



School of Health & Human Performance

College of Health Sciences

Campus Box 112

Milledgeville, Georgia 31061-0490

Phone (478) 445-4072

Fax (478) 445-4074

*Dec. Approval
SHE 2/5/2015*

MEMO

To: Dr. Sandra K. Gangstead, Dean
College of Health Sciences
From: Dr. Lisa M. Griffin, Director LMG
School of Health & Human Performance

Date: January 6, 2015

Re: Letter of Intent for M.S. in Athletic Training *Major*
degree

Attached is the *Letter of Intent* from the School of Health & Human Performance (SHHP) requesting approval to move forward with a full *New Program Proposal* for a Master's of Science degree with a major in Athletic Training. In our October faculty meeting, the SHHP faculty (i.e., departmental curriculum committee of the whole) unanimously approved moving forward with a new program proposal to transition the current B.S. in Athletic Training to a 3+2 master's degree program.

Please let me know if you have additional questions and/or concerns.

MILLEDGEVILLE • MACON • WARNER ROBINS

Georgia College & State University, established in 1889, is Georgia's Public Liberal Arts University.

University System of Georgia

Master of Science in Athletic Training Program Prospectus
College of Health Sciences
School of Health and Human Performance
Fall 2014

Athletic Trainers (ATs) are health care professionals who collaborate with physicians to provide preventative services, emergency care, clinical diagnosis, therapeutic intervention and rehabilitation of injuries and medical conditions. Students who want to become certified athletic trainers must earn a degree from an accredited athletic training curriculum and pass a comprehensive test administered by the Board of Certification.¹ In 2013 there were 333 baccalaureate-level professional programs. However, since the late 1990s, 27 master's degree level professional programs have been accredited. These programs impart the same professional knowledge, skills, and abilities, but they do so at the graduate level. The emergence of these "entry-level master's degree programs" (ELMs) mirror a national trend in peer healthcare professions who increasingly prepare students for professional practice at the graduate level. For example, physician assistants, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and audiologists all receive their professional education at the graduate level.²

Thus, in order to stay ahead of national trends and to become the first Athletic Training Master's program in the USG, the following evidence is shared documenting substantial need.

Justification of Need

Employment Need

ATs are employed in various occupational industries including: educational settings (universities, secondary schools), hospitals and clinics, occupational health, military, performing arts, professional sports, and public safety. Employment of ATs is projected to grow 21.2 percent from 2012 to 2022, faster than the average for all occupations. As people become more aware of sports-related injuries at a young age, demand for ATs is expected to increase most significantly in colleges, universities, and youth leagues.³ Furthermore, parents and coaches are becoming educated about these greater risks through community health efforts, specifically topics surrounding sudden death, concussions, and heat illness. Because ATs are usually onsite with athletes and are often the first responders when injuries occur, the demand for ATs is estimated to increase. Additionally, advances in injury prevention and detection and more sophisticated treatments are projected to increase the demand for athletic trainers. Also, as an increasingly active middle-aged and elderly population grows, an increased incidence of athletic-related injuries is likely.³

Insurance and workers' compensation costs have become a concern for many employers and insurance companies, especially in areas where employees are often injured on the job (military, public safety, large commercial industry, etc.). ATs create programs aimed at keeping injury rates down. Depending on the state, some insurance companies recognize ATs as healthcare providers and reimburse the cost of an athletic trainer's services.³

As the need ensues, reports suggest that ATs within offices of physicians should expect a 29.2 percent increase, those within the educational setting should see a 18.9 percent increase, fitness and recreational sport ATs should anticipate a rise of 18.5 percent, and those employed in the general medical and surgical realm have a predicted 15.6 increase during this 2012-2022 time frame.³

Specifically, Georgia is projected to have a 31.1 percent increase in employment during the 2012/22 window.⁴ The estimated number of ATs employed in Georgia in 2012 was 575. It is projected that in 2022 there will be 754. This represents an annual average growth rate of 2.7% percent, faster than the percent growth rate for all occupations in Georgia. Moreover, growth plus replacement needs for ATs in Georgia are estimated to average about 34 openings per year from 2012-2022.⁵ Comparatively, Georgia ranks fifth (31.1 percent) in employment trends by state for ATs ranked by percent growth falling only to Kentucky (45.7 percent), Utah (38.5 percent), Arizona (34.5 percent), and Virginia (33.2 percent).⁴

