



From Data to Action: 2025 CCA Data Days

July 28-29

Denver, CO

Agenda & Resources:

CompleteCollege.org/DataDays2025

Lead sponsor:



Nuventive[™]

The Data-Informed Improvement Company[™]

Making Data Digestible: Strategies to Share Your Data and Amplify Your Message

Emily House, PhD

Lecturer, Department of Leadership, Policy, and
Organizations, *Vanderbilt University*

Former Executive Director,
Tennessee Higher Education Commission

Kate Derrick, MEd

Communications Director,
Complete College America

WHY DOES THIS CONVERSATION MATTER?

No one reads dissertations.

Very few people read journals.

If they do, how much do they digest?

Not much.

WHY DOES THIS CONVERSATION MATTER?

- Need to provide policymakers with actionable, tactical data they can actually use.
- Policymakers are busy. **They are not unintelligent – they are busy.** Make it easy for them.
- Said differently: how can you turn *data* into *information*?

So how do we make the information interesting to people who aren't our fellow higher ed nerds?

Every Emily needs a Kate; every Kate needs an Emily.

Data nerds are not too cool for Comms.



Comms thinks you're super smart and wants to be your friend.

Presenting Your Data for Broad Consumption

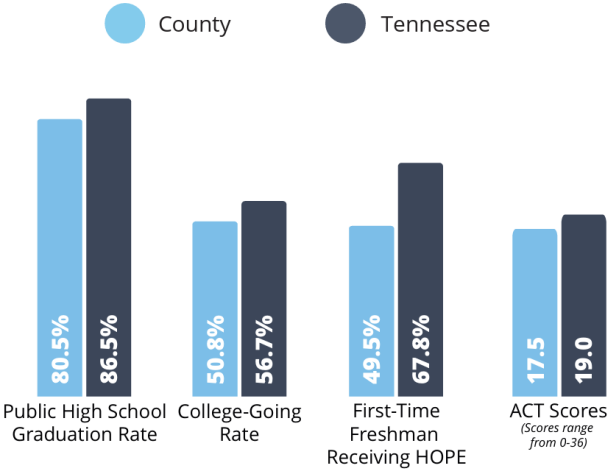
PUTTING YOUR DATA TO WORK

Make data actionable at a local level

2025 Higher Education County Profile

Davidson County

Community Education Snapshot



Note: 2023 Federal Public High School Graduation Rate and 2023 Average ACT Scores provided by TDOE. 2023 College-Going Rate and HOPE Recipient Rate for Fall 2023 provided by THEC.

Education Attainment Rate (age 25-64)	County	TN
Adults with HS+	90.6%	90.5%
Adults with Some College, No Degree	16.9%	20.5%
Adults with Associate or higher	54.2%	39.6%
Adults with Bachelor's or higher	48.1%	31.3%

Socioeconomic Profile	County	TN
Labor Force Participation Rate	71.5%	59.3%
Share of Population in Poverty	14.3%	14.0%
Unemployment Rate	3.3%	3.1%
Population Ages 25-64	404,611	3,603,399
Rate of Population Growth (2022-2024)	1.9%	1.8%
Population Projections (2024-2034)	9.6%	7.2%
Median Household Income	\$71,863	\$64,035

69.9%

completed the FAFSA in 2023-24 as compared to **73.9%** overall in Tennessee.

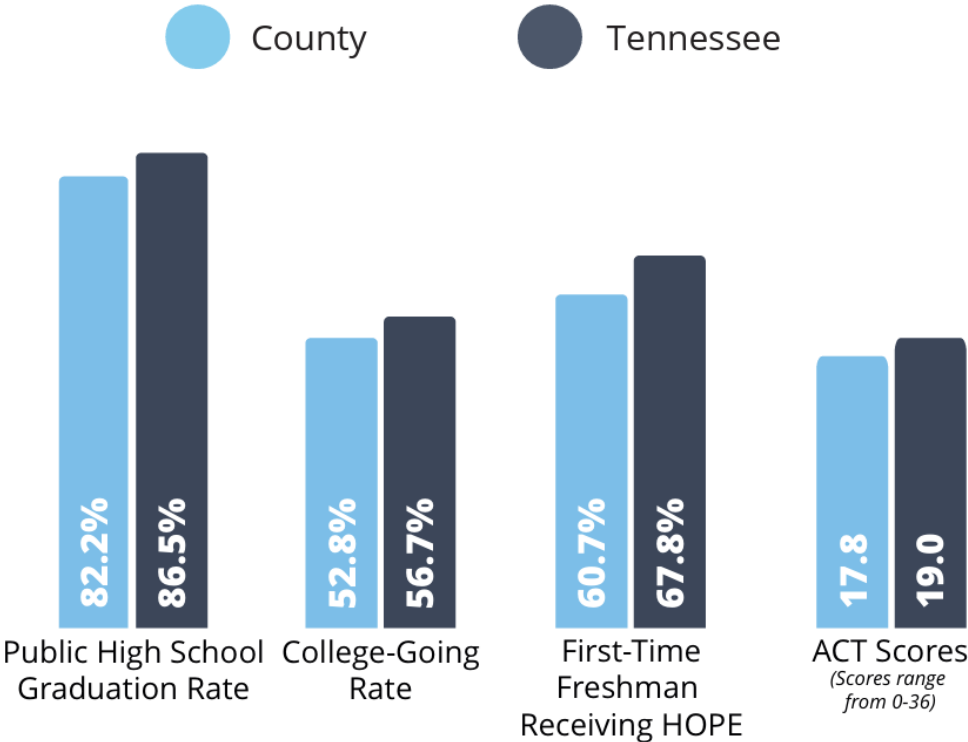
Note: Overall 2023-24 FAFSA completion rate.

