



TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

CONSENT CALENDAR ITEM: II.B.

MEETING DATE: May 16, 2024

SUBJECT: Off-Campus Center
University of Tennessee, Health Science Center, College of Pharmacy –
Knoxville Center

ITEM TYPE: Action

ACTION RECOMMENDATION: Approval

BACKGROUND

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. Per THEC Policy A1.4A Off-Campus Instruction for Community Colleges and Universities, an off-campus center is defined as a location that is geographically apart from the main campus where students can enroll and complete academic programs. Additionally, there must be a continuing administrative presence, evidenced by at least one (1) full-time or part-time administrator housed on-site.

The University of Tennessee, Health Science Center (UTHSC) requests a center code for the College of Pharmacy, Knoxville Center on the University of Tennessee Medical Center (UTMC), Knoxville Campus premises located at 1924 Alcoa Highway, Knoxville, TN 37920. The proposed center will meet the growing demand for pharmacy education in the region and address healthcare workforce needs by offering students the coursework and clinical training necessary to attain their Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) degree. The program offers instruction in the areas such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, biochemistry, anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, pharmaceutical chemistry, pharmacognosy, pharmacy practice, pharmacy administration, applicable regulations, and professional standards and ethics. The off-campus location was originally used as a clinical site for the PharmD program. However, UTHSC started offering courses for clinical students on-site at the Knoxville Center, and students will be able to complete the PharmD starting in the Fall 2027 semester. UTHSC was not aware that they would need to have the location classified as a center, partially because clinical sites are exempt per THEC Policy A1.4A from requiring site codes. Once they discovered the oversight, they have been working with THEC and UT system staff to have the center approved.

UTHSC anticipates annual enrollment increases for its PharmD program, reflecting the pressing demand for pharmacists due to healthcare challenges such as the current physician shortage, suboptimal medication adherence, increased prescription drug use, and the aging U.S. population. Leveraging data from the Tennessee Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, projections indicate a continued need for pharmacists, especially in areas like Knox County, characterized by notable healthcare concerns such as high rates of poor physical health days, adult obesity, and preventable hospital stays. This projected growth aligns with job market trends, with 85 percent of UTHSC students graduating with a PharmD in the Class of 2023 receiving job offers before graduation, and all graduates who sought employment being licensed and employed as pharmacists within three (3) months after graduation. Furthermore, the PharmD

contributes to the State's higher education completion agenda by addressing the significant need for pharmacists in Tennessee.

The Knoxville facility, situated at the University of Tennessee Medical Center, provides a stable educational infrastructure, with operational costs primarily covering faculty and staff salaries which are expected to be offset by projected tuition revenue. Led by Dr. James Wheeler, Associate Dean, the faculty at the Knoxville Center bring extensive experience in pharmacy education and practice. The center offers a four-year PharmD program aligned with the Memphis and Nashville curriculums while employing various delivery methods to optimize resource utilization and enhance instructional quality.