



NEW ENGLAND BOARD
of HIGHER EDUCATION 

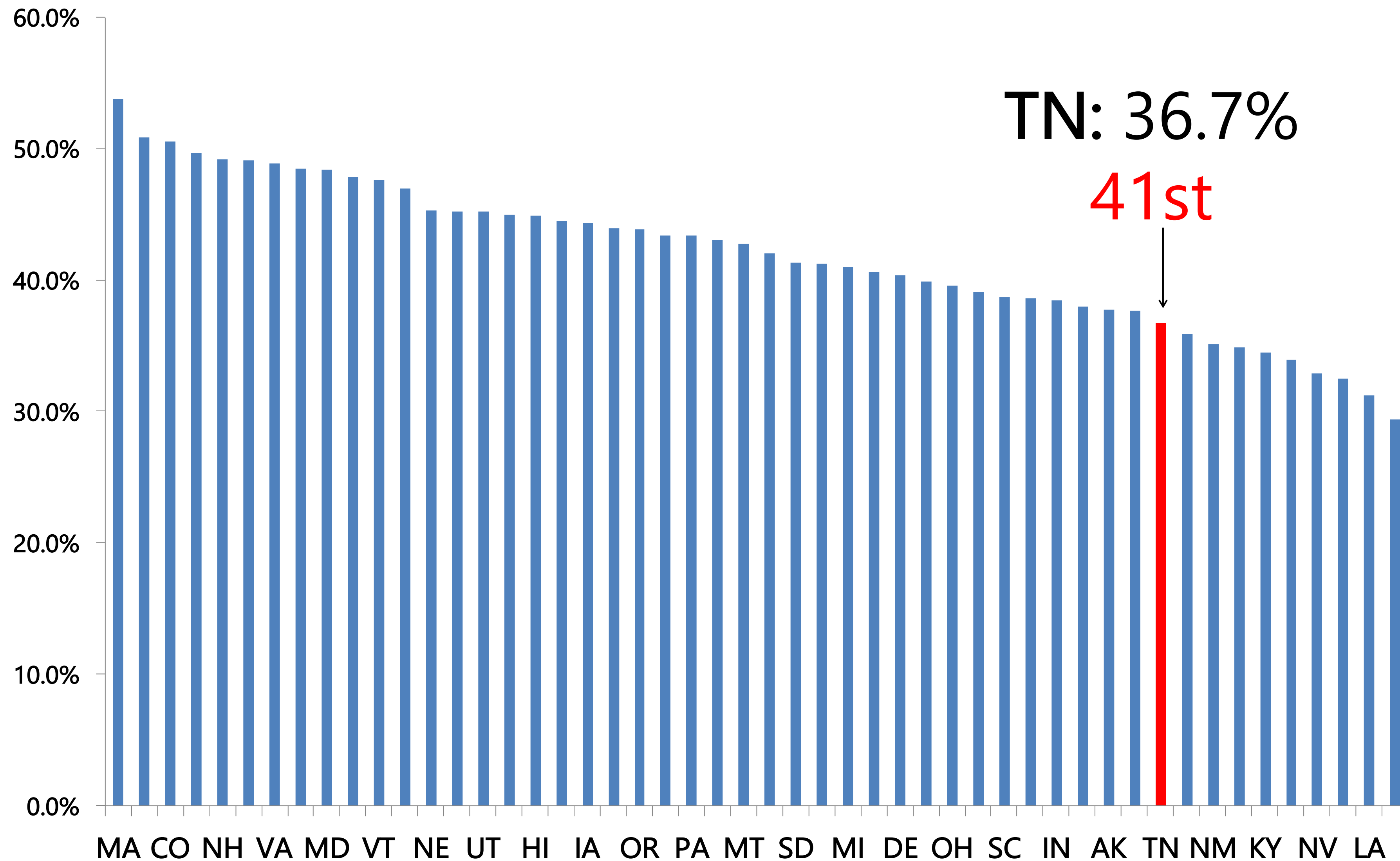
FALL 2019 LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Sept. 26, 2019 | Woodstock Inn – Woodstock, VT



Tennessee Reconnect: (Re)Engaging Adults in Higher Education

Low Educational Attainment



Public and Private Good

- Economic well-being tied to educational attainment.
- Employers concerned about workforce, not just site and incentives.
- More educated citizenry.



First Step: Free College



What happened?

We did the math.

“What about adults?”

Next Step:



Tuition-free community and technical college for adults.

A man with short dark hair and a beard, wearing safety glasses and a blue button-down shirt, is focused on working on the engine of an aircraft. He is positioned in the foreground, looking down at his work. The background shows the interior of the aircraft's engine compartment with various mechanical parts and wiring. The lighting is bright, suggesting an outdoor or well-lit indoor environment.

Reconnect Eligibility Requirements

- Do not have an Associate or Bachelor's degree
- File as an independent student on the FAFSA
- Be a Tennessee resident (at least 1 year)
- Complete a Reconnect Success Plan
- Enroll at least half time (6+ credits each semester)

The Initial Challenge:

How do we find these adults?

A Tailored Approach



Your career goals are just a few steps away

- ✓ **Apply to TN Reconnect**
- ✓ **Apply to your local community college or eligible Reconnect institution**
- ✓ **File your FAFSA**


TENNESSEE
Reconnect

TNReconnect.gov @TNReconnect

Targeted Social Media



Community Stakeholders

- Churches
- Rotary clubs
- Chambers of Commerce
- Other state agencies
- Local workforce boards

Structured Supports



Community members
Other state agencies
Advocates and information sources



Community-based
Institution-neutral
Optional hands-on assistance

Expectations were low.

- Tennessee economy is strong.
 - ~3% unemployment
- Assume 12,000 will apply; 8,000 will enroll.
 - This was met with skepticism.



All Projections Exceeded

42,000 applications

18,100 enrolled

Cohort 1

71% female

56% have children

34 is the average age

35% have never enrolled before

35% attended college previously

75% household income < \$50,000

86% plan to work while enrolled

Reconnect Student Success

- **Average enrollment – 9+ credits**
 - Increase in number of adults enrolled in community colleges.
- **75% Fall – Spring retention**
 - Far exceeds non-Reconnect adults and non-Promise students enrolling right out of high school.



**"You can be a spouse,
parent, child, sibling,
employee, and **student**
at the same time."**

**- Amy
#TNReconnect**



**Making myself go back to
school at 32 with a family
was hard, but family
encouraged me and I found
a way to do it. Now I am
graduating!**

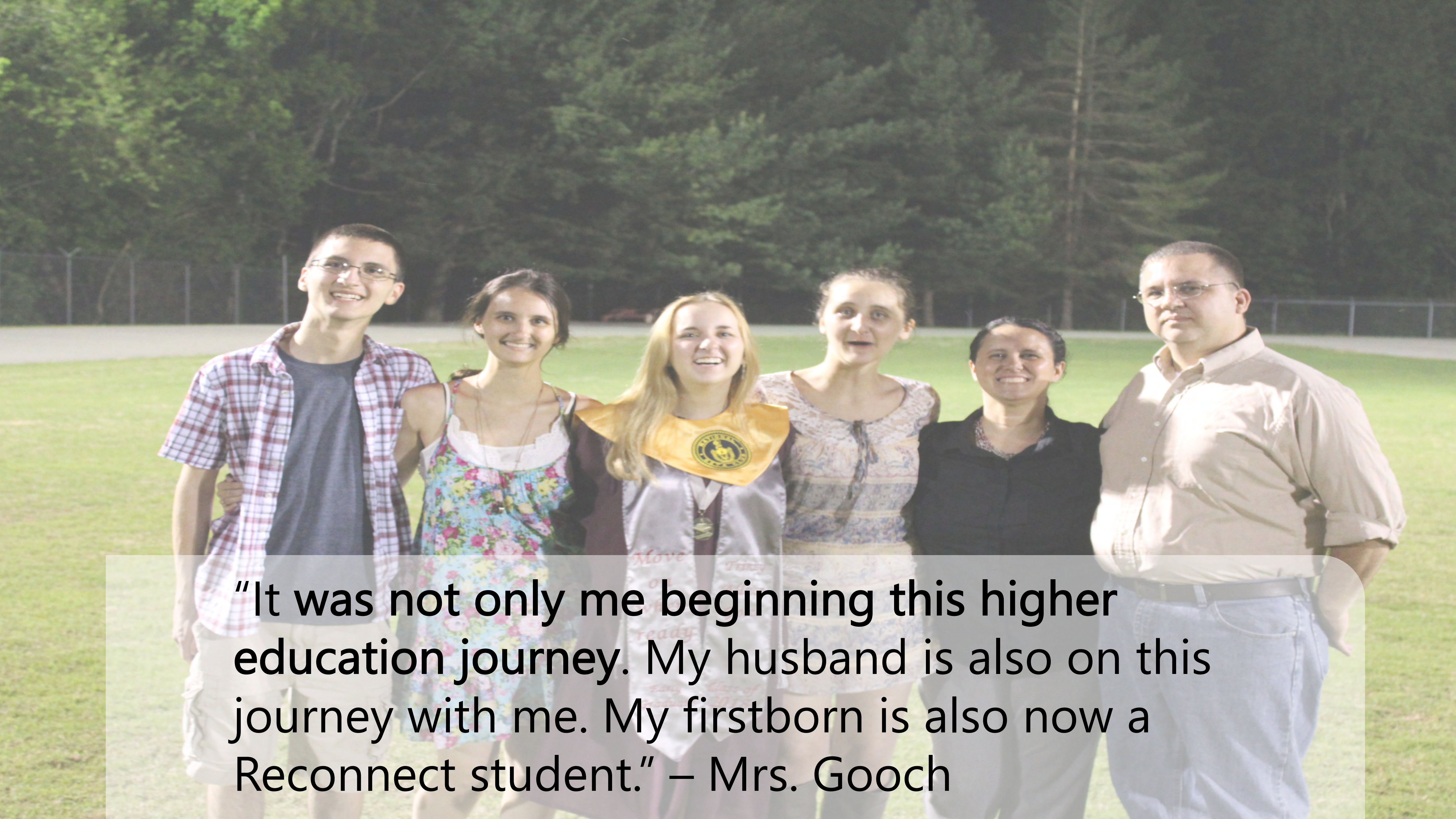
- Jennifer, Henry County



**"To better myself...to make
ME proud." - Lori**

Sumner County Reconnector



A photograph of a family of six standing on a grassy field with trees in the background. From left to right: a young man with glasses wearing a plaid shirt over a dark t-shirt; a young woman in a floral dress; a young woman in a graduation gown and yellow stole; a young woman in a patterned dress; a young woman in a dark shirt; and a man with glasses wearing a light-colored button-down shirt. A semi-transparent text box is overlaid on the bottom half of the image.

"It was not only me beginning this higher education journey. My husband is also on this journey with me. My firstborn is also now a Reconnect student." – Mrs. Gooch



Because of Tennessee Reconnect, I can now pursue a career that will allow me to give back to others. Without it, I probably would not have been able to pursue my dream.

#TNReconnect

Who didn't enroll? Why?

- Delayed entry
 - *Couldn't make "life changes" quickly enough*
- Limited class options, scheduling issues
 - *Working with institutions*
- Concerns about non-tuition costs
 - *i.e., housing, food, transportation*
- Maintaining outreach
 - *We are not giving up on these students*

Education and Well-Being

- Retaining and attracting employers
 - *Expansion*
 - *Relocation*
- Changing the college-going conversation
- Breaking the cycle of poverty for adults and their families

Connect with us:



GOLDIE BLUMENSTYK

JOSH GARRISON

EMILY HOUSE

goldie@chronicle.com

Jgarrison@che.in.gov

Emily.House@tn.gov

www.chronicle.com

www.che.in.gov

www.tn.gov/thec

@GoldieStandard

@GarrisonJ84

@houseea

@chronicle

@GovHolcomb

@TNHigherEd