

Types of Higher Education Institutions

Public career and technical schools: Career and technical schools offer training to help you develop skills that are in-demand in the workforce. In Tennessee, these are the **Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs)**, which are funded, in part, by money from the State of Tennessee. Students often can complete these programs within four months to two years. Graduates of these programs can receive either a certificate that documents their knowledge or skills in a particular area or they can receive a diploma from the institution. The TCATs offer both full-time day enrollment or evening enrollment and the TCATs offer 60 occupational programs statewide.

Public two-year colleges: Tennessee's public two-year colleges are known as **Tennessee's community colleges**. These colleges offer associate degree programs, which usually take two years to complete. Many also offer certificate programs. Like the TCATs, the community colleges are funded partly by the State of Tennessee, so tuition and fees are often very competitive. There are 13 community colleges across the state that with over 480 academic programs. You can also participate in the Tennessee Transfer Pathways programs, which will allow you to transfer the credits from your associate degree to a public four-year college and have those credits count toward a bachelor's degree.

Public four-year colleges: Like public two-year colleges, public four-year colleges are funded, in part, by the State of Tennessee. These colleges offer bachelor's degree programs, which usually take four years to complete, although some offer two-year associate degree programs, too. Many also offer graduate programs, such as master's degree programs and doctoral degree programs. Because they receive government funds, tuition and fees usually are lower at public colleges and universities.

Non-profit private colleges and universities: Non-profit colleges and universities are funded, in part, by private donations. These colleges and universities are managed primarily by boards of governors made up of community members. There are many types of non-profit colleges and universities offering a wide variety of degrees and programs, including two-year and four-year degrees. Although tuition and fees are sometimes higher at non-profit colleges and universities, many are able to offer large scholarships through funds provided by their donors.

For-profit colleges and universities: For-profit colleges and universities are businesses. They are managed primarily by shareholders and owners. For-profit colleges may offer programs in convenient time frames or formats, but their tuition and fees are sometimes higher. As with any institution, students will want to check and ensure that the credits they've earned at the institution will be recognized by other colleges if they choose to transfer to another institution.

