



Student Mobility Initiative: Tennessee Reconnect Act

The **Tennessee Reconnect Act** establishes a last-dollar scholarship for adults to attend a community college tuition-free. With this extension of the Drive to 55, which comes at no additional cost to taxpayers, **every** Tennessean will have the opportunity to enter or reenter public higher education with no tuition expenses.

Why Tennessee Reconnect?

Tennessee needs **871,000** degrees to reach Drive to 55 goal, but only **645,000** high school students are expected to graduate between 2014 and 2022. Tennessee must bolster its focus on the recruitment, retention and completion of adults in higher education. The state has a tremendous opportunity to attract more adults to higher education, with more than **900,000** Tennesseans having earned some college credit but no degree.

To be **eligible for Tennessee Reconnect**, the student must:

- Not already have an associate or bachelor degree;
- Have been a Tennessee resident for at least one year preceding the date of application for the grant;
- Complete the FAFSA and be deemed an independent student^[1];
- Be admitted to an eligible institution (any of the state's 13 public community colleges) and enroll in a degree or certificate program at least part time (6 semester hours); and
- Participate in an advising program approved by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission.

In order to maintain the Tennessee Reconnect grant, the student must enroll in classes leading to an associate's degree or certificate, maintain a 2.0 GPA, and maintain continuous enrollment.

Adults who meet all the requirements will receive a **last-dollar scholarship**, which is equal to the difference between the community college tuition and fees and any gift aid (grants and scholarships) that a student receives. The amount of funding a adult student will receive will be based on the average amount of tuition and fees at a community college, which is estimated to be \$4,200. Tennessee Reconnect will be funded through the **lottery for education account** and will cost approximately \$10 million once fully implemented.

[1]An "independent" student is defined as one of the following: at least 24 years old, married, a graduate or professional student, a veteran, a member of the armed forces, an orphan, a ward of the court, or someone with legal dependents other than a spouse, an emancipated minor or someone who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Please see <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa/filling-out/dependency> for a complete list. See more at: <https://www.tn.gov/nexttennessee/topic/nt-one-pagertennessee-reconnect#sthash.sfoTw3QN.dpuf>