

## Let's Reconnect!

As alumni we have all had time to learn that life just has a way of getting in the way of our plans. If you're a control freak like I am, that can really drive you crazy. College was in the plan at one point in our lives. After all, that's why we joined a college prep program! We each sat through weekly meetings and those Saturday lectures, and some even attended the summer programs. All of a sudden we are adults and out the world and... BAM! Well hello life! I personally thought life would be more like a box of chocolates and not a baseball bat. Chocolates are good...baseball bats.... not so much. We then have to shift our plans around and a lot of the times our education doesn't make the cut. We do what we have to do and say "I'll do college one day...". And eventually "one day" starts getting pushed back further and further due to not having the finances to actually go.

"One day" has finally arrived here for us in Tennessee. It comes in a nice package called Tennessee Reconnect. In 2013, Governor Haslam launched the Drive to 55 to increase the number of Tennesseans with a postsecondary degree or certificate percent. At least half the jobs in our state will require some postsecondary education by 2025. This drive resulted in establishing Tennessee Promise, which allows high school graduates meeting certain requirements to attend two years of community or technical college free of tuition and fees, and the Tennessee Reconnect scholarship, which provides free technical or community college for adults.

Tennessee Reconnect is a way to help more Tennessee adults enter higher education to gain new skills, advance in the workplace and fulfill lifelong dreams of completing a degree or credential. Beginning fall 2018, Tennessee Reconnect will provide a last-dollar scholarship to qualifying adults pursuing an associate's degree or credential at a community or technical college in Tennessee. Last-dollar scholarships are equal to the difference between tuition and fees and any gift aid (grants and scholarships) that a student receives. Basically this means that whatever you still owe the school after your federal and state aid has been applied, Tennessee Reconnect will take care of the rest of the money you owe the school. It does not cover books or supplies and you will not receive a check for the remainder of the money.

To be eligible for Tennessee Reconnect, you 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 Reconnect;
- Complete the FAFSA and be deemed an **independent student\***;
- Be admitted to an **eligible institution\*\*** and enroll in a degree or certificate program at least part time (6 semester hours) beginning with the 2018-2019 year; 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.

This is an amazing opportunity for you if you have been wanting to go back to school! School is now free! And all you have to do is apply for Tennessee Reconnect here: <https://www.tnreconnect.gov/> You must apply to one of the eligible institutions (*link provided at bottom of blog*), and fill out your FAFSA! If

you need any help or guidance or have any questions, you can contact Amy and Abby anytime! I guess Forest Gump was right after all! Life is like a box of chocolates!

*\*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.*

*\*\*Follow this link for a list of eligible institutions: [https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/governoroffice-documents/governoroffice-documents/TNReconnectListofInstitutions\\_17-18%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/governoroffice-documents/governoroffice-documents/TNReconnectListofInstitutions_17-18%20(1).pdf)*