

# Tennessee Reconnect

## Frequently Asked Questions



Whether you have been to college before, or this is your first time, you are just a few steps away from achieving your educational goals. Below are some steps to take to get (en)rolling.

### 1. What is the Tennessee Reconnect Scholarship?

The Tennessee Reconnect Scholarship is a last-dollar scholarship that will allow all Tennessee adults who qualify to attend an eligible institution free of tuition and mandatory fees. This program begins with the fall semester of the 2018-19 academic year.

### 2. How do I apply?

- a. Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and be classified as an independent student
  - i. For Fall semester – by September 1
  - ii. For Spring or Summer semester – by February 1
- b. Complete the application and Reconnect Success Plan in the TSAC Student Portal, [www.tn.gov/tsacstudentportal](http://www.tn.gov/tsacstudentportal)

### 3. What are the eligibility requirements?

Students must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Be a Tennessee resident for at least one year prior to the FAFSA submission date
- Complete the FAFSA and be classified as an independent student
- Not have previously earned an associate or baccalaureate degree
- Be a U.S. Citizen or eligible non-citizen
- Comply with United States selective service requirements, if applicable to the student
- Not be in default on a student loan program
- Not have an outstanding balance of previously awarded financial aid to an institution
- Not be incarcerated
- Be admitted to an eligible institution and enrolled at least part time (minimum 6 hours) in courses leading to a certificate or associate degree
- Complete the application and Reconnect Success Plan questionnaire in the TSAC portal.

### 4. What is the Reconnect Success Plan?

In order to be eligible to receive the Reconnect scholarship, students must participate in a Reconnect Success Plan. When applicants apply for the scholarship, they will be asked a series of questions to help THEC identify challenges they may face when returning to school as an adult, and next steps they may be required to take. Students' answers to the questions will generate a Reconnect Success Plan for each student – a “map” of resources personalized for their needs and available through his or her local Tennessee Reconnect Community (TRC) and through their institution of choice. Each student will be assigned to a TRC to access the high touch pre-enrollment advising and navigation services they offer to adult Reconnectors, which are based on national best practices for supporting adult learners. THEC and the TRCs will administer and oversee participation in the Reconnect Success Plan.

### 5. Are there any income requirements or caps that students must meet to qualify?

No, there are no income requirements or caps students must meet to qualify for the award.

### 6. How much is the potential award amount?

The Tennessee Reconnect grant is a last-dollar scholarship which will cover the cost of tuition and mandatory fees charged to all students at any of the state's 13 community colleges, 27 colleges of applied technology, or other eligible institutions. It is important to understand that the grant will not represent a last-dollar scholarship at the eligible four-year institution.

## **7. Are there continuing eligibility requirements?**

Yes. To continue to be eligible for the Tennessee Reconnect Scholarship, students must:

- enroll at an eligible institution in a program or courses that lead to completion of a certificate or associate degree;
- attend and complete each semester at least as a part-time student (minimum 6 hours);
- maintain a minimum cumulative 2.0 GPA at the end of each academic year;
- maintain continuous enrollment (fall & spring) at an eligible institution;
- complete the renewal FAFSA each year; and
- continue to participate in the Reconnect Success Plan.

## **8. How will the award amount for the Tennessee Reconnect Scholarship be determined?**

Similar to Tennessee Promise, the amount of the award shall be the last dollar of tuition and mandatory fees charged to all students after Pell, TSAA, and TELS have been applied. In addition, all tuition waivers and discounts must first be deducted before gift aid is credited.

## **9. Can students regain the scholarship if they lose eligibility due to a low GPA?**

No. If a student ceases to be eligible for the scholarship due to GPA then the student is not eligible to regain the award. However, a student can appeal the loss of eligibility for a reason other than GPA. The appeal process will follow the TELS appeal process.

## **10. How long can the student receive the Tennessee Reconnect Scholarship?**

Students can receive the award until the occurrence of the first of the following events:

- the student has attained a degree or certificate in an eligible program of study;
- the student has attempted the number of semester hours necessary for completion as determined under Title IV SAP maximum time frame standards including any hours transferred to the eligible program which were earned prior to enrollment as a Tennessee Reconnect student (TSAC plans to introduce legislation in the 2018 session of the Tennessee General Assembly that would eliminate this as a terminating event); or
- five (5) years have passed since the date of initial enrollment as a Tennessee Reconnect student.

