign the banner that represented the school they would be attending the next year. All schools were called individually which was an emotional moment for all in attendance as students came to the front stage and knelt down to sign their name on the banners. The next day these banners were hung around the auditorium for a senior breakfast and then carried by students proudly during a senior walk around the school.

## Anderson County High School Senior Breakfast Seniors Sign a Letter of Intent

Students who have been granted a scholarship or award have been honored in previous years by signing a “letter of intent” in which they commit to be scholars at their institution and to be good stewards of the money being invested in them. This is a celebration where parents, media, and local officials are invited to attend and a keynote is delivered from a retired teacher. Students receive a personalized pen to sign their letters of intent with their class year on it. Letters were posted in the hallways after the ceremony.

Contact: Angela “Hoppy” Merryman, [amerryman@acs.ac](mailto:amerryman@acs.ac)



Signing letters of intent at Anderson County High



College Pep Rally at Springfield High School

## An Exciting Pep Rally for College Springfield High School Shows Their Pride

Each year Springfield High School in Robertson County holds a high-energy college pep rally. Their school marching band plays, cheerleaders cheer, and students fill the bleachers. Each graduating senior is recognized for their college plans and is announced over a microphone for all to hear.

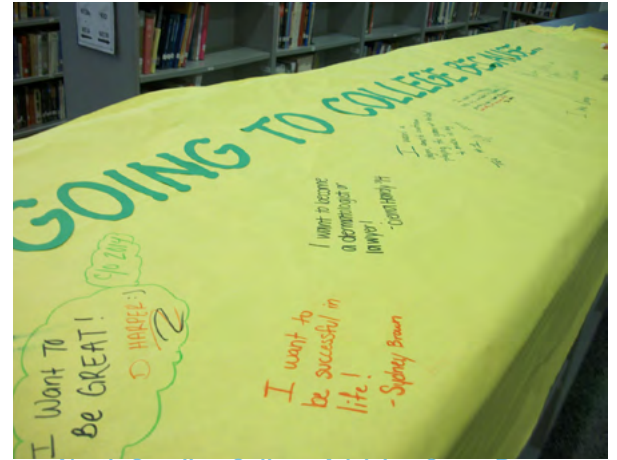
Contact: Rebecca Roberson, [rebecca.roberson@rcstn.net](mailto:rebecca.roberson@rcstn.net)

# College Signing Day Through the National College Advising Corps

## Signature Program: Decision Day

### Developing a College-Going Culture

The National College Advising Corps was one of the first organizations to make the idea a College Signing Day beyond athletics a nationwide phenomenon. In celebration of May 1, National Decision Day, college advisers with the National College Advising Corps hosted various events and activities across the country between April 27 and May 29, 2012. Decision Day is the day high school seniors make the decision about their post-secondary education or training plans and is a signature milestone event for the National College Advising Corps. "Decision Day is a great way for schools and communities to celebrate the future of its senior class," says Nicole Hurd, PhD, Founder and Executive Director of the Advising Corps.



North Carolina College Advising Corps Banner

## What is the National College Advising Corps?

### Mission and Reach of the Advising Corps

The National College Advising Corps seeks to bring talented, enthusiastic advisers to every community that wants them and to every student who needs them. Through a nationwide consortium of colleges and universities, the Corps aims to increase the number of low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students entering and completing higher education. By placing recent graduates of partner institutions as college advisers in underserved high schools and community colleges, the Advising Corps works in communities across the country to provide the advising and encouragement that students need to navigate college admissions. Advisers work full time to help students plan their college searches, complete admissions and financial aid applications, and enroll at schools that will serve them well.

## Supporting the National Goal of Increased Attainment

### Praising Student Success

In support of President Obama's goal that "every American pursue some form of education beyond high school," Decision Day events are held to praise students' success and their commitment to postsecondary education or training, while supporting the development of a college-going culture among younger students within the high school.

Decision Day can be the final celebration for the senior class marking their accomplishments of the past 4 years. You can also make this a school-wide celebration thus contributing to the college-going culture in the school. The celebration can be for the day or for a week. It depends on your planning and resources. You should start with planning a date, time and location. Other factors you may have to consider are costs related to site/location, equipment needs, decorations, raffle prizes, food, drinks, snacks, honorarium and such.

# Best Practices from Other States



Michigan College Decision Day

## Michigan College Access Network Decision Day

In Partnership with College Advising Corps, Michigan Held a Decision Day

On May 1, 2014, Michigan held a College Decision Day with the National College Advising Corps.

- 58 schools participated
- Kept the first year information and sites submitted data.
- They plan to formalize the event further in 2015.

## San Antonio College Signing Day

A City-Wide Event Hosted by the Mayor

San Antonio has a “red carpet” type of event for students hosted in a city-owned venue. They have local radio personalities emcee the event with colleges in attendance. Students make a public declaration of their college choice and make a pledge to attend. They found that having media involved increased the likelihood that colleges would donate gear.



San Antonio College Signing Day



National College Decision Day in Iowa

## Iowa College Student Aid Commission

Participates in National College Decision Day

The Iowa College Student Aid Commission encouraged high schools across their state to participate in National College Decision Day on May 1.

Last year, many schools in Iowa held events to celebrate National College Decision Day. Students from Davenport North High School gathered to celebrate college decisions and had the opportunity to ask a panel of college representatives questions. Underclassmen were invited to the assembly and got the chance to speak with college representatives to start the college planning process.