



# TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

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REGULAR CALENDAR ITEM: III.

**MEETING DATE:** May 15, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Academic Policy Revision: Academic Policy A1.4: Off-Campus Instruction

**ITEM TYPE:** Action

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## BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 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. Public Chapter 186 of the 114<sup>th</sup> General Assembly revises the statute to allow the Commission to delegate approval authority for off-campus locations to the Executive Director. The proposed changes to the policy were drafted to reflect this shift and incorporate feedback from institutional and system-level stakeholders, including off-campus administrators and chief academic officers.

Significant changes in the proposed policy include:

- Currently, THEC has two policies that delineate the requirements for off-campus approval: *A1.4A – Off-Campus Instruction for Community Colleges and Universities* and *A1.4B – Off-Campus Instruction for Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology*. In an effort to streamline policies and processes, THEC is proposing combining the two policies into one new policy: *A1.4 Off-Campus Instruction*.
- The proposed policy change includes delegated authority to THEC's Executive Director for all off-campus locations.
- Approval requirements have been streamlined across the different types of off-campus locations and aligned to the newly launched off-campus portal.
- Notification requirements have been adjusted to ensure accurate data collection for THEC's off-campus portal and academic program inventory.

Attachment A provides a redlined version of the proposed changes and Attachment B provides a clean version of the amended policy.

## ATTACHMENT A: Redlined Policy Revision

**Section Title:** Academic Policies  
**Policy Title:** Off-Campus Instruction  
**Policy Number:** A 1.4

**1.4.1** **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 all public institutions including universities, community colleges, and colleges of applied technology.

The Commission delegates the authority for review and approval of off-campus locations to the Executive Director. The Executive Director maintains the discretion to refer an off-campus location to the Commission for approval. Students may not enroll in any new off-campus location, nor may any off-campus location be advertised by any public institution prior to THEC approval.

### ~~1.4A.2A~~ **Definitions.**

~~**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** — 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** — is one that culminates in a certificate (academic, technical, or graduate); associate degree, bachelor's degree, or graduate degree (master's, professional, or doctorate).~~

~~**1.4A.3A** **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 following requested action are available on the THEC website:~~

- ~~• Establish an Off-Campus Center; and~~
- ~~• Establish an Off-Campus Site.~~

### **1.4.2** **Locations Subject to Approval.**

**Branch Campus:** A branch campus is a location affiliated with a college of applied technology and is operated under the supervision of a full-time, on-site, local administrator who reports to the chief administrative officer at the main campus.

**Extension Campus:** An extension campus is a location affiliated with a college of applied technology within a fifty-mile radius of the main campus. Direct supervision and control are provided from the main campus, and the staff is limited primarily to instructors and support staff.

**Instructional Service Center:** An instructional service center is a location affiliated with a college of applied technology that serves employers and the public for the delivery of programs or portions of programs to meet a workforce need. An instructional service center must be a joint venture between the institution and an employer or another educational agency and must be located within the geographic service area designated by the governing board of the institution. Appropriate student services must be available on-site, and the full range of services must be made accessible to participating students at the main campus.

**Off-Campus Center:** An off-campus center is a location affiliated with a public community college or university that is geographically apart from the main campus where students can enroll and complete at least one academic program. 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 affiliated with a university, community college, or college of applied technology that is used to offer credit enrollment geographically apart from the main campus. 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.

### 1.4.3

**No Unnecessary Duplication.** 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 locations. It is expected that institutions and/or systems will resolve any conflicts between the institutions impacted by the proposed off-campus location submission prior to submission of the off-campus location request to THEC.

An institution contemplating the creation of an off-campus location must review the THEC off-campus inventory to avoid duplication. The institution must communicate its proposal to the impacted institution(s) in writing prior to the submission of the proposal to THEC. Impacted institutions will have 10 business 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 location to the THEC Executive Director.

### 1.4.4

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

- Clinical training sites with no didactic instruction
- Continuing education coursework
- Non-credit coursework, including non-degree apprenticeship
- Online offerings, unless the student is required to be at the location (synchronously or asynchronously) to receive instruction
- Study abroad coursework
- Student teaching locations and degree apprenticeship locations with no instruction on-site

#### 1.4.5

#### Criteria for Review for **Branch Campuses, Extension Campuses, Instructional Service Centers, Off-Campus Centers, and Off-Campus Sites.**

- **Justification of Need ~~Needs Assessment~~**– The proposal ~~must include~~ an explanation ~~requires supporting documentation~~ of the need for the new off-campus ~~center~~ location that justifies institutional allocation/reallocation of state resources. ~~The proposal must document the following:~~
  - ~~Community of industry support,~~
  - ~~A description of the target population; and~~
  - ~~How the proposed center contributes to the state's higher education completion agenda.~~
- **Enrollment** – The proposal must include anticipated enrollment in the location's initial year for short-term approvals and over the following four (4) academic years for long-term approvals.
- **Faculty and Staff** – The proposal must include anticipated faculty and staff support required to operate the new off-campus location.
- ~~**Sustainable Demand**— Proposal requires a projected headcount and full-time equivalent enrollment in the location's initial year and over the following four (4) academic years.~~
- **Operational Costs and Revenues** – Proposal ~~must include~~ ~~requires~~ 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, faculty salaries, and all other items deemed necessary by the **Tennessee Higher Education** 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 character of 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** – For off-campus locations that require an administrative presence, an explanation of the plans for administration of the off-campus location ~~must be provided and~~ should be appropriate for the enrollment and character of the academic programming offered.
- **Existing Off-Campus Centers** – In the event an institution has an existing

off-campus center and another institution proposes an off-campus center at the same location, the two institutions are required to document any communications and agreements related to the proposed off-campus center request to the THEC staff. THEC staff will review the request and will render a recommendation for approval or denial. If approved, an off-campus center code will be provided for the institution with the proposed off-campus center.

#### 1.4.6

**Off-Campus Locations Outside of Tennessee.** Pursuant to T.C.A. §49-7-202(q)(3), if the new location will create or expand a physical presence out of state, the higher education institution shall, through its governing board, file with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission a notice of intent to initiate out-of-state instructional activity prior to the development of the proposal.

#### 1.4.7

**Letter of Notification for a Facilities Acquisition.** A Letter of Notification (LON) informing THEC of a proposal to establish a new off-campus ~~center~~ location is required ~~at least 90 days in advance of~~ prior to 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~~ locations 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~~ location request.

#### ~~1.4A.5A3~~

~~**Commission Action.** Proposed off-campus centers approved by institutional or governing boards 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.6A~~

#### ~~**Off-Campus Sites**~~

#### ~~1.4A.6A1~~

~~**Criteria for Review of Off-Campus Sites.** An off-campus site is a physical space that is used to offer course credit. 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**—Proposal requires supporting documentation of need for the new off-campus site that justifies institutional allocation/reallocation of state resources.~~

- ~~**Demand**~~— Proposal requires projected headcount and full-time equivalent enrollment in the first semester and first year.
- ~~**Operational Costs and External Support**~~— Proposal 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.6A2** — **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.~~

**1.4.8**      **Major Changes to Off-Campus Locations.** Institutions must notify THEC of any changes to the academic program offerings at an off-campus location ~~at least one semester~~ prior to the ~~implementation~~ of a change. Changes include:

- Adding ~~or terminating 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); and,~~
- Changing the type of off-campus location for an approved off-campus location (e.g., from an off-campus site to an off-campus center)
- Inactivating, phasing-out, and closing of off-campus locations ~~and/or terminating academic programs (see THEC Policy A1.5 — Academic Actions Notification).~~
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**1.4.9**      **Review of Off-Campus Locations.** THEC will monitor off-campus location enrollments ~~every three (3) 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 request an institution submit a new request for an off-campus location code in the event of a major change in offerings.

~~**1.4A.7A2** — **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.~~

~~**1.4A.8A** — This policy will be reviewed every five (5) years unless changes in off-campus location requirements are warranted.~~

**Sources:** THEC Meetings: April 22, 1988; November 14, 2002; July 26, 2007; July 27, 2017, January 28, 2022, and May 15, 2025.



**Section Title:** ~~Academic Policies~~

**Policy Title:** ~~Off-Campus Instruction – Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology~~

**Policy Number:** ~~A 1.4B~~

**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 Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs). The Commission grants the authority for review and approval to the Executive Director. The Executive Director maintains the discretion to refer an off-campus location 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 the TCATs. This policy is specific to locations offering diploma credit. The policy will adhere to the Council on Occupational Education (COE) definitions as it relates to off-campus instruction. The COE is the accrediting body for the TCATs. 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 Off-Campus Instruction – Community Colleges and Universities Policy (A 1.4A).

