

New Degree Summary Proposal (White Paper)

Degree name: Master of Science in Athletic Training (MATr)

Department: Health and Human Performance (HHP)

College: Health Sciences

1. **Strategic alignment.** Cite specific examples of how the program aligns to the DSU strategic plan, mission, and goals. Are there aspects that make the proposed program unique or enable it to stand out from similar programs? How?

Response:

- In the 2020 Strategic Plan, Status to Stature, Goal number 2 is to: “**Broaden** and enhance academic programs to facilitate **growth**.”
- The current proposal aligns specifically with the supporting strategy number 1 under that goal: “**Develop** and **approve master’s degrees** and new baccalaureate majors.”
- The unique features of the proposed program include (a) its foresight with respect to the direction Athletic Training certification is trending, (b) its positioning in a community that promotes and hosts athletic and sporting opportunities, (c) its offerings for students in the surrounding Arizona, Nevada and California areas , and (d) its positioning of students for placement in allied health professions, including Physical Therapy (PT) and Occupational Therapy (OT).

2. **External demand.** What need(s) will this program help fulfill for our DSU footprint and stakeholders in Washington County? What impact would the program have on existing programs in the state? Bordering states? Justify how projected employment opportunities are reasonable. Include both local and national statistics on potential employment of graduates. Justify how the program will meet projected future demand, growth, and economic trends. How?

Response:

- Washington County is host and home to athletic and sporting events year-round. These include marquis events like the St. George Marathon and Huntsman World Senior Games, college athletics, and youth tournaments for a variety of sports. With the expansion of DSU’s hosting of state football, basketball, and swimming tournaments for high schools, the need for local athletic training (AT) services will continue to grow.
- Implementation of the MATr program will provide better local coverage. This benefits our students by providing experience toward the degree and hours toward certification and employment, and also benefits DSU through billed services to sanctioning bodies of the hosted tournaments and events. Additionally, it benefits DSU athletics, who currently utilize external coverage, overseen through IHC.
- Athletic trainers are employable in professional and collegiate sports, secondary and intermediate schools, sports medicine clinics, hospitals and rehabilitation facilities, fitness centers, and physician offices. Due to the growth of these settings and offerings locally, the demand for new athletic trainers will continue to grow.
- There is a master’s degree in athletic training program at SUU. However, the projected employment in the profession suggests that there is need for more programs, not fewer. More information to this point will be presented. But, as our service region tends to include Arozona, Nevada and California students, it is important to note that regionally, UNLV only has an undergraduate AT program, and so we will be positioned to offer the necessary program for students who wish to pursue a career in AT, but who are unable to do so in Nevada. This is because by Fall 2022, a new certification in AT will only be possible with an M.S. from a CAATE-accredited program (Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education).
- According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the growth of the AT profession is estimated to be 23% nationwide from 2016-2026. This is almost double the projected 12% growth in other

allied healthcare professions and technical occupations, which already surpasses the 7% projected growth for all occupations.

- In Utah, this projected growth is 39.3%. For California, it is 25%. In Arizona, it is 34%. For Nevada, the projected growth data are unavailable, but even absent those, these estimated growth data suggest that the employment outlook is positive for our future M.S. graduates. Because of Utah's particularly high projected growth in the profession, and because of the unique athletic and sporting nature of this local area, it is reasonable to have our own M.S. program, which will actually be needed in addition to, not just be competing against (per se) the program which has started at SUU, and has not attained CAATE accreditation.

3. ***Internal demand.*** What is the enrollment and graduation outlook over the next two, five and ten years? State compelling evidence of student demand at the county, state, national, international levels. Are there other DSU programs (including GE) that will rely on this program for instruction and support? Are there other internal demand factors this program will help meet?

Response:

- Based upon comparison with similar programs (Baylor University, University of Northern Iowa, Azusa-Pacific University, University of North Carolina Greensboro), a typical cohort will have 10-15 (up to 20) students in it. The program is a two-year, 60-credit program (by CAATE standards), and so by the second year, there would be a total of 20-30 (up to 40) students in the program. Graduation and board of certification (BOC) pass rates vary from institution to institution, but are usually greater than 90 percent, and multiple of the above institutions have many years with 100% pass rates.
- The initial cohort could start at 10 students, and in five to ten years, the enrollment can rise to as many as 20 (these are typical ranges among the studied programs). Graduation and BOC pass rates can be expected to remain similar, but with the addition of the Human Performance Center and its facilities, the accommodation of more students can be addressed as appropriate.
- Informal survey data (career aspiration data from Introduction to Exercise Science classes) have shown that 13 of almost 140 students (about 9%) this academic year alone plan to pursue a career in AT. This represents only students enrolled in Exercise Science who are in their Introductory course in one academic year. The student demand for the program from just our institution is likely higher, as these reported data do not reflect majors in upper division courses, or other majors across campus who may also have the same career goal in mind. It is also noted that these very informal findings are made before the students are even aware of the existence of the M.S. program right here on campus. Once it exists, students will choose DSU for the ability and convenience of starting and finishing their undergraduate and graduate academics at one institution.
- This demonstrates a source of students for the M.S. program from just our campus. When taken with demand for the program that will likely arise from Arizona, Nevada, and even California, it is anticipated that cohorts will fill.
- Upon advancement of the proposal from the Academic Council to the Graduate Council for full approval, more survey data to support the demand for the program will be sought.

