

**Request for Authorization to Establish
Master of Science in Occupational Therapy (MSOT)
CIP 51.2306
University of North Carolina at Greensboro**

I. Program Highlights

- The University of North Carolina at Greensboro proposes the establishment of a Master of Science in Occupational Therapy (MSOT).
- The purpose of the MSOT program is to prepare students to become licensed occupational therapists who help individuals of all ages participate in meaningful activities (or “occupations”) despite physical, cognitive, or emotional challenges. We anticipate the enrollment to total 50 across the two-year program by year five (25 students/cohort).
- UNC Greensboro’s MSOT program stands out for its strong job outlook—occupational therapy jobs are expected to grow 11percent from 2023 to 2033. This high demand means graduates are likely to find jobs quickly and enjoy long-term career stability. UNCG also offers one of the most affordable MSOT programs in the state, costing less than three out of five peer institutions. As a minority-serving institution, UNCG plays a key role in expanding access to the profession, aligning with national efforts to increase diversity in occupational therapy.
- UNCG’s new MSOT program directly supports the university’s strategic goal to prepare workforce-ready graduates from all backgrounds. It equips students with the skills needed for a fast-growing healthcare field and strengthens the School of Health and Human Sciences’ mission to train essential health professionals. The program also complements existing health sciences programs and will help attract undergraduates interested in occupational therapy.
- Occupational therapy is a high-demand, fast-growing field in North Carolina and nationwide. Jobs are projected to grow 11 percent from 2023 to 2033, nearly triple the average for all occupations. That’s about 9,800 job openings per year, many due to retirements or career changes. In North Carolina alone, there are roughly two job postings for every hire, showing strong employer demand.

II. Academic Program Planning Criteria (UNC Policy 400.1)

1. **Relation to Campus Distinctiveness and Mission.** UNCG’s new MSOT program supports its mission to transform lives and meet regional workforce needs. It prepares students for in-demand healthcare roles, with most graduates finding jobs within 30–45 days of certification. The program strengthens existing health sciences offerings, attracts future students, and contributes to North Carolina’s economy. It also aligns with UNC System priorities by promoting mental health, community engagement, and diversity. As an affordable, high-impact degree, the MSOT program reflects UNCG’s commitment to access, student success, and social mobility.
2. **Student Demand.** Systemwide data shows that application and acceptance rates are stable and programs are attracting sufficient applicants to fill their cohorts. UNCG’s currently has 221 pre-OT students, 132 of which are maintaining a GPA of 3.0 or above, indicating a healthy pipeline of qualified applicants.

Table 1. Other UNC System Enrolled for CIP 51.2306— [Occupational Therapy], [Master’s]

Institution	AY2019-20	AY2020-21	AY2021-22	AY2022-23	AY2023-24	AY2024-25
ASU	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	24
ECU	74	79	77	71	72	68

UNC-CH	49	49	45	44	48	47
UNC P	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	21
WSSU	134	84	84	84	82	82

Table 2. Other UNC System Completions for CIP 51.2306— [Occupational Therapy], [Master’s]

Institution	AY2019-20	AY2020-21	AY2021-22	AY2022-23	AY2023-24	AY2024-25
ASU	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
ECU	21	27	25	25	23	N/A
UNC-CH	22	24	24	24	20	N/A
UNC P	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
WSSU	28	29	27	29	27	N/A

Table 3. IPEDS Peer Institutions Completions for CIP 51.2306— [Occupational Therapy], [Master’s]

Institution	AY2019-20	AY2020-21	AY2021-22	AY2022-23
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Several peer institutions have doctorate occupational therapy programs, but none have MSOT programs because most institutions decided to move to the doctoral level.

- 3. Employment Opportunities for Graduates.** Occupational therapy is a top-rated, fast-growing field in North Carolina. The profession is projected to grow 1.8 percent annually, adding over 660 jobs by 2032, with a median salary of \$94,580. It holds a five-star rating from NC Commerce, reflecting strong long-term demand and job stability.

