

# **Improving Financial Aid through Enhanced Reporting: Using Research, Policy, and Data Empowerment**

2022 SHEEO Higher Education Policy Conference  
August 10th, 2022



The University of Michigan (UM) research group is a team of graduate students in the UM Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education under the guidance of Drs. Stephen DesJardins and Brian McCall



The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) is relentlessly focused on increasing the number of Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential.

## Presenters

Jacob Kamer, Tennessee Higher Education Commission  
Amanda Klafehn, Tennessee Higher Education Commission  
Brian Douglas, Tennessee Higher Education Commission  
Kristen Cummings, University of Michigan



# SESSION OVERVIEW

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**Part I:** The THEC-University of Michigan Partnership

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**Part II:** Re-Envisioning Financial Aid Reporting in Tennessee

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**What's Next?**

# Part I:

# THEC-UM Partnership

# Tennessee Policy Context

- HOPE Scholarship created in 2004
- Updates and revisions to award amounts and requirements have evolved over time
- THEC produces an annual, descriptive report on student participation, renewal, and completion
- HOPE intersects with a suite of state financial aid programs, including Tennessee Promise

# About the Partnership

A research-policy partnership with a co-created research agenda that prioritized the production of information and analysis that directly supports THEC/TSAC's work and contributes to the academic literature on merit-based financial aid.

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Many thanks to our partnership's leadership team, Drs. Emily House (Executive Director, THEC/TSAC), Stephen DesJardins (Professor, CSHPE), and Brian McCall (Professor, CSHPE). Thanks as well to the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education (PR/Award R305B150012#), which provided training support to KC Deane and Kristen Cummings.

# Partnership History

2018

- Leadership met to explore research opportunities
- Identified answerable research questions
- Data Use Agreement (DUA) developed and initial data received

2019

- Data updates received
- Policy outputs reviewed and finalized
- Direction re-setting; focus on HOPE scholarship loss and impact estimates

2020

- Memo development; data use agreement update; planning
- Brainstorming
- Institutional Profiles

2021

- Continued investigation of HOPE Loss and institution profile work
- P20 Application

2022

- Transition to P20 environment; expansion of research question scope
- Institution Profiles hand-off

# UM Research

- **Year 1:** Began w/ THEC-identified RQs related to HOPE

*Deliverable:* A series of descriptive policy briefs targeting THEC audience

- **Year 2:** THEC & UM co-constructed actionable RQs to pursue in subsequent years of the partnership.

*Deliverables:* Descriptive policy memos targeting THEC & began work on academic-oriented projects focused on more rigorous research designs

- **Years 3+:** Focused predominately on academic-oriented projects. UM researchers continued to communicate & discuss findings w/ THEC staff

*Deliverables:* Conference presentations & journal articles. Presentations & discussions about research findings with THEC staff



# Research Questions & Methods

1. What would it cost to support students who lose the HOPE scholarship late in college?
  - *Descriptive exploration & cost estimations*
2. At the institution level, how do the demographics of HOPE recipients change as students progress through each of the four HOPE renewal checkpoints?
  - *Descriptive institution-level profiles*
3. How does HOPE Aspire eligibility influence low-income students' decisions of whether and where to enroll in college?
  - *Regression discontinuity design*
4. What are the effects of HOPE scholarship loss at the first checkpoint on stop-out, transfer, and degree completion? How do these effects vary by student subgroup?
  - *Regression discontinuity design & competing risks analysis*

# Findings: Effects of HOPE Loss

## At TN Community Colleges:

- **Stop-out:** No effect
- **Cross-sector transfer:** ↓ for full sample, low-income, female, and rural students
- **100% time AA:** ↓ for higher-income and female students
- **200% time AA:** ↓ for full sample, low-income, and rural students

## At TN Public Four-Years:

- **Stop-out:** ↑ for full sample, higher-income White students
- **Cross-sector transfer:** ↑ for low- and higher-income Black students, ↓ for higher-income White students
- **100% time BA:** ↓ for low-income Black and White students, ↑ for higher-income White students
- **150% time BA:** ↓ for higher-income Black students

# HOPE Loss: Main Takeaways & Implications for Policy

- Student populations experience loss differently and the estimation of average effects masks this variation.
- Across both the two- and four-year sectors, the effects of HOPE loss are often not immediate and may occur years after HOPE loss.
- Why and *how* loss affects student outcomes likely goes beyond a purely financial mechanism.

