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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Tennessee Announces \$15 Million in Awards to “GEAR UP” for College Success**

**NASHVILLE** – *October 18* – Students in 16 Tennessee counties will benefit from over \$15 million in funding to support college access and success efforts thanks to a grant from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. The funding is part of the U.S. Department of Education’s Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant program, which aims to provide information and services to students and families to increase enrollment and success in postsecondary education. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission announced the Collaboratives that will be a part of GEAR UP TN and participate in activities that cultivate a college-going culture in Tennessee.

“We are focused in Tennessee on taking the next step in post-secondary education because we have to increase the number of graduates if we’re going to attract high quality jobs to our state. Twenty-three percent of Tennesseans have a degree from a four-year institution, and while college isn’t for everyone, it needs to be for more people than it has been,” said Governor Bill Haslam. “This grant goes a long way toward assisting students who might otherwise not have access to the support and resources needed to enter and succeed in college, and I look forward to seeing the impact we can have on students starting as early as the seventh grade.”

GEAR UP TN will serve a cohort of 7,500 students in the Class of 2018, along with 5,000 graduating seniors each year through 2019. A total of over 37,500 students at 83 schools will be directly served during the seven years of federal funding. Each GEAR UP TN Collaborative includes at least one priority high school, one middle school, a higher education institution, the local board of education, and at least two community-based partners.

The Collaboratives are located in the following 16 counties: Anderson, Bradley, Campbell, Claiborne, Davidson (Metro Nashville Public Schools), Grainger, Hancock, Hardeman, Haywood, Henderson, Johnson, McNairy, Robertson, Shelby (Memphis City Schools), Union and Wayne. The Collaboratives were chosen through a competitive grant proposal process. Award amounts were determined by the number of students to be served in each direct service school.

GEAR UP TN, through the Collaboratives, provides students with direct services, including mentoring, tutoring, college visits, and financial aid counseling. The Collaboratives are required to fully match federal funds in the sixth and seventh year of the grant to ensure long-term sustainability of the local GEAR UP TN programs.

Increasing college attainment is central to Tennessee's statewide master plan for public higher education, which has set a goal to bring the state up to the national average for undergraduate degree attainment by 2025. Although Tennessee has moved from 38th to 28th in national rankings of college completion, greater gains in degree attainment are needed to meet the state's future economic needs. GEAR UP TN will provide support to the state's public agenda for higher education through its targeted intervention and assistance approaches.

"GEAR UP TN is a vital component of our approach to increase the number of college degrees in Tennessee," said Richard Rhoda, executive director of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. "We've seen that the GEAR UP TN model works for Tennessee students. The program prepares students both academically and financially for college, building a foundation for success and helping students to understand the lifelong benefits of a degree."

Tennessee was also the recipient of a 2005 GEAR UP grant and during the six years of that grant, college-going rates in targeted counties increased by 22.8 percent in participating districts.

For more information please contact Kate Derrick, Director of Communications, GEAR UP TN, at [kate.derrick@tn.gov](mailto:kate.derrick@tn.gov), 615-532-0428.

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## **About GEAR UP TN**

GEAR UP TN is a movement in local communities to expand the college-going culture in Tennessee and empower students to succeed. Funded through a seven-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education and administered by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, GEAR UP TN works with community-based Collaboratives in 16 counties across the state to promote college readiness and success. Between 2012 and 2019, GEAR UP TN will provide over \$15 million in funding for direct services, including mentoring, tutoring, college visits, and financial aid counseling, to provide Tennessee students with a clear path to college.

## **About the Tennessee Higher Education Commission**

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) was created in 1967 by the Tennessee General Assembly for the purpose of coordinating and supporting the efforts of post-secondary institutions in the State of Tennessee. Tennessee Higher Education Mission: Tennessee public higher education will ensure student access to mission-focused institutions providing teaching and research of high quality and educate an increased number of citizens ready for productive lives in a global knowledge economy.