

# HVAC Excellence

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## Team Visitation Report - HVACR Technologies

### Visitation Date

July 11, 2025

### Team Members

Abigail Carter, Ed.D.

Steve Allen, M.Ed., LEED AP

### School

Tennessee College of Applied Technology Upper Cumberland  
910 Miller Avenue  
Crossville, TN 38555 4360

### Faculty/Staff Interviewed

- Mr. Cliff Wightman, President
- Mr. Stacy Johnson, Executive Vice President
- Ms. Wanda Reid, Vice President of Compliance and Academic Affairs
- Mr. Jeff Slagle, Vice President of Operations & Facilities
- Ms. Cindy Lowe, Admissions/Records Specialist
- Ms. Jena Demars, Student Services Coordinator
- Ms. Darlene Henson, Student Service Assistant
- Ms. Tammie McCloud, Financial Aid Coordinator
- Mr. Cody Cantrell, Financial Aid Assistant
- Ms. Danielle Sutton, Business Office Specialist/HR
- Ms. Cinthya Pulido, Accounts Payable
- Mr. Randy Smith, Instructor

### Students Interviewed

Students from instructor Randy Smith's HVACR class were very attentive as accreditation team member Steve Allen spoke regarding future employment opportunities in the HVACR industry and how important the education and training they were receiving would be to their future success. The students were polite and attentive. Mr. Allen advised the students that a clean driving record was critical to their employment in the HVACR field. The purpose of the visit and the program's re-accreditation process were also explained.

### **Advisory Committee Members Interviewed**

Advisory Committee member Justin McCarthy of Action Heating and Air Conditioning, Crossville, Tennessee was present. Mr. McCarthy stated that his company hires many of the graduates of the TCAT - Upper Cumberland HVACR program. He also stated that HVACR instructor Randy Smith is extremely knowledgeable and an excellent instructor.

Training related to the installation and service of Mini-Split systems was also discussed. Instructor Smith has recently ordered additional equipment to expand Mini-Split training.

Mr. McCarthy fully supports and encourages the HVACR program's plans to expand training in new Low GWP/A2L refrigerants. A copy of the ESCO manual on Low GWP Safety was presented to instructor Smith.

### **The visiting team's recommendation to the HVAC Excellence Review Committee**

Team members concur that the Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration (HVACR) program at TCAT - Upper Cumberland meets the standards set forth by HVAC Excellence and recommends re-accreditation for another six (6) years.

### **Standard 1 - Mission of Program**

The Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCAT) are governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) system. TBR is the largest higher education system in Tennessee, governing 40 post-secondary educational institutions. The TBR system is comprised of 13 community colleges and 27 technology colleges. The TBR system enrolls more than 80 percent of all Tennessee students attending public institutions of higher education. The Commission of the Council on Occupational Education (COE) accredits Tennessee College of Applied Technology. This report will contain information related to Tennessee College of Applied Technology - Upper Cumberland. In May of 2024, the Tennessee Board of Regents recommended TCAT Crossville change its name to TCAT - Upper Cumberland in preparation for the merger with TCAT Livingston in 2025.

The mission of the Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration (HVACR) program is appropriate for the college and its service area. The mission statement is part of the college handbook and various other school publications. The need for trained HVACR technicians in this area has been determined and documented in the self-study. The college's self-study provided a substantial list of local businesses as potential employers in the HVACR and related fields. Tennessee College of Applied Technology - Upper Cumberland meets Standard 1 requirements set forth by HVAC Excellence.

### **Standard 2 - Administrative Responsibilities**

Interviews provided evidence of the administrative support for the Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration program. The Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration program area is exceptionally clean and well organized. The program is equipped with modern trainers, up-to-date HVACR training equipment, modern diagnostic tools, and adequate storage space. The administrative staff receives program goals and the need for technology updates information. The program faculty collaborates cooperatively with the

administrative personnel to order appropriate equipment and related materials. The self-study provided exhibits to document an orderly purchasing system that supports the program.

The self-study includes copies of both a diploma and a transcript that document student competencies. The college's evaluation process supports program needs and purchases. The college handbook provides information related to policies on attendance, violations, liabilities, safety, and parking. Tennessee College of Applied Technology - Upper Cumberland meets Standard 2 requirements set forth by HVAC Excellence.

### **Commendations/Recognitions**

The accreditation team recognizes the enormous effort required to complete the college's self-study and coordinate the on-site visit. The team commends the college for its commitment to excellence and appreciates its long-term association with HVAC Excellence. The team specifically recognizes Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration instructor, Randy Smith, and the Vice President of Compliance and Academic Affairs, Wanda Reid, commend both in preparing the self-study.

In addition, the accreditation team commends President Cliff Wightman and Executive Vice President Stacy Johnson for their direct hands-on attitude and impressive relationship with staff, faculty, and students. The HVAC Excellence team was impressed with the information provided during the interview process with them.

### **Standard 3 - Finances and Funds**

Student fees associated with tuition, maintenance fees, and required tools are in the college handbook that is available online on the college's website. The self-study provides copies of the program's past three years annual budget as well as the Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration program budget for the current year. Interviews with the instructors and administrative staff document appropriate development and implementation of the program's budget. Tennessee College of Applied Technology - Upper Cumberland provides adequate funding for the Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration program.

