

GREBE Report on UT's Residency Regulations

Report Purpose

GREBE, acting on behalf of the graduate students in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, would like the University of Tennessee, Knoxville to restructure its Residency Policy for graduate students to allow students who have established domicile in the state to be considered for in-state residency classification for the purpose of tuition and fees.

We believe that the current policy is too restrictive, and that restructuring the policy would be a viable step in helping the University to meet its Top 25 Quest Goal of increasing the number of graduate students.

Justification

The University of Tennessee's "Top 25 Quest" seeks to improve UT's standing in national rankings and to make UT Knoxville a Top 25 public research university. One of the three main goals, set forth by the University to meet this challenge, is to "improve graduate education, with the specific goal of increasing the number of PhDs we produce." Currently, UT Knoxville awards significantly fewer doctorate, master's, and professional degrees than most of its 27 peer and aspiration schools.

We have researched the Residency Policies of the 27 public Universities listed by the Top 25 Task Force as peer and aspiration universities, and have found that UT's Residency Policy is much stricter for graduate students than the majority of other public Universities. We suggest the University revise its Residency policy to align with these other institutions, and argue that by setting more reasonable residency standards the University will be more attractive for graduate students pursuing a degree at UT Knoxville.

Suggestions for Policy Change

Based on review of policies at the 27 peer and aspiration universities, we feel that University of Tennessee's rules on residency are draconian. All but two universities researched provide a clear and attainable way for graduate students to gain in-state residency. There are two common mechanisms to facilitate a graduate student's change in residency status: schools either provide exemptions for graduate students who hold assistantships or fellowships (12 schools; Table 1), and/or schools will evaluate a student's claim of establishing domicile in the state after 12 months of residency in the state (15 schools; Table 2).

We suggest that the University consider adding either, or both, of the following amendments to its current policy to make UT Knoxville more comparable to its peer and aspiration schools:

1. Granting Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs), Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs), or fellowship-holders In-State Residency Status for tuition and fee purposes;
2. Allowing graduate students to apply for in-state residency status after 12 months of living in the state of Tennessee, if they have rescinded domicile in any other

location. We suggest that the following documents could be used as proof of domicile in Tennessee:

- a. Owning or leasing residential property in the state
- b. Federal Income Tax Returns (To establish permanent address and fiscal independence)
- c. Driver's license or state ID
- d. Vehicle Registration
- e. Voter Registration
- f. Spouse who is domiciled in the state

Concluding Remarks

The University of Tennessee's residency policy for graduate students is too restrictive and is not in line with the policies of peer and aspiration institutions. We feel that a change in this policy will aid in the recruitment and retention of outstanding graduate students and will ultimately serve to promote UT Knoxville in its quest for Top 25 status.

Table 1: UT Top 25 Quest peer and aspiration group schools that provide exemptions that allow for Graduate students to acquire in-state residency status.

INSTITUTION	Are Exemptions Provided?	If Yes, what Exemptions?			
		GTA/GRA Position	Scholarship Student	Resident Spouse	Property Owner
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	No				
Current Peer Group					
Auburn University	Yes	X ¹		X	
Iowa State University	Yes	X ¹			
NC State University, Raleigh	No				
Top 25 Aspiration Group					
University of Georgia	Yes	X ²			
Clemson University	No				
Purdue University	Yes	X ³	X		
Texas A&M	Yes	X ⁴	X ⁶	X	X
University of Minnesota	Yes	X ¹	X ⁷		
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey	No				
Indiana University	No				
Michigan State University	Yes	X ⁵		X	
Aspiration Group					
University of California Berkeley	No				
University of California Los Angeles	No				
University of Virginia	No				
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor	Yes			X	
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	No				
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	Yes	X ¹			
University of Wisconsin, Madison	No				
University of California Davis	No				
University of California Santa Barbara	No				
University of Florida	Yes				
University of Texas, Austin	Yes	X ³			
The Ohio State University	No				
University of Maryland, College Park	Yes	X			
University of Pittsburgh	No				

¹ If GTA/GRA position is 1/4 time or greater

² GTA/GRA position must be 13 hours/week or greater.

³ Many cover all tuition and fees

⁴ GTA/GRA position is 1/2 time or greater

⁵ For fee purposes only. Departments can use tuition waiver for GTAs.

⁶ If scholarship is greater than \$1,000

⁷ If student holds a fellowship, scholarship or traineeship equivalent to ¼ time GTA/GRA position

Table 2: UT Top 25 Quest peer and aspiration schools that allow students to apply for in-state residency status after living within the state for 12 consecutive months, and the types of evidence used to establish a student's domicile for tuition and fee purposes

INSTITUTION	Can students establish domicile, and in-state residency, after 12 month of living in state?	Acceptable Evidence for establishing domicile												
		Establishment of Financial Independence (e.g., Parental Tax Returns)	Resident Spouse	State-income source	Federal Tax Document	State Tax Documents	Property ownership	Lease/Rental Agreement	State issued ID	Automobile registration	Voter registration	Finances in state banking institution	Membership in state-based organization/community	Admission to licensed profession in state
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	No													
Current Peer Group														
Auburn University	Yes	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Iowa State University	No													
NC State University, Raleigh	Yes	X		X		X	X		X	X	X		X	
Top 25 Aspiration Group														
University of Georgia	No													
Clemson University	No													
Purdue University	No													
Texas A&M	No													
University of Minnesota	No													
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey	Yes	X	X			X	X	X			X	X		
Indiana University	No													
Michigan State University	No													
Aspiration Group														
University of California Berkeley	Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
University of California Los Angeles	Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
University of Virginia	Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor	No													
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	Yes	X		X		X	X		X	X	X		X	
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	Yes	X ¹	X ¹											
University of Wisconsin, Madison	Yes	X			X	X	X		X	X	X		X	
University of California Davis	Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
University of California Santa Barbara	Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
University of Florida	Yes	X	X		X	X								
University of Texas, Austin	Yes	X	X				X							
The Ohio State University	Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
University of Maryland, College Park	No													
University of Pittsburgh	Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

¹ A married student who receives at least one half their income from a non-University, but in state, source may appeal for residency status.