

History and Purpose of the Tennessee P-16 Council

In 2005, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) convened a reconstituted and refocused Tennessee P-16 Council aimed at providing collaboration among key stakeholders for introducing and coordinating statewide P-16 initiatives. The singular goal of the Council is raising rates of high school graduation and postsecondary participation through a seamless high school-to-college alignment of academic standards. The nine-member Council represents the interests of education, community, government, and business in increasing the educational attainment of Tennesseans.

Governor's Policy Advisor
Chancellor, Tennessee Board of Regents
President, The University of Tennessee
Commissioner of Education
Executive Director, State Board of Education
President, Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association
Executive Director, Tennessee Business Roundtable
President, Tennessee Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Executive Director, Tennessee Higher Education Commission (P-16 Council Chair)

As its first act, the Council charged THEC with establishing a Mathematics Curriculum Alignment Task Force with the goal of improving student readiness for college by aligning standards for high school and first-year college mathematics courses. THEC's Task Force partners were the State Department of Education (DOE), the State Board of Education (SBE), and the two systems of higher education. For over a year, more than fifty high school, middle school, community college, and university mathematics faculty, DOE curriculum specialists, mathematics assessment consultants, ACT representatives, SBE staff, University of Tennessee and Tennessee Board of Regents system staff, and THEC staff worked together to develop recommendations for standards alignment, assessment protocols, and high school mathematics graduation requirements. The Council received and endorsed the Task Force recommendations which sought concordance of math curricula with ACT math learning expectations, promoted early assessment using ACT EPAS and other predictive data, recommended the requirement of four years of high school math with an Algebra II threshold, and began the dialogue for raising university admission requirements in math. While the work of the Task Force pre-dated Tennessee's adoption of the American Diploma Project, its faculty engagement and resulting recommendations helped lay the groundwork for the Tennessee Diploma Project and Tennessee's 2007-8 reform of high school graduation requirements. The Council enthusiastically committed its support to the Tennessee Diploma Project framework and process.

The Council serves as the GEAR UP TN principal governance body and fulfills a statewide oversight function required by the terms of the six-year federal grant to THEC.

The Council serves as the steering committee for Public Chapter 459. This legislation directs the State Board of Education, Department of Education, Tennessee Higher Education Commission, Board of Trustees of the University of Tennessee, and the Tennessee Board of Regents to create and govern a consortium for creative innovative education. In having these same partners, the Council undertook oversight for approving high school and post-secondary cooperative dual credit programs, the curriculum development for these programs, and high school to postsecondary articulation avenues for credits earned in these programs.

The Council does not provide direction for the Tennessee Board of Regents' network of local P-16 councils, a network established prior to the renewal of the state coordinating P-16 body. However, the Council has formally recognized the broad base of the Tennessee Diploma Project and its potential for using the local P-16 network for reaching TDP goals. This network provided a communications avenue for the Governor's Office, TBR, UT, and THEC staff to take TDP information to schools and communities.