Top Colleges Selected by 2023 High

2025 Higher Education County Profile

Shelby County

Community Education Snapshot



Note: 2023 Federal Public High School Graduation Rate and 2023 Average ACT Scores provided by TDOE. 2023 College-Going Rate and HOPE Recipient Rate for Fall 2023 provided by THEC.

Education Attainment Rate (age 25-64)	County	TN
Adults with HS+	90.1%	90.5%
Adults with Some College, No Degree	21.3%	20.5%
Adults with Associate or higher	41.5%	39.6%
Adults with Bachelor's or higher	34.7%	31.3%

Socioeconomic Profile	County	TN
Labor Force Participation Rate	57.5%	59.3%
Share of Population in Poverty	18.1%	14.0%
Unemployment Rate	4.7%	3.1%
Population Ages 25-64	479,023	3,603,399
Rate of Population Growth (2022-2024)	-0.4%	1.8%
Population Projections (2024-2034)	-2.3%	7.2%
Median Household Income	\$59,621	\$64,035

67.3%

completed the FAFSA in 2023-24 as compared to **73.9%** overall in Tennessee.

Note: Overall 2023-24 FAFSA completion rate.

PUTTING YOUR DATA TO WORK

Make it pretty. (No, seriously!)

- Colorful tables, figures
- Maps and useful visuals
- Keep it SIMPLE and clear

PUTTING YOUR DATA TO WORK

Make it pretty. (No, seriously!)



Tennessee Reconnect

More than 10,000 Tennessee adults have applied to Reconnect at a community or technical college, tuition-free.

Join them.
Apply now at TNReconnect.gov.

Tennessee's 2016-17 High School Graduation Rate

89.1%

A record-high for graduation rates in Tennessee

56% of districts

with a high school saw their graduation rates increase.

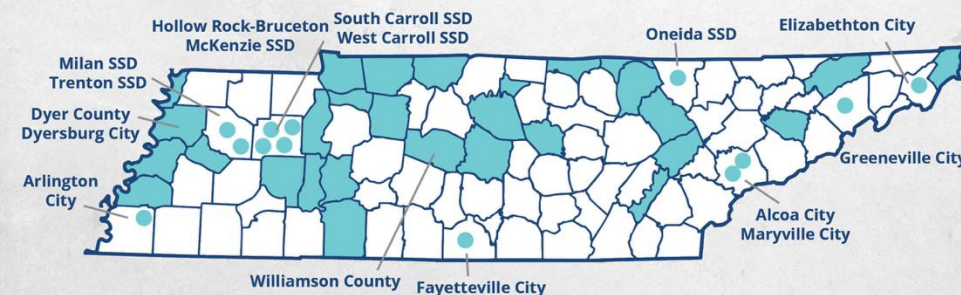
13 districts

improved graduation rates by 5 percentage points or more.

83%

graduation rate for students who identify as Black, Hispanic, or Native American, a three-year high.

43 districts have graduation rates at or above 95 percent
(up from 36 districts in 2015-16)



Lake County Schools

Lake County saw the largest jump in graduation rates, increasing 23.1 percentage points in one year.



The Achievement School District saw a 12.8 percentage point increase in graduation rates, the third largest gain among districts.



Tennessee Higher Education Summit

August 18, 2017

A gathering of higher education leaders at a time of growth and transition in Tennessee.

6 Locally Governed Institutions

2 Higher Education Systems

Higher Education Commission

39 Chancellors & Campus Presidents

For the first time, leadership and boards from all of Tennessee's public higher education institutions gather to discuss the future of higher education.

85 Board Members & Trustees

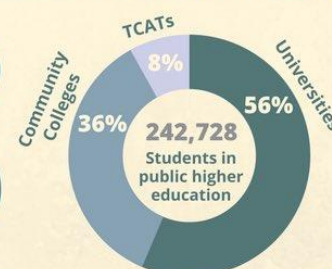
Including
10 Student Trustees
7 Faculty Trustees