Regionally, Macon, GA ranks the highest for the annual mean wage for ATs within the state at an average of \$49,100 showing the value placed on these professionals within the middle Georgia area.³ Surrounding states also show related employment increase percentages during the 2012-2022 time span. Alabama ranks the highest at a percent change of 27 percent, with South Carolina not far behind with an anticipated increase of 23 percent.^{6,7} Mississippi, Tennessee, and Florida all are projected to increase at 20 percent.^{8,9,10}

USG Initiatives

The University System of Georgia (USG) states in its Strategic Plan that it is committed "to develop new, flexible, and affordable degree options."¹¹ The Athletic Training Master's degree would allow for Georgia College students to obtain an advanced degree in 5 years with the intent of a 3+2 program of study. This provides for both the liberal arts education as well as an advanced knowledge and skills in a professional healthcare degree. The program of study aligns with the USG's commitment "to the development of new and flexible general education and degree program pathways that promote affordable and high-quality course and degree completion options." By tailoring the curriculum to naturally progress from the B.S. in Exercise Science (which can be currently be completed in 3 years), the AT program can be completed in 5 years. Furthermore, the commitment from the USG to "to maintain and improve the quality and diversity of academic programs by placing an emphasis on academic program reviews, accreditation standards, faculty development opportunities, and pedagogical improvements," will be fully upheld through the ongoing and annual accreditation review by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE).¹²

In addition, the USG insists on "the pursuit of excellence in research and graduate/professional education." The Georgia College Athletic Training Program has received national recognition for the innovative use of *Standardized Patients (SPs)* in Athletic Training Education. This national recognition will be enhanced at the graduate level. Coinciding with the USG's commitment "to high-quality programs, teaching, and learning," students matriculating through the degree will experience a mature and well-grounded standardized patient process with faculty whose research aligns with this mission. This also provides a vast variety of opportunities for students to pursue research.

National Association Findings

A 2012 report submitted by the National Athletic Trainers Association (NATA) Executive Committee for Education titled *Future Directions in Athletic Training Education* proposed several initiatives for the purpose of advancing various aspects of athletic training education.¹³ One of these initiatives called for the critical examination of the appropriate degree level for preparation as an athletic trainer (AT) – also known as the professional degree. Further deliberation produced the *white paper* report on the professional degree level titled *Professional Education in Athletic Training: An Examination of the Professional Degree*.² Presented below are the key findings from this document which further influence the proposed degree transition from the baccalaureate-level to the master's degree.

1. Graduate-level professional education will better align ATs as peers to other healthcare professions and should enhance our status and influence in the larger health care arena.
2. Transition to graduate professional education facilitates continued evolution in the professional competency requirements to better reflect the clinical practice requirements of current and future ATs in a changing healthcare environment.
3. Factors fundamental to providing quality care are likely improved by professional education at the graduate level.
4. Professional education at the graduate level enhances retention of students who are committed to pursuit of an athletic training career. Graduate-level education attracts students who are better prepared to assimilate the increasingly complex concepts that are foundational for athletic training practice.
5. Transition to professional education at the graduate level would increase the likelihood that education programs are better aligned with other health care profession programs within their institution.
6. Professional education at the graduate level should facilitate interprofessional education.
7. A strong foundation of health-related basic sciences is increasingly necessary to prepare students for contemporary clinical practice in athletic training.
8. Professional education should not compete with general education, liberal arts, and foundational science requirements because it detracts from the effectiveness of the professional educational experience.

9. A transition to professional education at the graduate level will result in a more efficient educational system.
10. Currently, all state practice acts accommodate graduate-level education in athletic training as meeting the requirements for the state credential. No state practice acts would need to be amended.
11. The impact of a transition to graduate-level professional education on compensation levels and employment opportunities is complex and difficult to predict. Multiple factors influence compensation and employment patterns in healthcare.