# Translating Research to Practice

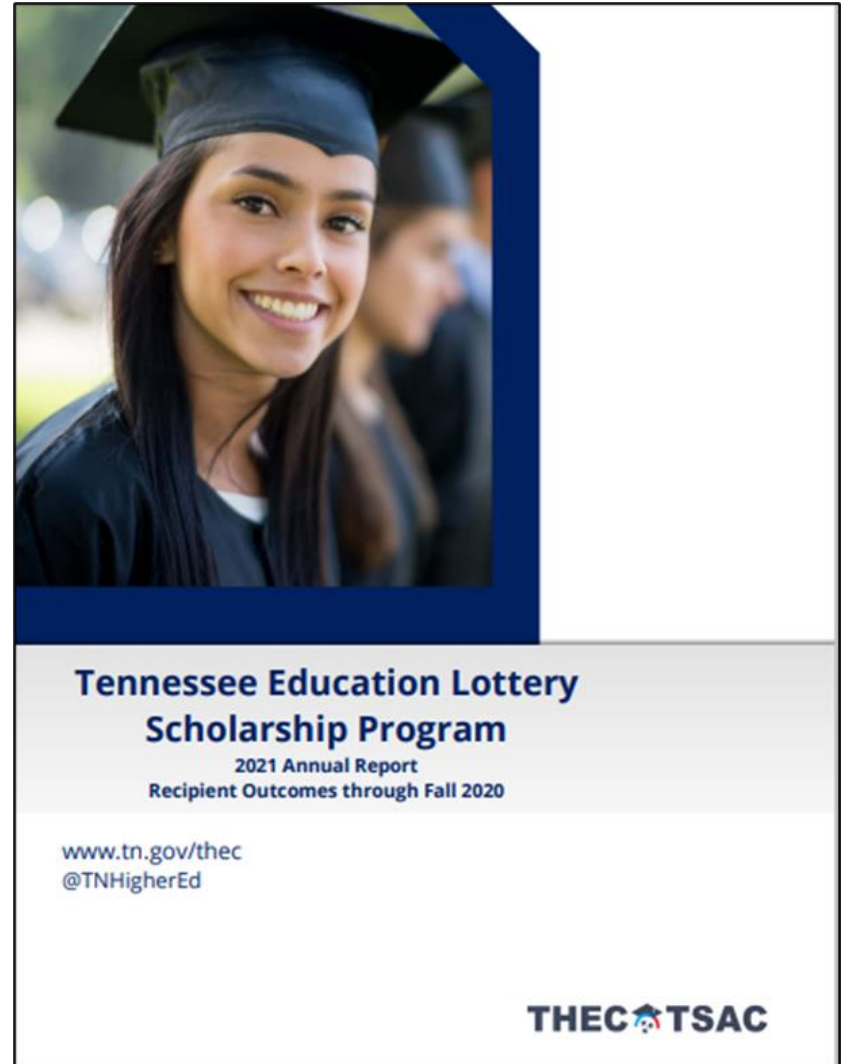
- Research questions are co-formed between SHEEO staff and academic research partners
- Research questions evolve and outputs are iterative
- Communication is critical – between project leads, researchers, and SHEEO staff
- Apply what is learned to improve practice

# Part II:

# Rethinking Financial Aid Reporting in Tennessee

# TELS – Lottery Report

A legislatively mandated annual report designed to research and analyze data concerning the state's scholarship and grant programs related to student success and scholarship retention



## Data Source Evolution:

- Institution reported

## Institution Reported

- Lottery related data reported with semester enrollment files



## **Data Source Evolution:**

- Institution reported – eGRandS – FAST

### **eGRandS**

- Electronic Grants and Scholarship
  - Primary system used by colleges, universities , and state aid officials to administer state educational grant and scholarship programs in Tennessee
- Managed by TSAC
  - Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation

