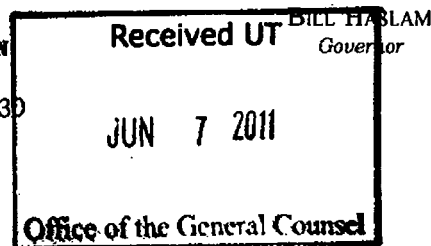




RICHARD G. RHODA
Executive Director

STATE OF TENNESSEE
HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION
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June 1, 2011

Dr. Joe DiPietro
President
University of Tennessee
831 Andy Holt Tower
Knoxville, TN 37996

Dear Dr. DiPietro:

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) has been asked to confirm that the University of Tennessee system office may act as the State agency responsible for handling student complaints from students attending UT institutions. It is my understanding that this question arises from the provision of the federal program integrity regulations, published October 29, 2010, requiring that states have a process to address complaints against institutions enrolling persons located in Tennessee, including Tennessee's public institutions, in order for an institution to be eligible for Title IV financial aid.

This requirement has caused many to ask which Tennessee agency is responsible for addressing complaints of particular institutions, such as those institutions governed by UT. The legislature has not charged THEC with the responsibility of addressing complaints against Tennessee public institutions.

However, the United States Department of Education has offered guidance as to what is an appropriate agency. In the Dear Colleague Letter dated March 17, 2011 (GEN-11-05), the Department stated that "[a] State may rely on a governing board or central office of a State-wide system of public institutions if the State has made the determination the governing board or central office is sufficiently independent to provide successful oversight of complaints for the institutions in that system." It appears from our review of all available information that UT is the type of governing board described in GEN-11-05. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard G. Rhoda".

Richard G. Rhoda
Executive Director

cc: Dr. Katie High
Ms. Catherine Mizell ✓
Dr. Stephanie Bellard Chase