Demand

The demand for athletic trainers is greater now than ever, and is anticipated to grow within the next 10 years. Nationally, The Department of Labor reports that employment of athletic trainers is expected to grow by 30 percent from 2010 to 2020, much faster than the average for all occupations. As people become more aware of sports-related injuries at a young age, demand for athletic trainers is expected to increase most significantly in schools and youth leagues.³ At the state and national levels, legislators are currently working on legislation for youth safety. Specifically, House Resolution (H.Res. 72): Secondary School Student Athletes Bill of Rights aims to ensure safety against cardiac events, neurological injuries, environmentally-induced conditions, and dietary/substance conditions.¹⁴

Athletic trainers are highly educated. Nearly 70 percent of credential holders have a master's degree or higher advanced degree.¹ To compete for occupational opportunity, the advanced degree is fundamental. An advanced degree allows for employment opportunities and salaries comparable to other health care professionals (similar to physical, occupational, speech, language and other therapists). Currently there are only 30 professional accredited master degree granting institutions as documented by the CAATE with only 5 residing in the southeast (University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, University of North Carolina Greensboro, Lenoir-Rhyne University, Life University, and Florida International University).¹² Of the 5 accredited programs currently in Georgia, all degrees offered are at the baccalaureate level. Georgia College is striving to be the first program within the USG to transition to the master's degree, offering graduate education at an affordable price.

Currently Georgia College has undergraduate applications averaging 30+ each spring to begin the following year as a cohort, admitting on average 22 students. The program is currently estimated to have 112 pre-major Athletic Training students. With the current level of interest combined with the number of international students and out of state students at the graduate level seeking information about the program, the demonstrable external interest and demand for the advanced degree is already in place.

Non-Duplication at USG Institutions

As documented previously, only 5 advanced degree programs reside in the southeast with only one housed in Georgia. Life University (a private not-for-profit institution) is the only program in Georgia offering an advanced athletic training degree. The Master of Athletic Training (MAT) degree at Life University is housed in the Department of Sport Health Science. This is a two-year, 76 quarter-hour, professional curriculum.¹⁵ No additional data was provided since this is a new program. Life University is located in metropolitan Marietta, GA, thus the current proposed program would be the first USG institution in Georgia located centrally in middle Georgia.

References

1. Athletic Training. National Athletic Trainers Association Web site. <http://www.nata.org/athletic-training> Accessed November 19, 2014.
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3. Employment Projections. Bureau of Labor Statistics Web site. <http://www.bls.gov/emp/> Accessed November 19, 2014.
4. Occupational Outlook. Georgia Labor Market Explorer Web site. <http://explorer.dol.state.ga.us/mis/occupation.htm> Accessed November 19, 2014.
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14. NATA News. March 2013: 12-14.
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GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY

DEGREE PROGRAM CHANGES
PROPOSAL COVER SHEET

DEGREE: CIP CODE: 51.0913

PROGRAM/CONCENTRATION NAME: M.S. Athletic Training

DEPARTMENT: School of Hlth & Hum. Perf.

PROPOSED EFFECTIVE DATE: Fall, 2017
Semester Year

RECEIVED
JAN 03 2015
Office of the Dean
College of Health Sciences

RECEIVED
FEB 04 2015
Office of the Dean
College of Health Sciences

Check One or More of the Following and Attach the Appropriate Forms

- New Program Proposal
- New Concentration Proposal
- Change in Program/Concentration/Degree Requirements
- Deactivate/Discontinue Degree Program/Concentration

Submitted by:

Mrande J. Jurek 1/6/15
Faculty Member Date

Recommendation:*

Recommend Not Recommend Lisa M. Griffin 1/6/15
Chair, Dept. Curriculum Committee Date

Recommend Not Recommend Lisa M. Griffin 1/6/15
Department Chair Date

Recommend Not Recommend [Signature] 1/30/15
Chair, School Curriculum Committee Date

Recommend Not Recommend Sandra K. Gansstead 2/5/15
School Dean Date

Recommend Not Recommend _____
Chair, Curriculum, Assessment, & Policy Cmt Date

Recommend Not Recommend _____
Vice President for Academic Affairs Date

*A "Not Recommend" recommendation should include reviewer rationale and recommended action here: