



## 2023-2024 Regional Contract Program Annual Report

The Regional Contract Program (RCP) is one of the first programs developed by the Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB). Since 1949, RCP has served as a model through its simple concept: sharing institutional resources. The program enables SREB participating states to share the cost for health profession programs, allowing states to postpone or even avoid creating programs for small numbers of students while still ensuring opportunities for their residents. The health programs authorized for South Carolina residents include Optometry (Southern College of Optometry, University of Alabama Birmingham, and University of Pikeville, Kentucky) and Veterinary Medicine (Mississippi State University, Tuskegee University, and University of Georgia).

When states contract through SREB for available openings in out-of-state professional programs, they lower their healthcare training costs significantly. States that set aside spaces in their professional programs also benefit. Institutions keep high standards for admission because there is a large pool of high-quality applicants. Students have broader educational opportunities and do not have to pay the higher out-of-state tuition.

After consultation with institutions and states, SREB sets the rates annually for all programs—usually two years in advance. Appropriations are made by the South Carolina General Assembly as a part of the annual state budgeting process for this program.

In South Carolina, interested students must contact the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) for access to the RCP. This process involves Commission staff determining whether the student has satisfied South Carolina residency provisions pursuant to the South Carolina Code of Laws for Determination of Rates of Tuition and Fees and related regulations, including the required two-year period of residency in this state. (Statutory Authority: S.C. Code Ann. § 59-112-10 et seq.; S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 62-600 et seq.). Once a student is certified as having met the eligibility requirements, the student retains RCP status if he or she remains enrolled full-time in the same degree program and



retains South Carolina residency. Contract seat students must recertify annually no later than June 1 to remain a participant in the RCP.

For the 2023-2024 academic year, 186 applications for RCP were received and processed, 6 applications were denied, 99 students applied to one or more institutions, and 97 SC students were certified for participation in the RCP through SREB (67 Mississippi State University, 25 Tuskegee University, 80 University of Georgia, 3 Southern College, 2 University of Alabama Birmingham, and 3 University of Pikeville Kentucky).

**Table 1: Certification in Regional Contract Program by program and institution.**

Program	Institution	Certified
Veterinary	University of Georgia	80
Veterinary	Mississippi State University	67
Veterinary	Tuskegee University	25
Optometry	Southern College of Optometry	3
Optometry	University of Alabama – Birmingham	2
Optometry	University of Pikeville	3

Regional Contract Program enrollment included 150 veterinary students (43 first year and 107 recertified), and 13 optometry students (5 first year and 8 recertified) with a total cost of \$5,415,585.50 for the 163 participating South Carolina students. Veterinary students receive \$34,505.00 per academic year and Optometry students receive \$19,776.00 per academic year. It is important to note that the RCP experienced a 3 percent rate increase from 2022-2023 for all participating states and one veterinary student withdrew spring semester.

**Table 2: Enrollment in Regional Contract Program by program, institution, and annual cost.**

Program	Institution	Enrollment	Cost
Veterinary	University of Georgia	94	\$3,243,470
Veterinary	Mississippi State University	31	\$1,069,655
Veterinary	*Tuskegee University	25 (Fall) 24 (Spring)	\$845,372.50 \$828,120
Optometry	Southern College of	7	\$138,432

Program	Institution	Enrollment	Cost
	Optometry		
Optometry	University of Alabama – Birmingham	3	\$59,328
Optometry	University of Pikeville	3	\$59,328

Table 3: Certified, Accepted, and Recertified SC Students by program and institution.

Program	Institution	First Year Certified	First Year Accepted	Recertified
Veterinary	University of Georgia	80	29	65
Veterinary	Mississippi State University	67	10	21
Veterinary	Tuskegee University	25	4	21
Optometry	Southern College of Optometry	3	2	5
Optometry	University of Alabama – Birmingham	3	1	2
Optometry	University of Pikeville	3	2	1
		<b>181</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>115</b>

Further information about RCP is available on the CHE website at (<https://www.che.sc.gov/regional-contract-program>) and on SREB's website (<https://www.sreb.org/regional-contract-program>).