The college's administrative team is committed to providing the equipment and other resources needed to keep the Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration program current with today's technology. The Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration instructor is directly involved in the budgetary process and reminded periodically of budget deadlines and procedures. Program enrollment, number of graduates, completers, economic conditions, and other factors are components of the budgetary process. Tennessee College of Applied Technology - Upper Cumberland meets Standard 3 requirements set forth by HVAC Excellence.

### **Standard 4 - Student Services**

Tennessee College of Applied Technology - Upper Cumberland has an established process of student admission, orientation, counseling, and placement/follow-up. The college's website provides a wealth of relevant information for prospective and currently enrolled students. The college does not require a specific entrance exam for program entry but provides tutoring for all

students. The college provides an orientation process for all college students. Student Services records are confidential and stored in secured areas.

The Tennessee College of Applied Technology does not offer student loans. However, most students are eligible for some form of financial aid. Tennessee Promise is both a scholarship and mentoring program focused on increasing the number of students that attend college in the state. It provides students a last-dollar scholarship, meaning the scholarship will cover tuition and fees not covered by the Pell grant, the Wilder-Naifeh Technical Skills Grant, or State Student Assistance Funds. Tennessee Reconnect Grant is a "last dollar" scholarship that pays the remaining balance after other state and Pell Grants are applied. This Grant is available for students who want to attend Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology.

Student Services provide counseling for all students enrolled at Tennessee College of Applied Technology - Upper Cumberland. Hours for counseling and other services are on-site, and available times are on-line at the college website. Student Services coordinates ADA compliance and provides services for students with medical concerns or needs. The self-study contains copies of forms to document medical information. Student Services provides job placement assistance and conducts follow-up with its graduates. Tennessee College of Applied Technology Upper Cumberland meets Standard 4 requirements set forth by HVAC Excellence.

### **Standard 5 - Instructional Design & Program Elements**

The TCAT - Upper Cumberland self-study was excellent. There was excellent documentation for all items in Standard 5. A detailed copy of the curriculum was submitted with self-study. Also, course descriptions and requirements for the Certificate and Diploma programs are on the TCAT – Upper Cumberland web site. Supplemental or part-time training is not provided. The present instructor/student ratio is 1 to 15.

Safety is addressed at the beginning of the HVACR program with a 10-hour OSHA course followed by a 24-hour shop safety course. Safety glasses are required to operate or work on equipment. A student sign-off sheet covering worker characteristics and safety was submitted. In addition to the school accident and injury form, OSHA Form 301 Injuries and Illnesses Incident Report form is also used.

Students can check their grades and their course progress using the on-line Banner system. Lab and shop assignments and performance were submitted. ESCO work ready exams are used as well as the ESCO 608 exam. The live work order and disclaimer were well documented. The HVACR Program Advisory Board documentation was submitted, and updates were obtained at the site visit. TCAT - Upper Cumberland meets Standard 5 requirements set forth by HVAC Excellence.

### **Required Compliance Corrections**

- None.

### **Suggestions**

- Expand Low GWP training.

- Use the student-built house for Energy Audit Training

### **Standard 6 - Physical Facilities**

The instructor's office, lab, and classroom are separate areas. The classroom and lab areas are visible from the instructor's office. Fire extinguishers, first aid kits, and eyewash stations are present. The classroom is sufficiently equipped with multimedia equipment. The lab area has a dedicated exhaust system. TCAT - Upper Cumberland meets Standard 6 requirements set forth by HVAC Excellence.

### **Compliance Corrections**

- None.

### **Suggestions**

- Additional eyewash stations be installed in the lab/shop area.
- Expand lab/shop areas to meet anticipated increased student enrollment.
- Mount first aid kits on walls.

### **Standard 7 - Equipment and Tools**

The HVACR program has an excellent assortment of related tools and consumables. Diagnostic tools are available and in working order. Cleaning supplies are readily available. A copy of the required student tool list was submitted. There is no student tool purchase program. TCAT - Upper Cumberland meets Standard 7 requirements set forth by HVAC Excellence.

### **Required Compliance Corrections**

- None.

### **Standard 8 - Cooperative Training**

The Cooperative Work Program was well documented within the self-study. The accreditation team reviewed the Cooperative Education Policy & Procedures, Cooperative Education Program Agreement, and other support documentation. The cooperative program is an important part of the HVACR program. TCAT - Upper Cumberland meets Standard 8 requirements set forth by HVAC Excellence.

### **Required Compliance Corrections**

- None.

### **Standard 9 - Instructor Qualifications**

HVACR instructor Randy Smith meets all the criteria required by the Tennessee Board of Regents to be an HVACR instructor. Qualifications were well documented in the program's self-study. Annual administration evaluations were submitted. Student evaluations for the instructor were submitted within the self-study. TCAT - Upper Cumberland meets Standard 9 requirements set forth by HVAC Excellence

**Required Compliance Corrections**

- None.

**Suggestions**

- HVACR Instructor Randy Smith attend the HVAC Excellence National HVACR Educators Conference in Las Vegas March 16-19, 2026.

**Commendations**

- TCAT Upper Cumberland is commended for providing excellent self-study.