

Legislative Update January 12, 2010

Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010

The Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010 is Governor Phil Bredesen's legislative proposal to reform public higher education in Tennessee. The legislative proposal is largely based on a study completed by Stan Jones, founder of Complete College America. Here are some of the key features of the proposal:

- Make significant changes to how public higher education develops its master plan. Universities must address the state's economic and development strategies in their goals and objectives. Substantive planning and accountability will be based on course completion and degree production rather than enrollment counts. An emphasis will be put upon the development of discreet mission statements for each public institution for higher education and producing degrees consistent with those statements. THEC will then be responsible for developing policies and formulae for fair and equitable distribution of funds consistent with these goals and plans.
- Tennessee's community colleges will be treated as a system. Rather than thirteen independent institutions, the state will immediately begin to develop uniformity among the community colleges.
- The Act proposes the development of a "university tract" in the community college curriculum. The tract will provide 41 hours of general education courses and 19 hours of pre-major specific courses. Whether or not a student completes all or portions of the tract, the courses will be transferred with equivalence to the public universities.
- If a student completes an AA or AS at a public community college they will be able to transfer to a public university with junior status.
- Complete the current work of developing a common course numbering system between the community colleges and the public universities.
- Create an option for community college students who intend to pursue a four year degree and meet the university admission standards to be simultaneously enrolled at the community college and a four-year university.
- Offer all remedial work at the community colleges.

Tennessee First to the Top Act

This Act serves as the legislative package to complete Tennessee's application for the federal Race To The Top funds. Tennessee is seeking to submit their application materials by January 19, 2010 in order to compete for round one of the funding. Overall, 8-15 states will receive grants ranging from \$200 - \$700 million. Only 2 – 3 states will be funded in round one.

Key to this application is the monitoring of "student growth data." This is another name for longitudinal student data sets. The goal is monitor a student's educational "growth" from pre-kindergarten through

college. Initially the data will be used to track the progress of students as a tool to evaluate teachers and teacher education programs.

Linking primary school data with higher education data is an issue that has caused concern for TICUA. TICUA sent a letter to the Governor expressing reservations about how data will be collected and used. Private colleges and universities do not currently share the state's protection against lawsuits for lost data. TICUA has set immunity as a precondition for further cooperation in data sharing. As well, it is critical that all data are used in a way that is productive toward improvement rather than punitive. Finally, any cooperation with the state with TICUA member institutions should not result in a loss of autonomy of our curriculum or program design.

Fast Track

It is the goal of the Administration to have both of these bills passed by week's end. Rarely has there been seen such a bold initiative with state level policy. The final language of the bill was distributed today, with many lobbyists possessing a copy before the legislators. This will be a week of late nights and lots of hallway conversations.

Lottery Scholarship

House Education Chairman Harry Brooks indicated today during a briefing that he believes the lottery scholarship issues probably will not be dealt with during this week's Special Session. Today, however, the Bredesen Administration distributed a report that recommended increasing the community college scholarship. Specifically, the report recommends that the "Tennessee HOPE Scholarship for two-year institutions should be adjusted to provide for a more equitable level of financial aid, relative to four-year institutions, by **increasing from \$2,000 to \$3,000** the amount granted to students attending community colleges" (emphasis theirs). This is consistent with the THEC proposal that calls for the same adjustment by taking aid from the freshmen and sophomores attending four-year institutions and giving it to community college students. This would have both community college and university freshman and sophomores to have a \$3,000 HOPE and juniors and seniors would get \$4,000. This proposal totally disregards the tuition burden of students attending four-year institutions. According to a TICUA analysis, this would reduce student aid at private colleges by \$6.3 million.