

Agenda Item: I.E.

DATE: July 26, 2012

SUBJECT: New Academic Common Market Policy

ACTION RECOMMENDED: Approval

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The SREB (SREB) Academic Common Market (ACM) is a tuition-savings program designed for postsecondary students who live in the 16 SREB member states. The ACM allows students to pay in-state tuition to study in a program not offered in their home state, provided they have been accepted into an approved degree program at a participating ACM institution.

THEC is responsible for certifying students as Tennessee residents for participation as well as facilitating student program nominations for new access to out-of-state programs. To date there is no comprehensive document outlining the policies and procedures surrounding student ACM certification or the program nomination process. Reconciling THEC rules, policies, and common practices, this document provides clear directions for each facet of the program in one location that is to be made available to the public. It is intended to clear up gray areas and offer consistency in the program's administration allowing for increased efficiency among staff and participants.

Changes in current practice are: defining primary residency proof; adding an appellate process for denied certifications; adding deadlines for each semester of certification as well as recertification; and clarifying protocol on incomplete applications.

Academic Common Market in Tennessee

Handbook of Policies and Procedures for ACM Participation

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Overview of the Program

The Academic Common Market (ACM) is a tuition-savings program designed for college students who live in the 16 Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) member states. The ACM allows students to pay in-state tuition to study in a program not offered in their home state, provided they have been accepted into an approved degree program at a participating ACM institution.

Program eligibility varies by state according to the specific agreements made with its colleges and universities. Each state maintains its own ACM coordinator who certifies student residencies for ACM participation and facilitates nominations for new programs. Only programs that culminate in a baccalaureate degree or higher are available for ACM participation in Tennessee.

For participation in the ACM, interested students must:

- Live in Tennessee;
- Select a program eligible for Tennessee residents through the SREB [program search](#);
- Be admitted into the eligible program by a participating institution; and
- Be certified as a resident by the Tennessee ACM coordinator.

This handbook outlines the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's ACM policies and procedures. The following chapter details the Student Certification Process.

Student Certification Process

Tennessee students who wish to participate in the ACM must complete the student certification process. This process certifies the student as a Tennessee resident, and thereby eligible to participate in the ACM. Prior to applying for certification, students must have been admitted into an approved ACM program. Only after the student has received an official written notice of admission into an eligible program (not only the institution) from a participating institution may he or she apply for Tennessee residency certification.

Three documents constitute a completed application:

- 1) **Application for Tennessee residency** – Found on the Tennessee Higher Education Commission website through the following link: [ACM Application](#)
- 2) **Proof of admission into an eligible program** – An official, unconditional letter of acceptance from the college, stating the applicant’s name, the institution of attendance, semester of anticipated enrollment, and the specific ACM-eligible program in which the applicant is enrolled.
- 3) **Proof of residency in Tennessee** – At least one piece of evidence from the criteria listed below (p. 4, “Proof of Residency”).

Decisions will not be made on incomplete applications. All materials must arrive in their completed form in order to be processed by the ACM coordinator. Note that the Tennessee ACM coordinator does not certify residents of other states for ACM participation in Tennessee; this is the purview of the ACM coordinator of their home state. Below are detailed descriptions of what constitutes proof of admission and residency per the Tennessee Higher Education Commission’s guidelines.

Proof of Admission

Proof of admission refers to verification of acceptance to or enrollment in an ACM-eligible baccalaureate or graduate-level program at a participating institution. Students must furnish their official, unconditional letter of acceptance to the program (not only the institution), stating the applicant’s name, the institution of attendance, semester of anticipated enrollment, and the specific ACM-eligible program in which the applicant is enrolled. Official letters may be mailed to the Tennessee ACM coordinator. Alternatively, a **color copy** showing the institution letterhead and signature of the appropriate admissions officer or authority may be mailed as well.

Note that admission into some ACM-eligible programs is dependent upon additional institutional requirements. For example, some programs have minimum GPA requirements. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission defers to the institution for all decisions regarding admission into specific programs.

Primary Proof of Residency

For the purposes of ACM participation, Commission policy maintains that residency is established by being continuously domiciled in Tennessee over the previous **12 months**. College attendance does not apply to establishing or relinquishing residency status.

