

**Request for Authorization to Establish a  
Master of Science in Athletic Training  
(M.S., CIP 51.0913) at  
Appalachian State University**

**I. Program Highlights**

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- The MS Athletic Training program will develop evidence-based healthcare professionals with the ability to think critically and reflectively in a changing healthcare system. Students who complete this program will be engaged members of the healthcare team and community, and aid their patients in the prevention, assessment, and treatment of injuries and illnesses.
- Coursework in the program will prepare students to meet core competencies for healthcare professionals set forth by the Institutes of Medicine and the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education.
- This is an on-campus program.
- This degree program is comprised of 66 SCH of didactic and clinical education over two academic years. Clinical education will include at least two immersive clinical experiences. Students will be enrolled for six full-time terms, yet will have opportunities to participate in internships during the summer of the second year.
- 15-20 full-time students are projected in the first year, while 45-50 full-time students are projected by the fourth year.
- Appalachian State University will direct existing resources to the teach-out of the BS Athletic Training degree program and the implementation of the new MS Athletic Training degree program. No new faculty, library resources, or facilities and equipment will be needed. However, additional administrative staff and new Master's program graduate student assistantships will be needed.

**II. BOG Academic Program Planning Criteria (UNC Policy 400.1)**

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1. **Existing Programs (Number, Location, Mode of Delivery).** Three institutions in North Carolina currently offer the MS in Athletic Training (The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, High Point University, and Lenoir-Rhyne University).

There are five UNC institutions (Appalachian State University, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, University of North Carolina at Pembroke, University of North Carolina Wilmington, and Western Carolina University) requesting to plan an on-campus Athletic Training Professional Master's Program. They are positioned to meet the needs and demands of their respective regions, the state of North Carolina, and surrounding states, without unnecessary duplication. The requests extend from a change in Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) policies that require students to graduate from a Master's program to be eligible to sit for the Board of Certification (BoC) Exam. Successful completion of the BoC is required for Athletic Trainer Certification, which makes graduates eligible for licensure by the North Carolina Board of Athletic Trainer Examiners.

2. **Relation to Campus Distinctiveness and Mission.** The proposed MS Athletic Training degree program supports the mission of Appalachian state by transforming students into graduates who are lifelong learners and engaged, productive citizens. It would support the University's goal to

increase graduate student presence and provide a “destination program” in the discipline. It would support the ASU Beaver College of Health Sciences’ mission by providing an innovative, collaborative, and challenging healthcare program that produces high-quality graduates, and transforms the health and quality of life for the communities served.

3. **Demand (local, regional, state).** Societal demand for Athletic Trainers is substantial and growing. During the 2013-2014 academic year, 7.8 million student-athletes participated in sports. Athletic Trainers are identified in state laws as key healthcare providers in the recognition, evaluation, and treatment of injuries, including concussions, which occur during sports participation. Having appropriate medical coverage in the middle school and high school setting is essential to prevent injuries and sudden death among student-athletes. A recent study on athletic training availability in North Carolina public high schools found that only 62 percent of the 394 public high schools have full-time Athletic Trainers. Some North Carolina counties currently have no Athletic Trainers serving their high schools. As the state works to expand athletic training services to all high schools, graduates from Athletic Training Professional Master’s programs will be prepared to fill those positions.
4. **Potential for Unnecessary Duplication.** Twenty-one institutions offer Athletic Training Professional Programs in North Carolina; three programs offer a Master’s degree and eighteen programs offer a Bachelor’s degree. Athletic Training Program Directors were contacted and asked to provide these data from their respective CAATE Annual Report; these data provided were self-reported. Five programs did not provide data. Overall, the total number of Athletic Training Professional Programs in North Carolina and the United States is expected to decrease as a result of the CAATE decision to require a Master’s degree. Furthermore, each UNC Institution planning for the degree change is proposing to offer distinct areas of interest in their Athletic Training Professional Master’s Programs. Therefore, the establishment of these programs would not create unnecessary duplication.
5. **Employment Opportunities for Graduates.** Labor market information indicates strong projections for athletic training employment. The NC Works data projects a 1.8 percent annual percentage growth between 2012 and 2022. The Bureau of Labor and Statistics projects a 21 percent growth between 2014 and 2024. A 2011 article in the New York Times listed Athletic Trainers as one of the top ten fastest growing occupations, projecting 6,000 new jobs by 2018. In 2014, Business Insider identified Athletic Training as number five on their list of *The 20 College Majors That Lead To The Most Satisfying Careers*.
6. **Faculty Quality and Number.** No new faculty positions are needed.
7. **Availability of Campus Resources (library, space, etc.).** The existing resources of the ASU Belk Library, including electronic resources, journals, books, and staff, are adequate to support the program. The proposed MS-AT degree program will primarily operate out of the newly constructed teaching and research facility for the Beaver College of Health Sciences (BCHS), a 203,000-square foot building slated to open in July 2018.
8. **Relevant Lower-level and Cognate Programs.** Disciplines in the College of Arts and Sciences (Psychology, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Interdisciplinary Studies), and in the Beaver College of Health Sciences (Exercise Science, Public Health, Communication Sciences and