Table 4. Estimated Employment in North Carolina for Standard Occupational Classification Codes (SOC) Cross-walked to CIP Code: 51.2306— Occupational Therapy, Master’s

Education Level Requirement	Count of SOC Codes	2022	2032 Estimate	Net Change	Percent Change
Master’s	1	3,365	4,028	663	1.8%

Table 5. Median Wage for SOC Codes Cross-walked to CIP Code: 51.2306— Occupational Therapy

Educational Level Requirement	SOC Count	Median Wage
Some College or Associate Degree	N/A	N/A
Bachelor's Degree	N/A	N/A
Doctoral or Professional Degree	1	\$94,580

- 4. Impact on Access and Affordability.** As part of the UNC System, UNCG offers one of the most affordable tuition rates in the country, helping transform the lives of low-income, first-generation, rural, and underrepresented students. Occupational therapy is a fast-growing field, with projected job growth of 11 percent from 2023 to 2033. Median salaries range from \$83,560 to \$96,370. Based on these figures, in-state graduates can expect a return on investment within one year, with ROI estimates between 68 percent and 73 percent.
- 5. Program Specific Fees or Tuition.** UNCG is requesting program-specific fees or tuition differential for this program.

Table 6. Full-Time Academic Year 2025-26 Master’s Degree Level Tuition and Fees per Year (In Dollars)

Category	Resident	Non-Resident
Tuition	\$14,154	\$53,736
Tuition Differential	\$4,000	\$4,000
Mandatory Fees (Athletics, Student Activities, Health Services, Educational & Technology, Campus Security, Debt Service, ASG)	\$7,318	\$7,318
Special Fees	\$1,000	\$1,000

6. **Expected Quality.** UNCG’s proposed MSOT program will be accredited by the Accreditation Council of Occupational Therapy Education, making graduates eligible to take the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT) certification exam and apply for licensure in North Carolina and all other states. The program will be a high-quality, mission-driven initiative that aligns with university and UNC System goals. Housed in a modern facility, it will serve as a cornerstone for rehabilitation sciences at UNCG. The two-year, 68-credit program runs continuously across fall, spring, and summer terms.

DEGREE PROGRESSION (CREDIT HOURS)	FALL	SPRING	SUMMER	TOTAL
YEAR 1	16	14	6	36
YEAR 2	14	12	6	32
Total				68

7. **Faculty Quality and Number.** The proposed MSOT program meets accreditation standards by requiring that all faculty hold at least a master’s degree, with over half holding doctorates. The Program Director must have a doctorate, clinical and academic experience, and an active research agenda. An Academic Fieldwork Coordinator will be hired to meet accreditation standards. Then, two faculty will be hired before year three, with one added in year four and five. All must be licensed occupational therapists with relevant clinical experience.
8. **Relevant Lower-level and Cognate Programs.** Applicants must have a bachelor’s degree before entering the MSOT program. UNCG offers strong undergraduate programs—especially in health-related fields—that prepare students to be competitive for admission.
9. **Availability of Campus Resources (Library, Facilities, etc.).** UNCG Libraries are fully equipped to support the MSOT program with no need for added resources or staff. A dedicated librarian will provide research support, and existing materials already cover occupational therapy topics. The program will be housed in the newly renovated Moore Building. The project is a comprehensive, transformational renovation funded and designed for interdisciplinary collaboration in health sciences. Current IT and academic tech staff are sufficient, and no new hires are planned.
10. **Existing Programs (Number, Location, Mode of Delivery).** The total overall ratio of applicants to accepted students in existing programs for 2023-24 is 3.93 and for 2024-2025 is 3.64.