Per the rules of Tennessee Higher Education Commission, Chapter 1540-1- “Regulations for Classifying Persons as Tennessee Residents for the Purpose of Participating in Tennessee Higher Education Commission Programs,”

If a person asserts that he or she has established domicile in this State, he or she has the burden of proving he or she has done so. Such a person is entitled to provide to the Commission any and all evidence which he or she believes will sustain his or her burden of proof. Said Commission will consider any and all evidence provided to it concerning such claim of domicile but will not treat any particular type or item of such evidence as conclusive evidence that domicile has or has not been established. Examples of such evidence include home ownership, marriage to a bona fide Tennessee resident, and possession of a Tennessee driver’s license. (1540-1-1-.07)

Both independent and dependent students must furnish at least one piece of evidence of residency to the Tennessee ACM coordinator. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission considers primary proof of residency to be government issued documents or those from a bona fide educational institution such as the following provided they demonstrate 12 months of continuous domicile.

- Voter registration card
- Driver’s license
- Proof of permanent military residence
- Vehicle registration
 - With issue date twelve months prior to the application deadline.
 - Address must match that provided in the application.
- Federal tax return
 - Address must match that provided in the application.
- W-2 form
 - Address must match that provided in the application.

For example, a driver’s license must indicate that it **was issued twelve months prior to the application deadline**, not the expected date of enrollment in the program to which the student has been accepted.

Note that for the purposes of ACM residency, obtaining a voter registration card, driver’s license, or vehicle registration in another state implies establishment of domicile in that state.

Dependent Students

For dependent students (also known as unemancipated students), the following evidence may be considered proof of residency in addition to the examples above:

- **A current** high school transcript, demonstrating continuous enrollment in a Tennessee high school for the previous academic year
 - Must be the original document, showing school letterhead or watermark, and indicating the same home address provided in the application.
- Parent or guardian’s federal tax return
 - Address must match that provided in the application.
 - Parents/guardians are welcome to block out all financial information so long as the student’s name, address, and social security number are visible.

Dependent students are entitled to certain provisions as outlined in the Rules of Tennessee Higher Education Commission. They include:

- An unemancipated, currently enrolled student shall be reclassified out-of-state should his or her parent, having theretofore been domiciled in this State, remove from this State. However, such student shall be permitted to participate in Commission programs as if they were classified in-state so long as his or her enrollment at a public or private higher educational institution or institutions shall be continuous. (1540-1-1-.05)
- An unemancipated person whose parent is not domiciled in this State but whose parent is a member of the armed forces and stationed in this State or at Fort Campbell pursuant to military orders shall be classified out-of-state but shall be permitted to participate in Commission programs as if they were classified in-state. Such person’s status, while in continuous attendance toward the degree for which he or she is currently enrolled, shall not be affected should his or her parent thereafter be transferred on military orders. (1540-1-1-.06)

Dependent applicants should note that it is only the **student’s** domicile that counts toward residency in the state. For example, in the case that a student’s parents maintain separate domiciles—one in Tennessee and one in another state—the student must live with the parent who is domiciled in Tennessee **for at least 12 months** in order to be eligible for ACM. In all cases determining the validity of dependents’ residency status, the applicant’s address must match that of the evidence provided of continuous domicile.

Additional Exceptions for Out-of-State Persons

- A person whose domicile is in a county of another state lying immediately adjacent to Montgomery County, or whose place of residence is within thirty (30) miles of Austin Peay State University shall be classified out-of-state but shall be permitted to participate in Commission programs as if they were classified in-state provided, however, that there be no teacher’s college or normal school within the non-resident’s own state, of equal distance to said non-resident’s bona fide place of residence.

- Part-time students who are not domiciled in this State but who are employed full-time in the State, or who are stationed at Fort Campbell pursuant to military orders, shall be classified out-of-state but shall be permitted to participate in Commission programs as if they were classified in-state.
- Military personnel and their spouses stationed in the State of Tennessee who would be classified out-of-state in accordance with other provisions of these regulations will be classified out-of-state but shall be permitted to participate in Commission programs as if they were classified in-state. This provision shall not apply to military personnel and their spouses who are stationed in this State primarily for educational purposes.
- Persons from the counties of Fulton, Hickman, and Graves in the Commonwealth of Kentucky shall be permitted to participate in Commission programs as if they were classified in-state on the condition that Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky, continue to admit Tennessee residents from selected Tennessee counties to enroll at that institution without payment of out-of-state tuition, as is being done at this time.
- Persons whose bona fide place of residence is in Mississippi County, Arkansas, or either Dunklin County or Pemiscot County, Missouri, shall be permitted to participate in Commission programs as if they were classified in-state.
- Active-duty military personnel who begin a degree program while stationed in Tennessee or Ft. Campbell, Kentucky and are deployed or transferred prior to completion of their degree program may continue to enroll in the Tennessee institution and be classified as out-of-state residents, but shall be permitted to participate in Commission programs as if they were classified in-state residents. This classification remains in effect as long as he / she completes at least one (1) course for credit each twelve (12) month period after the transfer or deployment. Exceptions may be made in cases where the service member is deployed to an area of armed conflict for periods exceeding twelve (12) months.

In all cases listed above, proper documentation should be furnished to the ACM coordinator in lieu of evidence of Tennessee residency.

Supplemental Materials

Documents verified by a third party will **not** be considered primary proof of continuous Tennessee residence for ACM purposes, but may be provided as supplemental evidence. Supplemental materials may include:

- Pay stubs or letters from employers stating continuous employment.
- Utility bills or any materials documenting 12-month consecutive payment on a domicile.
- Executed lease agreements or any letters from landlords.

Submission of Application Materials

Completed applications are to be sent to:

Academic Common Market Coordinator
Tennessee Higher Education Commission
404 James Robertson Pkwy Suite 1900
Nashville, TN 37243

Decisions will not be made on partial applications; all materials must arrive in their completed form to the ACM coordinator before they will be processed. The ACM coordinator is not responsible for following up with students to ensure they have sent in all the required documents. This stipulation also refers to any additional steps required by the institution offering the program. For cases in which additional requirements must be met in order to qualify for admission, students are responsible for completing all steps **before** applying for certification with the Tennessee ACM coordinator. Additional queries and follow-ups may be directed to ACM.Coordinator@tn.gov.

Deadlines

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission observes the following dates as firm deadlines for receipt of student certification applications.

- Fall semester: May 30th
- Spring semester: November 15th
- Summer: April 30th
- Recertification: July 1st (see next chapter, “Continuing Certification,” p. 8)

Completed applications must be received by the ACM coordinator by the deadline indicated. Receipt of an incomplete application does not mean automatic denial of certification; however, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that all missing materials are provided by the deadline.

In the event that a student is denied certification, he or she may reapply up until the deadline for the semester of enrollment. Such a scenario might happen, for example, if a student was denied certification because he or she provided unacceptable evidence of Tennessee residency, and wishes to reapply with an alternative piece of evidence.

Continuing Certification

Once enrolled in an ACM program at an institution outside of the state, students must continue to meet all requirements established by the institution for retention in the specified program. This refers to departmental requirements, GPA minimums, disciplinary and academic standing with the university, and all other stipulations for which the student is held accountable. In all cases regarding student retention in an approved ACM program, institutional requirements take precedence over any complementary Commission policies. That is, the Commission will never act as arbiter over student disputes regarding retention in specified programs; all decisions regarding program retention shall remain the exclusive domain of the institution.

Continuing certification is also contingent on maintaining Tennessee residency throughout the student's participation in ACM. If at any time it comes to the attention of the Tennessee ACM coordinator that a student has either voluntarily or involuntarily forfeited residency in the state, the Commission will revoke ACM status effective immediately and notify the student in writing (see next chapter, "Coordinator Responsibilities," p. 9). Examples of voluntary forfeiture of residency include, but are not limited to, establishing residency in another state at the time of participation in ACM. By obtaining a driver's license, voter registration card, or vehicle registration in another state, it shall be inferred by the Commission that the student has relinquished Tennessee residency, and is therefore no longer eligible to receive ACM benefits. The ACM coordinator reserves the right to audit students at any time to ensure they are complying with Tennessee residency requirements.

Occasionally, institutions may request that students be recertified in order to continue receiving ACM benefits. The coordinator must notify the student in such a case using the appropriate letter found in the next chapter. ***In all cases, the Commission maintains the firm date of July 1st for receipt of all new materials requested for recertification.***

Competing Scholarships

The privileges of ACM participation in effect amount to a tuition waiver granting certified Tennessee students out-of-state tuition discounted to the in-state rate. By participating in the ACM and attending an institution outside of the state, students forfeit their eligibility for other scholarships administered in the state of Tennessee. The Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship (TELS), for example, including all HOPE, GAMS, ASPIRE, and Access awards, does not follow the student out of state. Therefore, if students elect to receive ACM benefits, they do so at the risk of rendering themselves ineligible for any award with competing eligibility requirements as outlined per the specific provisions of that award. In all cases in which there may be conflicts with other scholarship provisions, ACM status does not exempt students from the requirements of those awards.

ACM participation, however, may or may not affect student eligibility for other awards either administered by the institution or a third party such as a foundation. It falls to the institution's discretion whether ACM status affects a student's ability to receive departmental or institutional grants. It is the responsibility of the student to investigate these policies before applying for ACM certification.

Program Nomination Process

In order to nominate a program, the student must fill out the Program Nomination Form available here: [Program Nomination Form](#). The proposed out-of-state program must have a curriculum that is at least 51% different from an in-state program regardless of program name in order to be included in the ACM. The nominating student is required to review the THEC API and certify they believe no similar program exists in Tennessee. The API search is available here: [THEC API Search](#). When it arrives via the “submit by e-mail” function to the acm.coordinator@tn.gov e-mail, the coordinator will document the program nomination and forward to both the UT and TBR systems for institutional review. Each system will distribute the form to campuses and report back to the ACM coordinator if there are any objections. This process is allotted three months for completion.

If an institution objects to the program nomination, the coordinator will notify the student and include the comparable in-state program for their information. The nominating student has the option to seek further review of this decision. The process requires the student compare the curriculums of each school (the in-state program the institution objected on behalf of and the out-of-state program nominated) class by class to prove 51% difference. The student will be given ten (10) business days to provide this documentation. Upon receipt, the ACM coordinator will forward this information to the objecting institution as well as the system coordinator for review. The institution will then respond with their decision to the ACM coordinator who will notify the student of the final decision.

If both systems approve the program nomination, the ACM coordinator will request access to the program through SREB. When the ACM coordinator receives a response from the out-of-state institution regarding the request for access, the student will be informed of the program nomination result. If the out-of-state institution denies the request for access, no further action can be taken.

When a new program is added to the ACM for Tennessee residents, SREB will automatically update the public website ([SREB ACM Programs](#)) to reflect the changes. Once the out-of-state institution confirms Tennessee ACM access to the specified program, the program is available to all students for the next semester.

Certification Appellate Process

Any student who is denied residency certification or continued certification may appeal that determination. A request for appeal must be filed in writing and sent to the attention of the ACM State Coordinator. The request must be received at least ten (10) business days from the date the certification was mailed or otherwise transmitted to the student. Requests may be received through hand delivery, mail, electronic mail or facsimile. The request must be signed, list each instance where the ACM State Coordinator erred, and provide a detailed argument for each alleged error, including references to specific statutes and/or rules. If these requirements are not met, your request may be denied.

Any request for appeal shall be forwarded to and considered by the Executive Director of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. If the student is not satisfied with the determination of the Executive Director, the student may request that the Tennessee Higher Education Commission make a final determination after hearing and fully considering the merits of the appeal. Unless circumstances dictate a shorter time period, the student shall be afforded at least ten (10) business days within which to file a written statement with supporting documentation explaining the alleged error. No opportunity for oral argument will be provided. A student may be advised and represented at the student's own expense by counsel or, unless prohibited by any provision of law, other representative.

Any request for appeal shall be sent to the following address:

ACM Coordinator
404 James Roberston Parkway
Suite 1900
Nashville, TN 37243
or
ACM.Coordinator@tn.gov

Appendices

- A. Application for Residency Certification**
- B. Participating Tennessee Institutions**
- C. Current Out-of-State Institutional Restrictions**
- D. Useful Links**

Application for Residency Certification

Return application to:

ACM Coordinator
Tennessee Higher Education
Commission
404 James Robertson Pkwy
Suite 1900
Nashville, TN 37243

PROGRAM ADMISSION

Please attach a copy of an official unconditional admission letter stating the applicant's name, the institution of attendance and the specific ACM program or major in which the applicant is enrolled.

RESIDENCY

Assuming all other criteria are met, please attach a copy of a voter registration card (issued 12 months ago or more), a driver license (issued 12 months ago or more), or proof of permanent military residence.

A resident is one who has lived continuously in Tennessee for at least 12 months and whose domicile is in Tennessee. A domicile is a true, fixed, permanent home or habitation. It is the place where the resident intends to remain and to which he or she expects to return.

Dependent student: under age 24, claimed as a dependent on a parent's/ guardian's income tax forms.

Independent student: over age 24, not claimed as a dependent on anyone's income tax form; a graduate student.

Armed forces: a member, a spouse or dependent of a member of the U.S. Armed Forces.

*Please note that you cannot establish TN as a domicile while enrolled full time in a TN postsecondary institution.



APPLICANT INFORMATION			
Last Name	First	Middle	
Street Address			
City	State	ZIP	Birthdate
County			
Phone	Social Security Number		
E-mail Address			
ACADEMIC COMMON MARKET PROGRAM INFORMATION			
Institution			State
Degree (e.g. BA)		Major / Program Concentration	
Requesting certification starting semester Fall Spring Summer 20__			
Have you been fully admitted to the major without conditions? YES NO Will you enroll fulltime? YES NO			
EDUCATION HISTORY			
High School		Address	
From	To	Date of graduation	
College		Address	
From	To	Date of graduation	Degree
Other		Address	
From	To	Date of graduation	Degree
TENNESSEE RESIDENCY			
<input type="checkbox"/> Dependent Student		<input type="checkbox"/> Independent Student	<input type="checkbox"/> Armed Forces
List all primary places of residence during the past 12 months			
Address		From	To
When did you begin to reside in Tennessee?			
Are all necessary supporting documents enclosed (incomplete applications will not be processed)?			
SIGNATURE			
<i>I do solemnly declare and affirm under penalties of perjury that the information I provided in this application is true and accurate; and that all supporting documents attached hereto are true and complete copies of the original documents.</i>			
Applicant Signature			Date
Certification Officer Signature		Approved / Denied	Date

Participating Tennessee Institutions

In Tennessee, ten public postsecondary institutions participate in the Academic Common Market.

- [Austin Peay State University](#)
- [East Tennessee State University](#)
- [Middle Tennessee State University](#)
- [Tennessee State University](#)
- [Tennessee Technological University](#)
- [University of Memphis](#)
- [University of Tennessee Chattanooga](#)
- [University of Tennessee Health Science Center](#)
- [University of Tennessee Knoxville](#)
- [University of Tennessee Martin](#)

Current Out-of-State Institutional Restrictions

The following is a non-exhaustive list of current restrictions on ACM participation by state and institution as of April 3, 2012. It is the responsibility of the student to inform him/herself of the restrictions for the specific institution and program to which he/she has applied.

ALABAMA

- **Auburn University** limits ACM access to undergraduate programs. Only 25 new ACM participants are accepted each year; and students must be at the junior or senior level to participate in the ACM. Auburn selects applicants on a competitive basis. The deadline is March 15. Applicants should first contact the institutional coordinator's office prior to contacting state coordinator.
- The **University of Alabama** limits ACM access to the programs that are currently listed in the ACM inventory. You must complete a separate application for University of Alabama, meeting these conditions for participating in approved ACM programs (UA limits ACM access to the programs that are currently listed in the ACM inventory.):
 - (1) For first-time ACM certification, an undergraduate student must have at least a 25 ACT composite score or 1130 SAT composite score (math and verbal only) and at least a 3.00 overall high school GPA.
 - (2) For continuing certification after the first semester of ACM support, each UA ACM student must maintain at least a 3.00 overall GPA on all UA course work attempted. This GPA standard is in addition to the long-standing requirements for maintaining residency and major.