Higher Education in Tennessee

11 Public Universities

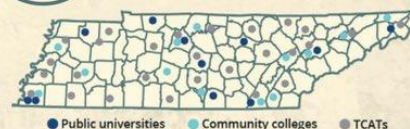
13 Community Colleges

27 Colleges of Applied Technology



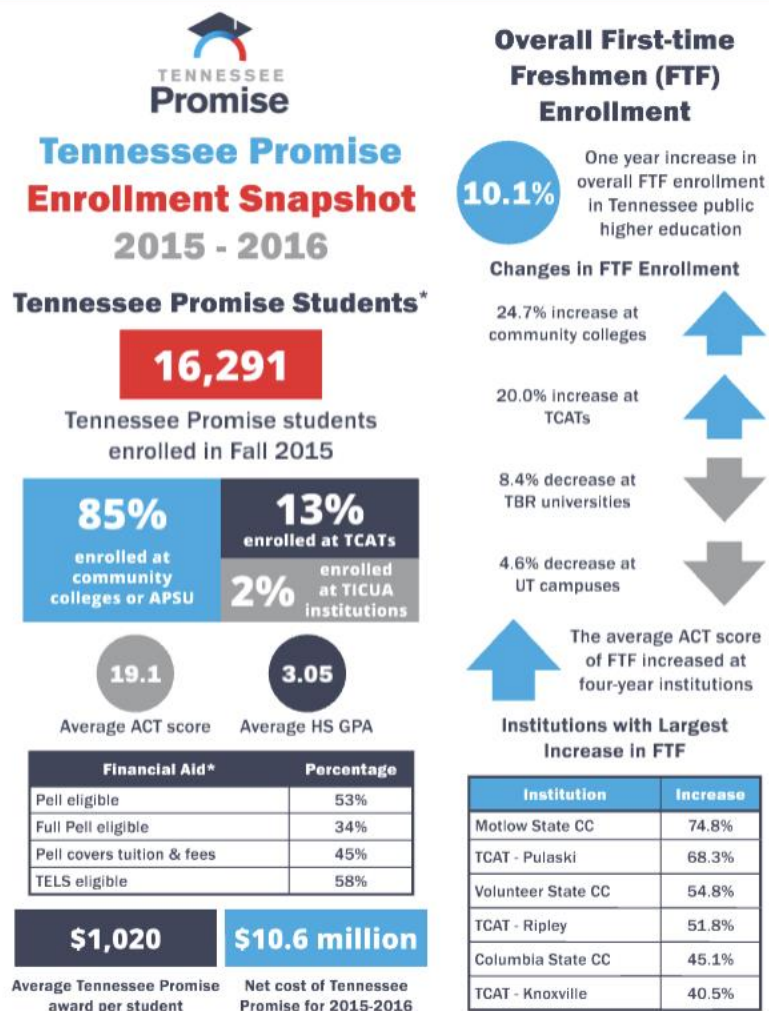
199,410 Undergraduate Students

23,637 Graduate Students

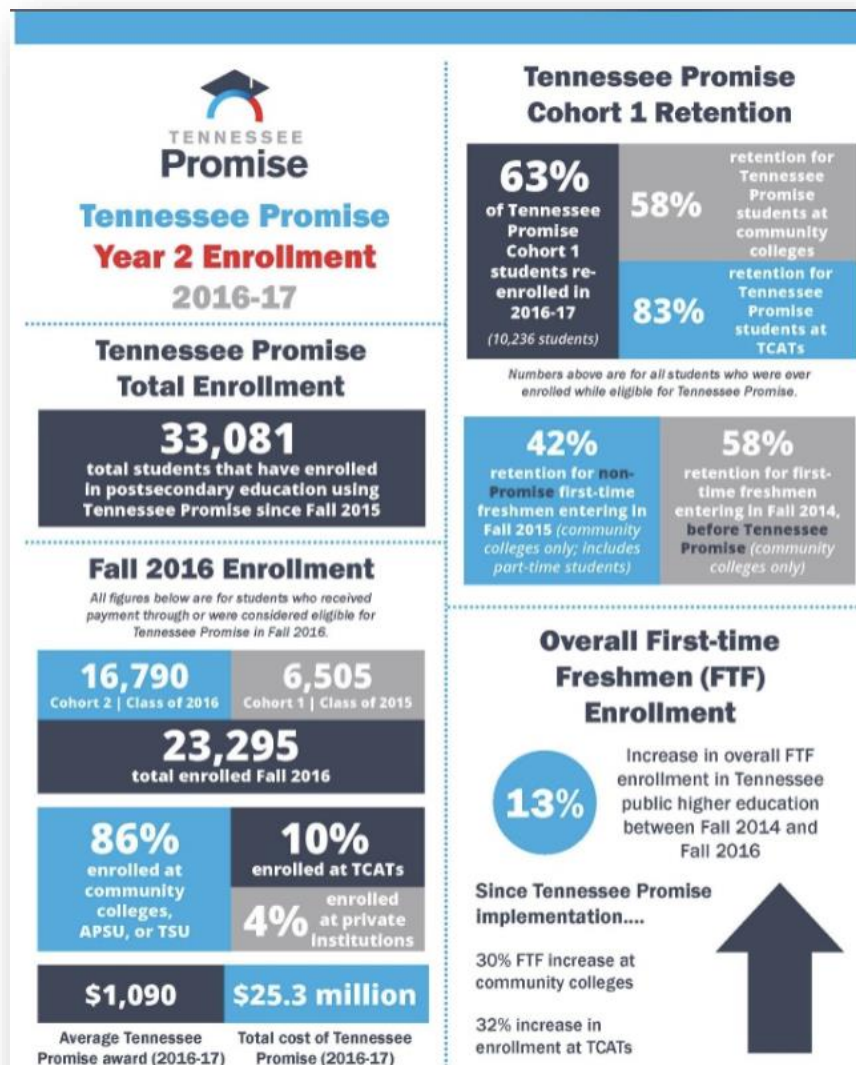


PUTTING YOUR DATA TO WORK

Break it down and tell a story.