#### **1.4B.2A Definitions.**

**Diploma Credit** – is coursework for credit towards a diploma and is only applicable to off-campus locations.

**Instructional Service Center** is a temporary or permanent location that serves employers and the public for the delivery of programs or portions of programs to meet a critical or sustained need. An instructional service center must be a joint venture between the institution and an employer or another educational agency. The occupational program at an instructional service center must be under the direct control of the main campus and located within the geographic service area designated by the governing board of the institution. Appropriate student services must be available on-site, and the full range of services must be made accessible to participating students at the main campus.

**Extension Campus** is a subordinate location within a fifty-mile radius site of the main campus. Direct supervision and control are provided from the main campus, and the staff is limited primarily to instructors and support staff. All programs of an extension campus must meet the educational requirements of the main campus and comply with its operational policies".

**Branch Campus** is a subordinate location of the main campus, operating under the supervision of a full-time, on-site, local administrator who reports to the chief administrative officer at the main campus. The branch campus



must meet all educational requirements and comply with the operational policies of the main campus”.

**Off-Campus Site**—is a physical space that is generally 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.

**1.4B.3A1** — **Locations Subject to Approval.** Proposals for instructional service centers, extension campuses, branch campuses, and off-campus sites will be subject to review and approval under this policy. Proposal formats appropriate to the following requested actions are available on the THEC website:

- Establish an Off-Campus Instructional Service Center, Extension Campus, or Branch Campus.
- Establish an Off-Campus Site.

**1.4B.3A2** — **Criteria for Review of an Instructional Service Center, an Extension Campus, and a Branch Campus.** THEC considers the following criteria, to maximize state resources, in evaluating the establishment of an off-campus Instructional Service Center, Extension Campus or Branch Campus locations at TCATs:

- **Needs Assessment** — Proposal must include supporting documentation of need for the new off-campus location that justifies institutional allocation/reallocation of state resources.
- **Sustainable Demand** — Proposal must include supporting documentation of anticipated enrollment in the location’s initial year and over the following four (4) academic years.
- **Operational Costs and Revenues** — Proposal must include 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, 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 character of programs offered. In particular, facilities should meet the standards of COE, 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, the 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 T.C.A. §§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.

**1.4B.3A3** **Criteria for Review of Off-Campus Sites.** An off-campus site is a physical space that is generally 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 to maximize state resources in evaluating the creation and operation of off-campus sites:

- **Need**—Proposal requires supporting documentation of need for the new off-campus site that justifies institutional allocation/reallocation of state resources.
- **Demand**—Proposal requires supporting documentation of anticipated enrollment at the location.
- **Operational Costs and External Support**—Proposal requires supporting documentation detailing program costs associated with the proposed location, as well as a short narrative around any shared expenses and resources.

**1.4B.4A1** **Review of Off-Campus Locations.** THEC will monitor off-campus location enrollments every three (3) years to determine that enrollments are continuous and identify any potentially low-enrollment locations.

**1.4B.4A2** **Phase-Out and Closing of Off-Campus Locations.** THEC may recommend to the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) the phase out and closure of off-campus locations that experience low enrollment over time. TBR and TCATs 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. TBR and TCATs should notify THEC of off-campus locations requiring inactivation every three (3) years.

**1.4B.5A1** **No Unnecessary Duplication.** THEC will not approve the establishment of an off-campus location or site if the proposed delivery of instructional services could reasonably occur through existing TCATs or other off-campus locations.

~~1.4B.5A2~~ **Service Area.** If a proposed off-campus location is in the service area of another institution, it is expected that TCATs will communicate with relevant institutions to coordinate off-campus offerings. TBR will resolve any service area conflicts between TCATs and community colleges prior to submission of the off-campus location request to the Commission.

~~1.4B.6A~~ This policy will be reviewed every five (5) years unless changes in off-campus location requirements are warranted.

**Sources:** THEC Meetings: July 27, 2017 and January 28, 2022.

## ATTACHMENT B: Clean Policy Revision

**Section Title:** Academic Policies  
**Policy Title:** Off-Campus Instruction  
**Policy Number:** A 1.4

**1.4.1** **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 all public institutions including universities, community colleges, and colleges of applied technology.