Table 7. Other UNC System Applied/Admitted /Enrolled for CIP 51.2306— Occupational Therapy

Institution	Degree Level	Counts	AY 2023-2024	AY 2024-2025
ASU	Master’s	Applied/Admitted/Enrolled	N/A	89/32/24
ECU	Master’s	Applied/Admitted/Enrolled	108/33/28	104/41/27
UNC-CH	Master’s	Applied/Admitted/Enrolled	196/40/23	186/28/24
UNC P	Master’s	Applied/Admitted/Enrolled	N/A	45/32/21
WSSU	Master’s	Applied/Admitted/Enrolled	109/32/28	165/29/29

11. **Potential for Unnecessary Duplication.** UNCG has a strong pipeline of pre-occupational therapy students, with 221 currently enrolled and 132 maintaining GPAs above 3.0. Unlike many new programs, UNCG is well-positioned to meet student demand and launch successfully. System-wide data shows stable application trends, and new programs have not reduced enrollment at other campuses. The MSOT program will build on UNCG's academic strengths to meet workforce needs while supporting access, affordability, and student success.
12. **Feasibility of Collaborative Program.** As a campus-based program, we do not anticipate direct collaboration with other programs given the geographical distance.

III. **Summary of Review Processes**

1. **Institution Review Process and Feedback.** The MSOT proposal followed UNCG's curriculum review process, which begins with the faculty approval, the school or college curriculum committee approval, and the university-wide curriculum committee approval. In the case of graduate programs, the Graduate Council also reviews and votes on the program. The Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning reviews the proposal for compliance with accreditation standards. Financial Worksheets are reviewed by the chief financial officer.
2. **UNC System Office 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 the statements made.

IV. **Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the UNC Board of Governors approves the University of North Carolina at Greensboro request to establish the Master of Science in Occupational Therapy (MSOT) (CIP 51.2306) effective fall 2026.

**Request for Authorization to Establish
Master of Science (MS) in Engineering
CIP 14.0101
Western Carolina University**

I. Program Highlights

- Western Carolina University proposes the establishment of a Master of Science (MS) in Engineering in the College of Engineering.
- The proposed program provides opportunities for engineering students to attain increased technical depth and research skills that will support accelerated career advancement and preparation for graduate study. All courses will be offered in person at WCU's Cullowhee location. Projected enrollment in year five is 38 students.
- The proposed MS in Engineering will help fill the need for engineering and research expertise in western North Carolina and across the state. It will offer the flexibility to pursue discipline-specific (electrical, mechanical, civil, and industrial engineering) and generalist engineering coursework and includes an Accelerated Bachelor's to Master's (ABM). The ABM option enables undergraduate students to take graduate-level coursework in their final year and earn both bachelor's and master's degrees in five years.
- The proposed degree program aligns with WCU's mission and the UNC System mission by promoting engaged learning and fostering regional economic prosperity and community development through academic excellence and innovation.
- Graduates will work in industries employing electrical (general, computer, power, and energy), mechanical (general, robotics, and automation), civil, or industrial engineers. Data show significant employment deficits in the surrounding region and across the state over the coming decade. Graduates will also be prepared to pursue doctoral study.

II. Academic Program Planning Criteria (UNC Policy 400.1)

1. **Relation to Campus Distinctiveness and Mission.** WCU offers the only engineering program in the western region of North Carolina. The proposed MS Engineering program will support WCU's mission to provide academic excellence, affordability, and access. It aims to foster the creation and application of knowledge to cultivate economic prosperity, community development, and engagement with technology-oriented industrial employers and entrepreneurs. The proposed program will also support the mission and strategic goals of the UNC System. Students' access to NC Promise tuition rates in the first year of the graduate-level coursework creates affordability, and the ABM option allows for completion of two degrees within a five-year timeline.
2. **Student Demand.** WCU's undergraduate programs in engineering and technology grew 22 percent since fall 2022 (Catalytics), with the trend continuing upward. The department anticipates that current undergraduate students seeking further academic development and marketability through advanced engineering coursework will be the largest source of students for the MS Engineering program. In spring 2025, 331 WCU undergraduate engineering students were surveyed about their interest in earning the MS Engineering degree. Of 92 respondents,

82 percent said they were likely or extremely likely to consider the program for future study. Respondents cited the potential for a higher starting salary, accelerated career advancement, an expedited pathway (via ABM), and preparation for doctoral study among their reasons to consider enrollment. These findings, along with the high industry demand for engineers with advanced degrees, support projected student demand.