*Enrollment and aid numbers based on information provided by institutions as of November 18, 2015. Numbers are subject to change, based on final certification of students.



Enrollment and aid numbers based on information provided by institutions as of January 27, 2017. Numbers are subject to change, based on final certification of students.

PUTTING YOUR DATA TO WORK

Make it simple.



**2013 educational
attainment rate: 37.8%**

**2015 educational
attainment rate:
39.7%**

**2025 educational
attainment rate
GOAL: 55%**

PUTTING YOUR DATA TO WORK

Make it human.

High School Class of 2010

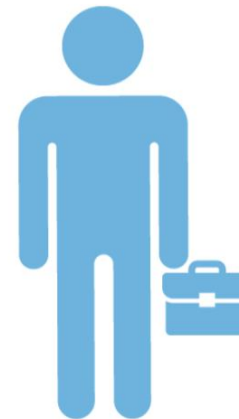


14% of Knox's classmates didn't graduate with him.

55% of Knox's classmates graduated from high school and started college.

Knox was part of the 31% of his class to go directly into the workforce.

4 years later



Knox and his classmates who went directly to work, with no postsecondary training, had an average annual income of \$9,030.

Knox had a 16% chance of earning above minimum wage.

Pushing Your Data Beyond Your Team

Interactive: How many people in your ZIP code have a college degree? Find out here

Adam Tamburin and Jason Gonzales Nashville Tennessean

Nov. 14, 2018 | Updated Nov. 16, 2018, 10:48 a.m. CT



Partnerships,
Relationships,
and Multiple
Streams



PARTNERSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS



The “However,”:

1 Out Of 3 Tennessee Promise Applicants Is No Longer Eligible

Mentors Won’t Help Tennessee Promise Students With Financial Aid Forms Anymore

Tennessee Promise’s Biggest Accomplishment: Adding ‘Free’ To College Conversation

PARTNERSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS

The “However,”:

MARKETPLACE

Search For & Place Classifieds

THE TENNESSEAN

[News] Sports Counties Business Music Advertise Obituaries eNewspaper Legals

EDUCATION

Large numbers of Tennessee students not ready for college, new state data show



Jason Gonzales

The Tennessean

Updated Feb. 13, 2019, 7:15 p.m. CT



Advertisement

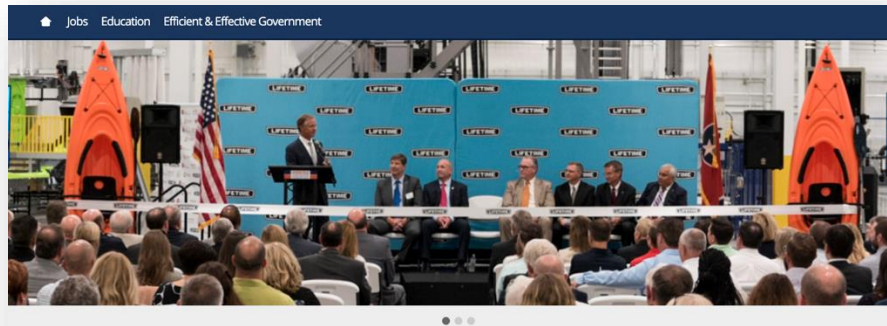


The “However,”:

- Don’t try to hide or obscure the bad numbers.
 - If you have mostly good numbers, lead with those.
 - If you have mostly bad numbers, lead with what you plan to do to address them.
- Coordinate with your comms team on the release to maximize the attention—and respect the embargo. (And know who you can trust with the embargo.)

MULTIPLE STREAMS

YOUR WEBSITE



NOW WE MUST...

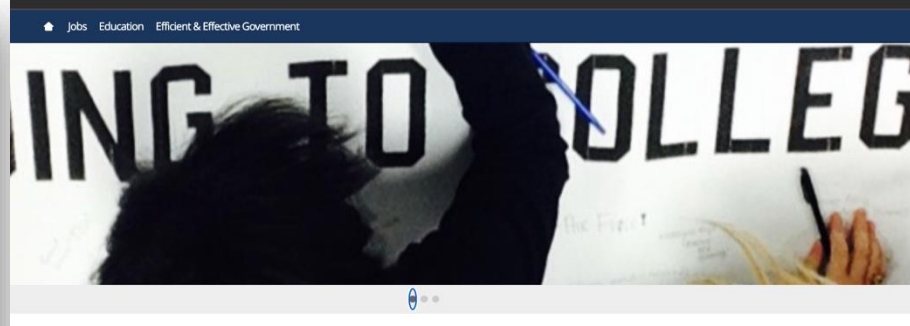
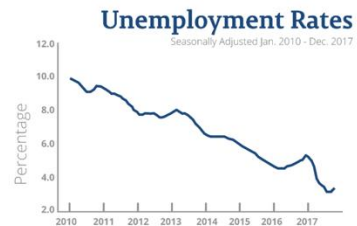
FUEL THE JOBS MACHINE

"By continuing to fuel the jobs machine we have created here in Tennessee, we lift up the already high quality of life here in this great state. Jobs are created when businesses put capital at risk, so we have focused on fostering the best, most predictable business environment." – Governor Bill Haslam

We must build on our job growth and economic success by continuing to develop a skilled and trained workforce while providing a low-tax and predictable business environment.

