



## 2022-2023 Regional Contract Program Annual Report

The Regional Contract Program (RCP) is one of the Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB) first programs. Beginning in 1949, RCP serves as a model through its simple concept: sharing institutional resources. The program enables SREB participating states to share the cost for health profession programs to postpone or even avoid creating programs for a small number 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 for available openings through SREB for students 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 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 (SC CHE) for access to the Regional Contract Program (RCP). This process involves Commission staff determining whether the student has satisfied South Carolina residency provisions including the required two-year period of residency in the state pursuant to the South Carolina Code of Laws for Determination of Rates of Tuition and Fees and related regulations. (Statutory Authority: 1976 Code §§ 59–112–10 to 59–112–100, Regulations: 62-600, 609 (2023)) 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 2022-2023 academic year, 181 applications were received and processed, 1 student was denied certification, and 180 SC students were certified for participation in the RCP through SREB (64 Mississippi State University, 26 Tuskegee University, 86 University of Georgia, 2 Southern College, 1 University of Alabama Birmingham, and 1 University of Pikeville Kentucky).

Students who ultimately enrolled in the Regional Contract Program include 138 veterinary students (45 first year and 93 recertified), and 9 optometry students (2 first year and 7 recertified) with a total cost of \$4,795,800 for South Carolina. Veterinary students receive \$33,500.00 per academic year and Optometry students receive \$19,200.00 per academic year.

**Table 1: Enrollment in Regional Contract Program by program, institution, and annual cost.**

Program	Institution	Enrollment	Cost
Veterinary	University of Georgia	86	\$2,881,000
Veterinary	Mississippi State University	27	\$904,500
Veterinary	Tuskegee University	25	\$837,500
Optometry	Southern College of Optometry	5	\$96,000
Optometry	University of Alabama – Birmingham	3	\$57,600
Optometry	University of Pikeville	1	\$19,200

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>).