

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

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.
- The curriculum combines structured didactic and clinical courses to meet program and learning outcomes. Didactic courses will be offered in a face-to-face format with an occasional online/web-based class. Clinical courses facilitate the knowledge acquired in the didactic courses into skill acquisition and application in authentic, real-time patient care experiences across a variety of affiliate sites in multiple settings, such as universities/colleges, high schools, clinics/hospitals, and physician practices. Since this degree is a professional master's degree that will serve as the entry to the profession of athletic training, the core courses will address the knowledge, skills, and abilities required of entry-level athletic trainers.
- This is an on-campus program.
- This degree program is comprised of a minimum of 64 SCH of instruction and clinical experiences. In accordance with Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) standards, the program will require that the coursework and clinical rotations span a period of at least two academic years.
- 6 full-time students are projected in the first year, while 24 full-time students are projected by the fourth year.
- Since the program has been in existence at the undergraduate level, the necessary resources are available in the library and the facilities and equipment are currently sufficient to meet the competencies required by the educational standards and to meet the needs and expectations of our graduate's employers. No new faculty, library resources, facilities and equipment, or other program support 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.

APPENDIX L

- 2. Relation to Campus Distinctiveness and Mission.** The mission of UNC Pembroke centers on changing the lives of the students, faculty and communities we serve through education. As a regional institution, UNC Pembroke strives to improve the communities in our service region. Access to healthcare is limited in rural areas and much of our service area is rural. According to a 2015 study of availability of licensed athletic trainers in North Carolina, 3 of the 5 counties that border Robeson County did not employ a single licensed athletic trainer (LAT) while the fourth county had an LAT at only 21-40 percent of its schools. This program supports the desire of the university to expand the health care programs offered on the campus to assist in addressing the health care needs of the underserved population in our service region.
- 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.** The current three faculty members can sufficiently meet an increase in enrollment in the athletic training program cohorts. However, if the program grows significantly or if the CAATE standards change again, there could potentially be a need to hire additional faculty.

APPENDIX L

- 7. Availability of Campus Resources (library, space, etc.).** Since the program has been in existence at the undergraduate level, the necessary resources are available in the library and the facilities and equipment are currently sufficient to meet the competencies required by the educational standards and to meet the needs and expectations of our graduate's employers. The current facilities, IT and library resources are sufficient to meet the needs of the program as documented by the CAATE Site Visit team in February 2016. The team felt that if the program were to grow significantly, additional classroom/lab space and resources would likely be needed. The current classroom/lab space can only accommodate 14 students, but the potential for locating larger spaces on campus exists.
- 8. Relevant Lower-level and Cognate Programs.** There are no lower level or cognate programs supporting the proposed MSAT. Per CAATE standards, the athletic training degree will only be allowed to be offered at the master's level (2022 is the last time students can be admitted to the undergraduate athletic training programs). The Department of Health and Human Performance is seeking university approval to create a Pre-Health Professions track within the current Exercise and Science degree program. This subject-matter degree track will satisfy the pre-requisite requirements for the MSAT. The program is also establishing an Early Assurance program that would guarantee admission to students at UNCP who meet the pre-requisite requirements. Having the Pre-Health Professions track and the Early Assurance Program will allow the MSAT faculty to actively recruit students to enter UNCP as freshman with the intention of completing their undergraduate degree and the proposed MSAT degree.
- 9. Impact on Access and Affordability.** This is a relatively affordable degree program, given that UNC Pembroke has the lowest tuition of any of the UNC System campuses proposing to offer the MS in Athletic Training. A tuition differential of \$200 per semester is requested to purchase items needed for clinical rotations such as a uniform, individual athletic training kit, and diagnostic tools that need to be specific to the individual. Money left over will be spent on acquisition and maintenance of capital equipment.
- 10. Expected Quality.** The program currently has a comprehensive master assessment plan (accreditation requirement) that addresses all of the program outcomes and goals and uses data to drive program changes. Criteria have been determined to measure student acquisition of learning outcomes. In addition, metrics to evaluate program effectiveness will include enrollments, number of graduates, retention rates, graduate placement, first-time Board of Certification (BoC) exam pass rate, and overall BoC pass rate.
- 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 UNC Pembroke 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, UNC Pembroke provided relevant information pertaining to program requirements and resources. One area of concern noted in the review status section of the Request to Plan document was that the program is currently on probation. The May 2017 graduates all passed the BOC exam so the 3-year aggregate pass rate is now 100 percent. The revised 3-year aggregate rate will take effect in the fall and the program will be removed from probation by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) in February 2018. The committee only meets once per year to determine the probation status changes.

In addition, UNC Pembroke noted a clarification regarding enrollment projections. They have a target size of 12 students in the cohort by the fourth year. 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 UNC Pembroke's request to establish a Master's of Science (B.S.) in Athletic Training degree program (CIP 51.0913) to enroll students starting Summer 2020.