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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



BILL LEE
GOVERNOR

STATE OF TENNESSEE
TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION
TENNESSEE STUDENT ASSISTANCE CORPORATION

312 ROSA L. PARKS AVE., 9TH FLOOR
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Dear School Administrators,

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) is pleased to announce the launch of a Direct Admissions pilot program. This pilot is a first-of-its-kind initiative designed to simplify the college admissions process and increase college enrollment across the state. Direct admissions programs proactively admit students to college based on their academic records, removing the need for traditional applications. Similar programs are already active in states like Georgia, Idaho, and Minnesota, but Tennessee is taking this a step further by integrating up-front information and commitments about state financial aid eligibility into the process.

As a one-year pilot study, this initiative will be thoroughly evaluated by a dedicated research team to determine its effectiveness, with the possibility of expanding the program statewide in the future. By providing early admissions notifications and financial aid estimates, the process is designed to create a clearer, more supportive pathway to college. Schools and students will receive resources and assistance to ensure a smooth experience throughout the pilot.

To assess the impact of this approach, every high school in the state will be assigned to one of four study groups:

- Group 1: Schools will proceed with their normal college application season without direct admissions notifications.
- Group 2: Seniors will receive a letter listing the Tennessee colleges and universities where they are already admitted based on their academic records.
- Group 3: Seniors will receive a letter with their direct admissions offers, along with an early indication of financial aid for which they may qualify.
- Group 4: Seniors will receive direct admissions offers and financial aid information alongside additional college-going supports, including student/parent texts and personalized outreach from a dedicated direct admissions advisor.

High schools have been randomly assigned to treatment groups for this project. **View a full list of high schools randomly selected to participate here** CollegeForTN.org/direct-admissions/direct-admissions-selected-high-schools/. To optimize research validity and impact of the study, whether a selected high school is assigned to Groups 2, 3, or 4 will be embargoed until later in the fall after

letters are generated. Schools will then receive proactive outreach from THEC and have access to a suite of student/parent and counselor resources.

This research-driven approach will provide valuable insights into how early, clear communication about college admissions and financial aid influences students' postsecondary decisions. The findings will help shape the future of college access efforts in Tennessee. For more details and frequently asked questions, visit CollegeForTN.org/Direct-Admissions.

We look forward to partnering with you in this exciting pilot for Tennessee students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lizzette Reynolds". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Lizzette Reynolds, Commissioner
Tennessee Department of Education

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Gentile". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name being the most prominent.

Steven Gentile, Executive Director
Tennessee Higher Education Commission