### **FAST**

- Financial Aid System of Tennessee





## **Data Source Evolution:**

- Institution reported – eGRandS – FAST – FA\_DW

## **FA\_DW**

- Financial Aid Data Warehouse
- Easier to understand
- Intuitive naming

## **FA\_DW Creation Steps**

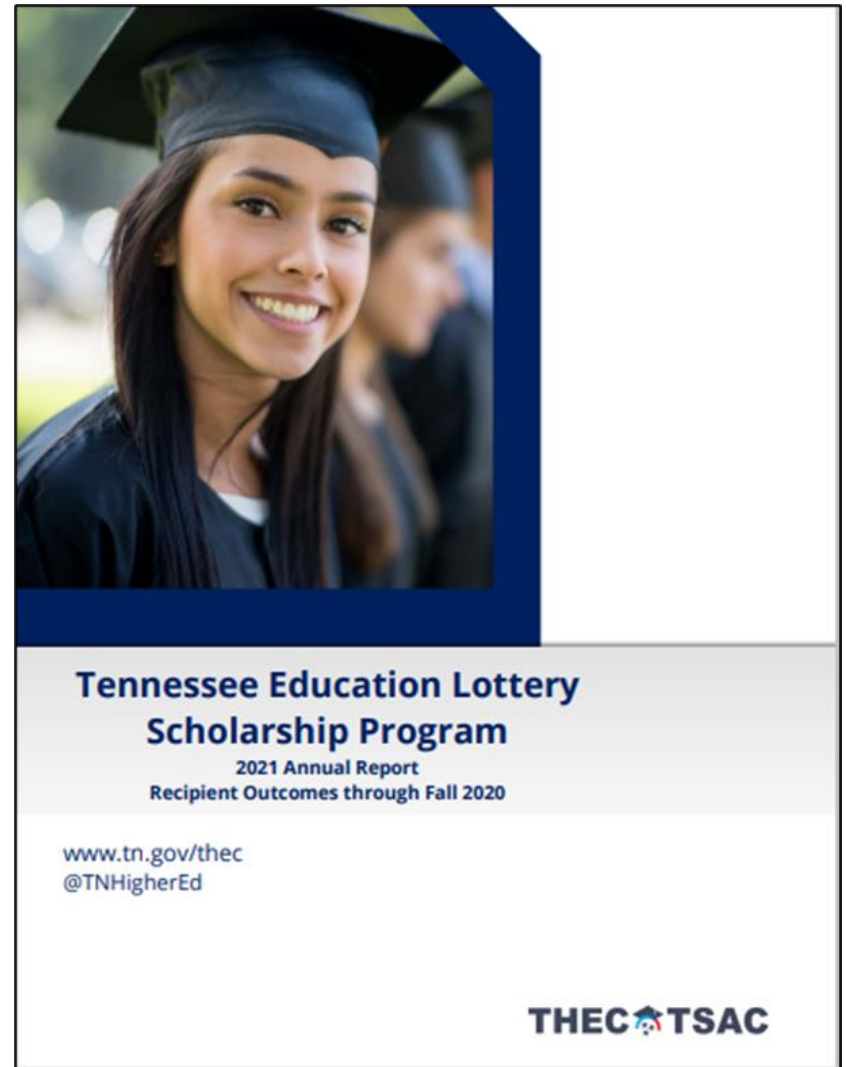
- TELS Lottery Report
- Other Active Programs
- FAFSA
- Applicant Data
- Student Information System ID link

# Differences in eGRandS and FA\_DW

	eGRandS	FA_DW
Tables	356	9
Timeframe	All Years	10 years
Updated	Daily	4x year
Base	Academic Year	Term
Payments	Transactional	Final Payments
HOPE Programs	Combined	Broke Out
PII	Included	Excluded

# Developing a Plan of Action

- **Goals:**
  - More transparency
  - Greater granularity
  - Narrative context
- **Outputs:**
  - Printable, narrative report
  - Data downloads
  - Data dashboards
- **Needs:**
  - Relational database for financial aid data reporting and usage
  - Comparable year-year data
  - Automated processes
  - Improved data storage