Since 2011...

- * **400,000 net new jobs** have been created.
- * The state's **unemployment rate** has hit **record lows** and continues to outpace the national rate.
- * Tennessee is **one of the lowest taxed states** in the nation.
- * Investments in infrastructure to ensure Tennesseans **have a safe, reliable transportation network** to access the jobs of the future.



NOW WE MUST...

ACCELERATE OUR EDUCATION GAINS

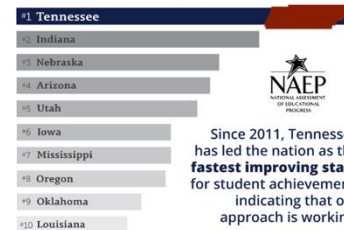
"Tennessee is now viewed as a change agent, an innovator in the world of public education. By accelerating the gains we have made in education and staying true to the reforms in place, we will ensure that no matter how much money a family has, no matter what neighborhood a child grows up in, and no matter the pace and style of learning an individual child requires to thrive, every student will have an opportunity to learn." – Governor Bill Haslam

We must further the gains we have made in education by staying true to the reforms we have put in place for Tennessee's students and families.

Since 2011...

- * Tennessee has put in place **higher standards and greater accountability** for our students and educators.
- * Through the new state standards, Tennessee students are now the **fastest-improving in the nation**.
- * The state will have invested **nearly \$1.5 billion** into K-12 education, with \$500 million going to teacher salaries.
- * Tennessee's **high school graduation rate** has hit a **record high** and more students than ever are going to college.
- * **Tennesseans can attend college tuition-free** through Tennessee Promise and Tennessee Reconnect.

Fastest Improving State in the Nation



Since 2011, Tennessee has led the nation as the **fastest improving state** for student achievement, indicating that our approach is working.



NOW WE MUST...

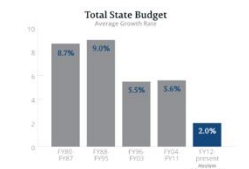
MAINTAIN OUR STRONG RECORD OF LOW TAXES AND LOW DEBT

"We had the opportunity to drastically overhaul the state's budget with a new philosophy built around seeking innovation and a commitment to provide the best possible service at the lowest possible cost. Working together, our strong track record of low taxes and low debt now positions us to be the very best stewards of the people's money." – Governor Bill Haslam

We must continue to provide the best possible service for our citizens at the lowest possible cost.

Since 2011...

- * State government has shrunk through **\$578 million in cuts** from the state budget.
- * The **Rainy Day Fund tripled**, providing the state with long-term financial security.
- * Tennessee has the **lowest debt per capita** of any state.
- * Tennesseans have seen **\$572 million in tax cuts**, including a 30 percent cut on the sales tax for groceries.
- * State employees are rewarded for providing the best service through **performance-based pay**.