4. ***Quality/Costs of the program/Future costs.*** What costs will be incurred over the next two, five, and ten years? What will be the cost per student credit hour? Justify how the costs and budgets will be sustainable for potential future program growth and expansion? Are there adequate plans for student support/assistantships? Will the current and future faculty be able to deliver a quality program? To support and appropriately instruct the projected student enrollment? Why? What are the credentials and reputation of the faculty? Are there adequate equipment, facilities (research space), & library resources? Is the proposed administration for the program appropriate and adequate? What other factors will influence quality?

Response:

- The initial costs to start the program will come from the need for two new full-time faculty (dictated by CAATE accreditation standards) and treatment modality equipment. A needs assessment for the latter of these will need to be made before going for full Graduate Council approval. The faculty requirement, though, is already well understood and represents a minimum requirement.
- Similarly, the cost per student credit hour will need to be accurately estimated, as it has not yet been.
- However, the sustainability of the program lies in two key factors: (a) the consistent and even growing demand for this training in the nation and particularly our region, and (b) the ability of the program to generate service revenue from local coverage and partnership with healthcare providers in the area. This will be discussed under point 5 below.
- Students may be supported through assistantships to the degree that funded research takes place in the department. Because the HPC will feature state-of-the-art labs, it is anticipated that this will be possible. AT students will likely have opportunities to work on clinical projects in the human performance labs via the incoming PT and OT programs as well.
- The hired faculty will come with the necessary qualifications and background to deliver a quality program. Because the program is new and unique, the hires are necessitated and will therefore reflect the need for quality and distinguished program delivery.
- Because of the structure of the two-year sequence of coursework, two AT faculty can adequately deliver the program within the prescribed teaching load at DSU.
- The new HPC will have space for teaching and modalities dedicated to AT. The faculty hired will also fill the CAATE-prescribed roles of program director and clinical coordinator. The new facility will attract students, and provide access to modern equipment and research space.

5. ***Revenue and other resources generated by the program.*** What revenues (tuition, grants, other) will this program generate in two, five, and ten years? What kind of grants are anticipated? Is there adequate support for research grants? Other sources of revenue?

Response:

- Graduate tuition will be generated by this program. We propose that program-specific tuition be studied for this program, as it is a professional one, like the DPT and OT programs.
- Because it is a graduate program, there is opportunity for program-related research by faculty. Health-related research should attract funding. Additionally, the biomechanics lab will have an ongoing research agenda which will touch on injury-risk and movement quality. This research will attract contract revenue as well.
- The labs will feature sufficient and appropriate equipment for the research.
- It is probable that our graduate assistants can be hired for coverage in the area through a body such as IHC or other provider.
- Additionally, revenue could be generated via billable service to athletics, who will be able to contract our own services rather than those of an external entity, and even local events like the World Senior Games, etc.

6. ***Research/program design/other.*** Will this program create research and creative opportunities for our faculty and students? How will these research opportunities help our faculty? Students? Is the program a partnership or collaboration with a private organization, USHE or other institution, or standalone? What are the merits of it being a partnership or standalone? What is the percentage of face-to-face, online, hybrid, evening, or weekend time spent in this program? What other instructional innovations/delivery methods are being proposed for this program? Are there other opportunities that this program will create? Develop new markets? How will the program adapt to changes in technology, trends, student populations, and/or employer needs?

Response:

- The research and creative opportunities associated with this program come from the access to lab experiences. Gait and movement will be measurable with the new HPC labs, giving students hands-on access. AT will have dedicated space in the new HPC. The labs provide the new faculty with opportunities for professional development and scholarly work. Research collaboration with Exercise Science can be coordinated.
- Potential partnerships with local providers will need to be explored. Currently, AT services for our own athletics and surrounding area are provided in conjunction with IHC. It is yet unclear how a new alignment would look if we are able to provide our own coverage via graduate assistants. It is probable that our graduate assistants can be hired for coverage in the area through a body such as IHC.
- The program will be delivered face-to-face. The schedule of classes may include evening courses, but this is to accommodate clinical assignments, rather than to target already-working professionals. It is meant for full-time graduate students. Additionally, to keep the program to two years, while satisfying CAATE credit hour regulations, Summer enrollment will be required.
- Applications to the program will come through the ATCAS system. Admissions criteria need to be developed further, but it is anticipated that they will include GRE scores, letters of recommendation, and GPA information. Initially, this may simply involve a system of rank order, admitting the top 10 qualified applicants. These criteria and the application process reflect those in place at multiple institutions, including those previously referenced.