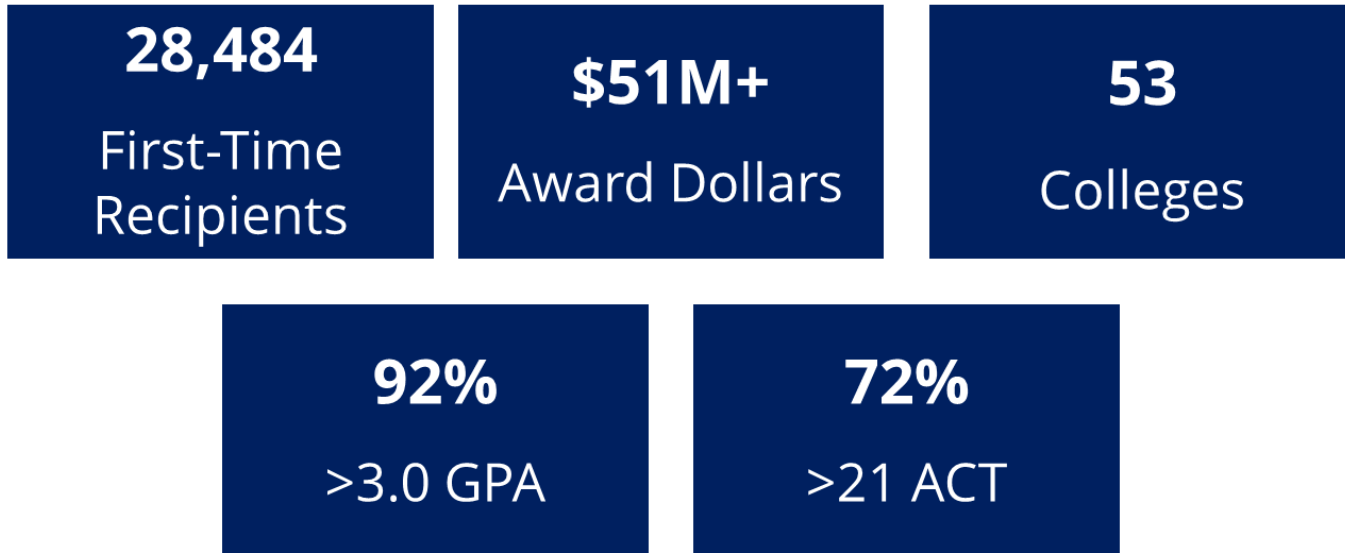


# Information Gathering

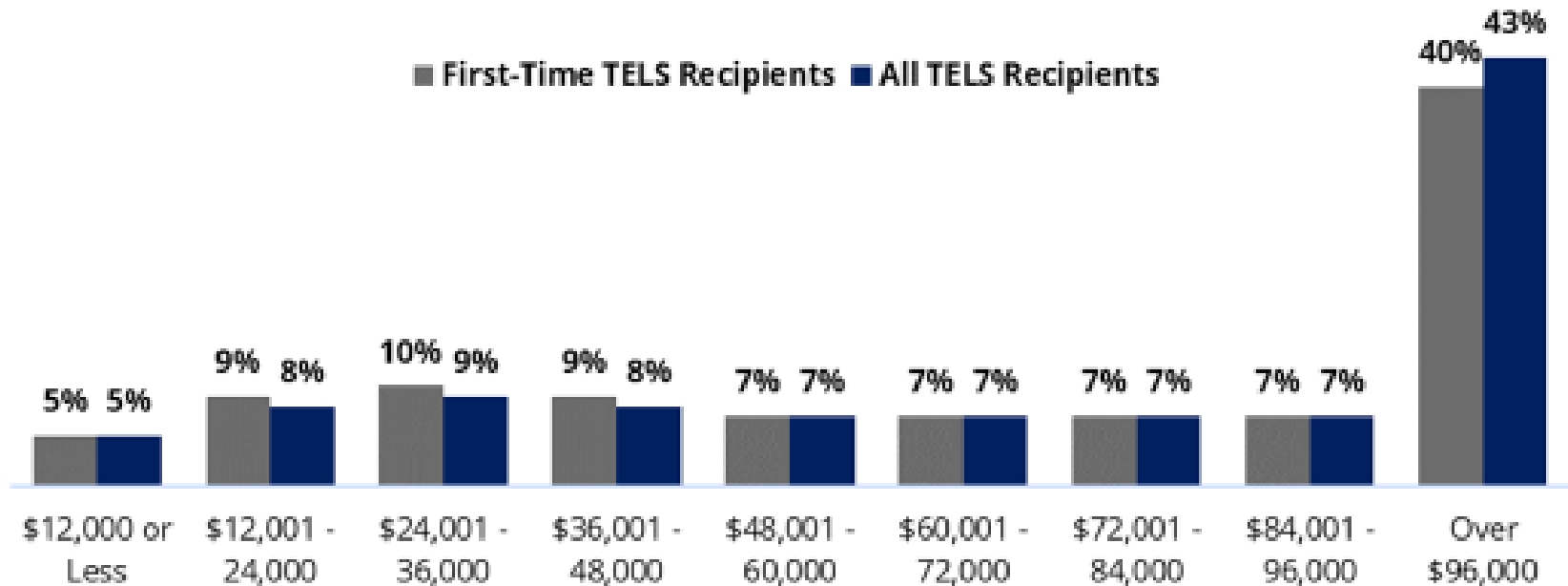
- **Review of statute**
- **Stakeholder engagement:**
  - Internal (e.g., cross-agency bureaus)
  - External (e.g., institutional and system partners)
  - Iterative process (before, during, and after reporting)
- **Peer comparisons:**
  - Texas, *Report on Student Financial Aid in Texas Higher Education*
  - Georgia, *Keeping the Hope Scholarship Throughout Georgia*
- **Finding our audience:**
  - Legislative staffers
  - THEC/TSAC administrators
  - Institutional/system personnel
  - Policy advocates
  - Researchers