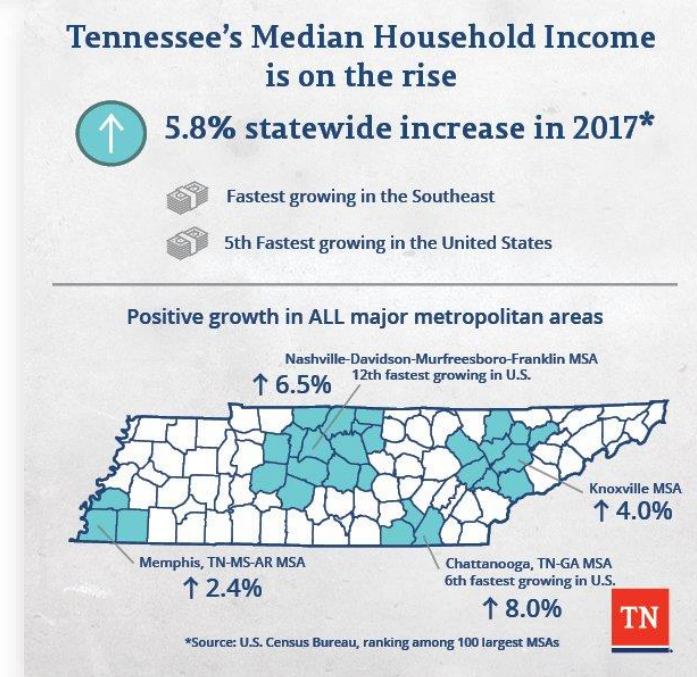
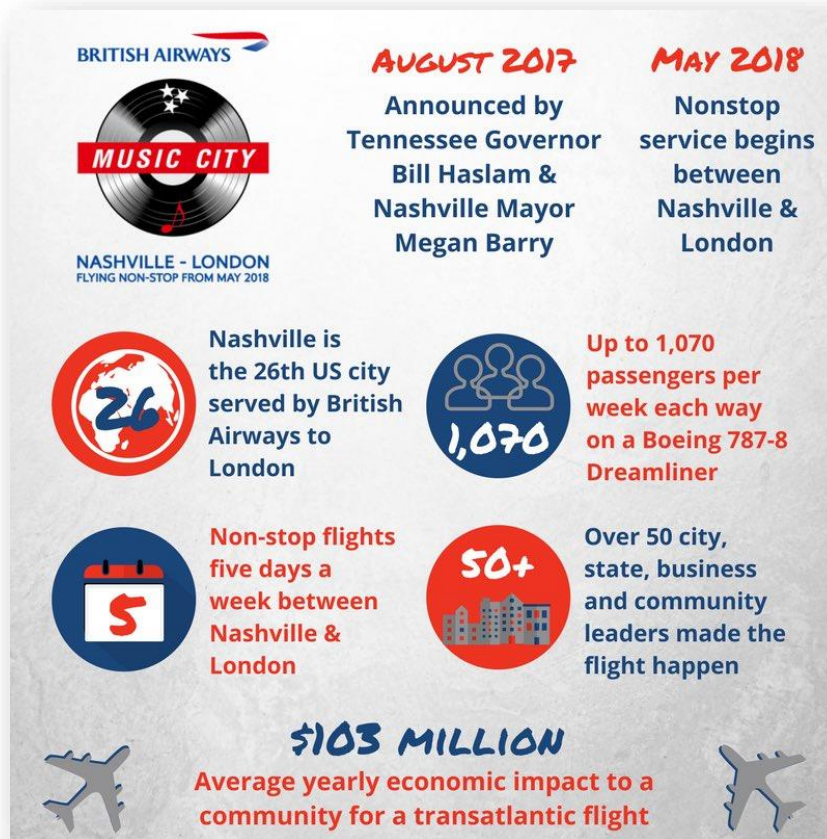


Social Media Channels

- Think about the audience and alter the content to that platform. If it doesn't make sense for that platform, don't post it there.
 - Twitter/BlueSky – Quick graphic; include a shortlink link to the data in the graphic.
 - Example of shortlink: CompleteCollege.org/2025stats
 - LinkedIn/Facebook – Add some analysis, include a graphic, and include a link.
 - Instagram – Focus on the graphic, include a shortlink in the graphic.
 - TikTok – Talk through the data! Break it down for people with some visuals.
 - Tip: Look at what research universities do to share research on TikTok.
- Share it on your own socials, especially LinkedIn.

MULTIPLE STREAMS

Social Media Channels



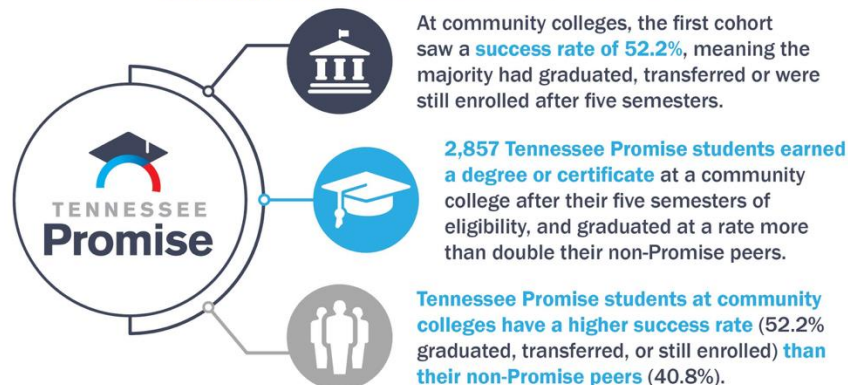
MULTIPLE STREAMS

Earned Media

Tennessee Promise Outcomes | May 2018

Tennessee Promise has accelerated degree production and full-time enrollment at the state's community colleges.

What we know about the first cohort of Tennessee Promise students at community colleges, who entered college in Fall 2015:



Tennessee Promise provides two years of tuition-free community or technical college to recent high school graduates. The program is part of the Drive to 55, Governor Bill Haslam's push to get 55 percent of Tennesseans equipped with a college degree or certificate by the year 2025.



NEWS

Institutions Community Colleges

March 01, 2017

Replicating the Tennessee Promise

As Tennessee's Promise program expands to include adult students, other college scholarship programs are figuring out how to replicate its success.

By Ashley A. Smith



While many states and cities are still working through the details and funding behind their attempts to create a free community college program, Tennessee has been busy expanding its scholarship.

The state was the first to create a free community college program. Now in its second year, the Tennessee Promise has led to student retention gains even as the number of participating students increases.