The Commission delegates the authority for review and approval of off-campus locations to the Executive Director. The Executive Director maintains the discretion to refer an off-campus location to the Commission for approval. Students may not enroll in any new off-campus location, nor may any off-campus location be advertised by any public institution prior to THEC approval.

**1.4.2** **Locations Subject to Approval.**

**Branch Campus:** A branch campus is a location affiliated with a college of applied technology and is operated under the supervision of a full-time, on-site, local administrator who reports to the chief administrative officer at the main campus.

**Extension Campus:** An extension campus is a location affiliated with a college of applied technology within a fifty-mile radius of the main campus. Direct supervision and control are provided from the main campus, and the staff is limited primarily to instructors and support staff.

**Instructional Service Center:** An instructional service center is a location affiliated with a college of applied technology that serves employers and the public for the delivery of programs or portions of programs to meet a workforce need. An instructional service center must be a joint venture between the institution and an employer or another educational agency and must be located within the geographic service area designated by the governing board of the institution. Appropriate student services must be available on-site, and the full range of services must be made accessible to participating students at the main campus.

**Off-Campus Center:** An off-campus center is a location affiliated with a public community college or university that is geographically apart from the main campus where students can enroll and complete at least one academic program. 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 affiliated with a university, community college, or college of applied technology that is used to offer credit enrollment geographically apart from the main campus. 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.

#### 1.4.3

**No Unnecessary Duplication.** 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 locations. It is expected that institutions and/or systems will resolve any conflicts between the institutions impacted by the proposed off-campus location submission prior to submission of the off-campus location request to THEC.

An institution contemplating the creation of an off-campus location must review the THEC off-campus inventory to avoid duplication. The institution must communicate its proposal to the impacted institution(s) in writing prior to the submission of the proposal to THEC. Impacted institutions will have 10 business 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 location to the THEC Executive Director.

#### 1.4.4

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

- Clinical training sites with no didactic instruction
- Continuing education coursework
- Non-credit coursework, including non-degree apprenticeship
- Online offerings, unless the student is required to be at the location (synchronously or asynchronously) to receive instruction
- Study abroad coursework
- Student teaching locations and degree apprenticeship locations with no instruction on-site

#### 1.4.5

**Criteria for Review for Branch Campuses, Extension Campuses, Instructional Service Centers, Off-Campus Centers, and Off-Campus Sites**

- **Justification of Need** – The proposal must include an explanation of the need for the new off-campus location that justifies institutional allocation/reallocation of state resources.
- **Enrollment** – The proposal must include anticipated enrollment in the location's initial year for short-term approvals and over the following four (4) academic years for long-term approvals.
- **Faculty and Staff** – The proposal must include anticipated faculty and staff support required to operate the new off-campus location.
- **Operational Costs and Revenues** – Proposal must include 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, faculty salaries, and all other items deemed necessary by the Tennessee Higher Education 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 character of programs offered.
- **Administration** – For off-campus locations that require an administrative presence, an explanation of the plans for administration of the off-campus location must be provided and should be appropriate for the enrollment and character of the academic programming offered.

**1.4.6 Off-Campus Locations Outside of Tennessee.** If the new location will create or expand a physical presence out of state, the higher education institution shall, through its governing board, file with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission a notice of intent to initiate out-of-state instructional activity prior to the development of the proposal.

**1.4.7 Letter of Notification for a Facilities Acquisition.** A Letter of Notification (LON) informing THEC of a proposal to establish a new off-campus location is required prior to any facilities acquisition, including lease execution and/or presentation to the State Building Commission or State Architect.

The LON must include signatures and approvals from the President of the institution and a system representative (where applicable). The establishment of off-campus locations 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 location request.

**1.4.8 Changes to Off-Campus Locations.** Institutions must notify THEC of any changes to the academic program offerings at an off-campus location prior to the implementation of a change. Changes include:

- Adding or terminating academic programs
- Changing the type of off-campus location for an approved off-campus location (e.g., from an off-campus site to an off-campus center)
- Inactivating, phasing-out, and closing of off-campus locations

**1.4.9 Review of Off-Campus Locations.** THEC will monitor off-campus location enrollments to determine that enrollments are continuous.

**Sources:** THEC Meetings: April 22, 1988; November 14, 2002; July 26, 2007; July 27, 2017, January 28, 2022, and May 15, 2025.