

DATE: July 27, 2017

SUBJECT: Off-Campus Instruction at Community Colleges and Universities

ACTION RECOMMENDED: Approval

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-7-202(q)(3) the Tennessee Higher Education Commission is to review and approve or disapprove all proposals for off-campus locations at public institutions. The purpose for establishing off-campus sites and centers is to expand access to higher education for Tennesseans. Recent legislative actions, including the Focus on College and University Success (FOCUS) Act of 2016, and changes in practice have necessitated revisions of the Off-Campus Instruction Policy.

PROPOSED POLICY REVISIONS

The Off-Campus Instruction policy is recommended to be split into two policies: Off-Campus Instruction at Community Colleges and Universities and Off-Campus Instruction at the Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCAT). In cases where a TCAT is considered a part of a Community College, as is the case with TCAT Chattanooga and Chattanooga State Community College, the joint institution will be considered under the Community Colleges and Universities Policy.

THEC plans to review the off-campus location inventory every three years. It may be recommended that locations with low enrollments be inactivated.

A1.4A Off-Campus Instruction at Community Colleges and Universities

The Off-Campus Instruction policy is recommended to be renamed Off-Campus Instruction at Community Colleges and Universities. The policy was last revised in July 2007 and outlines the Commission’s authority and requirements for review and approval of off-campus locations.

The proposed policy returns off-campus center approval to the Commission. The policy maintains delegated authority of off-campus site approval to the Executive Director. The proposed revisions exclude certain course offerings and locations from the policy; outline the review process for off-campus location requests (including an update to the early notification process for

off-campus centers); articulate expected communication and collaboration among institutions; and update THEC's monitoring processes for current locations.

RECOMMENDATION

Proposed revisions to the Off-Campus Instruction policies have been reviewed by academic affairs staff, the Office of the General Counsel, and applicable stakeholders, including institutions and governing boards. The policies are recommended for approval and adoption. Proposed changes will provide needed clarity on policy expectations and will improve data collection on off-campus offerings.

Section Title: Academic Policies
Policy Title: Off-Campus Instruction – Community Colleges and Universities
Policy Number: A 1.4A

1.4A.1A **Scope and Purpose.** Pursuant to T.C.A. §49-7-202(q)(3), the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) is to review and approve or disapprove all proposals for off-campus locations at public institutions, including the community colleges and universities.

The Commission will take action on proposed off-campus centers quarterly at Commission meetings. The Commission delegates the authority for review and approval of off-campus sites to the Executive Director. The Executive Director maintains the discretion to refer an off-campus site to the Commission for approval.

This policy fulfills the Commission’s charge to develop policies and procedures for the purpose of reviewing and approving off-campus locations at community colleges and universities. In cases where a Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) is considered a part of a community college, as is the case with TCAT Chattanooga and Chattanooga State Community College, the joint institution will be considered under this policy.

1.4A.2A **Definitions.**

Off-Campus Center – An off-campus center is a location that is geographically apart from the main campus where students can enroll and complete academic programs. There must be a continuing administrative presence, evidenced by at least one full-time or part-time administrator housed on-site.

Off-Campus Site – An off-campus site is a physical space that is used to offer credit enrollment. Some examples of typical offerings at off-campus sites include: dual enrollment or dual credit offerings; workforce development opportunities; and short-term, specific instructional needs. An off-campus site does not offer all courses necessary to complete an academic program.

Academic Program – An academic program is one that culminates in a certificate (academic, technical, and/or graduate); associate’s degree; bachelor’s degree; and/or graduate degree (master’s, professional, and/or doctorate). This is specific to programs and coursework offered where the students and instructor meet synchronously in the same place.

1.4A.3A Exclusions to the Off-Campus Instruction Policy. The following offerings and/or locations are excluded from this off-campus location policy:

- non-credit coursework;
- continuing education coursework;
- on-line offerings;
- study abroad coursework;
- clinical, practice, and student teaching locations; and
- correctional facilities.

1.4A.4A1 Locations Subject to Approval. Proposals for off-campus centers and off-campus sites will be subject to review and approval under this policy. Proposal formats appropriate to the requested action are available on the THEC website:

- Establish an Off-Campus Center.
- Establish an Off-Campus Site.

1.4A.4A2 Letter of Notification. A Letter of Notification (LON) informing THEC of a proposal to establish a new off-campus center is required at least 90 days in advance of any facilities acquisition, including lease execution and/or presentation to the State Building Commission or State Architect. In extenuating circumstances, the Executive Director maintains the discretion to review a LON within a shorter time period.

The LON must include signatures and approvals from the President of the institution and a system representative (where applicable). The establishment of off-campus centers must be consistent with and reference the most recently approved campus master plan and institutional mission profile approved by THEC. Upon review and approval by the Executive Director, the institution and system can move forward with the proposed off-campus center request.

1.4A.4A3 Criteria for Review of Off-Campus Centers. THEC considers the following criteria in order to maximize state resources in evaluating the establishment of off-campus center locations:

- **Needs Assessment** – supporting documentation of need for the new off-campus center that justifies institutional allocation/reallocation of state resources. The proposal must document community or industry support, describe the target population, and explain how this proposed center contributes to the state’s higher education completion agenda.

