

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

I. Program Highlights

- The MS Athletic Training program will prepare competent entry-level athletic trainers capable of addressing the healthcare needs of an active population in many different healthcare settings.
- This is an on-campus program.
- This degree program consists of a 67-credit hour, residential graduate program designed for students pursuing employment as an Athletic Trainer. Students will complete a comprehensive curriculum consisting of 52 credit hours of didactic education and 15 credit hours of clinical/experiential learning. Course outcomes align with the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) accreditation standards and the Board of Certification (BoC) Practice Analysis.
- Eight full-time students are projected in the first year, while 40 full-time students are projected by the fourth year.
- Teaching responsibilities of the MSAT program will be fully absorbed by the current BS Athletic Training Faculty. Adjunct professors may be required during the phasing out of the BS Athletic Training Program and commencement of the MSAT program.
- A Program Director and Clinical Coordinator will be needed to implement the program.
- No new library resources or facilities and equipment will be needed.
- Two graduate assistantships for research will be needed.

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

1. **Existing Programs (Number, Location, Mode of Delivery).** Three institutions in North Carolina currently offer the MS in Athletic Training (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 MSAT degree program will fulfill the mission of Western Carolina University by enriching the lives of students and members of the surrounding community, region and state by enhancing economies and providing a graduate learning experience that utilizes teaching, research, service, and community engagement to train the next generation of athletic trainers.

- 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 62percent 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 1.8percent annual percentage growth between 2012 and 2022. The Bureau of Labor and Statistics projects a 21percent 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.** Teaching responsibilities of the MSAT program will be fully absorbed by the current BS Athletic Training Faculty. The current BS program will be phased out as the MSAT program is phased in. The termination of the BS program to be replaced by a MSAT program is a professional / accreditation requirement. Within the first four years, it is not anticipated that the program will require additional full-time faculty. Adjunct professors may be required during the phasing out of the BS Athletic Training Program and commencement of the MSAT program.
- 7. Availability of Campus Resources (library, space, etc.).** Western Carolina University's (WCU) Hunter Library offers extensive online, print, and human resources in support of the Athletic Training program. At this time, no additional library support is needed for the Master of Science of Athletic Training Program. The program will be housed in the 160,000 ft. Health and Human Sciences Building (HHSB), which has twelve dedicated classroom spaces and twenty-one labs that are designed for both research and learning spaces.

8. **Relevant Lower-level and Cognate Programs.** No lower level or cognate programs are necessary for supporting the proposed degree program. The proposed program is a stand-alone master's degree and potential students can earn a bachelor's degree in any major from any university; potential students only need the pre- requisites in order to apply. Western Carolina University is currently developing an Integrated Health Sciences degree to be offered at the baccalaureate level. This undergraduate degree will have the courses necessary to allow undergraduate students to complete the pre-requisites necessary for application to the MSAT program.
9. **Impact on Access and Affordability.** An \$850/semester or \$1700/year tuition differential is proposed. The revenues will support expenses related to necessary upgrades to a graduate program, including cadavers and dissecting equipment, therapeutic modalities, emergency care supplies, exam and clinical software, and annual maintenance of equipment.
10. **Expected Quality.** The faculty in the Athletic Training Program have established metrics for the graduate program based upon current undergraduate enrollment and success, including retention rates, completion rates, graduate placement, and surveys of alumni and employers.
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

Campus Review Process and Feedback. The proposal was reviewed by the Western Carolina 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, Western Carolina 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

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