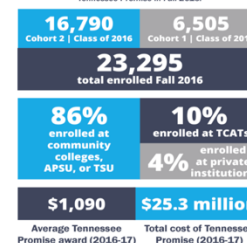
That success was highlighted recently by the state's move to expand the Promise to include all adult residents through Tennessee Reconnect -- which already allowed adult residents to earn a certificate for free at any Tennessee college of applied technology. (The expanded program requires adults to not already have an associate or bachelor's degree, be a state resident for at least a year, apply for federal student aid, participate in an advising program and attend college at least part time.)

"One of the things we always heard was, 'What are we doing with adults?'" said Mike Krause, executive director of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. "And now we've been able to answer that question. We built a seamless message that is about everyone going to college."

More than 33,000 students have received the Promise scholarship and enrolled in college since the program began in 2015, with nearly 23,300 enrolled in 2016.

Fall 2016 Enrollment

All figures below are for students who received payment through or were considered eligible for Tennessee Promise in Fall 2016.



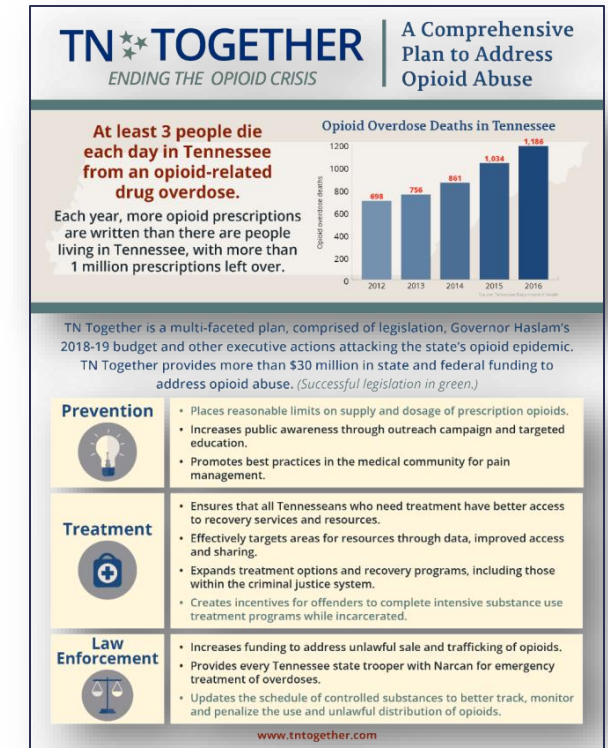
But, as some states and cities are learning, replicating an initiative like the Tennessee Promise isn't an exact science. And there are a few common barriers many programs have faced, including finances and politics.

"Money is the logical explanation," said Laura Perna, director of the Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy at the University of Pennsylvania,

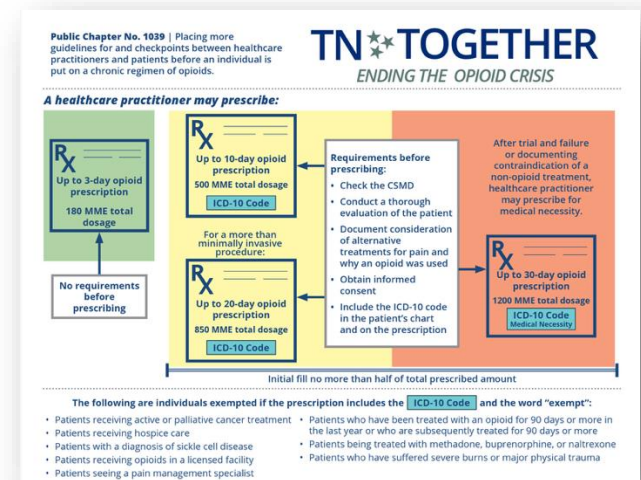
MULTIPLE STREAMS

Consider your Audience

- Who are you trying to reach and what level of context do they already have?
 - Board members or university leadership
 - Faculty and staff
 - Current students
 - Prospective students
 - Legislators and public officials
 - Media
 - General public
- What possible actions could they take as a result of your data?
 - Tailor the message to your audience and think about what actions they can take and how you want them to interact with your institution.
 - Talk through these with your comms team—they are great with message targeting.



One-pager for broader audiences, including the general public.



