

Student Success at Tennessee Community Colleges

Summary

Tennessee Promise and Tennessee Reconnect have made it possible for many Tennesseans to pursue a college degree or credential tuition free. But removing the financial obstacles to higher education isn't enough. We've also been working hard to ensure that all students who enter college then complete college.

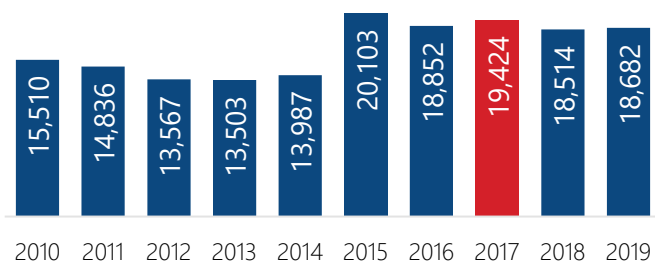
This emphasis on completion made a profound impact on student success. Graduation rates at Tennessee community colleges have increased significantly over the last seven years, **from 14% to 25%**.

The improvements in student success have impacted thousands of Tennesseans, but Tennessee community colleges still have a long way to go to promote success equitably for each student.

Calculating the Graduation Rate

What is a cohort? Graduation rates start with a cohort of students. Each fall, colleges identify students who are seeking a degree, are enrolled in at least twelve credit hours (full-time students), and have enrolled in college for the first time after graduating from high school (first-time students). The students in this group are called the first-time, full-time (FTFT) freshman cohort.

First-Time, Full-Time Freshmen at Tennessee Community Colleges

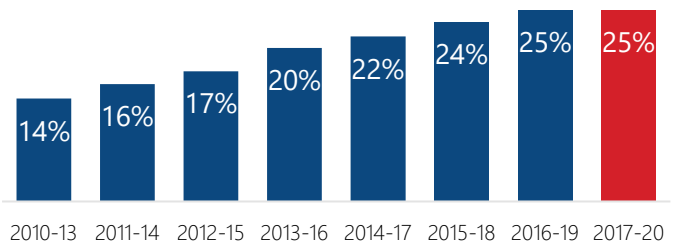


How do we calculate a graduation rate? Once a cohort is established, colleges follow the success of these students. While there are many metrics of success, the graduation rates reported by TBR reflect the number of students in the cohort who earned a certificate or degree from a Tennessee community college within three years of entering college as a FTFT freshman.

Increasing Graduation Rates

In Fall 2017, over 19,000 students enrolled at Tennessee community colleges as members of the first-time, full-time cohort. By summer 2020, after three years, 4,914 of these students had earned a degree or certificate.

Graduation Rates at Community Colleges



This represents a significant increase in three-year graduation rates for Tennessee community colleges, from 14% of students who started in 2010 to 25% of students who started in 2017. Since the 2017 cohort was larger than the 2010 cohort, the increase in graduation rates reflects an even larger increase in the number of new Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential. After three years, nearly 5,000 students from the 2017 cohort had graduated, compared to 2,103 from the 2010 cohort.

Beyond the Graduation Rate

Many Tennessee community college students take more than three years to graduate. In fact, at the three-year mark, 10% of students from the 2017 cohort had not yet graduated but were still enrolled at a TBR community college. Additionally, 11% had transferred to another postsecondary institution before graduating, and 26% had graduated from a TBR college or another institution.