DELAWARE

- The University of Delaware limits ACM access to the programs that are currently listed in the ACM inventory.

FLORIDA

- The state of Florida limits ACM access to graduate-level programs only.

GEORGIA

- The **Georgia Institute of Technology** limits ACM access to programs that are currently listed in the ACM inventory. The last semester that Georgia Tech will take undergraduate students through ACM is spring semester 2011. Beginning summer semester 2011, students are welcome to participate at the graduate level only.
- **Georgia State University** limits ACM access to graduate-level programs only.
- **The University of Georgia** grants ACM access after students have completed at least 60 college credit hours and been formally admitted into the ACM degree program. ACM eligibility at UGA is limited to four academic semesters for undergraduate students.

MARYLAND

- Maryland is not processing requests for the addition of new programs to the ACM inventory for its residents. Out of state students may continue to request access to Maryland's programs.
- The **University of Maryland, Eastern Shore** does not participate in the ACM.

MISSISSIPPI

- The state of Mississippi limits the eligibility of Mississippi residents participating in the Academic ACM program to those enrolled in degree programs on a full-time basis. Full-time enrollment status will be based on the host institution's definition of full-time enrollment.
- The **University of Mississippi** limits ACM access to the programs that are currently listed in the ACM inventory.
- The **University of Southern Mississippi** limits ACM access to the programs that are currently listed in the ACM inventory.

NORTH CAROLINA

- The state of North Carolina has suspended its participation in the ACM for both out-of-state residents coming to North Carolina and in-state students leaving for alternate ACM programs.

OKLAHOMA

- The **University of Oklahoma** limits ACM access to the programs that are currently listed in the ACM inventory and will not be opening any additional programs into the ACM.

SOUTH CAROLINA

- The state of South Carolina limits the eligibility of South Carolina residents participating in the Academic ACM program to those enrolled in degree programs on a full-time basis. Full-time enrollment status will be based on the host institution's definition of full-time enrollment.
- **The Citadel, College of Charleston, Francis Marion University** and the **University of South Carolina-Beaufort** do not participate in the ACM.
- **Clemson University** limits ACM access to graduate-level programs only.
- **Coastal Carolina University** will not add the BSBA in Marketing (Professional Golf Management) to the ACM during 2008-09 Academic Year.
- The state of South Carolina does not include "mode of delivery" as a determinant of program eligibility for state residents.

TEXAS

- The state of Texas limits ACM access to residential graduate-level programs only.
- The **University of Texas at Austin** does not participate in the ACM.

VIRGINIA

- Virginia is not processing requests for the addition of new programs to the ACM inventory for its residents. Out of state students may continue to request access to Virginia's programs.
- The **College of William and Mary** limits ACM access to graduate programs.

- Students studying at **Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University** may enroll in the engineering programs with ACM benefit only after the general courses in engineering have been completed.
- **James Madison University, Mary Washington College, University of Virginia and Virginia Commonwealth University** do not participate in the ACM.

WEST VIRGINIA

- Students studying at the **West Virginia University Institute of Technology** must have completed the associate's degree in Printing Technology before enrolling in the bachelor's degree in Printing Management through the ACM.

Useful Links

SREB Program Search: <http://home.sreb.org/acm/choosestate.aspx>

THEC API: <http://thec.ppr.tn.gov/THECSIS/Research/Research.aspx>

THEC ACM for TN Residents:

http://www.tn.gov/thec/Divisions/AcademicAffairs/ACM/tn_residents.html

THEC ACM Residency Certification Application:

http://www.tn.gov/thec/Divisions/AcademicAffairs/ACM/acm_pdf/ACM%20Residency%20Application.pdf

THEC ACM Program Nomination Form:

http://www.tn.gov/thec/Divisions/AcademicAffairs/ACM/acm_pdf/2010/ACM%20Program%20Nomination%20Form.pdf