## **11. Can a student appeal max time frame with the institutional SAP committee to become eligible for TN Reconnect?**

Yes, a student may appeal maximum time frame to become initially eligible. A determination of maximum time frame includes only those hours which are eligible for transfer into the new program, whether the hours were earned as a Reconnect student or prior to enrollment in Reconnect. Although SAP is not considered for eligibility, maximum time frame will be impacted by the hours eligible for transfer into the program of study.

## **12. Will a student who completes a certificate be allowed to pursue an associate degree?**

Yes, a student may continue to receive the Tennessee Reconnect Scholarship for an associate degree following completion of a certificate that directly leads to the associate degree.

## **13. Can a Tennessee Reconnect student transfer from one eligible institution to another?**

Yes, as long as the student continues to meet all eligibility requirements.

#### **14. What will happen to the Community College Reconnect Grant (CCRG)?**

Legislation which enacts the Tennessee Reconnect Scholarship will also include the following changes to the CCRG which became effective on May 24, 2017:

- Reduces the number of semester hours required for attendance from nine (9) to six (6)
- Eliminates SAP and only requires a 2.0 GPA to continue to be eligible for CCRG
- Removes the 12-month non-enrollment requirement
- Removes the requirement of completing 30 semester hours toward an associate degree prior to enrollment in the CCRG

#### **15. Will CCRG recipients continue to be funded?**

Yes, recipients will continue to be funded by the CCRG block grant provided to your institution in the fall 2016 semester. If the recipients do not complete their program of study by the fall 2018 semester then they will transition to the Tennessee Reconnect Scholarship if they have met all CCRG requirements.

#### **16. What happens to the CCRG block grant funding at the end of summer 2018?**

All unexpended CCRG funds at the end of the 2017-18 academic year will be returned to TSAC.

#### **17. Will this impact the nontraditional HOPE Scholarship at community colleges?**

Yes, the legislation enacting Tennessee Reconnect eliminates the nontraditional HOPE Scholarship at eligible institutions beginning in the fall semester 2018. However, the nontraditional student HOPE Scholarship will remain at eligible four-year institutions for students enrolled in bachelor degree programs.

#### **18. What happens to nontraditional HOPE students who are still enrolled at a community college at the end of summer 2018?**

These students will automatically transition to TN Reconnect, if all academic and non-academic requirements are met. Under the current TN Reconnect legislation, existing nontraditional students who are Pell/TSAA eligible may potentially lose funding under the TN Reconnect awarding process. TSAC plans to introduce legislation in the 2018 session of the Tennessee General Assembly to grandfather these students which will allow them to keep their nontraditional HOPE Scholarship until they reach a terminating event.

#### **19. Will exceptions be made for students who do not maintain continuous enrollment?**

Students who have an approved medical or personal leave of absence may continue to receive the grant upon resuming the eligible program of study so long as all eligibility requirements have been met.

A student may drop from full time to less than full time but may not drop from part time to less than part-time enrollment. The student who loses eligibility will have the opportunity to appeal to the institution and, if denied, appeal to TSAC (similar to HOPE).

#### **20. Can a prior recipient of TCAT Reconnect who has completed a certificate or diploma program, now participate in the TN Reconnect program?**

Yes. Prior completion of a certificate or diploma program at a TCAT would not disqualify a student from participating in the TN Reconnect program.

#### **21. As a student, what do I need to do with the Reconnect Success Plan to maintain my scholarship?**

When you first apply for the scholarship, you will be asked a series of questions that will generate a Reconnect Success Plan for you – a “map” of resources personalized to your needs. To maintain your eligibility and scholarship, you will be asked to complete this questionnaire annually in order to provide you the best, most accurate and up to date resources in your postsecondary journey.

## **22. How do I check the status of my Tennessee Reconnect Scholarship application?**

To check the status of your application, you should visit the TSAC Student Portal (<https://cliplink.tsac.tn.gov/student/signon/>) which you used to first apply for the scholarship.

## **23. How do I check the status of my financial award with the Tennessee Reconnect Scholarship?**

To check the status of your scholarship and/or your award amount, you should contact the financial aid office at the institution you plan to attend and/or are currently attending with your scholarship.