Table 1. Other UNC System Enrolled for CIP 14.0101 — [Engineering, General], [Master’s]

Institution	AY2019-20	AY2020-21	AY2021-22	AY2022-23	AY2023-24	AY2024-25
NC State	46	42	36	42	38	41
UNC Charlotte	9	8	9	9	7	6

Table 2. Other UNC System Completions for CIP 14.0101 — [Engineering, General], [Master’s]

Institution	AY2019-20	AY2020-21	AY2021-22	AY2022-23	AY2023-24	AY2024-25
NC State	16	12	12	13	11	7
UNC Charlotte	5	6	1	2	5	1

Table 3. IPEDS Peer Institutions Completions for CIP 14.0101 — [Engineering, General], [Master’s]

Institution	AY2019-20	AY2020-21	AY2021-22	AY2022-23
University of Colorado, Colorado Springs	26	34	35	28
Youngstown State University	1	7	2	3
University of Tennessee, Chattanooga	22	21	16	16

- 3. Employment Opportunities for Graduates.** Graduates will find opportunities in industries employing electrical, mechanical, civil, or industrial engineers. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, these are the most in-demand disciplines of engineering in the state and nearby metropolitan areas including Atlanta, Columbia, Charlotte, and Knoxville. The associated employment sectors have projected annualized deficits of 544 positions over the next decade. Salaries range from \$102,900 to \$138,100 at five years from graduation (US BLS/JobsEQ). A recent Indeed.com survey of positions requiring or preferring an “Engineering Master’s”, identified 75 open positions within 25 miles of nearby Asheville.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (via JobsEQ) data show that approximately 30 percent of engineers across sectors hold postgraduate degrees. A comparison of 2022 data with estimated growth by 2032, outlined in Table 4, shows the estimated market demand for graduates with a master’s degree or higher will be approximately 8,900 or six percent based on projected net change.

Table 4. Estimated Employment in North Carolina for Standard Occupational Classification Codes (SOC) Cross-walked to CIP Code: 14.0101 with a Matching Education Level Requirement

Education Level Requirement	Count of SOC Codes	2022	2032 Estimate	Net Change	Percent Change
Bachelor's	19	139,143	168,829	29,686	21%

Table 5. Median Wage for SOC Codes Cross-walked to CIP Code: 14.0101, Engineering, General

Educational Level Requirement	SOC Count	Median Wage
Some College or Associate Degree	0	N/A
Bachelor's Degree	19	\$107,360
Doctoral or Professional Degree	N/A	N/A

- Impact on Access and Affordability.** Courses in the proposed MS Engineering program will be in-person on WCU's campus in Cullowhee. This delivery mode will offer high accessibility to ABM students who are expected to constitute the majority of enrollment. Students entering as undergraduates with the ABM option can take advantage of NC Promise tuition rates in their final undergraduate year while undertaking graduate-level courses. The ABM format would also reduce the time to earn the MS degree, increasing affordability. Data from NC Tower show that UNC System institution graduates in the 14.0101 CIP with a master's-level degree earned an average annual wage of \$114,050 at five years after graduation.
- Program Specific Fees or Tuition.** Western Carolina University is requesting a \$500 annual tuition differential for graduate students in the program.

Table 6. Full-Time Master's Tuition and Fees per Year (In Dollars)

Category	Resident	Nonresident
Tuition	\$4,568	\$15,287
Tuition Differential	\$500	\$500
Mandatory Fees (Athletics, Student Activities, Health Services, Educational & Technology, Campus Security, Debt Service, ASG)	\$3,199	\$3,199
Special Fees	N/A	N/A

- Expected Quality.** All WCU's existing undergraduate engineering and technology programs are accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) or will apply for initial accreditation in the 2026 cycle. All programs undergo periodic external review and continuous improvement reporting to assess student learning outcomes. The program will require 30 credit hours including 18-24 hours of coursework in engineering and six hours in a support area (business, mathematics, etc.). For students pursuing the thesis option, six hours of thesis research is substituted for engineering coursework. Non-thesis option students will take six hours in engineering coursework or pursue directed projects.