- **Sustainable Demand** – projected headcount and full-time equivalent enrollment in the location’s initial year and over the following four academic years.
- **Operational Costs and Revenues** – supporting documentation detailing program costs and revenues associated with the proposed location. Projected costs include but are not limited to items such as leasing agreements, square footage and renovated space, equipment, utilities, instructional resources, administrative and faculty salaries, and all other items deemed necessary by the Commission. Revenues include but are not limited to items such as tuition and fees, state appropriations, and sales and services.
- **Facilities** – Facilities planned or in place for the off-campus location should be appropriate for the enrollment and type of academic programs offered. In particular, facilities should meet the standards of SACSCOC, and other applicable accrediting and regulating agencies. Whenever the establishment or upgrading of a location requires substantially new facilities, which may or may not include a land purchase, the community should be willing to provide the site, access to all necessary utilities, highways, and access roads, and make a substantial contribution towards the initial planning and construction of the location. The leasing or acquisition of space or land is subject to approval by THEC and the State Building Commission; and must comply with current State laws set forth in Tennessee Code Annotated §§12-1-106, -107 or §§12-2-114, -115, State Building Commission policy, and THEC policy numbers F4.1 - Master Plans and F4.2 - Lease Space Funding and License Agreements.
- **Administration** – Plans for administration of the off-campus center should be appropriate for the enrollment and character of the academic programming offered.

1.4A.4A4

Commission Action. Proposed off-campus centers approved by the institution’s governing board and recommended by THEC staff will be presented to the Commission for action at the earliest possible scheduled meeting.

In keeping with SACSCOC principles and federal requirements for truth in-advertising, students may not enroll in any new off-campus center nor may any off-campus center be advertised by any public institution prior to approval by the Commission to implement.

1.4A.4A5

Criteria for Review of Off-Campus Sites. An off-campus site is a physical space that is used to offer credit enrollment. Some examples of typical offerings at off-campus sites include: dual

enrollment or dual credit offerings; workforce development opportunities; and short-term, specific instructional needs. The Commission considers the following criteria in order to maximize state resources in evaluating the creation and operation of off-campus sites:

- **Need** – supporting documentation of need for the new off-campus site that justifies institutional allocation/reallocation of state resources.
- **Demand** – projected headcount and full-time equivalent enrollment in the first semester and first year.
- **Operational Costs and External Support** – supporting documentation detailing operational costs associated with the proposed location, as well as a short narrative around any expenses and resources, including any cost sharing agreements with business or school systems.

1.4A.4A5 **Executive Director Review.** The Commission delegates the authority for review and approval of off-campus sites to the Executive Director. The Executive Director maintains discretion to refer an off-campus site request to the Commission for approval.

1.4A.5A1 **Major Changes to Off-Campus Centers.** Institutions must notify THEC of any major changes to the academic program offerings at an off-campus center, including:

- Adding new academic programs (see THEC Policy A1.5 – Academic Actions Notification)
- Extending existing academic programs (see THEC Policy A1.2 – Extension of Existing Academic Programs)
- Inactivating and/or terminating academic programs (see THEC Policy A1.5 – Academic Actions Notification)

1.4A.5A2 **Review of Off-Campus Locations.** THEC will monitor off-campus location enrollments every three years to determine that enrollments are continuous and to identify any potentially low-enrollment locations.

During this review, THEC will request all institutions operating off-campus locations to provide updates in the event of any major change in offerings (e.g., shifting the purpose of a center or site from training teachers to dual enrollment) or increases and/or decreases in enrollment of twenty-five percent or more. THEC reserves the right to have an institution submit a new request for an off-campus location code in the event of a major change in offerings.

1.4A.5A3 **Phase-Out and Closing of Off-Campus Locations.** THEC may recommend that an institution and/or governing board phase out and close off-campus locations that experience low enrollment over time. Institutions and/or governing boards will have an opportunity to provide a justification for the lack of enrollment and request that the location remain active until the next review period.

Institutions and/or governing boards should notify THEC of off-campus locations requiring inactivation every three years.

1.4A.6A **No Unnecessary Duplication and Service Area.** THEC will not approve the establishment of an off-campus location if the proposed delivery of instructional services could reasonably occur through existing institutions or other off-campus centers.

It is expected that the Tennessee Board of Regents and the University of Tennessee will resolve any service area conflicts between the institutions in their respective systems prior to submission of the off-campus location request to THEC.

An institution contemplating the creation of any new off-campus offering, specifically dual enrollment, within the region of another institution's main campus or off-campus center shall communicate its proposal to the impacted institution(s) in writing prior to the submission of the proposal to THEC. Impacted institutions will have 10 calendar days to review and provide feedback to the requesting institution. Requesting institutions shall document any communications and agreements with impacted institutions in the off-campus request to THEC. Impacted institutions should also submit any unresolved objections to the proposed off-campus offering to the Executive Director.

The THEC Academic Program Inventory provides the initial indication of duplication or undue proliferation of programs in the state.

1.4A.7A Policy will be reviewed every three years unless changes in off-campus location requirements are warranted.

Sources: THEC Meetings: April 22, 1988; November 14, 2002; July 26, 2007; and July 27, 2017.