# 2021 TELS Report Findings (Abridged)



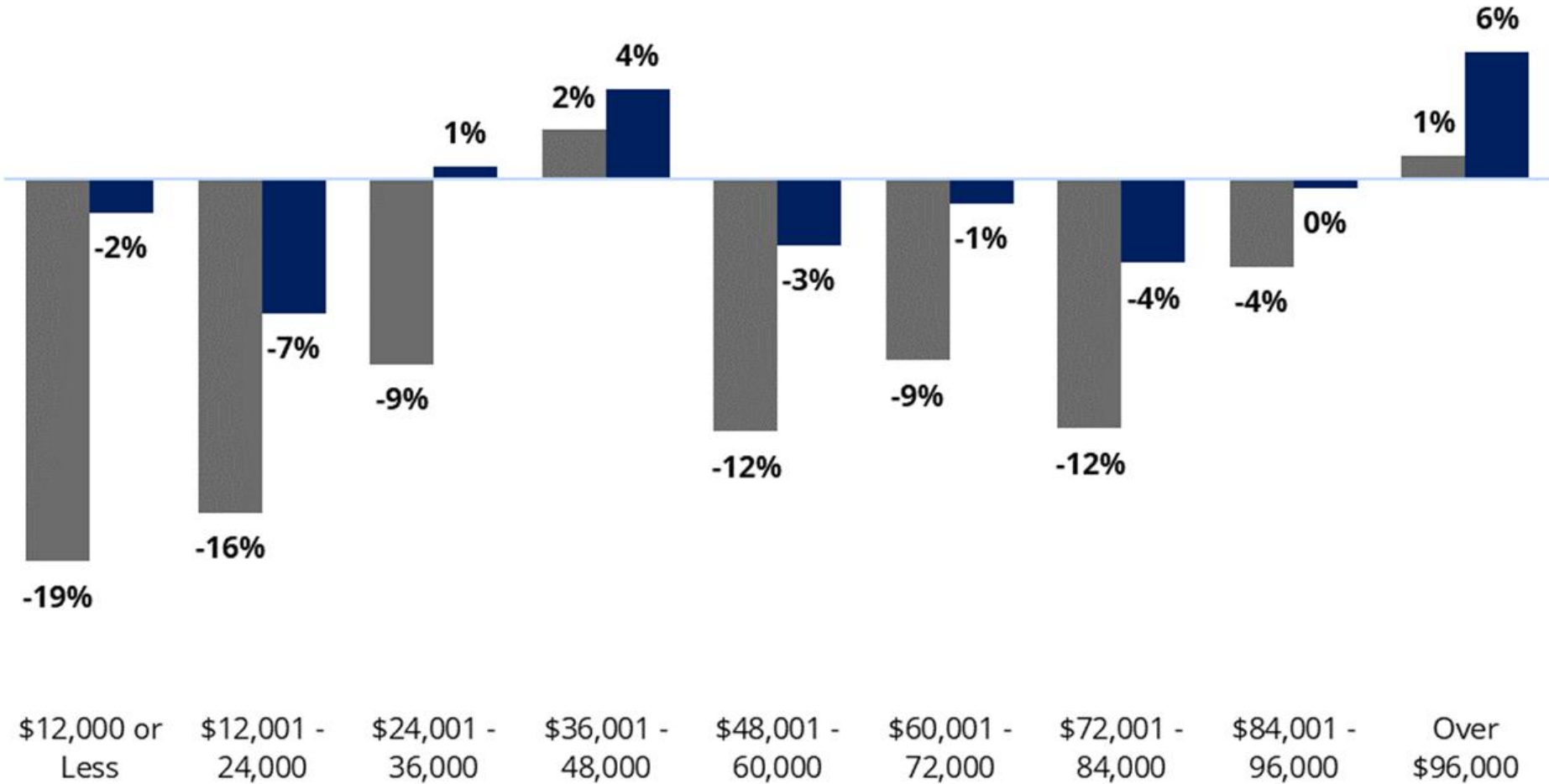
# Share of Recipients by Adjusted Gross Income (AGI)