7. **Faculty Quality and Number.** Faculty teaching in the program will hold graduate faculty status at WCU. All faculty will hold a terminal degree and be active scholars in their fields with ongoing research obligations. Most faculty also have engineering experience in US industry. The College of Engineering currently employs 31 faculty members, and that number continues to increase to support ongoing growth of undergraduate programs. The current number of faculty in support area courses (business, mathematics, etc.) are expected to be adequate to absorb the projected MS Engineering student enrollment in existing course offerings. The MS Engineering program would also have a program director who is responsible for recruiting, course scheduling and staffing, program assessment, and management of any graduate assistant duties.
8. **Relevant Lower-level and Cognate Programs.** WCU currently offers undergraduate programs in electrical, mechanical, civil, and industrial engineering. These programs will serve as a source of enrollment for the MS Engineering program, particularly via the ABM pathway. Further, upper-level undergraduate courses will be augmented and cross-listed as first-year graduate courses with the addition of advanced work to support ABM students. In this way, faculty may cultivate students who may be interested and well suited to work in their area of research.
9. **Availability of Campus Resources (Library, Facilities, etc.).** The MS Engineering program will be housed in the Belk and Center for Applied Technologies (CAT) buildings at WCU. Their capacity is adequate to support the program through its startup phase. Equipment needs would also be well met by current assets. Expansion funds have been appropriated by the state of North Carolina in the amount of \$95.3 million to support construction of a new engineering building. This additional space would support the program in years five through ten. Also, current library resources are sufficient to support the instructional and research needs of the program.
10. **Existing Programs (Number, Location, Mode of Delivery).**

Table 7. Other UNC System Applied/Admitted /Enrolled for CIP 14.0101 — Engineering, General

Institution	Degree Level	Counts	AY22-23	AY23-24
NC State University	ME (online)	Applied	14	10
		Admitted	9	8
		Enrolled	8	5
UNC Charlotte	MSE (on campus)	Applied	2	6
	ME (off campus)	Admitted	1	3
		Enrolled	1	3

11. **Potential for Unnecessary Duplication.** The proposed program differs from those listed in Table 7 in its target audience, delivery modality, and geography. Programs at NC State and UNC Charlotte cater to working professionals and are limited to coursework only. The proposed MS Engineering program at WCU fills a regional need for graduate study in an underserved area of the state, providing an in-person learning experience and a thesis option for students to build research skills.
12. **Feasibility of Collaborative Program.** Opportunities to collaborate with other institutions may result from transfer coursework from NC State's ME program.

III. Summary of Review Processes

1. **Institution Review Process and Feedback.** This proposal has undergone review and approval where applicable by WCU's College of Engineering Graduate Committee, associate dean, dean, associate provost for academic affairs, Graduate Council, University Curriculum Committee, Provost's Council, chief financial officer, and chancellor. Approval and support were provided at all levels. A prospectus for SACSCOC approval has been submitted, and WCU's Faculty Senate will provide final review in the spring 2026 semester.
2. **UNC System Office 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 the statements made.

IV. Recommendation

Staff recommends that the UNC Board of Governors approve the Western Carolina University request to establish the Master of Science (MS) in Engineering (CIP 14.0101) effective fall 2026.

**Request for Authorization to Discontinue and/or Consolidate
Academic Degree Programs**

**Western Carolina University — Master of Innovation Leadership and Entrepreneurship (M)
(CIP 52.1499)**

Overview: The Master of Innovation Leadership and Entrepreneurship (52.1499) at Western Carolina University will be discontinued effective spring 2026. This request to discontinue a degree program has been reviewed by the appropriate institutional committees and approved by the appropriate academic authority(ies).

The request to discontinue the Master of Innovation Leadership and Entrepreneurship is due to low student enrollment. No faculty or staff members will be affected by the discontinuation of the program. Faculty will continue teaching courses that support undergraduate entrepreneurship programs, certificate programs, and other College of Business offerings. Individualized plans of study have been developed for all currently enrolled students to ensure that those who maintain satisfactory academic progress are able to complete the program.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Board of Governors approve Western Carolina University's request to discontinue the delivery of the Master of Innovation Leadership and Entrepreneurship (52.1499) effective spring 2026.