TICUA Policy Update

Reconnect Moves Forward in the House

The House Education Administration and Planning Subcommittee voted this week to move the Governor's Adult Reconnect bill to the full Committee. The bill was amended to include four year colleges and universities which have Associate degree programs. This includes a number of TICUA member colleges and universities.

The Reconnect scholarship is restricted to students who are declared independent by way of the FAFSA, have not received a previous degree, and be enrolled in at least 6 credit hours. It is anticipated that 24,000 students will be taking advantage of the program which begins in the fall of 2018 at a cost of over $10 million. Currently enrolled students will be eligible upon the inception of the program. As with Tennessee Promise, the Reconnect program is a last-dollar scholarship; the Pell Grant and other state aid must be counted prior to Reconnect dollars being received. The scholarship amount for the four year institutions is capped at the average community college tuition and required fees rate.

More information on Reconnect: https://www.tn.gov/nexttennessee/topic/nt-one-pagertennessee-reconnect

STRONG Act Heard in House Subcommittee

The House Education Administration and Planning Subcommittee voted to move the STRONG Act to full Committee. This scholarship program allows a member of any National Guard branch to receive free tuition at a public university or a scholarship equivalent to average of the public university tuition at a TICUA member institution. Students must first apply federal and state non-payback aid before the STRONG Act funds are applied.

This four-year pilot program requires the Reservist to be in good standing with the National Guard, not have previously received a BA or BS degree, and maintain a 2.0 GPA. The scholarship is a reimbursement program and pays for hours completed each semester. As well, the program is capped at 120 credit hours.

More information on the STRONG Act: http://www.tn.gov/nexttennessee/topic/nt-one-pager-tennessee-strong-act

Higher Education Budget Hearings

The Senate Education Committee held higher education budget hearings this week. It was an opportunity for all the public higher education divisions to discuss their proposed budget requests. Overall, THEC is requesting $55.1 million for system-wide operations including $25 million for the

funding formula and $30.1 million for salary increases.   THEC's Executive Director Mike Krause indicated that if this improvement is approved the public college and university tuition increases will be at 4% or less for the 2017-2018 academic cycle.

Additional requests included $343 million for capital improvement projects throughout public post-secondary institutions in the State. THEC also put forth a request for $10 million in recurring funds for the State's only purely need-based student aid program – the Tennessee Student Assistance Award (TSASA). Students attending TICUA member institutions benefit from the TSAA.   These funds assist families with adjusted gross incomes at about $30,000 and less to attend the college or university which best fits their academic and social needs.

TICUA 61st Annual Meeting a Success

"Capitol Conversations: Charting the Future" was the theme of TICUA 61st Annual Meeting which was held last week in Nashville. The meeting was attended by the vast majority of TICUA member campuses, a handful of member campus Trustees, and the TICUA Board of Directors. This year's policy focus included sessions with Education Chairs Senator Dolores Gresham and Representative Harry Brooks, Finance Chair Senator Bo Watson, House Speaker Beth Harwell, and Lt. Governor Randy McNally, Governor Bill Haslam, and Andrew LaCasse and Lauren Davies of US Senator Lamar Alexander's office. The TICUA Legislative Reception followed the day of sessions and was attended by over 60 legislators.   Thank you to all who attended!

Mark the date for the 2018 **TICUA 62nd Annual Meeting** to be held on **February 20 and 21, 2018** in Nashville.