# Change in Headcount by AGI Group

■ First-Time TELS Recipients ■ All TELS Recipients



# First-Year Outcomes, Fall 2019 Cohort

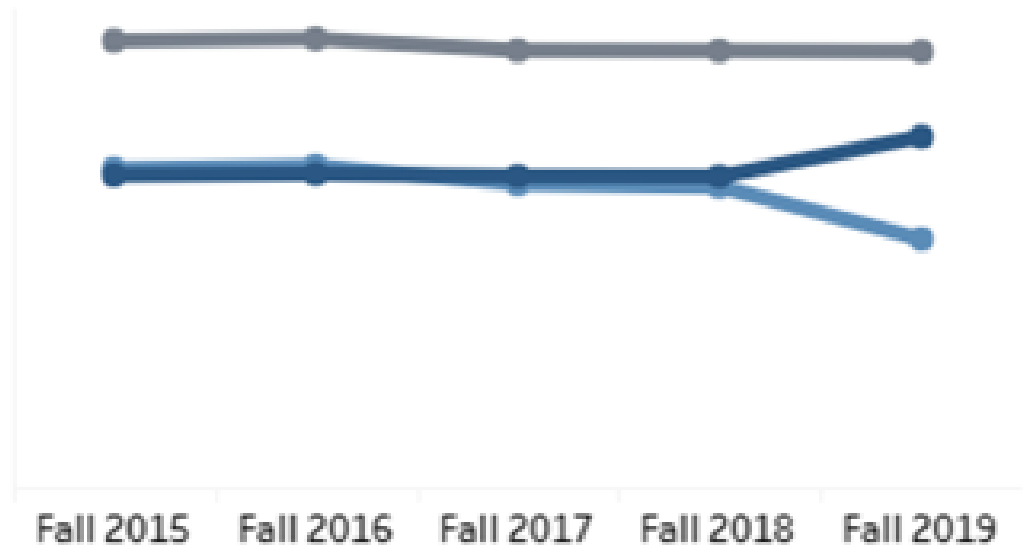
**79%** remained enrolled regardless of scholarship maintenance.

