PROMOTING PLA STATEWIDE: THE DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, AND CONTINUED SUPPORT OF PLA PROGRAMS AND POLICIES IN TENNESSEE

Wilson Finch, Tennessee Higher Education Commission
Overview of Presentation

- Why PLA is important to Tennessee?
- How are we approaching PLA in Tennessee?
- What we have been doing in the state?
- What are we doing now?
- What impact do we hope to have?
- Questions
Higher Education in Tennessee: Structure

Governor

General Assembly

TN Higher Education Commission (THEC)

Coordinating Board

University of Tennessee System (UT)
  - Governing Board
    - 3 Universities
    - 4 Specialized Institutes

TN Board of Regents (TBR)
  - Governing Board
    - 6 Universities
    - 13 Community Colleges
    - 28 Colleges of Applied Technology
The Completion Agenda in TN: 
Background

- Public Policy Audit – 2009
- **Complete College Tennessee Act (CCTA)** – 2010
- Institution Missions Revised – 2010
- Master Plan Developed – 2010
- **Tennessee Transfer Pathways Developed** – 2010-2011
- 100% Performance-Based Funding Formula Developed and Implemented – 2010-2011
- Completion Innovation Challenge:
  - Focus groups
  - Tennessee Adult Strategies Group
- **Tennessee PLA Initiative** – fall 2011-present
The What and the Why

- Why are adult learners so important to TN higher education and how is PLA a tool for helping them?

- What have we been doing in Tennessee with PLA?

- What state, system, and institution approaches have we used and how can they be adapted for you?
The Case for Increasing TN’s Adult Educational Attainment

- Adult population 25 years and older with an Associates degree or higher:
  - U.S.: 35.6%
  - TN: 29%

 888,000 adults in Tennessee with some college but no degree

- Occupations that need some type of postsecondary education for entry are projected to grow the fastest during the 2010-20 decade.

- **State goal – “Drive to 55”**: Raise educational attainment levels to 55% by 2025

Impact of Education on Salary and Employment

**Education Pays**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Unemployment rate in 2011 (in %)</th>
<th>Median weekly earnings in 2011 (in $)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional degree</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1,263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>1,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no degree</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school diploma</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average unemployment rate: 7.6%
Average median weekly earnings: $797

Why Focus on PLA?

PLA targets adult learners, and adult learners are important to Tennessee.

- State educational attainment goal
- Jobs
- Better performing students
Why Focus on PLA?

Research shows outcomes for adult students with PLA are better than adults with no PLA credit.

- Higher GPAs
- Shorter time-to-degree
- Better retention rates
- Better completion rates
- Take more regular courses
# Funding Formula Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Colleges</th>
<th>Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 Credit Hours</td>
<td>24 Credit Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Credit Hours</td>
<td>48 Credit Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 Credit Hours</td>
<td>72 Credit Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual Enrollment</td>
<td>Bachelor’s and Associates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates Degrees</td>
<td>Masters/Ed Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificates</td>
<td>Doctoral/Law Degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Placements</td>
<td>Research &amp; Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D Success</td>
<td>Transfers Out with 12 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers Out with 12 Hours</td>
<td>Degrees per 100 FTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce Training</td>
<td>Six-Year Grad Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awards per 100 FTE</td>
<td>Premiums: Adult and Pell-Eligible Students (40% Each)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Premiums: **Adult** and Pell-Eligible Students (40% Each)
The PLA Initiative

Goals:
- Reduce time-to-degree for adult students.
- Expand access to and options for PLA to adult learners in all Tennessee colleges and universities.
- Use PLA as an incentive for adults to return to school and as a tool to pursue increased degree attainment.
- Help institutions implement and execute their PLA programs more effectively and achieve their goals.

Focus:
- Increasing consistency
- Increasing access
- Increasing awareness
Tennessee’s Approach to PLA

CCA Grant-Supported Work:
- PLA Task Force
- Statewide PLA Standards
- Training and Campus Outreach
- Workforce Outreach
- Central Website and Marketing

Ford Foundation Grant-Supported Work
- Technical Assistance and Capacity Building for Campuses
- Resource and marketing support to campuses
Tennessee PLA Task Force

- 21 of 22 public institutions
  - Voluntary
  - Diverse
  - Charged with drafting the Standards
- Subcommittees for different subjects
  - Transcription and Transfer
  - Structures
  - Outreach and Communications
  - Finance
  - Student Support
Highlights of TN PLA Standards

- Value statement
- Common definitions
- Standardizes what credit is accepted and how it can be used by students
- Academic quality and access
- Transcription and tracking
Highlights of TN PLA Standards

- Transparency and consistency
- Credit-by-exam consistency
- Periodic review of PLA policies
- Portfolio-specific standards
- Transfer
  - Adopted into Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) Policy
  - Key components (including transfer) accepted by the University of Tennessee System (UT)
  - Endorsed by the Board of the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association (TICUA)
What are we doing now?

- **Objectives:**
  - Increase institutional capacity to provide PLA
  - Identify barriers in policies, practices, and awareness
  - Increase student demand for PLA

- **Vehicles**
  - PLA Toolkit for Campuses
  - Marketing materials and support (pending funding approval)
  - PLA Program Evaluations and Technical Assistance – “Menu of Services”
Menu of Services

☐ THEC will offer strategies/assistance to:

- **Increasing demand** by students
- **Increasing partnerships with local businesses** for use of PLA
- **Aligning current institutional and departmental policies** with PLA Standards
- **Assessing institutional procedures and intake processes** from a potential student’s perspective (“secret shopper” concept)
- **Examining other available PLA options** (e.g. Thomas Edison State College Exams, National College Credit Recommendation Service, MOOCs, ACE workforce training credits, LearningCounts.org, etc.)
- **Addressing faculty concerns** and awareness
- **Promoting PLA as a default** way of awarding credits
Impact

- Direct Benefits of PLA to Students
- Big Picture:
  - Attracts adults back to higher education
  - More adult credentials and faster
  - Closer to our Drive to 55 goals
Questions?

Wilson Finch

Wilson.Finch@tn.gov

615-741-2204