Disorders, Nursing, Nutrition, Health Care Management, Social Work, and Wake Forest Physician Assistant Assistant) prepare students for careers in athletic training and other healthcare professions. Specifically, inter-professional opportunities with other graduate programs such as Exercise Science, Nursing, Nutrition, Speech Language Pathology, Social Work, Health Administration, and Psychology are valuable to the proposed MS-AT degree program as our College and the CAATE place growing emphasis on inter-professional education and practice. Currently, no foreseeable improvement or expansion of these disciplines are required to support the proposed MS-AT degree program.

9. **Impact on Access and Affordability.** Appalachian will request a differential tuition of \$75 per credit hour for MS-AT program enrollees. For the 66 total credit hours required in the proposed MS-AT degree program, each student will pay \$4,950 in differential tuition. Revenues generated will be used for graduate assistantships, student scholarships, student program costs, capital outlay/equipment, program director and coordinator of clinical education stipends, accreditation maintenance, and other program costs.
10. **Expected Quality.** Appalachian State University will implement an ongoing annual evaluation of the proposed MS Athletic Training program using reviews and reports on applicants, admitted students, enrollment, student learning outcomes, clinical evaluations, retention, graduation and Board of Certification examination rates, graduate placement, and alumni surveys. The CAATE also requires programs to submit an annual report via their online system by the first of October. During the first year of the program, a self-study will be conducted to support accreditation reaffirmation efforts. Appalachian State University will also engage in a periodic comprehensive review of student learning outcomes.
11. **Feasibility of Collaborative Program.** Although accreditation requirements can create challenges that limit the level of practical partnerships, the five universities identified in this document (Appalachian State University, UNC Charlotte, UNC Pembroke, UNC Wilmington, and Western Carolina University) have discussed opportunities for collaboration. UNC Online course exchange could be a possible avenue for online courses such as pharmacology, organization and administration, psychosocial issues and behavioral health, and nutritional concepts. Guest lecturing across programs in our respective areas of expertise is another low-cost opportunity. Course sequencing could be developed appropriate to the respective institutions and faculty with content expertise could be scheduled to appear via distance learning technologies.
12. **Other Considerations.** None.

### III. Summary of Review Processes

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**Campus Review Process and Feedback.** The proposal was reviewed by the Appalachian State University faculty, department and university curriculum committees, the provost, and chancellor. Approval was obtained at all levels.

**UNC General Administration Review Process and Feedback.** Throughout the review process, Appalachian State University provided relevant information pertaining to program requirements and resources. The institution submitted appropriate documentation and research to support its statements. Reviewers evaluated the requests and did not require further responses.

**IV. Recommendation**

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It is recommended that the Board of Governors approve Appalachian State University's request to establish a Master's of Science (M.S.) in Athletic Training degree program (CIP 51.0913) to enroll students starting Summer 2019.