**63%** renewed their scholarship for a second year.

**45%** of those who did not renew remained enrolled.



## First-Year Renewal Rates and Retention Rates for Non-Renewals

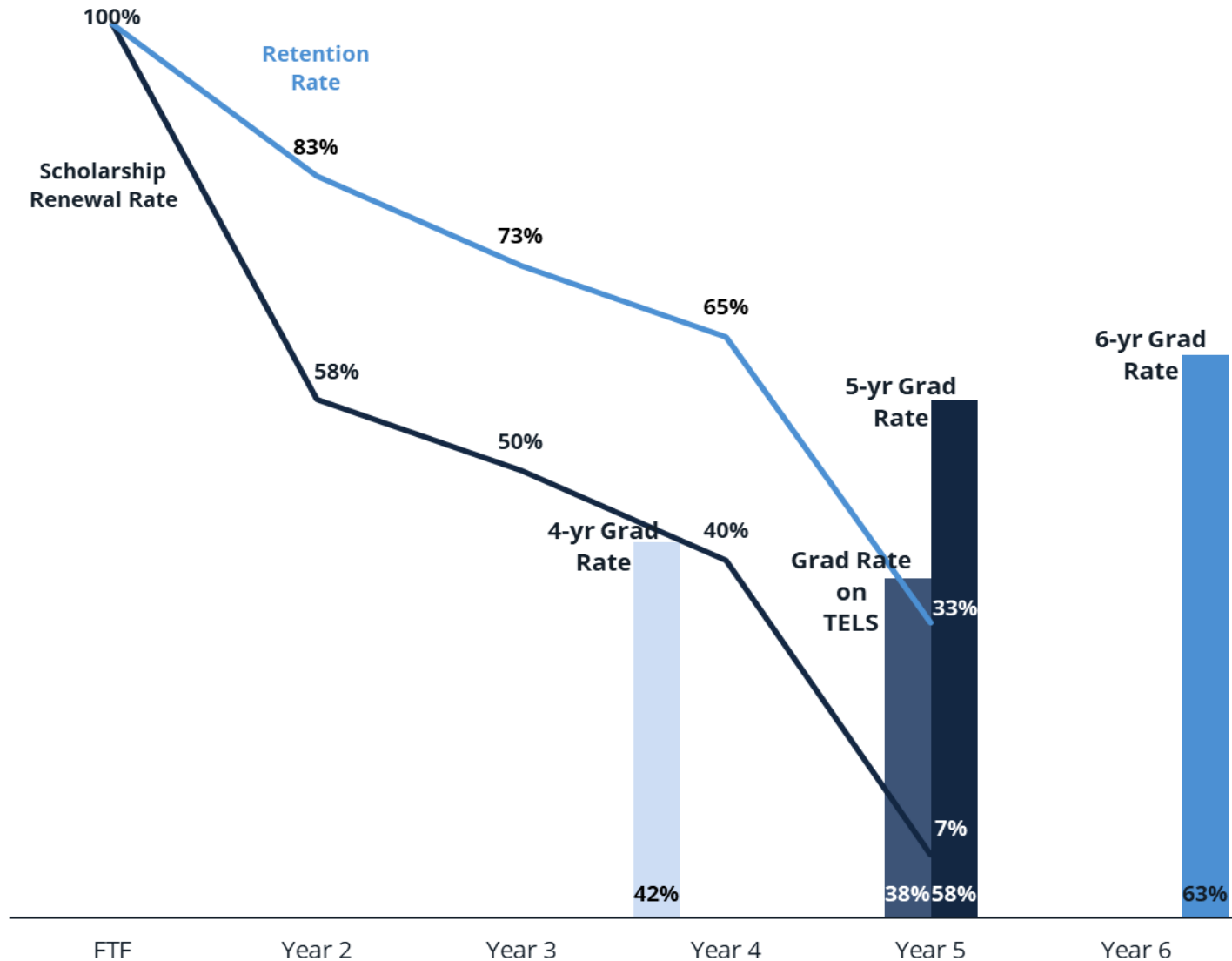


The [gray line](#) represents overall retention rate.

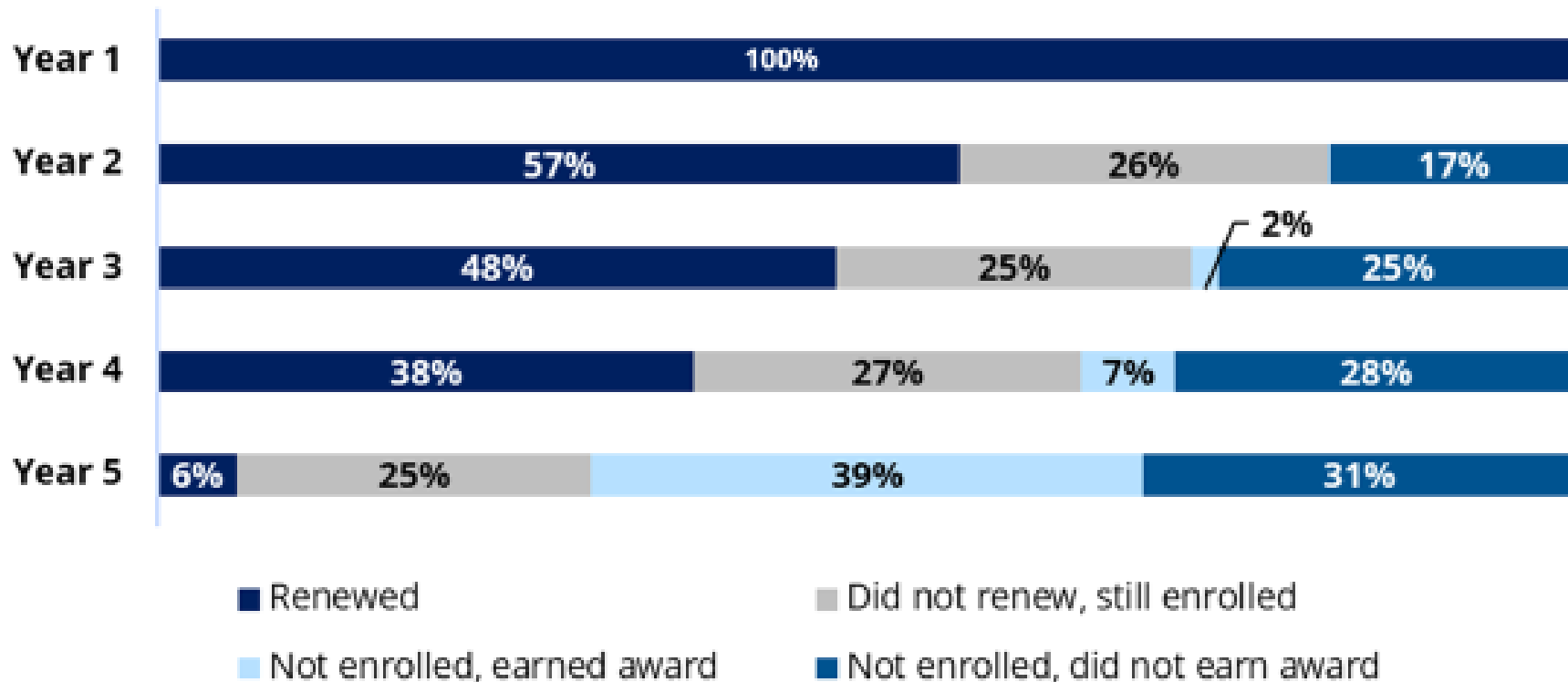
The [medium blue line](#) represents non-renewal retention rates.

The [dark blue line](#) represents first-year renewal rates.