Detailed graphic for legislators and media

MULTIPLE STREAMS

Consider your Audience

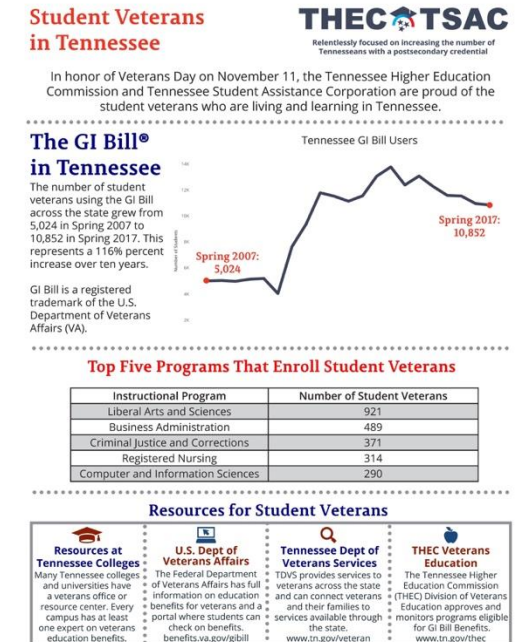
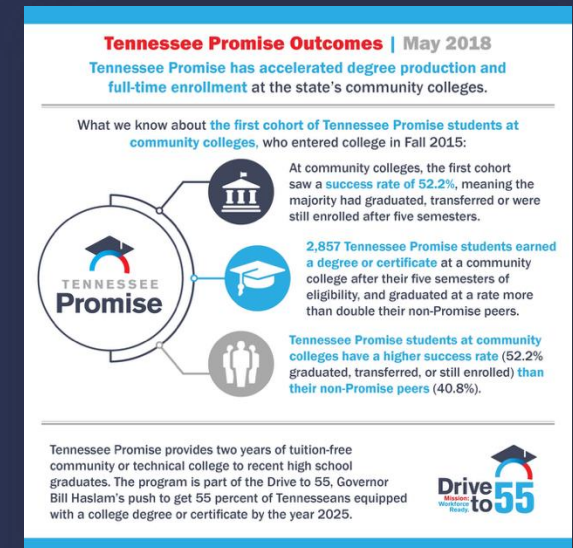
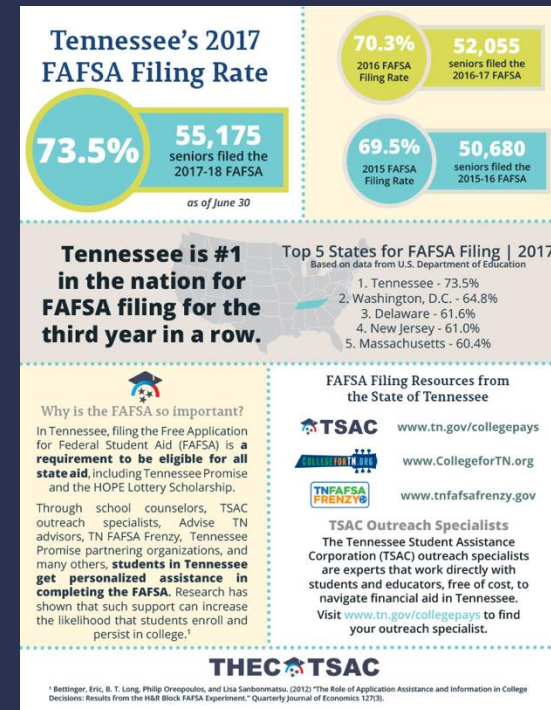
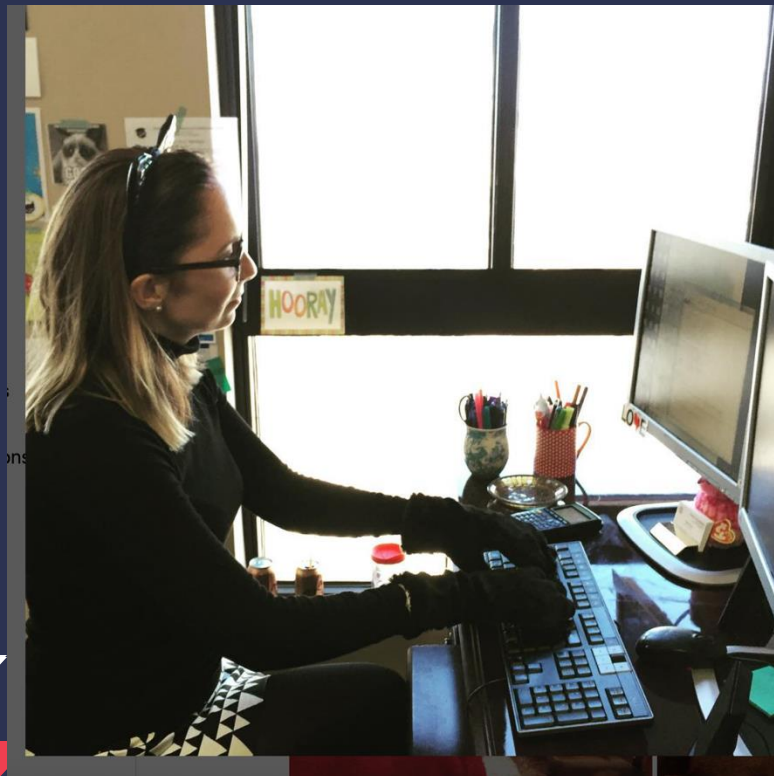
Multiple streams & tailored messages:



The Key Takeaways

So how do we make the information interesting to people who aren't our fellow higher ed nerds?

Every Emily needs a Kate.



So how do we make the information interesting to people who aren't our fellow higher ed nerds?

Every Kate needs an Emily.



SUMMARY

TL;DR:

- Build relationships.
- No one cares about your data if you can't communicate it clearly.
- Descriptive data matters.
- Policymakers are busy, they're not dumb.
- You may only get a snippet of people's attention, so make it matter.