



**Relentlessly focused on increasing the number of  
Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential**

## **Higher Education and Public Policy Internship Program**

**Tennessee Higher Education Commission  
Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation**

For application submissions, questions, or additional information, please contact Taylor Odle,  
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The Tennessee Higher Education Commission sponsors a Higher Education and Public Policy Internship Program to expose graduate and undergraduate students to the state-level coordination and operation of the higher education enterprise. Interns engage in the Commission's programmatic, research, and policy operations through an individually-tailored educational experience. Interns learn more about higher education and current trends through structured readings, attendance at Commission staff meetings, shadowing senior leadership, working on staff- and state-related projects, and completing a final project suited to their area(s) of focus.

## **About THEC**

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission was created in 1967 by the Tennessee General Assembly to achieve coordination and foster unity with regard to higher education in the state. The Commission coordinates and provides guidance to the institutions governed by the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, the six locally-governed state universities, and the community colleges and colleges of applied technology governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents. There are currently nine public universities, two special purpose institutes, 13 community colleges, and 27 colleges of applied technology in Tennessee that serve approximately 250,000 students.

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission is the state's coordinating agency for higher education. Guided by the *Master Plan for Tennessee Postsecondary Education*, THEC oversees an array of finance, academic, research, and consumer protection initiatives that promote student success and support the state's completion agenda for postsecondary education. THEC actively seeks to develop policy recommendations, programmatic initiatives, and partnerships that increase educational attainment in the state while improving higher education access and success for all Tennesseans.

THEC and its sister agency, the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation, employ approximately 130 staff members across twelve divisions. For more information on THEC/TSAC, please visit <https://www.tn.gov/thecc/>.

## **The Internship**

THEC hosts interns during each Fall, Spring, and Summer term. Positions are open to undergraduate and graduate students with relevant experience and acceptable qualifications. THEC's internship program offers participants the opportunity to learn from and contribute to the Commission's ongoing efforts to coordinate higher education in Tennessee, advance student access and completion, and produce a more educated workforce. While interns are typically housed in the Policy, Research, and Fiscal Affairs division, opportunities for collaboration with other THEC divisions is encouraged and may be arranged. Internships are paid positions, and interns may earn academic or professional credit for participation.

## About

Interns have a unique opportunity to work in a fast-paced environment while gaining real-world experience in postsecondary education policy development, research, and government relations. THEC interns play a critical role in assisting the Commission staff as they research, generate, and advance policy ideas that deliver student opportunity and workforce development. Interns focus on salient postsecondary education policy issues, such as college affordability, state financial aid, program evaluation, and other areas of interest.

While learning from and contributing to the work of THEC, interns also engage in academic and professional development activities. Prior to joining THEC, interns engage in suggested pre-program readings from academic journals and policy organizations in addition to introductory conference calls. While at THEC, interns may participate in THEC-arranged meetings with professors, social events with interns from other agencies, and lectures by leading academic and policy minds.

Interns develop an independent, culminating project focused on a research idea, program development, or policy intervention to advance student success and deliver a policy plan presentation to THEC's senior leadership team before the conclusion of the internship period.

## Responsibilities

The primary responsibility of interns is to support the Policy, Research, and Fiscal Affairs (or designated) division by:

- Collaborating with state and agency experts in postsecondary education policy to develop research ideas and/or policy recommendations;
- Conducting literature reviews and policy scans on issues related to college readiness, access, financial aid, and success;
- Attending and summarizing education-related meetings and legislative hearings;
- Analyzing quantitative and qualitative data to inform policy analysis, development, and recommendations;
- Developing evidence-based materials to support the Commission's operation; and
- Assisting in administrative work.

## Qualifications

Ideal applicants will possess an interest in higher education policy, supplemented by research or advocacy-based experience in the field, in addition to:

- General knowledge of higher education issues from a state and/or national level;
- Demonstrated experience in examining educational challenges from an empiric and public policy perspective;

- Strong analytical and/or research skills, including use of Excel and/or SPSS/Stata for analysis; and
- Excellent written and oral communication skills.

Applicants should fit into one of the following categories:

- A current student or recent graduate of a baccalaureate program in statistics, public policy, education, or a related discipline.
- Currently enrolled in (or accepted to) a graduate program in statistics, public policy, education, or a related discipline.
- A recent graduate of a master’s or doctoral-level program in statistics, public policy, education, or a related discipline.

Interns may earn academic credit for a practicum or internship experience in accordance with their institution’s academic policies. It is the intern’s responsibility to notify THEC of their program’s specific requirements for hours, project completion, and the like.

### To Apply

Interested applicants should submit a cover letter, resume, academic transcript(s), and writing sample before the respective deadline for the term in which they are applying. All materials should be submitted to [taylor.odle@tn.gov](mailto:taylor.odle@tn.gov). Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. The applications deadlines are as follows:

For Fall term (approximately August – December):	July 1
For Spring term (approximately January – April):	November 1
For Summer term (approximately May – July):	April 1

The cover letter should detail your interest in the position, relevant experience, academic and professional qualifications, and highlight potential areas of focus for research or projects, if selected. Please also identify one academic and one professional reference, providing contact information for each. If you are interested in partnering with another division at THEC, please note that in your cover letter. Your resume should include your GPA, major(s) or program concentration(s), expected graduation date(s), and highlight relevant public policy, research, or employment experience. For your writing sample, please respond to the following question in no more than 2 double-spaced pages:

Tennessee has led the nation in innovative postsecondary education policies, instituting the nation’s first full outcomes-based funding formula, offering the first statewide Promise scholarship program, and achieving the highest FAFSA completion rate in the country for the past several years. Considering Tennessee’s position as a national leader and innovator, what postsecondary education challenges still exist and how can education researchers, policymakers, and governing bodies/THEC address them?