# Scholarship Renewal, Postsecondary Retention, and Graduation Rates, Fall 2013 First-Time Scholarship Recipients



## Renewal and Retention Through Year 5, Fall 2014 First-Time TELS Recipients



# Data Resources

## Interactive Dashboards

Student Participation

Recipient Outcomes

## Downloadable Data

Participation by Program and Institution

Recipient Outcomes by Institution



[TN.gov/THEC/Research](https://www.tn.gov/THEC/Research)

Financial Aid Reports > TN Education Lottery Scholarship Report

**1. Select a term.**

Fall Term

**2. Filter data by postsecondary system and scholarship program.**

System\*

Program

**3. Click on the visuals below to filter results by demographic group.**

**Gender**

**Race/Ethnicity**

**First Generation**

**Pell Eligibility**

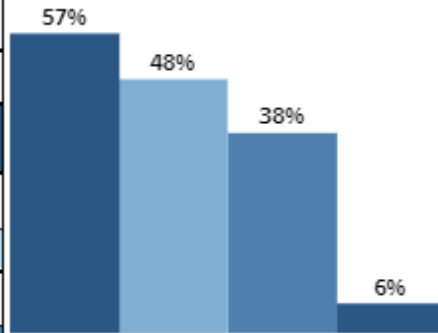
**TSAA Eligibility**

**Reset All**

Note: Data based on verified payments recorded in the Financial Aid System of Tennessee (FAST) and the THEC Student Information System (THECSIS). Retention data supplemented by the P20 Connect System. Graduation rate data supplemented by the P20 Connect System and National Student Clearinghouse Student Tracker.  
\*Private institutions are inclusive of not-for-profit and for-profit colleges.

First-Time Recipients	First-Year Renewal	Graduated in 4 Years	Graduated in 5 Years	Graduated in 6 Years	Graduated on TELS
27,559	57%	44%	59%	64%	33%

Renewal by Year

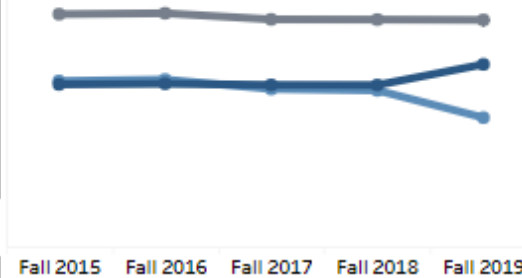


6-Year Graduation Rates  
by AGI and Academics

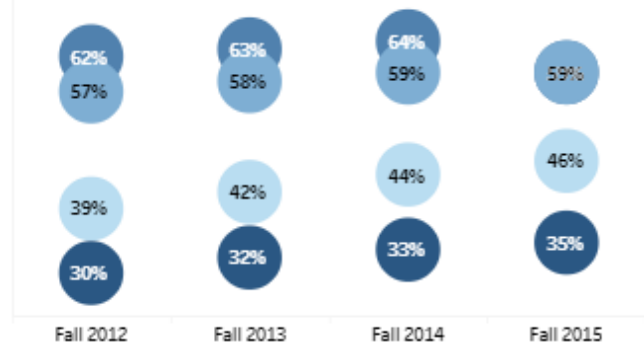
Adjusted Gross Income	High School GPA	ACT Composite
\$12,000 or Less	2.24 or Less	17 or Less
\$12,001-24,000	2.25-2.49	18-20
\$24,001-36,000	2.50-2.74	21-24
\$36,001-48,000	2.75-2.99	25-28
\$48,001-60,000	3.00-3.24	29 or Higher
\$60,001-72,000	3.25-3.49	
\$72,001-84,000	3.50-3.74	
\$84,001-96,000	3.75 or Higher	
Over \$96,000		

Outcomes Over Time

First-Year Renewal Rates and Retention Rates for Non-Renewals



4-, 5-, and 6-Year Graduation Rates by Cohort



The gray line represents the share of TELS recipients who remained enroll in postsecondary education one year after their initial scholarship receipt (i.e., fall 2020 for first-time recipients in fall 2019).

The medium blue line represents the share of first-time TELS recipients who did not renew their scholarship eligibility but remained enrolled.

The dark blue line represents the share of first-time TELS recipients who renewed their scholarship eligibility for a second year.

This graph displays graduation rates for first-time TELS recipients. Graduation rates represent the share of first-time TELS recipients earning either an associate or bachelor's degree within the specified time frame. Six-year graduation rates are currently only available through the fall 2014 cohort.

# In Closing



**Sensitivity**



**Transparency**



**Accuracy and  
Efficiency**



**Visibility**

# What's Next

**Access**

**Consistency**

**Use**



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